

Pierre Elliott Trudeau
reason over passion
history essay



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Pierre Elliot Trudeau was the most influential leader in Canadian politics. He was a charismatic, charming, honest and an intellectually brilliant individual. Trudeau inherently believed in a fair society where minority rights are protected and all citizens are treated equally. He used his unique skills to build a better Canada, where its citizens enjoyed a superior quality of life and standard of living. Elected in 1968, Trudeau was responsible for implementing landmark legislation, which significantly impacted Canadian lives in a positive way. In 1969, Trudeau enacted the official languages Act, which enabled both English and French speaking Canadians equal rights. In 1970, Trudeau implemented the War Measures Act for the safety of the Canadian people against terrorist's acts. Furthermore, in 1982 Trudeau revamped the Canadian Charter of Right and Freedoms, which “ changed the shape of Canadian democracy”[1]and gave Canadians a new outlook towards life. Trudeau allowed Canada to evolve into what he perceived as a just society, which created personal and political freedom in addition to unity within the nation.

1969, a year in which Francophones (a term used to describe primary French speaking individuals) would be able to “ use their talents to the full,”[2]as Trudeau enacted the Official Languages Act, otherwise known as Bill C-120. This act “ entrenched the rights of Francophones to their language wherever they lived and gave public servants the choice of their language of work”[3]. Trudeau stated, “ Either one nation with two languages or ultimately two separate nations”[4]. Trudeau, advocating Canadian unity “ aimed at opposing the concept of a French Canada”[5]. The Trudeau government wanted to recognize French and English languages as equal. Trudeau, a

francophone himself stated that he wanted “ increased identification of Francophones within Canada”[6]; Bill C-120 gave greater responsibility to French Canadians in the federal government, as section five declared that the “ decisions of the federal courts were to be issued in both English and French”[7]. Section eight, which stated that, “ both English and French versions of a law enacted by the Parliament of Canada are equally authentic”[8], and section nine which assured that “ each agency of a Crown Corporation in Ottawa or in a bilingual district must ensure that services were available in both official languages”[9].

Trudeau covered every aspect of ensuring equality and unity of both English and French speaking Canadians. Trudeau hoped to “ re-channel Quebec nationalism”[10]and eliminate separatism in Quebec. Bill C-120 appeared promising as it has progressively more support throughout Canada. The Bill has been revised twice to “ strengthen some of its provisions”[11]and in 1982 parts of Bill C-120 was constitutionalized by its placing in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Languages Act was appreciated by many Canadians however small minorities insisted on committing to the independence of Quebec. The Front de Liberation or the FLQ wanted to ensure greater participation of the French speaking public. In October 1970 the FLQ became known as “ Canada’s Terrorist group”[12], as they kidnapped two public officials James Cross and Pierre Laporte. Roman Pearson of the Centre of Canadian Studies stated that “ terrorism was something that Canadians read about in the newspapers’; it was not supposed to occur in Canada, but the FLQ changed all of that”[13]. It was also reported that in “ August 1970 FLQ terrorist were training with <https://assignbuster.com/pierre-elliott-trudeau-reason-over-passion-history-essay/>

Palestinian terrorists, and had vowed a series of political assassinations”[14]. The FLQ were determined, in hopes that Quebec would somehow become independent; conversely Trudeau had a different mindset. He believed that no terrorist group should be able to “ roam free in the streets of Canada”[15]. As he was being questioned by a local news reporter he stated that, “ as people are being abducted let them be protected, it’s only natural”[16]In response to the FLQ on October 16th 1970, under the leadership of Trudeau, the Federal Government proclaimed the War Measures Act. This act “ allowed the government to assume emergency powers in the event of war, invasion or insurrection, real or apprehended”[17]. Trudeau’s reasoning suggested that his country was being attacked by a group of individuals who made wrong judgments. The media criticized Trudeau with phrases such as, “ Canada, a police state”[18]. The media also took into consideration that some of the Canadian population were shocked in the decisions made. Trudeau replied, “ well there’s a lot of bleeding hearts around who just don’t like to see people with helmets and guns, all I can say is go on and bleed, but it’s more important to keep law and order in a society then to worry about weakly people who don’t like the looks of soldiers”[19]a reporter commented stating “ at any cost?”[20]Trudeau famously replied “ just watch me!”[21]His determination and reasoning of FLQ extermination led to nearly over five hundred arrests, and a compromise, from a list of demands that was given to the federal government. The negotiation included the “ ending of police searches”[22], the “ liberation of twenty three FLQ political prisoners”[23]and “ safe conducts out of the country”[24]. Although Trudeau’s actions were extremely controversial “ 87 % of Canadians were in support during what <https://assignbuster.com/pierre-elliott-trudeau-reason-over-passion-history-essay/>

became known as the October Crisis”[25]Trudeau received praise for his logical thinking and saved Canada from alleged terrorism.

As the FLQ became a lessening issue, human rights became the focal point of the Trudeau administration. In 1982 Trudeau revamped the Canadian constitution combining the British North America Act of 1867 with several amendments in a process which was known as “ repatriating the constitution”[26]. The constitution act of 1982 covered fundamental rights and freedoms of all Canadians. It covered such areas as democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights and equality rights. Trudeau included amendments from the Official Languages Act and he gave minorities “ political freedom”[27]within society. Trudeau believed that, “ a constitution can permit the co-existence of several cultures and ethnic groups within a signal state”[28], ultimately meaning unity within the population of Canada. Trudeau used the Constitution as a way of bringing Canadian together. We as the population of Canada are benefiting greatly from Trudeau as we live in strong and prospering country. The Constitution Act gave Canadians and enlightening envision of the future with a feeling of prosperity towards oneself. For the minorities who were discriminated against such as women, aboriginal Canadians, African Americans and the disabled, the Constitution Act gave this part of the population a chance to live a life where they could be seen as equals. This was something Trudeau strongly believed in as he stated, “ Canada will be a strong country when Canadians of all provinces feel at home in all parts of the country, and when they feel that all of Canada belongs to them”[29]. For the current population of Canada, we can safely say that this has been proven true.

To the world Canada has been looked at as the “ safe country”[30]it has been seen as the country that “ stay’s out of harm’s way”[31]and “ protects rather than causes infliction upon”[32]. Canada is a country of united multiculturalism, which as Canadians, we are proud of. Without Pierre Elliott Trudeau Canada would not hold this reputation. Trudeau once said, “ We peer so suspiciously at each other that we cannot see that we Canadians are standing on the mountaintop of human wealth, freedom and privilege”[33]. Trudeau had great hopes for Canada. He believed in nation wide unity, and as a result he fought with solidity for the rights of minority groups, by implementing, manipulating and revamping procedures so that we can all live in a nation where we feel at home. Trudeau’s way of thinking was based upon “ reason over passion”[34], he used Aristotle’s theory of rationalism to solve his countries dilemmas and therefore, Trudeau created an effective democratic nation.

Endnotes