

PIERRE TRUDEAU'S JUST SOCIETY:
BOLD ASPIRATIONS MEET REALITIES OF GOVERNING

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UNIVERSITY OF REGINA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Jason Michael Chestney, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in History, has presented a thesis titled, ***Pierre Trudeau's Just Society: Bold Aspirations Meets Realities of Governing***, in an oral examination held on September 7, 2018. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Supervisor: Dr. Raymond Blake, Department of History

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Abstract

This thesis considers Pierre Trudeau's first term as prime minister from 1968 to 1972 to determine his success in delivering on his key promise of a Just Society made during the 1968 electoral campaign. Trudeau had promised that his government would remove all social and economic barriers to allow the full participation of all citizens to enjoy all of the democratic, social, and economic benefits Canada had to offer. It investigates why, in the span of less than four years, the central message embodied in Trudeau's 1968 electoral platform largely disappeared from his government's agenda. This thesis contends that the Just Society fell victim to a variety of factors, notably the realities of governing which require a bureaucratic and pragmatic approach rather than an idealistic one, opposition from significant segments of the Canadian public, and the difficulty inherent in the political system of implementing idealistic reforms within a four-year election cycle. As prime minister, Trudeau found that his lofty and laudable – and inherently ambitious and idealistic – plans to remake Canada became a casualty to a pragmatic policy-making process that required him to deal with the realities of governing a large, diversified, and often divided, country that Canada was. The Just Society's disappearance from the Liberal Government's agenda and rhetoric also parallels the drop in the popular enthusiasm for Trudeau himself, or the "Trudeaumania" euphoria, that had marked Trudeau's entry into prime ministerial politics. The notions of a Just Society and Trudeau were closely connected, it is argued here, and the Canadian public had high expectations in 1968, largely because of his ambitious promise of the Just Society. Many voters were disappointed when he failed to deliver on his promise. Through exploring the failure around his promise of a Just Society, this thesis offers a new interpretation of Trudeau, the challenges around the ambitious promises he made about a Just Society, and

the realities of governing a modern, diverse and regionalized democracy. By 1972 the idea of a Just Society had largely disappeared from Trudeau's, and the Liberal party's, political discourse.

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Introduction

Pierre Trudeau's first term as Canada's prime minister from 1968 to 1972 saw a rapid departure from the central message of his Just Society that helped propel him and the Liberal party to a majority government in June 1968. The campaign might not have been an easy one for any new Liberal leader who had to defend the record of former Liberal Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, but Trudeau managed it well, even though he had played an important part in Pearson's government. In 1968, moreover, many Canadians were still disillusioned with politics and party leaders at the federal level. There had had a series of minority governments, beginning in 1962, and neither Prime Minister Pearson, who was prime minister from 1963 to 1968 nor John Diefenbaker, Conservative leader and, Leader of the Opposition since he had squandered his massive 1957 election victory, had excited Canadians. When the dashing and handsome Pierre Trudeau entered the political fray, many Canadians were not only enthusiastic about him personally but also hopeful that he could provide the type of leadership they desperately believed Canada needed. They had great expectations that he could restore their confidence in the federal government and create the type of Canada that they believed possible.¹

It is difficult to overstate just how much Trudeau inspired Canadians in 1968. He quickly presented himself to be a quintessential and consummate politician. Some of his attraction at the time was that he was neither Pearson nor Diefenbaker nor any of the aging politicians that most Canadians could recall serving as their prime minister. He

¹ Paul Litt, *Trudeaumania* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016), 242. For a history of the 1957 to 1967 period, see, J.L. Granatstein, *Canada, 1957-1967. Years of Uncertainty* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1986), and Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

created among voters, moreover, a sense that he was an outsider, a non-politician who promised to break the mould of old-time politicians such as Pearson, Diefenbaker, Louis St. Laurent and Mackenzie King. Although his background, upbringing, and early life placed him squarely within Canada's economic and intellectual elite, he was, nonetheless, a relative outsider when it came to federal politics. He was not, however, the political novice and the naïve politician as some contemporaries had portrayed him, even if it was a notion that he, himself, laboured to perpetuate. Trudeau was, in fact, relatively experienced in politics, having been active in the animated and rough-and-tumble politics of Quebec from a young age. More recently, he had served for two years as justice minister in Pearson's government during which time he had confronted Quebec and the other provinces over constitutional change and attempted to modernize Canada's antiquated criminal code.² Even so, once the image of him as an outsider took hold, especially among the media and, to a lesser extent, with the public, he embraced it wholeheartedly and relished the adulation, especially that of young and adoring female voters, that such a perception spawned.

Many Canadians gravitated to Trudeau and were excited about his promise of a Just Society. Although what he meant exactly with the phrase was not always clear, but with that promise, he nonetheless aroused considerable excitement among Canadians. To Trudeau, a Just Society was essentially a liberal democratic one in which

[P]ersonal and political freedom will be more securely ensured than it has ever been in the past. The Just Society will be one in which the rights of minorities will be safe from the whims of intolerant majorities. The Just Society will be one in which those regions and groups which have not fully shared in the country's affluence will be given a better opportunity. The Just Society will be one where such urban problems as housing and pollution will be attacked through the application of new knowledge and new techniques.

² John English, *Citizen of the World: The Life of Pierre Elliot Trudeau* (A.A. Knopf Canada, 2006), 352.

The Just Society will be one in which our Indian and Inuit population will be encouraged to assume the full rights of citizenship through policies which will give them both greater responsibility for their own future and more meaningful equality of opportunity. The Just Society will be a united Canada, united because all of its citizens will be actively involved in the development of a country where equality of opportunity is ensured and individuals are permitted to fulfill themselves in the fashion they judge best.³

Trudeau's Just Society promised something to all Canadians. His Canada was to provide equality of opportunity for all citizens and, such equality, he believed, would restore national unity. It also promised personal and political freedoms and privileged individualism over community rights. Moreover, previously disadvantaged citizens who had not shared in the affluence that Canada as a whole had enjoyed in the post-war period finally would as the Just Society was extended to help those regions struggling to achieve economic success, to improve lives of Indigenous peoples whose standard of living remained far below the Canadian average, and to protect minorities that had often felt the injustices of intolerant majorities. He promised, too, to deal with the issues influencing Canada's urban communities, notably poor housing and the environment.

Yet, in 1968, his Just Society was never articulated as a specific set of policy goals that the federal government could quickly implement. It was, rather, a set of aspirations for a better and improved Canada. Moreover, Trudeau did not give a particular dollar figure necessary to achieve his Just Society, but his project was, nonetheless, presented as a national one, and Canadians expected it to be fulfilled, as part of a financially sustainable government legislative agenda following Trudeau's victory. Trudeau invited Canadians through his campaign literature and rallies to "Come work with me" and encouraged citizens to "Vote for New Leadership for All of Canada."⁴ Even

³ Quoted in Ron Graham, ed., *The Essential Trudeau* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1999), 16-20.

⁴ Paul Litt, *Trudeaumania* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016). 249.

if Trudeau did not articulate specific policy objectives in his rhetoric of the new liberal democracy, many Canadians, themselves, embraced his Just Society not as something merely philosophical and aspirational, but as the promise of a set of legislative and administrative initiatives that would see them participating in a more just, inclusive, and prosperous nation once Trudeau had settled into the Prime Minister's Office. In Canada's electoral system, many voters, even though often cynical about politicians, believe that political leaders would try and deliver on their promises in the mandate given to them by citizens who cast their ballots.⁵ By the end of the 1968 campaign, Trudeau's promise of a Just Society had entered the political and the public discourse and it became linked inextricably to him. Four years later, Canadians would have the opportunity to pass judgement on the success or failure of the Just Society as determined by the Liberal Government's legislative accomplishments.

Trudeau in Canadian Historiography

The literature on Prime Minister Trudeau and his tenure as prime minister is substantial.⁶ Because he was the prime minister for such a long period, however, the interest in his Just Society and his first term as prime minister are often overshadowed by other, later events that have drawn the attention of historians and other academics. Those events include, notably, the constitutional battles and the implementation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly the debates around repatriating the constitution in 1982.⁷ His relationship with Quebec, particularly the rise of separatism and the quest for

⁵ For a detailed comparison of Canada's political system and governance see Thomas O. Hueglin and Alan Fenna's *Comparative Federalism: A Systemic Inquiry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

⁶ A search of the University of Regina Archer Library search engine revealed 5,434 peer-reviewed articles and 105 books focussed directly on Pierre Trudeau. Of course, the list of published materials is not inclusive. Amazon.ca likewise lists 276 books on Pierre Trudeau.

⁷ For a detailed analysis of the Canadian Constitutional Debate, see Ron Graham, *The Last Act: Pierre Trudeau and the Gang of Eight and the Fight for Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Books Canada Limited, 2012);

Quebec's independence from Canada, has also attracted considerable scholarly attention.⁸ Canadian academics have also attempted to explore Trudeau as a "philosopher king" and given considerable attention to his attempts to promote Canada's diversity and multiculturalism.⁹ As a result, Trudeau and his Just Society, as promised in 1968, are often either considered within the context of his whole tenure as prime minister or within the context of his life in competitive politics from 1968 to 1984.

John English's two volume biography is one example of putting Trudeau's promise of a Just Society within the context of Trudeau's entire political career. English, a long-term Liberal and a Member of Parliament from 1993 to 1997, takes a broad view

Howard Leeson and Richard Simeon, *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006),

Peter Russell, *Canada's Odyssey: A Country Based on Incomplete Conquests* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Garth Stevenson, *Canada Unfulfilled Union Canadian Federalism and National Unity* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009); Gil Remillard, "The Constitution Act, 1982: An Unfinished Compromise" in Christian Leuprecht and Peter H. Russell (eds.), *Essential Readings in Canadian Constitutional Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Gerald Friesen, "The Prairies as Region: The Contemporary Meaning of an Old Idea" in Chad Gaddfield (ed.), *Constructing Modern Canada Readings in Post-Confederation History* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Limited, 1994).

⁸ For a detailed view on the changing political and social dynamics in Quebec, see Peter Gossage and Jack Little's *An Illustrated History of Quebec Tradition and Modernity* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press Canada, 2012); Guy Laforest, *Trudeau and the end of a Canadian dream*. trans. P. L. Browne and Michelle Weinroth (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995); Kenneth McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada: The Struggle for National Unity* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997); Kenneth McRoberts and Dale Posgate, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1976); Pierre Fortin, "How Economics is Shaping the Constitutional Debate in Quebec" in Chad Gaddfield (ed.), *Constructing Modern Canada Readings in Post-Confederation History* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Limited, 1994); Alexander Brady, "Quebec and Canadian Federalism" in Christian Leuprecht and Peter H. Russell (eds.), *Essential Readings in Canadian Constitutional Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Pierre Trudeau, "Quebec and the Constitutional Problem" in Christian Leuprecht and Peter H. Russell (eds.), *Essential Readings in Canadian Constitutional Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

⁹ For a detailed analysis of multiculturalism and its merits, see Will Kymlicka's *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada* (Don Mills, Oxford University Press Canada, 1998); Allen Mills, *Citizen Trudeau: an Intellectual Biography* (Don Mills, Oxford University Press Canada, 2016); Monique Nemni, *Young Trudeau, 1919–1944: Son of Quebec, Father of Canada*, trans. William Johnson (Toronto, 2006). Monique Nemni, *Trudeau transformed: the Shaping of a Statesman, 1944–1965*, trans. George Tombs (Toronto, University of Toronto Press 2011).

Trudeau's religious outlook is examined in *The hidden Pierre Elliott Trudeau: the Faith Behind the Politics*, ed. John English et al. (Ottawa, 2004). Ramsay Cook, *The teeth of time: remembering Pierre Elliott Trudeau* (Montreal and Kingston, 2006); André Burelle, *Pierre Elliott Trudeau: L'intellectuel et le Politique* (Montréal, 2005); Max and Monique Nemni, *Young Trudeau, 1919–1944: son of Quebec, father of Canada*, trans. William Johnson (Toronto, 2006). Monique Nemni, *Trudeau transformed: the shaping of a statesman, 1944–1965*, trans. George Tombs (Toronto, University of Toronto Press 2011).

of Trudeau's life and gives as much attention to his private as his political life. For Trudeau's first mandate, English focuses on the October Crisis and his dealing with the Front de Libération du Québec. In English's view, Trudeau emerges as a hero for how he dealt with the French-English crisis to not only save Canada, but also change it immeasurably.¹⁰

J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell take a more narrow approach in *Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy*, by focusing on Trudeau's foreign policy from 1968 to 1984. Although Trudeau spent a great deal of time trying to reorient Canada's foreign policy, especially from a dependence on the United States to create a more robust trading network around the world, Granatstein and Bothwell argue that Trudeau was unsuccessful in doing so. They contend that he was unable to alter Canada's foreign policy in any substantive way.¹¹ Dennis Guest adopts a similar approach to Granatstein and Bothwell's by narrowing his focus to Trudeau's impact on Canada's social security system. While Guest's *The Emergence of Social Security* does not look only at social security under Trudeau, he attempts to show how Trudeau fits into the development of the Canadian welfare state. Guest suggests that Trudeau must be seen as part of the "... [F]illing in the gaps" of a social security system that was put in place after the Second World War.¹² He notes, too, that after 1970 Canada's society security system failed to keep pace with inflation as the federal government struggled to deal with a series of financial challenges. Moreover, Trudeau's government, Guest suggests, returned to a residual, neo-liberal approach to social welfare whereby citizens are provided with

¹⁰ John English, *Citizen of the World: The Life of Pierre Elliot Trudeau*.

¹¹ J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, *Pirouette* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 9.

¹² Dennis Guest, *The emergence of Social Security in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), <http://www.deslibris.ca.libproxy.uregina.ca:2048/ID/404179>, 143.

assistance when they need help from the state rather than enhancing the institutional approach which the Pearson government had pursued through the implementation of new pensions and the Canada Assistance Plan. Pearson had believed that a strong social security system was an essential feature of modern society.¹³

Political scientist Donald Savoie, writing both as a political insider and a well-established political scientist with considerable experience working within the federal government, focuses on how the Trudeau government functioned as an administration. His is a critical interpretation of Trudeau as prime minister. He blames him for orchestrating the concentration of power within the agencies that served the prime minister. Savoie condemns Trudeau's centralizing of power away from Parliament and its elected members to the Privy Council Office and the Prime Minister's Office, both of which the prime minister and his unelected advisors controlled.¹⁴

Two recent studies of Trudeau have returned to the 1968-1972 period when Trudeau first emerged with such enthusiasm on the national political scene. Yet, neither of them places much emphasis on how Trudeau's promise of a Just Society fared in the period after he was elected prime minister. Both Robert Wright's *Trudeaumania, The Rise to Power of Pierre Elliot Trudeau* and Paul Litt's *Trudeaumania*, are interested in what caused, motivated and sustained the excitement surrounding Trudeau's rise to power. Litt "...[I]nterprets Trudeaumania in terms of the unique time and place in which it rose,"¹⁵ noting in particular the role played by the mass media, the prominence of the youth counterculture, and the rise in the 1960s of Canadian nationalism, all of which

¹³Dennis Guest, *The emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 144.

¹⁴ Donald J. Savoie, *What is Government Good At? A Canadian Answer* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2015), 103.

¹⁵ Paul Litt, *Trudeaumania*, 31.

coincided with Trudeau's entry into politics. Wright offers a different interpretation; he does not attribute Trudeau's rise to charisma, but argues instead that Trudeau offered a cogent diagnosis of the crises facing Canada and a uniquely Canadian solution to address them.¹⁶ Unfortunately, neither author offers much that is new to the historical record and the existing narrative.¹⁷ Moreover, neither attempts to explain the rapid decline in both Trudeau's and the Liberal government's popularity immediately following the 1968 election which resulted in a Liberal minority government in 1972. What is notably absent in both books is any discussion of Trudeau's Just Society beyond the 1968 electoral campaign. However, Bryan Palmer notes in *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* that commentators – and surely the public, too – at the time were taken in by “[T]he cult of celebrity and the politics of audacity”¹⁸ of Mr. Trudeau, and, Palmer claims, when Canadians turned off their television sets that April evening in 1968 with Trudeau as their incoming prime minister after being crowned Liberal leader, they were very much “turned on to Trudeau and the possibilities of what now, seemingly, were his dance and his decade.”¹⁹ Yet, within a few years, as Palmer notes, “[T]he love affair” with Trudeau and his Just Society would fade into “nostalgia.”²⁰ This thesis proposes to explain one of the possible factors why that happened.

¹⁶ Robert Wright, *Trudeaumania: The Rise to Power of Pierre Elliot Trudeau* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Limited, 2016), XIV.

¹⁷ Paul Litt, *Trudeaumania*, 249.

¹⁸ Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 176.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 176-77

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Argument and Approach

Canadians had their first opportunity to evaluate how successful they believed Trudeau was on delivering to them a legislative program to achieve his promised Just Society when they cast their ballot in the federal general election held on 30 October 1972. The election results showed that many Canadians were not satisfied with Trudeau's legislative progress as he and his party managed only a minority government in 1972. Trudeau barely hung on to power, winning 109 seats, only two more than the Progressive Conservatives. The New Democrats won 31 seats and held the balance of power in the House of Commons. Trudeau lost thirty seats from the 1968 election, and popular support for the Liberal party dropped seven points to thirty-eight percent, down from forty-five percent just four years earlier. The Conservatives increased their share of the popular vote by 3.6 percent to 35 percent. The regional distribution of seats also showed significant losses for Trudeau's Liberals. In British Columbia, the Liberal party lost twelve seats, four in Alberta and twenty-seven in Ontario. It won virtually all of the seats in Quebec in the same manner as the Liberal party had for decades since the First World War, notwithstanding a few notable exceptions.²¹ The election results showed that Trudeaumania had come to an end, and, indeed, many Canadians had expressed their disappointment that Trudeau had not delivered on the optimism and confidence that the Liberals had embodied in 1968 when they promised Canadians a more just and inclusive country.

In some ways, though, Trudeau's promise of a Just Society was regarded by many Canadians as merely a continuation of the postwar prosperity that most had experienced

²¹ Government of Canada, "Results, Federal Election October 30 1972" [Online] Available: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/bdddd905-07bd-5702-81ab-835beeb902a3> [2018, February].

since the mid-1940s. Although some regions and groups of Canadians had not benefited greatly since the end of the Second World War, the Canadian government had been, in fact, more activist than ever before, trying to encourage economic growth and full employment while also providing government transfers to individuals for a variety of programs, including pensions, health care, and student loans. The notions of a social service state was very much at the core of a government-driven nationalism which began with the return of peace in 1945, and most Canadians thought that the “progressive” measures would continue with the promise of Trudeau’s Just Society. Some considered Trudeau’s Just Society as merely promising the continued expansion of Canada’s social programs and a variety of state-sponsored measures to benefit even more Canadians and to create a better and more inclusive Canada.

However, Trudeau’s first term proved that not to be the case, and many socially and economically disadvantaged groups and their supporters would no longer wait passively for the Canadian government to improve their position with new legislation or new approaches to governing. A large number of them joined in the protests that were common throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s to demand that the government immediately address their concerns . Such activism came from a variety of quarters in the period from 1968 to 1972, and some of the anger expressed by various groups would be conveyed at the ballot box in the 1972 election and at Prime Minister Trudeau. Included among the groups who considered themselves disadvantaged and in need of redress, by the state, were feminists, who wanted action, particularly on abortion rights and other issues; First Nations, who no longer wanted the federal government to implement policies

for their welfare without consulting them directly, and supporters of Quebec sovereignty, who wanted the relationship between Quebec and the federal government to change.

Those activist groups were also joined by others, especially the disenchanting from Western Canada and rural Ontario who believed the government had ignored them. These group included farmers, who felt that the federal government was not paying enough attention to their interests, and many in Western Canada, who felt that the federal government was paying too much legislative attention to Quebec while paying too little attention to their concerns. The disenchantment was felt by other Canadians more generally, who believed that their government was not doing enough to alleviate the financial difficulties that they faced, especially in the area of their personal economic well-being. It was a very diverse group, then, that became disillusioned with Trudeau and his Liberal party and although they sometimes had conflicting concerns, they all shared a sense of dissatisfaction with the federal government and expressed it in various ways, but most notably at the ballot box.²² Many of those who wanted further changes to the political and social landscape in Canada also became disillusioned with Trudeau. The thesis contends that Trudeau's promise of a Just Society became a victim to these forces and circumstances.

Moreover, there were other, perhaps less obvious factors at play in Trudeau's first term that affected the fate of his Just Society promise. First, Trudeau's articulation of the Just Society was in many ways aspirational and philosophical, which embraced classic liberalism, with a strong emphasis on the individual. As a result, the Just Society promised in 1968 was more rhetorical than it was practical and, hence, difficult to

²² Frederic Boily, *De Pierre a Justin Trudeau: Portrait de Famille de l'ideologie du Parti Liberal du Canada 1968-2013* (Quebec City: Laval University Press, 2014), 110.

achieve in a short period of time. The Trudeau Liberals soon came to understand the difficulty of implementing idealistic reforms, especially within a four-year election cycle. As prime minister, Trudeau found that his lofty and laudable – even ambitious and idealistic – plan to remake Canada became a casualty to a pragmatic policy-making process that required him to deal with the many realities of governing a large, diversified, and often divided Canada. Second, Trudeau never articulated either during the 1968 campaign or after the election how the Just Society was to be achieved or what precisely it would entail. This allowed Canadians to interpret for themselves what Canada as a Just Society would look like and what legislative program they could expect. Many voters, particularly those within several disadvantaged groups that were noted above, rarely saw Trudeau's promise of a Just Society as mere rhetoric. They gave Trudeau in 1968 a strong majority government – something they had withheld from Diefenbaker and Pearson in three previous general elections – precisely because many believed he could deliver on his promises through precise government action. Once the ballots were counted and Trudeau set to governing in 1968, he soon discovered that while campaigns may be constructed with rhetorical flourishes and aspirations, governing did not function that way. The realities of governing require a bureaucratic and administrative framework that is able to deliver to voters some of what they were promised and subsequently came to expect, even demand.

Governments have to provide concrete results, then, but Trudeau was not able to do that sufficiently in the period from 1968 to 1972. As a result many voters became disillusioned with him during his first mandate, and the popular enthusiasm for Trudeau

himself, or the “Trudeaumania” euphoria, disappeared over his four-year mandate.²³ Disputes with the provinces, especially Quebec, occurred over social policy and constitutional issues from 1968 to 1972. Socially disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as those demanding greater rights for women, particularly over abortion access, First Nations, Quebec sovereignists, the gay community, and youth all felt that they had not benefited from the policies that were included in Trudeau’s legislative program. Other groups were disappointed that the gains that they had supposedly made in the Omnibus Bill, Bill C-150, a controversial bill that was first introduced in 1967 to deal with issues as disparate as abortion, homosexuality, drinking while impaired, and divorce, did not go far enough.²⁴ Moreover, in the latter years of Trudeau’s first mandate the Canadian economy began to falter amid rising concerns over deficit spending and slowing economic growth, forcing Trudeau to deal with a variety of economic issues, particularly a combination of stagnating economic growth and hyper-inflation. Unemployment increased and a serious budget crisis loomed, and the Liberal government faced serious budget deficits after 1970. The Liberal government soon realized that some of the programs it had envisioned as necessary for achieving the Just Society, were threatened and became unaffordable.

These hypotheses, particularly as they relate to Trudeau’s legislative agenda, are explored in this thesis predominantly through research in primary sources, principally from newspaper publications, including *The Globe and Mail*, *Le Devoir*, and *The Leader-Post*, from government publications, notably the Speeches from the Throne and the

²³ Frederic Boily, *De Pierre a Justin Trudeau: Portrait de Famille de l’ideologie du Parti Liberal du Canada 1968-2013*, 110.

²⁴ CBC Radio News Special, “The Omnibus Bill Doesn’t go far enough.” *CBC Archives* 29 May 1970 [Online] Available: <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/the-omnibus-bill-doesnt-go-far-enough> [2018 March].

federal budget speeches, and from parliamentary debates. Through media coverage, it is possible to chart the reception to the Trudeau government more generally and to monitor Trudeau's legislative and policy agenda. This thesis also utilizes the substantial secondary source literature on Trudeau's first term as prime minister to assess how Canadians had come to view Trudeau and his promise to deliver a more just society for Canadians in the period from 1968 to 1972.

The Trudeau Government's Approach to Governing and the Canadian Economy

When Trudeau selected his Cabinet and launched his Liberal government, he expected to continue to govern on a progressive path. Even if Trudeau's priorities were different from those of previous governments, Canada had changed significantly in the 1960s, and there were already significant signs of societal unrest in Canada that were poised to present major problems as Trudeau attempted to achieve the goals.²⁵ He and the Liberal government failed to realize just how much Canadian society had changed and how various disadvantaged groups in Canada became increasingly frustrated with their limited ability to achieve economic and social well-being let alone advancement. Moreover, the age of social protest, including the movement against the Vietnam War, had crossed the Canadian-American border and had a powerful impact on Canadian public life.²⁶

The Liberal government's commitment to the Just Society, which Trudeau had campaigned on in the 1967-68 Liberal leadership race and then again during the 1968 federal election, was reflected in the 1968 Throne Speech, read by Governor-General

²⁵ Peter C. Newman, *The Distemper of Our Times*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1968), 469.

²⁶ For a more complete view of the effects that the protest movements were having on Canadian society, see Bryan D. Palmer's, *Canada's 1960s: the Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2009).

Roland Michener. “[My Ministers] recognize their duty to ensure that the wishes of Canadians concerning their government be fulfilled as quickly and as completely as the general advantage will allow,” Michener said as he opened the 28th session of Parliament, noting as well that “Across the land there are great expectations of what this Parliament will produce.”²⁷ And, the government re-committed itself to the promises made in the campaign: “My Government is deeply and irrevocably committed to the objectives of a Just Society and a prosperous economy in a peaceful world.” Clearly, Trudeau believed that the unity of the country depended on attaining his promise, “as-indeed [did] the enjoyment by each Canadian of the maximum possible liberty, happiness and material well-being.” There were, however, only platitudes and a fair measure of rhetoric given to the Just Society agenda and none more so than the words from the Throne speech that committed the Trudeau government to “the righting of wrongs and ... the opening of opportunities long denied [to many].”²⁸

Yet, despite this optimism and renewed commitment to a Just Society, the Liberal government urged caution to those who listened carefully to the Throne Speech. The path to the Just Society in Canada might exceed the government’s four-year mandate. Trudeau advised that he was “conscious that aspirations and their realization have to be tempered by a sober awareness of reality.” Government must be aware of “the complexities of modern society, [and] effective programs take time to develop and more time to implement.” Finances are limited, the Governor General warned, “and must be used with careful planning and the hard judgement of priorities. It is a simple fact of life that everything cannot be done at once.” This was a point that was emphasized in the Throne

²⁷ Government of Canada, *Throne Speech September 12 1968* [Online] Available: <https://www.poltext.org/sites/poltext.org/files/discours/tcan1968.pdf>. [2017, December] 14.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

Speech “As incomes cannot increase faster than productivity if price increases are to be restrained, so government spending by all levels of government cannot increase faster than productivity if we wish to restrain the increase in levels of taxation. These two realities,” the Trudeau Government made clear, “are among the most important that Canadians and their leaders must bear in mind during the months and years ahead.”²⁹ The government’s fiscal capacity would be paramount in the years ahead. The Liberal government clearly indicated that implementation of its Just Society agenda would be fluid, and it provided no fixed end date to achieve its campaign promise.

Perhaps a more precautionary omen in the Throne Speech for those anxious for the Trudeau Administration to move quickly on the Just Society agenda was the language used in the 1968 throne speech that seemed to privileged the traditional ethnic and historical communities of French and English-speaking Canadians. The Throne Speech made explicit references to “bilingualism” and “biculturalism” and to the necessity of constitutional reform which the Governor General said “remains the best long-term guarantee of Canadian unity.”³⁰ The Throne Speech also promised to enact a new Official Languages Act to meet the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and to consider measures “relating to Indians, to citizenship, to national symbols, to cultural agencies, to transportation of all kinds as well as to communications (including satellites), educational television, and the financing of the Post Office.”³¹ The Throne Speech indicated to many who had been excited about the Just Society promise that the Liberal government would likely continue to pursue the themes and policies that had dominated Parliamentary legislation since 1867. Once again,

²⁹ Government of Canada, *Throne Speech September 12 1968*, 14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.* 15.

the federal government seemed to have largely ignored the socially disadvantaged and other groups, such as women's groups, which were clamouring to be taken more seriously by their government, especially on issues such as abortion access.³²

The Throne Speech was in many ways a wish-list of the government and many were hopeful that Trudeau's budget would show a greater commitment to his promise of a building a Just Society in Canada. The 1968-1969 budget, the first in Trudeau's new administration, was presented by the Minister of Finance, Edgar J. Benson on 22 October 1968, and it represented Trudeau's hope to achieve the Just Society. The full participation of Canadians in the Just Society that the Liberal government envisioned during their time in office was reflected in the sheer physical size of the Liberal government's budget speech and documents in 1968 and then again in 1969. The 1968 budget was over 400 hundred pages in length.³³ The incredibly detailed document demonstrated what the Liberal government hoped to achieve with the budget as a whole, not just in terms of social and economic policy, but also as a transparent symbol breathing proverbial life into Trudeau's Just Society. In keeping with this theme of transparency the Liberal government made first an exposition of the changes to the tariff structure, corporate taxes and income taxes, including charts presenting these proposed changes in great detail.³⁴

The fact that these changes were presented before the overall economic situation was clear demonstrated that the Liberal government ranked tax and tariff reforms as high priorities for the new government. However, only thirty-four percent of Canadians

³² Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada 1960's: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 79-80.

³³ The specific issues surrounding First Nations protests and the abortion protests are examined in greater detail in subsequent sections. Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada 1960's: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 79-80. Government of Canada, *Budget Speech in the House of Commons 22 October 1968*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 155- 210.

approved of the tax changes while thirty-eight percent were opposed the changes.³⁵ The budget also included adjustments to taxation rules for both high income earners and insurance companies, which had previously been exempted from taxation.³⁶ The tax changes were required, in part, to generate new revenue to provide funding to allow for the increased social spending and support programs that might help achieve the Just Society,³⁷ Despite increased revenue from expanding and increasing the tax base, the government soon came to realize that Trudeau's planned spending objectives would still result in a budgetary shortfall and a significant deficit, and add substantially to the public debt, which, the government feared, threatened to shake both business confidence in the economy and Canadian public's personal confidence in the government.³⁸ Even before the end of fiscal 1968-69, the Liberal government already faced a dilemma, and realized that they had to increase government spending if they wish to work meaningfully towards achieving the Just Society but doing so, despite the new tax measures, would mean spending funds that the government did not have.³⁹

That the Canadian economy, and by extension the Liberal government, was already under financial strain in the fall of 1968 would have a great impact on Trudeau's plan for the Just Society. While there was a preliminary, modest government surplus for the 1968 fiscal year of \$167 million, the Liberal government's projections forecasted a

³⁵ Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, "Gallup Poll #339 [January 1970]" [Online] Available: https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf_files/gllp-70-jan339-que.pdf [2018, May], 2.

³⁶ "Tough Line From a New Man" *The Globe and Mail (1936-Current)* 23 October 1968 [Online] Available: <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uregina.ca:8443/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1242357559/D20B3011FE452EPQ/12?accounntid=13480> [2018, May].

³⁷ Government of Canada, *Budget Speech in the House of Commons 22 October 1968* [Online] Available: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/pdfarch/1968-sd-eng.pdf>, 16.

³⁸ Government of Canada, *Budget Speech in the House of Commons 22 October 1968*, 15-16.

³⁹ John Saywell, *Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs 1968* (Toronto: University of Press, 1969), 107.

\$402 million deficit for the 1969 fiscal year.⁴⁰ Not wanting a deficit nor wanting to increase the debt, the Liberal government undertook a series of efforts such as cancelling funding for government-funded scientific research, to cut spending.⁴¹ In 1970, the government's problematic financial situation became clear as Ottawa incurred a deficit of more than a billion dollars due to the strains from regular public spending and the growth of the welfare state.⁴² The fear of continuing deficits and a growing federal debt created caution in Trudeau's government, especially as it had considering implementing new government measures to realize some of Trudeau's promises from the leadership 1967 campaign and 1968 general election. The rate of inflation increased to four percent, in 1968.⁴³ While inflation was not the dominant economic issue in fiscal 1968 and 1969, it would soon become one of the greatest fiscal challenges for the Canadian public and the Liberal government.⁴⁴ With already having to deal with an unstable and slowing economy and a growing budgetary deficit, the Liberal government realized that its ability to implement new policies to achieve the Just Society was becoming more and more difficult. A projected \$130 million surplus for fiscal 1970-1971,⁴⁵ became a deficit totalling \$375 million.⁴⁶ Even though the deficit accounted for less than one percent of

⁴⁰ Government of Canada, *Budget Speech in the House of Commons 22 October 1968*, 19.

⁴¹ Geoffrey Stevens, "Arts, Science: Federal Savings Drive Continues Budget Bites" 24 September 1968, *The Globe and Mail (1936-Current)* [Online] Available: <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uregina.ca:8443/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1269915608/941C6FA0DA048F2PQ/1?accountid=13480> [2018, February].

⁴² "Canada's Deficits and Surpluses, 1963-2015" *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation* [Online] Available: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/multimedia/canada-s-deficits-and-surpluses-1963-to-2015-1.3042571> [2018, June].

⁴³ "Inflation: Canada 1968" [Online] Available: <http://www.inflation.eu/inflation-rates/canada/historic-inflation/cpi-inflation-canada-1968.aspx> [2018, May].

⁴⁴ "Ibid.

⁴⁵ Government of Canada, *Budget Speech in the House of Commons 12 March 1970*, 11.

⁴⁶ Government of Canada, *Budget Speech in the House of Commons 18 June 1971* [Online] Available: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/pdfarch/1971-sd-eng.pdf> [2017, June], 42.

Canada's total Gross Domestic Product,⁴⁷ it signaled an unprecedented postwar economic downturn. Many Canadians expected the federal government to take the lead in combating inflation and providing sound fiscal policies. The Liberal government was forced to consider its policy priorities, and in 1970-1971 the Liberal government was finally forced to confront the reality that the government's financial crisis was not going to be solved in short order.⁴⁸

There were signs by 1969 that even some members of Cabinet and a number of Liberal backbench Members of Parliament were growing increasingly disillusioned with Prime Minister Trudeau's delay on implementing a series of policy to achieve the promised Just Society. The Honourable Paul Hellyer, the Minister of Transport and chair of a Cabinet committee on housing and urban development, resigned from Cabinet. In his letter of resignation, he took direct aim at the failure of the Trudeau government to deal with a variety of issues relating to the Just Society. "[I am] increasingly disturbed with the directions and policies being followed by the government," he wrote. "I feel there is a lack of initiative in using federal powers to deal with issues such as housing, pollution, inflation and urban development which are so vital to the needs of ordinary people in our modern, industrialized society."⁴⁹ Backbenchers, too, were unhappy. They had been asked to participate in the drafting of a Just Society but by mid-1969, many became disillusioned that there had been so little action from Cabinet since they were elected in 1968, that they staged what the press called 'the Backbenchers' Revolt. This led to a special caucus meeting in Ottawa on 20-22 June and a number of recommendations were

⁴⁷ Trading Economics, "Canada's GDP 1971" [Online] Available: <https://tradingeconomics.com/canada/gdp> [2018, June].

⁴⁸ Government of Canada, *Fiscal References Tables September 2017* [Online] Available: <https://www.fin.gc.ca/frt-trf/2017/frt-trf-17-eng.pdf> [2017, May], 12.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

forwarded to the Cabinet to give Members of Parliament a great voice in government policy.⁵⁰

When Parliament resumed with the second session of the Twenty-Eighth Parliament on 22 October 1969, many expected the government to provide greater details of the Just Society. In some sense, the government did so, but its focus was on the protection and extension of individual rights which were the focus of thirty-two of the government's legislative priorities. Although individual rights were a critical aspect of Trudeau's Just Society, the *Montreal Gazette* noted that while important, action of human rights is "cheap and popular" and comes as a time when "the government has no funds with which to undertake the big new spending programs" that are necessary to achieve Trudeau's Just Society.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, the opposition parties were critical and attacked Trudeau for breaking his promise to Canadians on the Just Society. Robert Stanfield, the Conservative leader, criticised Trudeau for "omitting proposals for social, urban, and welfare legislation," and for being "content to consider the question of poverty in Canada at some future date." He then moved an amendment charging the Liberals with failing to implement policies to improve the living standards of Canadians.⁵² Tommy Douglas, the NDP leader, was no less critical: "A Just Society," he charged, "involves more than legal justice. Surely a Just Society also means social justice and economic justice."⁵³

Despite the criticism leveled at Prime Minister Trudeau, the Liberal government shifted its focus with the government's budget in 1970. Given the economic environment

⁵⁰ Paul Stevens and John Saywell "Parliament and Politics" in John Saywell (ed) *Canadian Annual Review for 1969* 31-32.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 34-35.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 35.

that came with the possibility of prolonged labour unrest, slower growth, smaller profits for Canadian businesses, and continued fears of inflation, Finance Minister Benson called upon Canadians to exert “a national effort” during the coming year to “reduce the rate at which prices are increasing.”⁵⁴ The fiscal fears were also reflected in John Saywell’s political analysis in the *Canadian Annual Review* from 1968 to 1972 and it was becoming evident that the Liberal enthusiasm for the Just Society was losing momentum. In the 1968 edition of the popular and respected *Canadian Annual Review*, the Just Society rhetoric featured prominently in its coverage of the government’s platform and in Saywell’s analysis of the government’s policy. However, just two years later, in 1970, both in the budget speech and the throne speech, the idea of the Just Society was not featured prominently at all. In fact, there is no mention of the Just Society in the budget speech. In the Throne Speech, the Liberal government invoked the Just Society when it justified changing some elements of the government’s long-standing social programs. The difference in the language over such a short period for the Just Society is telling. In 1968, the Liberal government often interpreted and presented the Just Society as a concrete set of government policies, but by 1970 the Just Society had essentially become an aspirational goal. As Saywell so correctly noted, the Liberal government’s claimed to remain committed to their Just Society agenda but it was by 1970 merely renewing its pledge to what it then called “the distant ideal of the Just Society.”⁵⁵

The trend of the Just Society fading from the political discourse continued into the 1971 legislative session when it became more apparent that the economic difficulties that the Liberal government faced presented long-term challenges rather than a minor issue

⁵⁴ Paul Stevens and John Saywell “Parliament and Politics” in John Saywell (ed) *Canadian Annual Review for 1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971). 158.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

that could be quickly solved. The Just Society, it seemed, was fading quickly from the Liberal government's legislative agenda as the financial difficulties increasingly became the prominent issue for Trudeau and his Liberal Administration. Indeed, by 1971, the Just Society had become a point of attack for the opposition parties and other critics of Trudeau to criticize the Liberal government's perceived failure to address the most pressing concerns facing Canadians public. Progressive Conservative leader Robert Stanfield was among the most vocal. He chided Trudeau and the Liberals in the House of Commons, suggesting that Liberals loved slogans, and "to be sure, and the Just Society was one of them ... The role of those slogans was to hide the fact," he said, "that the Trudeau government was offering few policies of any relevance and that it had no coordinated program of economic management..."⁵⁶ Many among the general public as well as political analysts were coming to realize that the Liberal government was failing to meet its promise of the Just Society.

As the overall financial situation worsened and support for Trudeau began to decline, the Liberal government struggled to manage spending with their commitments.⁵⁷ This was reflected even in the length of the budget speeches presented in Parliament. From more than 400 pages in 1968, the budget speeches in 1969 and 1970 were slightly more than 250 pages in length, an indication no doubt of the government's attempt to curtail spending in difficult economic circumstances.⁵⁸ In 1971, the last budget year before the federal election in 1972, the budget speech was only eighty-four pages, and it focused primarily on tax reform, not social issues, to try and combat rising inflation

⁵⁶ Paul Stevens and John Saywell "Parliament and Politics" in John Saywell (ed) *Canadian Annual Review for 1971* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 32.

⁵⁷ The public protests were having a negative effect on the Liberal government's public image and the economic downturn was undermining the public's confidence in the Liberal government's ability to deal with the country's economic issues.

⁵⁸ Government of Canada, *Budget Speech in the House of Commons* 12 March 1970.

and other economic and fiscal issues. It lowered the corporate tax rate from fifty percent to forty-six percent, and in some instances it eliminated certain taxes all together.⁵⁹ The government also passed measures to institute taxes in on training allowances, capital gains, unemployment insurance benefits, and scholarships.⁶⁰

The social programs that Trudeau envisioned on top of Canada's established welfare state, such as spending on affordable housing and increasing federal government transfers to the provinces for poverty reduction,⁶¹ were dependent on large increases in government revenues. However, with the government already facing an unprecedented structural deficit situation in the first serious economic downturn since the Great Depression, by 1970 there was, Trudeau believed, no extra money to pursue social spending that achieving the Just Society meant. Within a few years, Trudeau also came to realize that there was not even enough capital to maintain the welfare state created in the postwar period.

All of this is not to say the Liberal government was inactive when it came to social policy. Its most aggressive action was on unemployment and assisting unemployed workers, for instance. The Liberal government had floated a number of new measures on unemployment in the *White Paper on Unemployment Insurance* presented in 1970, and based on the recommendations from a Royal Commission report on unemployment insurance. The White Paper essentially became the *Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971* which included many of the Commission's recommendations, significantly increasing access to unemployment benefits, making coverage essentially universal, and adding

⁵⁹ Government of Canada, *Budget Speech in the House of Commons 18 June 1971* [Online] Available: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/pdfarch/1971-sd-eng.pdf> [2017, June], 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶¹ Government of Canada, *Budget Speech in the House of Commons 22 October 1968*, 7.

provisions for sickness, maternity leave, and retirement benefits.⁶² Liberalizing access to unemployment benefits, was an important step to creating the Just Society, but as soon as the government's fiscal situation worsened in the late 1970s, many of the benefits provided in 1971 were reduced.⁶³

The Liberal government also proposed a series of social programs to reduce poverty and were specifically targeted to low income Canadian families. There was a caveat however. In order to pay for these programs, the Liberal government proposed eliminating family allowances for about thirty percent of those families considered to be in the middle class.⁶⁴ Many women's groups in particular were opposed to such a change as it meant that mothers who received family allowance benefits would lose the monthly income. The result was that many of these middle class families felt that such a loss would create a large economic and social barrier to their fuller participation in society which was the exact opposite of what the Trudeau reforms were intended to do. Those mothers in particular believed that the proposed changes would make Canadian less just and fair, and after the 1972 election when Trudeau found himself in a minority position, he quickly dropped his plan to reform the family allowance plan to target greater benefit to low income families. The Liberal government's financial situation was forecast to be much worse for 1971-1972, with no guarantees of further economic recovery or return to the general prosperity that the government need to implement a series of policies to achieve the Just Society. The fiscal difficulties and opposition from certain groups that

⁶² Zhengxi Lin, *Employment Insurance in Canada: Policy Changes* [Online] Available: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-001-x/1998002/3828-eng.pdf>, [2018, May]. 43

⁶³ Leslie Pal, "Revision and Retreat: Canadian Unemployment Insurance, 1971-1981," in Jacqueline S. Ismael, ed., *Canadian Social Welfare: Federal and Provincial Dimensions* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 75-104.

⁶⁴ Raymond Blake, *From Rights to Needs: A History of Family Allowances, 1929-92* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2009), 230-231.

the Liberal government had encountered in the first couple of years of its mandate had clearly forced a change in Trudeau's priorities.

As the overall economy worsened and the government's financial challenges became progressively more severe with no long-term solution to correct the government's deficit and debt situation, the Just Society faded from the Liberal government's political discourse. However, it was not only financial pressures that derailed the Liberal government's Just Society agenda. Many groups within Canadian society had become impatient and they were no longer willing to wait patiently for the Liberal government to enact the systemic, gradual change which they believed were necessary to achieve the Just Society which Trudeau and the Liberal party had promised in 1968. These groups, among them First Nations and Women's groups, took to protesting, commanding the Liberal government's attention, and further cutting into support for Trudeau. They had bought into both the promise and the rhetoric of the Just Society.

Protests from First Nations

Canada's First Nation's communities were among the most disappointed with the failure of Trudeau's Just Society to address their needs and concerns. When the Trudeau government introduced the "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969", commonly known as the White Paper on Indian Policy, it believed that its approach both integrate Indigenous peoples into the mainstream of Canadian society and make them equal to all other Canadians by treating them as individuals and removing all

unique aspects of the Indian Act from government legislation.⁶⁵ However, it encountered concerted opposition, even though it attempted to address some of the concerns of Indigenous peoples as the Trudeau's Just Society statement had promised. However, Trudeau's approach to the matter was misguided and undertaken without adequate consultation with Indigenous peoples. The Liberal government sought to assimilate First Nations into mainstream Canadian society by extending Trudeau's notions of individual rights for them, but such an approach was anathema to Indigenous culture and it was something that they, with a few notable exceptions, vociferously opposed.⁶⁶ The White Paper specifically proposed that the Indian Treaties be effectively abolished and that the relationship between the Crown and First Nations would change. An independent commissioner would be appointed to deal with First Nations claims on an individual basis.⁶⁷

Before the Liberal government's attempt to revise the Indian Act in 1969, the relationship between First Nations and the Canadian government was already strained. A new 'nationalism' had emerged within Indigenous communities determined to fight the injustice that had been inflicted upon their communities through a century of subjugation and colonial state policies.⁶⁸ Indigenous communities believed, too, that their relationship with the state was enshrined in the Constitution and, that previous governments had failed to uphold either the letter or the spirit of the Numbered Treaties, and by 1968 they

⁶⁵ While it was officially known as the "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969" it was the "1969 White Paper" that entered the political lexicon.

⁶⁶ There was a difference of opinion between the Liberal Government's interpretation and First Nations interpretation of the policy. First Nations saw the policy as forced assimilation but the Liberal Government saw it as merely treating First Nations the same as other ethnic minority groups.

⁶⁷ Jean Chrétien, "Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy 1969" last modified 15 September 2010 [Online] Available: http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/cp1969_1100100010190_eng.pdf, 11-21 [2018, March].

⁶⁸ J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant Aboriginal Treaty Making in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2009), 298-299.

were determined that they would not allow the federal government to any longer ignore their concerns. It quickly became apparent, however, that the Trudeau government and First Nations did not share the same view on how to resolve the issues confronting First Nations communities and Indigenous peoples more generally. The Liberal cabinet, and particularly Trudeau and his advisers, saw the Indian Act as an impediment to First Nations involvement in Canadian society and believed full First Nations' participation in Canadian society was a requirement of Canadian citizenship. They also believed that First Nations wanted the same rights as all other Canadian citizens.⁶⁹ In this, Trudeau's attitude was not unique to First Nations: he believed that no one single ethnicity should have rights that were distinctly separate from the rights held by all other Canadians.

The Liberal government, therefore, sought to abolish The Indian Act and force First Nations to take a more active part in Canadian society in the same manner as all Canadian citizens. Their exclusive rights under the Indian Act would be revoked. In Trudeau's view the rights enshrined in the Indian Act ran counter to the objectives outlined in his Just Society which was based largely on individual rights and freedoms.⁷⁰ The holding of any exclusive rights, such as those that First Nations held under the Treaties, was exclusionary and hence harmful to Canadian society and an impediment to national unity.⁷¹ Although such a view was important in Trudeau's government, it was shared by a very small minority of First Nations.⁷² Even so, federal civil servants and political advisors appointed by Trudeau to the Privy Council Office and to the Prime Minister's Office, impatient with the pace of change within Indigenous communities and

⁶⁹ Olive Patricia Dickason and William Newbigging, *A Concise History of Canada's First Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 251.

⁷⁰ J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens. A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, 250.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 224-225.

⁷² Many of these First Nation supporters of the Liberal Government's found themselves ostracized from their own communities in the after the Liberal government abandoned implementing the policy.

imbued with Trudeau's liberalism, ignored the bureaucrats within the Department of Indian Affairs. The department warned against dismantling the Indian Act, but the Liberal government pushed their agenda with their own version of how to achieve the Just Society for Indigenous peoples.⁷³ In so doing, they incurred the anger of large segments of Canada's Indigenous peoples when they assumed that First Nations would be grateful for the changes that Trudeau proposed.⁷⁴

The Liberal government faced protests on a scale not seen since the Great Depression, as First Nations mobilized against the Federal government.⁷⁵ The reaction from Indigenous leaders also demonstrated they had become increasingly aware of their rights and were determined to protect them. The Trudeau government had clearly charged ahead with a plan that ignored the cultural imperatives and demands of the people they believed they were helping. In the process, Trudeau and his government encountered a determined opposition that not only derailed their plans for Indigenous peoples but also serve to undermine the whole philosophical argument for the Just Society they hoped to create in Canada.

For First Nations – and as the Supreme Court later ruled – their relationship was not with the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau, but with the Governor-General, representing the Crown.⁷⁶ As a result, First Nations' leaders believed the Liberal government had no authority to attempt to abolish or even change the Indian Act without

⁷³ J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens. A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, 228.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Olive Patricia Dickason and William Newbigging, *A Concise History of Canada's First Nations* 248-249.

⁷⁶ The vast majority of the agreements between First Nations were made before Canada became a fully sovereign country. As a result, the agreements were signed on behalf of the Canadian Queen, which the Governor-General represented when the Queen, or Crown, was not in Canada. Therefore, First Nations viewed that only the monarchy, or the Governor-General, had the authority to amend First Nations Treaties.

their consent.⁷⁷ The Indian Act, they believed, had conferred upon them certain rights, and the reason they continued to face great economic and social barriers that prevented them from participating fully in Canadian society came from the fact that the Canadian Government had failed to uphold treaty rights. Moreover, continued racism and stereotyping of Indigenous peoples and the contempt with which successive Canadian governments had treated Indigenous peoples was the cause of their situation, not the Indian Act itself.⁷⁸ Even though the Liberal government was forced to withdraw their attempt to abolish the Indian Act, the Liberal government continued its condescending attitude towards First Nations, with Trudeau himself even remarking, “We’ll keep them in the ghetto as long as they want.”⁷⁹ Such an attitude, of course, only worked against Trudeau’s own agenda as First Nations and other Canadians wondered if the Just Society had to be created solely on Trudeau’s terms and if one did not agree with his approach, he would quickly lose interest and turn his attention elsewhere.

Women’s Protest and the Just Society

Although the Trudeau government eventually abandoned its attempt to abolish the Indian Act in the face of a determined opposition, the protests had, nonetheless, been a shock to Trudeau and his Cabinet. It was not the last time that the Trudeau government would encounter opposition to its plans to remake Canada, however. They soon learned that there were other segments in Canadian society that did not see their proposed solutions to many of the social and economic issues in Canada in the same way that they did. Trudeau soon found himself confronted by women’s groups, particularly over the

⁷⁷ Olive Patricia Dickason and William Newbigging, *A Concise History of Canada’s First Nations*, 252.

⁷⁸ J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant Aboriginal Treaty Making in Canada*, 298-299.

⁷⁹ Pauline Comeau, *The First Canadians: a Profile of Canada’s Native People Today* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1990), 10.

issue of abortion. Abortion had been included as one of the important matters in the Omnibus Bill that was amending the Criminal Code to deal with a number of social issues, including homosexuality and divorce among others long considered taboo in Canada. While the new legislation had allowed access to abortion services under certain conditions, many women's groups were angry that it did not go further on abortion.⁸⁰ The government promised that other underlying issues on abortion would be addressed after a study period, but that did little to satisfy women's groups that argued that they must control their own bodies and not have decisions made by medical professions.⁸¹

Women's groups demanded their full participation in Canadian society that Trudeau had espoused in the Just Society. They fought for a variety of issues, particularly gender equality in the workplace, better childcare facilities, and the removal of systematic discrimination, but it was abortion that brought many women into the streets and led to their questioning of Trudeau's commitment to the Just Society. When women's groups interrupted Trudeau's news conference in Vancouver in 1970 to question the government's abortion policy, Trudeau was dismissive. He stated that women did not have the right to control access to abortion services and asked whether they were representing themselves or whether they were part of a larger feminist movement.⁸² Far from listening and responding to their concerns, Trudeau continued to be dismissive through the months of protest from women's groups over abortion, to the point that he once stated to the protesters: "Your mind is closed miss, that's the trouble. You know

⁸⁰ CBC Archives, "Omnibus Bill: A New Era in Canada" [Online] 29 August 1969 Available: <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/omnibus-bill-a-new-era-in-canada> [2018, March].

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Douglas Sagi and John Burns, "Women protest Against Abortion Law: Trudeau returns, faces screams of anger" *The Globe and Mail (1936-Current)*, 30 May 1970 [Online] Available: <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uregina.ca:8443/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1242124040/8ABFE4DEAE504EBEPQ/1?accountid=13480> [2018, March].

you're living in a democratic society, and just because you have a conviction you want everyone else to believe exactly like you.”⁸³ Such a response could only serve for voters to rethink their commitment to Trudeau and their belief that he would fulfil his promise of the Just Society, especially as women's groups insisted that they had the support from 200 000 women across Canada, a claim that Trudeau largely dismissed, stating, at one point, that he would have to check on the woman's accuracy when he returned to Ottawa.⁸⁴ Such a response galvanized women's resolve, as they insisted that Trudeau's legislation on abortion, effectively meant that abortions were limited to the well-off in Canadian society and discriminatory against the poor.⁸⁵

For the women involved, then, Trudeau's response to the concerns that they raised was a clear demonstration that the initiatives contained within the Just Society were not benefiting the women wanting changes to abortion laws. The confrontations at Vancouver when abortion advocates disrupted Trudeau's press conference on his return from an Asian trip were not an isolated incident. It was part of a national movement that became known as the Abortion Caravan, which was pushing for greater access to abortion and charged that the Liberal government, particularly Trudeau himself, was dragging its feet on the issue. When the government dismissed their concerns, through refusing to meet with those in the Abortion Caravan, they went further, no longer trying to hold closed-door discussions with politicians who simply dismissed the women's

⁸³ CBC Radio News Special, “The Omnibus Bill Doesn't go far enough.” *CBC Archives* 29 May 1970 [Online] Available: <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/the-omnibus-bill-doesnt-go-far-enough> [2018 March].

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Rose Perron, “Rules on Abortion Called Rich Woman's Law” 1 June 1970 *The Globe and Mail (1936-Current)* [Online] Available: <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uregina.ca:8443/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1242122272/EEABD8A0E88249A6PQ/14?accountid=13480> [2018 March].

concerns.⁸⁶ The Abortion Caravan moved to peaceful protests to push the issue to the forefront of Canadian society.

However, the biggest problem for abortion advocates was that the Liberal government and Trudeau in particular, continued to see the discussion around abortion as an intellectual discussion, while for the Abortion Caravan it was a pressing health and women's issue. This epitomized the disconnect between Trudeau and disadvantaged groups who felt that Trudeau's promise of the Just Society was empty rhetoric and was bringing no real benefit to them. Indeed, it was the Liberal government's dismissive attitude towards disadvantaged groups when they demanded the fulfilment of Trudeau's promise that prompted the Liberal government to temper its rhetoric about the Just Society. At the same time, the government had also realized that the financial situation was placing severe limits on what it might achieve in new legislative measures towards creating a more just Canada. As a result, these disadvantaged groups, including some women's groups, lost faith in the Trudeau Liberals and were no longer willing to wait for them to remove many of the societal and economic barriers necessary for them to improve their lot in society.

Other Canadians, too, were becoming disenchanted with Trudeau on a variety of issues. The frustration that many Canadians felt was reflected in opinion polls in 1970 on several Liberal policies, notably the economy, Canada's dependence on the United States, and the relationship between French and English Canadians.⁸⁷ When it came to the 1969 budget, thirty-four percent approved of the tax changes that the Liberal government

⁸⁶ Rose Perron, "Rules on Abortion Called Rich Woman's Law" 1 June 1970 *The Globe and Mail* (1936-*Current*)

⁸⁷ Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, "Gallup Poll #339 [January 1970]" [Online] Available: https://library.carleton.ca/sites/default/files/find/data/surveys/pdf_files/gllp-70-jan339-que.pdf [2018, May], 2.

introduced while thirty-eight percent were opposed the changes.⁸⁸ On the issue of a distinct Canadian national identity which the Just Society was supposed to create there seemed to be little progress. Fifty percent of Canadians believed Canada to be more dependent on the United States in 1970 than in the past. Many believed that Trudeau was failing to create a sense of distinctive Canadian pride that the Liberal government had promised in its Just Society.⁸⁹ Moreover, the English-French relationship remained troubled, with forty-two percent of Canadians stating that the relationship between French and English-Canadians had gotten worse; only twenty-four percent thought relations between the two founding communities had improved,⁹⁰ despite the fact the Liberal government had put in considerable effort to improve relations immediately upon taking office in 1968. By 1970 and especially 1971, it was becoming clear to the Canadian public that the national unity promise in the Just Society had not been fulfilled and their confidence in the Liberal government's ability to deal with these issues was waning.

While Trudeau was able to recognize that many disadvantaged groups had different perspectives on how to make Canada more just, he was not willing to embrace what he considered the radical manner that those groups advocated to achieve meaningful change. In adopting such an attitude, Trudeau was seen by many as emblematic of the status quo rather than being an agent of change that many voters thought he had been in 1968. Whatever the disagreements of various groups with the government, Trudeau was adamant that protest groups follow the law and work through the proper channels to create the change they desired. Any non-compliance from protest groups rendered their

⁸⁸ Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, "Gallup Poll #339 [January 1970]" [Online], 2.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 3.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 4.

protest illegitimate,⁹¹ many traditionally disadvantaged groups were not willing to follow the route to change that Trudeau favoured. As a result, the growing intellectual disconnect between the Trudeau and the many disadvantaged groups and ordinary voters served to undermine the Canadian public's confidence in the Liberal government's ability to implement the Just Society.

While Trudeau has been portrayed as a champion for homosexual rights, he was less open about pushing for gay rights, given the hostile political climate of the period and questions raised about his religious beliefs.⁹² Trudeau may have had his own personal moral objections to same-sex relationships and even his statement revealed what he thought about homosexuality. By referring to the "Bedroom" in his famous statement "the state has no business in the bedrooms of the nation,"⁹³ Trudeau made own personal feelings clear: homosexuality was acceptable within the confines of a private setting, but it was not something that should be expressed publicly or that should be openly championed from any political figure. His position on homosexual rights frustrated gay rights advocates because his legislation did not go far enough. While they appreciated the fact that homosexuality was no longer part of the Criminal Code, gay rights groups wanted the state to ensure that their rights would be protected in the public sphere. Yet, the Liberal government continued to treat the gay community with suspicion largely because of their political alignment and activism.⁹⁴ Once again, it seems, the Liberal government, found itself dealing with a form of political activism that cut into Liberal

⁹¹ CBC Radio News Special, "The Omnibus Bill Doesn't go far enough." *CBC Archives* 29 May 1970.

⁹² Paul Litt, *Trudeaumania*, 372.

⁹³ CBC Television News, "Trudeau: 'There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation.'" *CBC Archives* 21 December 1967. [Online] Available: <https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/omnibus-bill-theres-no-place-for-the-state-in-the-bedrooms-of-the-nation> [2017, May].

⁹⁴ Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 308.

support, particularly in Quebec.⁹⁵ It also prompted some Canadians to wonder how committed Trudeau was to delivering on the Just Society he had promised in 1968.

Regionalism and the Just Society

Although the Liberal government emerged from the 1968 campaign with a majority government and support from across Canada, it was easy to assume that support for the Trudeau's Just Society agenda was national in scope. There were, however, serious cleavages in the country that threatened Trudeau's mandate and perhaps support for his Just Society agenda. Trudeau and the Liberals had captured over forty percent of the popular vote, but the number of seats for the Liberals was not distributed evenly across the country. Canada's electoral system of representation by population which gave the majority of Canada's constituencies to Ontario and Quebec, where most of the people live, particularly favoured Trudeau in 1968. Because his Just Society message appealed to those living in those provinces, he won considerable support there, capturing 119 out of the 154 constituencies he won.⁹⁶ As Trudeau was about to discover, appealing to Ontario and Quebec did not translate into national appeal. Various groups in the Prairies and in rural Ontario, where the Liberal government won only a few seats in 1968, did not share the same enthusiasm for Trudeau as did Quebec and southern Ontario.⁹⁷ This was especially the case in the Prairie Provinces, where the Liberal government only won eleven of a possible forty-five seats.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era*, 308.

⁹⁶ Government of Canada, "Results, Federal Election June 25 1968" [Online] Available: <http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/24e6c2f9-acbd-597d-9de6-7ecdc7db2ef7> [2017, September].

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Government of Canada, "Results, Federal Election June 25 1968" [Online].

Nevertheless, once the Liberals had their majority and started governing, they often assumed that most Canadians saw the world as they did.⁹⁹ They hoped the Canadian public would have a new sense of national identity as the old notions of “postwar” Canada were breaking down.¹⁰⁰ As it would soon be shown, in fact, the opposite occurred with voters especially in Western Canadian which soon became frustrated with the Liberal government, especially its handling of Quebec. While Quebec continued to heavily support the Trudeau government, the changes occurring in Quebec served to distract the Liberal government from other issues in Canadian society. The bitterness between Quebec and the federal government had increased significantly after the Quiet Revolution that began in 1960 shortly after the death of Premier Maurice Duplessis.¹⁰¹ As a consequence the political atmosphere in Quebec was extremely volatile and was, in hindsight, primed for a political crisis when Trudeau became prime minister. While Quebec’s status was not then the political and constitutional issue it would become later in the 1970s, Quebec nationalism was clearly on the rise. Many in Quebec were no longer satisfied with simply gaining control over Quebec’s economy; they were pushing for a more nationalistic representation for Quebec inside Canada.

In dealing with Quebec, the Liberals acted rather predictably, starting in 1969 by focusing on “bilingualism” and “biculturalism” as a way to foster national unity. These initiatives were seen as the primary way to attempt to placate an increasingly independent and separatist oriented Quebec. One of the biggest issues for French-speaking Quebecois was that being French-speaking often condemned them to a lower social and economic

⁹⁹ Peter C. Newman, *The Distemper of Our Times*, 455.

¹⁰⁰ For a detailed analysis of the changes occurring in English-Canada during this period see Jose Igartua’s, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English-Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006).

¹⁰¹ Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec Social Change and Political Crisis* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press Canada, 1993) <http://www.deslibris.ca.libproxy.uregina.ca:2048/ID/432074>, 91.

tier, an issue than had occupied Quebec's provincial governments for more than a decade. French-speaking Quebecois also had problems breaking into the federal civil service and as late as the 1960s it was almost unilingually English.¹⁰² The Liberal government's Official Languages Act making both English and French Canada's two official languages was one measure designed to bridge the linguistic divide between the two historical communities and help national unity. However, this was a controversial policy as it prompted many in Western Canada to fear that they would be forced to learn French and in their view, it focused the Liberal government's attention primarily on the residents of Quebec at the expense of focusing on the rest of Canada. This perceived favouritism that the Liberal government had for Quebec served to undermine support for Trudeau and the Liberal government, and by extension the Just Society, in other parts of English-Canada.¹⁰³ Moreover, the October Crisis and Quebec government's more nationalistic tone forced Trudeau to adopt his own hard-line stance as the protector of Canada as a national community.¹⁰⁴ The result was that the Liberal government had to focus increasingly on dealing with Quebec sovereignty at the expense of dealing with other matter, some of which might have been necessary to achieving the Just Society.

Despite Trudeau's attempt to deal with the rights of French-speaking minorities and the growing nationalist sentiment in Quebec through his bilingualism and

¹⁰² Graham Fraser's, *Sorry I Don't Speak French Confronting the Canadian Crisis That Won't go Away* (McClelland and Stewart Limited, 2006) provides an in-depth look at the French-English language debate has impacted Canadian politics.

¹⁰³ Stanley McDowell, "How Ottawa Didn't Win the West" *The Globe and Mail (1936-Current)* 14 October 1971 [Online] Available: <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uregina.ca:8443/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1241715925/C3052AD427984A78PQ/4?accountid=13480> [2018, January].

¹⁰⁴ Globe and Mail Staff Writer, "Masse blames Trudeau for separatism rise" *The Globe and Mail (1936-Current)* 11 December 1969 [Online] Available: <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.uregina.ca:8443/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1242158980/EB3F370CC0A34534PQ/1?accountid=13480> [2017, May].

biculturalism policies, it was not enough to satisfy many in that province. That became readily apparent with the October Crisis in 1970. The Crisis began with the abduction of Quebec politician Pierre Laporte by the Front de Liberation du Quebec (FLQ) and made national headlines, but it soon turned into a major victory for the Liberal government. Laporte's abduction, and subsequent assassination, promoted the invocation of the War Measures Act that turned the situation into a full-blown crisis. In Quebec, the French-language, newspaper *Le Devoir* opened its coverage with the headline: "Pierre is dead" and focused on the federal and provincial government's responses to Laporte's assassination.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, an English, western Canadian newspaper, *The Leader-Post*, instead focused on the FLQ, and their criminal responsibility, and the need to bring those responsible to justice.¹⁰⁶ In addition, *The Leader-Post* emphasised the heavy guarded dignitaries, and the unnatural sense of calm that prevailed over the city along with a demand to know why the police had failed to stop the FLQ and laid blame on the Liberal government.¹⁰⁷ While the Liberal government's hard-line against the FLQ, did gain political support in Western Canada,¹⁰⁸ that support proved to be fleeting as Western Canada was, in the long-term more concerned about the Western Canadian economic health than the political changes occurring in Quebec. The crisis actually created a political opportunity for Trudeau to portray himself as the champion for Canadian unity.

The crisis in Quebec also had ramifications for the rest of Canada, particularly for Western Canada, as they saw the Liberal government as more determined than before to

¹⁰⁵ "Pierre est Mort" *Le Devoir*(Montreal, Quebec) October 19 1970.

¹⁰⁶ George Emielle, "City of Crisis Seems Normal" *The Leader-Post* (Regina, Saskatchewan) October 20 1970.

¹⁰⁷ Canadian Press, "PM May Disclose Police Activities" *The Leader-Post* (Regina, Saskatchewan) October 20 1970.

¹⁰⁸ Western Canada's lack of support for the Just Society, and the reasons behind this lack of support, will be discussed in the paragraphs following the paragraphs on Quebec sovereignty.

appease those supporters of Quebec sovereignty. Despite the fact that prairie farmers were experiencing considerable obstacles and declining prospects, they still made up over five percent of the combined prairie population¹⁰⁹ and still had considerable political influence. Many farmers wanted greater federal control over grain prices and assistance from the federal government, but the Liberal government was not enthusiastic about implementing any new schemes for them.¹¹⁰ When Trudeau expressed its commitment to bilingualism and little for farmers, even asking them why he should sell their grain,¹¹¹ the farmers and Western Canada erupted in angry protests. The backlash against Trudeau from frustrated Western Canadians was intense as they came to realize that Trudeau's Just Society did not include them. The regional cleavages between Western and Central Canada and between westerner and Quebecers would deepen between 1968 and 1972 due to Trudeau's perceived focus on Quebec while ignoring the western provinces.¹¹² The Liberal government favoured a non-interventionist approach when it came to agriculture and if the farmers could not survive they should go out of business.¹¹³ Such a response from Ottawa prompted the tagline in the western protests against Trudeau, that his "The Just Society [was] Just for the Rich!"¹¹⁴ Westerners felt that the Just Society was not

¹⁰⁹ "Farm Population, Census Data, Canada and by Province, 1931 to 1971" *Statistics Canada* [Online] Available: https://www.statcan.gc.ca/access_acces/archive.action?l=eng&loc=M1_11-eng.csv [2018 March].

¹¹⁰ Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House Limited, 2005), 402.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Peter C. Newman, *The Distemper of Our Time.*, IX.

¹¹³ Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House Limited), 414.

¹¹⁴ Globe and Mail Staff Writer, "Trudeau calls pickets a disgrace to youth" [Online] Available: <https://search-proquest.com.libproxy.uregina.ca:8443/hnpglobeandmail/docview/1241946877/EB3F370CC0A34534PQ/44?accountid=13480>. [2017, January].

going to benefit them, and westerners, including their governments, were less inclined to support Trudeau's Just Society and the public spending it required.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

There was no national project comparable to the Just Society initiatives when Trudeau went to the people in 1972. He chose as the campaign slogan an innocuous phrase, "the land is strong," which had little of the idealism of his Just Society mantra in 1968. His first term as prime minister, when he was beset by a looming economic crisis, an insurrection in Quebec, anger from a variety of disadvantaged groups, and growing alienation in Western Canada, had failed to deliver on his promise of a Just Society. In that campaign it would be a more pragmatic and practical approach to simply build on the legacy of a strong and vibrant land.

For many voters, it was their own personal economic circumstances that would determine Trudeau's fate, though the Liberal government's perceived lack of action when dealing with the country's economic problems and a variety of social and cultural issues, many would surely be tempted to vote *against* the Liberal government and Trudeau, rather than *for* any other political party.¹¹⁶ There was a sense among the Canadian public that the Liberal government had failed to deliver on the optimism and hope that was promised with the Just Society, and such a feeling was laid bare with the 1972 election results. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation interviewed many people on the streets the day after the 1972 election, and asked them why they did not vote Liberal. One man's reply encapsulated the voter frustration with the Liberal government stating "I'm

¹¹⁵ Mary Janigan's *Let the Eastern Bastards Freeze in the Dark* explores this concept, going back to before Confederation, and the perceived Eastern Canada versus Western Canada dynamic in Canadian politics.

¹¹⁶ "Pierre Trudeau Experiences Popularity Backlash After 1972 Election" *CBC Archives* 31 October 1972 [Online] Available: <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/trudeau-backlash-after-1972-election>

very pleased, very pleased that son of a bitch got a kick in the ass... I've been a Liberal all my life and I certainly didn't vote for him this time oh no!"¹¹⁷ However, and rather ironically, it was the seven seats that the Liberal government won in Western Canada, largely due to the popularity of Trudeau's hard-line stance against Quebecois sovereignty in Western Canada, which saved the Liberal government.¹¹⁸

Trudeau's Just Society was a bold initiative to attempt to reform Canadian society. However, after only two years of openly espousing the virtues of the Just Society, the concept largely disappeared from the government's rhetoric and many of its policy initiatives. There were many reasons for its abandonment. One of the main problems was that Trudeau and his cabinet saw Canadian society in a manner different from the way some of minorities and women's groups saw it. Trudeau and members of his cabinet were "well-educated"¹¹⁹ as well as those he appointed to the Prime Minister's Office, at least initially, could not understand that there were societal segments that thought differently than they. Many within the Canadian population were focused on their respective and immediate community and they did not share the "intellectual" view that Trudeau had of the Just Society. Furthermore, by 1968, Canadian society had changed and many socially active groups, such as the second-wave feminists, First Nations, gay-rights groups, and Quebec sovereignists, were no longer willing to allow the Liberal government to enact societal change without their consultation, a point that the government learned quickly when they attempted to make changes to the Indian Act. The Liberal government was forced to respond to the protests in a matter that First Nations'

¹¹⁷ "Pierre Trudeau Experiences Popularity Backlash After 1972 Election" *CBC Archives* 31 October 1972,.

¹¹⁸ "Results of Federal Election October 30 1972" [Online]

¹¹⁹ Trudeau and his fellow ministers were educated as a product of their time in the educational system from the 1930s to the 1950s. Due to their economic, social, and political connections Trudeau and his ministers were educated as an intellectual and political elite, with the expectation that these men would inevitably become those in charge of government and industry.

found somewhat satisfactory. Similarly, women were not willing to accept the changes, particularly on abortion, that was introduced in an Omnibus Bill. The rise of Quebec sovereignty, the emergence of the FLQ, and with the protests from Western Canada, all served to distract the Liberal government from their Just Society agenda.

Moreover, the Liberal government's difficulties on the Just Society agenda would only increase from 1970 onward due to the looming economic crisis. As revenues dropped and the government deficits increased, funds were hardly available to maintain the levels of social spending that had increased dramatically since 1945 let alone pursue new and expensive policy goals dreamed of in the Just Society. The economic problems that were already building throughout the latter half of the 1960s would in the early 1970s mushroom to derail the Liberal government's budgets. With the economic crisis, the Just Society's implementation became difficult if not impossible, especially as its emphasis on removing societal barriers generally involved increasing government spending on social programs which the Liberal government could not afford. The economic crisis was not just affecting the federal government's coffers; it was also affecting the general public's personal finances and their attitudes toward the federal government. For the first time since 1945, unemployment began to rise and inflation started to erode the purchasing power of Canadians. For the Liberal government the crisis was unprecedented and it had no way of dealing effectively with it and Canadians did not feel that Trudeau had the ability and experience to deal with economic crises. The result was even less money to create the Just Society. Trudeau's Just Society was, in some ways, the end of state-driven and state-directed national projects. It failed to be implemented as originally conceived due to a combination of public skepticism from

socially and economically disadvantaged groups who wanted a greater say in how their governments dealt with issues related directly to them and because of a looming economic crisis that reduced the state's fiscal capacity to initiate new and possibly expensive social projects. The idea of a Just Society held great promise but its implementation depended on an accommodating public and a buoyant economy and in the period from 1968 to 1972, Prime Minister Trudeau had neither in governing Canada.

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