

# Conflict between french and english canada history essay



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A great man once said, " Love thy neighbor as thyself..." Unfortunately in Canada, that is not the case. For many years, hostility has existed between the two largest ethnic denominations in our country, the French and the English. Both have tried to undermine one another in aspects of religion, language, culture and politics. To understand the cause of this continuing bitter saga, one must take a journey back in time. Throughout the course of Canadian history, there were many occasions wherein the French and English Canadians have clashed but three major historical events tore the relationship into pieces: Red River Rebellion, Conscription dilemma of World War I and the FLQ October Crisis of 1970 in Quebec. This essay will discuss the importance of these situations and its impact on the French and English relations.

The Red River Rebellion, led by Louis Riel, was one of the first major event that created the rift between the French and English Canadians. In 1869, when the Hudson's Bay Company sold the vast territory known as Rupert's Land to the Canadian government, the Metis were worried. " The Metis descended from the intermarriage of Europeans with indigenous peoples and they possess elements of both cultures." (Flanagan 1) They feared that the government would disregard their ownership of the Red River Settlement because they did not have papers to prove they owned the land. Louis Riel, a Metis man, took leadership and stood up for the rights of his people. He set up a provisional government in Manitoba. This act angered the English Canadians and was thought by the Canadian Government as an act of rebellion. These feelings of resentment and hostility further elevated with the execution of Thomas Scott. On the other hand, in the Roman Catholic

province of Quebec, many people said Riel's actions were justified. They felt sympathetic toward Riel and his government. As one can see, this event led by a man of deep conviction and faith drove a wedge into a crack between the French and the English Canadians. Francophones regarded the Red River Rebellion a noble cause and Louis Riel a hero who stood up to protect the rights of the French-speaking Metis. The Anglophones saw the rebellion as a threat to Canada's sovereignty and Riel a traitor. This conflict of emotions would remain until the next major event.

"Conscription!" was the headline of almost all the newspapers throughout Canada. During World War I, Canada contributed to the war effort by supplying ammunitions, war vehicles and especially soldiers. Albeit there was also a predicament involving conscription in WWII, this was much worse. As the war dragged on, the number of casualties was mounting and the number of volunteers was dwindling. In reaction to this predicament, the current Prime Minister, Borden, asked the Parliament to pass a conscription bill, meaning all able-bodied men would be drafted into military service. Even just the mention of conscription brought a storm of protest in Canada, especially from the French Canadians. When the Military Service Bill was passed in 1917, the thread that bridged the Anglo-Francophone relations just got thinner. "Although conscription provided few troops for the war effort, it split the country. It was overwhelmingly unpopular in Quebec, where there was a massive resistance to military service." (Reed, Hiebert 1) One reason why French Canadians did not advocate conscription was they felt abandoned by France when their colony was conquered by British Forces way back in 1760. Another reason why Francophones, did not support

conscription was because recruiters for the military were Protestants and spoke mainly English. This Conscription Crisis was an added reason for the resentment that already exists between the two feuding populace.

Decades have passed and it seemed that the relationship had hope for peace, but to much dismay, it was to be further crushed by a horrible event. On October 1970, a crisis in Quebec surfaced involving the Front Liberation of Quebec (FLQ) and the federal government that was to result in serious repercussions in later years. The FLQ was a terrorist organization whose purpose was to gain Quebec independence from the rest of Canada. Their violent acts reached its pinnacle when they kidnapped Quebec Labour Prime Minister Pierre Laporte and British diplomat James Cross. " The FLQ's kidnappings were perhaps the most dramatic domestic events in 20th century Canadian history." (Watson 1) In reaction to these events, Prime Minister Trudeau proclaims the War Measures Act, relieving the civil rights of all Canadian citizens. Quebeckers thought it was an overreaction that federal troops be sent it into their province. Some questioned that it was a conspiracy to take over the Quebec government. However, those who jailed were gravely outraged. Hundreds of people were arrested and detained in holding cells just because of their nationalistic beliefs. Anger and bitterness remain in the hearts of those that were wrongfully persecuted and oppressed. Indeed, this most heinous act of terrorism in Canada's history is a crucial constituent in the degradation of the French-English relation.

Canada's past is littered with conflict and struggles but none surpassed the enormity and gravity of the French-English dissention. The Red River

Rebellion...the Conscription crisis of World War I...and the FLQ disaster in <https://assignbuster.com/conflict-between-french-and-english-canada-history-essay/>

Quebec ... were key events in Canadian history that “ split” the French-English Canadian connection. This problem plagues our country today and many measures were taken to try to improve the situation but to no avail. Yet we must keep trying and keep Former Prime Minister Laurier’s words in mind: “ Two races share today the soil of Canada ... These people had not always been friends. But I hasten to say it ... There is no longer any family here but the human family. It matters not the language people speak, or the altars at which they kneel.”