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Article abstract

This article discusses the connection between French Canadian nationalist, the journalist Henri Bourassa, and other international voices that opposed the First World War. It examines common ideas found in Bourassa's writing and the writing of the Union of Democratic Control in Britain and the position of Pope Benedict XV about the war's consequences, militarism and the international system. This article argues that Bourassa's role as a Canadian dissenter must also be understood as part of a larger transnational reaction to the war that communicated similar solutions to the problems presented by the war.

Dissenting in the First World War: Henri Bourassa and Transnational Resistance to War

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RÉSUMÉ *Cet article explore les liens entre le « nationaliste » canadien-français Henri Bourassa et des opposants hors Canada critiquant le conflit mondial de 1914. En effet, des acteurs à l'international partagent des idées communes que l'on retrouve dans le discours défendu par Bourassa (nationaliste et ultramontain), dans celui de la Union of Democratic Control au Royaume-Uni (socialiste) et de la position du pape Benoît XV sur les conséquences de la guerre sur les sociétés, sur l'ordre mondial et sur la militarisation des nations. Cet article soutient que le rôle de dissident que joue Bourassa au Canada doit être compris comme s'inscrivant dans une réaction transnationale à la guerre qui se rejoint sur plusieurs éléments, à travers des analyses du conflit et des propositions de solutions pour répondre aux problèmes causés par la Grande Guerre.*

ABSTRACT *This article discusses the connection between French Canadian nationalist, the journalist Henri Bourassa, and other international voices that opposed the First World War. It examines common ideas found in Bourassa's writing and the writing of the Union of Democratic Control in Britain and the position*

of Pope Benedict XV about the war's consequences, militarism and the international system. This article argues that Bourassa's role as a Canadian dissenter must also be understood as part of a larger transnational reaction to the war that communicated similar solutions to the problems presented by the war.

More than a century after it began, the history of the First World War continues to evolve. Although national narratives still hold sway over the literature, historians are beginning to expand the scope of their analysis to examine transnational forces that affected the belligerent nations. Scholars are beginning to consider Michael Neiberg's caution that « a focus on nationality at the expense of other sources of identity clouds our understanding of the war »[1]. While national identities shaped those living through the war, the global nature of the conflict invariably created similar responses among those who experienced it. For instance, the call to arms of 1914 rallied populations in both the Allied and Central Powers, each claiming that their national existence was threatened. The resulting « societal mobilization » proved the power of national communities even as the commonality of that experience revealed that the next four years was a world war, and

1. Michael S. Neiberg, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I,* Cambridge, Belknap Press of Havard University Press, 2011, p. 5. Neiberg also explored the transnational nature of the war in Michael S. Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War: A Global History,* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2005, and Michael S. Neiberg, « Towards a Transnational History of World War I », *Canadian Military History,* 17, 3 (2008), p. 31-37. Akira Iriye addressed the Great War's place in a transnational approach in Akira Iriye, « The Historiographic Impact of the Great War », *Diplomatic History,* 38, 4 (2014), p. 751-762. Alan Kramer's review of new contributions to Great War scholarship offers a summary of books addressing the « global war » as well as an excellent listing of historiographical developments from around the world, see Alan Kramer, « Recent Historiography of the First World War-Part II », *Journal of Modern European History,* 12, 2 (2014), p. 155-161; for the first part, see Alan Kramer, « Recent Historiography of the First World War-Part I », *Journal of Modern European History,* 12, 1 (2014), p. 5-27.

not simply a collection of national ones[2]. Thus, the transnational experience of the war is one that exists because there are parallel (though not identical) reactions to ideas and events that permeated across national boundaries and identities. By connecting these reactions across the world, historians can begin to understand common threads between individuals and movements that reflect the larger shared experience of the war.

In Canada, the undue influence of competing memories of the First World War has made it difficult to place the Canadian experience within a larger worldwide conflict. Our experiences have been contentious almost since the war began in 1914. Although more recently « history from below » has highlighted numerous forgotten histories, historians can clearly distinguish two primary and divergent historiographical traditions between French and English Canada. English-speaking Canadians cemented the triumphant narrative of the war through celebrations of « national » battles like Vimy Ridge, progress towards independence such as our separate signature on the Treaty of Versailles, and ultimately, a Canadian contribution to victory in 1918. In contrast, Quebecois developed their own memory of the war that highlighted resistance against conscription, mistreatment within the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and the development of their own « national » consciousness distinct from the rest of Canada[3]. Both of these are legitimate ways of understanding the war, specific to a set of collective experiences, but they also exist in tandem. The « negative bond » between these two collective identities, in that each exists in part through disavowing the

2. John Horne, « Introduction: Mobilizing for 'total war' », in John Horne ed. *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 1.
3. See the recent historiographical overview of the *Canadian Historical Review:* Mark Osborne Humphries, « Between Commemoration and History: The Historiography of the Canadian Corps and Military Overseas »,*The Canadian Historical Review,* 95, 3 (September 2014), p. 384-397; Mourad Djebabla, « Historiographie francophone de la Première Guerre mondiale : écrire la Grande Guerre de 1914-1918 français au Canada et au Québec », The Canadian Historical Review, 95, 3 (September 2014), p. 407-416; Amy Shaw, « Expanding the Narrative: A First World War with Women, Children, and Grief », *Canadian Historical Review,* 95, 3 (2014), p. 398-406.

other, is a common historical phenomenon, though rarely does it coexist within the same nation-state[4]. Much ink has been spilled (or perhaps, pixels used) to explain the primacy of one memory of the war over the other, or to at least understand why both exist and perpetuate among Canadians today. Applying a wider lens to suitable case studies could help overcome these limitations without revising the important scholarship done to date.

One such case is French Canadian nationaliste Henri Bourassa. Both French and English scholarship acknowledges the journalist as a pivotal figure in Canada's history of the war and identifies him as our most vocal dissenter. Traditionally, historians have placed Bourassa's dissent within a national context that concentrates on his opposition to conscription and other domestic political concerns[5]. This article argues that, despite the tendency to understand his ideas as a purely Canadian reaction to the war, Bourassa shares similarities with non-Canadian movements that reflect the transnational war experience. His political and religious beliefs connected him to radical dissent in Britain as well as Pope Benedict XV in Rome. In comparing his arguments about the war's consequences, militarism, and the future of international relations to those of the British anti-war

4. Chris Lorenz examines this in Chris Lorenz, « Towards a theoretical framework for comparing historiographies: some preliminary considerations », *Historyka: studia metodologiczne* Special Issue, (2012), p. 30-31. Lorenz has also studied Quebec historical identity specifically, see Chris Lorenz, « Comparative historiography: Problems and perspectives », *History and Theory,* 38, 1 (1999), p. 25-39; and Chris Lorenz, « Double Trouble: A Comparison of the Politics of National History in Germany and in Quebec », in Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz eds. *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe,* Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 49-70.

5. There is a wealth of scholarship on Bourassa, ranging from specific works to inclusion in more general studies. Some definitive works among English and French scholars include, Elizabeth Armstrong, *Crisis of Quebec 1914-1918,* Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1937; Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa: La vie publique d'un grand Canadien,* Montréal, Éditions Chantecler, 1953; Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf: The Social Program of the Nationalists of Quebec 1900-1914,* Ottawa, Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1972; Sylvie Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuples élus: comparaison des ambitions nationale et impériale au Canada entre 1896 et 1920,* Sainte-Foy, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2002; Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa: Le fascinant destin d'un homme libre (1868-1914),* Québec, Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2013.

group, the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), and the Vatican, it is clear that Bourassa's resistance to the Canadian war effort was shaped as much by a transnational experience as it was by a local one.

BOURASSA'S POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Yet, it is important to remember that Bourassa still offered a uniquely French Canadian analysis of the war. In the pages of his newspaper, *Le Devoir*, Bourassa communicated a far different conception of the war than that of other newspapers and political commentators. It derived from his pre-war understanding of nationalism, Catholicism, and imperialism in a Canadian context. While many Canadians believed that pre-war disputes between French and English Canadians ought to be discarded in favour of a total war effort (especially in 1914), Bourassa viewed the war as another iteration of the same imperial system and English Canadian antagonism that had plagued Canada since its creation. The liberal nationalism and ultramontane Catholicism that shaped his prewar career consequently formed the basis of his wartime dissent.

His presence on the national stage began with his election victory under the Liberal banner in 1896. His caught the attention of the new Prime Minister, Wilfrid Laurier, who nurtured the young MP as his protégé over the next three years[6]. Under Laurier's guidance, Bourassa joined the delegation resolving the Manitoba School crisis over French language instruction, which eventually produced the Laurier-Greenway Agreement that upheld the status quo. Bourassa felt the French speaking Canadians deserved better protection in the western province, but accepted Laurier's concessions. Next, the Liberal leader appointed him secretary to the Anglo-American commission set on deciding the Alaskan boundary dispute. The talks collapsed, and Bourassa came away convinced that Britain would never

6. Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa,* p. 44.

adequately represent Canadian interests[7]. His concern deepened after the 1899 British invasion of the Boer Republics in present-day South Africa. Laurier's decision to allow Canadian volunteers to fight for the British set a dangerous precedent for the future. Canada was now obligated to help Britain in other foreign wars that concerned the Empire, but Canadian interests[8]. Bourassa could no longer accept Laurier's willingness to compromise with English Canada and Britain, especially at the expense of the nation's French speaking minority. For Henri Bourassa it proved a catalyst in his political career. His open dissent led to him leaving the Liberal Party to sit as an independent in 1899.

Afterwards, he followed his own vision of the Canadian nation and was now determined to communicate to Canadians a clearer understanding of their relations with the Empire and the relationship between the English majority and French minority[9]. This self-imposed duty pushed Bourassa to the margins of Canadian politics, but to the forefront of the public sphere where he sought out other French Canadians to shape a new future for their province and, they hoped, for their country. Bourassa helped create the Ligue Nationaliste along with Olivar Asselin, Armand Lavergne, Jules Fournier, and Omar Héroux in 1903[10]. Their ideology of *nationalisme* was the French Canadian vision of nationalism. The movement was deeply embedded in the intellectual currents of French Canada at the turn of the century. With Bourassa at the helm, they filled their political vessel with elements of British Liberalism, bilingual and bicultural Canadian nationalism, and the French Canadian drive to survive in North America. Yvan Lamonde has termed their ideas as a « dérivatif nationaliste » of Laurier's liberalism, since they too supported collective national values of equality, democracy, and economic intervention, but Laurier's Liberals and the nationalistes likely

7. *Ibid*., p. 56-57.
8. Henri Bourassa, *Grande-Bretagne et Canada : Questions actuelles,* Montréal, Imprimerie du Pionnier, 1901, p. 26-27.
9. Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa…*, p. 79.
10. Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf…*, p. 2.

would have disagreed over that distinction[11]. At the heart of the nationaliste position lay the bicultural and autonomous Canada where French Canadians had an equal say and where the two peoples lived in partnership free of imperial responsibilities.

In spite of parallels to American or British political traditions, Bourassa espoused a nationalist sentiment focused on Canada's uniquely French and English Canadian character, rather than its colonial heritage. His « nationally-imagined » community did not attach itself to the former motherlands of England or France[12]. Bourassa believed that Canada possessed a political culture that was a combination of French and English heritage and deserved expression in its own right. In his mind, the long history of French Canadians in North America left them best equipped to define this political culture and defend it. « Les Canadiens-français … n'ont d'autre patrie que le Canada » Bourassa wrote in 1903, « ils sont prêts à lui rendre tout ce qu'ils lui doivent ; mais n'estimant rien devoir à l'Angleterre ni à aucun autre pays, ils n'en attendent rien »[13]. He hoped to harness his people to a vision of a united Canada. Eventually, after a brief time in the Assemblée Nationale, the French Canadian politician turned to journalism and editorial-writing fulltime. He founded his paper *Le Devoir*, sparred with Laurier over the creation of the Canadian navy in 1910, helped ensure Laurier's 1911 election defeat, and spoke out against Ontario's discriminatory restriction of French language schooling in 1912. Bourassa continued to advocate his liberal nationaliste beliefs and link them to his French Canadian identity. During the war, those beliefs formed the foundation of his dissentious views of the Canadian war effort.

Liberalism and nationalism were two pillars of Bourassa's worldview, but the third was the most important: Ultramontane

11. Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire Sociale des Idées au Québec 1896-1929 vol. II,* Quebec, Éditions Fides, 2004, p. 194-195, 226.
12. In the sense of Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Modernism,* New York, Verso, 1991, p. 41.
13. Henri Bourassa, *Les Canadiens-français et l'Empire britannique,* Québec, Imprimerie S.A. Demers, 1903, p. 40.

Catholicism. Ultramontanism originally described location, as any Catholics north of the Swiss Alps were « over the mountain » from Rome. By the 19th century, it described all Catholics who looked to Rome for direction instead of other sources of authority. In their view of the world, there was no greater power than God and his representative on Earth, the Pope, was the voice of God in human affairs. Bourassa's relatives initiated him into ultramontane belief as a child and his devotion stayed with him throughout his life. For Bourassa, Catholicism was more than just an identity, it was an ideological system that greatly influenced his political views[14]. In 1910, at the 21st Eucharistic Congress in Montreal, Bourassa argued that language and religion were inseparable for French speakers in North America. They were engrained into their « racial » identity (today we would call this a cultural identity) and thus an integral element of French Canadian nationalism as well[15]. The « hierarchal relationship » between Bourassa's political and religious beliefs sometimes resulted in him moderating or silencing his opinions, but ultimately served as the basis for a religious French Canadian nationalism that guided his career and opinions[16]. His ultramontanism superseded his political beliefs, as God and the Church were more important to him—and to the world, he would argue—than the state or the nation. His religiosity influenced his views of Quebec society and Canadian politics and, as we will see, affected how he understood the unfolding international diplomacy of the First World War.

14. This distinction reflects the argument of Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie, « Modalities of Social Authority: Suggesting an Interface for Religious and Social History », *Histoires Sociales/Social History,* 71, 36 (May 2003), p. 15.
15. Henri Bourassa, *Religion, Langue, Nationalité : Discours prononcé à la séance de cloture du XXIe Congrès Eucharistique, à Montréal, le 10 septembre 1910,* Montréal, Imprimerie du Devoir, 1910, p. 3-4.
16. Sylvie Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuples élus…*, p. 19-26 et 37-124.

BOURASSA'S OPPOSITION TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The outbreak of a general European war in the summer of 1914 tested all of those beliefs, as Bourassa moderated his traditional position against military endeavours for the Empire. This partially because he experienced the first days of the war in German Alsace, where he was studying linguistic minorities in late July. The imminent hostilities forced him to leave through Belgium and then France before returning home. In France, he saw the *union sacrée* that brought together the bitterly divided political spectrum, and believed that the war offered the same opportunity for Canada to resolve the problems of the last decade[17]. Thus despite his long-standing stance against foreign wars, Bourassa initially believed that the conflict was a chance to unite Canadians as his nationalism demanded. In his editorials of 1914, he demanded a qualified war effort relative to Canada's capability and concessions from English Canada in regards to Ontario's discriminatory language-education law, Regulation 17. Bourassa's initial criticisms were moderate ones, but ultimately questioned the sanctity imbued on the war by its supporters even as he affirmed Canada's participation in it[18]. Equally, he worried about opposing the position of the Catholic Church in Quebec, which came out forcefully in favour of the war that autumn[19]. Bourassa, like so many others within the belligerent nations, was caught up in the popular public enthusiasm that marked its beginning.

17. Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa…*, p. 528-530; Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa…*, p. 503; and also Andre Bergevin, Cameron Nish, and Anne Bourassa, *Henri Bourassa: biographie, index des écrit, index de la correspondance, 1895-1924,* Montréal, Les Éditions de l'Action Nationale, 1966, p. XLVII.
18. This is communicated through Bourassa's editorials from August—September, such as Henri Bourassa, « En France et en Alsace », *Le Devoir,* 22 Août 1914, p. 1; Henri Bourassa, « Après la Guerre », *Le Devoir,* 2 Septembre 1914, p. 1; Henri Bourassa, « Le Devoir Nationale », *Le Devoir,* 8 Septembre 1914, p. 1; and his series on British diplomacy leading up to the war titled « Une Page d'Histoire » from 9-14 September.
19. René Durocher argues that the contrast between Bourassa's support for the war while still criticizing it emerged purely out of a desire to avoid any perceived conflict with Quebec bishops in 1914, see René Durocher, « Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918 », *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers,* 6 (1971), p. 248-275.

The journalist's initial support did not stop him from comprehensively dissecting the war's causes and consequently question the legitimacy of its alleged purpose. Bourassa rightfully believed that the causes of the war were far more complex than the narrative offered in Canadian newspapers and the House of Commons. War supporters in French and English Canada publicly championed the defence of Britain, France, and Belgium as the primary reason for Canadian participation[20]. That November, Bourassa presented to his readers another view of the war through the arguments of British socialist and Union of Democratic Control member, Noel Brailsford.

A noted left-wing British intellectual, Brailsford's career as a British political commentator stretched from the Boer War in 1899 to the Suez Crisis in 1956. Brailsford made a name for himself after joining the commission investigating the Balkans Wars in Macedonia, and subsequently helped author and edit the *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Cause and the Conduct of the Balkan Wars* published by the Carnegie Foundation in 1914[21]. His next book, *The War of Steel and Gold*, published in May 1914 examined the « armed peace » of Europe. In it, Brailsford condemned the British « balance of power » policy in Europe as intrinsically faulty. Its preservation, he argued, was not « self-sufficing » but represented a means to an end. The tensions between Great Powers Europe had faced over the last two decades sprang from the corruption of the balance of power principle, wherein the balance of power became an

20. R. Matthew Bray, « 'Fighting as an Ally': The English-Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War », *The Canadian Historical Review,* 61, 2 (1980), p. 141-68; Cook and Brown, *A Nation Transformed…*, p. 212-13; Mason Wade, *The French Canadians 1760-1945*, Toronto, Macmillan Company, 1956, p. 648-653.
21. Baron d'Estournelles de Constant, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars,* Washington, D.C., Carnegie Foundation, 1914.

end unto itself[22]. Thus, when the war broke out, Brailsford had already made a name for himself as a left-wing commentator dissecting British imperialism and the complex Balkan crises. He joined the UDC alongside other well-known British leftists, and became influential enough to be included in A.J.P. Taylor's history of British « trouble-makers »—a group of political dissenters with whom Bourassa might have found common purpose, though not common ideology.[23]

In his editorials, Bourassa does not refer to Brailsford as an outsider or radical but merely introduces him as a British writer. A recent Brailsford article in the *Contemporary Review* was unlike anything Bourassa might have read in the pages of Canadian newspapers. The French Canadian recited Brailsford's argument that Germany's invasion of Belgium did not cause the war[24]. Instead, the Serbian alliance with Russia was a thorn in Austria's side that precipitated the July Crisis. Germany, in turn, responded to Russian aggression and launched a defensive war[25]. According to Brailsford, and subsequently Bourassa,

22. Henry Noel Brailsford, *The War of Steel and Gold; a study of armed peac,* London, G. Bell & Sons, 10th edition, 1918, p. 29-30. It was originally published in May 1914. In later editions, he emphasized that colonial and economic forces had led Europe towards a general war. For instance, « War could never have come about save for these sordid colonial and economic issues [...] The stake lies outside Europe, though the war is fought on its soil », *Ibid*., p. 338.
23. A.J.P. Taylor, *The Trouble-Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792-1939,* Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1958.
24. H. N. Brailsford, « The Empire of the East », *Contemporary Review,* 116 (1914), p. 334-45. His article was also incorporated into a Union of Democratic Control pamphlet, see H. N. Brailsford, *Origins of the Great War,* Union of Democratic Control Pamphlet No. 4 (1914). Bourassa eventually republished the article as well, see Henri Bourassa, *The Foreign Policy of Great Britain,* Montreal, Le Devoir, 1915, p. 37-47.
25. Henri Bourassa, « L'Orientation de la Politique Anglaise », *Le Devoir,* 28 Octobre 1914, p. 1. Interestingly, Durocher cites a letter from Bourassa to Bishop Gauthier from 6 Novembre 1914 that a reliable source had told Bourassa that « l'une des dernières paroles prononcées par Pie X avant sa mort, c'est que "la Russie est la grande coupable" », see Durocher, « Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre… », p. 256. It is likely that this affected Bourassa's acceptance of Brailford's arguments. Equally, the Papacy irrationally feared Russian control of Constantinople and setting up an « Orthodox St. Peter's », see John F. Pollard, *The Unknown Pope: Benedict XV (1914-1922) and the Pursuit of Peace,* London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1999, p. 90-91.

Russia was the isolated Entente Power and agitator that pitted Serbia against Austria, drawing the other Great Powers into a European-wide conflict for its own political machinations and economic benefit[26]. Ironically, Brailsford wrote, if the Entente won and Germany, Austria and Turkey were crushed, Russia would control the Dardanelles straits in Turkey and sit on top of Britain's road to India. Then, he argued, imperialists would propose that only a strong Germany could balance the threat of Russia[27]. As historians, we know now that neither Brailsford nor Bourassa were absolutely correct in their assessment of the international situation. Nor did they seek to alleviate Germany's blame for attacking Belgium, but rather discerned complexity in the political issues underlying the war's outbreak rather than the monocausal emphasis presented in patriotic rhetoric.

By the second year of the war, Bourassa had grown disillusioned with Canada's participation and his fellow Canadians. His criticism had caused a bitter reaction among the war's supporters. A mob prevented him from speaking in December 1914 when he tried to express his views. « The only serious aspect of the situation is the marked growth of intolerant and arrogant jingoism » he wrote of the event, « there is, for all true Canadians, a danger to be more dreaded than the expansion of German militarism in Europe: it is the moral conquest of Canada by Prussianism under false British colours »[28]. The first major Canadian battle at Ypres in April 1915, and the sinking of the civilian liner, the *RMS Lusitania*, by German U-boats in May, intensified support for the war as the « Great Adventure » turned into a « Great Crusade » against Germany[29]. For Bourassa, the willingness to support

26. Henri Bourassa, « Les Responsabilités de la Russie », *Le Devoir,* 29 Octobre 1914, p. 1.
27. H. N. Brailsford, « The Empire of the East… », p. 344.
28. Henri Bourassa, *The Duty of Canada at the Present Hour,* Montreal, Le Devoir, 1915, p. 4. For a description of the event, see Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa…*, p. 521-522.
29. Ian Miller, *Our Glory & our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War,* Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2002, p. 15-66; see also Paul Maroney, « 'The Great Adventure': The Context and Ideology of Recruiting in Ontario, 1914–17 », *Canadian Historical Review,* 77, 1 (1996), p. 62-98.

the war no matter the consequence only further underscored its dangerous potential. He saw transformations in Canada and the world because of the war's unquestioning acceptance of militarism and price of victory at any cost.

His own concerns aligned with those of the Union of Democratic Control in Britain. In August 1914, political and intellectual opponents to Britain's war effort had founded the UDC amidst popular enthusiasm for the European conflict. They believed that a secretive British foreign policy had condemned their country to answer a call to arms from France and Belgium without the consent of the British people. Foreign policy, they argued, ought to be under the control of voters and thus under « democratic control »[30]. Its executive consisted of radical liberals and socialists, many of whom had offered opposition to British imperialism in the years before the war. The most vocal voices of the UDC, such as Bertrand Russell, E.D. Morel, and Noel Brailsford, wrote prolifically and crafted a clear vision of peace during wartime when so many others could not turn their gaze from the French battlefields. Primarily an organization of social elites for social elites, it still rapidly expanded across Britain as opposition to the war spread.

It is little wonder that Bourassa found solidarity with the men and women of the UDC during the war years. Much like the French Canadian dissident, they offered a political and intellectual opposition to the war based in their pre-war positions that struck at the heart of their nation's justification for the bloodshed. The UDC condemned the war as a consequence of rampant imperialism and militarism, not merely defence against a German menace. Their radical advocacy for peace and « democratic control » struck a chord with the French Canadian nationalist. Bourassa also wanted Canadians to have control over their foreign policy and participate in an international arena not confined by the demands of Empires. He admired these « hommes de

30. Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 33.

haute valeur, prêts à risquer leur popularité et leurs chance de succès personnel, à rompre leurs attaches de parti et leurs associations d'intérêts, pour défendre une liberté légitime et soutenir un principe ou une idée »[31]. He could have very well been describing his own position in wartime Canada. Bourassa's beliefs closely mirrored those of the UDC, and there is no doubt he was inspired by their writing from reading their pamphlets. In both Canada and Britain, war supporters claimed that the war would not end until Germany's destruction and that only eliminating Prussian militarism would bring peace in Europe. Both the UDC and Bourassa mocked that goal an impossibly idealistic view of continental Europe. Germany would never be destroyed, unless the Allied nations—the so-called champions of civilization—decided to kill every man, woman and child in Germany. Even if they somehow accomplished that brutal task, militarism would still thrive among the Allied states. Bourassa warned that until citizens of Canada and Britain woke up to the « ignorance » and « invincible indolence » of imperialism, they would never truly understand the virtues of British civilization to which the war supporters claimed loyalty[32]. For Bourassa, it was the UDC that symbolized the best Britain had to offer, and he praised them accordingly. They evoked the same principles of liberalism that Bourassa cherished.

On the other side of Bourassa's ideological coin, he found another international voice that envisioned an end to the conflict. The Great War's first anniversary was lamented in the Vatican, where Pope Benedict XV grieved the war that had marked his ascendance to the Papacy in 1914. On 28 July, exactly a year after Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Benedict released an *Aspotolic Exhortation* to the belligerent nations. The Pope was saddened that his advice to end the conflict had gone unheeded. « May this cry » he hoped, « prevailing over the dreadful clash of

31. Henri Bourassa, « La Saine Opinion Anglaise », *Le Devoir,* 12 Juin 1915, p. 1.
32. *Ibid*.

arms, reach unto the peoples who are now at war »[33]. The Pope's appeal, addressed to all those involved, was couched in Christian morality, but he also reminded them of the « tremendous responsibility of peace and war ». It echoed the Pope's letter to Cardinal Vannutelli in May, when he noted that « the war continues to ensanguine Europe, and not even do men recoil from means of attack, on land and on sea, contrary to the laws of humanity and to international law »[34]. The distinction was an important one. It signalled the new direction for the Vatican on the international stage, which under Benedict's predecessor Pius x had languished[35]. The Pope's missives reinforced the value of international law, and above all, moderation and compromise, as a means of ending the war.

In an editorial reply that August, Bourassa thanked the Sovereign Pontiff for having given his consoling words to humanity[36]. Pope Benedict asked only that the nations of the world for peace rather than war. The devout Catholic Bourassa had nothing but praise for the wisdom of the Vatican. To Bourassa's ultramontane thinking, the Roman Pontiff was the only figure who could take on the role of international arbitrator and resolve the terrible crisis of the Great War. Few others shared that effusive praise, Bourassa wrote, because the worst transgressors against peace had turned away from the Papacy. That summer, he pointed to larger moral and social « weaknesses » that had corrupted the world, such as faltering family relationships, ignoring of social duty, individual egoism, class warfare and the thirst for riches. Bourassa looked to the world that ignored the Pope's message

33. *Exhortation* Allorchè Fummo *to the Belligerent Peoples and to their Leaders,* in Reverend Harry C. Koenig, ed. *Principles for Peace Selections From Papal Documents Leo xiii to Pius xii*, Washington, National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943, p. 180. Originally written in Italian.
34. *Letter era nostro proposito to Cardinal S. Vannutelli,* in *Ibid*., p. 170. Originally written in Italian.
35. Peter C. Kent and John F. Pollard, « A Diplomacy Unlike Any Other: Papal Diplomacy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries », in Peter C. Kent and John F. Pollard eds. *Papal Diplomacy in the Modern Age,* London, Praeger, 1994, p. 16-17.
36. Henri Bourassa, « L'Appel du Pape », *Le Devoir,* 3 Août, 1915, p. 1.

and saw « une humanité sans âme »[37]. The passion and drastic tone of his words emphasized how seriously he took Papal position. Pope Benedict XV was not simply another contributor to the array of opinions on the war. Here was the word of God given to his people.

In comparing two inspirations for Bourassa's beliefs, there is an obvious disconnect between them. Noel Brailsford, whose arguments Bourassa had repeated almost verbatim in November 1914, was a well-known socialist. UDC members were themselves part of the moral and social « weakening » that Bourassa described opposing Rome. However, it was the fusion of liberal and conservative beliefs that had shaped Bourassa's career, having once been anointed a « castor rouge » by Wilfrid Laurier (a beaver being the sign of Ultramontanes, and red the colour of liberals)[38]. It was no different in regards to these international forces. As Sylvie Lacombe has described, Bourassa had a hierarchy of values that allowed him to hold differing beliefs about the world[39]. Similarly, he had created a hierarchy that placed the Papacy above the UDC but the UDC still ranked above war supporters in terms of rational thinking about the war. Importantly, the UDC essentially affirmed what Pope Benedict said about the war, although using different words, which made their arguments even more compelling for Bourassa. Both worked for the same goal: to eliminate war.

The context of 1915 helps explains why Bourassa found them appealing. After a year of nominally support the war, he found the rhetoric of war supporters in Canada increasingly hypocritical. They claimed to wage their war against German militarism, yet their every action proved to Bourassa that they cared little for the consequences of war on Canadian society. It was Pope Benedict XV and the UDC that truly waged war on war, advocating for the abolishment of war as an international practice. Their phrasing was different, but Bourassa found in both a

37. Henri Bourassa, « La Réponse au Pape », *Le Devoir*, 6 Août, 1915, p. 1.
38. Réal Belanger, *Henri Bourassa…*, p. 44, fn. 2.
39. Sylvie Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuples élus…*, p. 124.

forward thinking view of the world dedicated to changing the broken international system. E.D. Morel explained in his overview of the UDC that there were « great forces, some measurable, some intangible [...] [drawing] civilised people closer to one another, to accentuate the mutuality of human needs. [...] The whole tendency of modern development emphasises the interdependence of civilised peoples »[40]. Bourassa would have read much the same message in the Pope's words:

> the equilibrium of the world, and the prosperity and assured tranquillity of nations rest upon mutual benevolence and respect for the rights and dignity of others [...] may they resolve from now henceforth to entrust the settlement of their differences, not to the sword's edge, but to reasons of equity and justice[41].

The vision that compelled the UDC campaign to change British foreign policy and European relations mirrored the worldly Catholic position espoused by Pope Benedict XV. They all wanted see an end to the brutal war and the creation of a new system to avoid future ones, whether they were left-wing radicals in the UDC or the head of a divided Catholic flock. As a liberal Ultramontane Catholic, Bourassa found common cause with both. How to fix the broken system was no easy task, and the final section of this article will address the link between the UDC, Pope Benedict XV to Bourassa's views on it.

A NEW INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

For all of them, the war proved that permanent peace could not be achieved through military means or by an international system that required force of arms to succeed. The solution was a new form of global governance: a league of nations that

40. E.D. Morel, « Union of Democratic Control », in E.D. Morel, *Truth and War,* London, National Labour Press, 1918, p. 175.
41. *Exhortation* Allorchè Fummo, in Koenig, *Principles for Peace,* p. 181-182. Bourassa translated the passage into French, Henri Bourassa, « Le Guerre a la Guerre II : Nationalisme et Imperialisme », *Le Devoir,* 10 Août 1915, p. 1.

could ensure their own collective security. In Britain, there was a serious divide between league supporters over its form, particularly in regards to national sovereignty. The Bryce Group, a private meeting of journalists, politicians and intellectuals headed by esteemed politician and former Ambassador to the United States, Lord Bryce, coalesced in October 1914 to draft an outline for a « league of peace » that could form after the war[42]. Its member included some who had already joined the UDC, but unlike the anti-war movement, the Bryce Group operated behind closed doors. The resulting Bryce Proposals called for an association of nations that could mediate and avoid conflicts but have limited powers over its nation state members. Disagreement over how much power the League should have caused UDC members to leave the group, and instead they demanded a world federation. After the UDC began producing booklets expressing their own vision of the League in mid-1915, the Bryce Group changed its name to the League of Nations Society and launched a public campaign to rally worldwide support around the idea[43].

Although the Bryce Group's ideas ultimately won out over those of the UDC, Bourassa clearly drew inspiration from the British radicals in the UDC rather than the League of Nations Society. The UDC challenged the notion of sovereignty itself and adamantly argued that national sovereignty had to give way to the general interest of humanity. The league must limit sovereignty to achieve its goals since, as Noel Brailsford wrote in 1917, « absolute sovereignty means irremediable anarchy »[44]. The international system itself also required change. The League proposed by the Bryce Group relied on military force to enforce peace. Pacifists

42. Martin David Dubin, « Toward the Concept of Collective Security: The Bryce Group's 'Proposals for the Avoidance of War,' 1914-1917 », 24, 2 (Spring, 1970), p. 288-318.

43. James M. Donahue, In Search of a Global, Godly Order: *The Ecumenical Movement and the Origins of the League of Nations, 1908-1918,* Thèse de Ph.D., University of Notre Dame, Département de philosophie, 2015, p. 265-284. Donahue's work on League of Nation societies relied on links with Protestant churches, which is an interesting contrast to Bourassa's devout Catholicism, but his interest in international reform predates the public League campaign of October 1915.

44. Henry Noel Brailsford, *A league of nations,* New York, Macmillan, 1917, p. 115.

within the UDC could not accept a system that further propagated the use of military force. They believed that militarism was one of the causes of international instability, and the current war had already demonstrated the failure of military power as a deterrent. The « balance of power » policy that maintained a relative peace in Europe since the 1815 Congress of Vienna had also led to an arms race, as each nation struggle to maintain military parity with their neighbour[45]. The changes the UDC demanded were radical ones, but ones that seemed necessary to them given the war caused by the current system. « Those who have told [the people] that in the preservation of the 'Balance of Power,' and in the multiplication of colossal armaments lay the one chance of international peace, » declared one text, « have been utterly, hopelessly, calamitously wrong »[46]. The scale of the conflict proved that the solution had to be just as drastic and monumental.

The ferocity and passion of UDC writing is mirrored in Bourassa's own work. The first major publication of UDC ideas concerning the new international system began in 1915, though they had appeared in abbreviated forms even in pamphlets from 1914. The exact moment when Bourassa read UDC booklets is difficult to pinpoint, but their influence on the French Canadian emerges from a study of his work as UDC ideas appear, but offered with a Canadian perspective.

In January 1916, Bourassa declared that he no longer accepted the war's legitimacy after one and half years of dismissal and attacks from English Canada. A month earlier in December 1915, he had qualified his backing of the Canadian war effort in a booklet, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre ?*, writing that he would only continue supporting the war if he was sure that the war did not threaten the peace and equilibrium of the world[47]. He evoked the

45. Union of Democratic Control, *The Balance of Power,* London, Union of Democratic Control, 1915, p. 24.
46. Union of Democratic Control, *The Morrow of the War,* London, Union of Democratic Control, 1915, p. 13.
47. Henri Bourassa, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre ? La défense nationale, la révolution impérialiste, le tribut à l'Empire,* Montréal, 1915, p. 253.

same criticism that the UDC and Pope Benedict XV had offered over the last year, and within a month of its publication, he decided that the conflict no longer met that standard[48]. To readers of *Le Devoir*, there was little substantial change in the content of Bourassa's editorials, which had been denouncing the terrible transformations of the war since its beginning. Now he had the freedom to express his dissent against the war unequivocally and, like the UDC, turn his eyes to the war's aftermath. That spring, he published another booklet based on a series of lectures he delivered in March and April 1916, titled *Hier, Aujourd'hui, Demain*. It more forcefully repeated an argument he had first introduced in *Que devons-nous*, that the war represented an « imperialist revolution » for Canadians and the world. To Bourassa, the militarism that demanded the subservience of all aspects of Canada's economic, political and social structures in the name of the war effort was simply imperialist ideology deformed by the pressures of wartime[49]. He worried that those changes would be permanent ones, and a significant portion of the book was devoted to the problem of militarism. The « solutions of tomorrow » required a new international system and a changing role for Canada. He proposed different possible paths for Canada, ranging from annexation by the United States, independence, or an imperial association within the Empire[50]. Each of the solutions that Bourassa described places Canada as part of a larger community of nations that works against militarism. He described a world similar to the one in UDC booklets and outlined necessary changes for many of the same reasons.

That Bourassa and the UDC moved in parallel opposing the war is abundantly clear, and all of the examples are far too numerous for listing here, but there is one significant divergence. He shared their critique of the international system that

48. He announced it in a speech celebrating the anniversary of *Le Devoir*, see Henri Bourassa, *Le* Devoir *et la guerre, le conflit des races. Discours prononcé au banquet des amis du* DEVOIR, *le 12 janvier 1916,* Montréal, 1916.
49. Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd'hui, demain,* Montréal, 1916, p. 107.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

had caused the war and ensured its continuance, which coloured his analysis of the war's events,[51] but arrived at another conclusion from it. Indeed, the crumbling international order required a greater power to control the impulses of nations, but Bourassa turned to Pope Benedict XV as the sole moral power capable of surpassing human interests and defending the common good of all people. Only the Pope could guide the world safely towards an unbiased peace:

> Que la paix se fasse demain, ou que les nations, obstinées à leur perte, poursuivent leur oeuvre de suicide et de dévastation, ce n'est ni la paix allemande, ni la paix française, ni la paix anglaise, ni la paix américaine, ni la paix impérialiste, ni la paix démocratique, qui mettra fin au massacre: ce sera la paix chrétienne[52].

Bourassa used UDC ideas to confirm his own Ultramontane perspective of the world. It is on this hinge that Bourassa's resistance to the war ultimately turned, though it lay entwined with the UDC perspective. Both wanted to eliminate militarism from the world and create a long-lasting peace, though Bourassa inevitably sided with his spiritual leader as to the best way to accomplish it.

The final years of the war only affirmed the opposition that had developed to it, especially from Bourassa's view in Canada. Militarism became even more dangerous as the Prime Minister Robert Borden's government moved to enact forced military service in 1917. The conscription crisis revealed the disastrous impact of a more militant Canadian society, as old and new divisions between French and English Canada emerged. No French Canadian should be forced to fight for the English Canadian majority, Bourassa declared throughout 1917, solely

51. See for example, Bourassa's thoughts on the chance for peace in 1916, in Geoff Keelan, « Catholic Neutrality: The Peace of Henri Bourassa », *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada,* 22, 1 (2011), p. 99-132.
52. Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix,* Montréal, Le Devoir, 1918, p. 146.

because they controlled the democratic process[53]. After the December 1917 federal election, Quebec had become the last bastion of the comparatively moderate Laurier Liberals against the pro-conscription government, underlining the isolation of French Canadians and in Bourassa's eyes, the insidious power of militarism[54]. He had never imagined before 1914 that Canada's cultural fault lines could produce such fractures. After riots broke out across Quebec over Easter Weekend over the enforcement of conscription, Prime Minister Borden passed an Order-in-Council that prohibited the press from publishing, or an individual from publicly expressing, « any adverse statement, report, or opinion concerning the action of the allied nations in the prosecution of the war »[55]. Bourassa voluntarily ceased his writing in the pages of *Le Devoir* and spent the last months of the war in careful silence[56].

For historians, the connections between Bourassa and international voices are not altogether novel—Bourassa's liberalism and Catholicism are topics already covered in the literature[57]. However, those works do not capture the impact they had on Bourassa and the conclusions we can draw from it. Bourassa was a part of a larger reaction to the First World War that transcended national and ideological boundaries. Outside of wartime, he would have occupied little common ground with the members of the UDC, yet from 1914 to 1918, he read their works and adapted them for his Canadian audience. The wartime experience of dissenters followed similar paths, which suggests the transnational character of opposing the war. They reacted to the same global

53. See Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription,* Montréal, Éditions du Devoir, 1917.
54. Henri Bourassa, « "L'Isolement" des Canadien-Français : Fausses manoeuvres de conciliation », *Le Devoir,* 26 Décembre, 1917, p. 1.
55. A description of the law is found in Canada, *Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada,* 53, 1 (1918), p. 23.
56. Henri Bourassa, « L'ordre Public doit être Maintenu », *Le Devoir,* 5 Avril, 1918, p. 1.
57. For example, Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa—Catholic Critic,* Ottawa, Canadian Historical Association, 1976, or for a direct comparison with British liberalism, see James Kennedy, *Liberal Nationalisms Empire, State, and Civil Society in Scotland and Quebec,* Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013.

forces that swayed the belligerent nations of the world, whether they were radical Britons or Catholic French Canadians.

These links suggest that Bourassa possessed a comprehensive worldview that extended beyond his homeland and stress that the Canadian history of the war has been limited by questions of Canadian nationalism. Although currently the connections between Bourassa and the UDC are somewhat circumstantial, as their ideas mirror each other, but a more comprehensive reading of Bourassa's personal correspondence might reveal deeper links. Likewise, other disciplines might offer unique insights into Bourassa and his position as a public intellectual, and not simply a homegrown dissenter. For instance, Noel Brailsford is a particularly compelling comparison with the French Canadian journalist, given the difference in their ideological views but similarities in their views on the war. Scholars of International Relations (IR) have placed Brailsford as a radical but important voice that advocated social change through education, questioned international structures, and sought to understand the role of human nature within international systems. His work could be considered an international political economy approach to IR, a multidisciplinary method that incorporates elements of politics, economics, history, and philosophy[58]. Minus his predisposition towards Catholicism, does Bourassa fit a similar description ? Is there a place for Bourassa as a proponent of an IR theory ? Regardless of the answer, it is evident that Bourassa offered an analysis of the war and the world that was far deeper than simply criticisms of imperialism or the advocacy of French Canadian nationalism. Even his Catholicism, a staple of French Canadian identity and the study of Bourassa, reveals a larger web of beliefs about the complex issues facing Canadians during the war years. He sought to understand Canada's place in a changing world and present to his readers exactly what role a nation like Canada could play in it. Through his analysis, he grappled with the same problems

58. Peter Lamb, « Henry Noel Brailsford's Radical International Relations Theory », *International Relations* 25, 4 (2011), p. 493-494.

of the international system facing others around the world, and unsurprisingly, expressed similar solutions. Few would have recognized Bourassa as an important figure, but he remains a Canadian looking out to the world who communicated his views about it. At a time when Canada was taking its first steps as an autonomous nation, Bourassa was one of the few public figures to explore what that might mean.