The role which communications technologies played in the creation of Canadian provincial identities between 1846 and 1914 was a complex one. For one thing, it must certainly be acknowledged that the cultural boundaries identified in Canada would probably have developed regardless of the communications technologies employed during this period. And for another, it must be recognized that there were cultural identities already in the process of formation long before the first telegraph line was opened between Toronto and Hamilton in 1846. But what the development of communications technologies did provide during this period was a catalyst which served to focus much of the debate over the formation of a Canadian national consciousness and the retention of provincial identities. And as important as these technologies were to the formation of the national consciousness, they were equally as crucial to the identification of distinctive provincial and ethnic characteristics. That is to say that the very existence of the technologies seems to have released latent identities within Canadians at both the most general and specific levels. Canadians, using the new technologies to the best advantage wherever possible, identified themselves with the empire, the nation and a specific home, or alternatively, refused to do so while remaining cognizant that such identities were available for appropriation.

P. F. W. Rutherford has suggested that a regional community consists of a network of inter-related institutions along with a set of specific problems and a common outlook among its members. Regionalism, he continued, "is a creed which attempts to define the character and the goals of a regional community... But above all regionalism is a species of rhetoric and must be understood within this context." Highlighting Rutherford's suggestion that regionalism is a species of rhetoric, one recognizes immediately the difference between the United States and Canada during the early years of this period. Whereas the United States suffered through a civil war between the two great regions of its body, the Canadian Confederation lasted relatively unscathed and unchallenged. Perhaps the regional communities
of Canada were more homogeneous than has been realized, or more amenable to compromise at least than their volatile American kin.

The divisions of Canada are well known. Each of the extant regions of the period had at the beginning, or developed as time advanced, distinctive views on a broad range of subjects, including the issue of the extension of communications technologies. These differences were readily recognized, too, by the residents of the different divisions. Joseph Howe, for instance, while Premier of Nova Scotia, told a group at a dinner party in Montreal in September of 1861 that, "We have been more like foreigners than fellow subjects; you do not know us, and we do not know you. There are men in this room, who hold the destinies of this half of the Continent in their hands; and yet we never meet, unless by some chance or other . . . we are obliged to meet. . . ." Howe's observations were made, of course, only eight years preceding the achievement of Confederation.

Part of the difficulty was the fact that Canada was such an immense country in which the means of communication available were relatively crude. As Frederick Jackson Turner observed of the United States, "We are so large and diversified a nation that it is almost impossible to see the situation except through sectional spectacles. The section either conceives of itself as an aggrieved and oppressed minority, suffering from the injustice of the other sections of the nation, or it thinks of its own culture, its economic policies, and of the nation in terms of itself." Turner's statement was, obviously, equally applicable to Canada.

Turner's observation would describe only too well the feelings of the French Canadians about the English during this period, for they seemed to be forced by their very association with that larger population into a kind of siege mentality. But it was not true that the differences between regions only existed between the English and the French. There were serious differences, for instance, between the Canadas on the one side and the Maritimes on the other over the issue of imperialism. And, as Goldwin Smith observed in 1892, "No inhabitant of Nova Scotia or New Brunswick commonly calls himself a Canadian. The people of British Columbia, priding themselves on their English character, almost disdain the name. [The Manitobans and Northwesterners are a community] severed from Eastern Canada."
In 1879, too, Smith had observed in a letter to J. X. Merriman of the Cape Colony that, "British Columbia is again threatening secession, and has named May 1st as the fatal day. Her object is to extort money, which she has already succeeded in doing to a very disagreeable extent. For the general interest of confederation she cares not a straw." Smith's observations have since been echoed by Canadian historians of the period; contemporaries of Smith's reflected their attitude toward the federal government by their colloquial designation of its seat, Ottawa, as "Hole in the Woods."

One of the first great national undertakings of Canada following Confederation was the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. George M. Grant said that the CPR was built because, "We were under the inspiration of a national idea, and went forward. We were determined to be something more than a fortuitous collocation of provinces." Equally lilting was the comment of Ray S. Baker in 1908. "Built upon faith in a virgin country, with a restless, expansive, ambitious people, the road is ever solicitous for development, being wholly unable to look upon its plains and mountains except with the eye of the prophetic imagination." Such visions were not shared by all, however. To some the road "seemed . . . a venture into the impossible by visionary ignoramuses."

One accomplishment for which the CPR could take the lion's share of credit was the establishment of towns along its route to the Pacific. Although Goldwin Smith had doubts about the Canadian Pacific as a "colonisation road," J. C. Hamilton predicted in 1876 that Manitoba would be filled by Canadians as a result of the introduction of steam communication. Hamilton's prediction was borne out by events, too, as Harold A. Innis has noted.

In addition to expectations of new people moving to fill the prairies were other visions as well. The Guelph Herald expected in 1878 that the "blessings of civilization" would flow in by the car load when the Pembina Branch Railroad (later part of the CPR) was opened on December 3; John Foster predicted in a letter to William McDougall, the Minister of Public Works in Canada, in 1869 the end of "the feeling of isolation and banishment in Red River if a railroad were constructed to the settlement from the East. To H. P. P. Crease, judge of the British Columbia Supreme Court, a "through line of Rail across the continent" would mean "real
live confederation with Canada instead of a paper one;"21 to Thomas C. Keefer in *Philosophie des Chemins de Fer*, 1853, the railroad meant the arrival of a new spirit and vision into agricultural districts formerly bound by tradition and short-sightedness, a "powerful antidote to this state of primitive, but not innocuous simplicity. . . ."22

Determining just how effectively the CPR—or any other railway—achieved the visions projected for fulfillment by steam communication is problematic. There was one prediction, however, the fulfillment of which was the cause of much contention and ill-feeling, particularly on the prairies. That was the effect of railroad construction on real estate values. J. C. Hamilton had surmised in 1876 that with a railroad in the West, "land would at once rise in value, and all near railroads would be eagerly sought."23 Even as late as this date, however, such a statement was purely speculative, for railroads in Canada were only being built to connect existing settlements. When the discussion turned to questions of pushing the rails west, beyond settlement, there was a real gap in knowledge about what real estate prices would do. Hamilton's prediction at the time when the transcontinental rail route was under serious discussion followed a similar prediction made in 1868 by William Robinson and preceded another made for the Nelson Valley Railway in 1881.24

There were two problems associated with the fulfillment of such predictions. The first problem stemmed directly from the very "essentialness" of the railroad itself, that is from the very reason for its existence. W. A. Mackintosh has written, for instance, that, "Railways and continually improving transportation were as essential as rain and sun to progressive settlement on the Canadian prairie. Nearness to railways and to projected railways was of first importance to the settler."25 But the problem was, that no matter how many railways there were, and there was much evidence that by the end of the period Canada was overbuilt with railways, they did not, and never could, exist everywhere.26

In the first instance were the problems created where the railroads were.27 James J. Talman has noted that, "the building of railways resulted in the rise of many settled communities . . . , " and he has quoted an advertisement in the *Weekly North American* of August 11 and September 15, 1853, and March 16, 1854, which stated, "The introduction of Railways will no doubt cause many new villages to spring up where before they never would have been thought of . . . ."28
The advertisement was correct. Ford Fairford was astonished in 1914 at "how rapidly towns spring into being when a railway company utters its voice." Numerous historians have noted the creation of towns by railways moving west, and Mulvany has contended that even in the case of Toronto, it was the railroads which made it "the metropolis, the mother-city, the mart of Ontario." The phenomenon of railway-induced growth in Canada was obviously not an isolated one.

In the areas where railways were built the problem was the vested interest of the railroad companies in the location of settlements, all of which saw subsequent real estate speculation. Particularly in the case of the Canadian Pacific, huge land subsidies were provided as partial payment for the construction of the road. The CPR naturally desired to place new settlements in the areas where it owned the land, hoping to recoup its huge capital expenses by making land sales. James B. Hedges has noted that the large reserves of land granted to the CPR even away from the rail lines assured the company a significant degree of influence on the country's future development and gave them a measure of control over rival transportation enterprises.

When a railroad town was created on the prairie, there was a surge of prosperity, followed by new settlers, colonization companies, increased land value and speculation in every line of trade. As Skelton has said of the railroads in the 1850's, "The Railways brought with them a new speculative fever, a more complex financial structure, a business politics more shaded into open corruption . . . ." The Hamilton Gazette of February 6, 1854, quoting the Liverpool Journal, said, "Railway operations [in Canada] are calling into existence new wants and new enterprises, creating new markets, and filling men with bigger thoughts." The Weekly Dispatch in 1855 noted that the energies of merchants, mechanics and farmers had been screwed up to railroad speed.

These changes were not all accepted willingly. People knew that the Canadian Pacific was lining its pockets with silver and eventually the Westerners complained bitterly about
the CPR monopoly which was gouging them with its insatiable appetite.\textsuperscript{38} Finally the CPR's exclusive franchise in the West was terminated in 1888.\textsuperscript{39} People also knew that railroads failed. The Canadian Pacific itself had been on the verge of bankruptcy several times while construction proceeded, and faltered periodically following its completion.\textsuperscript{40} There were also worrisome stories which circulated about the financial condition of the Canadian Northern, the Grand Trunk and the Great North Western railways, leading the Dominion government to subsidize and bail out bankrupt railroads, and later to merge the roads, excepting the CPR, into the Canadian National System.\textsuperscript{41}

Another problem for those who accepted any railroad's offer of settlement was that all their work might end up benefitting only the railway company. There were apparently many farmers, for instance, who were settled by the Manitoba North Western subsidiary lines around Birtle and who later found the railway becoming heir to their failed farms and selling them, including the improvements, for as little as sixty dollars apiece.\textsuperscript{42}

But there were also problems in those areas where railroads were not. In the 1880's, for instance, a settlement begun by William Pierce in Saskatchewan failed when the Canadian Pacific did not construct an expected branch line through it.\textsuperscript{43} Also, of course, many settlements were never conceived due to the inability to market products, or even to travel easily to where there might have been markets had there been a railway. George E. Church wrote in The Fortnightly Review in 1903 that because the east-west Canadian railways were all crowded around the southern edge of Lake Winnipeg, "the whole vast area of the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, to the north of the [CPR] . . . lie unproductive."\textsuperscript{44} The same problem also afflicted the prairie provinces. Again, at least in some cases, part of the problem was created by railways, particularly the Canadian Pacific, which was granted a northern reserve grant as part of its construction subsidy, a grant not tributary to the CPR lines but which was held for appreciation rather than being sold to encourage settlement.\textsuperscript{45}

In the West the railways, for the most part, also controlled the electrical communication available via the telegraph.\textsuperscript{46} This meant that settlers in the territories were dependent not only for transportation, but also for communication, on these companies, except in those places where the
Dominion Telegraph operated. The Dominion Telegraph, however, only operated where there were no rail lines. The railroads, then, seemed to hold the prosperity and future of westerners in their hands. It was small wonder that resentment against the railroad, against the government which organized and chartered them and regulated them, and against the East where they were financed and headquartered, should grow. The experience which westerners had with the railroad eventually colored their views of other technologies which were introduced for their benefit, but which were also controlled and chartered in the East.

It was the prairie provinces, for instance, which led the way in the development of municipally-owned and provincially-owned telephone systems. Manitoba and Alberta bought out the Bell interests in 1908; Saskatchewan followed in like fashion the following year. One observer gave some credit for these actions to the influence of American emigrants, settlers in the prairies who had been a part of, or influenced by, "Populism and agrarian discontent" in the United States. The fact that the Grange movement was one promulgated in large measure by dissatisfaction with western American railroad companies meant that its ideology and its rhetoric would find fertile soil in the Canadian West. The actions taken on the prairies on telephone expropriation allowed each community which so desired to manage its own system to do so under the assumption that peculiar ties of interest or location existed. By 1909 the Montreal Daily Witness was pronouncing the earlier Manitoba system expropriation a success which relieved the "tedium of solitude," and the "apprehension and melancholy" of farm life.

In the East the issues were different, but the conflicts as significant. To the French in Quebec, for instance, language was used to define the French Canadian character and experience. Lacking the rationale of distinctive language, as Allan Smith has noted, would mean the disintegration of French Canadian society. Although many scholars have attributed the French distinctiveness in Canada to other factors, there is no doubt that language has been a key element in their identity.

Morgan and Burpee noted as early as 1905 that two distinctive literary traditions existed in Canada, one English and the other French. Dilke commented in Greater Britain that in the case of the French Canadian, "The American soul
has left physical type, religion, language, laws, and habits absolutely untouched."57 This was not true of the English Canadian, who had much in common with what he called his "southern cousin," and who—in matters of culture and responsiveness to the North American continent—seemed to act in a manner more akin to the American, or even to emulate them.

Henri Bourassa, the nationalist leader of Quebec at the turn of the century, accused the English Canadians of attempting "to make Canada a land of one tongue and one culture," and argued that "The conservation of the language is absolutely necessary for the conservation of the race, its genius, its character and its temperament."58 The French Canadians, too, were successful in resisting absorption into the dominant English-American culture. They fought back against infringements upon their religion, traditions, temperament and language. In 1908, for instance, Armand Laverge complained in Parliament that the rights of the French language were being slighted by railway, telephone and telegraph companies in Canada.59

The issue of French versus English language-usage was part of a larger and sometimes bitter struggle between the two great racial stocks of Canada. Although many Canadian imperialists attempted to include the French within their visions of a common people sharing common characteristics, the French were more accustomed to dealing with the blatant racism of the English press in Canada, and with the British authorities who "did all that could humanly speaking be done, short of bloody persecution, to deprive of [language and religion] the original population of that country."60

The French and English populations of Canada split over many issues, including the execution of Louis Riel, the Boer War, dual school systems in Manitoba in 1890 and in Ontario in 1910.61 French publications appeared which attempted to interpret affairs from a French perspective, two of the most notable being Bourassa's independent journal, Le Devoir, first appearing on January 10, 1910, and Francois Xavier Garneau's Histoire du Canada depuis sa découverte jusqu'à nos jours, which began appearing between 1845 and 1848.62 At least part of the long battle over French rights and language was won in 1910 when Raoul Dandurand of the Quebec Provincial Legislature, assisted by the Canadian Pacific, convinced the Grand Trunk, the Montreal Light, Heat, and Power, and the Bell Telephone companies to accept compulsory bi-lingualism in the province.63 The battle had been a long and bitter one.
Canada Bell was an English Canadian business, headquartered in Montreal. This arrangement, an English company headquartered in a French city, was not unusual in Canada. Whereas many businesses in the city would have escaped protest or censure from the French during this period for using English exclusively, Bell, like other communication and transportation companies, or "public service" companies such as utilities, could not. These sorts of enterprises were doing business--and making money--in a French city in a French province. Their services were essential ones. The French Canadians saw no reason to acquiesce to attempts to coerce them into using English.

The French-language press of Montreal waged a series of wars over this issue, attacking especially the telephone company which seemed to be the most intransigent in its refusal to hire bilingual operators or to print bilingual invoices. Also, since use of the telephone was seen as essential to the efficient business operation, the French Canadians saw Bell's stubbornness as a blatant attempt at coercion on the part of an English corporation. When Bell, after agreeing in 1910 to compulsory bi-lingualism in Quebec, continued its infuriating tactics, the French attacked with increasing intensity.

As early as 1884-85 the Montreal Daily Witness had reported that Bell had about as many French as English subscribers in Montreal. But that fact apparently did not impress Bell with the necessity of hiring operators who were fluent in both languages. Twenty years later Le Nationaliste was complaining of the treatment of a young girl by a newly-appointed English telephone operator although, as the newspaper said, "she speaks good English and French." The paper was apparently galled by the fact that the branch operation in question was located in a predominately French ward, and noted, "We cannot get an answer in French from the telephone, we cannot send a telegram in French without having the spelling and the meaning changed, we cannot call in French at a messenger service office without being insulted by some low improvised clerk."

In July, 1911, following Bell's acceptance of compulsory bi-lingualism, the Daily Witness, La Patrie, La Presse and Le Devoir published complaints about Bell's service. The complaints were answered by R. F. Jones, local manager of Bell, who said that the alleged bad service, long waits for connection and wrong connections were due to the bi-lingual problem in Montreal.
On July 12, 1911, a letter appeared in La Patrie. The writer, addressing himself to the manager of the Farnham exchange, Mr. Choquette, was certain that Bell would "extend a helping hand in the just claim we are about to make." The claim was "that each employee of [Bell] at Farnham will speak the French language." The writer claimed that three-quarters of Farnham's population was French, and that operators would not accept numbers given in French. Protests, he said, resulted in cut connections. He concluded, "It seems hardly creditable that in a French town like Farnham we cannot have a connection in French."

Le Devoir complained in February, 1912, that Bell was persisting in its practice of giving French subscribers bills written only in English, "however precise they are in asking to have them otherwise. . . ." and in spite of the fact that Ottawa subscribers received bills written in both languages. In March of 1912 Bell finally relented, agreeing to provide Montreal subscribers with bills written in French.

All the problems did not disappear, however. Le Nationaliste of November 10, 1912, asked the question: "Why should the Bell company keep telephone operators who cannot understand the language of two thirds of its subscribers?" A letter to R. F. Jones of Bell, reprinted in Le Devoir in 1914 asked the same question and complained that no answer to it had been received since an original letter had been mailed in September of 1913. Jones did then reply, stating in part, "I beg to advise you that with 1,375 operators it is absolutely impossible that all of them should speak both languages fluently. Our Long Distance Operators read, write and speak [sic] both languages fluently."

It was apparent that Bell's strategy of avoiding or ignoring the issue of French-speaking operators was not working. The ability to use their own language, and to have it accepted on equal terms with the English language—at least in Quebec where they predominated—was too important an issue to the French for them to surrender to a hated English-controlled corporation. That the problem persisted was shown by an article in Le Devoir, March 13, 1914. The paper commented that a French Canadian speaking French in London, England, had a better chance of receiving a courteous reply than one in any English Canadian town, or even in the English sections of Montreal.
Throughout this period, then, regional conflicts developed in which particular communications technologies were instrumental in focusing at least part of the invective of the antagonists. The complaints seemed to center on the issue of corporate rights granted by the Dominion government or assumed by the technology-controlling interests. That the conflicts extended throughout the period indicates the depth of feeling and the importance attached to the technologies by the people whom they were supposedly introduced to serve. That the conflicts were resolved—and resolved in ways which were unpalatable to corporate interests—demonstrates that the corporations were not serving what Canadians felt to be their interests. That provincialism was an important component of late nineteenth-century Canada is shown by a comment made by Goldwin Smith. "Steam and telegraph, we are told, have annihilated distance. They have not annihilated the parish steeple. They have not carried the thoughts of the ordinary citizen beyond the circle of his own life and work. They have not qualified a common farmer, tradesman, ploughman, or artisan to direct the politics of a world-wide State." Their possibilities, in short, were tempered by the functions they were thought to serve in the minds of Canadians conscious of the differences which existed between them.

Footnotes

27. See Baker, "Destiny," 892.
31. See Berton, The Great Railway, 231, 232, on the locating of Calgary.
33. Hedges, Land Subsidy Policy, 69.
35. Ibid., 115.
37. Ibid.
38. See Goldwin Smith's letter to Lord Farrer, April 21, 1887, in Haultain, Smith's Correspondence, 203; and Waite, Arduous Destiny, 112, 113, 181.
42. See Hanna, Trains of Recollection, 87.

44. George Earl Church, "Canada and its Trade Routes," The Fortnightly Review, n.s., 73 (March 1, 1903), 414, 415.

45. Hedges, Land Subsidy Policy, 48.


47. See Canada, Statistical Abstract, 1887, 263, 264; and Hanna, Trains of Recollection, 161.


49. It should be noted here, too, that the New Brunswick Legislature authorized the Governor-in-Council in 1907 to "expropriate telephone companies, their property and franchises," with compensation fixed by agreement or arbitration, but nothing concrete came of the act. See New Brunswick, Official Year Book of the Province of New Brunswick, Canada, Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1919, 164.


52. Kitto, Province of Saskatchewan, 44.


57. Dilke, Greater Britain, 47.

58. Quoted in Wade, French Canadians, 495; see also 622.

59. Ibid., 555.

60. Morice, Red River Insurrection, 58; see also Berger, Sense of Power, 128; and Wade, French Canadians, 276, 277.

61. See Wade, French Canadians, 414-418; Hardy, From Sea Unto Sea, 385, 388, 389; and J. E. Rea, "The Roots of Prairie Society," Prairie Perspectives, 49.
63. Ibid., 576.
64. Ibid., 333-335; see also Lester Burrell Shippee, Canadian-American Relations 1849-1874, New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1939, 4.
65. "Hilloa! Hilloa!" Montreal Daily Witness, late 1884 or early 1885, Lewis B. McFarlane, Scrapbook, book 2, 70, Canada Bell Archives.
69. "Still the Bell Company," Le Devoir, Montreal, February 17, 1912.
74. Smith, Canadian Question, 300.

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