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**Battling a Trojan Horse : The Ordre de Jacques Cartier and
the Knights of Columbus, 1917-1965**

James Trepanier

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the M.A. Degree in History

Department of History
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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Abstract

This study examines the creation and growth of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier (OJC) - a French-Canadian Catholic secret society created in Ottawa - and its opposition to the Knights of Columbus - a Catholic fraternity created in Connecticut in the late nineteenth century but which had expanded into Ontario and Quebec by the early twentieth century – from 1917 to 1965. Historians of French-Canadian nationalism in the early to mid twentieth century have largely passed over the Ordre de Jacques Cartier and the Knights of Columbus in their studies of Catholic movements and associations. The few studies that have looked at the OJC have downplayed the influence that the Knights of Columbus had on the secret society and its campaigns. This study seeks to fill that gap in looking at how the OJC anti-Knight campaign reflects shifts in French-Canadian nationalism and conception of French-Canadian identity. More specifically, by taking a closer look at the attitudes of the OJC's leaders towards the Knights of Columbus, a more nuanced picture of relations between French-Canadian nationalists in Quebec and Ontario emerges.

This study argues that the OJC's campaign against the Knights reveals the shifting priorities both of its Ottawa-based leadership and its growing Quebec membership base. Differences of opinion over the Knights of Columbus in Quebec and Ontario from the end of the Great War are symptomatic of the eventual schism between neo-nationalists in Quebec and French-Canadian nationalists in Ontario that came to the fore in the 1960s with the Quiet Revolution in Quebec and the dissolution of the OJC. Using both the archives

of the Knights of Columbus and the OJC, this study will analyze the increasing emphasis on territorial autonomy in Quebec by nationalists as well as how lay movements both preceded, and were part of, shifting nationalist discourse in the mid-twentieth century.

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Introduction

In April of 1951, a special article in *Le Devoir* reported that the second edition of a book by the paper's own Ottawa political correspondent, Pierre Vigeant, was experiencing great sales.¹ The first edition of *Knights of Columbus: Que sont les 'Chevaliers de Colomb'?* had sold over 12,000 copies in Quebec, and the second edition was selling out fast. Who was buying the polemical tract? The article didn't specify, though it did cite the topic – the Knights of Columbus and their status in Quebec – as very topical and popular with readers.² Vigeant's tract, which tried to pass itself as a history of the Catholic men's fraternal association, was in fact a thinly veiled attack on the Order. For Vigeant, the Knights of Columbus, and their link to an American headquarters, presented many parallels to the relationship between the provincial and federal governments in Canada:

L'histoire des Chevaliers de Colomb au sein de la puissante société irlando-américaine ressemble étrangement à celle des Canadiens français de la réserve québécoise au sein de la Confédération. Ils doivent se battre pour obtenir la moindre bribe de français.³

Where did this animosity come from? What was it based on and who was interested in reading such attacks? Vigeant, in fact, had a hidden agenda. As a member of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier (OJC), a French-Canadian Catholic secret society created in Ottawa in 1926, he was leading what was the strongest push in a long standing battle by the OJC against the Knights of Columbus.

¹ *Le Devoir*, 28 avril, 1951, press clipping found in National Archives of Canada (NAC), *Fonds Ordre de Jacques Cartier* (OJC), K. of C. Brochure de l'Action Nationale (articles de Pierre Vigeant), 1951-1954, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145.

² Ibid.

³ Pierre Vigeant, *Knights of Columbus: Que sont les 'Chevaliers de Colomb'?* 2e édition, (Montréal: L'Action Nationale, 1951), 15.

What would create enough animosity in the OJC to fight a fellow Catholic organization for so long? What does this reveal about the concerns of French-Canadian Catholic nationalists throughout the period? Would the Knights, a patriotic fraternal organization started in the United States, survive nationalist opposition in Quebec and Ontario? What differences, if any, emerged in nationalist leaders' responses to the Knights in Ontario and Quebec and their approach to French-Canadian survival? This study will argue that the Knights of Columbus not only provided the source of inspiration for creating the Ordre de Jacques Cartier, but that the growth of the Knights throughout the mid-twentieth century would be a constant concern for the OJC and its changing strategies towards the Knights reflect the larger shifts occurring within the OJC leadership and French-Canadian nationalism. Ultimately, the seed that provided the idea for the Ordre de Jacques Cartier – the influence of the Knights of Columbus – would also form part of the root of its eventual implosion in the 1960s.

Historians of French-Canadian nationalism in the early to mid twentieth century have, until recently, largely passed over the Ordre de Jacques Cartier in their studies of nationalist movements. The few studies that have looked at the OJC have downplayed the influence that the Knights of Columbus had on the secret society and its campaigns. By taking a closer look at the attitudes of the OJC's leaders towards the Knights of Columbus, however, a more nuanced picture of relations between French-Canadian nationalists in Quebec and Ontario emerges. The experience of French-Canadians in Ontario in the First World War made them profoundly suspicious of a Catholic association they saw as largely Irish and whose leaders loudly supported the elimination of French Catholic schooling through the Regulation XVII legislation of the

provincial government of James Whitney. Learning from experience, they created their own Catholic secret association dedicated to advancing the cause of French-Canadians – the Ordre de Jacques Cartier. As this new society expanded into Quebec, however, tensions arose over the direction of French-Canadian nationalism as many of their colleagues in Quebec had profoundly different experiences than the minority French-Canadian population of Ontario.

As the OJC grew, faced challenges and eventually faltered in the 1960s over the issue of Quebec separation and the autonomy of Quebec within the Order, the Knights of Columbus remained a key factor in their operations, campaigns and inspiration. The ideological thread to the OJC's opposition to the Knights of Columbus changed, however, with the larger shifts in society and nationalist thinking. Their reasons for opposing the Knights of Columbus shifted from the distinctively Ontario-based experiences of the OJC's founders to a more economic-minded form of nationalism in the 1930s and finally to a more autonomist and aggressive form of nationalism sweeping Quebec in the 1950s as a new generation of nationalists came to the fore. Though the OJC's fight against this "nouveau cheval de Troie" was ultimately a failure, the clash between these two Catholic fraternal societies offers a compelling glimpse of changes happening within French-Canadian Catholic associations and the nationalist movement in the mid twentieth century.⁴

Jumping to revolution? Historiography and the post-war era

While French-Canadian historiography has traditionally looked at the structural, ideological and economic changes sweeping Quebec in the years following the Second

⁴ NAC, *OJC*, Bulletin mensuel du 1er janvier 1946 à juin-juillet 1958, MG 98 I98 Vol. 26 – *Bulletin* 1947-1948 no. 10 (juin-juillet 1948), "Organismes étrangers" 2-3.

World War and preceding the Quiet Revolution as symptomatic of the coming changes of the 1960s, the study of the role of Catholic lay movements in this period of changing ideas of French-Canadian identity is still very much in development. Thus, an increased understanding of both the OJC and the Knights of Columbus and their rise and decline in the period would contribute to historical understanding of changes and continuities in nationalism in Quebec and French Canada. Some historians and political scientists have rightfully lamented that, as a result of the transformative changes of the Quiet Revolution, the historical narrative - focused on the 1960s - neglects the post-war period in a manner that, in the words of G.-Raymond Laliberté, makes it seem as if “on avait à pieds joints sauté de la Première Guerre mondiale à la Révolution tranquille.”⁵ Just how have historians and social scientists and historians interpreted the period, and how would an understanding of the Knights and OJC contribute to existing studies on French-Canadian nationalism?

Any study that extends over forty years of history naturally covers a lot of historiographical ground. Thematically, this study will contribute to research on French-Canadian nationalism as it relates to shifting relationships between the francophone populations of Ontario and Quebec and their conception of what it meant to be “French-Canadian” in terms of loyalty to a religion, territorially defined space or something more organic. It will also examine the impact of growing Quebec nationalism (which leads eventually to a Quebec sovereigntist movement) on the way Catholic lay associations interpreted French-Canadian identity. A third area that this study will add nuance to is the

⁵ G.-Raymond Laliberté, *Une société secrète: l'Ordre de Jacques Cartier* (Montreal: Hurtubise HMH, 1983), 14.

currently scant knowledge of Catholic lay associations such as the Knights of Columbus and the Ordre de Jacques Cartier.

In recent work on nationalist leader Lionel Groulx, historian Michel Bock has challenged traditional interpretations of Groulx's conception of French-Canada.⁶ Bock argues that, contrary to what is commonly accepted in academic interpretations of Groulx's vision of French-Canadian nationalism, Groulx actually had quite an organic, broad definition of French-Canadian culture and identity and how best to protect it. Indeed, Bock argues that Groulx, like many nationalists of his period, had a vision of French-Canada as an organic whole, above the limitations of political or territorial structures later imposed by a new generation of Québécois nationalists. All that was required was to identify with the inheritors of the traditionalist, French and Catholic heritage, regardless of where it was on the continent.⁷ Groulx's conception of French Canada was profoundly influenced by his experiences with francophone communities in Ontario during the schools crisis of the First World War.⁸ While Bock does identify the Ordre de Jacques Cartier as sympathetic towards the nationalist leader through its fundraising campaigns to help his work in the 1930s, he does not fully explore the relationship between Groulx's nationalism and the ideology and activity of the OJC.⁹ This study will seek to push Bock's analysis of Groulx's relationship with French-Canadian minorities by developing his role in shaping the activities of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier, particularly in their campaign against the Knights of Columbus.

⁶ Michel Bock, *Quand la nation débordait les frontières : Les minorités françaises dans la pensée de Lionel Groulx* (Montréal : Editions Hurtubise HMH, 2004).

⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁸ Ibid., 244-256.

⁹ Ibid., 211.

Bock's intellectual history of Groulx is an example of the recent resurgence of research on changes within French-Canadian nationalism in the early to mid twentieth century. Indeed, the specificity of his study is indicative of an increasingly sophisticated field of research on French-Canadian identity and nationalism. On a more general level, historians have started to analyze relationships between French-Canadian communities in light of the 'rupture' that occurred in French-Canadian identity with the Quiet Revolution. In his work on mutations within nationalist thought in Quebec after the Second World War, historian Michael D. Behiels, contends that the period saw the rise of two separate ideological camps: neo-nationalists and neo-liberals. The neo-liberals were grouped around the journal *Cité Libre* and allied with the social science faculty of the Université Laval, while the neo-nationalists were grouped around *Le Devoir* and the history department of the Université de Montréal. Behiels argues that both the neo-nationalists and neo-liberals in Quebec saw state intervention as an important step to improve Quebec, but for different reasons. Neo-nationalists sought to use the state to strengthen the French-Canadian nation, while liberals wanted to increase individual rights and freedoms.¹⁰ Products of a growing middle class in Quebec with increasing levels of technical and theoretic education in the social sciences, Behiels argues that both liberals and neo-nationalists sought to apply this new knowledge to the state, though they had different conceptions of the French-Canadian polity, with the neo-nationalists increasingly relying on the Quebec state to protect their language and culture.¹¹

In a 1993 collection of articles on francophone history in Ontario, historian Pierre Savard traced the evolution of the relationship between francophones in Ontario and

¹⁰ Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec's Quiet Revolution: Liberalism versus Neo-Nationalism, 1945-1960* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 97.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 16-18.

Quebec right up until the 1960s.¹² Savard points to the unifying experience of indignation with the elimination of French schools in Ontario during the Regulation XVII crisis of the First World War as the peak of solidarity between francophone leaders in both provinces. Savard comes to this conclusion by looking at fundraising efforts for independent French schools in Ontario launched in Quebec, as well as Quebec media and nationalist association support for their besieged colleagues in Ontario.¹³

After Savard's cursory study of connections between francophones in Ontario and Quebec historians starting delving deeper into the connections amongst the francophone diaspora in North America. Two historians in particular have contributed greatly to the study of the evolving relationship between francophone communities in Canada : Marcel Martel and Gaétan Gervais.

In his study of the institutional network of national organizations that linked French-Canadians in a common community of interests (in which Quebec was a major player), Martel traces the growth of Quebec-based nationalist ideas which see the Quebec state as the only viable mechanism for the survival of francophone culture in North America. This increasing focus on Quebec caused friction and eventually a rupture between more pan-Canadian francophone thinkers and associations, including the OJC, and neo-nationalists in Quebec, who axed their view of the French-Canadian nation on the territory of Quebec.¹⁴ Indeed, the OJC's own collapse in the 1960s over divisions between its Ontario leadership and Quebec members is presented by Martel as a

¹² Pierre Savard, "Relations avec le Québec," in *Les Franco-Ontariens*, dir. Cornelius J. Jaenen (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa), 231-264.

¹³ Ibid., 232-235.

¹⁴ Ibid., 20-23.

precursor to a more open break between Quebec and the rest of French Canada at the États généraux du Canada français of 1967.¹⁵

Gaétan Gervais, meanwhile, focuses on various national congresses such as the États généraux du Canada-français, to trace the evolution of French-Canadian nationalist thought and changing relationships between francophones in Ontario and Quebec.¹⁶ Gervais, like Martel, Bock and Savard, points to the schools crisis of the First World War as one of the peak times of solidarity between francophone leaders in both provinces.¹⁷ Gervais, discussing the evolution of a “culture de congrès” where French-Canadian identity could be either reinforced, or contested, offers that, over time, three major centers of discourse on nationalism developed: Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec city (in addition to smaller regional hubs in the Maritimes and the West).¹⁸ This notion of separate nationalist visions within the French-Canadian community serves as a useful prism for analysis as this study delves into the complex understanding of how strategies of how best to protect French-Canadian Catholicism and culture was debated within the Ordre de Jacques Cartier.

The majority of studies of French-Canadian nationalism, including Martel and Gervais, which discuss the role of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier in nationalist discourse and activity, inevitably focus on the contentious split between Quebec and Ontario members over the direction of the society in the 1960s as symptomatic of a general break in a pan-Canadian French-Canadian nationalist discourse.¹⁹ This focus on the 1960s split

¹⁵ Ibid., 146-148.

¹⁶ Gaétan Gervais, *Des gens de résolution: Le passage du 'Canada français' à l' 'Ontario français'* (Sudbury: Institut franco-ontarien, 2003).

¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁸ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹ Martel, *Le Deuil d'un pays imaginé*, 146-148; Gervais, *Des gens de résolution*, 109; Savard, “Relations avec le Québec,” 240-241; Bock, *Quand la nation*, 82.

in the OJC was first discussed in the only lengthy study of the OJC, G.-Raymond Laliberté's *Une société secrète: l'Ordre de Jacques Cartier*. His study provides a largely institutional analysis of the Order's creation and operation on a quantitative level, dividing its various campaigns into economic, social and national categories. Laliberté's analysis of the Order centers around his question of "le degré et la nature de contrôle politique réel qu'a pu exercer l'O.J.C. de 1930 à 1965, de même que les héritages qu'il a laissés," - a political legacy which he sees as the creation of the Parti Québécois of the 1960s.²⁰ Thus, largely political in scope, his study gives only minor attention to the Catholic overtones of the society and its influence on (and complex definition of) French-Canadian nationalist thought. He mentions the anti-Knight of Columbus campaign only in passing, in his interpretation of the Order's shift towards linguistic and state based nationalism in separating Quebec associations, and the state, from foreign control.²¹

In the only work that discusses the OJC's animosity towards the Knights of Columbus in any detail, historian Robert Choquette focuses more on its impact in the religious and linguistic battles of Ontario. In *La foi gardienne de la langue en Ontario, 1900-1950*, Choquette frames the founding of the OJC in the aftermath of the Catholic schools controversy that swept Ontario with Regulation XVII.²² Choquette focuses on the Ontario activities of the Order, particularly in the fields of language rights and ecclesiastical appointments.²³ Choquette positions the OJC's campaign against the Knights in the context of Irish-French antagonisms in Ontario and the Order's efforts to rid the region of "[une] cinquième colonne irlandaise qui tient les Canadiens français en

²⁰ G.-Raymond Laliberté, *Une société secrète: l'Ordre de Jacques Cartier*, 33.

²¹ Ibid., 237, 250-251.

²² Robert Choquette, *La foi gardienne de la langue en Ontario, 1900-1950* (Montréal : Bellarmin, 1987), 234, 262.

²³ Ibid., 252-258.

tutelle,” and does not go into great detail, devoting two or three pages to the topic without any comparison to Knight reaction. Developing the Knights’ side of the story, as well as the response to this campaign in Quebec, would give a better picture of the full nature of the debate.²⁴

Following the story of the creation of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier in the 1920s through to its implosion in the 1960s through the prism of its shifting stance towards the Knights of Columbus will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the fundamental challenge that the OJC faced. Based in and inspired by Ontario experience, OJC leaders led a movement largely based in Quebec, where members had entirely different experiences and, increasingly, changing political views. As historian Yves Frenette argued, the First World War represented a “césure” in the evolution of a French-Canadian identity.²⁵ The division of opinion in Ontario and Quebec over what approach to take towards the Knights of Columbus indicates that, even during what is assumed to be a period of high feelings of solidarity in French-Canadian nationalist circles, there were

²⁴ Ibid., 245, 248-249.

²⁵ Yves Frenette, *Brève histoire des Canadiens français* (Montréal : Boréal, 1998), 140. Frenette is one of a growing number of academics who critique the interpretation of the “rupture” of the 1960s in French-Canadian identity. Academics have studied the social, economic and political development of the French Canadian communities of Canada and have found much earlier roots for this schism. See, for instance, Gratien Allaire, “Le Triangle canadien-français au tournant des années 1960. Le Conseil de la vie française en Amérique, la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal et l’Ordre de Jacques-Cartier,” *Francophonies d’Amérique* Printemps, no. 17 (2004), 108-110; Linda Cardinal, “Le Canada français à la lumière des États généraux : critique de la thèse de la rupture,” in Marcel Martel and Robert Choquette, *Les États généraux du Canada français, trente ans après : actes du colloque tenu à l’Université d’Ottawa les 5, 6 et 7 novembre 1997* (Ottawa: Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1998), 213-232; Linda Cardinal, “Sortir de la nostalgie, en finir avec le ressentiment : les francophones hors Québec et la coopération interprovinciale,” in Simon Langlois and Jean-Louis Roy, *Briser les solitudes : les francophonies canadiennes et québécoise* (Québec : Éditions Note bene, 2003), 15-30.

already the early seeds of experience that would lead to the schism of the 1960s described by other historians.²⁶

All of these studies' analysis of the OJC's anti-Knight campaign is symptomatic of the general scholarly silence on the Knights of Columbus in Quebec. The Quebec Knights have been given very little attention in historical work, save for a brief study by historian Jean-Claude Drolet.²⁷ Drolet's study, while providing some basic details of linguistic and financial tensions between the Quebec Knights and the New Haven headquarters, did not have access to the Knights of Columbus archives, nor appear to be aware of the OJC's animosity towards the Knights.²⁸ Another recent study of the Knights in Quebec, J.H. Lefebvre's *Christophe Colomb et l'Ordre des Chevaliers de Colomb*, provides an institutional sketch of the growth of the Knights of Columbus, mentioning only briefly some of the challenges faced by the Knights in their history in the province.²⁹

Though the Knights' presence in Quebec remains largely unstudied, works on their development in the United States and English Canada provide useful axes of analysis or potential questions to ask of the Quebec context. In the United States, Christopher J. Kauffman's *Faith and Fraternalism: The History of the Knights of Columbus, 1882-1982*, commissioned by the Order on the occasion of its centennial, provides a detailed, well-researched analysis of the Knights' formation and growth.³⁰

Using the Knights' own archives, which include the personal papers of many of the

²⁶ See, for example, Gervais, *Des gens de résolution*; Martel, *Deuil d'un pays imaginé*; Savard, "Relations avec le Québec."

²⁷ Jean-Claude Drolet, *L'Ordre des Chevaliers de Colomb: Origine, structure, initiation, implantation dans la province de Québec* (Chicoutimi: Centre d'études et de recherches historiques du Saguenay, 1968).

²⁸ Ibid., 200-230.

²⁹ J.H. Lefebvre, *Christophe Colomb et l'Ordre des Chevaliers de Colomb* (Montréal: Éditions Christophe Colomb 1492, 1972).

³⁰ Christopher J. Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism: The History of the Knights of Columbus, 1882-1982* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982).

Supreme Knights as well as meeting minutes and thematic *fonds*, Kauffman positions the story of the Knights as part of the American Catholic Church's efforts to link Catholicism with American citizenship through an emphasis on patriotic acts and loyalty to the state, while also providing life insurance benefits for members.³¹ Indeed, the Knights' development as a fraternal society was part of larger trend of growth in fraternal societies in North America as a whole.³² Kauffman's thesis on the Knights' blending of Catholic and American identity is part of a larger school which argues that the American Church has continuously tried to integrate itself into a sometimes hostile Protestant society. This minority position forced the Church, argues sociologist Jose Casanova, to "prove" its loyalty to the state while maintaining the faith in Roman authority. Thus many Catholic associations, and the Church in general, became "the most 'American', that is, patriotic of all American denominations" in secular affairs.³³

While Kauffman's work reinforces the "patriotic faith" element of other works on the American Catholic Church, his analysis of the Knights' expansion into Canada, more particularly Quebec, leaves many questions unanswered. Pointing out that the Knights first expanded into Montreal, he blurs the line between Irish and French-Canadian members in the Quebec State Council, arguing that both the French and the Irish "were victims of prejudice and discrimination," and contended that this bonded them with their American brethren, "Because American and Canadian Catholics shared

³¹ Ibid., xii-xiv, 17.

³² David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 14-16 ; for French-Canadian fraternities and mutual aid societies see Martin Petitclerc, " 'La riante bannière de la démocratie': les sociétés de secours mutuels québécoises au 20e siècle," *Assurances* 70, no. 1 (2002), pp. 73-92.

³³ Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 168.

common needs, Columbianism was easily transported beyond U.S. soil.”³⁴ Kauffman’s thesis - that Columbianism helped assert Catholic citizenship in societies where Catholics were in the minority - seems strangely misplaced for the mostly Catholic population of Quebec, as does his assertion that Irish and French-Canadians had common goals as Catholics, without any allusion to linguistic animosity.

In Canada, meanwhile, the most significant study on the Knights of Columbus is that of historian Mark McGowan and his study of the Irish Catholic community of Toronto.³⁵ McGowan counters the general perception of Toronto as a North American Belfast rife with religious tensions with a portrait of an Irish Catholic community eager to integrate into Canadian society.³⁶ Like Kauffman, McGowan argues that the Knights of Columbus became a critical vehicle for Irish Catholic patriotism in Toronto, particularly during the First World War with their war charity work which helped create a “fusion of Catholicism and Canadian identity among Catholic lay-men but [which also] signaled significant changes in Protestant Toronto’s acceptance of English-speaking Catholics as loyal citizens.”³⁷ While McGowan’s work expands on Kauffman’s by delving into the Knights’ expansion into Ontario, his argument that “the principle of patriotism was as much a part of the Knight’s oath in Canada as it was in the United States...[though it] was altered to suit the British North American context,” again assumes similar experience across the country, while the cultural and political context of Quebec would lead one to challenge McGowan’s observation on all Canadian Knights.³⁸ McGowan’s level of local

³⁴ Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 117.

³⁵ Mark G. McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish and Identity in Toronto, 1887-1922* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

analysis and discussion of both popular and ecclesiastical reaction to the Knights does, however, provide a useful framework for looking at the Knights' experience in Quebec.

Method and Sources

The comparative approach of this study will contribute to a better understanding of relations between Catholic lay movements and of shifts within French-Canadian nationalist movements, most particularly a more nuanced understanding of both the Ordre de Jacques Cartier and the Knights of Columbus in Quebec during the 1950s. To develop the campaign by the OJC against the Knights in addition to gauging the reaction by the Knights themselves to nationalist opposition, a comparative, qualitative analysis of both OJC and Knights of Columbus archive sources will be used here. In the case of the OJC, the Chancellory's meeting minutes, held at the University of Ottawa's Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française (CRCCF), as well as the reports of the Orientation Committee, held at the National Archives, will establish the decisions and approach taken by the Order's elite towards the Knights. Special collections at the National Archives within the Order's papers also deal specifically with the Knights of Columbus and contain anything from press clippings on the Knights in Quebec to correspondence and propaganda from the anti-Knight campaign. These holdings, combined with the minutes and resolutions adopted by the members in attendance at the annual general meetings of the Order will help assess the general reception of the Chancellory's anti-Knight campaign by the wider membership.

In addition to consulting the OJC's own archives and records to assess their campaign, the author also consulted the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council archives located in New Haven, Connecticut. These archives hold the personal papers of the

Supreme Knights of the Order, as well as various meeting minutes and correspondence with the various state councils around the world, including Quebec. For this study, the papers of Supreme Knight Luke Hart, who led the Knights during the period studied, were consulted to establish the official Knight leadership's attitude towards Quebec, as well as any reaction to nationalist rejection of the Knights in Quebec and Ontario.

The first chapter of this study discusses the impact that different experiences of the First World War had on French-Canadians in Ontario and Quebec. In particular, the role played by the Knights of Columbus in the Canadian war effort and in the Ontario schools crisis spurred a divide between Quebec and Ontario francophone nationalist leaders. In Ottawa, nationalists reacted against what they felt was a secretive Irish society that was working behind the scenes to push English only Catholic schools in the province. Quebec leaders of the Knights of Columbus, and even the clergy in the province, however, were shocked at the vehement attacks by nationalist leaders in Ottawa against the Knights, an organization that (in Quebec) had become largely francophone by the beginning of the war. Reaction to the Knights of Columbus in both provinces reveals cracks in this supposed solidarity amongst French-Canadians, even as the Ordre de Jacques Cartier was created to try and unite them.³⁹

The second chapter will follow the evolution of both the OJC and the Knights of Columbus in Quebec during the Depression of the 1930s. Both associations struggled to retain members while continuing to push expansion in Quebec. For the Knights of Columbus, a reform of their insurance system and membership requirement, combined with a return to the public spotlight as a war time auxiliary service helped stem the decline of the mid-1930s. After the war, the Knights enjoyed a period of rapid growth in Quebec,

³⁹ Savard, "Relations avec le Québec," 232.

though a new executive began to express new rumblings of discontent over its autonomy in relation to the Supreme Council. For the OJC, meanwhile, the 1930s represented a time of shifting priorities, becoming increasingly focused on issues of economic nationalism as well as allying themselves to Quebec nationalist Lionel Groulx

The third chapter will focus on the OJC's anti-Knight campaign itself, from 1949-1956. The Knights' own reaction to this vocal, if unidentified opposition, coupled with efforts by the Quebec State council of the Knights to gain more autonomy from the Supreme Council will also be explored. The failure of the autonomist movement resulted in the compromise solution of incorporating the Knights of Columbus under Quebec provincial law, a compromise that neither the Ordre de Jacques Cartier nor the Supreme Council were satisfied with.

The rejection of the autonomist movement by the Supreme Council of the Knights pushed the OJC to establish a copy-cat society, the Chevaliers de Champlain, in 1956. Its moderate success will be analyzed in comparison to changes within the Knights in the final chapter. The natural *dénouement* of the OJC's campaign against the Knights after 1956 was part of a shift in priorities within the Chancellory. The Knights, however, would undergo a brief period of turmoil as the State Executive, firmly entrenched in positions of leadership in the province since the end of the war, was turfed by an alliance of disgruntled Knights of Columbus in the province and a fuming Supreme Knight.

The conclusion to this study will offer an explanation as to why the story of these two Catholic lay societies has too often been ignored, and will link the struggle against the "Trojan Horse" of the Knights of Columbus to a nationalist vein that would be transformed by the Quiet Revolution.

Chapter 1

For God, country and language: the First World War and the creation of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier

In 1882, while planning the creation of a new semi-secret mutual aid association for Irish Catholics in New Haven, Connecticut, Father Michael McGivney offered that "Our primary objective is to prevent our people from entering Secret Societies by offering them the same, if not better advantages to our members."⁴⁰ The Knights of Columbus eventually became his answer to the challenges posed by a slumping economy in the region and the temptations offered by secular, or Protestant mutual aid associations and fraternities.

Over forty years later, in 1926, another priest, François-Xavier Barrette, faced a similar dilemma in his parish of Saint Charles in Ottawa. This time, however, Barrette was concerned with the apparent threat posed by the same Knights of Columbus, who had by then expanded into Ontario and Quebec. According to Barrette, societies like the Knights of Columbus had worked behind the scenes during the French-language schools battles that had raged in the province throughout the previous decade to advance the cause of Irish Catholics in banning French-language education. How then, asked Barrette, could francophones counter the threat posed by Catholic associations like the Knights and Protestant lodges such as the Orange Order? The solution for Barrette was clear, "Nous devrions comme les autres peuples, avoir une société secrète pour les Canadiens français."⁴¹

⁴⁰ Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 19.

⁴¹ This discussion is reconstituted in a historical account of the OJC's creation, CRCCF, *OJC*, Historique de l'Ordre de Jacques Cartier, allocution du Grand chancelier préparée pour une réception donnée en l'honneur de Monseigneur Alexandre Vachon, 1941, C3/1/1.

What happened in those forty years? How had the Knights gone from being a local response in Connecticut to a Catholic lay movement in Canada so prominent as to push French-Canadian nationalists and some members of the clergy to strongly oppose them? In spite of historian Christopher Kauffman's claims that Columbianism was enthusiastically supported by all North American Catholics, the Knights' growth into Canada soon saw French-Canadians divided on their role in French-Canadian Catholic life. This divide was defined and shaped by the events of the First World War, the schools crisis in Ontario and growing differences between the composition of the Knights of Columbus in Ontario and Quebec. The bitter experiences of French-Canadian leaders in Ontario of what they felt was an active campaign against them by their Irish co-religionists in the Knights of Columbus led some to call publicly for the creation of a similar association for French-Canadians in the middle of the crises of 1917-1918. That call would eventually be answered by the creation of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier in 1926 by a group of French-Canadians in Ottawa who would use the model of the Knights as an inspiration for their new secret society.

1.1 The expansion of the Knights of Columbus into Canada

The Knights of Columbus were born during a general period of growth for fraternalism and mutual aid societies. The depression of the 1870s in industrial North America pushed many working men to seek protection against unemployment, and the volunteer, often ethnic based fraternal mutual aid societies often held great appeal to working class men.⁴² The Irish Catholic community's tendency in the mid to late nineteenth century to rally together via organisations like the Ancient Order of Hibernians or the Irish Catholic Benevolent Union must therefore be seen as part of this

⁴² Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 14-17; Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State*, 14-16.

trend. Soon, however, new Catholic lay movements began to seek to actively place themselves within American cultural life, which was largely Protestant. Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, one of the ecclesiastical leaders of this “Americanist” movement, was a staunch supporter of the Knights upon their creation and defended such societies throughout his career as an important means for American Catholics to prove their loyalty to the republic and integrate into American life.⁴³

Gibbons’ support for the Knights and the Knights’ own emphasis on patriotism is explicable by understanding the minority position of Catholics in the United States. The Catholic Church in the U.S. had a flock composed of many immigrant communities surrounded by a mostly Protestant society. Fearing the establishment of small, sect-like ethnic Catholic communities as a weakening of the Church, clerics like Cardinal Gibbons would be quick to support the patriotic and fraternal Knights of Columbus.⁴⁴ This minority position forced the Church and its laity, argues sociologist Jose Casanova, to “prove” its loyalty to the state while maintaining the faith in Roman authority. Thus many Catholic societies, and the Church in general became “the most ‘American’, that is, patriotic of all American denominations” in secular affairs.⁴⁵

It was during these efforts to strengthen and broaden the reach of the Knights of Columbus that Cardinal Gibbons wrote to Archbishop Bruchési at the turn of the century to recommend promoting the foundation of the Knights of Columbus in Quebec.⁴⁶ Bruchési’s approval opened the door to recruitment and the creation of new councils in

⁴³ Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 92-94.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 173-174.

⁴⁵ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 168.

⁴⁶ Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 116-117.

the province.⁴⁷ The first Quebec council was created in Montreal in 1897 and was predominantly composed of anglophone members, many of whom had travelled or lived briefly in the United States, and thus had had contact with the Order.⁴⁸ The initial expansion of the Knights in Quebec, therefore, was modest, controlled and mostly influenced by contact with their colleagues in the United States.

The Quebec State Council's relationship with the Supreme Council was defined by the basic federalist governance of the Knights of Columbus. The State Council in the Knights had almost complete autonomy not related to the insurance funds of the Order or the overall organization of the Knighthood.⁴⁹ The State Executive, including the State Deputy, is elected at an annual convention of representatives of all the councils in that state area.⁵⁰ District Deputies, who manage groupings of councils, are selected by the District Deputy. Financial Secretaries, Supreme Directors (representatives on the Board of Directors, the executive branch of the Supreme Council) are selected by the Supreme Council in New Haven.⁵¹ Once a year, all higher officers of the Order (State Deputies, former Supreme Knights, members of the Board of Directors, and four to eight representatives selected by each state council) elect all the Supreme Council positions, including the Supreme Knight.⁵² Interestingly enough, the constitution of the Order specifically banned the separation of any council or State Council from the Supreme Council.⁵³

⁴⁷ Why Bruchési accepted to allow the Order to create councils in Montreal is unknown to the author, as his reply to Gibbons was not found.

⁴⁸ Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 5-20, 116-117.

⁴⁹ Drolet, *L'Ordre des Chevaliers de Colomb*, 105.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 105-106

⁵¹ Ibid., 108-109.

⁵² Ibid., 108-109.

⁵³ Ibid., 113.

The composition of the Knights of Columbus in Quebec soon changed as the Order gradually began to recruit more French-Canadians within its ranks. While the first Knights in Quebec were for the most part English-speaking, within a decade the Order had become largely francophone. This change can be seen in the operations of the State Council and the State Congresses as well as in the Order's initiation rituals. Conducted in English initially, the initiation rituals for the Order were translated into French as early as 1905.⁵⁴ The State Congresses, conducted in English up until 1909, were run in both languages from 1910-1912, and then from 1913 onwards in French only.⁵⁵

These adjustments within the workings of the Order reflect an increasingly francophone base and need to serve what was rapidly becoming a francophone dominated organization, at least at the state level. The transition to French was not the result of quiet acquiescence on the part of the Supreme Council in New Haven, however. While records for the early years of the State Council are sparse, there were official requests for even more French, especially the translation of the Order's constitution, at the 1916 and 1919 State Congresses. The Supreme Council refused these requests, and it was only in 1935 that copies of the constitution were made available in French, and this at the expense of the Quebec State Council of the Knights.⁵⁶

In Ontario, meanwhile, the first council of the Knights was formed in Ottawa on January 28, 1900, and by 1904 the Order had established enough of a base in the province to create a new State Council. By 1907 there were ten councils and 1,256 members in the

⁵⁴ NAC, *OJC*, Bulletin mensuel des Chevaliers de Colomb, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, mars, 1949, "Reminiscences Colombiennes".

⁵⁵ NAC, *OJC*, Bulletin mensuel des Chevaliers de Colomb, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, février, 1949.

⁵⁶ NAC, *OJC*, Bulletin mensuel des Chevaliers de Colomb, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, mars, 1949, "Reminiscences Colombiennes".

province.⁵⁷ The Champlain Council of the Knights of Columbus in Ottawa appears to be the only francophone council in the province at the time.⁵⁸ The gradual southward expansion of the Order in Ontario would coincide with the outbreak of war in 1914. As we shall see, the Ontario Knights of Columbus jumped on the opportunity to contribute to the war effort and publicize the Order's activities.

1.2. The tests of war: Regulation XVII and conscription

In June of 1912, the Ontario provincial government of Premier James Whitney introduced the Circular of Instructions No. 17 (soon to be known as Regulation XVII) which proposed limiting French-language education to, at most, one hour per day in all Ontario schools to be enforced by an inspector (usually French) and a supervising inspector (usually English) who had ultimate authority. The foundation for over a decade of conflict had been laid as English-Canadian (mostly of Irish origins) and French-Canadian Catholics debated the future of their school system.⁵⁹ The ebb and flow of rhetoric and actions by both Irish Catholics and French-Canadian Catholics in the crisis have already been well documented.⁶⁰ Organisations like the Association canadienne-française d'éducation d'Ontario (ACFÉO), *Le Droit* and, eventually, the Ordre de Jacques Cartier, all were either heavily involved in, or inspired by the crisis. Irish Catholic leaders like London Bishop Michael Fallon fanned the flames of controversy by musing about French-Canadian conspiracies of making Ontario "une province française, au sein d'une république française occupant les rives du Saint-Laurent," while French-

⁵⁷ W.T. Sheady, *Knights of Columbus in Ontario, 1900-1963* (Ontario State Council of the Knights of Columbus, 1963), 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁵⁹ Robert Choquette, *Langue et religion*, 172-173.

⁶⁰ See, for instance, Choquette, *Langue et religion*, 167-228.

Canadian clerics complained of “le persécution fratricide” of their Irish coreligionists.⁶¹ The crisis, as we shall see, would have a lasting impact on French-Canadian nationalists in Ontario as they battled their Irish coreligionists over the language of education of their children. Ultimately, it would provide the experience of a minority on the defensive that would further separate them from their French-Canadian brethren in Quebec in terms of attitudes towards bilingual and foreign societies

While francophone leaders in Ontario remained focused on opposition to Regulation XVII, the outbreak of war in Europe complicated the situation even further. Prime Minister Robert Borden’s promise of sending 500,000 Canadian troops to Europe soon developed into a national controversy over the issue of conscription. Here historical divisions over Canada’s role in the empire (particularly during the Boer War) returned to the fore in an increasingly tense debate over Canada’s war effort. French-Canadians, in Quebec and Ontario in particular, balked at compulsory military service, citing the lack of respect of their linguistic rights in Ontario as one of the primary reasons for opposition.

The tensions surrounding the conscription crisis of 1917 and the debates surrounding Regulation XVII in Ontario are very much part of most historical work on the period.⁶² The role played by the Knights of Columbus in both provinces, however, either in national war efforts or as targets of attacks by French-Canadian nationalists, is often ignored. Indeed, during the war the different attitudes towards the Knights and their

⁶¹ Quoted in Choquette, *Langue et Religion*, 193, 215.

⁶² See, for example, major works such as Elizabeth Armstrong’s *The Crisis of Quebec, 1914-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937); J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), 70-90; Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 250-275; Jean Hamelin and Nicole Gagnon, *Histoire du Catholicisme Québécois, 1898-1940* (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1984), 305-306; René Durocher, “Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918,” *Historical Papers* (1971), 269-271.

activities in both provinces served to further increase the divide of opinion between Quebec and Ontario. In Ontario, the symbolism of having prominent Knights lead the forces supporting Regulation XVII would reinforce for nationalist leaders the notion that they were only hurting their cause and needed to be strongly opposed. In Quebec, meanwhile, and in Montreal in particular, the now largely francophone Knights of Columbus provided (albeit contentiously) a venue for partial reconciliation via the Catholic Army Huts Program and fundraising drives to support it in 1918.

1.3. "Everyone Welcome, Everything Free"- The Catholic Army Huts

Before discussing the divergent attitudes towards the Knights of Columbus in Quebec and Ontario during the war, a discussion of the activities and contributions of the Knights to the national war effort is necessary. It is around the war efforts of the Knights of Columbus that diverging opinion on the Knights begins to appear in Quebec (in Montreal in particular) and Ontario. As Duff Crerar and Mark McGowan have pointed out in their works on the Catholic Church and the Catholic Chaplaincy during the First World War, the Catholic Church's involvement in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) went through many "growing pains" as the forces in general adapted to rapidly growing troop numbers as well. Up until 1916, Catholic soldiers were usually limited to one "official" option for recreation during their time away from the lines of the closest Y.M.C.A Hut operated by the British, with Canadian cooperation and support.⁶³ While these huts provided a place to relax, read and write letters home, the Protestant undertones of their administration caused increasing concern in Catholic circles. For

⁶³ Crerar, *Padres in No Man's Land*, 81, McGowan, *Waning of the Green*, 281; Mark McGowan, "Harvesting the 'Red Vineyard': Catholic Religious Culture in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919," *Historical Studies* 64 (1998), 61.

Canadian forces stationed in England, the only alternative in the early days of the war were the modest Catholic Army Huts run by the Catholic Women's League of England.⁶⁴

This virtual Y.M.C.A. monopoly changed, however, because of two factors. First, the United States' entry into the war in 1917 also brought new models and ideas into the field of war charity work, particularly since the Americans had designated a number of religious organizations, including the Knights of Columbus, as official war service organizations.⁶⁵ The Knights had been operating Catholic Army Huts for the American army since the 1916 border disturbances with Mexico and were quick to offer their services once war was declared on Germany. The American Knights hoped to counter the effects of the Protestant Y.M.C.A., which had more experience in the field, on the moral behaviour of Catholic servicemen.⁶⁶ Indeed, the American Knights vowed that their huts would never be the "tail of the YMCA" and opted to create their own huts as opposed to cooperating with the Y.M.C.A huts program.⁶⁷ Thus, Canadian Catholics had an example to emulate when the decision came to organize an effort to help counter the influence of the "Y" in Canada.

The second factor leading to the creation of the Canadian Catholic Army Huts program was the unfortunate injury of Ottawa-born Chaplain John O'Gorman on the front lines, which forced him to return to Canada in 1917. Before becoming a chaplain in the Canadian forces, however, his activities in Ottawa in his parish of Blessed Sacrament had been publicly in favour of Regulation XVII. Publishing articles in the Ottawa Citizen

⁶⁴ At the end of the war, the CAH directors petitioned the Secretary of State to officially thank these women for their volunteer services, often spending weeks at a time away from home, living in a small cubicle attached to the hut. NAC, *Secretary of State*, Catholic Army Huts, RG 95, Vol. 2695, W.T. Kernahan to Thomas Mulvey (Under-Secretary of State), July 3, 1919.

⁶⁵ Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 190-191.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 197.

condemning bilingual schools and encouraging the English-only faction of the Ottawa school commission, O’Gorman left for his service overseas hostile to French-Canadian nationalists in Ottawa.⁶⁸ While O’Gorman continued to push for the right to return to Europe in spite of his lame arm, his return to Ottawa provided a strong advocate for the Catholic Chaplains in the nation’s capital, as well as a strong voice in the schools crisis.⁶⁹ O’Gorman also took the opportunity to encourage Ontario Catholics to create an alternative to the “Y” huts. He approached J.L. Murray, the Ontario State Deputy for the Knights of Columbus, with the idea of providing financial assistance to Catholic Chaplains and recreation centres without the Protestant tone of the “Y” huts.⁷⁰ Murray then introduced the idea at the Ontario Knight’s Convention of May, 1917 where, following the lead of their American cousins, the Ontario Knights voted to raise funds for the Chaplains through a membership tax.⁷¹

During the summer of 1917, the Ontario Knights pushed for incorporation under federal law for their war charity and thus be able to organize larger fundraising drives. Receiving sanction in October of 1917, the Catholic Army Huts (CAH) charity was born.⁷² Under the patent, the Knights were authorized to:

⁶⁸ Choquette, *Langue et religion*, 182-183, 195.

⁶⁹ O’Gorman had been determined to get back to the front, writing the Minister of Militia, “It is true that I could not carry a machine gun under my left arm, but I can perform all the duties of a Catholic chaplain,” NAC, *Militia and Defence* (Militia), RG 9, III C-15, Vol. 4636, Chaplain Service Personal Files “Mac”, “Mc”, “N”, “O”, O’Gorman, J.J. O’Gorman to Kemp, September 21, 1917; For more on O’Gorman’s political activities in Ottawa see Crerar, “Bellicose Priests,” 32.

⁷⁰ Daniel and Casey, *For God and Country*, 15; Crerar, *Padres in No Man’s Land*, 81.

⁷¹ Daniel and Casey, *For God and Country*, 16; Historians differ on the degree of influence the American hut movement had on the Canadian Knights. Crerar, for instance, credits the Americans as the source of inspiration in his doctoral thesis, though he eliminates this connection in the published version. McGowan also ignores the American influence, while Kauffman claims the United States as the inspiration for the Canadian efforts; Crerar, *The Padre in No Man’s Land : Canadian Military Chaplains, 1866-1939* (PhD dissertation: Queen’s University, 1989), 257-258, 81; McGowan, *Waning of the Green*, 281; Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 221.

⁷² Secretary of State for Canada, *Letters Patent Incorporating Catholic Army Huts*, Ottawa: 1917

Erect, equip and conduct Catholic Army Huts for Canadian Soldiers, which shall serve the two-fold purpose of chapels for Catholic soldiers and recreation huts for all soldiers, irrespective of creed, and to supply Catholic Chaplains in the Canadian Overseas Force and in the Canadian Militia with rosaries, medals, prayer books and similar devotional aids for distribution to Catholic soldiers.⁷³

In their activities, the Knights often served French-Canadians, since they were the largest Catholic group and their battalions had the highest concentration of Catholics.⁷⁴ A great example of this correlation between the Knights' support and a more active Catholic Chaplain Service was the 10th French-Canadian Reserve Battalion, stationed in Bramshott in late 1918. The Knights provided a cinema tent as well as 700 volumes of "good French literature" for the Catholic Chaplain in the camp, of which an average of 25 a day were used by the men of the battalion.⁷⁵ For the battalion's Chaplain, J.N.A. Desjardins, the effect this had on his popularity with the men was tangible. Commanding officer Lieut.-Col. H. Desrosiers praised Desjardins' work:

On account of the attractions he is providing, a large number of men are satisfied to stay in Camp, instead of wandering to nearby towns, with the usual results. There is also a cheerfulness amongst the men which helps the Training considerably.⁷⁶

In addition to recreation centres and entertainment behind the lines, the Knights provided the Catholic Chaplains at the front with much needed chapel tents. In short supply for the majority of the war, these tents offered the Chaplains a partially controlled environment where at least some form of normalcy for giving mass to their flock behind the lines could be provided. The alternative--open air masses, or improvised ceremonies to suit the conditions--often involved simply a portable altar "propped up on two

⁷³ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁴ McGowan, "Harvesting the 'Red Vineyard'," 51.

⁷⁵ Daniel and Casey, *For God and Country*, 24-25.

⁷⁶ NAC, *Militia and Defence*, Chaplain Service Personal Files 'D', Desjardins, JNA, RG9 Vol. 4621, Lieut-Col. H. Desrosiers 10th Canadian Reserve Batt. to Workman, Jan 25 1918

bayonets,... [which would then be] the focus of Mass in a barn, a field, a railway siding, burned-out building, hospital ward, an old tent, or even a chalk cave carved out from under the lines of fire,” without the priest even donning full regalia or doing the full mass on many occasions.⁷⁷ The tents were seen to have improved the troops’ attendance at mass and the Chaplain’s own efficiency in providing communion and other sacraments. Coupled with their tendency to focus on providing for Catholic battalions (often French-Canadian) such as the 10th Reserve or the Royal 22nd (one of the first to receive a chapel tent), the Knights, and Catholic clergy could thus legitimately claim that they were helping French-Canadians, volunteer and conscript alike.⁷⁸

Back in Canada, meanwhile, the Knights of Columbus set to work to raise funds for their efforts to help Catholic soldiers overseas. After having organized a membership tax in May of 1917 to raise the initial funds for the Catholic Army Huts, Ontario State Secretary J.L. Murray and Father O’Gorman realized that a broader effort was going to be needed to fund the CAH adequately. Thus, while seeking official incorporation under federal law, they also sought official support and help from the Ontario Catholic hierarchy. With the support of prominent Catholic leaders like Bishop Fallon of London, Ontario and Archbishop Neil McNeil of Toronto, as well as the support of the Catholic press, the Knights succeeded in raising approximately \$80,000 of a goal of \$100,000 in the fall of 1917 using mostly Catholic channels of promotion to raise the funds.⁷⁹ Though the amount of money raised was impressive, the Ontario State Council deemed it insufficient. Thus, in the preparations for a new campaign in 1918, the Ontario Knights sought not only to include non-Catholics in their drive by getting assistance from the Red

⁷⁷ McGowan, “Harvesting the ‘Red Vineyard’,” 55-56.

⁷⁸ Daniel and Casey, *For God and Country*, 53-54.

⁷⁹ Daniel and Casey, *For God and Country*, 16; McGowan, *Waning of the Green*, 282-283.

Cross, Salvation Army and even the Y.M.C.A., but they also reached out to other state councils, particularly Quebec, to join in.⁸⁰

Earlier in 1917 the groundwork for cooperation between the Ontario and Quebec Knights had been laid by the efforts of Archbishops Neil McNeil of Toronto and Paul Bruchési of Montreal to unite French and English Knights in a National Council as an example of national unity in light of the conscription crisis. McNeil in particular was passionate about the possibility of Canada's 600,000 English Catholics acting as a "connecting link" with alienated French-Canadians via their common faith, and thus be able to "heal the nation's wounds."⁸¹ While the efforts for a National Council failed, Quebec State Deputy (and deputy speaker of the House of Commons) Georges Boivin was so impressed by the Knights' focus on national unity during a visit to a Toronto Council in September 1917 that it was not difficult to convince him, or Bruchési, to support a national fundraising campaign, which was planned for the Fall of 1918.⁸² How this foray in Quebec would fare, however, remained to be seen.

The Knights of Columbus were not the only Catholic organization providing or planning support for French-Canadian soldiers in 1918. While Knight advertising boasted that "All were welcome, and everything is free," a similar organization in Quebec welcomed soldiers *chez eux*. The Chez-Nous du Soldat was a Quebec-based answer to the Catholic Army Huts. A Montreal-based association, the Chez-Nous was created in April of 1917 when the local Société Saint-Vincent-de-Paul was approached by one its members, C.J. Magnan, to create a French-Canadian war charity for the expected wave of French-Canadian conscripts. Magnan argued that with the "fait accompli" of conscription

⁸⁰ McGowan, *Waning of the Green*, 282.

⁸¹ Ibid., 179.

⁸² Ibid.

and the coming reality of an increase in French-Canadian numbers in the military, they should work to create:

Des milieux catholiques où, sans être exclusifs, loin de là, les soldats canadiens-français retrouveront l'image de la famille absente, milieux sympathiques, gais, reconfortants et particulièrement propres à préserver la foi des jeunes et à garder intacte en leur âme leur mentalité canadienne.⁸³

The Society approved the idea and a number of committees set to work establishing recreational tents at Valcartier which included space for the chaplain's office, a confessional, a chapel for mass as well as areas set aside for reading, playing pool, or writing letters. In Montreal, meanwhile, the Society established its Aide aux Conscrits Canadiens headquarters, which acted as a base for fundraising in the province.⁸⁴ With its stated goal of providing religious and material support to the French-Canadian conscript, Quebec nationalist organizations rallied to the new association, helping to raise over a million dollars to assist in the construction of the Chez-Nous du Soldat at Valcartier and to provide French-Canadian chaplains with rosaries, bibles and other religious paraphernalia in the camp.⁸⁵ In Montreal, the local branch of the Société Saint Jean-Baptiste held a "Guignolée du Soldat" and raised over four thousand dollars in one night in September of 1918.⁸⁶

While the Aide aux Conscrits Canadiens fund enjoyed early success, it did not react well to the Knights of Columbus' decision to move their campaign into Quebec. In its own paper, *L'Écho du Pays*, the association portrayed itself as representing "bien dignement l'Église et la Famille, et aussi la Patrie, auprès de nos chers fils que les dures nécessités de l'heure poussent à la caserne," in an effort to establish supremacy in the

⁸³ *L'Écho du Pays*, Automne, 1918, 3.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ *L'Écho du Pays*, Automne, 1918, 4

⁸⁶ *Le Devoir*, 10 septembre, 1918, 2

province.⁸⁷ The association also made sure that its newspaper, which was sent overseas to men training for the front, clearly established which was the “true” Quebec Catholic charity association for soldiers:

Née (sic) de l'Aide aux Conscrits, dans un milieu de traditions françaises et catholiques, au sein d'une atmosphère vraiment nationale, *l'Echo du Pays* reste et restera fidèle à ses origines. Tu peux (sic) donc lire ces pages, ami conscrit, sans aucune crainte....C'est la voix des tiens, comme on te l'a promis, qui parle ici.⁸⁸

1.4. The Knights of Columbus Drive of 1918: Helping the men overseas

As the Knights of Columbus prepared to launch their 1918 fundraising campaign, they began to incorporate the lessons learned from previous charity campaigns in the hopes of improving their collection. This was particularly true in Montreal. Indeed, many of the directors and patrons of the campaign, who lent their names to the campaign, had previous experience on the successful 1917 Canadian Patriotic Fund drive. Montreal Mayor Médéric Martin, Governor General Lord Shaughnessy, as well as Archbishop Bruchési and Senator Raoul Dandurand, all veterans of the CPF campaigns of 1917, volunteered their reputations once more in 1918 in agreeing to support the Catholic Army Huts Fund drive in Montreal.⁸⁹

Archbishop Bruchési, meanwhile, provided the most encouragement for the drive with his letters of support and ordering a universal Sunday collection in the diocese organized for the Knights.⁹⁰ His pastoral letter to all parishes just before the campaign started, however, was focused on comparing the Knights' efforts to the *Chez-Nous du Soldat* in a likely effort to compare what the Knights were doing in Europe with

⁸⁷ *L'Echo du Pays*, Automne, 1918, 3.

⁸⁸ *L'Echo du Pays*, Automne 1918, 1.

⁸⁹ Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 174-177; *La Presse*, 5 septembre, 1918, 7.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*; McGowan, *Waning of the Green*, 179.

something his parishioners were already familiar with. He also pushed the need to support the Knights by offering that they would help comfort conscripts overseas rather than opting to play on a sense of Canadian patriotism :

En donnant beaucoup, ils contribueront à maintenir dans la bonne voie la portion du troupeau dont le sort doit nous intéresser davantage actuellement: nos conscrits d'outre-mer.⁹¹

Thus, Bruchési complemented the Knights' campaign to try and heal the wounds caused by conscription in the Catholic Church and nationalist movement by rallying voluntary support around Quebec's conscripts. Supporting the Knights because of their assistance to Catholic volunteers and conscripts alike allowed Bruchési to rally support while also diverting attention away from his own disappointment in the adoption of conscription.⁹²

This two-pronged approach to the fundraising drive was not always absorbed wholesale by the Montreal and Ottawa francophone media, however. In Montreal, the two major french papers, *La Presse* and *Le Devoir*, differed sharply in their editorial content covering the drive. In Ottawa, meanwhile, the main francophone paper *Le Droit*, absorbed in the battles over Regulation XVII, viewed the campaign in a completely different light.

Reflecting its penchant to promote the efforts of French-Canadian soldiers and an overall sympathetic attitude towards the war effort, the editorial board of *La Presse* was quick to jump on the Knights' campaign as a tool to promote a united war effort. While announcing the dates of the coming campaign, *La Presse* went beyond a simple public

⁹¹ Bruchési's address quoted in *La Presse*, 16 septembre, 1918, 1, 16.

⁹² In looking at private correspondence between Bruchési and Bourassa after the institution of conscription, René Durocher argued that Bruchési felt betrayed and compromised by the Union government's decision to bring in conscription, while Bourassa felt the Church was being too supportive of the government. Supportive of Bourassa's opposition to conscription in private, "Sur la conscription je pense absolument comme vous," Bruchési refused to condemn the government or retract his initial support for a voluntary war effort, see Durocher "Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre," 269.

notice in applauding the success of the Ontario Knights in 1917 in raising 80,000 dollars. The need to support the campaign was certainly not left in doubt, especially considering their conclusion that, "On apprécie vivement l'effet du moral que les Chevaliers de Colomb apportent à nos braves gars en France et en Angleterre, grâce aux contributions de ceux qui ne peuvent aller combattre."⁹³

For the editors of *La Presse*, the Catholic Army Huts fundraising drive "fait appel aux plus nobles sentiments de l'âme canadienne."⁹⁴ Absent from their reasoning was any notion of imperial obligation, defending England or, more importantly, the origins and composition of the Knights of Columbus outside Quebec. To the editorial board of *La Presse*, which had been supportive of the war effort from a voluntary perspective, this was simply a question of helping their own and in so doing Quebec had an obligation to match the efforts of the other provinces during the national campaign, even implying that Quebec (as a Catholic province) "a même le devoir de faire plus."⁹⁵

While *La Presse* had been quick to support the Knights' campaign without any degree of criticism, the editors of *Le Devoir* were initially sceptical of the benefits of supporting a campaign they saw as largely benefitting English-speaking Catholics, regardless of their pledge to serve all Catholic soldiers. *Le Devoir* had initially put priority on covering the Aide aux Conscrits Canadiens and the Chez-Nous du Soldat centres it had established in Quebec military bases, indicating a preference for uniquely French-Canadian ventures.⁹⁶ The editorial board of *Le Devoir* took an ambivalent stance towards the Knights' campaign as it geared up for the drive of late September. While it

⁹³ *La Presse*, 4 septembre, 1918, 10.

⁹⁴ *La Presse*, 19 septembre, 1918, 4.

⁹⁵ *La Presse*, 18 septembre, 1918, 4.

⁹⁶ For example, *Le Devoir*, 10 septembre, 1918, 2.

did give space for advertising for the campaign earlier in September, its news coverage of preparations for the drive was initially offset with stories about the success of the Chez-Nous movement and Aide aux Conscrits activities. On September 10, for instance, a copy of a press release by the Aide aux Conscrits Canadiens ran right beside a story covering the official announcement of the coming campaign for the Knights.⁹⁷ The Knights' campaign story was tempered by the asides that it was "le gouvernement canadien [qui] a autorisé les Chevaliers de Colomb du Canada à accomplir pour les soldats catholiques ce que les Y.M.C.A. a (sic) fait pour les soldats d'autres croyances."⁹⁸

This subtle animosity would change, however, with the publication of Archbishop Bruchési's circular to parish priests in the archdiocese in support of the Knights. Both *Le Devoir* and the Aide aux Conscrits appear to have bowed to Episcopal authority thereafter.⁹⁹ After Bruchési's address, *Le Devoir's* coverage of the campaign became much more supportive, while the Aide aux Conscrits – likely soothed by the Knights' promise to donate a portion of the drive's funds to the Chez-Nous in Canada as well as the Archbishop's own endorsement of their work on the home front – quietly withdrew its vigorous campaigns for funds in the media.¹⁰⁰

Indeed, after September 16 the coverage given by *Le Devoir* to the activities of the Knights was constant—almost daily—and always positive. Linking the efforts of the Knights of Columbus with general efforts by the Catholic Church, *Le Devoir's* editors pointed out that the funds raised by this campaign would only serve to help and comfort the conscripts from their province. Strengthening their support was their inclusion of a

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ *Le Devoir*, 16 september, 1918, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. ; After September 16, no stories covering the *Aide aux Conscrits* appeared in *Le Devoir* or any other paper studied for the duration of the Knights' fundraising campaign.

section of Bruchési's pastoral letter and its pledge to help conscripts from the beginning of the campaign. According to the paper, "C'est la plus haute et la plus efficace recommandation qu'elle put recevoir."¹⁰¹ Thus, through the campaign to help soldiers overseas, conscript and volunteer alike, the editorial board of *Le Devoir* was able to attempt to repair frayed links with the Catholic leadership in a mutual campaign in support of Catholic soldiers.

While the Army Huts campaign received various degrees of support from the major French-language Quebec newspapers, it remained to be seen whether the increased publicity would create an increased interest in the Knights. Judging by the rise in membership, there certainly appeared to be a link. Between 1916 (just prior to the start of the Army Huts campaign) and 1921 membership in the province of Quebec rose from 7,181 members to 19,186.¹⁰² The Knights of Columbus growth can undoubtedly be linked to the double benefit of increased publicity and war time popularity during the period.¹⁰³

1.5. Wise with experience? French-Canadian reaction in Ontario to the 1918 Huts campaign

While the major French newspapers in Quebec rallied to varying degrees to the Knights of Columbus campaign, in Ontario French-Canadian nationalists on the editorial board of *Le Droit* had a significantly different perspective on the Knights. *Le Droit*, which was created as an organ to publicize the French-Canadian arguments in Ontario during the Regulation XVII period, continued to view the news through a lens of

¹⁰¹ *Le Devoir*, 21 september, 1918, 1.

¹⁰² *The Columbiad*, September 1917, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 15; *The Columbiad*, September, 1922, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 14.

¹⁰³ While there is no extant documentation of the number of veterans who became Knights in the years after the war, it is likely safe to assume that, as a men's association with contact with the men overseas and in training, the Knights of Columbus' ranks were swelled by returning soldiers and their reputation as a war charity.

linguistic tension. Thus, it viewed the Knights, and their leadership in Ontario, strictly through the prism of already lengthy battles with their Irish Catholic brethren for language rights in schools in the province. Ontario Knight leaders like Bishop Fallon, instead of inciting acquiescence and support for the campaigns of 1918, like Archbishop Bruchési had been able to do in Quebec, only increased French-Canadian animosity towards the Knights and their fundraising campaigns through their involvement in the schools crisis.

The simmering animosity towards the Irish Knights in Ontario from French-Canadian leaders came to a head with the fundraising campaign of the fall of 1918. The editorial board of *Le Droit*, now led by J.-Albert Foisy, who was also the Secretary for l'Association canadienne-française d'éducation d'Ontario (ACFÉO), ostensibly tackled the topic of the Knights of Columbus in Ottawa in 1918 as a way of shedding light on the Order as a new council which was being formed in Ottawa.¹⁰⁴ In reality, however, it was more of a sustained attack on the Knights. According to Foisy, it was the responsibility of a nationalist paper like *Le Droit* to undertake an honest investigation of the Knights, to go beyond the ritual and prestige of the Order to see if it really could serve the national and religious interests of French-Canadians in Ontario. Foisy argued that they would prove "que cette société n'offre actuellement aucun avantage religieux ou national aux Canadiens français de la ville et de cette province, [et] qu'au contraire, elle constitue pour notre foi un danger et pour notre race un désastre."¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the arguments that Foisy put forward in a series of editorials - entitled "Pour former une élite" - throughout the rest of the summer and fall of 1918 established a veritable program for how to build a

¹⁰⁴ *Le Droit*, 13 juillet, 1918, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

successful fraternal society which would later be taken up by the founders of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier.

Foisy first attacked the Order on its premise of forming a Catholic elite. Arguing that the Knights were “une société de catholiques,” rather than a “société *catholique*” Foisy contended that the Knights were more of a self-interest group composed not of the national elite (or of the Catholic elite, which could only be led by the clergy), but rather of “les hommes qui ont le plus d'argent, le plus d'influence, le plus de patronage, pour en faire jouir les membres plus au point de vue matériel qu'au point de vue moral et catholique.”¹⁰⁶ According to Foisy, the main attraction of joining the Knights was mostly selfish, for the society was based on nepotism, encouraging the professional and political advancement of members over the wider public. In mixed-language councils this effect was difficult to measure, but in unilingual councils the effect was clear for Foisy, and gave English Knights an unfair advantage over non-Knights, an advantage that went against the Catholic virtues of charity and justice:

Ils n'ont pas le droit de pousser cette protection, cette préférence, jusqu'à s'en servir comme une arme pour réduire les autres à l'impuissance, pour les soumettre à leur volonté, pour les forcer à agir contrairement à leurs justes convictions.¹⁰⁷

Besides criticizing the self-interest of the Knights, Foisy also addressed the coming fundraising drive of the Knights. He was quick to point out that French-Canadians already had their own organization – the *Chez-Nous du Soldat* – to support. Supporting the Knights' campaign would help English Catholic prestige, he argued, and not French-Canadian Catholicism:

Après la guerre, il est très probable, quand viendra le partage des mérites, que l'on sera porté à prendre l'oeuvre de telle organisation, sans demander à quelles sources elle est

¹⁰⁶ *Le Droit*, 16 juillet, 1918, 1; 25 juillet, 1; 31 juillet, 1.

¹⁰⁷ *Le Droit*, 9 août, 1918, 1; 18 août, 1.

allée puiser pour recueillir les fonds avec lesquels elle a fait merveille. Si les Canadiens français délaissent leurs propres organisations pour encourager des organisations étrangères, on les accusera d'avoir abandonné leurs conscrits à la charité des étrangers, d'avoir négligé de leur porter secours, d'avoir manqué de coeur.¹⁰⁸

Shortly after contending that French-Canadians needed to support their own organizations instead of the Knights, Foisy went for the knock-out blow by claiming that the Knights of Columbus in Ontario had been at the forefront of support for Regulation XVII. While he acknowledged that leaders such as Bishop Fallon, Father O'Gorman and prominent school board members in Ottawa and other regions never acted officially on behalf of the Knights in pushing the new laws and injunctions throughout the period, Foisy nevertheless found it condemnable that they were key leaders or members of the Order. Thus, a French-Canadian joining the Knights in the province would be struck with "paralyse nationale," and could never play a role other than "fournir de l'argent qui servira contre nous dans tous les domaines, religieux, politique, commercial et économique," he argued.¹⁰⁹

Foisy curiously ended his series of editorial pieces with a grudging word of admiration for the Order and expressed regret (and subsequently a call to action) that French-Canadians did not have such a strong society of their own. As a lay movement, Foisy applauded the Knights efficiency at lobbying Church, civil and commercial authorities and their effectiveness as a mass popular movement :

(Les Chevaliers de Colomb) devrait servir de modèle aux Canadiens français, non pas en ce sens qu'ils doivent courir s'y enrégimenter, mais en ce qu'ils devraient s'efforcer d'en

¹⁰⁸ *Le Droit*, 7 septembre, 1918, 1. Foisy did not have any direct connections with the Chez-Nous movement but likely had received news of their formation and intentions through his responsibilities as Secretary for ACFÉO.

¹⁰⁹ *Le Droit*, 26 octobre, 1918, 1.

créer une du même genre, qui offrirait tous ses avantages au point du vue social canadien français et n'aurait pas ses dangers au point de vue national et religieux.¹¹⁰

Le Droit was not the only organization in Ottawa concerned with the influence of prominent Knights in the schools crisis. The ACFÉO also waded into the debate around the Knights in Ontario near the end of the war. In May of 1916 the Lafontaine Council (Montreal) of the Knights of Columbus wrote ACFÉO President L.P. Landry to express their support of the campaign against Regulation XVII.¹¹¹ While this show of support was undoubtedly welcomed, the association remained sceptical about the Knights, as evidenced by a reply to Valleyfield College instructor Father A. Dandurand's inquiry for information about the Knights. Citing the list of prominent members of the Order such as Bishop Fallon and claiming that there were Knights among the group of men who had secured the Mackell injunction (which barred payment of Ottawa teachers in a separate school board who did not adhere to provincial regulations) in 1914, as well as rumours that a delegation of Knights had approached Bishop Charles-Hughes Gauthier of Ottawa to have the University of Ottawa turned into an English-only institution in 1916, they argued that French-Canadians could not possibly benefit from joining such an association. Instead, it was a patriotic duty to oppose their efforts to recruit French-Canadians.¹¹²

Most remarkable, however, was the ACFÉO's dealings with Archbishop Bruchési in late 1918 (right as *Le Droit* stepped up its public opposition to the Knights). Bruchési

¹¹⁰ *Le Droit*, 2 novembre, 1918, 1.

¹¹¹ NAC, OJC, K. of C. Sociétés étrangères, 1921-1946, MG28 I98 Vol. 147, Sec. archiviste du Conseil Lafontaine des Chevaliers de Colomb au Président de l'ACFÉO (L.P. Landry), 6 mai 1916.

¹¹² NAC, OJC, K. of C. Sociétés étrangères, 1921-1946, MG28 I98 Vol. 147, Sec. de l'ACFÉO au Père A. Dandurand (Collège de Valleyfield), 17 mai 1918. For more on the Mackell injunction see Choquette, *La foi*, 120-122; Choquette, *Langue et religion*, 183-185. Bishop Gauthier's opinion of the Knights is unknown, though he often worked with Archbishop McNeil to try and find compromise for his flock in Ottawa in the schools crisis, Choquette, *La foi*, 40, 122.

had complained to Ottawa priest Charles Charlebois about the paper, and the association, attacking the Knights while the Quebec clergy had united behind the Canadian Army Huts campaign. Foisy was quick to reduce the vigour of his attacks on the Knights in an apology to Bruchési, “nous avons l'intention la plus sincère de publier un journal catholique sous tout rapport et jamais nous ne voudrions dire quoi que ce soit de nature à blesser Votre Grandeur ou tout autre Évêque de Québec.”¹¹³ Bruchési's response defended his and Cardinal Bégin's decision to support the Army Huts, citing the lack of Catholic areas of recreation for soldiers as a major problem overseas. Any opposition was thus easily perceived as defiance of the episcopacy:

Il y a au Canada des prêtres et des évêques qui sont Chevaliers de Colomb. Ceux-ci ne sont pas condamnés par l'Église. En faisant une campagne terrible contre eux, *Le Droit* naturellement se trouvait à condamner l'acte du Cardinal et le mien. Cette campagne était-elle opportune? Fera-t-elle du bien? Vous le croyez peut-être. Moi je le regrette. Il y a de ces luttes que les journalistes catholiques feraient bien de commencer, ce me semble après avoir pris conseil des évêques qu'ils ceulent (sic) servir et défendre.¹¹⁴

Bruchési's anger came only months after Pope Benedict XV had issued a second papal encyclical, *Litteris apostolicis*, on the schools crisis. In it, the Pope pushed for moderation and condemned “illegitimate” means of trying to reform education laws in the province and, above all, demanded that the laity obey their bishops and priests in this regard.¹¹⁵ Bruchési's reaction was certainly one that took the Pope's orders into consideration.

Thus, it is during the First World War that the first signs of division over how to deal with the Knights of Columbus begin to appear in Ontario and Quebec. For the

¹¹³ CRCCF, *ACFO*, Évêques: Bruchési, Paul. Archevêque de Montréal, 1914-1939. C2/154/12, J.A. Foisy à Bruchési, le 16 octobre, 1918.

¹¹⁴ CRCCF, *ACFO*, Évêques: Bruchési, Paul. Archevêque de Montréal, 1914-1939, C2/154/12, Bruchési à Foisy, 17 octobre, 1918.

¹¹⁵ For more on this and Benedict's other encyclical, *Commissio Divinitus*, see Choquette, *Langue et religion*, 216-217, 203-206.

francophone population of Ontario, the perceived dual role of many Knights as their main opponents in the schools debates negated their war efforts, while for Quebec Knights, the war became an opportunity to show that they would still voluntarily contribute to the war effort. Almost entirely francophone by war's end, the Quebec Knights' leadership first faced the growing resentment from their Ontario compatriots when State Deputy Georges Boivin was invited by the Ontario Knights of Columbus to speak at a tribute banquet in 1923 for the Catholic Army Huts at the Château Laurier in Ottawa. Speaking to a mostly English audience, Boivin lauded the Knights' war contributions and efforts to improve national unity, arguing that they had done more in this regard than the Unity League or the *Bonne Entente* movement.¹¹⁶ Turning to domestic affairs, Boivin heaped praise on the efforts of the Knights to support French Catholic schools in the West, such as in Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan. These efforts, he argued, exemplified the unity and conviviality of the Order:

The K. of C. ... had brought about better relations between Ontario and Quebec, and in this connection he wished to say, speaking as a French-Canadian, that the English-speaking brethren had been more broad minded than the French themselves in the matter.¹¹⁷

Charles Gauthier, having taken over for Foisy as one of the main editorialists at *Le Droit*, pounced on Boivin's glib comment to a friendly audience and used it to hammer home criticisms *Le Droit* had made of the Order in 1918:

Il faut que M. Boivin soit fortement ignorant de nos luttes scolaires et des activités de certains individus de son ordre pour oser venir parler à Ottawa, le centre même de la résistance scolaire, où se sont perpétrés les plus odieux affronts contre les droits des pères de famille canadiens-français, de la largeur d'esprit des 'English-speaking brethren' d'Ontario. Ce n'est pas assez d'avoir souffert par les 'English-speaking brethren', il faut

¹¹⁶ *Le Droit*, 7 juin, 1923, 1.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

aujourd'hui qu'un de nos compatriotes de la province de Québec vienne les cajoler, les flater (sic) bassement, s'humilier devant eux, et nous humilier avec lui.¹¹⁸

Boivin, in a letter to Knights of Columbus Quebec State Secretary Denis Martin, adamantly defended his decision to speak to the Ontario Knights, and more particularly his commendation of their support for the creation of francophone councils in the Prairies. If supporting any organization that supported francophones was a sin, he argued, “je suis un pécheur impénitent.”¹¹⁹ Boivin rejected the idea of trying to plead his case in a letter to *Le Droit*; in his mind it was an unfair playing field for they controlled publication and had already shown themselves to be vehemently opposed to the Knights.¹²⁰

This residual bitterness over the divisions created by the war carried far into the 1920s, as the struggle to have Regulation XVII rescinded continued. The ACFÉO spent the early 1920s collecting evidence of Irish Catholic attempts to block their efforts to reinstitute French schooling. Increasingly, the association attempted to make links between local tensions across the province with the activities of the Irish Knights of Columbus. For example, in a letter to a member in Windsor, the ACFÉO executive admitted “Nous sommes sur la piste de plusieurs mauvais coups que viennent de nous donner certains Irlandais Chevaliers de Colomb et nous désirons compléter nos renseignements.”¹²¹ Indeed, even the Champlain Council of the Knights of Columbus (Ottawa), one of the few francophone councils of the Knights in Ontario, expressed concern in a public resolution that Knights were on the school board in Pembroke which

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Letter quoted in NAC, *OJC*, Bulletin mensuel des Chevaliers de Colomb, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, mai, 1951, 12.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Sociétés étrangères, 1921-1946, MG28 I98 Vol. 147, Sec. de l'ACFÉO à Joseph de Grandpré (Windsor ON), 16 octobre, 1923.

had rejected French schooling in the region, and repudiated their actions, even if they were in a personal capacity and not as Knights.¹²²

The Quebec Knights, meanwhile, continued to defend their reputation, and expressed surprise that they should be labelled as national traitors throughout the 1920s. The State Council fashioned itself the defenders of language and faith throughout the period in circular letters to members as well as to the media. In a New Year's address in 1924, the Quebec State Deputy called upon the general membership to continue the fundraising drive to support the creation of a French college in Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan, "Cette oeuvre est la nôtre; nous nous y sommes consacrés, nous devons la mener jusqu'au bout et nous y la mènerons. C'est pour la survivance de notre foi et de notre langue dans l'Ouest canadien."¹²³ Additionally, leaders like Supreme Director Francis Fauteux pushed *Le Droit* to publish more positive stories on the Knights activities, such as lobbying the Vatican for a francophone bishop in Ottawa in 1927, or their support for French-language schools in the West.¹²⁴ After the efforts and tensions of the war and the schools crisis, the wounds were clearly slow to heal.

1.6. Lessons learned: The creation of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier

The 1920s thus became a period of competing definitions of what it meant to be a Knight of Columbus in Ontario and Quebec. Tied to this debate was differing notions of French-Canadian identity. For francophone Knights in Quebec, it was difficult

¹²² *Le Droit*, 11 décembre, 1923, 1.

¹²³ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Sociétés étrangères, 1921-1946, MG28 I98 Vol. 147, Lettre circulaire du Député d'État des Chevaliers de Colomb du Québec aux Grands Chevaliers de la province de Québec, 8 janvier 1924.

¹²⁴ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Sociétés étrangères, 1921-1946, MG28 I98 Vol. 147, Francis Fauteux aux rédacteurs de *Le Droit*, 10 juin 1925; the Quebec State Council had actively lobbied the Papacy for a French-Canadian to be appointed in the diocese, CRCCF, *ACFO*, Évêques: nomination dans la diocèse d'Ottawa, 1927, C2 153 9, Francis Fauteux, Sec. d'État des Chevaliers de Colomb de Québec au Pape Pie XI, 24 avril 1927.

to understand the opposition of Ontario francophones to the Order, while in Ontario, the Knights of Columbus remained synonymous with their experiences as a minority fighting pitched battles to protect their language and faith. While the Quebec Knights staunchly defended their record, in Ontario militants from the Regulation XVII battles began to consider new means of increasing their political influence. One option which gained popularity was the possibility of creating a secret society to match the perceived shadowy and substantial power of Protestant organisations like the Masons and even the Orange Order or the powerful organizations of the Irish Catholic community. Thus, on October 22, 1926, 19 men from the Ottawa and Hull region met in the presbytery of Father François-Xavier Barrette at Saint Charles parish to discuss the formation of a French-Canadian secret society.¹²⁵

While academics such as Robert Choquette, Marcel Martel and Raymond Laliberté have argued that the motivation for creating the OJC rose from the experiences of the battle over Regulation XVII, they offer little in the way of detailed explanation to the claim that “La naissance de l’Ordre...doit se comprendre dans le contexte des seize années de luttes ecclésiastique et scolaire menées par les Franco-Ontariens depuis 1910.”¹²⁶ A recent study traced the contact that the founding members of the OJC had with one another before the first meetings of 1926-1927 and found that most members worked and worshiped in similar professions and parishes (namely Father Barrette’s parish of Saint-Charles) and put time and energy into the same volunteer associations.¹²⁷

Institutions and associations like *Le Droit*, l’ACFÉO and other local Ottawa associations

¹²⁵ NAC, *OJC*, Procès-verbaux du CX, MG 28 I98 Vol. 8, 22 octobre 1926.

¹²⁶ Choquette, *La langue*, 234; Martel and Laliberté offer similar conclusions about the reasons for the creation of the Order, Laliberté, *Une société secrète*, 38-39; Martel, *Le deuil d’un pays imaginé*, 34.

¹²⁷ Anik Sauvé, *L’Ordre de Jacques Cartier : une étude sur les artisans méconnus de sa fondation*, Master’s Memoir, Ottawa, University of Ottawa, 2004.

thus were intrinsically linked with the Order and would continue to be throughout its existence.

Thus, even men like Albert Foisy, who did not necessarily form the core group of founders of the OJC could, by their contact with their colleagues in church associations or at work, influence and inspire the Order's creators.¹²⁸ While previous and more recent work has established the links between the founding members in Ottawa and the larger context of the political environment of the time, particularly in Ottawa, one question remains: what pushed them to create a secret society such as the OJC?

For the future leaders of the OJC, tactics of their adversaries, especially of their Irish Catholic brethren, during the schools crisis was justly considered in the creation and modeling of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier. The Knights of Columbus had become a prominent target for French-Canadian nationalists in Ontario, particularly in Ottawa, in the latter days of the war and into the 1920s with their prominent Irish leadership and numerous other members who spearheaded efforts to block efforts to repeal the new school laws. While there exists very little extant record of the original meetings of the Order, Esdras Terrien, founding member of the Order, clearly linked the experiences of the previous decade with the inspiration for creating the Order:

Nous avons connu la lutte par les cercles de la jeunesse, nous l'avons faite dans la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, dans l'Association d'Éducation, dans la presse catholique indépendante, et sentant le besoin d'une autre arme auxiliaire, nous nous sommes laissé persuader à fonder et aider la société secrète que nous présentons ce soir.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Foisy, for instance, worshiped at Saint-Charles, and thus had contact with Father Barrette. He also worked with Charles Gauthier, one of the first members of the OJC, on the editorial board of *Le Droit*, Laliberté, *Une société secrète*, 91; Georgette Lamoureux *Histoire d'Ottawa, Tome IV, Ottawa, 1900-1926 et sa population canadienne-française* (Ottawa: G. Lamoureux, 1984), 135.

¹²⁹ CRCCF, *OJC*, Historique de l'Ordre de Jacques Cartier, allocution du Grand Chancelier, 1941, C3-1-1, Reception à s. exc. Monseigneur Alexandre Vachon, 2 février, 1941.

The perceived tactics of both their Protestant and Irish Catholic adversaries working in the shadows through secret societies and semi-secret organizations during the schools crisis had provided important lessons for them, argued Terrien, and they soon reached the conclusion that "il fallait répondre par la même stratégie aux tactiques camouflées."¹³⁰ Not only were their Irish coreligionists gaining an advantage through semi-secret societies, but some of their own francophone campatriots were joining these foreign societies, a devastating loss for the national community, according to Terrien who, even in 1941, saw these societies as a threat:

Trop des nôtres restent isolés de nos diverses sociétés catholiques et nationales, et pour des raisons de milieu, de tempérament ou autres, s'enrôlent dans des sociétés étrangères, souvent neutres et même anticatholiques.¹³¹

Something was clearly needed to counter the weight and sway of English Catholic organizations and the leaders of the Order offered a solution in a new society which ultimately would seek to divert attention from fraternities like the Knights:

Nous voulions garder ou redonner à notre peuple cette structure, cette conviction, cette mentalité foncière que nous apercevions dans les races qui nous entourent, afin de le mettre en état de résister mieux à l'assimilation, de lutter sur un pied d'égalité avec ses concurrents étrangers, de rayonner chez lui, de se développer dans le sens de son génie propre et de garder unis et vivants tous les groupes français du Canada.¹³²

Thus, the need for a new vehicle of political and social action was the driving force behind the creation of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier.

While the experiences and lessons learned from the schools crisis provided the motivation for the formation of a French-Canadian secret society, the Ordre de Jacques Cartier very quickly began to assimilate some of the keys to success of the Knights of

¹³⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹³¹ CRCCE, *OJC*, Historique de l'Ordre de Jacques Cartier, allocution du Grand Chancelier, 1941, C3-1-1, Reception à s. exc. Monseigneur Alexandre Vachon, 2 février, 1941, 3.

¹³² Ibid., 5.

Columbus in designing their new society. One of these was a solid link with religious authority. Like the Knights of Columbus, the Ordre de Jacques Cartier emphasized the modest beginnings of their society in their own historical accounts, often focusing on the meeting between Father Barrette and founding member Albert Ménard in the fall of 1926, much like Knight legend recounts Father McGivney approaching the Red Knights in New Haven with the idea of creating a new association for the Irish Catholics of the region.¹³³ Like the Knights of Columbus, each council of the OJC had to have a chaplain to advise on religious and moral matters and the head chaplain was a permanent member of the executive council, or *Chancellerie* (heretofore referred to as Chancellory).¹³⁴ Indeed, the leaders of the OJC placed great importance on the idea of being a Catholic lay movement to protect French-Canadian rights. For the founders, faith was intrinsically linked with language :

La religion s'exprime et s'enseigne par le verbe, la nôtre nous est venue et nous est restée par la langue française, les deux vivent dans une intimité presque inséparable que nous voulons entretenir jusqu'à la fin de nos jours.¹³⁵

Thus, the nationalist vision of the OJC's founders was still clearly rooted in a link between linguistic and religious continuity.

These religious overtones, however, were also likely influenced by the Catholic Church's traditional suspicion of secret societies and especially of overtly nationalist organizations in an era where nationalism was firmly rejected by the papacy. As the OJC was forming, the Pope had issued edicts against the Action française movement in France, as well as a French-Canadian nationalist paper, *La Sentinelle*, in Rhode Island,

¹³³ CRCCF, *OJC*, Historique de l'Ordre de Jacques Cartier, 1949, C3/1/4, Dialogue entre M. le curé F.X. Barrette et Albert Ménard au presbytère, l'automne de 1926; Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 18-19.

¹³⁴ Choquette, *La foi*, 236-238.

¹³⁵ CRCCF, *OJC*, Historique de l'Ordre de Jacques Cartier, allocution du Grand Chancelier, 1941, C3-1-1, Réception à s. exc. Monseigneur Alexandre Vachon, 2 février, 1941, 13.

for upsetting the order and authority of the Church through nationalist activities.¹³⁶ In an era where public nationalist agitation was frowned upon, and even provided cause for excommunication, the founders of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier were undoubtedly aware of the need for discretion and the approval of religious authority in creating their new society.

If the religious overtones of the OJC were central to its creation, the religious rituals and symbolism also served as a useful tool for education and inspiration of its members. The ceremonies and rituals of the OJC resembled and likely deliberately mimicked the Knights of Columbus on a number of fronts. From the rituals one had to go through to be welcomed as a member to the organizational structure and even the name, the Ordre de Jacques Cartier clearly was setting itself as the francophone alternative to the Knights. Indeed, by invoking Jacques Cartier as opposed to Christopher Columbus as their inspiration, the Order was clearly expressing its opinion on who they thought was a more suitable icon of the exploration and Christianization of North America than Christopher Columbus.

When one compares the ritual and reverence associated with Cartier in the ceremonies and hymns of the OJC to those in tribute to Columbus in the Knights of Columbus rituals, the similarity is remarkable. In the initiation ritual for the third degree in the OJC, for example, Cartier is the first French-Canadian alluded to in a ceremonial invoking figures such as Dollard, Samuel de Champlain and various French explorers as Catholic forefathers of North America.¹³⁷ Cartier's arrival in the Saint Lawrence is

¹³⁶ For more on these events see Susan Trofimenkoff, *Action Française: French Canadian Nationalism in the Twenties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 102-108.

¹³⁷ NAC, *OJC*, Lettres Circulaires, janvier 1929-février 1934, MG28 I98 Vol. 19, "Galerie des Ancêtres au 3^e Degré", 15 décembre, 1931.

couched in the same reverential tones as Columbus' landing at San Salvador in Knights of Columbus ritual, and his accomplishments were the sign that "sa race et les fils de son esprit seraient de droit et à jamais les vrais fils et maîtres du continent nouveau."¹³⁸

Compare this to historian Christopher Kauffman's claim that the choice of "Columbus" "affirmed the discovery of America as a Catholic event," and the parallels between the two societies become even more clear.¹³⁹ The *Conncticut Catholic* was delighted with the Knights of Columbus' choice for a symbolic namesake:

As American Catholics we do not know of anyone who more deserves our grateful remembrance than the great and noble man - the pious, zealous, faithful Catholic, the enterprising navigator, and the large-hearted and generous sailor: Christopher Columbus.¹⁴⁰

Like the Knights of Columbus, the leaders of the OJC saw themselves as the inheritors and protectors of the Catholic tradition in North America, though for them this tradition was French in nature. Their coat of arms exemplified this deliberate link with the past, having the dates of 1534-1926 below the OJC shield. As Edgar Tissot explained to the first *Commanderie* (council, or XC in OJC correspondence) in Ottawa, their new secret society simply formalized the link that all French-Canadians had had with Cartier through centuries of existence in North America.¹⁴¹ The ritualized homage to their French-Canadian forefathers formed a critical part of what the OJC leadership felt made the Order so attractive for members, and it also offered new members valuable lessons on how to live a better religious and patriotic life.¹⁴² What remained to be seen, however,

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 16.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 17.

¹⁴¹ NAC, *OJC*, *Sociétés Secrètes*, 1928-1944, MG28 I98 Vol. 153, "Conférence sur les Sociétés Secrètes", 1 mai, 1928, 4-5.

¹⁴² Ibid.; at the second meeting of the Order, the founding members had decided that creating rituals and ceremonies was "absolument nécessaire", NAC, *OJC*, *Procès-verbaux de la CX*- 22 Octobre 1926-11 octobre, 1928, MG28 I98 Vol. 8, 5 décembre, 1926.

was how successful this new society would be in rallying support as it grew into the 1930s and, ultimately, sought to establish itself as the most influential association in French North America.

1.7. “The ever-recurrent problem”: Maintaining the OJC and Knights of Columbus membership in the early 1930s

After the initial meetings of 1926-1927 and having secured a federal charter, the OJC leadership focused on expanding the society beyond the confines of the Ottawa region.¹⁴³ To do this it established new means on communicating official edicts and political positions via a public newsletter, *l'Émerillon* (named after one of Cartier's ships) run by former and current journalists from *Le Droit*.¹⁴⁴ It also pushed the development of new councils, or XCs, well into the 1930s, with moderate success. While Raymond Laliberté has noted that the OJC experienced continued growth throughout the 1930s, it was likely slower than they would have liked, judging by the circular letters issued to members on the need to boost their efforts in order to counteract the slump of the early Depression years.¹⁴⁵

This concern with the growth of the OJC was reflected by an increasing focus on recruitment and growth in Quebec. While the leadership recognized that the Order would have more of an impact in terms of their battles for language rights on French-Canadians living outside of Quebec, they also realized that a strong presence in the province could

¹⁴³ Having a Charter allowed the OJC to own and sell property for their headquarters.

¹⁴⁴ Choquette, *La foi*, 242-243.

¹⁴⁵ For the growth of the Order see Laliberté, *Une société secrète*, 44-45; for examples of the Order's reaction to the Depression, see NAC, *OJC*, *Lettres Circulaires*, janvier, 1929-février, 1934, MG28 I98 Vol. 19, “Vie Interne et Inactivité,” 1 juin, 1931; “Orientation Générale,” 30 septembre, 1931; “Recrutement et vie des commanderies, plus particulièrement à celles du Québec,” 8 janvier, 1932.

increase their membership and overall strength.¹⁴⁶ By 1934, the OJC had expanded to include 59 councils, 39 of which were in the province of Quebec and only four in the western region of the country.¹⁴⁷ Quebec was clearly becoming the main seat of membership for the Order, while the leadership continued to be based in Ottawa.

What is most telling about the OJC's strength in this period, however, is not just the Chancellory's growing concern for its growth, or the competition posed by foreign societies, but also fear of inadvertent competition coming from other French-Canadian organizations. In May of 1930 the Chancellory received a report from a sympathetic priest in Montreal warning them of the creation of a new French-Canadian society known as the Chevaliers de Carillon and asking them what they would like to do about it.¹⁴⁸ The Chancellory, likely aware that they were still establishing the OJC in the Montreal region, took a conciliatory route by deciding to try and meet the leaders of this new organization to see if a merger would be possible. A meeting held a couple of weeks later, however, saw the Chancellory take the rare decision to go public, publishing the following ad in French-Canadian newspapers, indicating a failure of the first strategy :

On annonce de temps à autre la fondation d'une société secrète catholique et canadienne-française visant à combler une lacune chez les nôtres. On ignore sans doute qu'une société de ce genre existe déjà depuis plusieurs années et s'appelle l'Ordre de Jacques-Cartier. Fondée à Ottawa, où se trouve son siège social, elle a reçu l'approbation ecclésiastique et possède une charte fédérale. Elle étend ses ramifications sur presque tout le pays.¹⁴⁹

Later, in December of 1933, the Chancellory appeared to further soften its initial stance on trying to counter the influence of foreign societies by releasing a circular which

¹⁴⁶ NAC, *OJC*, Sociétés Secrètes, 1928-1944, MG28 I98 Vol. 153, "Conférence sur les Sociétés Secrètes", 1 mai, 1928, 3; NAC, *OJC*, Lettres Circulaires, janvier, 1929-février, 1934, MG28 I98 Vol. 19, "Recrutement et vie des commanderies, plus particulièrement à celles du Québec," 8 janvier, 1932.

¹⁴⁷ Laliberté, *Une société secrète*, 44.

¹⁴⁸ NAC, *OJC*, Procès-verbaux de la CX, 8 mai, 1930 au 21 octobre, 1934, MG28 I98 Vol.8, 15 mai, 1930.

¹⁴⁹ Press clipping from an unknown newspaper found in NAC, *OJC*, Procès-verbaux de la CX, 8 mai, 1930 au 21 octobre, 1934, MG28 I98 Vol.8, 28 mai, 1930.

declared it permissible to new members to be sworn in at the First Degree level, so long as they were worthy, while being members of other societies and fraternal associations.¹⁵⁰ Once these members were sworn into the OJC, they believed, they would naturally be persuaded to be more loyal to them and could then be promoted to higher degrees.

Even as the concerns over membership began to wane, the Order continued to be wary of taking on any large battles in the mid to late 1930s. In January of 1935, for instance, the Chancellory refused to engage in any sort of active opposition to the Knights of Columbus, even when requested to do so by a member of the Order in Saint-Raymond, Quebec. They argued “qu'il serait excessivement dangereux pour nous et l'Ordre si nous prenions l'action,” though they acknowledged the need to oppose the Knights, offering instead that perhaps the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste could take up the call at that time.¹⁵¹ The only form of concrete action taken by the Order against the Knights was in reaction to inquiries about what to do with members who were also Knights. They took a soft approach, barring the promotion of any first or second degree members who continued their membership with the Knights, while officers and those in the third degree or above were exempt from any sanctions.¹⁵²

The 1930s were thus a period of consolidation for the OJC as its membership hovered at approximately 3,500 members for the period.¹⁵³ The Knights of Columbus, meanwhile, were experiencing similar difficulties in recruiting new members and, more particularly, keeping them. In 1926, while the Ordre de Jacques Cartier was still just an

¹⁵⁰ NAC, *OJC*, Knights of Columbus (en général) 1951-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, Circulaire de la CX, 23 décembre 1933, Enrôlement des nôtres dans les sociétés étrangères.

¹⁵¹ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Sec. du CX au XC Noël Chabanel, no. 55, 11 janvier 1935.

¹⁵² NAC, *OJC*, Procès-verbaux de la CX, 8 mai, 1930 au 21 octobre, 1934, MG28 I98 Vol. 8, 30 janvier, 1938.

¹⁵³ Choquette, *La foi*, 239.

idea, the Knights of Columbus had just over 18,000 members in Quebec (most of whom were francophone).¹⁵⁴ By 1932 this number had dropped to 14,934 and the decline in membership finally bottomed out in 1936 when membership dropped to 13,653.¹⁵⁵ While the losses in Quebec were significant, a decline in membership was a reality for all State Councils of the Knights of Columbus in the period, even before the devastating effect of the Depression of the 1930s. Throughout the mid-1920s until the 1930s the Order sustained staggering net losses in membership, peaking at 51,160 in 1932-33.¹⁵⁶ Though the leadership in New Haven considered this to be no worse than other fraternal societies were faring in the middle of the Depression, they emphasized the need to sustain membership as a number one priority:

The life, vitality, and future of the Order depend on the annual growth and increase in membership. In all fraternal organizations, as in all associations of human beings, the question of maintaining the membership is the ever-recurrent problem which requires the best thought both of officers and members.¹⁵⁷

Many in the Knights' leadership (and the Knights' official historian) credited some of the drop in membership to the somewhat transitory popularity of the Knights with returning soldiers and the glowing status of the association in the post-war years.¹⁵⁸ Kauffman contends, as did the Supreme Council in the 1920s, that many new Knights were attracted to the prestige the Order gained during the war, pointing to the high number of new associate (without insurance) members amongst the new recruits – almost 75% in the early 1920s.¹⁵⁹ The associate membership was by far the area with the most significant losses throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. For the Quebec Knights of

¹⁵⁴ *Columbia*, Supreme Secretary's report, September 1926, 43.

¹⁵⁵ KCA, *Annual Report of the Supreme Secretary*, June 30, 1933, 12; Supreme Council Proceedings, August 17-19, 1937, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 34-35.

¹⁵⁶ KCA, *Supreme Council Proceedings*, August 17-19, 1937, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 32.

¹⁵⁷ KCA, *Supreme Council Proceedings*, August 15-17, 1939, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 25.

¹⁵⁸ Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 315-317.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Columbus, an even higher portion of their members with associate status - in 1920 almost 85% of their total membership had associate membership – most likely led to their higher membership loss rate.¹⁶⁰

The Supreme Council, becoming increasingly alarmed with continued losses into the late 1920s, focused on beefing up requirements to even become an associate member of the Order. As Supreme Knight James Flaherty bluntly stated in late 1927, "One member who says 'I used to be' hurts the Order more than a hundred who say 'I never was'."¹⁶¹ Thus, in 1927 the requirements for associate membership were modified, raising the minimum age to 26, while members under 26 had to become insured members with at least one thousand dollars in Knights insurance. Targeted at new members, likely those who had signed up during the war boom, these new policies sought to seek only the most reliable members – those with insurance- knowing that they would likely stay with the Order for the long term.¹⁶² These regulations also stemmed some of the bleeding in Quebec, though the Order continued to suffer losses throughout the early stages of the Depression, a sign yet again of the tenuous hold the Order was able to maintain on its associate members (the vast majority) in the province.¹⁶³

1.8. Conclusion

The early 1930s were a period of survival and consolidation for both the Ordre de Jacques Cartier and the Knights of Columbus. The OJC, rising out of the tumult over Regulation XVII had built itself as a counterweight to the Knights of Columbus. It did

¹⁶⁰ KCA, *The Columbiad*, October 1920, Report of Supreme Secretary, p.7. While it is difficult to track members coming and going, the percentage of Quebec members with associate status remained roughly the same, likely indicating a similar if not higher loss rate at the associate level as the other State Councils.

¹⁶¹ Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 318.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 321.

¹⁶³ By 1933, for instance, the associate membership only formed 56% of the total membership in Quebec, though they still experienced a general decline in members; KCA, *Annual Report of the Supreme Secretary*, June 30, 1933, 12.

this with the memories of key Knights like Bishop Michael Fallon of London and others having supported the government's language legislation firmly in mind. French-Canadian leaders in Ottawa at *Le Droit* and the ACFEO thus sought to fight the positive image of the Knights gained through the increasingly public profile of their war work in Quebec and overseas. In Quebec, meanwhile, the Knights of Columbus had become a mainly francophone association, and their war work generated a mostly positive response, albeit with some reservations about the national scope of the campaign. The Depression shook both the Knights and the OJC and both associations spent most of the 1930s focusing on survival and consolidation. The outbreak of war once more in September of 1939, however, would bring up ghosts of 1917-1918 and push the Ordre de Jacques Cartier to finally tackle the problematic Knights head on.

Chapter 2

Inter-war survival and renewed tension between the OJC and the Knights of Columbus

The timing of the creation of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier forced it to overcome some major challenges early in its existence as it faced the Depression only a few years after its first meetings in basement of the presbytery of Saint-Charles parish in Ottawa. Fuelled by a perceived need to combat foreign, or “Irish” Catholic associations which they felt had worked against them in the schools crisis, the leaders of the OJC were pushed by the economic downturn of the 1930s to address larger economic issues facing French-Canadians. Thus, in December of 1933 it adjusted its approach to the Knights of Columbus in a circular to the wider membership to now emphasize the economic loss investing in American fraternal societies like the Knights represented for French-Canadians:

Un des buts principaux de la fondation des C.O.J.C. est d'empêcher l'exode des nôtres vers d'autres sociétés étrangères à notre pays et à nos intérêts nationaux. Si le coulage vers ces associations continue, cela sera au détriment de toute la race. L'argent qu'ils y verseront servira en maintes circonstances à aller à l'encontre de nos droits et privilèges.¹⁶⁴

The leaders of the OJC thus began redefining some of their founding principles. No longer was the emphasis on creating a secretive force to combat their Irish coreligionists in the Knights on equal footing in Ontario, but rather the OJC was presented as a tool to educate French-Canadians about the dangers of investing in and joining foreign fraternal associations like the Knights (in the hopes of weakening the base of support for the Knights).

¹⁶⁴ NAC, *OJC*, Knights of Columbus (en général) 1951-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, Circulaire de la CX, no. 150-M1933-45, 23 décembre 1933, Sujet : Enrôlement des nôtres dans les sociétés étrangères.

A small shift, perhaps, but indicative of the OJC's increased emphasis on economic nationalism as a response to the hard times of the Depression. This chapter will focus of the shifting priorities of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier as well as the increasingly tense relationship between the Knights of Columbus of Quebec and the Knights' Supreme Council in New Haven.

The OJC's increased emphasis on economic nationalism can be seen in its initiation of the Ligue d'Achat Chez Nous, as well as its own increasing interest in developing some sort of insurance or death benefits plan for its members (another cue taken from their adversaries, the Knights of Columbus). It also saw a realignment of the OJC's nationalist ideology – moving beyond the feud over school language rights to larger issues of economic survival (and then solidarity in face of post-war prosperity) and more aggressive use of the Quebec state in a period of federal centralization in provincial-federal relations. Much of this was inspired by their intellectual mentor, Lionel Groulx. Groulx had become increasingly prominent in nationalist circles throughout the 1920s, as well as having many connections with the Ottawa French-Canadian elite and the OJC was quick to latch on to his militant nationalism as its own, supporting him financially and encouraging the spread of his many tracts on nationalist issues.¹⁶⁵

All of this development would be put to the test with the outbreak of war in September of 1939. Mindful of the battles of the last war, the OJC reduced its overall activity during the war to focus on key issues such as the plebiscite on conscription and, eventually, on a plan for post-war growth. During the war, mentor Lionel Groulx became one of the many voices condemning the return of conscription, and his ideas would fuel

¹⁶⁵ For more on this see Bock, *Quand la nation*, 222-231.

much of the post-war activities of the OJC, while the relationship between the Order and the nationalist priest grew during the period.

The period also witnessed a shift in the OJC's leadership. Newer members like Pierre Vigeant and Jean-Jacques Tremblay (who both went on to become Grand Chancellors in the 1950s) began to exert increasing influence on the Chancellory's orientation. Vigeant in particular would spur the OJC to resume the battle to weaken or eliminate the Knights of Columbus. Profoundly influenced by their own experiences (growing up in New England for Vigeant, or in Ottawa for Tremblay), the OJC leadership thus continued to approach the issue of the Knights of Columbus from a minority perspective.

The formation of new associations and organizations by the OJC like the Société Richelieu and the Union de Mutuelles-Vie Française d'Amérique, however, represented the rise of a more aggressive autonomist nationalism within the OJC leadership which reflected much of Groulx's calls for more aggressive action. The creation of these new, strictly francophone organizations attempted to establish footholds in areas where the Chancellory felt the Knights of Columbus were the strongest – economic solidarity and as a fraternal club.

The need to combat the Knights of Columbus was revived near the end of the war. This time a large scale campaign attacking their economic clout and lack of autonomy from New Haven (and less their activities in Ontario) would become the main points of criticism during a time of relative economic prosperity. Unfortunately for the Chancellory, their Quebec members appeared initially reluctant to take on a campaign against the seemingly innocuous Knights. The slow response from Quebec members

foreshadowed an increasing divide between the Ontario based leadership and Quebec membership.

The Knights of Columbus, meanwhile, also went into the war in a much stronger position than at the beginning of the 1930s. Revived from flagging membership numbers by a new ethic in the Supreme Council in New Haven, the Canadian Knights of Columbus reaped the rewards of their solid reputation for their previous war by being recognized as an official war auxiliary of the Canadian military in 1939. Increasing membership, however, led to renewed conflicts within State Council - Supreme Council relations. Like the *Ordre de Jacques Cartier*, the Knights of Columbus in Quebec were also products of the changing political and religious environment in Quebec after the war. While Quebec State Deputy Thomas-Adélarde Fontaine battled with the authorities in New Haven over the use of French, these early battles for increased recognition of the French element in the Knights did not lead to outright resistance, though the promise of it certainly simmered throughout the period.

2.1. The OJC, the Ligue d'Achat Chez Nous and Les Amis de l'abbé Groulx

Though the OJC had been reluctant to tackle the Knights of Columbus head on throughout the 1930s, it did undertake campaigns of support or initiation which reflected the growing concern for French-Canadian economic autonomy and linguistic protection that would later fuel their anti-Knight arguments. In 1933, for instance, the committee charged with coordinating the activities of the Order began to encourage a massive campaign to collect the names of French-Canadian businesses and manufacturers in order to actively promote them.¹⁶⁶ Initially, the movement was to be known as "Encourageons

¹⁶⁶ NAC, *OJC*, Comité des activités (comité économique), 1932-1936, MG28 I98 Vol. 80, Re: Bureau Économique Canadiens-français, 11 septembre, 1933

les nôtres,” though this was eventually dropped in favour of the name Ligue d’Achat Chez Nous by November of 1935.¹⁶⁷

True to the role of behind the scenes supporter that the OJC had fashioned for itself, the Ligue d’Achat Chez Nous was an autonomous organization, though its leadership was based in Montreal, and was for the most part linked with the OJC. Indeed, the Chancellory made the creation of new councils of the Ligue a mandatory priority for all XCs for 1935 and 1936.¹⁶⁸ It became a means of promoting the interests and ideology of the Chancellory without it having to compromise the all-important secrecy of the Order. One of the Ligue’s early pamphlets best explained their strategy for supporting French-Canadian businesses:

Il n'est pas toujours facile de savoir si une maison est de chez nous. La Ligue de l'Achat Chez Nous est organisée en vue de donner gratuitement ces renseignements dans la mesure possible. Elle est à votre disposition, tant pour nous renseigner sur un cas particulier que pour vous donner une liste des nôtres engagés dans un commerce ou une industrie quelconque.¹⁶⁹

Throughout the late 1930s the Ligue published pamphlets encouraging French-Canadians to buy local cheese, textiles, milk, butter and a variety of other goods.¹⁷⁰ While some historians have characterized the strategy of the Ligue d’Achat Chez Nous as “a direct and simple response,” for the OJC, the Ligue represented one of their first forays outside

¹⁶⁷ NAC, *OJC*, Comité des activités (comité économique), 1932-1936, MG28 I98 Vol. 80, Circulaire: Comité des activités, décisions, 14 janvier, 1934; Circulaire, Actualité, Vie des XC, 5 novembre, 1935.

¹⁶⁸ NAC, *OJC*, Comité des activités (comité économique), 1932-1936, MG28 I98 Vol. 80, Circulaire, Actualité, Vie des XC, 5 novembre, 1935; NAC, *OJC*, Lettres circulaires no 156 à 337 (vol. 2) février 1934 -septembre 1938, MG28 I98 Vol. 19, no. 273, Action Économique, Voeux du Congrès, 21 novembre, 1936.

¹⁶⁹ NAC, *OJC*, Lettres circulaires no 156 à 337 (vol. 2) février 1934 -septembre 1938, MG28 I98 Vol. 19, *Faites Votre Part! Notre survivance nationale dépend de notre action économique*. pamphlet. n.d.

¹⁷⁰ Most of the Ligue’s pamphlets and publications can be found in NAC, *OJC*, Lettres circulaires no 156 à 337 (vol. 2) février 1934 -septembre 1938, MG28 I98 Vol. 19.

the schools issue into what they felt was a larger factor in national survival in the midst of the Depression – economic autonomy.¹⁷¹

The creation of a scapegoat – foreign-made goods and foreign capital- provided the OJC with a target to mobilize against to fight the losses suffered in the manufacturing and natural resource sectors of the Quebec economy during the Depression.¹⁷² As we shall see, the creation of the Ligue d'Achat Chez Nous was the first step towards an increasingly sophisticated approach to economic nationalism by the OJC, one that would eventually lead them to move beyond consumer politics to that of investment and capital management. The Knights of Columbus, with their significant portion of the life insurance market, would become symbolic of this shift in the post-war years.

The late 1930s also marked an evolution and solidification of the OJC's conception of French-Canadian identity and nationalism. In addition to new projects of economic nationalism like the Ligue d'Achat Chez Nous, the OJC also moved towards a new source of intellectual inspiration. As discussed earlier, the initial impetus for the creation of the OJC came from the frustrations and lessons learned during the battles over Regulation XVII in Ontario. The OJC was quick to link itself to a pan-Canadian vision of nationalist activity. This is best demonstrated by the OJC's adoption of Lionel Groulx as a sort of intellectual mentor.

Groulx had a vision of French Canada that the Order absorbed readily. Groulx based his nationalism on an emphasis on the importance of the connection language and history. Religion continued to be tied to French-Canadian culture in his nationalist vision. Indeed, both Groulx and the OJC were profoundly affected by the experiences of the

¹⁷¹ Michael Oliver, *The passionate debate : the social and political ideas of Quebec nationalism, 1920-1945* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1991), 158-159.

¹⁷² Linteau et al., *Histoire du Québec contemporain : Tome 2, Le Québec depuis 1930*, 22-26.

battles over Regulation XVII. For Groulx, the schools crisis was a catalyst that would wake up the French-Canadian nation, and thus he continued to maintain strong links with the francophone community on Ontario after the war, encouraging them in their struggles.¹⁷³

The OJC's admiration for Groulx was best exemplified in the pre-war years by a 1937-1938 fundraising drive the Order organized to provide Groulx with a secretary and travelling funds to free him up for more research. The drive itself revolved around a group from the Montreal Regional Council which had created a public organization, Les Amis de l'Abbé Groulx, in order to raise funds to support his research and speaking activities.¹⁷⁴ Faced with a *fait accompli*, the Chancellory attempted to regain control of the issue by belatedly issuing their own official endorsement of the activity of the Montreal members and encouraged all XCs to form their own committees to encourage the fundraising drive, arguing that "Cette souscription facilitera la tâche de notre historien national et de l'inspirateur de l'action nationale de notre Ordre."¹⁷⁵

Once again, through an external organization controlled by its own members, the OJC sought to establish a firm presence on the nationalist stage. A contradiction perhaps, given that it was conducted away from the public eye where only members of the Order knew the "true" nature of the drive, but this contradiction appeared irrelevant to the leadership of the OJC, who pushed their members hard, arguing that, "C'est la première

¹⁷³ Bock, *Quand la nation*, 282-288.

¹⁷⁴ NAC, OJC, Souscription à l'abbé Groulx, 1937-1938, MG28 I98 Vol. 135, Circulaire du CPR no. 5, sujet: "Les amis de l'abbé Groulx" 7 oct., 1937.

¹⁷⁵ NAC, OJC, Souscription à l'abbé Groulx, 1937-1938, MG28 I98 Vol. 135, Circulaire de la Chancellerie, Sujet: Campagne de souscription en faveur de l'abbé Lionel Groulx" 22 octobre, 1937. These years witnessed growing differences between the Montreal C.P.R. and the CX in Ottawa over the autonomy of the Montreal region within the OJC, see Tanya Dazé, *L'Ordre de Jacques Cartier et les deux solitudes au Canada français* (Master's Memoir: University of Ottawa, 2006), 17-28.

grande occasion de manifester la force de l'Ordre. Tous, nous y avons confiance et sommes intéressés à en faire un succès."¹⁷⁶

In spite of the Chancellory's enthusiastic support of the campaign, some of the leaders of the movement found themselves defending Groulx's status as a French-Canadian nationalist as opposed to a nationalist focused on the autonomy of Quebec. Raymond Denis, President of the Amis committee and an insurance broker for *La Sauvegarde* in Montreal, was thus forced to publish a short official statement to counter rumours that French-Canadians outside Quebec should not support the campaign because of Groulx's supposed support of Quebec separation:

M. l'abbé Groulx veut un état français, c'est-à-dire un état qui ne soit pas dominé par les étrangers, ni économiquement, ni autrement, mais cet état français il entend le réaliser dans la Confédération et non pas en dehors de la Confédération. Ses déclarations à ce sujet sont absolument explicites.....je n'aurais pas accepté la présidence de ce comité de souscription si j'avais eu la moindre inquiétude au sujet de la doctrine de l'abbé Groulx concernant nos groupes minoritaires canadiens-français.¹⁷⁷

The reaction to this undocumented malaise over supporting Groulx speaks volumes about the OJC's efforts at both reacting to and influencing nationalist thought in Canada throughout the 1930s and of potential rifts over the issue of Quebec separation.¹⁷⁸ Though the campaign was repeatedly extended beyond its intended 2 month duration, it raised over 8,000 dollars for Groulx. The money raised was put towards a home in Outremont for Groulx, the same home where he passed away some thirty years later.¹⁷⁹ This Montreal-initiated effort in support of Groulx, and the Ontario leadership's adoption

¹⁷⁶ NAC, *OJC*, Souscription à l'abbé Groulx, 1937-1938, MG28 I98 Vol. 135, Circulaire du CX, 23 novembre, 1937.

¹⁷⁷ NAC, *OJC*, Souscription à l'abbé Groulx, 1937-1938, MG28 I98 Vol. 135, Comité "Les Amis de l'abbé Groulx", n.d.

¹⁷⁸ A search of the existing OJC archives found no evidence of any debate over Groulx's vision of French Canada in the 1930s, and correspondence between the Chancellory and the Amis committee did not reflect any tension either. Opposition most likely came in the committee members personal affairs and business in Montreal.

¹⁷⁹ Bock, *Quand la nation*, 211.

of it as an Order-wide cause, exemplifies the broadening conception of nationalist activity within the OJC, and of the increasing sway of its Quebec (particularly Montreal) membership. This increase of influence from Quebec, especially in the case of the support of Groulx, however, was not incongruous with the Order's pan-Canadianist vision. As historian Michel Bock recently surmised, "les minorités françaises... voyaient en lui un allié inconditionnel," and thus it is not surprising that the Ontario-based leadership of the OJC would be ready to support Groulx.¹⁸⁰ Coupled with the creation of the Ligue d'Achat Chez Nous, a clearer picture of the OJC's nationalist ideology began to emerge.

2.2. Sustaining growth: the continuing problem of membership in the OJC and the Knights of Columbus

While the OJC broadened its scope of action in the late 1930s, it also remained preoccupied with the problem of increasing and sustaining its membership. A possible solution to their dilemma was to develop some sort of economic tie between a member and the Order, either through life insurance or a death benefit policy. Almost from its inception, the Chancellory had been concerned with this facet of the Order's life. In the mid 1930s, for instance they created a committee to look at fraternal benefits for members. One of its first proposals was to create "La Fraternité Saint-Joseph", a fund by donation where the family of any deceased member would receive as many dollars as there were contributing members. This proposal was rejected because of its uncertain legality as such societies were not defined or protected under Quebec law. A second proposal came in 1936 from a member who worked for the Alliance Nationale to provide

¹⁸⁰ Bock, *Quand la nation*, 212.

collective insurance for the entire membership, though the offer was never taken up by the Chancellory.¹⁸¹

Thus, a 1940 report by a special committee on insurance was not necessarily a new initiative.¹⁸² What was, however, was the detailed arguments given for economic factors as driving forces in membership strength and the detail of the plan the committee proposed. The justification behind the committee's recommendation of adopting a life insurance policy was threefold and, not surprisingly, resembled the importance the Knights of Columbus had originally placed on insurance and which they continued to do well into the 1940s. First, the committee believed that having an insurance policy for members would stimulate recruiting in areas where they had previously had difficulty. Second, it would help the OJC retain members, a problem they continued to experience throughout the 1930s. Finally, an insurance policy would provide the OJC with much needed funds to invest and boost their nationalist campaigns.¹⁸³

The insurance plan proposed displayed a much higher degree of sophistication and planning than previous proposals, an indication of the changing skills of the Order's economic elite. Using the experience of committee members in the actuarial sciences and life insurance industries, the plan took into consideration the aging of members, sliding rates of payment and the need to maintain reserve funds. Buried in the report, however, was the recommendation that the Order not sell any policies worth over five hundred

¹⁸¹ NAC, *OJC*, Assurance dans l'O., 1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 31, "Bref historique des projets d'assurance ou de caisse-décès étudiés par la CX ou considérés par elle, pour les membres de l'O." n.d.

¹⁸² NAC, *OJC*, Procès verbaux de la CX, 1926-1942, MG 28 I98 Vol. 8, 28 janvier, 1940, "Assurance dans l'Ordre".

¹⁸³ Ibid.

dollars to members, for fear of competing with existing French-Canadian insurance associations.¹⁸⁴

This was certainly a modest sum for the period and, coupled with the committee's reluctance to actively encourage the adoption of their report (leaving it up to further review), leads to doubts about the degree of commitment to the plan from its architects. Indeed, "official" versions of the Order's development during the 1940s conflict on the issue of why the Chancellory allowed the report to die on the order paper.¹⁸⁵ What the aborted insurance endeavour does reveal, however, is both the continued efforts of the Order's leadership to offer itself as an alternative to the Knights of Columbus and also the shifting priorities of the Order's nationalist activities towards the economic realm.

In contrast to the Ordre de Jacques Cartier, which focused on new ways of keeping members somewhat later than the Knights of Columbus, the Knights continued to tinker with their own strategies for recruitment into the late 1930s. The Knights of Columbus had also been hit hard by the Depression of the 1930s. Membership numbers dropped drastically, though many in the Knights' leadership (and the Knights' official historian himself) credited some of the drop in membership to the somewhat transitory popularity of the Knights with returning soldiers.¹⁸⁶ Though initial modifications to the associate membership requirements had helped somewhat, the Supreme Council continued to watch their membership numbers warily throughout the mid to late 1930s.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Founding member Esdras Terrien, for instance, blamed the failure to adopt an insurance policy in 1940 on the personal interests of many of the leaders in the Chancellory, who were either employed in the insurance industry, or were closely linked to it, CRCCF, *OJC*, Historique de l'Ordre de Jacques Cartier, 1949, C3/1/4, 53. A summary of insurance projects prepared for the Insurance Committee, meanwhile, blamed fears over compromising the secrecy of the Order and argued that it would be too difficult for a small bureaucracy like that of the OJC to implement as reasons for killing the project, NAC, *OJC*, Assurance dans l'O., 1952, MG28 I98 Vol. 31, "Bref historique des projets d'assurance ou de caisse-décès étudiés par la CX ou considérés par elle, pour les membres de l'O." n.d.

¹⁸⁶ Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 315-317.

One innovation, however, has been credited with helping the Order turn the tide: the creation of a professional service department charged with the task of modernizing the Order's insurance and recruitment strategies.¹⁸⁷ Put under the direction of Charles Ducey, a former Boys' Movement leader in the U.S., the Service Department enacted a Five Point programme for local councils built around Catholic Activity, Council Action, Fraternal Protection, Publicity and Maintenance of Manpower, all designed to keep members in the Order. While this solidified the Order from an organizational standpoint, the drums of war in late 1939 would provide the necessary boost for the Order to solve its Depression era decline in Quebec.

2.3. Renewing old campaigns: the Second World War

As they did in the First World War, the Canadian Knights of Columbus entered the new war in Europe without the official participation of their American colleagues. They did, however, reap the rewards of their efforts in the previous conflict. Unlike the previous war, though, they did not operate as an autonomous charity providing services for the Catholic Chaplaincy branch of the Chaplain Service, but rather became part of a larger effort by the Canadian government to manage all aspects of the war effort. Under the auspices of the Department of National War Services, the federal government sought to regulate and concentrate the activities of charity associations by providing them with a common pool of funds, though they also had to take part in joint fundraising campaigns to avoid direct competition. Four associations were designated as official war auxiliaries by the Department: the Knights of Columbus, the YMCA, the Salvation Army and the Canadian Legion.¹⁸⁸ The Knights presence as the only Catholic service organization thus

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 331-332.

¹⁸⁸ Keshen, *Saints Sinners and Soldiers*, 27.

thrust them once more into the spotlight throughout the war, in spite of their restricted abilities to promote themselves or raise funds. In the words of the Knights' official history of their war work, the Knights of Columbus war worker overseas knew "that the prestige of the Organization was involved and although he served Catholic, Protestant, Jew or Atheist, without favour or discrimination, he considered himself the ambassador of the Canadian Catholic people and by his efforts they as a group would be judged."¹⁸⁹

While the Knights provided similar support to the Catholic Chaplains and to all soldiers via recreational centres in Europe, they also established centres in major Canadian cities like Toronto, Vancouver, Quebec City and Montreal. According to the Order's official history, the Quebec centres were "enjoyed alike by French and English Canadians."¹⁹⁰ Huts similar to the ones serviced in the First World War were also run at military camps near Sherbrooke, Chicoutimi, Farnham, Joliette, Lauzon, Megantic, Montmagny, Rimouski, St. Jerome, Sorel and Valcartier.¹⁹¹

The Knights received numerous tributes from military authorities, politicians and episcopal authorities alike, undoubtedly boosting their standing as a Catholic lay movement. Perhaps the most stirring tribute came in the form of a letter to the Knights from the Bishop of Pembroke, Bishop Leo Nelligan, who had served as Principal Chaplain for the first years of the war:

The influence of these Huts, therefore, in preparing the men to fulfill faithfully and well both their religious and civic duties is nothing more or less than the fulfillment of the significant motto of the Knights of Columbus, "For God and Country."¹⁹²

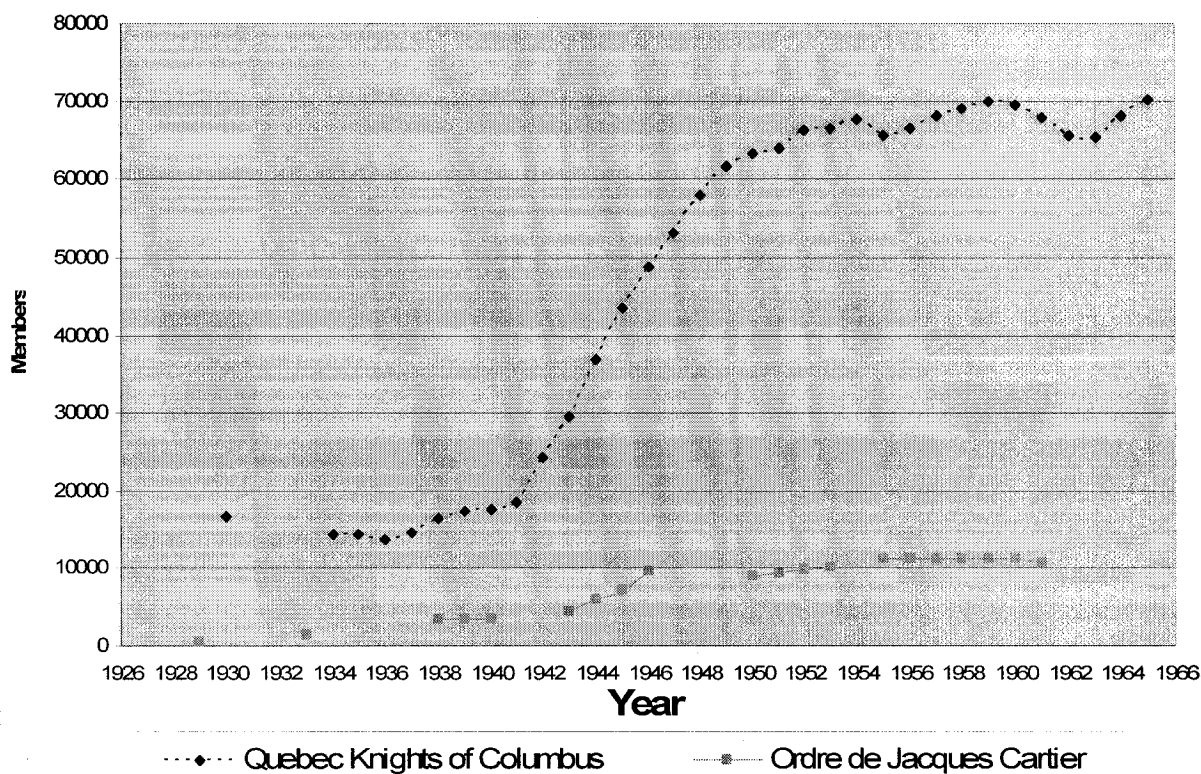
¹⁸⁹ *War Services of the Canadian Knights of Columbus, 1939-1947 : A History of the Work of the Knights of Columbus Canadian Army Huts* (Montreal : Knights of Columbus, 1948), 87-88.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 198-199. A chaplain for the Knights, Bonaventure Poirier, also sang the Order's praises, Bonaventure Poirier, *Histoire de la Chevalerie de Colomb* (Montréal : Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1943).

Table 1: Membership Growth in the Ordre de Jacques Cartier and the Quebec Knights of Columbus



Source: Knights of Columbus Archives, *Supreme Council Proceedings, 1930-1966*; G.-Raymond Laliberté, *Une société secrète*, 118; Robert Choquette, *La foi gardienne de la langue en Ontario, 1900-1950*, 239.

The Knights of Columbus, benefiting from praise from such authorities, thus saw their membership across the country, including Quebec, increase significantly during and after war. In 1940, for instance, Quebec membership was roughly 17,000 members, while by 1947 their membership in the province was over 53,000 (see Table 1).¹⁹³ Like the First World War, however, a significant portion of the new wave of members chose only associate membership, in spite of the reform measures taken by the Supreme Council in the inter-war years and the increase in disposable income that could be used for investments such as life insurance in the post-war era (see Table 2), indicating that many

¹⁹³ KCA, *Supreme Council Proceedings*, August 19-21, 1941, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 34-35; *Supreme Council Proceedings*, August 16-18 1949, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 44-47.

joined not for the insurance benefit, but for spiritual or social reasons.¹⁹⁴ Once again, the increased prominence of the Knights during the war witnessed a subsequent surge in membership in Quebec, though it remained to be seen just how this new wave of members would react in the period of change after the war, or even whether they would stay.

In response to the Knights of Columbus' solid reputation earned during the war for their war charity work, the Ordre de Jacques Cartier attempted to counter by solidifying its own position and creating new associations to compete with the Knights in the late stages of the war. Though the lack of extant records on the activities of the OJC during the years of the Second World War (1939-1945) creates a documentary gap for the researcher looking to trace the evolution of the OJC's nationalism and activities during the war, the few existing documents do offer some fascinating clues for the explosion of activity that occurred once the war ended in 1945. In December of 1942, for instance, Chancellor Esdras Terrien addressed a meeting of the OJC in Quebec City on the current state of affairs and what they should be planning for once the war was over. His biggest source of frustration? The revival of the Bonne Entente movement during the debate on conscription, where francophones pledged fealty to the Canadian government in concert with English Canadian leaders in order to smooth tensions over the plebiscite:

Qui n'est fatigué de tous ces discours d'après-dîner, même par les nôtres, prônant la bonne entente entre les races du pays. Est-ce que l'on ne pourrait attendre autre chose de nos orateurs pérorant chez les Rotariens, les Kiwanis, les Lions, de nos discoureurs politiques, de nos bonimenteurs à la radio? On reste étonné du nombre de ceux qui semblent prêts à vendre leur collaboration à cette sensée bonne entente, où les nôtres donnent toujours et les autres reçoivent sans cesse.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Of the 53, 244 members listed in Quebec in 1947, 35, 951 had associate member status, Ibid; Linteau et al., *Histoire du Québec contemporain*, tome 2, 203-206.

¹⁹⁵ NAC, OJC, Chancelier (Terrien, Esdras) Brouillons de discours, d'articles et de lettres, 1941-1949, MG 28 I98 Vol. 36, Réunion spéciale de l'Ordre, Québec, le 8 décembre, 1942.

For Terrien, the new divisions over conscription were reminiscent of the divisions of the Great War, where French-Canadian voices were drowned out in “bilingual” organizations. Therefore, he called upon the Order to come up with a comprehensive plan, both for activities during the war and once the war was over.¹⁹⁶

Though leaders like Terrien tried to rally the OJC membership during the war, it was the OJC’s secrecy that appear to have impeded some of its efforts at growth and activity. For instance, in April of 1943 Bishop Leo Nelligan, Head Chaplain of the Canadian Army’s Catholic Chaplaincy services, wrote to Archbishop Vachon in Ottawa to urge him to encourage local Catholic associations to lobby the government for better funding for the chaplaincy, in particular better chapels for the front.¹⁹⁷ Vachon forwarded this appeal to the Chancellory, which reacted by sending out a circular to the membership urging them to work within their local associations to lobby the government, but to do so as private citizens and not on behalf of the OJC.¹⁹⁸ Meanwhile, their nemesis and inspiration, the Knights of Columbus, were publicly boosting their own efforts in support of the Catholic chaplaincy. In spite of the attention given to public associations like the Knights of Columbus during the war, the Chancellory continued to staunchly defend the need for secrecy, refusing a request, for instance, by Montreal members to make some of the OJC’s activities public in order to aid recruiting and retaining members.¹⁹⁹ For the OJC leadership, secrecy continued to be its main strength (as it had been for their

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ NAC, *OJC*, Chapelles Militaires, 1942-1943, MG 28 I98 Vol. 37, Bishop Leo Nelligan à Mgr A. Vachon, Ottawa, 7 avril, 1943.

¹⁹⁸ NAC, *OJC*, Chapelles Militaires, 1942-1943, MG 28 I98 Vol. 37, Circulaire, Sujet: Chapelles Militaires, 14 avril, 1943

¹⁹⁹ NAC, *OJC*, Circulaires de l'Ordre etc., 1940-1941, MG28 I98 Vol. 37, Sec. adj. du CX au sec. du CR no. 5 (Mtl), 19 juin, 1941, Re: Extériorisation de l'Ordre.

adversaries during the last war), and should continue to be, though the temptation to boast of their accomplishment may be alluring.²⁰⁰

Even though the Chancellory persistently insisted on the apparent lessons learned from the Great War in their inflexibility on the issue of exteriorisation, they continued to shift their intellectual and material support to Lionel Groulx's nationalist activities during the war. While the late 1930s had been a time for the OJC's Montreal members to assert themselves in supporting Groulx, by the 1940s Groulx's nationalism had been thoroughly embraced by the leadership in the Chancellory. Groulx's various lectures and political tracts published during the tensions over the plebiscite on conscription of 1942 and on the state of French Canada in general were often passed on by the Chancellory to all members, or adopted outright as official policy for the Order.

Many of Groulx's calls for change echoed the OJC's plans for campaigns, or mirrored what they were already doing. In May of 1942, for instance Groulx's writings on economic nationalism were used in an opinion piece for the Comité de la Survivance française en Amérique, an organization with close links with the OJC, on the importance for French-Canadians of supporting French-Canadian business and industry:

Ils n'ont pas le droit d'ignorer qu'en portant leur appui ou leur argent à des industries ou à des maisons de commerce étrangères, ils ferment non seulement l'avenue du succès mais même l'accès du travail à leurs fils et à leurs filles. Ils ne peuvent ignorer non plus qu'en se privant de la puissance financière, ils compromettent (sic) leur vie spirituelle, ils édifient des dictatures qui pèseront lourdement sur leur vie, accroîtront chez le petit peuple sa mentalité de vaincu. Le peuple canadien-français doit ou devrait savoir ces vérités, car elles sont pour lui le salut public.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ NAC, *OJC*, Assurance et Mutualité, 1940-1942, MG28 I98 Vol. 31, La Semaine de la Mutualité Française: 9 au 16 mai 1942. Pamphlet. Le Comité de la Survivance française en Amérique.

Even in the midst of economic growth during the war, nationalists like Groulx continued to emphasize the need for French-Canadians to practice economic solidarity in order to ensure their survival and growth.

What proved to be the ultimate rallying cry for the OJC, however, was Groulx's famous "Pourquoi nous sommes divisés", a stirring address given at Montreal's Monument National in November of 1943. In this speech, Groulx united his calls for economic solidarity and suspicions of the benefits of French-Canadians joining associations who claimed to be working for national unity:

Whatever may come, we cannot enter like a herd into the societies of others, take part, by affiliation, in all the neutral associations, English or American, show ourselves consequently incapable of forming societies of our own, suited to our own spirit, and keep any pretension of being a proud race – Catholics of initiative and creative imagination, and, in addition, leaders of social life in our province. We cannot play, drink, build, eat, think, feel like Englishmen or Americans and flatter ourselves that we shall remain indefinitely French.²⁰²

In the midst of the war, it is hard to imagine that Groulx did not have associations like the Knights of Columbus in mind when he made such condemning statements. Groulx had grown increasingly suspicious of outside influence, be it economic or intellectual, in Quebec in the last years of the war. His concerns over a seemingly unstoppable wave of modernization and growing foreign control of the French-Canadian economy, particularly in Quebec, continued to fuel his nationalism.²⁰³

The Ordre de Jacques Cartier was quick to work to spread the message of Groulx's "Pourquoi nous sommes divisés". The translated version of his Monument National speech was purchased en masse by the Chancellory and distributed to members

²⁰² Translation from Lionel Groulx (Gordon O. Rothney trans.), *Why are We Divided? An address delivered at the Monument National (Montreal), November 29, 1943* (Montreal: Ligue d'Action Nationale, 1943).

²⁰³ Historian Michel Bock has pointed to this malaise in Groulx's thinking moving into the post-war years, Bock, *Quand la nation*, 359-363.

with the instructions to pass them out to any anglophone colleagues or acquaintances to better acquaint them with the French-Canadian situation during the war, and what they demanded, "Ce serait là, tout en faisant leur éducation sur certains points essentiels, travailler en même temps pour notre nationalité."²⁰⁴ The OJC's support for Groulx was not limited to helping the distribution of his ideas, however. In many ways (and as will be discussed later) they made their post-war program an interpretation of some of his ideas for economic and social activity while embracing his vision of a continued continental presence for francophones in North America.

As for his relationship with the OJC, Groulx became increasingly close to the OJC, attending their annual congresses and making the occasional address. At the annual congress of 1946, for instance, Groulx gave the closing speech to the assembled delegates.²⁰⁵ The canon called upon the members of the OJC to work to increase national consciousness and pride amongst French-Canadians across the country. The popularity of foreign associations was a sign, he argued, of the current weakness of patriotism amongst their brethren.²⁰⁶ For Groulx, a national association like the *OJC* should play a leading role in this regard and he pushed them to do so:

Je sens que vous êtes puissants. Je sens que vous l'êtes à un tel point que si vous disparaissiez, il se produiraient (sic) un grand vide, et la petite race manquerait de son meilleur ouvrier.²⁰⁷

Groulx's support for the OJC displayed his hope that they would become the conservative defenders of both the French language and Catholic faith from any foreign

²⁰⁴ NAC, *OJC*, *Revues, Why we are divided*, 1944-1946, MG28 I98 Vol. 133, Circulaire de la CX, 5 décembre, 1944.

²⁰⁵ NAC, *OJC*, Groulx (Chanoine Lionel) MG28 I98 Vol. 44, Allocution de m. le Chanoine Lionel Groulx à la séance de clôture du congrès, 7 juillet 1946. While it is not certain if, or when, Groulx ever actually became a member, his frequent presence at the annual congresses serves as a strong sign of his connection to the OJC.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

threat. This support, in turn, was echoed by the Ottawa Chancellory's support for Groulx, revealing their ideological inspiration. These OJC leaders, however, would soon face a rising generation of neo-nationalists and liberals in Quebec critical of their approach to French-Canadian survival. The assertion of the Quebec majority witnessed throughout the interwar period would develop into tensions between the two major francophone communities in the Order (as well as between varying definitions of nationalism). Debates over the direction of the OJC would continue to grow throughout the post-war years, and would manifest itself in the campaign against the Knights in Quebec picked up near the war's end.

2.4. Post-war renewal and the OJC

As the Second World War came to a close, the Chancellory turned to new projects meant to increase French-Canadian solidarity and autonomy- both social and economic. On the social front, the OJC sought to create a French-Canadian competitor to "foreign" professional and service based associations like Rotary and Kiwanis. In June of 1940 Father Louis Lachance, a chaplain with the Order, submitted a plan for a new social club to the Chancellory. Called Les Clubs Lucerne, these clubs borrowed heavily from associations like Rotary and Kiwanis – focusing on fellowship, international service, community service and professional networking.²⁰⁸ The project was picked up by members of the Chancellory and a series of meetings starting in 1941 hammered out the details and principles of a French-Canadian service club modelled after clubs like Kiwanis and Rotary.²⁰⁹ By January of 1944 the "Société Richelieu" had received a federal charter. The signatories on the application? OJC members Onésime Boileau,

²⁰⁸ NAC, *OJC*, Procès-verbaux de la CX, 1926-1942, MG 28 I98 Vol. 8, 2 juin, 1940.

²⁰⁹ Renée Veilleux and Céline Deschênes, *Dans les sentiers de l'amitié: Richelieu International, 1944-1994*, (Mont-Joli : Club Richelieu Mont-Joli, 1994), 14-15.

Jean-Jacques Tremblay, Horace Viau and Chéri Laplante.²¹⁰ The first club would be established a year later in Ottawa.²¹¹

The founders of the new organization hoped to create something “ayant 'pignon sur rue' et à laquelle l'ensemble des Canadiens français pourront ouvertement adhérer.”²¹² Once again, however, the leadership in Ottawa would face a challenge in terms of determining the power dynamic with Quebec clubs. Shortly after the creation of the first clubs in the Ottawa region, Montreal Chancellor Pierre Vigeant passed the message on to his counterparts in the Chancellory news that the Montreal members would not be ready to submit to the authority of an association based in Ottawa and recommended they create clubs outside the Montreal region first.²¹³ Once again, possible tensions with Montreal members diverted the strategy of the OJC in trying to implement new campaigns or associations.

The establishment of the Richelieus would become a key component of the Order's eventual fight against the Knights of Columbus and other neutral or english associations by trying to offer similar advantages and activities in a distinctly francophone association. It also revealed some of the tensions growing between the Ottawa leadership and Montreal membership. The second prong of their attack would come on the economic front, via a rallying of French-Canadian life insurance associations.

Esdras Terrien, whose frustration with foreign associations was discussed earlier, was not the only member of the OJC frustrated with the situation of francophones in self-

²¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

²¹¹ Ibid., 40.

²¹² Ibid., 9.

²¹³ Ibid., 36.

professed “national” or bilingual associations like the Knights of Columbus, Rotary or Kiwanis clubs. Jean-Jacques Tremblay, who spent a brief stint as director of the Orientation Committee near the end of the war, as well as René Paré, President of La Société des Artisans, were exasperated during the war with the difficulty faced by francophone insurance associations in the Canadian Fraternal Association, on both linguistic and representation status levels.²¹⁴ Thus, in 1942 the two insurance brokers worked towards creating a French-Canadian counterpart to the Canadian Fraternal Association, the Union des Mutuelles-Vie Française d’Amérique (UMVFA) which initially grouped together the Union Saint-Joseph du Canada (founded in 1863), La Société des Artisans (created in 1876), L’Union du Commerce (1876) L’Union Saint-Joseph de Drummondville (1890), L’Association Canado-Américaine (1896), La Société l’Assomption (1903) and La Mutuelle-Vie de l’U.C.C. (1936).²¹⁵

While the UMVFA had no legal links between its seven members, it existed to provide support and cooperation between mutual aid societies. Members had to operate in French, pay yearly dues, and be considered a cooperative society and a member of the Conseil Supérieur de la Coopération to maintain their membership. Though it admitted members based on language rather than religious denomination, the UMVFA did not include nationalist aims in its regulations, professing instead the aim of defending “les sociétés mutuelles et le mouvement coopératif en général.”²¹⁶ As René Paré described it in his memoirs, the association did not seek aggressive competition with their English

²¹⁴ Paré speaks of this frustration in his memoirs, René Paré, *Sur les traces d'un fondateur téméraire: la Société des Artisans* (Montréal: Coopérants, assurance-vie, 1990), 62.

²¹⁵ CRCCF, *Fonds Union des Mutuelles-Vie Française d’Amérique* (UMVFA), Procès-verbaux, 1948-1968, C25/1/1, “Règlements, 1948” attached to reunion du 24 avril, 1948 – the original constitution for the Union was adopted on March 24, 1945.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

Canadian counterparts, but rather a consolidation of their own resources, “il n’était pas question d’abandonner la Canadian Fraternal Association, mais il était possible que nous ayons des rencontres entre-nous et peut-être notre propre association francophone à côté de l’autre.”²¹⁷

The UMFVA would continue to have links with the OJC through the presence of Tremblay and Paré within both organisations in the post-war years. The UMFVA and the Richelieus represented concrete action by members of the OJC to meet renewed concerns that French-Canadians did not have enough organizations of their own, either economic or, in the case of the Clubs Richelieu, social. The timing of the creation of these two associations linked to the OJC - late in the war – coincided with the Chancellory’s gearing up for a post-war program against an old foe: the Knights of Columbus.

2.5. Beating the “Cheval de Troie”: the OJC and its campaign against the Knights of Columbus

The growth of the Knights, and their prominence during the war as an official war auxiliary service, undoubtedly concerned the Chancellors of the OJC. While the OJC had done little this time to actively oppose their efforts during the war, in November of 1945 the growth of the Knights caused them enough worry to pass a resolution calling for an investigation into the Knights’ strength in Quebec, and more particularly within the Order.²¹⁸ These initial misgivings were picked up by the Orientation Committee of the Chancellory in the spring of 1948 as it launched preparations for a general campaign against neutral and foreign societies. The committee, under the leadership of new Director Pierre Vigeant, would provide much of the intellectual ammunition for most of

²¹⁷ Paré, *Sur les traces*, 62.

²¹⁸ NAC, *OJC*, Procès-verbaux des plénières de la CX, 4 novembre 1945, MG28 I98 Vol. 9, Rapport du comité de la vie de l'Ordre, 11 novembre, 1945.

the anti-Knight campaign of the 1950s. Vigeant, the political correspondent for *Le Devoir* in Ottawa, had gained a reputation as a polemical journalist throughout his career – frequently attacking any weakening of French in the federal civil service – and his actions within the Order certainly reflected his public activities.²¹⁹ He would become the intellectual engine behind the Order's campaign against the Knights throughout the 1950s, stubbornly refusing to give up even as the Order was torn apart by debates over its own structure.

Born in Amesbury, Massachusetts, Vigeant later attended classical college in Nicolet before studying social science at l'Université de Montréal. He then spent two years in the early 1930s working for federal Fisheries Minister Alfred Durenleau in Ottawa. It was during this time in Ottawa that Vigeant was invited to join the ranks of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier.²²⁰ After his stint in the the minister's office, Vigeant left Ottawa to become a foreign correspondent for *Le Devoir* until he accepted the position as their Ottawa Bureau Chief in 1944.²²¹ His return to Ottawa saw Vigeant become a chancellor with the OJC, after having served as a member of the challenging regional council in Montreal and on the Conseil Provincial du Québec within the OJC.²²² He also became the Director of the Orientation Committee in 1948, which oversaw or planned most of the OJC's campaign, including the fight against the Knights of Columbus.

By the time of his return to Ottawa in the mid-1940s, Vigeant had become staunch in his belief that the Quebec state should use all of its existing powers to protect

²¹⁹ Vigeant's role in the nationalist movement after the war has received scant attention by historians of the period, though his role as part of *Le Devoir*'s nationalist editorial team is outlined in Behiels, *Prelude*, 22-24.

²²⁰ *L'Émérillon*, janvier 1961, "Pierre Vigeant," p. 9.

²²¹ *Le Devoir*, 22 décembre, 1960, 1.

²²² *L'Émérillon*, janvier 1961, "Pierre Vigeant," p. 9.

and develop French Canadian culture and prosperity not only in the province, but across the whole continent.²²³ He was also an outspoken critic of the Duplessis government. In 1947, for instance, Vigeant slammed the provincial government's tame approach to the federal government's negotiations with Newfoundland over the terms of a possible union with the self-governing colony.²²⁴ The annexation of Labrador to the new province represented a major loss of resources for Quebec, argued Vigeant, and was symbolic of Duplessis' refusal to truly act aggressively in terms of Quebec's provincial rights:

Il est beau de poser au champion de l'autonomie provinciale et des intérêts du Québec. Il est beau de faire de grands discours pour dénoncer les empiètements du gouvernement fédéral, mais il est plus méritoire et plus efficace d'agir pour prévenir ces empiètements. Il n'est pas très pratique de tourner le dos et d'attendre que le coffre-fort soit vidé pour crier au voleur. Le gouvernement fédéral a négocié avec les représentants de Terre-Neuve sans se soucier des intérêts du Québec. Quelles mesures le gouvernement de Québec a-t-il prises pour se tenir au courant de ce qui se passait et pour défendre ces intérêts?²²⁵

Vigeant's frustration with the Quebec government's inaction in terms of representing the interests of Quebec was part of his larger vision of wanting French-Canadians to assume more control of their own destiny. Thus, associations like the Knights of Columbus were likely targets for his criticism. For Vigeant, the Knights represented a personal issue as well. In a letter to a priest in the U.S. during the OJC's anti-Knight campaign, Vigeant linked his memories of his childhood in Amesbury, Massachusetts with his crusade against them:

Mes souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse m'ont laissé l'impression très nette que les Knights of Columbus étaient les pires ennemis des Franco-Américains. C'est donc avec douleur et indignation que j'ai constaté que nos compatriotes de la province de Québec s'enrôlaient par milliers dans les rangs de cette société et lui fournissaient ainsi des armes

²²³

In 1948, for instance, Vigeant wrote a short tract on the decline of French at the University of Ottawa, Vigeant, *L'anglicisation à l'Université d'Ottawa* (Montréal : Éditions de l'Action nationale, 1948).

²²⁴ Vigeant, "Les offres du Canada à T.-Neuve et la protestation de M. Duplessis," *Le Devoir*, 11 novembre 1947, p. 1.

²²⁵ Ibid.

pour combattre les Franco-Américains et les autres minorités françaises. Il est très difficile de faire comprendre aux 'Chevaliers de Colomb' de la province de Québec qui ne voient jamais leurs grands chefs et qui s'enthousiasment dans des conseils entièrement français qu'il s'agit d'une société irlandaise qui nous combat en maintes circonstances.²²⁶

Vigeant was thus frustrated with the strength of the Knights in Quebec and their lack of autonomy from their American headquarters. These frustrations, fuelled by his own experiences, would fuse with his autonomist vision for Quebec in the plan he drew up for attacking the Knights in Quebec.

The Orientation Committee had decided to focus on the Knights of Columbus because of their rapidly growing membership in Quebec, their strength in the life insurance field and the increase in the number of OJC members who were also Knights.²²⁷ According to the committee's own estimates, 18-20% of its members were also members of the Knights.²²⁸ Most worrisome to the OJC, however, was not just the threat that the Knights posed to their own membership, but also as a draining influence of French-Canadian life insurance capital. With over 600,000 dollars of net annual profits going south of the border to the Knights' international headquarters in New Haven, Connecticut, the Order condemned the French-Canadian Knights as "de[s] vaches à lait pour le bénéfice de New-Haven."²²⁹ Action was called for, and it would be Vigeant who would pick up the challenge.

The Orientation Committee's plan itself reveals much about the initially cautious nature of the campaign, as well as the vision of its architect. Its first three "phases" were

²²⁶ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Pierre Vigeant, 1918-1951, MG28 I98 Vol. 146, Vigeant au Révérend Père Joseph Fontaine, rédacteur "Celle Qui Pleure" Attleboro Mass, 3 avril 1951.

²²⁷ NAC, *OJC*, Directeur de l'Orientation, 1948-1952, MG28 I98 Vol. 73, "Projet de campagne contre sociétés neutres et sociétés étrangères, 2 avril, 1948".

²²⁸ NAC, *OJC*, Directeur de l'Orientation, 1948-1952, MG28 I98 Vol. 73, "Projet de campagne contre sociétés neutres et sociétés étrangères, 2 avril, 1948."

²²⁹ Ibid.

²²⁹ CRCCE, *OJC*, Circulaires de la Chancellerie, 1er juillet 1949 au 1er janvier 1951, C3/20/16, "Circulaire, mars 1950: Chers Mutualistes,".

almost exclusively reserved for convincing members of the *OJC* that being a member of the “Chevaliers de Colomb”, as they were improperly called in Quebec (since they were only registered to sell insurance as the Knights of Columbus), was not in the interest of French-Canadians. The first step to undertake, according to the committee steered by Vigeant, was to educate officers within the *OJC* like the *Visiteurs Régionaux* (in charge of communicating directives and orders from the Chancellory (CX) in Ottawa to the various regional councils) and the *Organisateurs Généraux* (assigned to represent the CX in the regional councils) on the “true” nature of the Knights and the need to discourage francophone membership in the Order.²³⁰ These elite officers would then travel to the various regional councils to both establish the number and strength of the Knights in the various regions of Quebec and determine how many members of the local *OJC* had dual membership in the Knights. These officers received specific instructions not to raise any overt opposition to the Knights at this stage.

The next phase required the education of officers within local councils of the need to fight the Knights, and to get their members to discourage their colleagues from joining the Knights, or if members themselves, to quietly withdraw from the organization. New members of the *OJC* were to be screened, and those who were found to be members of the Knights were to be blocked entry in the *OJC*. The *Émérillon* and *Bulletin*, the Order’s two newsletters, would simultaneously run articles discussing the nefarious nature of neutral and foreign societies without specifically mentioning the Knights.

Only once the CX had assured itself a safe setting for attacking the Knights would they begin a more open campaign using the nationalist press and other organizations like

²³⁰ These definitions of the *Visiteur Régional* and the *Organisateur Général* are given in Laliberté, *Une société secrète*, 88-91.

the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste and the Jeunes Laurentiens to condemn the Knights and convince the public that “ce sont des tièdes, sinon des traîtres,” in order to either secure autonomy for the Knights or to withdraw from the fraternity.²³¹ The campaign also planned to use propaganda in favour of French-Canadian life insurance and mutual aid societies to counter the Knights, in addition to creating a copy-cat organization based in Quebec if efforts to eliminate it or to get it to separate from its New Haven headquarters failed.²³²

While the plan of attack for the campaign against the Knights of Columbus initially received the enthusiastic support of the Chancellory, only a week later these same men expressed concerns over the possible backlash of going after such a large association as the Knights.²³³ These early misgivings proved somewhat prophetic as the Chancellory took its first step in the campaign by surveying the Visiteurs Régionaux about attitudes towards the Knights in their respective regions.²³⁴ While not all VRs replied to the survey, the results of those who did were somewhat lukewarm. Twelve of the twenty-three respondents felt “les K. of C. nuisent à nos causes nationales ou religieuses,” while the other 11 felt the opposite, or were indifferent towards the Knights.²³⁵ In spite of the apparent split on the issue, the Administration Committee in Ottawa urged the Chancellory to push on with the campaign, arguing that “la Chevalerie n'entrave pas seulement l'expansion de nos organismes sociaux, économiques et

²³¹ NAC, *OJC*, Directeur de l'Orientation, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 73, “Projet de campagne contre sociétés neutres et sociétés étrangères, 2 avril, 1948.”

²³² Ibid.

²³³ NAC, *OJC*, Directeur de l'Orientation, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 73, “Rapport de la réunion du Comité de l'Orientation tenue le 8 avril 1948.”

²³⁴ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Bulletins à nos officiers dans l'O. 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145, Mémoire soumis par le conseil d'administration à la CX, lors d'une réunion spéciale plénière, les 22 et 23 mai, 1948.

²³⁵ Ibid.

nationaux, elle menace l'existence et le développement de notre Ordre," and therefore had to be stopped.²³⁶

The initial division of opinion within the VR officers was soon mirrored in the general response of the wider membership in the fall of 1948. By this time the Chancellory had issued some preliminary literature against the Knights for members of the OJC. A prime example was the June-July 1948 issue of the OJC's *Bulletin Mensuel*, a newsletter only seen by OJC members. In that issue an article criticized the assimilating power of bilingual associations such as the Knights of Columbus, calling the Knights "un nouveau cheval de Troie" as dangerous as neutral or American trade unions, or of the Irish communities in the northern United States and Ontario to the vitality of French-Canadian Catholics.²³⁷ The Chancellory was unsure of the impact these articles were having on their members, however. Thus, in September of 1948, the Chancellory called on its VRs to report on the progress of their education of OJC officers about the Knights.²³⁸ This initial effort at contact was met with relative silence, as an October call to these officers chastised their lack of activity:

Nous ne doutons pas que vous l'aviez déjà commencé avec la prudence requise, mais il importe que nous sachions ou vous en êtes, quels sont vos succès, quelles sont vos difficultés, afin de vous aider ou de rectifier votre tir, au besoin.²³⁹

Feeling the pressure from the leadership of the Order, most VRs subsequently reported by the end of November.²⁴⁰ Once again, the results of their initial work in their regions was

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ NAC, *OJC*, *Bulletin mensuel* du 1er janvier 1946 à juin-juillet 1958, MG 98 I98 Vol. 26, *Bulletin* 1947-1948 no. 10 (juin-juillet 1948), "Organismes étrangers" 2-3.

²³⁸ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Bulletins à nos officiers dans l'O. 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145, Questionnaire: re: organismes étrangers, 23 septembre, 1948.

²³⁹ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Bulletins à nos officiers dans l'O. 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145, Exclusif aux V.R.- du sec du cx. 22 octobre 1948, sujet: rapports et documentation concernant les organismes étrangers.

²⁴⁰ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Bulletins à nos officiers dans l'O. 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145, Résumé des réponses des V.R. au questionnaire du 26 octobre 1948, re: K. of C., 25 novembre, 1948.

mixed. Some reported enthusiastic support for the idea of fighting the Knights, while others expressed surprise at the news of the campaign, or even resisted the idea. Of the VRs who reported positive reaction, most represented regions in Ontario. As for those who resisted the initial idea of the campaign, they almost exclusively represented regions in Quebec. Districts like Trois-Rivières, Joliette, Quebec City, Rimouski, Nicolet, Saint-Hyacinthe and Saint-Jovite all reported a significant amount of dual members (holding posts both in the OJC and the Knights of Columbus), opposition to forcing Knights out of the Order and even outright support for the Knights of Columbus as an association in Quebec.²⁴¹

Much like the debates over the public activities of the Knights of Columbus during the First World War in Ontario and Quebec, Quebec members of the OJC appeared unaware of their Ontarian colleagues' animosity towards the Knights, who were seen as an innocuous Catholic association run by French-Canadians in the province. The VR for the Saint-Jovite region put it strongest when he argued, "c'est un manque de jugement de demander de sortir d'une société hautement louée par l'Épiscopat et par le Pape, et qui fait tant pour l'Église." In fact, he felt so strongly about his support of the Knights (being one himself) that he resigned in protest.²⁴²

The case of Saint-Jovite was not an isolated one. In the Conseil Régional 13 (Roberval) a meeting addressed by the Visiteur général quickly exploded in heated debate when the subject of the Knights of Columbus was raised.²⁴³ Trying to quash the suggestion that the OJC should infiltrate the Knights councils in the area in order to better

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ CRCCF, *OJC*, Visiteurs généraux, correspondance, 1946-1947, 1949-1951, C3/11/12, Réunion du CR 13, 10 juillet, 1947.

implement public campaigns, the VG refuted the idea that “un bon Cartier peut faire un bon Colomb,”:

L'O. [Ordre de Jacques Cartier] a été fondé par des C.-f. pour les C.-f., exclusivement, tandis que l'autre O. [Chevaliers de Colomb] a été fondé par des Irlandais catholiques et n'a pas pour mission expresse de sauvegarder et promouvoir les intérêts des C.-f. comme tels.²⁴⁴

When another member offered the argument that the Knights had episcopal approval and thus could not possibly be that nefarious of an association, the attending chaplain intervened :

Pardon, à la dernière retraite sacerdotale, Mgr. l'Évêque a donné ordre aux prêtres non-aumôniers des K.C. de ne plus assister aux réunions. Il a déclaré que seuls les aumôniers désignés par l'autorité avaient le droit et le devoir d'y assister, non les autres et en qualité de membres. Les évêques constatent que les K. of C. existent et qu'ils comptent un nombre important de catholiques dans la province et qu'ils ne peuvent ignorer ce fait. Voilà tout.²⁴⁵

In spite of their Irish roots, some clerics in the French-Canadian Church thus took an ambivalent, if not suspicious, stance towards the Knights of Columbus. The Knights were viewed as a neutral religious organization rather than a nationalist religious organization controlled by Irish Catholics. Clearly, the Chancellory had its work cut out for it if it was going to be successful in pushing the Knights out of Quebec.

2.6. The Knights of Columbus under a new leader in Quebec

While the OJC was busy laying the groundwork for a campaign against the Knights of Columbus in the post-war years, the Knights in Quebec were also undergoing some major transformations in the years following the war. Under the leadership of their new State Deputy Théophile-Adélard (T.-A.) Fontaine, a Quebec provincial judge in Montreal and former Liberal MP, the State Executive for Quebec became increasingly

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

militant in their demands for more autonomy from New Haven as well as more French in the operations of the fraternal association. The State Executive would eventually become caught between loyalties to the Order and increasing nationalist sentiment from various sectors of the province, but in the first years after war the two were not necessarily contradictory in the minds of the Order's leadership.

New to the position of State Deputy in 1946, T.-A. Fontaine started his tenure as the leader of the Quebec Knights of Columbus focused on gaining an increase in the use of French in the Knights' official circles. While many local chapters operated in French, they continued to receive insurance contracts, charters and registration forms for new councils in English. This in spite of promises of accommodations earlier by the Supreme Council to increase French. Fontaine wrote to Supreme Secretary Joseph Lamb complaining of the situation in October of 1946, demanding, "nos candidats et nos membres tiennent absolument à ce que toutes ces formules et formalités à remplir, applications, requêtes, etc., soient traduites dans leur langue, afin qu'ils puissent bien se rendre compte de ce qu'il signent."²⁴⁶

Lamb's reply would become the Supreme Council's refrain for the next decade in terms of responding to demands from Quebec: no deviation from the regulations of the Order, and no large concessions for linguistic groups.²⁴⁷ Though Lamb acknowledged the presence of non-English speaking Catholics in the Order (in particular the Spanish-speaking members in the U.S.), he insisted that official business be conducted "in the official language of the Order, and not in the languages of the various national groups

²⁴⁶ KCA, *Joseph P. Lamb Supreme Secretary Papers*, Correspondence, Canada, Quebec, 1946, SC 3-4-057 Box 165, Fontaine to Lamb, October 30, 1946.

²⁴⁷ KCA, *Lamb Papers*, Correspondence, Canada, Quebec, 1946, SC 3-4-057 Box 165, Lamb to Fontaine, Nov. 8, 1946.

which compose its membership.”²⁴⁸ Additionally, Lamb claimed that there were a significant number of members in the Order who spoke only English, and thus their interests needed to be taken into consideration as well.

This evidently irked Fontaine as he fired back at Lamb that there was, in fact, only one exclusively English-speaking council in the province (Dominion Council in Montreal) and that, unlike the other linguistic groups in the United States, francophones formed the majority in Quebec and thus were justified in demanding to be able to use their own language to serve members.²⁴⁹ While remaining cordial, Fontaine ended with an ominous allusion to what could happen if New Haven continued to adhere to its interpretation of French-Canadian needs, “J’ai pris très bonne note des observations que vous avez cru devoir m’adresser à ce sujet, et vous pouvez compter que je me ferai certainement un devoir d’en donner communication à tous les intéressés.”²⁵⁰

This exchange between Fontaine and Lamb only a year after the end of the war is symptomatic of general relations between the Quebec Knights and their leadership in New Haven. While the State Executive and a variety of local councils (La Tuque and Beauharnois Councils in 1948, for example) continued to petition the Supreme Council for more documents and services in French, there was very little in the way of dissent or public negativity towards New Haven in the first few years after the war.²⁵¹ Nationalist rhetoric was essentially relegated to being a secondary priority for most of the Knights’ leadership during this period in favour of a much more active emphasis on the Order’s

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ KCA, *Lamb Papers*, Correspondence, Canada, Quebec, 1946, SC 3-4-057 Box 165, Fontaine to Lamb, Nov. 18, 1946.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ For local resolutions, see NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Colomb, 1897-1948, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Extrait de ‘Congrès Provincial’ tenu à Rivière du Loup, le 23 mai, 1948.

role as a Catholic association. State Deputy Fontaine's closing remarks to his 1948 annual address to the Quebec State Convention of the Knights of Columbus provides the perfect demonstration of these priorities:

A l'oeuvre, donc! Sachons prendre les résolutions qui s'imposent, soyons conséquents et logiques avec nous-mêmes, sachons nous préparer pour être véritablement à la hauteur de notre mission et de notre rôle de bons Chevaliers de Colomb, de Catholiques sincères et convaincus, d'auxiliaires de l'Église, de disciples du Pape et de témoins du Christ ressuscité.²⁵²

Little mention is made of the Knights of Columbus' position on nationalist activity or the survival and protection of the French language, rather, priority is placed on their prestige as the "elite" leaders of Catholic society. As their linguistic demands went unheeded, however, men like Fontaine would become increasingly militant, and would adopt a much more autonomist position in making their demands known to New Haven.

2.7. Educating their own: the OJC's internal campaign against the Knights of Columbus

Throughout most of 1948, meanwhile, the OJC leadership had been forced to focus more energy on converting their own officers to the idea that the Knights of Columbus needed to be fought rather than on the general membership. In response to the ambivalent response of many of the Quebec VRs, the Chancellory decided to encourage the use of alternatives to the Knights, and to inform members about their hypocrisies, rather than focus on a strictly negative campaign against them.²⁵³ Thus a series of anonymous pamphlets known simply as "les rapports K" would be distributed within

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Bulletins à nos officiers dans l'O. 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145, Exclusif aux V.R., sujet: organismes étrangers, 20 décembre, 1948.

OJC circles and would provide elaborate details of how the Knights did not suit French-Canadians.²⁵⁴

These reports, published intermittently between late 1948 and mid-1950, touched upon a variety of the *OJC*'s grievances with the Knights of Columbus as they operated in Quebec. Some of the first pamphlets took a very political approach, looking at the lack of representation for French-Canadians on the Grand Council (with only one representative in the entire hierarchy, but none on the all-important Grand Council) in New Haven in spite of the fact that the Quebec section of the Knights was by the far the largest in Canada. Contrasted with Ontario, which had had far fewer members than Quebec (15,000 to Quebec's 51 000) and still had one representative, Hamiltonian Gerald Lunz, on the Grand Council, the *OJC* argued "les Canadiens français brillent par leur absence," in New Haven, especially considering that Quebec was the only state council to have exceeded its recruitment targets during a recruitment campaign that year.²⁵⁵ Subsequent pamphlets pointed out that, in spite of this strong presence of francophones in the Order and a strong recruitment drive, the Knights had maintained official neutrality during the flag debate during the post-war period. The *OJC* saw this as a damning sign that the Knights did not have the interests of Quebecers at heart.²⁵⁶

The next theme of these "Rapports K" was that of the operation of the Knights within Quebec under the name of "Chevaliers de Colomb". Going to the roots of the history of the Knights in Quebec, the *OJC* pamphlets pointed out that the Knights had

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ CRCCE, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Colomb et Filles d'Isabelle, correspondence – 1948-1952, C3/22/12, "Rapport K2: Les Knights of Columbus: Effectifs au Canada, 25-10-48," 4p; "Rapport K3: Les Knights of Columbus: La représentation des C.F. à New Haven, 16-11-48."

²⁵⁶ CRCCE, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Colomb et Filles d'Isabella, correspondence- 1948-1952, C3/22/12, "Rapport K7: Les Knights of Columbus, 12-3-49," .

initially registered, and continued to register in Quebec as a mutual aid and insurance society under the province of Quebec's Treasury Department, Insurance Branch under the name of the "Knights of Columbus" and had never received legal recognition as the "Chevaliers de Colomb".²⁵⁷

While this may seem to be a semantic trifle, the *OJC* argued that this deception was the main reason for the success of the Knights in Quebec because they were able to put forth the impression that they were a uniquely francophone organization by operating unofficially as the "Chevaliers" as opposed to one that paid dues to an American headquarters. It argued that until they managed to at least gain some level of autonomy and linguistic equality for French in the operations of the Grand Council (particularly in having a Quebec representative) it was for all intents and purposes a type of fraud. Bringing the argument to a more personal level they argued that just as "'John Stone' n'a pas le droit de s'appeler 'Jean Lapierre' pour vendre plus facilement sa marchandise à la clientèle de langue française," so the Knights should not be able to do the same thing on a much larger scale.²⁵⁸ In the same vein, a subsequent pamphlet argued that minor attempts to translate some official documents into French by the Knights did not change where membership dues went, and only helped further "cette société étrangère [qui] se camouffle sous un visage français pour mieux duper les nôtres."²⁵⁹

Thus, throughout 1948 and early 1949 the Orientation Committee worked hard within the *OJC* to convince its members of the need to combat the Knights in Quebec. The results would be seen at the *OJC*'s triennial Congress of 1949. The conference itself

²⁵⁷ CRCCF, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Colomb et Filles d'Isabelle, correspondance – 1948-1952, C3/22/12, "Rapport K4: Les Knights of Columbus: Les 'Chevaliers de Colomb' ça n'existe pas, 19-12-48," 4p.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ CRCCF, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Colomb et Filles d'Isabelle, correspondance – 1948-1952, C3/22/12, "Rapport K5: Les Knights of Columbus, 31-1-49," 4p.

was fairly introspective, discussing various aspects of the Order such as rituals, the running of meetings, and other fields where it was felt that the Order might be able to improve. A number of resolutions were passed during the plenary session of the congress, including a particularly harsh indictment of the Knights of Columbus in Quebec. Resolution 50 professed the OJC's strong opposition to the Knights because of their Irish roots and American control. It encourages their fellow French-Canadians to either withdraw from the Knights, or not to join at all. It also declared that any member of the OJC who did not withdraw from the Knights should be banned from the Order.²⁶⁰

The Chancellory in Ottawa, likely cognizant of some of the initial resistant from regular members to fighting the Knights, later decided to reduce the severity of this resolution by changing the clause on banning OJC members who were simultaneously members of the Knights, but it maintained the need to educate and convince these members to pull out of the Knights.²⁶¹ More importantly, through a campaign of education within the *OJC* and in the form of a resolution adopted by the membership, the Chancellory had established some momentum in their campaign and could now move to the next step: moving outside the inner circles of the OJC membership to engage the Knights of Columbus in the public sphere .

2.8. Conclusion

The Knights of Columbus and the Ordre de Jacques Cartier were both hit hard by the Depression of the 1930s. Their respective efforts by both to regain momentum and stability in membership reveal much about some of the similarities and differences

²⁶⁰ CRCCF, *OJC*, Congrès général de 1949: programme et résolutions adoptées -1949, C3/8/10; Resolution cited in CRCCF, *OJC*, "Circulaires de la Chancellerie, 1er juillet 1949 au 1er janvier 1951," C3/20/16, "Circulaire, le 26 novembre, 1949, 'Aux V.R. re: organismes étrangers'," 3p. The vote totals were not revealed in the sources consulted.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

between the two associations. The leaders of the OJC, for example, began to discuss the possibility of adopting economic incentives like life insurance policies for members to increase member retention rates. While the decision to adopt a policy was continuously put off by the Chancellory, many of whose members feared competition to their own life insurance and mutual aid associations, it does reveal an awareness of the role of commerce and economic measures play both for the OJC, and for French-Canadians on a broader scale. Indeed, throughout the late 1930s the OJC began to promote an activist approach to economic nationalism, fostering and encouraging the *Ligue d'Achat Chez Nous*, for instance. This increasing focus on economic levers of nationalist activity accelerated during the war, as the OJC also encouraged the creation of the *Union des Mutuelles-Vie française d'Amérique*.

Much of the OJC's nationalist activity was increasingly related to its ties with nationalist leader Lionel Groulx, who both received strong support from the OJC and provided frequent inspiration for their own campaigns. The creation of the UMFVA, coupled with the birth of the *Clubs Richelieu* and the Order's own deliberations over adopting an insurance policy for members demonstrate not only the Order's adoption of many of Groulx's calls for action, but also of the Order's leadership continued obsession with countering an old foe. Largely influenced by a pan-Canadian vision influenced by memories of the Great War, their initial plans for attacking the Knights in the post-war years were met with surprise and even resistance by their Quebec brothers, forcing the Order to adjust their strategy.

The Knights of Columbus, meanwhile, also focused on tightening the efficiency of their own insurance and recruitments strategies in the late 1930s in Order to stabilize their

membership. What ultimately benefited the Quebec Knights, however, was their renewed role as a high profile Catholic war auxiliary service during the Second World War. The resulting growth in the Order, however, also resulted in renewed struggles for an increase in French in the upper levels of the Supreme Council. While the demands of men like T.A. Fontaine offered little in the way of a threat of resistance to New Haven in the first years after the war, their continued dismissal by authorities in New Haven would eventually transform their calls for more French in what they saw as a mostly Catholic rather than national organization into a much more militant form of autonomist sentiment. All that was needed was a spark. As we shall see in the next chapter, the spark (for both the OJC's campaign and the Knights of Columbus) would be created in the diocese of Trois-Rivières, where a frustrated bishop, a strong OJC council, and disgruntled Knights of Columbus would lead a struggle for outright separation of the Knights of Columbus of Quebec from their New Haven headquarters.

Chapter 3

Cutting ties: the OJC and the Quebec Knights of Columbus Separation Movement

As shown in the first two chapters, the creation and growth of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier was intrinsically linked to the experiences of francophone leaders in Ontario during the First World War, particularly their battles against the Knights of Columbus. This inspiration and bitterness lingered after the Second World as well, though the Knights of Columbus had blossomed in the post-war era to become a significant Catholic men's association in Quebec. Its growth in the province was certainly a point of pride for Knight leaders in the Quebec State Executive. At the Knights of Columbus Quebec State Congress of 1949, for example, State Deputy T.A. Fontaine painted a rosy picture of the state of affairs for the Quebec Knights. Praising their parish activities, Fontaine was particularly impressed with the overall growth of the Knights in the province in the previous decade. Indeed, the Quebec membership had grown from 17,000 to 65,000 members in roughly ten years. This, according to Fontaine, put the Quebec Knights at the forefront of the Order:

Depuis plusieurs années déjà, la province de Québec brille au tout premier rang à la tête de tous les états de l'ordre, et, sur cette terre d'Amérique, elle est maintenant considérée par nos chefs vénérés et par les plus hauts dignitaires de la hiérarchie comme l'État qui accomplit présentement le plus d'oeuvres utiles pour l'Église et pour la société.²⁶²

What Fontaine did not mention, however, is that beneath this seemingly strong portrait of growth, the Quebec Knights of Columbus were undergoing a major shift in terms of their relationship with the Supreme Council in New Haven. In some regions of the province growing disillusionment with the lack of progress made by the State Council in gaining more recognition of official use of French and more autonomy for the province within the

²⁶² *La Presse*, 11 juin, 1949. Article found in a group of press clippings in NAC, OJC, K. of C. Exécutif d'État, Province de Québec, 1949-1950, MG28 I98 Vol. 146.

Order pushed some councils to openly support the idea of separating the Quebec Knights of Columbus from their New Haven headquarters.

All this while a new generation of French-Canadian nationalists pushed to redefine French-Canadian nationalism and politics throughout the early 1950s. While the Quebec State Council of the Knights of Columbus and the Ordre de Jacques Cartier wrestled with the issue of autonomy for the Quebec Knights in 1952 and 1953, the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Constitutional Problems (the Tremblay Commission), struck in February of 1953, tackled the issue of Quebec's changing role within Canada and the needs of the French-Canadian polity.²⁶³ While some academics have decried the conservative overtones of the commission's report as rendering it antiquated almost upon publication,²⁶⁴ it did define Quebec as the "guardian of French-Canadian civilization."²⁶⁵ The Duplessis government, meanwhile, spent much of the post-war period wrestling with Ottawa over powers of taxation and financial autonomy, trying to block the expansion of federal spending in areas of provincial jurisdiction. The conservatism of the Duplessis government and of the Tremblay commission thus pushed them to oppose any federal efforts to help francophones outside Quebec as a violation of provincial rights.²⁶⁶

Thus, growing autonomist sentiment within segments of the Knights' membership reflected the larger reality of an evolving nationalist discourse in Quebec, one in which the territory and institutions of the province were seen as the best (and perhaps only) possible vehicle for nationalist activity. Fontaine and the State Executive of the Knights of Columbus in Quebec would face many of the same debates over nationalism and

²⁶³ Behiels, *Prelude*, 35, 208-211.

²⁶⁴ Peter Russell, *A Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?* 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 70.

²⁶⁵ Quoted in Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 296

²⁶⁶ Martel, *Le deuil d'un pays imaginé*, 108-109.

autonomy as other organizations, and governments, in the province did throughout the 1950s. The frenzy over an autonomist movement created in the Trois-Rivières region, with the support the Catholic Church in the region, would provide a preview of the growing opinion in Quebec that the province needed to take more firm control of its own destiny.

This chapter will focus on the collision of the Knights of Columbus' growing autonomist movement with the push by the Ordre de Jacques Cartier to encourage the Knights of Columbus to separate from New Haven. The focal point of activity for both associations was the region of Trois-Rivières, where Bishop Georges-Léon Pelletier, recently appointed bishop for the diocese, was at the center of a movement to oppose the American affiliation of the Knights of Columbus in the area. The OJC actively encouraged this autonomist movement via the clandestine participation of some its members within Knights of Columbus councils, placing most of their resources and hopes on the idea of gaining a separation for the Knights of Columbus.

This autonomist movement, while not condemned or actively encouraged by the Quebec State executive of the Knights, became the source of major tension with the Supreme Council in New Haven. Quebec Knights like Thomas Fontaine and Francis Fauteux became intermediaries between militants in Quebec and staunch refusal by the Supreme Council, particularly Supreme Advocate (later to become Supreme Knight) Luke Hart, to change the status quo within the Order. Via growingly militant resolutions adopted at State Congresses in Quebec, correspondence between the State and Supreme Councils, as well as the OJC's own foray into the battle, it will be shown that the debate over autonomy for the Quebec Knights of Columbus, and the OJC's efforts to encourage

the movement were symptomatic of the changes within nationalist and religious movements of the period. While neo-nationalists and liberals debated the future of nationalism and French-Canadian identity throughout the 1950s, religious movements such as the Knights of Columbus struggled with many of the same questions. Increasingly, the Quebec Knights would retreat behind their provincial borders in efforts to secure autonomy from New Haven and control in a region where French-Canadians were in the majority.

For the OJC, meanwhile, the Knights' autonomist campaign offered them a chance to reassert their definition of nationalism while adjusting the changing political realities in Quebec. The Chancellory's support of the autonomist movement reflected a growing trend, particularly amongst the Quebec members of the OJC, to focus on the Quebec state as a vehicle for nationalism. This shift, however, occurred within a context of continuing interest in protecting a continent-wide francophone presence. The move to support autonomy for the Quebec Knights must be placed in the context both of growing tensions within the OJC leadership with neo-nationalists in Quebec and changing nationalist discourse.

3.1. Superficial strength? The Quebec Knights of Columbus in the post-war era

While T.-A. Fontaine had sounded triumphant at the State Congress of June 1949, all was not well within the Quebec Knights of Columbus. Retaining members once they had passed through the gates of ritual into the Order continued to be a problem in the post-war years. Indeed, in late 1949 the State Executive, doubtless after prodding by the Supreme Council, launched an investigation into their retention rates. The findings were alarming: in Quebec, suspension rates were 12.5%, while the overall average for the

Order was 6.9%., making them the state council with by far the worst suspension record.²⁶⁷ Though the committee's report offered little in the way of solutions to the problem, it revealed the transitory nature of a significant portion of the membership. In 1949, for instance over 68% of members in Quebec were associate members, holding no insurance or, in other terms, lacked any financial ties with the Knighthood.²⁶⁸

Membership retention was not a new problem for the Knights in Quebec – they had faced the issue since the 1920s. What was new, however, was the increasing whispering campaigns against them in the province. In 1948, for instance, a Knight in Quebec wrote to the State Council complaining that people had been handing out coloured pamphlets attacking the Knights at 1st degree initiation ceremonies as well as attacks from a “revue mensuelle.”²⁶⁹ Though the initial strategy was to ignore these anonymous criticisms, the Order was forced to respond as they grew louder and more persistent. In December of 1949, right as the OJC was stepping up its production of pamphlets attacking the Knights, the Quebec State Council issued an official reply to those “qui se croient en sécurité dans les ténèbres, et que nous connaissons.”²⁷⁰ To these anonymous attackers the article rebutted that the episcopacy would not support the Knights if they were as nefarious as reported to be. Université Laval, for instance, would not have accepted donations from an organization that ‘did not exist’ in the sense that they accepted it from the ‘Chevaliers de Colomb’, and the Knights had been doing plenty

²⁶⁷ NAC, *OJC*, Bulletin mensuel des Chevaliers de Colomb, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, extrait du 'Bulletin d'Exécutif d'État des C. de C. de la province de Québec', livraison de décembre 1949.

²⁶⁸ KCA, *Supreme Council proceedings, August 21-23, 1951*, Report of the Supreme Secretary, p. 48-50. It is also in this report that the Supreme Secretary noted a widespread trend of high suspensions rates, though a “very small percent of the councils made a great deal of difference in the final membership figures.”

²⁶⁹ NAC, *OJC*, Bulletin mensuel des Chevaliers de Colomb, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, juillet 1948, “Le fameux pamphlet”, 3. These coloured pamphlets were likely copies of some of the “Rapports K”.

²⁷⁰ NAC, *OJC*, Bulletin mensuel des Chevaliers de Colomb, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, extrait du 'Bulletin d'Exécutif d'État des C. de C. de la province de Québec', livraison de décembre 1949.

to support French Catholic schooling in the Prairies, particularly in Gravelbourg, they argued.²⁷¹ In another article that month, State Secretary Julien Lavallée issued a warning about a coming concentrated attack on the Order in Quebec, and asked for support from Knights across the province in documenting it so that they could uncover who was truly behind these smear campaigns against the Order.²⁷²

The increasing activity against the Knights was, not surprisingly, largely the work of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier. In October of 1949, fresh off receiving official support from the membership for the campaign after the annual congress that summer, Orientation Director Pierre Vigeant prepared a mission statement of what he felt the Order should focus on in the years leading up to the OJC's 25th anniversary in 1952. Topping the list of priorities were the Knights of Columbus and establishing a strong French-Canadian presence in Rome.²⁷³ Vigeant reiterated his belief that the Order had been created to fight the Knights of Columbus in his description of its *raison d'être*:

Nous voulons intensifier nos efforts afin d'atteindre d'ici le vingt-cinquième anniversaire de notre Ordre ces objectifs fixés par nos fondateurs...La première de ces campagnes, c'est celle qui vise à évincer les Knights of Columbus du Canada français. C'est précisément pour faire concurrence à cette société étrangère et pour rendre aux Canadiens français les mêmes services qu'elle rend aux irlandais que notre Ordre a été fondé...[La deuxième] s'agissait de faire pièce à la propagande savante menée à Rome par les Knights of Columbus au bénéfice de l'élément Irlandais de l'Amérique du Nord et qui a valu à nos compatriotes tant de déceptions et d'épreuves dans les provinces anglaises du Canada et outre frontière.²⁷⁴

Vigeant had taken the fight against the Knights of Columbus one step further than the founders of the OJC. As shown in Chapter 1, the founding members of the OJC,

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Fears of Irish influence in Rome had been a pressing issue throughout the OJC's existence as they felt that groups like the Knights of Columbus had great sway in the Canadian College in Rome and thus worked to increase French-Canadian sway there. NAC, OJC, Fonds VADMA, 1949-1961, MG28 I98 Vol. 81, Comité de l'Orientation, 29 octobre, 1949.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

including Father Barette, sought to create a society that could counter the influence of organizations like the Knights of Columbus – both in civic and religious politics. Pushing for their eradication from French Canada, however, represented a stiffer attitude towards the Knights, revealing the confidence that leaders like Vigeant probably felt in the post-war years.

Thus, throughout the period of 1949-1951, the Chancellory, and Vigeant in particular, increased public pressure against the Knights of Columbus through methods such as putting out new “Rapports K” pamphlets, getting members to write to local newspapers to attack the Knights and encourage fellow French-Canadians to withdraw. Increasingly, these public attacks placed emphasis on the idea that there were already many similar associations that could offer the same services that the Knights of Columbus offered, without the foreign leadership of the Knights. Indeed, the Knights’ ties to New Haven were increasingly compared to the province of Quebec’s relationship with the federal government:

Il faut présager qu'un jour les Canadiens français du Québec comprendront que leur place n'est pas dans une mutuelle-vie étrangère ou les nôtres doivent lutter, comme auprès du fédéral, pour faire respecter les droits du français.²⁷⁵

Other members of the Chancellory, such as secretary Léopold Allard wrote letters to newspapers rebutting letters of support for the Knights (though under pseudonyms). In Allard’s example, he invited readers of *Le Devoir* to consider similar organisations in Quebec :

Les mouvements spécialisés d'Action catholique, le Tiers-Ordre, la Saint-Vincent de Paul, les Lacordaire, les scouts, les Chambre de Commerce, l'A.C.J.C., etc... tous ces

²⁷⁵ NAC, *OJC*, Knights of Columbus (en général) 1951-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, Rapport K-B, 15 octobre 1949.

mouvements, d'origine étrangère, se sont organisés chez nous avec complète autonomie, sans recevoir de directives du noyau initial et sans lui payer de cotisations.²⁷⁶

In another letter, this time to *Le Droit*, Allard blasted a reader in Ottawa who had supported the Knights :

Il nous force à évoquer le nom odieux de Fallon, haut dignitaire Knight; ceux des coreligionnaires Knights qui furent les sinistres artisans de l'injonction Mackell, etc.....Tout ce que nous, Franco-Ontariens, devons aux Knights of Columbus, c'est le pardon chrétien pour les innombrables coups que nous n'attendions pas de ceux qui partagent notre foi.²⁷⁷

Thus, old animosity against the Knights of Columbus was linked with growing demands for autonomy in various facets of public life in Quebec.

Aside from these increasingly public attacks on the Knights, the Orientation committee also switched gears during this period in terms of their approach to the Knights. No longer content with critiquing them, the committee adopted an official policy of encouraging both OJC members and the general public to push for the Knights to gain autonomy from New Haven. In September of 1950 the committee released a new directive to all regional officers of the OJC to encourage the idea of splitting the Knights from New Haven. Mirroring Allard's letter to *Le Devoir*, the circular offered the example of the Scouts, Catholic Action and others as proof that foreign societies could and should be adapted to French-Canadian life by securing their autonomy from their American headquarters.²⁷⁸

How this new strategy would play out remained to be seen, but the Knights' Quebec State Council was certainly not a passive victim of criticism during this period.

²⁷⁶ NAC, OJC, Knights of Columbus (en général) 1951-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, Lettre de Léopold Allard au Directeur de *Le Devoir*, 19 août 1950. The letter is signed with the pen name of Marcel Lévesque.

²⁷⁷ NAC, OJC, Knights of Columbus (en général) 1951-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, Allard au *Droit* (signé 'Un Franco-Ontarien), 13 décembre, 1950.

²⁷⁸ NAC, OJC, K. of C. Bulletins à nos officiers dans l'O. 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145, Aux officiers régionaux, re: organismes étrangers, 6 septembre, 1950.

The March 1950 issue of their monthly newsletter proudly rebutted all the arguments their critics used about their lack of French-Canadian patriotism by answering, “Un Chevalier de Colomb sincère et convaincu place le mot catholique avant toutes questions de race, de langue, de piastre et de cent.”²⁷⁹ This definition of Knighthood as being one defined by Catholicism to the exclusion of language, however, would soon come under fire in the region of Trois-Rivières.

3.2. The new autonomist movement within the Quebec Knights of Columbus

Despite the Quebec State Council of the Knights of Columbus pushing for language concessions via resolutions adopted at their annual conventions, the progress was too slow or completely unacceptable to some members. In early December of 1950, some of this frustration surfaced in the diocese of Trois Rivières and in the Mauricie region in general. In Trois-Rivières, Bishop Georges Léon Pelletier had expressed his opposition to the Knights, deploring “the affiliation with the Supreme Office at New Haven, which has the advantage of having the last word in all settlements concerning the Order, the Councils, and the members.”²⁸⁰ This episcopal opposition was mirrored by lay opposition as well in the region of Cap-de-la-Madeleine, where Fernand Lanouette, a pharmacist in the area and member of the local Knights council (where he was chair of the Conference Committee) sent out an invitation to all members of the council to discuss if they should be members of “la Société irlandaise des "Knights of Columbus"? Je suis assuré du

²⁷⁹ NAC, *OJC*, Bulletin mensuel des Chevaliers de Colomb, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, mars, 1950.

²⁸⁰ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Misc. material, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951-1954, SC-5-6-450 Box 242, Proceedings of State Executive Meetings, January 13, 1951. Pelletier had expressed these sentiments in December to State Warden Auguste Massicotte, who was from the region.

contraire et vous le prouverai. Toutes questions soumises recevront une attention spéciale.”²⁸¹

Even though Lanouette was a member of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier (he even served as the Grand Chancellor of the local XC), his decision to call a meeting came as a surprise to the leaders of the OJC in Ottawa, as evidenced by a letter from local member Napoléon Boisvert which informed the Chancellory of the move.²⁸² The meeting was clearly planned, however, as Bishop Pelletier had been consulted and even supported Lanouette’s idea of creating an autonomist movement.²⁸³ Responding to Lanouette’s initiative, the Chancellory advised Boisvert to encourage Lanouette to withdraw his connections with the OJC in order to avoid raising suspicion that it was an OJC venture, and to convince him to wait for the Knights’ annual congress, where a public resolution on separation would garner much more attention.²⁸⁴

Lanouette must have been a convincing speaker, for on the 18th of January, 1951, a joint meeting of the Cap-de-la-Madeleine and Trois-Rivières councils of the Knights of Columbus, citing the need to better reflect the unique linguistic, financial and cultural needs of Quebec and French-Canadians, approved a resolution calling upon the Quebec State Council “to inform the Supreme Council that we wish to separate ourselves from our brothers of New Haven”²⁸⁵ Lanouette, however, had not been alone in convincing his

²⁸¹ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Projet Lanouette, 1951-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 146, Fernand Lanouette aux membres du conseil des Chevaliers de Colomb Cap de la Madeleine, 11 décembre, 1950.

²⁸² NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Projet Lanouette, 1951-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 146, Napoléon Boisvert au sec. du CX, 26 décembre, 1950.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Projet Lanouette, 1951-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 146, Sec adj du CX à Boisvert, 29 décembre 1950. Lanouette only began corresponding with the CX in late January of 1951.

²⁸⁵ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Misc. material, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951-1954, SC-5-6-450 Box 242, Fernand Bellerive (Secretary Council 1001 T-R) and B. Paterson (Sec. Coucil 2669 Cap de la Madeleine) to Grand Knights of all Quebec Councils, January 19, 1951- translated copy. See appendice for full text of the resolution.

fellow Knights of Columbus to take a stronger stand against New Haven. According to Jean Pellerin, a member of the Trois-Rivières XC of the OJC and President of the local Société Saint Jean Baptiste, the autonomist resolution had been adopted “grâce à l'initiative de nos frères faisant partie des K. of C. et qui estiment que plusieurs autres conseils suivront cet exemple.”²⁸⁶

If Pellerin's enthusiasm for the autonomist movement is an indication of general sentiment within the Trois-Rivières XC, their focus was certainly on the Knights. Pellerin actively lobbied the CX to take a more active role in supporting the autonomist movement so that it could become a province-wide wave, but the under-secretary of the Chancellory, writing on their behalf, nixed the idea as being too dangerous for the Order's own level of secrecy. Besides, he argued, “il vaut infiniment mieux que l'initiative paraisse être le geste spontané de profanes qui veulent faire cesser une tutelle depuis longtemps intolérable.”²⁸⁷ In spite of Pellerin's frustration with the seemingly timid approach to taking an active role – he even accused the Chancellory of abandoning Quebec members by not actively supporting Lanouette's campaign- the Chancellory remained consistent in insisting that the autonomist movement remain separate from the OJC, though they would act in favour of it.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Projet Lanouette, 1951-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 146, Pellerin au sec. du CX, 23 janvier 1951.

²⁸⁷ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Projet Lanouette, 1951-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 146, Sec adj. du CX à Pellerin, 26 janvier 1951. The Chancellory echoed this advice in writing directly to Lanouette, encouraging him to distance himself from links with the OJC, NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Projet Lanouette, 1951-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 14, Sec. adj. du CX à Lanouette, 30 janvier, 1951.

²⁸⁸ Pellerin had this to say in a scathing letter to the Chancellory in Ottawa, “Maintenant que la lutte est belle et bien engagée voici que la CX se désiste prétextant la prudence. Elle lance à fond de train ses troupes de choc puis se retire sous sa tente.” NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Projet Lanouette, 1951-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 146, Jean Pellerin au Sec. Adj. du CX, 6 février, 1951.

3.3 The reaction in New Haven and the Quebec State Council

While the OJC wrestled with how to support the autonomist movement in Trois-Rivières, the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council was receiving nervous feedback from their Quebec State Council counterparts. Francis Fauteux, a long-time member of the Board of Directors, wrote to Supreme Advocate Luke Hart to express his own personal concerns about the “uneasiness” in the province as news of the Trois-Rivières resolutions spread.²⁸⁹ Quebec State Advocate Judge Eugene Marquis, meanwhile, was even more worried about the Trois-Rivières resolutions. He wrote to his counterpart in the Supreme Council in New Haven that the resolutions needed to be taken seriously, “It is to be feared that, if nothing is done, the majority of the Knights of Columbus in our Province will separate and form themselves into an association similar to our Order.”²⁹⁰ Marquis urged Hart to take action, suggesting that Spanish speaking members of the Order in the U.S. must have at some point raised similar linguistic complaints and that this might offer them some guidance on how to deal with the issue.²⁹¹

Hart’s response reveals some of the inherent incomprehension at the Supreme Council level of the demands of their French-Canadian colleagues. Writing to Fauteux, Hart recommended that he get in touch with Bishop Lawrence Patrick Whalen in Montreal to secure the support of the hierarchy in order to quell a movement which he saw as “extremely harmful to the interests of our Church and the Order and the French-

²⁸⁹ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951, SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Fauteux to Hart, February 2, 1951.

²⁹⁰ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951. SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Eugène Marquis to Hart, February 3, 1951. Whalen, the auxiliary bishop for the archdiocese of Montreal, was often Hart’s main source for ground level accounts of the goings on in Quebec – see KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada - Quebec, miscellaneous, 1956-1958, SC-1-10-430 Box 591, Hart: memo. Re: Conversation with his excellency Bishop Lawrence P. Whalen, February 2, 1956.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

Canadians who belong to the Order."²⁹² Why Hart would send Fauteux to an English-speaking bishop in Montreal to deal with the issue of French in Quebec is unclear, but it is symptomatic of Hart's approach to the whole issue. He was also unwilling to bend to Fauteux's compromise solution of establishing a French-Canadian secretariat in New Haven to allow French-Canadian members to handle their insurance business in French:

I am not in favor of anything that would tend to promote a distinction between members of the Order on the ground of racial ties and therefore I would not be willing to agree that there should be a French secretary in the Supreme Office merely because of the fact that 8% of our membership lives in Quebec and possibly 10% of it is of French extraction. However, if it would help the Order to serve the interests of a large group of our members who happen to be of French extraction and if it would enable the Order to serve them better than could be done otherwise, then I would be willing to agree that there shall be employees in the Supreme Office who speak and write French...²⁹³

Hart's dismissal of Fauteux's request was soon followed by news of the adoption of the openly separatist resolution by the Knights in the Trois-Rivières region and the announcement of their intention to bring the resolution to the provincial congress that spring.²⁹⁴ Fauteux's prescient warning that "there is a nice fight in view," would finally set off the alarm bells for his old friend Hart.²⁹⁵ Hart's advice was firm; the Order did not intend to leave Quebec, in spite of opposition. He also advised Fauteux on how to persuade his colleagues not to push for separation:

The Order in Quebec is great and strong because of its being a part of the supreme organization and that it would be better to have the members in Quebec continue as members of this great international organization than to be members of a small society which was separated from the international group.²⁹⁶

²⁹² KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951, SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Hart to Fauteux, February 5, 1951.

²⁹³ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951, SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Hart to Fauteux, February 15, 1951.

²⁹⁴ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Francis Fauteux, Supreme Director, Montreal, Canada, 1951-1954, SC-1-10-58 Box 579, Fauteux to Hart, March 8, 1951.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951, SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Hart to Fauteux, March 10, 1951.

Thus, Hart's attitude towards the restless element of the Order in Quebec became more conciliatory, resorting to promoting the Order rather than flat out refusing requests for change.

The Quebec State Council of the Knights of Columbus, meanwhile, was also reacting to news of the growing separatist movement in March of 1951. At a State Executive meeting on March 17 the issue of separation was front and center on the agenda. Fontaine reported that he had gone to see Archbishop Léger in Montreal about the issue to seek advice. According to Fontaine, Léger was at least warm to the idea of separation, if not completely supportive.²⁹⁷ More importantly, Fontaine reported that Léger believed that many clerics in the province would support a separation of the Quebec Knights from New Haven. Léger recalled his time in Rome at the Canadian College, where he witnessed first hand the Quebec Knights not receiving "every consideration that they should have had in proportion to the work that they had accomplished."²⁹⁸ While no clear resolution of support for the separatists was adopted, a number of new ideas for increasing the visibility of French at the upper levels of the Order were developed. They included a new Quebec based Knights of Columbus journal, official letter heads and greeting cards for new members in French, as well as setting aside 25% of the contributions to Catholic advertising the Quebec Knights made each year to publicity focused only on Quebec.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ KCA, Hart, *Supreme Advocate Papers*, Misc. material, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951-1954, SC-5-6-450 Box 242, Proceedings of the State Executive Meetings, March 17, 1951. These records are spotty in the Knights of Columbus archives, indicating that records of meetings were likely sent in by members with connections with the Supreme Council, such as Fauteux, rather than a standard policy of sending in meeting minutes.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

Francis Fauteux, after attending the meeting, sent his own account of what took place and assessed the strength of the separatist idea within the State Executive to Hart. In his view, State Treasurer Fabio Monet, State Advocate Eugène Marquis and State Secretary Julien Lavallée were all opposed to the idea of complete separation, while State Warden August Massicotte, from Trois-Rivières, was the strongest voice on the executive in favour of separation.³⁰⁰ Only State Deputy T.A. Fontaine remained “in the balance”, undecided on what to do.³⁰¹ The State Executive appeared to be hedging their bets, waiting to see how popular these resolutions would be.

In the weeks leading up to the State Congress in May of 1951, various councils of the Knights in the province began to issue public declarations in favour of or against the Trois-Rivières resolution. The Montmagny council of the Knights, for instance, issued their own resolution later that March demanding financial autonomy for the Quebec Knights.³⁰² Another council, this time in the Baie des Ha! Ha! region, released a resolution calling for a complete separation of the Quebec Knights from New Haven.³⁰³ The Shawinigan Council published a pamphlet in March on the autonomy issue to clarify its own position on the subject.³⁰⁴ Rejecting the idea that the autonomist movement was based on French-Canadian separatism, it argued:

L'Ordre des Chevaliers de Colomb, à l'instar de notre Sainte Mère l'Église, est et restera, dans notre Province, comme ailleurs, au-dessus des questions de races et de langues. Nous voulons par cette résolution, obtenir un État du Québec, État légalement reconnu par nos gouvernements, afin que nous puissions, dans cet État et par cet État du Québec,

³⁰⁰ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951, SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Fauteux to Hart, March 20, 1951.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951, SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Knights of Columbus, Council 2634, Montmagny to Quebec State Council, March 25, 1951.

³⁰³ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951, SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Conseil 2762, Baie des Ha!Ha!, 28 mars, 1951

³⁰⁴ Included in a letter from Jean Pellerin to the CX, NAC, *OJC*, K of C. Congrès provincial de 1951 et 1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145, Pellerin au Sec. adj. du CX, 29 mars, 1951.

contrôler nos propres finances, produit de nos contributions et de nos primes d'assurances... Nous réalisons qu'une des raisons de la grande force et de la puissance de notre Ordre résident précisément dans son Internationalisme. C'est pourquoi nous serions désireux et heureux de conserver une certaine "Affiliation" au Conseil Suprême, si, toutefois, ce dernier veut encore bien de nous.³⁰⁵

The autonomist movement within the Knights of Columbus of Quebec in 1951 thus began to use language from some of the political debates of the early 1950s in terms of asserting Quebec's right to control its own destiny. Aware of their numerical strength, as well as increasingly aware of the economic weight their insurance policies carried as economic capital, the language of the autonomists resembled the increasing calls by neo-nationalists for a more assertive Quebec state. While many councils supported the initial Trois-Rivières resolution, just how the push for autonomy would play out remained to be seen.

The Ordre de Jacques Cartier was also reacting to the flurry of activity before the Knights of Columbus Provincial Congress of 1951. Earlier that year, Pierre Vigeant used his connections as a journalist to publish a series of articles on the Knights of Columbus which were collected and published as a short tract, *Knights of Columbus: Que sont les 'Chevaliers de Colomb'*. Essentially a collected barrage of all the various criticisms the OJC had made of the Knights during the preparatory stages of their anti-Knight campaign, Vigeant's analysis of the Knights was damning to say the least. Cleverly separating the *Chevaliers de Colomb* (the Quebec Knights) from the *Knights of Columbus*, he compared their relationship with New Haven to that of Quebec to the Canadian federal government:

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

L'histoire des Chevaliers de Colomb au sein de la puissante société irlando-américaine ressemble étrangement à celle des Canadiens français de la réserve québécoise au sein de la Confédération. Ils doivent se battre pour obtenir la moindre bribe de français.³⁰⁶

Noting the long history of battles over language rights within the Order, Vigeant gave credit to the current wave of nationalist sentiment sweeping through the Quebec Knights, though he argued that this passion was perhaps misplaced:

Il est tout de même dommage de voir ainsi gaspiller des efforts et des énergies qui pourraient être tellement mieux employés ailleurs. Les Canadiens français ont-ils pris goût aux réclamations linguistiques au point de se chercher un nouveau champ de bataille lorsque la situation s'améliore au Parlement fédéral? Il serait tellement facile de faire de l'action sociale catholique et de l'action patriotique en français au sein de l'une de nos mutuelles-vie françaises sans avoir payer tribut à New-Haven.³⁰⁷

Vigeant's pamphlet quickly became one of the main weapons of the OJC's publicity campaign against the Knights, as they sent out special mass orders of the tract to organisations such as the Sociétés Saint-Jean-Baptiste d'Ontario and the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal, as well as being sent out to all XCs in Quebec to be given out to friends and colleagues.³⁰⁸ Purchasing over 11,000 copies of the tract themselves, the OJC created the impression for reviewers that Vigeant's pamphlet was creating a public stir by selling out its first edition.³⁰⁹

As the OJC pushed Vigeant's work into the public spotlight, the leadership in Ottawa also worked behind the scenes to try and rally support for the autonomist cause before the May congress of the Quebec Knights of Columbus. Writing to one of the regional secretaries of the OJC, for instance, Secretary Léopold Allard expressed hope that the growing autonomist movement within the Knights would be able to gain enough

³⁰⁶ Vigeant, *Knights of Columbus: Que sont les 'Chevaliers de Colomb'*, 2e édition, 15.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 24.

³⁰⁸ Both deliveries are referred to in NAC, OJC, K. of C. Brochure de l'Action Nationale (articles de Pierre Vigeant), 1951-1954, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145.

³⁰⁹ CRCCE, OJC, Circulaires de la Chancellerie, 1er juillet 1949 au 1er janvier 1951- 1949-1951, C3/20/17, "Circulaire générale no. 497, à tous les XC. Sujet: Une brochure à diffuser, 21 mars 1951."

support to gain approval for an autonomist resolution at the coming State Congress and called upon all the officers to use Vigeant's tract to spread the word so that the wave of support would provoke an immediate separation. "Quand la séparation sera chose faite," argued Allard, "notre campagne sera terminée et il ne nous restera plus qu'à noyauter un organisme qui sera devenu canadien-français."³¹⁰

With both the Ordre de Jacques Cartier and the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus frantically seeking to assess the coming storm at the provincial Congress of 1951, the tiny town of Saint-Gabriel-de-Brandon would soon become the first battleground in an increasingly complex struggle between the opponents of the Knights of Columbus (mainly the Ordre de Jacques Cartier and organisations associated with it) and the Quebec State Council of the Knights of Columbus. The Quebec State Council, meanwhile, faced the daunting task of heading off what was an increasingly militant autonomist movement while negotiating a compromise with a seemingly stubborn headquarters in New Haven.

3.4. Forcing the issue: the 1951 State Convention of the Knights of Columbus

The agenda of resolutions to be discussed at the 1951 State Congress of the Quebec Knights of Columbus reveals the powder keg-like atmosphere that was to ensue during the deliberations of the delegates. An indication of the strategy of the autonomists, the resolution list was stacked with various autonomy-related resolutions. Resolution 60, put forward by the Trois-Rivières and Cap-de-la-Madeleine councils, was by far the most aggressive in its language and the one that set off the most debate.³¹¹ Demanding a

³¹⁰ NAC, *OJC*, Knights of Columbus (en général) 1951-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, Allard à Bilodeau, Sec. du CR no. 3, 10 mars 1951.

³¹¹ NAC, *OJC*, K of C., Congrès provincial de 1951 et 1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145, Congrès provincial tenu le 20 mai 1951. The resolution in its entirety is attached in Appendice 1.

complete separation from New Haven, the resolution argued that “nos intérêts patriotiques canadiens-français ne sont pas les mêmes que ceux des Américains et des Canadiens de langue anglaise, fussent-ils catholiques.”³¹² Other resolutions (particularly Resolutions 61 through 69) demanded anything from more financial autonomy, to a French secretariat to simply incorporating the Chevaliers de Colomb name as the official title for the Order in Quebec.³¹³

Before rolling up their sleeves and sorting through the various resolutions, however, the members took a moment to look at the previous year’s accomplishments. State Deputy T.A. Fontaine’s address to the delegates recalled the good work they had been doing in Quebec, helping for example, victims of floods in Rimouski and Cabano. He noted, however, an increasingly public campaign of criticism against them, one that was noted at a Montreal conference on immigration to the province where some conference delegates from other French-Canadian associations criticized the Knights ability to take positive an action in relation to encouraging immigrants to learn French because they would be limited by New Haven’s authority.

Fontaine placed the blame for these criticisms squarely on the shoulders of “un patriotard à la Pierre Vigeant, atteint d'un narcissisme exhubérant et d'une ignorance crasse des oeuvres de notre Ordre.”³¹⁴ Moving to a more general discussion of recent publications by the likes of Vigeant and growing public criticism of the Knights, Fontaine lashed out against “des individus, des groupements, des associations, (il y en a toujours eu, d'ailleurs) à qui notre Ordre porte ombrage, qui n'aiment pas les Chevaliers de

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ NAC, *OJC*, K of C. Congrès provincial de 1951 et 1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145, Rapport du Député d'État à l'assemblée générale, 1951.

Colomb et qui s'emploient et s'ingénient à les critiquer.”³¹⁵ While he did not specifically accuse any one association or individual of particular responsibility, he dismissed rising criticism as jealousy “devant l'ampleur que prend l'Ordre des Chevaliers de Colomb, et qu'ils éprouvent le besoin de faire quelque chose de bien ou mal avant que leur association ou groupement ne tombe à néant.”³¹⁶

The combination of a variety of seemingly hostile resolutions and Fontaine's defensive speech made tense conditions for discussing change within the Knights of Columbus in Quebec. Accounts of the debates vary, depending on the approach and ambitions of the observer. What was actually adopted at the Congress, however, was a modified adaptation of the spirit of the majority of the autonomist resolutions:

The Knights of Columbus of the Province of Quebec wish to have their complete financial influence, as well in fact as in law, and that in the circumstances they ask that the Order be incorporated in Quebec under the name 'les Chevaliers de Colomb' with power to govern its affairs.³¹⁷

The resolution also called for the formation of a special three-person committee to study the issue and produce a report of recommended steps to follow in order to carry out the resolution by January of 1952.³¹⁸

The resolution was interpreted differently by the various people interested in the affair. Ludger Faguy, a former State Deputy in Quebec, and the State Insurance Agent (a salaried position paid by New Haven) at the time, wrote to Luke Hart that State Advocate Eugène Marquis had ingeniously rolled all the autonomist resolutions into the final one adopted, thereby shortening potentially acrimonious debate. The proposal to wait for a

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ KCA, Hart, *Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951, SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Provincial Convention of the Knights of Columbus of the Province of Quebec, May 20, 1951.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

committee report on the issue had “the effect of turning aside the storm which was brewing and the proceedings ended very happily,” argued Faguy, “Time is a great factor and will help in moderating some views.”³¹⁹ In the United States, meanwhile, the resolution captured the attention of the *Christian Science Monitor*, which published a short story on the convention, calling the resolution “a blow to the American society,” that strengthened “Quebec's feeling of independence in general.” In this account, the resolution was seen to make the decision to separate definite.³²⁰

This media attention in the U.S. perked the interest of some American Knights, such as John J. Delay, a 4th Degree Knight in Massachusetts who wrote to the Supreme Council after reading the article. The resolution appeared ominous to Delay, who lamented, “Wait untill (sic) the Italian Brothers start looking for more money to carry on their activities.”³²¹ Delay was not the only one to express concern over the potential shockwaves of the Saint Gabriel de Brandon resolution. Reacting to news of the actual resolution sent to him by Supreme Knight John Swift, Luke Hart was surprised by the actual wording of the resolution after having been told by Faguy that all that had been decided at the convention was to strike a committee on the issue.³²²

For the Ordre de Jacques Cartier, meanwhile, the resolution adopted at the convention offered cause for cautious optimism. The Chancellory turned the delay into a chance to try and speed up approval for separation by once again working behind the scenes. They encouraged, for instance, Paul Plante, an OJC member and administrator

³¹⁹ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951, SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Ludger Faguy to Hart, May 26th, 1951.

³²⁰ Press clipping found in KCA, *Canada- Quebec* - SLC-0060-1-002, “Quebec Knights of Colubus Cut ties with Order in the U.S.” by Miriam Chapin- Special to the *Christian Science Monitor*, June 8, 1951.

³²¹ KCA, *Canada- Quebec* - SLC-0060-1-002, John J Delay (4th degree Mass.) to Rev Arthur J. Riley, June 14, 1951.

³²² KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951, SC-5-6-448 Box 242, Hart to Swift, June 20, 1951.

within the life insurance department of the Caisses Desjardins for Quebec, to solicit State Secretary Julien Lavallée to pick up the Knights insurance obligations if they separated. Advising him to do this under the guise of having heard from word of mouth after the convention, the Chancellory again stressed the importance of secrecy and not revealing just how much information they had on the autonomist movement.³²³ Vigeant, meanwhile, was discouraging his readership in *Le Devoir* from further public attacks against the Knights while the committee did its work.³²⁴ As for the Chancellory's link with autonomist leader Fernand Lanouette, Secretary Léopold Allard kept continuous contact with him throughout the fall. The Chancellory was particularly interested in determining which members of the Quebec clergy were supportive of the movement and which needed to be convinced to support the cause, as evidenced by their numerous requests to Lanouette to see if he knew the general disposition of the Quebec clergy on the matter.³²⁵

Gauging clerical support for the autonomist movement was not the only problem the leaders of the OJC in Ottawa faced, however. Indeed, the leaders of the OJC in Ottawa seem to have felt some blindness in the months leading up to the committee report. In efforts to get more information on the progress of the autonomy committee, the CX issued a circular to some of its provincial officers in Quebec to ask them to get

³²³ NAC, *OJC*, Knights of Columbus (en général) 1951-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, Allard à Paul Plante, 26 mai 1951.

³²⁴ See, for example, NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., Pierre Vigeant, 1918-1951, MG28 I98 Vol. 146, Vigeant à Paul-Arthur Fortier, 29 mai, 1951. Fortier had written Vigeant at his *Le Devoir* office to applaud his work against the Knights. Vigeant's reply cautioned him against taking any drastic measures to attack the Knights until the autonomy committee had reported back to the State Executive.

³²⁵ See, for instance, NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Affaires en cours, 1950-1951, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145, Sec adj. du CX à Fernand Lanouette, 12 septembre 1951; Sec adj du Cx à Lanouette, 5 octobre, 1951. Lanouette never offered an answer to these requests, and the disposition of the clergy towards the Knights remained an enigma for the OJC throughout their campaign.

information on the committee's activities.³²⁶ Most telling, perhaps, of the OJC's anxious state in the months leading up to the report is a January 1952 letter to Lanouette explaining their tactics of the previous months, "nous ne voudrions aucunement desservir la cause dont vous vous êtes fait le dynamique pionnier, mais bien au contraire être utiles dans la mesure discrète où nous le pouvons."³²⁷

3.5. The Autonomist Committee Report

On January 28th of 1952, the special committee of the State Council of the Knights of Columbus of Quebec submitted their report to the State Secretary for Quebec on the autonomy issue. The committee was composed of Phillippe Ferland (a Montreal lawyer and leader of the Comité de refrancisation), Albert Boulet (a member of the OJC and secretary for La Solidarité insurance) and Victor Dallaire (a District Deputy for the Knights of Columbus in the Trois-Rivières region).³²⁸ They immediately addressed the vague reference to 'influence' referred to in the Saint-Gabriel resolution of the previous spring:

In certain quarters, unfavourable if not openly hostile to the Knights of Columbus, this was interpreted as conferring on the committee the widest powers, and it was inferred that this committee – which they called the independence committee – was to draw up and sign a severance instrument which would put an end to the relations existing between Knights of Columbus of the province and the authority of the Supreme Council. We feel that such was not the intention of the delegates at St-Gabriel de Brandon, and such is not the meaning of the resolution under which we are commissioned...The very wording [of

³²⁶ NAC, *OJC*, Knights of Columbus (en général) 1951-1952, MG 28 I98, Vol. 144, Circulaire confidentielle adressée à quelques officiers supérieurs, 10 décembre 1951.

³²⁷ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98, Vol. 143, Sec. du CX à Fernand Lanouette, 16 janvier 1952.

³²⁸ "Philippe Ferland," in *L'Encyclopédie de l'histoire du Québec* (online source), <http://www2.marianopolis.edu/quebechistory/encyclopedia/PhilippeFerland.html>; NAC, *OJC*, Knights of Columbus (en général) 1951-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, Sec. adj. du CX à Antoine Tremblay, gérant de la Solidarité, 31 mars 1952; NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Rapport de la visite du 2 novembre, à Trois-Rivières (Tessier and Lefrenière) 20 novembre, 1953.

the resolution] eliminates any notion of independence or complete autonomy which would be tantamount to a break with the Supreme Council.³²⁹

Having thus disposed of the semantic debate over their mandate by siding with a more conservative definition of autonomy, the committee laid out its recommendations on how to gain financial autonomy for the Order in Quebec. The first was to petition the Quebec provincial government for incorporation of the Quebec State Council, under which all local councils would be incorporated as well to allow the State Council and all Quebec councils to own property.³³⁰ Quebec law required associations to incorporate to have title to property or assets, unlike Connecticut law, and therefore the committee recommended incorporation as the first step towards financial autonomy. A second recommendation was to create a permanent secretariat in Quebec City to help coordinate and promote the activities of Quebec councils, in addition to action as liaison with the Supreme Council.³³¹ Finally, they called for the formation of an investment committee that would direct the Supreme Council on how to invest revenues from insurance generated in the province in French-Canadian companies.³³²

Luke Hart's response to the committee's report was unequivocal. In a memorandum on the issue Hart refuted the proposal to incorporate the State Council and the local councils in the province, "Their status is and must remain that of branches only – branches of the Supreme Council. There is no analogy between subordinate councils of

³²⁹ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Misc. material, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951-1954, SC-5-6-450 Box 242, "Text of a report prepared by a special committee of the State Council of the Knights of Columbus of the Province of Quebec and copy of two comparative schedules which form part of the report, as submitted. Jan 28, 1952," 1.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-7.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

³³² *Ibid.*, 9-10.

the Knights of Columbus and subsidiary corporations of great commercial companies.”³³³ As for the proposal to establish a secretariat, Hart saw this as an option which would “impose an expense and burden that would be prohibitive.”³³⁴ Finally, creating a separate investment committee for Quebec-raised insurance funds would weaken the solid reputation and sound investment policies that the Order was known for.³³⁵ While the committee had not advocated any sort of solid separation from New Haven, Hart treated their demands with the same firmness with which he had always applied to any separatist sentiment in the province.

While Hart firmly rejected the committee’s recommendations, supporters of at autonomist movement were not exactly thrilled with its suggestions either. *Le Devoir*, for instance, published an unsigned article in April upon receiving a copy of the report and attacked the timidity of the measures suggested to form an investment committee. In the eyes of the writer (assumedly Pierre Vigeant), simply advising New Haven on how to invest insurance funds was not enough – they needed to keep the funds in Quebec instead of sending them off to the Supreme Council.³³⁶ Vigeant, meanwhile, continued to work with Fernand Lanouette to gain support from various Knights councils to secure approval for the committee’s proposals, in spite of disapproval from the Supreme Council.³³⁷

The OJC leadership put a positive spin on the somewhat milder resolution adopted in 1951 and the committee’s report by calling it an important first step on the

³³³ KCA, *Luke Hart Supreme Knights Papers*, Resolution, Quebec Separationist Movement, undated, SC-1-10-386 Box 589.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Press clipping from *Le Devoir*, 1 avril, 1952 in NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Bulletins à nos officiers dans l’O. 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 145.

³³⁷ Vigeant met with Lanouette in March of 1952 to discuss how to best push the recommendations of the committee through, NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Rapport du Comité de l’Orientation, 2 avril 1952.

road to autonomy for the Quebec Knights, and naturally took much of the credit within their own circles. Indeed, during the OJC Congress of May of 1952, Pierre Vigeant pointed to this first attempt at autonomy as a reason for the OJC to keep up the fight.³³⁸ Clearly hopeful for the possibility of autonomy for the Knights, it was here that Vigeant issued an ultimatum; if the Knights succeeded in achieving autonomy they would be welcomed like all other nationalist organizations. If, however, the Knights failed in their push for autonomy, the OJC would carry on the campaign, “Nous la poursuivrons aussi longtemps que nous n’aurons pas converti chacun des Chevaliers de Colomb qui n’a pas renié sa race...nous la poursuivrons jusqu’à la victoire finale et définitive.”³³⁹

Armed with concrete proposals, some councils of the Knights of Columbus chose to continued to push for autonomy for the Quebec Knights throughout the summer of 1952. Fauteux, writing to Hart in April, warned of more resolutions to come at the State Convention that spring on the issues of establishing a provincial secretariat, an investment committtee and incorporation.³⁴⁰ Hart once again stood his ground, refusing to consider the resolutions, though he did offer to come to the convention to offer his support to Fauteux against any opposition.³⁴¹

Francis Fauteux, meanwhile, faced the unsavoury task of acting as the mediator between an increasingly exasperated State Council, particularly Fontaine, and the stubborn Supreme Council. Fontaine vented to Fauteux that the efforts of the State Council to respond to the various demands of the autonomist councils in a compromising

³³⁸ CRCCF, *OJC*, Congrès général de 1952: organisation, procès-verbaux et allocutions- 1951-1952, C3/8/13, “Allocution de M. Pierre Vigeant,” p. 275.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 276.

³⁴⁰ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1952-1954, SC-5-6-449 Box 242, Fauteux to Hart, April 30, 1952.

³⁴¹ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1952-1954, SC-5-6-449 Box 242, Hart to Fauteux, May 2, 1952.

manner with the Supreme Council had earned nothing but the scorn of the nationalists in the province. "We are all tired of this situation," he lamented, "You know that this change [adopting the committee's recommendations] is asked by the great majority of our officers and members in the province."³⁴² As a matter of course, Fauteux forwarded Fontaine's frustrations to the Supreme Council, which only further angered Hart, "I think the time has arrived where we should let the State Deputy of Quebec understand we are not going to be intimidated by his threat or his swagger."³⁴³

Hart clearly blamed Fontaine for the build-up of tension between the Supreme Council and State Council of Quebec and had tired of it. Just how he was going to "let him understand" however, remained undefined, and the affair lay dormant in terms of correspondence for the rest of the summer. In the future, however, Hart would choose to bypass Fontaine in his dealings with the State Council, preferring to deal with more "sympathetic" men like Eugène Marquis.

3.6. Taking the moderate road: the Incorporation Bill

In September, after having firmly opposed financial autonomy and establishing a provincial secretariat for the Order in Quebec, the Supreme Council was hit with the stunning news that the Quebec State Council was seeking incorporation under Quebec law.³⁴⁴ Hart, upon receiving the news, was livid with the gall of the Quebec State Council after the Supreme Council had clearly opposed all the resolutions and proposals put forward by the special committee. "I am amazed at this positive act of insubordination by

³⁴² KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1952-1954, SC-5-6-449 Box 242, Fontaine to Fauteux, July 14, 1952.

³⁴³ KCA, *Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1952-1954, SC-5-6-449 Box 242, Hart to Joseph Lamb (Supreme Secretary), July 21, 1952.

³⁴⁴ The petition for a provincial charter was forwarded to New Haven by Francis Fauteux, KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1953, SC-5-6-451, Box 242, Fauteux to Hart, September 23, 1952.

Fontaine, Lavallee and Monet in particular," Hart wrote to Fauteux, "It is the most brazen act of effrontery and contempt that has ever come to my notice...if a satisfactory explanation is not made by Fontaine and the others they should be suspended and charges preferred against them."³⁴⁵

In a more official capacity, Supreme Secretary John Swift wrote Fontaine to explain that the petition made to the provincial legislature for incorporation had "all the appearances of being an act of insubordination" and ordered him to withdraw it.³⁴⁶ In spite of Fauteux's pleas for patience before taking action against the Quebec executive, Hart dug in his heels, insisting that "their attitude is insubordinate and contemptuous. I think it is best to insist upon their compliance with the law and I hope you will not encourage them to believe that we are not going to require this."³⁴⁷

T.-A. Fontaine, meanwhile, expressed the surprise of the State Council at the severity of the Supreme Council's reply to news of the petition.³⁴⁸ Fontaine took a conciliatory approach, offering that the petition for legislation was still in the discussion stage before officially being presented in parliament and that they would keep the Supreme Council posted on its progress.³⁴⁹ In reality, however, Fontaine's actions did not completely follow through on the promised communication with New Haven. When Supreme Secretary John Swift wrote Fontaine to ask for an update on the situation on the petition in time for the Supreme Directors meeting in mid-October, reminding him at the same

³⁴⁵ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1953, SC-5-6-451 Box 242, Hart to Fauteux, Sept. 27, 1952.

³⁴⁶ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1953, SC-5-6-451 Box 242, Swift to Fontaine, Sept 29, 1952.

³⁴⁷ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1953, SC-5-6-451 Box 242, Fauteux to Hart, Sept 30, 1952; Hart to Fauteux, Oct 7, 1952.

³⁴⁸ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1953, SC-5-6-451 Box 242, Fontaine to Swift, Oct. 6 1952, re: Plan of incorporation..

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

time that the Supreme Council had yet to approve the proposed bill, Fontaine conveniently changed the date of the next State Council meeting – to the day of the Supreme Directors meeting.³⁵⁰ A report on any changes was thus almost impossible. Whether or not this was done deliberately by the Quebec leadership is unknown, but the timing certainly appeared suspect and only further frustrated Hart.

While the Knights of Columbus sorted through the recommendations of the special committee and eventually pushed for a piece of modest legislation, the OJC leadership continued to push for more than just incorporation for the Quebec Knights. Their disappointment with the failure of the Knights' State Congress in Montreal earlier that spring to adopt a strong autonomist stance resulted in a bitterly worded circular to all regional officers in June:

La décision du congrès de Montréal se résume ainsi: les Knights of Columbus du Québec veulent rester sous la tutelle de New-Haven....La triste victoire des Knights 'coloniaux' sur les Knights 'autonomistes' doit plus que jamais convaincre ces derniers de la nécessité de briser tous les liens avec New-Haven.³⁵¹

Pierre Vigeant was particularly bitter with the failure to gain a more aggressive autonomist resolution at the Montreal Convention. In his update on Orientation Committee activities in September, Vigeant lashed out at the Knights as symbolic of the constant frustration Irish Catholics posed to French-Canadians:

Nous n'avons jamais voulu et nous ne voulons pas d'une guerre à nos coreligionnaires irlandais. Nous ne pouvons pas oublier cependant que l'histoire des Canadiens français prouve qu'ils n'ont jamais cessé d'être nos pires adversaires, qu'ils sont accapareurs et influents jusqu'au sein de la hiérarchie suprême.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1953, SC-5-6-451 Box 242, Swift to Fontaine, October 10, 1952; Hart to Swift, Oct 11, 1952.

³⁵¹ NAC, *OJC*, Congrès provincial, 25 mai 1952 à Montréal, MG28 I98 Vol. 145, Aux C.R. re: Knights of Columbus, 27 juin 1952.

³⁵² CRCCF, *OJC*, Assemblée annuelle de la Chancellerie, 27 et 28 septembre 1952, C3/10/1, "Orientation," 15-16.

Upon hearing of the news of the legislative petition in September, the Chancellory gloomily considered its options. For the most part, the status quo of encouraging autonomist councils to keep fighting was adopted, though fatigue appeared to be growing. Jean-Jacques Tremblay, when asked if the UMFVA - an organisation tailor made to oppose any efforts by the Knights of Columbus to present themselves as a French-Canadian insurance association – would be willing to lead the opposition to the proposed bill, meekly offered that the Union would likely say no, as it had other pressing concerns.³⁵³

Thus, the OJC once more took it upon itself to try to divert attention from the Knights by providing a new alternative. In November of 1952 the Chancellory recalled its insurance committee which had been disbanded during the war to once again look at possible insurance options for OJC members. The committee members were almost all employed in the insurance field for firms such as the Artisans, Les Prévoyants, La Laurentienne, La Sauvegarde, l'Union Saint-Joseph and many others.³⁵⁴ Meeting with the overall goal of finding an insurance policy “qui aurait pour but de créer un lien entre l'O. et les membres, de les conserver davantage à l'O. et d'apporter en même temps des revenus,” the committee immediately rejected the idea of using an existing society to provide insurance.³⁵⁵ This was done because of concerns that it would compromise the OJC's secrecy or that it would be much simpler for members to sign up with these

³⁵³ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Réunion de la CX, 27-28 septembre 1952. These concerns focused mostly on the reform of provincial laws governing mutual aid societies.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ NAC, *OJC*, Comité de l'Assurance, MG28 I98 Vol. 31, “Rapport- Comité de l'Assurance, 5 novembre, 1952.”

societies themselves, without the OJC as a sort of middle man. The committee also rejected creating a new insurance society for the Order, arguing its efforts were better spent fighting the incursion of foreign societies like the Knights of Columbus into Quebec as opposed to building an insurance society from the ground up.³⁵⁶ Unwilling to create a new player in the insurance field that may have competed with their own firms, the OJC was yet again forced to abandon the idea of developing its own insurance.

The Chancellory was thus forced to wait for the rejection or approval of the proposed incorporation legislation for the Knights in Quebec. While they sought to continue a whispering campaign against the proposed bill, keeping in constant contact with representatives of various autonomist councils of the Knights, by October even Fernand Lanouette admitted to Vigeant that Premier Maurice Duplessis would likely approve the Bill, just to spite the official opposition led by Fauteux and the Supreme Council. As Vigeant recalled of their meeting, Lanouette “attend également à ce que Duplessis fasse voter la mesure parce qu’il a déjà été refusé par les Chevaliers de Colomb de Trois-Rivières et qu’il ne l’a pas oublié.”³⁵⁷ While the OJC could continue to push its campaign of bad press against the Knights, or consider new ways of strengthening its own position as a Catholic association, the ball was largely in the hands of the State and Supreme Councils in terms of the Knights of Columbus’ evolution in the province.

Relations between the Quebec State Council and the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus, however, were at a definite low point. After conveniently moving the date of the next executive meeting to coincide with the next meeting of the Supreme

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ NAC, *OJC*, Knights of Columbus (en général) 1951-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, Vigeant à Léopold Allard, 20 octobre 1952. This assertion about Duplessis’ possible bitterness towards the Knights of Columbus is difficult to document, though Lanouette, being from the Trois-Rivières region, may have been privy to rumours or inside information about the Premier’s hometown life.

Directors (thereby delaying a report to the Supreme Council on the incorporation issue), both Hart and Fontaine engaged in a tense standoff over who would be the first to reach out to offer compromise. The meeting, in spite of debate over who invited whom, did take place on November 23, 1952. State Advocate Marquis met with Hart and other officers of the Supreme Council at the Hotel Statler in New York City to discuss the incorporation bill. Eugène Marquis spoke on behalf of the Quebec delegation. Starting off with a restatement of the linguistic make up of most councils (largely francophone) in the province, Marquis then moved into a more contextual explanation for the recent demands of the Quebec members:

There is in our Province, a great nationalistic sentiment which has continuously increased during the last quarter of a century. Our fellow countrymen claim that they have the right to be recognized as French-Canadians all over the world. This general trend of opinion has been introduced in the life of our Columbian state.³⁵⁸

Marquis argued that the Quebec leadership had been under growing pressure from public campaigns against the Knights from nationalist circles as well as the changing "conception of autonomy of our compatriots."³⁵⁹ Closing with a call for compromise, Marquis then opened the floor to Hart. Hart reiterated his stand on the autonomy issue, refusing to allow for any siphoning of power away from New Haven. If the Order were to divide itself into "localized or racial groups," it would weaken the Order, for its strength was based on its size and central governing body, he argued.³⁶⁰ After some lengthy discussion, however, he did finally concede that councils should be allowed to seek legal recognition of their right to own property, while still rejecting the idea of outright

³⁵⁸ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Misc. material, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1954, SC-5-6-452 Box 242, "Minutes of the Conference of Supreme Officers and Representatives of Quebec State Council, Hotel Statler, New York, Nov. 23, 1952."

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

incorporation.³⁶¹ This nuance would prove important, for Hart envisioned the compromise as one where the local councils would simply upgrade that aspect of their operations, and none other, while the State Council interpreted this as a green light to carry on with the incorporation act, which, in their minds, was the natural solution to gaining judicial recognition of the councils.³⁶²

While the disagreement over the intent of the compromise reached at New York culminated in a frustrated Hart musing openly about possibly trying to block the bill, Francis Fauteux insisted the bill did not violate the terms laid out in New York to allow the councils to have legal status to represent themselves as legal entities. It allowed local councils to buy, own and possess property, to appear in court and as plaintiff and defendant and to be known officially as either the Knights of Columbus or the Chevaliers de Colomb.³⁶³ While Fauteux acknowledged that the bill itself might have made both sides of the debate unhappy with either the degree of autonomy given to the councils, or the lack thereof, he argued again that the bill was the only way to check the autonomist movement which had been steadily gaining steam in the province.³⁶⁴

In a last bout of frustration, Hart sent a final statement of his position to Fauteux at the end of March. Executing a bit of historical revisionism, Hart denied ever having given any credence to the strength of the autonomist movement:

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Even Francis Fauteux wrote to Hart about the passing of the incorporation law in March of 1953, saying that it broke no rules of the Order, and that the bill had disappointed those who would now see that "this separatist movement has been checked," KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1953, SC-5-6-451 Box 242, Fauteux to Hart, March 2, 1953. Hart continued to insist that incorporation was unnecessary even after the bill's passing in 1953, KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1953, SC-5-6-451 Box 242, Hart to Fauteux, March 4, 1953.

³⁶³ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1953, SC-5-6-451 Box 242, Fauteux to Hart, March 18, 1953.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

The Separatist movement was annoying, but we did not regard it as a serious threat against the Order. At all times it was stated that those who desired an autonomous fraternal benefit society organized under the laws of Quebec they were privileged to take whatever steps they might desire in that regard, but that they could not take over the Knights of Columbus scarcely needed to be stated.³⁶⁵

Furthermore, Hart argued that the entire question of the official name by which the Knights should be known in Quebec was almost ridiculous, and that the inclusion of the French name for the Knights in the incorporation bill “appeared to me to be wholly unnecessary.”³⁶⁶ Faced with the *fait accompli* of the legislation, Hart continued to dig in his heels against what he saw as a threat to the Order’s unity and strength.

News of the bill passing through the Quebec assembly also disheartened the leaders of the OJC, though for understandably different reasons. By the spring of 1953 Pierre Vigeant had all but given up on the hope of pushing for separation from within the Knights executive as a strategy to remove the Knights’ foreign leadership in New Haven. In a report to the Administration Committee in April of 1953, Vigeant recommended splitting ties with the autonomists :

Nous devrions continuer la campagne d’éducation et de propagande indépendamment du mouvement autonomiste qui, après avoir frôlé la victoire, a à toutes fins pratiques subi l’échec. Il faut démontrer qu’on ne peut rien attendre de ce groupement qui s’est laissé humilié au possible par New-Haven et qui continue de lui payer rente.³⁶⁷

Vigeant had grown disheartened with the autonomist option for the Knights of Columbus. As will be shown in the next chapter, however, the Order – and Vigeant in particular- had not given up the fight against the Knights of Columbus. Vigeant and the other leaders of the OJC in Ottawa recognized the defeat of the autonomist movement

³⁶⁵ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec Incorporation, 1952-1953, SC-5-6-451 Box 242, Hart to Fauteux, March 24, 1953.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ NAC, OJC, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Réunion du CA, 10 avril, 1953.

and began to look for new ways of countering the influence of groups like the Knights in Quebec. The new approach, unsurprisingly, came from the Bishop of Trois-Rivières, who suggested that the Order revive the Chevaliers de Carillon, a fraternal association in Quebec which had died out in the mid-1930s. As we shall see in the next chapter, creating a new organization to compete with the Knights of Columbus would be the last effort by the Ordre de Jacques Cartier to weaken the strength of the Knights of Columbus in Quebec.³⁶⁸

3.7. Conclusion

While the incorporation bill marked the final salvo in the long saga of the autonomist resolutions pushed by the Trois-Rivières councils (correspondence on the issue came to a virtual standstill in the summer of 1953), the divisions that were either created or deepened within the Knights of Columbus by debate over the issue would taint relations between the State and Supreme Councils for years to come. Luke Hart, deeply suspicious of the reliability and loyalty of men like Fontaine, by-passed them in favour of 'loyal' members of the Quebec leadership like Eugène Marquis and Francis Fauteux as his liaisons in Quebec. Even loyal men like Fauteux, however, were tested by the autonomist question, pushing for a middle ground that often proved to be unsatisfactory to Hart.

The debate over the autonomy of the Quebec State Council, however, reveals that post-war debates over nationalism and an increasing focus on Quebec as a state (the provincial government) and as a region that should be used more aggressively to protect the French-Canadian collectivity had filtered into an area which was a key proponent of

³⁶⁸ NAC, OJC, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Réunion du CA, 1 septembre 1953.

the more traditional and pan-Canadian version of French-Canadian nationalism – the Catholic Church and Catholic lay associations like the Knights of Columbus.

For the leaders of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier, the period was also one of adjusting to a new intellectual and social climate. Prominent Quebec members, like Fernand Lanouette, and Pierre Vigeant, took the old battle against the Knights of Columbus to a new level, however, moving beyond the animosity that lingered after the Regulation XVII battles. Focusing their attention on the autonomy of the Knights of Columbus in Quebec reflected the OJC's adaptation of an old campaign to a new context. While ultimately the inspiration for fighting the Knights remained influenced by the leaders' experiences in Ontario or, in the case of Vigeant, growing up in the United States, the OJC saw Quebec's autonomy as crucial to eliminating the assimilating influence of an American-led organization in the rest of the country. Though they encountered unexpected reluctance to pick up the campaign from their own members in the province, they ultimately latched onto the support of the autonomist movement in Trois-Rivières which, while linked to the OJC, was largely the result of the support of Bishop Pelletier and a general wave of discontent within the region's Knights of Columbus councils.

The failure of the autonomist push to get complete autonomy for the Quebec Knights reveals the divide within the Quebec Knights of Columbus leadership over just how far to push the autonomist case. Some, like Francis Fauteux, preferred to push for more traditional demands, attempting a moderate approach in proposing more visible accommodation to the State Council's linguistic demands, but by 1952 the views of men like Fontaine and Massicotte – that only complete autonomy would fulfill the patriotic

and cultural needs of French-Canadian Knights - had developed strong bases of support. Even the compromise solution of incorporating local councils pleased almost no one, and would set the stage for alternative approaches for the rest of the decade from both within the Knights and from the Ordre de Jacques Cartier.

Chapter 4

Fighting the tide: the OJC's last push against the Knights of Columbus

Faced with the success of the provincial bill incorporating the Knights of Columbus in Quebec, the leaders of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier sat at a crossroads in their fight against their old foes. Should they continue to concentrate their efforts on securing a complete separation of the Quebec Knights of Columbus from the Supreme Council in New Haven, or abandon the strategy in favour of focusing on creating a new, public fraternity that could offer competition against the Knights?³⁶⁹ Or should they opt instead to convert the OJC into a more public association so that they could receive public credit for the work they had been doing behind the scenes all these years? For the Knights of Columbus, meanwhile, issues of membership strength and leadership continued to plague relations between the Quebec State Executive and the Supreme Council.

This chapter will focus on the increasingly divergent paths of both the Knights of Columbus and the Ordre de Jacques Cartier after the tense debates over autonomy in the early 1950s. Both associations faced significant challenges leading up to the 1960s, and they responded with varying success. For the Chancellors of the OJC, the Knights of Columbus continued to be a preoccupation, though the increasing demands of Quebec (particularly Montreal) members to have more sway within the society hampered their attempts to mobilize against the Knights. The Chancellors chose to focus their energy on creating a new association to compete with the Knights, though the debate over the issue, and the formation of the new association – the Chevaliers de Champlain- exposed some

³⁶⁹ Discussion on the issue can be seen in the meeting minutes of the Administration Council of the Order, NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Réunion du CA, 1 septembre, 1953.

of the increasing tensions within the Order over its future direction and, more importantly, of a changing dynamic within Quebec Catholic lay movements as the heated nationalist debates within lay movements began to dissipate, shifting to more political and secular arenas.

For the Quebec Knights of Columbus, meanwhile, the incorporation of local councils under Quebec law seemed to have quelled the autonomy issue. The rancour and tension raised by the question, however, lingered and manifested itself in tense discussions between the Quebec State Council and the Supreme Council. Supreme Knight Luke Hart, hardened by his dealings with the Quebec autonomists, had made solidifying the Order's membership and insurance numbers a number one priority, and Quebec became one of the most troublesome jurisdictions in the regard as they continue to often lose more members than they gained. While autonomists within the Order continued to push for further transfers of power from the Supreme Council, the focus shifted to the internal politics of the Order. With his powers of Supreme Knight, Hart had more influence in deciding just who to deal with in the Quebec State Council, and he manoeuvred to eliminate some of the stubborn elements of the executive after the incorporation bill was passed, particularly men like T.-A. Fontaine and Auguste Massicotte. Working in conjunction with a break-away movement within the Order known as the Reveil Colombien, Hart effectively forced the Quebec State Council into electing a new executive, one much more sympathetic to New Haven.

4.1. Creating competition: the OJC and the creation of a new Catholic lay association

In preparing the campaign against the Knights of Columbus in 1948, the OJC's Orientation Committee, under the guidance of Pierre Vigeant, had made provisions for

creating a copy-cat association to compete directly and openly with the Knights of Columbus if their campaign to separate the Knights from New Haven failed.³⁷⁰ Indeed, as discussed previously, a special committee on the issue of competing with the Knights of Columbus struck in October of 1948 chose creating a similar association as the best option for combating the Knights.³⁷¹ The rise of the autonomist movement in Trois-Rivières in 1951, however, had delayed those plans. Their initial proposal was to create an association with the same features (insurance, social activities and rituals) as the Knights of Columbus, but to be controlled by the CX. This new association, tentatively intended to be a revived Chevaliers de Carillon, would compete with the Knights using many of the same tools that the CX felt made the Knights popular:

Il va sans dire que la Chevalerie "X" battrait la grosse caisse de la publicité sur ses activités sociales, comme font les K. of C., mais comme eux également, la mystique, l'initiation et les initiatives ou projets internes seraient un secret pour les non-membres.³⁷²

Even if the Chevaliers de Carillon had been created independently from the OJC, contact had been established between some of the former leaders of the Montreal-based leadership and the Chancellory of the OJC. Léopold Allard, for instance, met with one of the former leaders of the movement, Felix Surprenant, to discuss reviving the Order in November of 1948.³⁷³ Allard came away from these discussions convinced that the OJC should revive the now-defunct association. Aside from cleverly using the same acronym (C. de C.) as the Knights, it would present, he argued, a "meilleur concurrente que notre

³⁷⁰ NAC, *OJC*, Directeur de l'Orientation, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 73, Projet de campagne contre sociétés neutres et sociétés étrangères, 2 avril, 1948.

³⁷¹ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Carillon 1931-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 141, Moyen positif de concurrencer les K. of C., 23-24 Octobre, 1948.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Carillon 1931-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 141, Rapport sur les Chevaliers de Carillon, 10 novembre, 1948.

projet oligarchique, toujours moins sympathique à la masse.”³⁷⁴ Reviving an association would also help camouflage the role the OJC was playing in combating the Knights:

Nos adversaires ne nous verraient pas venir, puisqu'il s'agit d'une société, vieille de 20 ans qui a failli, ils ne croiraient pas le mouvement dangereux pour eux, ce qui assurerait l'expansion des C. de C. sans l'opposition naturelle que susciterait la naissance d'un nouvel organisme.³⁷⁵

Persuaded by Allard's arguments, the Chancellory approved the idea and adopted a resolution to use the “Chevaliers de Carillon à titre d'organisme susceptible de satisfaire aux aspirations de la masse canadienne-française et pour répondre aux fins visée par la CX.”³⁷⁶

The idea quickly lost momentum, however, once the responsibility for carrying out the project was transferred to the OJC's Conseil Provincial du Québec, based in Montreal, in January of 1949.³⁷⁷ After a delay of a few months, the Provincial Council balked at the task of reviving the Chevaliers de Carillon. In light of the Carillon's failure in the 1930s to establish firm roots, particularly in Montreal, the Council felt that it was not worth their efforts to revive the association:

Franchement, recommencer à zéro n'intéresse personne. Ça demande beaucoup trop de temps, de sacrifices financiers et de dévouement désintéressé. Et les chances de succès restent tellement lointaine. Il serait plus facile, croyons-nous, d'atteindre le but visé en nous servant d'une société déjà existante dont la réputation et l'avoir financier constituent des éléments sérieux de succès relativement rapides.³⁷⁸

This refusal by the Montreal members to carry out what they felt was a hopeless task effectively killed the efforts to revive the Chevaliers de Carillon, revealing continuing

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Resolution referred to in NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Carillon 1931-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 141, Commission des Chevaliers de Carillon, 11 janvier, 1949.

³⁷⁷ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Carillon 1931-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 141, Sec. du Cx au Sec. du CPQ, 31 janvier, 1949.

³⁷⁸ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Carillon 1931-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 141, Comité Exécutif du CPQ au Sec. du CX, 26 septembre, 1949

tension between the Chancellory in Ottawa and an increasingly strong faction in Montreal. With the rise of the autonomist movement within the Knights of Columbus, the idea of creating a similar association was put on the backburner, though the CX did encourage the autonomists in Trois-Rivières to change the name of a separated branch of the Knights of Columbus to the Chevaliers de Champlain.³⁷⁹

The rejection of the Conseil Provincial du Québec of the project to recreate the Chevaliers de Carillon was soon forgotten as the Chancellory focused its attention on the autonomist movement in the Knights of Columbus. After the failure of the autonomist movement, however, the option of creating a parallel association returned to the foreground in the inner circles of the OJC. This time, however, many of their former stalwart supporters were more cautious in their support for any new initiative, given the failure of the autonomist movement. The Chancellory, likely aware of previous rejection of the idea of creating a new association in Montreal, took the idea to the hub of the autonomist movement in the region of Trois-Rivières. When members of the Chancellory approached Bishop Pelletier in the fall of 1953, however, he warily supported the idea of creating a new association, to be known as the Chevaliers de Champlain. Pelletier was firm in his conviction that "Je ne peux pas me permettre un échec," in regards to the Knights.³⁸⁰ Concerned with his own credibility amongst his flock in the Trois-Rivières region, Pelletier told the OJC "il ne voudrait rien encourager qui ne serait appuyé par la CX et l'Ordre. À son avis il faut être assuré du succès."³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Projet Lanouette, 1951-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 146, Sec. de la CX à Pellerin, 12 février, 1951.

³⁸⁰ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Rapport de la visite du 2 novembre, à Trois-Rivières (Tessier and Lefrenière) 20 novembre, 1953.

³⁸¹ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Carillon 1931-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 141, Rapport de l'Organisateur Général au CX, 18 septembre, 1953.

The Chancellory in Ottawa thus took the advice of the bishop and decided to create their own association to compete directly with the Knights in Quebec. The idea was not without its detractors, however. In September of 1953, for instance, the Chancellory brought the topic up in a meeting in Ottawa, raising some heated debate. Long-time Chancellor Émile Lavoie voiced the opinion of those opposed to creating an entirely new association:

La fondation d'un autre organisme entraînerait nécessairement pour l'Ordre des pertes financières et limiterait encore le champ de son recrutement... l'idée première des fondateurs était que l'Ordre remplacerait un jour les Knights. Le temps est peut-être venu de changer notre formule pour faire de l'Ordre une association semi-secrète.³⁸²

The concept of opening up the OJC and making some of its activities public to be able to garner more credit was not a new one. Indeed, within the campaign against the Knights of Columbus, the proposal was debated on a number of occasions. In 1948, for instance, when planning the campaign, making the OJC more visible was an alternative the Chancellors considered.³⁸³ The concept was rejected because “c'est le secret qui a fait la force de l'Ordre et que les petits centres de l'Ontario et du Québec souffriraient beaucoup de l'extériorisation qui mettrait nos frères au blanc.”³⁸⁴ The fear of compromising the strength of the OJC in Ontario and the rural regions of Quebec thus trumped the possibility of increasing their strength in urban centres in Quebec.

Later, after hearing Émile Lavoie's suggestion in 1953 that the OJC should compete openly with the Knights, the organizing committee rejected the idea for a number of reasons. First, they argued that the OJC was not designed to be able to

³⁸² NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Réunion de la CX, 26-27 septembre, 1953.

³⁸³ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Carillon 1931-1954, MG28 I98 Vol. 141, Moyen positif de concurrencer les K. of C., 23-24 Octobre, 1948.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

compete directly with the Knights. While the Knights were largely an economic and religious association, the OJC was first and foremost a nationalist body.³⁸⁵ Second, the calibre of their members would suffer as they would be inundated by “des chercheurs de gloriole, d'honneur et de décoration,” who would not be able to work objectively for the French-Canadian cause. Finally, the effectiveness of their campaigns, which worked to create the illusion of a mass wave of support behind an issue, would be compromised by the public knowledge that it was just one association working towards a certain goal.³⁸⁶ Using the OJC directly against the Knights was thus not an option the Chancellory was willing to consider, in spite of some founding members' claims that it was precisely for that purpose (competing against the Knights) that they had been created.

After the bill incorporating the Knights of Columbus passed through the Quebec legislature, the OJC finally kicked its plan to create a new association into high gear. Choosing the Trois-Rivières region to be the seedbed of the new association, the CX wrote to Bishop Pelletier to explain that they were now committed to supporting and creating a new association in “le district colombien le plus autonomiste.”³⁸⁷ Then, having previously reached an agreement with Fernand Lanouette to secure his support for the new association, the Chancellory informed Lanouette that the new society would be known as the Chevaliers de Champlain.³⁸⁸ By the spring of 1955, the Chancellory had coordinated meetings between members of the OJC, such as Roméo Roy of Longueil, who had supported the idea of creating a new association, and members in Trois-Rivières

³⁸⁵ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Réunion du CA, 6 novembre, 1953.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Sec. de la CX à Mgr. Georges-Léon Pelletier, 18 octobre, 1954

³⁸⁸ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1955-1957, MG28 I98 Vol. 141, Allard à Lanouette, 25 novembre, 1954.

to start working on the new society.³⁸⁹ The catalyst to move from the idea to action stage came, however, after the Quebec Knights of Columbus provincial congress of May, 1955, when a member of the OJC who had been in attendance predicted that the low morale he perceived amongst the Knights made the time ripe to set the wheels in motion:

Ces trois jours nous auront au moins convaincu qu'une organisation qui serait mise sur pied au courant de l'été, pourrait dès le prochain congrès drainer un très grand nombre des 45 000 membres associés soit à une séparation, soit dans un mouvement nouveau mais identique.³⁹⁰

After such promising news, Pierre Vigeant set to work developing a tentative plan for the creation of the Chevaliers de Champlain. Using members of the OJC to secure a charter and form the first few councils, Vigeant envisioned that eventually they could recruit some of the most prominent separatist Knights to take over the new society. The OJC would then only have to make suggestions about its orientation via a few members planted in the upper echelons of the society.³⁹¹

True to form, the Chancellory attempted as much as possible to use their veteran militants from the autonomist campaign in Trois-Rivières as well as loyal members in Longueuil to help create the new Knighthood. This time, they avoided the risk of a rejection by Montreal members in the critical early stages by depending on these members.³⁹² By this time, however, some of these reliable sources were beginning to tire of the campaign against the Knights. Jean Pellerin, for instance, when asked to draft the ritual for the new Order using the Knights of Columbus' own rituals, refused to

³⁸⁹ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C., en général 1935, 1952-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 143, Sec. de la CX à Fernand Lanouette, 5 avril, 1955..

³⁹⁰ NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Congrès Provincial, 1955 et 1956, MG28 I98 Vol. 145, Jean Leclerc, O.R. du CR 22 au Sec. de la CX, le 23 mai, 1955.

³⁹¹ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1955-1957, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Entrevue avec le Grand Chancelier Pierre Vigeant, 8 juin, 1955.

³⁹² Montreal members of the OJC appeared to be silent on the issue as the Chancellory worked to create the Chevaliers de Champlain.

cooperate. Writing to Léopold Allard in August of 1955, Pellerin's frustration is plain to see. "Je ne vois pas tellement l'utilité d'une autre association d'imbéciles m'as-tu-vu," he wrote. Anyone who remained in the Knights after all the negative campaigning against them "n'ont décidément plus d'os. Nous perdons énormément de temps à improviser des cadres pour en recueillir les grenailles."³⁹³ Pellerin's frustration with the idea of a new society tapped into a potential weakness of the Order – being over-extended and creating too many satellite associations that eventually flooded the intellectual and national arena:

Nous avons trop de sociétés termites et pas assez de corporations influentes ayant pignon sur rue et jouissant de la considération du peuple...Je ne crois plus aux mouvements de masse et j'estime que nous sommes parvenus à un point de saturation en ce qui concerne la multiplicité des sociétés censées nous unir. Les associations nous éparpillent mais ne nous unissent pas.³⁹⁴

In spite of Pellerin's frustrations, the OJC ploughed ahead with its preparations of the new society, relying mostly on Roméo Roy and his OJC colleagues in the Longueuil region to draft the new society's constitution and come up with a logo and motto. Here the OJC had to provide some guidance, for Roy wanted to focus the new society on Quebec symbols, such as adopting the motto "Je me souviens" for the new Order. In an indication of the Chancellory's continued belief in a French-Canada larger than Quebec, they advised Roy that they intended the new Order to eventually extend across all of French North America, even if they would have Quebec as their main base of operations.³⁹⁵ Thus they ended up adopting the motto "Pour bâtir un peuple meilleur" as a slogan for the Order.³⁹⁶ The rituals, developed by Father Laurent Tremblay from

³⁹³ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1955-1957, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Pellerin au Séc. de la CX, 3 août, 1955.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1955-1957, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Sec. de la CX à Roméo Roy, 26 janvier, 1956.

³⁹⁶ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1955-1957, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Lettre patentes constituant en corporation les Chevaliers de Champlain, 18 juin, 1956.

Montreal, were based almost completely on the rituals of the Knights of Columbus, replacing Columbus with Champlain as the patron of the Order.³⁹⁷ Following Vigeant's plan, a group of OJC members from Longueuil secured a provincial Charter for the Chevaliers de Champlain in June of 1956.³⁹⁸ Vigeant followed up the creation of the new Order with an editorial in *Le Devoir* once again condemning foreign societies, claiming that joining them revealed a deep inferiority complex that was alarming within French-Canadian life.³⁹⁹

The first meeting of the newly-minted Chevaliers de Champlain certainly appeared to possess the will to compete directly with the Knights of Columbus. At the beginning of the meeting, the charter members of the Order (all OJC members) quickly stepped down to open the floor to elections for a Board of Directors. Included in the board were the mayor of Granby, Horace Boivin, as well as two of the men who had been involved with the committee on autonomy for the Knights of Columbus, Victor Dallaire and Philippe Ferland.⁴⁰⁰ A few members of the OJC remained on the Board, however, as a means of relaying information back to the Chancellory.⁴⁰¹ OJC Secretary Léopold Allard attended the meeting as an observer and wrote a glowing review of the subtle manoeuvring of the OJC's members, "ils se comportaient comme de véritables

³⁹⁷ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1955-1957, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Sec. de la CX au Père Laurent Tremblay, o.m.i. 7 mai, 1956.

³⁹⁸ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1955-1957, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Lettre patentes constituant en corporation les Chevaliers de Champlain, 18 juin, 1956.

³⁹⁹ *Le Devoir*, 26 juillet, 1956, clipping found in NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1959-1961, MG28 I98 Vol. 142.

⁴⁰⁰ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1956, MG28 I98, Vol. 142 Compte rendu de la première réunion des directeurs provisoires des Chevaliers de Champlain, 10 juillet, 1956.

⁴⁰¹ Namely, J-Émile Barrette and Renaud Chapedelaine, *Ibid.*

commandeurs de notre Ordre: travailler dans le secret puis se retirer au moment stratégique pour laisser récolter les autres au grand jour.”⁴⁰²

4.2. ‘Pour ‘ceux qui doivent traverser la rue’ : recruitment for the Chevaliers de Champlain

Almost from the outset, just who would be invited to join the Chevaliers de Champlain was a point of discussion for those behind the project. As noted earlier, Jean Pellerin in Trois-Rivières had expressed his frustration with what he felt was a saturation of fraternal and lay associations in Quebec. In his mind, what was needed was a way to link these organizations, he argued, not to create even more of them.⁴⁰³ Pellerin’s views, however, were not echoed amongst those in the Chancellory and thus the project forged ahead. The goal of replacing the Knights of Columbus made it crucial that the new society not be seen as an elite club by the wider public. Other members, however, who continued in positions of power within the new association differed with the OJC on this tactic. Here, the case of Dr. J.-Émile Barrette is particularly revealing of the nature of the debate. Barrette, who remained on the Board of Directors after the association’s first meetings in 1956, had begun to recruit members of the OJC and continuously pushed the argument that the Directors should be seeking to recruit francophone elites. This, according to OJC secretary Allard was causing delays in the new association getting itself off the ground.⁴⁰⁴

Though Barrette eventually bowed to the authority of the OJC, there were others that needed convincing that the Chevaliers de Champlain sought to recruit outside the

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1955-1957, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Pellerin au Séc. de la CX, 3 août, 1955.

⁴⁰⁴ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1955-1957, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Rapport de Missions. Sec. de la CX, le 4 juin, 1957.

traditional spheres occupied by other organizations.⁴⁰⁵ After having disciplined renegade members of the OJC within the Board of the Directors of the Champlains, Allard also met with SSJB members of the OJC to clarify that the new Order “n'est pas pour nos gens mais bien pour 'ceux qui doivent traverser la rue'.”⁴⁰⁶ Who, then, were they trying to encourage to “cross the street”? For the most part, members of the Knights of Columbus, and all those who, up to that point, had not seen fit to join associations like the Saint-Jean-Baptiste or other nationalist groups. As eventual Deputy Governor Mario Dumesnil put it during a speech in Rimouski, “par masse, nous entendons là l'ensemble de tous ceux qui croient dans la destinée mystérieuse mais certaine de notre peuple.”⁴⁰⁷ The “masses” were thus defined as all nationalists, rather than all Catholic men.

This emphasis on catching all nationalist French-Canadians who had been led astray into foreign societies revealed itself in the Chevaliers de Champlain's campaign in the summer and fall of 1957 to create new councils for the Order and gain some media attention. The message of offering competition to the Knights of Columbus was muted, however, by more general calls to nationalist solidarity amongst French-Canadian Catholics. At a gathering to celebrate an initiation of new members in Montreal, local governor, and former Knight of Columbus, Philippe Ferland sent out a message to his former colleagues in the Quebec Knights of Columbus:

Nous pouvons faire appel au patriotisme des Chevaliers de Colomb pour qu'ils s'engagent comme groupe et à titre de Canadiens français dans la croisade de solidarité économique. Nous n'avons pas à violenter leur décision, mais rien ne s'oppose à ce qu'un Chevalier de

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1957-1963, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Conférence donnée à Rimouski le 7 juin, 1959 par Mario Dumesnil, Gouverneur-Adjoint.

Colomb viennent s'inscrire sous la bannière de l'Ordre de Chevaliers de Champlain pour participer au combat commun.⁴⁰⁸

Another article in *L'Action Catholique* demonstrated that the target for the new Order was obviously the Knights of Columbus. Speaking at an initiation ceremony, another member of the new Order again made reference to the Knights of Columbus and the fact that many of their own rituals seemed to mimic those of the Knights:

On a déjà commencé à noter la ressemblance des Chevaliers de Champlain et des Chevaliers de Colomb, signalant une opposition possible entre les deux. Il serait malheureux de voir dans le lancement de la société naissante une déclaration de guerre à qui ce soit... L'essentiel, croyons-nous, c'est que les deux groupements évitent de créer un climat de guerre froide qui sera néfaste aux uns comme aux autres. Chacun ira son chemin en laissant aux citoyens la liberté d'adhérer à la société de son choix. Si les uns veulent s'en tenir exclusivement aux oeuvres d'apostolat catholique, peuvent-ils en vouloir à d'autres de se préoccuper aussi d'action nationale?⁴⁰⁹

The Chevaliers de Champlain thus were able to publicly challenge the Knights of Columbus in a way that the Ordre de Jacques Cartier had not been able to do since its foundation in 1926. Though it was a creation of the OJC, it quickly became a challenge for the leadership in Ottawa to manage, as the Chancellory faced difficulties of its own.

As discussed earlier, while the creation of the Chevaliers de Champlain was in its planning stages in the inner circles of the Chancellory of the OJC, it was felt that only a few members would be needed to help breathe life into the Order. In the spring of 1957, this message was reinforced to the wider membership in a circular to some of the officers in the OJC to emphasize that OJC members should encourage their friends and colleagues to join the new Order, but that their own priority should be their obligations to the OJC. Officers were told to join the new association "en nombre restreint, c'est-à-dire

⁴⁰⁸ *La Presse*, 18 novembre, 1957. Clipping found in KCA, *Hart Papers*, Newspaper clippings, Canada-Quebec Separationist Movement, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1957, SC-1-10-390.

⁴⁰⁹ *L'Action Catholique*, 16 mai, 1957, clip found in NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1959-1961, MG28 I98 Vol. 142.

pas plus qu'il ne faut pour assurer le noyautage."⁴¹⁰ The difficulties caused by their members within the Board of Governors (such as Barette) and a general trend in the Trois-Rivières region of the OJC members having too much influence in local councils caused Bishop Pelletier to complain to the Chancellory about the excessive control that the OJC exerted over the new association.⁴¹¹ Indeed, the leadership of the Champlain movement had become so divided on the recruitment and leadership issue that Pierre Vigeant met with the Board to lay out the OJC's official position on how the Champlains should proceed in recruitment activities:

L'Ordre est le seul véritable fondateur de la nouvelle société et qu'à ce titre, il avait le droit de suggérer une orientation, au moins dans les grandes lignes. La CX demande que l'Ordre de Chevaliers de Champlain soit une société de masse parce qu'il est appelé à remplacer un jour les K. of C. Toute divergence marquée de ce principe de base peut s'interpréter comme une offensive contre l'Ordre. En effet, si la nouvelle société vise à recruter l'élite de notre population, elle se pose comme la concurrente de l'Ordre et il deviendra de notre devoir de la combattre, l'enjeu étant la disparition de l'un ou de l'autre.
⁴¹²

For the OJC, the Chevaliers de Champlain were clearly meant to fill an area where they felt they could not compete with the Knights of Columbus: on the public stage and as a mass movement. If, however, their own creation posed a threat to their own vitality as an elite movement, Vigeant made it clear that they would not hesitate to do their utmost to oppose it.

4.3. Just how many crossed the street? Assessing the Chevaliers de Champlain

With a new project well on its way, all that remained to be seen was whether or not disgruntled Knights as well as other French-Canadians would flock to the new

⁴¹⁰ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1955-1957, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Bulletin exclusif aux VR. Re : Chevaliers de Champlain, 15 avril, 1957.

⁴¹¹ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1957-1960 MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Visite au secrétariat général du C.R. 6, 16 juillet, 1957.

⁴¹² NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1957-1960 MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Délégation à Québec, 21 octobre, 1957.

society. After having sorted out the issue of its recruitment targets, the Order set to work establishing new councils around Quebec and into Ontario. Branching out from their main bases of support around Joliette (where the first council was formed) and Longueuil proved difficult, however, and by 1959 the OJC was forced to rethink its policy of not allowing too many of its own members join the new Order. Though the Champlains had been successful in creating 34 councils by June of 1959, the CX in Ottawa was not satisfied with its progress and thus Allard asked Renaud Chapdelaine to submit an article to the OJC's *L'Émérillon* "en vue d'encourager les nôtres à entrer chez les Champlain."⁴¹³ The reversal of the policy on recruiting OJC members was not the only symptom of the Chancellory's impatience with the growth of the Champlain movement. The Chancellory also manoeuvred behind the scenes to remove Supreme Governor Mario DuMesnil in favour of someone (OJC member Omer Gratton) who they felt would hasten the growth of the new Order.⁴¹⁴

Even this substitution within the leadership, however, did not improve the fortunes for the Champlains' growth. Gratton, after just over a year and half at the head of the Order wrote to the Chancellory in July of 1962 to complain that many of the OJC members within the Chevaliers de Champlain placed priority on their work with the OJC, or at least used their obligations as an excuse for not putting efforts into their local councils.⁴¹⁵ Here, Allard provided somewhat of an empathetic ear in replying that getting

⁴¹³ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1957-1963, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Sec. de la CX à Renaud Chapdelaine, 22 janvier, 1960. A speech by Mario Dumesnil provides some of the only statistics available on the growth of the Chevaliers de Champlain (without providing specifics of the location of councils and membership numbers), NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1957-1963, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Conférence donnée à Rimouski le 7 juin, 1959 par Mario Dumesnil, Gouverneur-Adjoint.

⁴¹⁴ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1957-1963, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Allard à Renaud Chapdelaine, 26 juillet, 1960.

⁴¹⁵ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1962, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Omer Gratton, Gouverneur-Souverain à Léopold Allard, 31 juillet, 1962.

the most out of the OJC's leaders was not a problem faced by the Champlains alone, but by "un grand nombre de mouvements."⁴¹⁶ By this time, however, the OJC was facing a looming crisis of its own, and Allard's reference to having difficulty getting the most out of the membership could have equally applied to the OJC as it was reaching a point of paralysis as relations between the Quebec and Ontario members continued to sour.⁴¹⁷

The Chevaliers de Champlain, meant as the last resort in the fight against the Knights of Columbus, had been an underwhelming venture for the OJC, a last effort at creating and controlling a new association to unite French-Canadians in a period where the OJC was increasingly divided within itself. By the early 1960s, the Order's membership had attained a modest level of 2,000 members, failing to weaken the strength of the Knights of Columbus in the province.⁴¹⁸ If the Chevaliers de Champlain failed to catch fire in Quebec, however, it begs the question of whether it was because of the superiority of the Knights of Columbus or of larger issues of changing priorities for Quebecers in the late 1950s. Though the Knights had survived the test of the separatist resolutions, old divisions continued to linger through the mid-1950s and retaining their own members continued to be a problem.

4.4. Shifting focus: the Knights of Columbus under Luke Hart

The creation of the Chevaliers de Champlain certainly raised a few eyebrows within the Quebec membership of the Knights of Columbus. While some Knights in the province expressed a mild sense of betrayal upon hearing that some of their former brothers were amongst the founders of this new movement, reaction tended to be

⁴¹⁶ NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1962, MG28 I98 Vol. 142, Allard à Gratton, 7 août, 1962.

⁴¹⁷ The Chancellory at this time was engaged in a heated debate with Montreal members over the structure of the OJC, Dazé, *L'Ordre de Jacques Cartier*, 42-50.

⁴¹⁸ *Mémoire des Chevaliers de Champlain à la Commission Royale d'Enquête sur le bilinguisme et le biculturalisme*, août, 1964, préface.

mented.⁴¹⁹ Both Fontaine and Hart agreed that the new Order did not pose an immediate threat to the Knights and that, in the words of Fontaine, “il est toujours sage et prudent d'attendre pour pouvoir, éventuellement, juger l'arbre à ses fruits.”⁴²⁰

The Chevaliers de Champlain remained a minor distraction for the Knights of Columbus in the late 1950s. With the rise of Luke Hart to the position of Supreme Knights, all attention was again on the relationship between the Quebec State Executive and the Supreme Council as a major shift occurred within the Supreme Council's leadership. Finally successful in his efforts to become Supreme Knight in 1953, Luke Hart plunged enthusiastically into the job of managing the Order.⁴²¹ His stubborn loyalty to the Order, and high expectations of his colleagues to be just as passionate about the Order, continued throughout his reign as Supreme Knight. Almost by sheer will power and perseverance alone, Hart steered the Order through (in the words of historian Christopher Kauffman) “a time when the American Catholic Church modernized its educational, health-care, and other charitable institutions in response to rapidly changing conditions in America's complex society.”⁴²²

His energy and insistence on growth and change, however, would come across quite differently in Quebec. While he had managed to steer the Quebec State Council into a more conciliatory direction on the autonomy issue, he had misunderstood the nature of some of the arguments coming from Quebec and this would continue into his tenure as

⁴¹⁹ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada-Quebec Separationist Movement- *Le Devoir*, 1954-1960, SC-1-10-388 Box 589, J.H. Lefebvre to Hart, June 14th, 1957.

⁴²⁰ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, January-June 1957, SC-1-10-406 Box 589, Fontaine à J.G. Coutlee, Député du district de Joliette, 14 mai, 1957. Hart expressed similar caution when writing about the new Order, KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada - Quebec, miscellaneous, 1956-1958, SC-1-10-430 Box 591, Hart to Father Marcel Aubry, October 30, 1958.

⁴²¹ Christopher Kauffman noted he was the first Supreme Knight to take up full time residence in New Haven, even taking personal quarters in the Knights of Columbus main building in the city, Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 307.

⁴²² Kauffman, *Faith and Fraternalism*, 375.

Supreme Knight. In spite of Christopher Kauffman's argument that he "was the most thoroughly prepared man ever to hold the highest office in the Order," he continued to struggle with the Quebec membership.⁴²³

Though the Quebec State Council had frequently faced problems with membership retention throughout its existence, particularly after the Second World War, it was Hart who pushed the issue of suspensions and the lack of insured members in Quebec to the fore in the mid-1950s.⁴²⁴ While Hart had made boosting the insurance strength of the entire Order a top priority – through increasing the number of insured members and modernizing the insurance system used by the Order – Quebec was the State Council that offered the largest challenge in this regard. Consistently ranked at or near the worst level for membership retention within the Order, Hart blamed the Quebec Knights of Columbus woeful membership record on its low number of insured members. While the membership in Quebec appeared to be steadily growing, Hart regretted the loss of members who left quietly by not paying their dues or not remaining in contact with the Order. These losses, he argued in a letter to State Deputy Fontaine, "nullified" any gains made in the province.⁴²⁵ Hart blamed the ephemeral quality of much of the membership on the fact that Quebec had a much higher proportion of its members as associate members (without insurance) rather than insured.⁴²⁶ Initiation ceremonies may increase the prestige and visibility of the Order, but Hart argued that "memberships that will not

⁴²³ Ibid., 374.

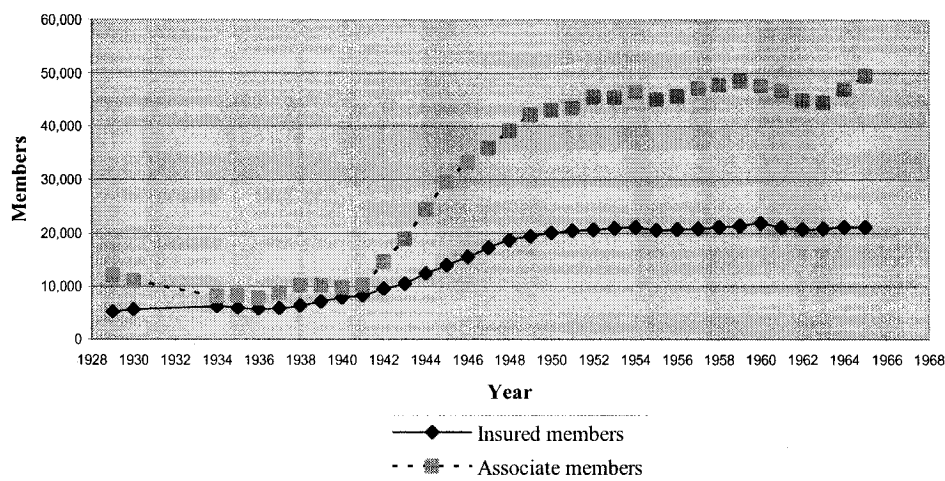
⁴²⁴ In 1949, for instance, the Quebec State Council expressed concern that their suspension rate (12.5%) was almost double the Order's average of 6.9% and they struck a committee to investigate the matter, though nothing substantive in the way of action was proposed, NAC, *OJC*, Bulletin mensuel des Chevaliers de Colomb, 1948-1952, MG 28 I98 Vol. 144, extrait du 'Bulletin d'Exécutif d'État des C. de C. de la province de Québec, livraison de décembre, 1949.

⁴²⁵ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, April-June 1954, SC-10-0395 Box 589, Hart to Fontaine, May 13, 1954.

⁴²⁶ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, April-June 1954, SC-10-0395 Box 589, Hart to Fontaine, April 30, 1954.

endure are not worth anything to the Order and they are not worth anything to the members. They are a hindrance to the Order and they do the members no good.”⁴²⁷ The solution, argued Hart, was to get the executive to push the insurance feature much more aggressively during initiations.

Table 2: Insured and Associate Membership in the Quebec Knights of Columbus



Source: Knights of Columbus Archives, *Supreme Council Proceedings, 1930-1966*.

Faced with demands from New Haven and the continued complaints of autonomist elements within the Order in Quebec, it is little wonder that Fontaine was exhausted by the summer of 1954, pleading with Hart not to further add to his obligations, "La charge de Député d'État devient de plus en plus lourde et requiert de plus en plus de temps, si on veut la remplir avec succès et efficacité."⁴²⁸ Not only did he face an internal feud within the Order, he was increasingly exasperated with the nationalist press, particularly *Le Devoir*, and its attacks on the Quebec Knights. That summer,

⁴²⁷ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, April-June 1954, SC-10-0395 Box 589, Hart to Fontaine. June 1, 1954.

⁴²⁸ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, July 1954, SC-1-10-396 Box 589, Fontaine to Hart, 12 juillet 1954.

editorials in *Le Devoir*, undoubtedly encouraged (and largely written) by Pierre Vigeant, lambasted the drain on the province's investment capacity that associations like the Knights represented, "C'est deux fois une erreur, car, en plus d'être un gaspillage d'argent, cela enrichit des gens qui nous ont combattus assez souvent et assez sournoisement pour que nous soyons justifiés de nous méfier d'eux."⁴²⁹ Increasingly, *Le Devoir*'s attacks on the Knights reflected a more vigorous and interventionist vein of nationalist discourse. No longer was it a case of avoiding sending money to the United States, but rather of seizing capital and using it to protect the French-Canadian nation. The Quebec State Council of the Knights, argued one editorial, could become (like the Quebec state) a bastion for French-Canadian Catholic lay organizations:

Ils pourraient devenir le coeur d'une vaste organisation canadienne et française qui couvrirait bientôt tout le Canada. Car les gens des autres provinces ne tiennent pas tellement à la formule actuelle. Ce qu'ils veulent, ce sont des cadres, des assurances, des réunions, une force. Actuellement, les gens des États-Unis leur donnent ces choses. Nous pourrions les leur procurer. Avec d'immenses avantages pour notre groupe ethnique.⁴³⁰

For Fontaine, attacks like these were at once a distraction and also a major source of the divisions within the Order and was seriously damaging its credibility. Though he derided the type of nationalism inherent in these editorials – calling it “la vieille lutte du nationalisme étroit et outrancier, contre les groupements internationaux,” – he saw it as a threat worthy of reaction.⁴³¹ His proposed solution was to address the issue of the amount of membership fees that went from Quebec to New Haven. Fixing this supposed

⁴²⁹ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Newspaper clippings, Canada-Quebec Separationist movement- *Le Devoir*, 1954-1960. SC 1-10-391 Box 589, "A quand la révolte de nos Chevaliers de Colomb?" *Le Devoir*, 29 juillet 1954.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada-Quebec Separationist Movement- *Le Devoir*, 1954-1960, SC-1-10-388 Box 589, Fontaine à Hart, 10 juillet 1954, Re: Suspensions dans Québec, et campagnes du journal "Le Devoir" contre les Chevaliers de Colomb.

imbalance in that field would help silence some of the Order's critics, he argued.⁴³² Hart, for his part, urged caution, in spite of the aggressive nature of the attacks in the press. Misjudging the importance of *Le Devoir*, Hart offered "I was under the impression that the paper was not very important," before suggesting ignoring the articles, since "they have all of the machinery in their hands and they can say things about you, without your having a chance to counteract their statements."⁴³³ He then dismissed the complaints about membership fees by pointing out that all state councils paid equal dues to New Haven, and that the Quebec members "surely cannot object to paying the same relative share of the cost of operations that is borne by other members of the Order."⁴³⁴

In spite of the pressure he felt from the nationalist press, Fontaine continued to boast about the Order's recruitment numbers in Quebec. Membership quickly became the heart of the debate between Fontaine and Hart in the mid-1950s, though both men differed on which gauge to use as a barometer of the Order's vitality. Fontaine repeatedly focused on the gains made in the province, pointing out the number of new initiations every year, while Hart preferred to focus on the final tally, or the net gain made by the Order overall, as shown by his demanding that suspension statistics be improved. Membership numbers prove both men correct. There was a veritable revolving door of members joining and leaving the Order in the mid-1950s. For the period of 1953-1954, for example, over 11,000 new members were sworn in at the first degree level, though 10,709 members also had their memberships suspended because of failures to meet

⁴³² KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, April-June 1954, SC-10-0395 Box 589, Fontaine to Hart, 25 juin, 1954.

⁴³³ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada-Quebec Separationist Movement- *Le Devoir*, 1954-1960, SC-1-10-388 Box 589, Hart to Fontaine, July 16, 1954.

⁴³⁴ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, July 1954, SC-1-10-396 Box 589, Hart to Fontaine, July 7, 1954.

membership requirements (paying dues, attending meetings etc.).⁴³⁵ Thus, though the Order consistently posted modest gains in the province, Hart worried more about the much larger potential for the province represented by the members who silently slipped out of the Order after having been initiated.⁴³⁶

Luke Hart thus spent much of 1954 and 1955 preoccupied with the unstable situation in Quebec. In his mind, there was not “anything peculiar about the situation in Quebec that prevents it from going along in the way that all other jurisdictions operate,” and he approached the problem in the same manner he had tackled the issue in the United States – with calculated logic.⁴³⁷ Hart targeted two areas that he believed to be problematic for the Order in the province – districts that were too large for the District Deputies to manage effectively, and financial secretaries in the local councils who were not vigorous enough in collecting insurance and membership dues. According to the rules of the Order, the District Deputy was in charge of supervising and directing a grouping of no more than four councils. In Quebec, however, the District Deputies managed an average region of about ten councils. For Hart, this was a major source of member alienation, since they did not have enough regular contact with these executive

⁴³⁵ KCA, *Supreme Council Proceedings, Aug. 16-18, 1955*, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 50-52.

⁴³⁶ Members could have left the Order for a variety of reasons, including economic, personal or simply a lack of interest. There is, however, a tangible increase in suspensions after the failed autonomist resolutions in 1952-1953. In terms of net growth, the Quebec region slipped from fourth to twelfth in the space of two years, largely due to heavy losses in membership outweighing recruitment, KCA, *Supreme Council proceedings, Aug 18-20, 1953*, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 49-51; *Supreme Council proceedings, Aug. 16-18, 1955*, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 50-52. Whether this is symptomatic of frustration with the Order’s continued link with New Haven, an expression of fatigue with the continued squabbling between the State and Supreme Councils or symptomatic of a decline in popularity of lay Catholic associations in the province is difficult to assess, though a resurgence in membership within the Order later in the decade would seem to indicate more of the former than the latter as possible causes.

⁴³⁷ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, October-December 1954, SC-1-10-399 Box 589, Hart to Fontaine, Nov. 5, 1954.

officers.⁴³⁸ Hart proposed creating forty-five districts in the province rather than the existing thirty to help alleviate the problem.⁴³⁹ To do so, however, would require redrawing the district maps in the provinces – traditionally arranged along diocesan lines – and though Fontaine agreed to expand to thirty-seven districts in the province, he anticipated episcopal opposition over the idea of crossing diocesan boundaries and thus resisted going any further.⁴⁴⁰ Aware of the power of the bishops to influence the ability of the Knights to recruit members, by speaking in their favour or against them, Fontaine was unwilling to cross swords with them over an internal governance issue for the Order.

Hart's second area of reform was the role of the financial secretaries for the Order in Quebec. Here, a differing definition of the role was mainly the problem. Throughout 1954 and 1955 Hart repeatedly brought up cases of individual secretaries who had not been actively collecting dues or insurance fees and asking the State Council for their dismissal. The typical response from the Quebec executive, however, was that these were model members of the Order, who met their expectations of keeping accurate records and who suspended members who did not meet the financial requirements of the Order.⁴⁴¹ Hart grew increasingly frustrated with this, writing to State Advocate Eugène Marquis to clarify the situation:

There seems to be an attitude throughout Quebec to the effect that it is not the duty of the Financial Secretaries to make collections. Grand Knights and others speak to me that this man and that man are good Financial Secretaries because their records are well kept. I have great difficulty in making them understand that a Financial Secretary is not merely a receiving teller, as in a bank, who receives payments and enters the sum on his records.

⁴³⁸ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, July 1954, SC-1-10-396 Box 589, Hart to Fontaine, July 9, 1954.

⁴³⁹ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, July 1954, SC-1-10-396 Box 589, Hart to Fontaine, July 15, 1954

⁴⁴⁰ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, July 1954, SC-1-10-396 Box 589, Fontaine to Hart, 16 juillet 1954; Fontaine à Hart, 20 juillet 1954.

⁴⁴¹ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec, July-Dec. 1954, SC -1-10-427 Box 591, Marquis to Hart, August 13, 1954.

He is the collector of the council. There is no other collector... It is not enough that he be a good bookkeeper. He must be a good collector and without a disposition to perform that duty he should not be allowed to continue as Financial Secretary... We are not going to permit this condition to continue.⁴⁴²

True to his word, Hart used his powers as Supreme Secretary to suspend a number of Financial Secretaries shortly thereafter. Fontaine was furious, and wrote a six page protest letter to Hart to demand that the suspended officers be reinstated.⁴⁴³ Hart stood his ground, however, in replying to Fontaine, "It is their duty to make collections. Unless they do so, they will not be retained in office. The record of suspensions in Quebec during the past three years is appalling. There can be no justification for it."⁴⁴⁴ Clearly, the tension from the autonomy question had carried over into discussions about the governance and vitality of the Order in Quebec. By early 1955, the relationship between Fontaine and Hart had soured to the point that Hart wrote to Fontaine to suggest he retire that Spring from his duties with the Order:

This condition (suspensions and disorganization) must end and the interests of the Order demand that I say to you that I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that it will never be remedied while you continue as State Deputy. You are a busy man. You have responsibilities to the government which you must meet. I am convinced that it is no longer possible for you to do that and at the same time do justice to the tremendous responsibilities attaching to the Office of State Deputy of Quebec. It is not fair to yourself nor to the Order for you to attempt to do so.⁴⁴⁵

Fontaine did not step down, but he did allow the Supreme Knight to come and try to address the suspension issue on his own. In March of 1955, the Executive and Finance

⁴⁴² KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec, July-Dec. 1954, SC -1-10-427 Box 591, Hart to Marquis, August 26, 1954.

⁴⁴³ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, September 1954, SC-1-10-398 Box 589, Fontaine to Hart, 6 septembre 1954.

⁴⁴⁴ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, September 1954, SC-1-10-398 Box 589, Hart to Fontaine, Sept. 17, 1954.

⁴⁴⁵ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec State Deputies, January-May 1955, SC-1-10-400 Box 589, Hart to Fontaine, January 27, 1955. Though Fontaine never issued a written reply to Hart's suggestion, he remained State Deputy throughout the rest of the 1950s, indicating that some sort of compromise must have been reached.

Committee of the Supreme Council recommended that Hart go to Quebec to address the District Deputies of the province on the insurance issue.⁴⁴⁶ After having been welcomed by the State Executive for Quebec, Hart read a carefully prepared speech to a gathering of District Deputies on March 8, 1955. Giving a detailed description of the expectations of each officer position in the Order, Hart hammered home the point that if they were to stop the flow of members leaving “through the back door”, they all needed to know and follow through on their roles and responsibilities.⁴⁴⁷ Here again, Hart pounced on the opportunity to offer his own redefinition on the Order’s purpose and source of strength:

Things have changed since Father McGivney had his great inspiration in the spring of 1882. Men now join the Order for the purpose of protecting their own interests, but they also join it for the sake of the Order itself. They believe in it. They glory in its accomplishments. And most people who do believe in it and appreciate its position in the affairs of the Church and our people know that the strength of the Order and its very existence depends on the insurance feature. Therefore, every possible effort must be made, should be made, to bring these Catholic men into our Order as insurance members.⁴⁴⁸

Though Hart spoke in English, he did receive some feedback from francophone District Deputies. Gédéon Leduc, for instance, applauded Hart’s emphasis on the insurance feature of the Order, arguing that too many joined for the ‘show’ of the initiation rituals, after which the the new Knight too often “s'en retourne tranquillement chez-lui, et c'est tout.”⁴⁴⁹ Insurance Agent J.H. Lefebvre, meanwhile, wrote Hart to say, “if a meeting like

⁴⁴⁶ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec, March-Dec. 1955, SC -1-10-429 Box 591, Joseph Lamb to Hart, March 2, 1955.

⁴⁴⁷ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Speeches, SC-1-10-379 Box 589, Address of Supreme Knight Luke E. Hart to District Deputies of Quebec, March 8, 1955.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec, District Deputies, 1955-1956. SC-1-10-374 Box 589, Gédéon Leduc to Hart, March 25, 1955.

that would have been done ten years ago we would not have had the trouble we have in the Province of Quebec."⁴⁵⁰

Even if Hart's March speech on insurance influenced only a few, the annual Quebec State Congress of 1955 certainly was much more tame than previous years. Though a few resolutions calling for control over insurance revenues and Catholic advertising funds were issued, they did not raise the same level of debate as in previous years.⁴⁵¹ Perhaps in a sign of loyalty to Hart after his visit to the province earlier that spring, the Executive introduced a resolution swearing continued loyalty to the Supreme Council and the Supreme Knight's final authority. *Le Devoir* reported that it was Eugène Marquis who introduced the resolution in a spirit of solidarity with New Haven, trying to put to rest the previous years of rancour, "Il faut l'unité au tronc de New-Haven. Une fois pour toutes proclamons notre unité finale, définitive, indéfectible, éternelle."⁴⁵² This effort at returning a sense of unity to the Order in Quebec, however, would prove short-lived, as the honeymoon of the prestige of a visit from the Supreme Knight (even one to scold the membership) wore off. Tension thus persisted within the Order, though it would serve as a catalyst for new voices in the Order to make themselves heard.

Throughout the next few years the membership situation in Quebec stagnated as Hart and Fontaine wrangled over the size of districts, and many members had to be suspended either because of being too young (26 was the minimum age), illegally being reinstated after having previously been suspended, not following payment schedules or

⁴⁵⁰ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec, District Deputies, 1955-1956. SC-1-10-374 Box 589, Lefebvre to Hart, March 14, 1955.

⁴⁵¹ This more subdued atmosphere is reported in a variety of sources, including a report from a member of the OJC, NAC, *OJC*, K. of C. Congrès Provincial, 1955 et 1956, MG28 198 Vol. 145, Jean Leclerc, au Sec de la CX, le 23 mai, 1955 and media coverage, *Le Devoir*, 24 mai, 1955, 1.

⁴⁵² *Le Devoir*, 24 mai, 1955, 1.

failing to meet other membership requirements.⁴⁵³ Hart stepped up his level of involvement in the internal workings of the Order in Quebec after receiving steady news of suspensions in the province. In a move that was highly unpopular with Fontaine and the Quebec executive, Hart began to fire, or refuse to re-appoint, District Deputies whom he believed were underperforming. Many of these men were loyal to Fontaine after years of service in the Order and wrote him to complain. When Fontaine forwarded these letters to Hart, he replied tersely:

It is my privilege to refuse approval for the appointment of District Deputies when I consider it to be for the best interests of the Order. In the cases referred to in the correspondence, I do not consider it to be for the best interests of the Order to approve the appointments and, therefore, such approval is withheld.⁴⁵⁴

Hart, long concerned with the management of the Order, had reached his breaking point over the lack of organization in Quebec, specifically with the performance of Fontaine. His opinion that “there is no law, no authority and no discipline in Quebec and there is no likelihood that there will be any under the existing circumstances,” led him to take matters into his own hands.⁴⁵⁵ Soon, however, members in Quebec would also begin to push for change within the Order’s leadership in the province, resorting to tactics reminiscent of the OJC’s main strategy: secrecy and behind the scenes coordination.

4.5. Taking sides with New Haven: Le Réveil Colombien

Prior to the Quebec Knights of Columbus State Convention of May, 1959, a small group of Knights gathered to discuss the problems facing the Order in the province. None

⁴⁵³ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Quebec, State Deputies, June-Aug. 1958, SC-1-10-0412 Box 590, Memo: Stephen Murray. Financial Secretary Department to Hart, Aug 13, 1958.Re: Lack of supervision by Quebec State Deputy Hon. Th. Adelard Fontaine.

⁴⁵⁴ KCA, *Hart papers*, Correspondence, Quebec, State Deputies, Sept.-Dec. 1958, SC-1-10-0413 Box 590, Hart to Fontaine, Sept. 3, 1958.

⁴⁵⁵ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Insurance, General Agents, J.H. Lefebvre, Quebec, 1953-61, SC-1-10-1596 Box 631, Hart to Lefebvre, June 25,1958.

were members of the executive, though they demanded a change at the top levels of the Order in Quebec. Calling themselves the “Réveil Colombien”, the group organized itself a mini hierarchy within the Knights, appointing a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary and Treasurer.⁴⁵⁶ Citing stagnating membership numbers as their main concern, the group of Knights pointed to their leaders as part of the problem:

Nous sommes certains que toutes ces lacunes pourraient être corrigées si, au Conseil d'État, nous avions des officiers qui apporteraient plus de dynamisme à l'organisation, des officiers qui, tout en étant guidés par les principes fondamentaux de notre Ordre, s'inspireraient des principes d'affaires pour faire revivre notre Chevalerie. Il semble opportun que pour résoudre nos problèmes un changement au Conseil d'État s'impose....La convention du mois de mai en fournira l'occasion.⁴⁵⁷

Stopping short of outright criticism of their long-time leaders, the Réveil nonetheless complained “il est injuste de laisser aux mêmes toutes les responsabilités.”⁴⁵⁸ The leader of the movement, Joseph Butler from Montreal, was in steady contact with Luke Hart throughout 1959-1960. Writing to Hart after the May Convention, Butler was harsh in his criticism of Fontaine and the grip he had on the levers of power within the Order, “the stronghold the State Deputy possesses over 'his' district deputies and this group wishing to protect what they call their 'jobs' is the 'plague' of the Order, in the Province of Quebec.”⁴⁵⁹ He and his colleagues blamed the rise of groups like the Chevaliers de Champlain on the “dissatisfied and discontented” members of the Order who left in frustration and offered their services in helping start a change in the leadership of the

⁴⁵⁶ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec membership, 1953-1959, SC-1-10-384 Box 589, Le Réveil Colombien, 29 avril 1959.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec membership, 1953-1959, SC-1-10-384 Box 589, Joseph Butler to Hart, May 28th, 1959.

Order.⁴⁶⁰ At last, Hart had some allies within the Order's wider membership who were willing to work with him.

Though the initial correspondence between Hart and Butler was very welcoming, it offers little in the way of finer details of what they planned to do to instigate a change of power in Quebec. After arranging a meeting in June, Hart introduced a reform within the Knights of Columbus' rules to limit the term of a State Deputy to four terms, thereby forcing Fontaine to retire.⁴⁶¹ Reaction to the resolution, adopted in August of that year, was mixed. The Réveil, understandably, supported Hart's motion wholeheartedly, offering to "launch another effort to remove the undesirables occupying key functions," while Francis Fauteux wrote to Hart to defend Fontaine, who "after having worked to a considerable development of the Order in the province of Quebec does not certainly deserve such outrage."⁴⁶² Hart was staunch in his reply, denying any personal involvement in the issue (and concealing his involvement with Butler et al.):

Whether the records of the State Deputies who will be affected by this law have had something to do with bringing about the change is a matter of opinion. I do not care to go into that matter but if necessary it could and would be gone into. As stated above, neither I nor the Supreme Board of Directors have any authority to repeal this new law or amend it.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec membership, 1953-1959, SC-1-10-384 Box 589, Hart to Butler, June 1, 1959; resolution referred to in KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec, 1959-1960, SC -1-10-431 Box 591, Butler to Hart, Sept. 18, 1959.

⁴⁶² Ibid.; KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec membership, 1953-1959, SC-1-10-384 Box 589, Fauteux to Hart, Sept. 21, 1959.

⁴⁶³ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec membership, 1953-1959, SC-1-10-384 Box 589, Hart to Fauteux, Sept. 29, 1959.

Fontaine, normally quite vocal, was silent on the issue, though his District Deputies did submit an official letter of protest to the Supreme Knight via Fauteux, to no avail.⁴⁶⁴

After over fourteen years, the era of T.A. Fontaine as State Deputy for the Quebec Knights of Columbus had come to an inauspicious end, the victim of the machinations of a frustrated Supreme Knight and some of his fellow Knights in the province. Eugène Marquis, who took over the leadership in June of 1960, inherited high expectations from Hart, who wrote to him that a "New Deal" for the Order was expected under his guidance.⁴⁶⁵ Marquis vowed that he would be up to the challenge:

My view as to the administration of the State of Quebec is to be in entire accord with the Supreme office, to respect your instructions and to fulfill my duties in order to be respected as I hope to have won the respect of the Bar and the people of my Province in the accomplishment of my judicial function.⁴⁶⁶

His reign as State Deputy would see greatly improved relations with the Supreme Council, though the problem of membership retention continued to dog the Knights in Quebec.

4.6. "Franco-Américain, il savait ce que c'est d'appartenir à une minorité," – the death of Pierre Vigeant and the end of the OJC campaign

As the Knights of Columbus went through a tense period of transition at the turn of the decade, the Ordre de Jacques Cartier was devastated by the news that Pierre Vigeant was stricken gravely ill in December of 1960. He died a few days after falling ill.⁴⁶⁷ The OJC had lost its most dogged combatant in the campaign against the Knights of Columbus. In a memoriam to Vigeant, André Laurendeau pointed to his colleague as a

⁴⁶⁴ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec membership, 1953-1959, SC-1-10-384 Box 589, District Deputy committee to Fauteux, Sept 21, 1959.

⁴⁶⁵ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec State Deputies, 1960, SC-1-1-415 Box 590, Hart to Marquis, June 22, 1960.

⁴⁶⁶ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec State Deputies, 1960, SC-1-1-415 Box 590, Marquis to Hart, June 18, 1960.

⁴⁶⁷ *Le Devoir*, 22 décembre, 1960, 1.

bridge in the paper's history, having worked with both the founders like Henri Bourassa and Omer Héroux and the new generation of nationalists now working at the paper.⁴⁶⁸

Applauding his battle for French-Canadian economic strength in Quebec, Laurendeau offered that Vigeant's experiences growing up in New England also gave him a unique perspective on the struggles of French-Canadians outside Quebec, because "il savait ce que c'est d'appartenir à une minorité."⁴⁶⁹ Ultimately, lamented Laurendeau, his passing would mean a loss of a nationalist leader who had led the charge on a number of issues:

Il part, alors qu'il atteignait pleine maturité, qu'il nourrissait des projets nombreux, que son influence s'étendait. Ses camarades en sont navrés. Ils savent combien il va leur manquer - combien de tâches resteront inaccomplies parce qu'il en connaissait mieux les éléments, et qu'il n'oubliait jamais de les poursuivre.⁴⁷⁰

One of those projects was undoubtedly the campaign against the Knights of Columbus.

What would happen now that the OJC had lost its main militant against the Knights?

The nationalist community came out in force for Vigeant's funeral in Montreal. Leaders of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Chevaliers de Champlain, Les Amis du *Devoir*, and numerous other "sociétés patriotiques canadiennes-françaises."⁴⁷¹ Leaders of the OJC were devastated by the loss, grieving during a meeting of the Chancellory the following month.⁴⁷² A memorial published in *L'Émérillon* summed up the importance OJC leaders put on Vigeant's role within the Order, calling him "un lutteur de l'école de Bourassa, de Pelletier, de Héroux...Le Canada français - spécialement les groupes minoritaires français - perd un grand ami, un vaillant défenseur."⁴⁷³ Even members of the Montreal conseil régional sang his praises, saying that he embodied the virtues of the

⁴⁶⁸ *Le Devoir*, 22 décembre, 1960, 4.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ *Le Devoir*, 27 décembre, 1960.

⁴⁷² CRCCF, *OJC*, Réunions du Conseil de la Chancellerie, 2 octobre 1960 au 16 février 1961 - 1960-1961-C3-4-2, Réunion du 12 janvier, 1961.

⁴⁷³ *L'Émérillon*, Janvier, 1961, 7.

OJC, possessing “l'énergie, le courage, l'entêtement, la modestie et l'efficacité de celui qui a consacré le meilleur de sa vie à l'avancement de ses compatriotes.”⁴⁷⁴ The OJC had lost their strongest leader in the Montreal region, right at a time where relations with the Montreal members were rapidly deteriorating over finances, separation of powers and the role that Quebec should play in French-Canadian nationalist activity.

After eulogizing and mourning Vigeant, the OJC was once again consumed by internal tensions over the role of Quebec in the Order, which would ultimately lead to the its dissolution. In his study of the Order, G-Raymond Laliberté contends that many of the disillusioned Quebec members of the OJC who had pushed for a stronger role for Quebec went on to work within the neo-nationalist circles that would eventually provide the breeding ground for the Parti Québécois.⁴⁷⁵ It should come as no surprise, then, that in 1961 the Chevaliers de Champlain – the association created by the OJC to combat the Knights as a religious and nationalist association – had adopted a much more nationalist tone in their activities. At the Provincial Convention in November of 1961, for instance, the Champlains adopted a resolution openly calling for a more aggressive use of the Quebec state :

Les Canadiens-français doivent travailler au renforcement de leur État provincial, le seul dont ils ont le contrôle, en amenant le gouvernement du Québec à exercer au maximum tous les pouvoirs que lui donne la constitution fédérale, et ensuite, à exiger et obtenir une révision de la constitution afin que le Québec puisse exercer tous les pouvoirs nécessaires à son épanouissement.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁴ CRCCF, OJC, Conseil Régional 5: Montréal (Québec), Réunions du Conseil régional, 1960-1961, C3-25-8, Rapport du réunion tenue le 11 janvier, 1961.

⁴⁷⁵ Laliberté, *Une société secrète*, 364-367.

⁴⁷⁶ Quoted in *Le Devoir*, 15 novembre, 1961, clipping from NAC, *OJC*, Chevaliers de Champlain, 1957-1960, MG28 I98 Vol. 142.

The Champlain leadership had taken a decidedly neo-nationalist turn just as divisions within the OJC were reaching the breaking point. The resolution by the Chevaliers de Champlain preceded by three years a similar call by Quebec members of the OJC for an even more aggressive use of the Quebec state and an increasing identification with the territory of Quebec as the 'reserve' best suited for the survival of French Canada.⁴⁷⁷

4.7. An era of "Splendid Cooperation": The Quebec Knights of Columbus under Eugène Marquis

The Knights of Columbus in Quebec also experienced significant change at the beginning of the 1960s. Under the guidance of new State Deputy Eugène Marquis, the Quebec Knights of Columbus managed to turn the tide of suspensions somewhat in the first years of the decade. Putting into action an ambitious strategy of reorganizing the appointments of District Deputies and Financial Secretaries, as well as offering rewards to councils with the best records for member retention, Marquis caught the approving eye of the insurance branch in New Haven.⁴⁷⁸ Indeed, by 1961 Marquis had succeeded in reducing the average number of suspensions in half compared to the previous year. Luke Hart was ecstatic with the turnaround, writing Marquis to express "the heartfelt gratitude and appreciation of our entire Order," for his hard work⁴⁷⁹

The improved relations between the Quebec State Council and the Supreme Council proved beneficial to Marquis. He capitalized on the recent turnaround in relations to ask Hart to approve a secretariat in Montreal – long sought after by the nationalist elements of the Order in Quebec – so that members could correspond on all administrative issues,

⁴⁷⁷ Martel, *Deuil d'un pays*, 146; Laliberté, *Une société secrète*, 103-106, 294-295.

⁴⁷⁸ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec State Deputies, 1960, SC-1-1-415 Box 590, Ducey to Hart, Dec. 12, 1960.

⁴⁷⁹ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec State Deputies, Jan-Feb. 1961, SC-1-1-416 Box 590, Hart to Marquis, Jan 5, 1961.

including insurance, in French. Anything relevant to the Supreme Council would then be forwarded to New Haven from there.⁴⁸⁰ Hart reluctantly agreed to open a staffed office in the province, though initially he approved a simple post office box from which correspondence could be forwarded to New Haven by members of the State executive.⁴⁸¹ By 1964, the establishment of the office was seen as one of the reasons for the Order's vitality in the province, along with Marquis' leadership. On the eve of the State Convention in 1964, Hart certainly did not hold back in his praise for the turnaround of the previous years:

With more than 63,000 members in its 235 councils, Quebec is one of the outstanding jurisdictions of our Order. Under your leadership during the past three years it has consistently carried forward the earnest and aggressive program that is traditional with the Order and I want to compliment you and all of the members in your province upon the enthusiasm that exists and upon the splendid spirit of cooperation that has been manifested throughout the jurisdiction.⁴⁸²

The Order, if not thriving, was certainly much healthier than in previous years. Liberal Premier Jean Lesage even gave a long keynote address at the Knights of Columbus State Convention of May, 1962.⁴⁸³ While Lesage was undoubtedly working to spread the Liberal message of "maîtres chez nous" to any sympathetic crowd, his attendance at the Knights' convention spoke volumes about the potential audience that the Order represented to a man like the Premier.

Luke Hart's enthusiasm with the Order's growth in the year ending in January of 1964 must have grown even further as the Knights of Columbus continued to enjoy

⁴⁸⁰ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec State Deputies, Jan.-March 1962, SC-1-1-420 Box 591, Marquis to Hart, Jan. 11, 1962.

⁴⁸¹ KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Francis Fauteux, Supreme Director, Montreal, Canada, 1961-1962, SC-1-10-60 Box 579, Hart to Fauteux, Nov. 30, 1962.

⁴⁸² KCA, *Hart Papers*, Correspondence, Canada- Quebec State Deputies, Jan.-Apr.. 1963, SC-1-1-423 Box 591, Hart to Marquis, Apr. 18, 1963.

⁴⁸³ *La Presse*, 22 mai 1962, 43.

growth into the mid-1960s, cracking the 70,000 member mark by June of 1965.⁴⁸⁴ More importantly, its net gain of 2,631 members that year placed it in first position for recruiting amongst all State Councils in the Order.⁴⁸⁵ While nationalists had been harsh in their criticism of the Knights failure to be as active on the nationalist level (i.e. gaining more autonomy), their prestige as one of the leading lay Catholic organisations in North America, combined with the rituals, insurance and status that membership gave had continued to garner support for the Knights. Supreme Knight Luke Hart refused to recognize the nationalist overtones of his dealings with the Order's executive in Quebec, refusing to give their demands any special treatment compared to other jurisdictions of the Order. While this drove out some of the more nationalist elements in the province, Hart's strategy appeared to have earned dividends as the Order managed to escape the fate of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier: a steady decline in membership in the 1960s.

Free of the issue of whether or not Quebec should be the 'reserve' from which to best protect French-Canadian life, the Quebec State Council had dealt with issues as a Quebec based body. By eventually adopting a compromise level of autonomy through a secretariat, the Order's leaders had favoured the Catholic side of the fence rather than the strictly linguistic one, though they continued to insist on the right to operate and be served by their leadership in New Haven in French. Unlike the Ordre de Jacques Cartier, the Knights of Columbus never professed to be the intellectual head of the French-Canadian polity, but rather of a wider Catholic elite. Language, then, continued to be subservient to faith.

⁴⁸⁴ KCA, *Supreme Council Proceedings, Aug. 17-19, 1965*, Report of the Supreme Secretary, 60-62.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

4.8. Conclusion

As the 1950s drew to a close, both the Ordre de Jacques Cartier and the Knights of Columbus had undergone significant changes. The OJC, making one last push to cut the foreign influence within the Knights of Columbus or to compete directly with them, engaged in debates over whether or not the Order needed to reform itself, or simply adjust their tactics in attacking the Knights. Opting for the latter, they chose to create a new society, the Chevaliers de Champlain, in order to offer a public association to compete directly with the Knights. The association, however, was hampered by debates over its direction and the lingering influence of the OJC. More revealing, perhaps, was the OJC's changing attitude towards its own members joining the new society. After initially discouraging it, the Chancellory flipped policy in order to try and revive the flagging Order, to no avail. Increasingly, members of the Chevaliers de Champlain, and even some of their ecclesiastical supporters, were wearying of the campaign against the Knights, arguing that their attention should be focused elsewhere. Inherent divisions within the OJC's membership became more obvious as the decade drew to a close, which eventually resulted in the OJC turning away from the campaign.

What was at question throughout this period was the OJC's *raison d'être*. The 1950s represented a time of changing dynamics within the OJC, where its role and scope were questioned and redefined. The failure of its Chevaliers de Champlain project to truly blossom (and even its adoption of a blatantly separatist stance in the early 1960s) is symptomatic of the OJC's growing struggle to remain relevant and influential on the Quebec nationalist scene. The rejection by the Montreal members of the project

symbolized the increasing divide between a new wave of nationalist activity and the old campaigns based on old wounds that the Knights of Columbus represented.

For the Knights of Columbus, meanwhile, the period saw a growth and modernization of its insurance management and membership structure under the vigorous and firm guidance of Supreme Knight Luke Hart. Quebec, however, continued to challenge Hart and his vision for the Order. Throughout the mid-1950s, he and State Deputy T.-A. Fontaine wrangled over suspensions and the organization of the Order in the province, eventually resulting in Hart working with a group of disgruntled Knights to remove Fontaine from office. Lingering tensions from the days of the separatist movement lingered well into the end of the decade. Hart continued to refuse to believe that suspensions in the province had anything to do with nationalism or disillusionment; he remained staunch in his critique of the skill and work ethic of many of the Order's leaders in the province.

In spite of the presence of the Chevaliers de Champlain and the covert attacks of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier through media outlets like *Le Devoir*, Hart continued to deny that Quebec was different than any other jurisdiction in the Knighthood. This firm grip guided the Order into the tumult of the 1960s with a new, loyal leader in Quebec (Eugène Marquis) just as the opposition from the Ordre de Jacques Cartier died down. The secret society founded on the principle of using the strengths of the Knights to protect and promote French-Canadian nationalism had faltered in its longest running campaign, just as it entered the most trying time of its existence: the 1960s and the wave of change sweeping the province.

Conclusion

The death of Pierre Vigeant in December of 1960 robbed the Ordre de Jacques Cartier of its most passionate opponent to the Knights of Columbus. Vigeant had been almost entirely focused on the Knights throughout his time in the Chancellory, coordinating the campaign against them and providing most of the justification for the campaign. Largely influenced by his youth in New England and his knowledge of the history of the Knights in Ontario from his time in Ottawa as a political correspondent, Vigeant was in many ways a bridge across a growing chasm between the Ontario leadership and Quebec members. His efforts to turn the bitter memories of the Regulation XVII crisis into a mass action to try and cut the Knights of Columbus in Quebec from their ties to the United States reflected an increasing emphasis on the concept of Quebec's autonomy and need to assert itself to protect French-Canadian culture.

Just how aggressive this autonomist push should be, however, proved problematic for the OJC as it encountered resistance first from some of its own members on the issue of battling the Knights and then had trouble convincing enough members of both the OJC and the Knights that only an outright separation of the Quebec Knights would be enough to make it a truly French-Canadian association. Symptomatic of growing resentment towards the Chancellory in Ottawa, the Montreal Provincial Council's refusal to pick up the project to revive the Chevaliers de Carillon as an alternative after the failure of the autonomist movement was a warning sign of the coming storm of debate over the structure of the Order and its direction. As historians such as Marcel Martel, Gratien Allaire and G.-Raymond Laliberté have already shown, the early 1960s witnessed the Ordre de Jacques Cartier imploding as factions within the Order attempted to wrestle

power away from the Ottawa based leadership and push the Order to adopt a stronger neo-nationalist stance and support the Quebec independance option which was gaining support with younger nationalists. This would be their means to rejuvenate the Order and recruit a new generation of nationalists.⁴⁸⁶

Montreal critics of the status quo in the 1960s were not the first to challenge the Chancellory to rethink its ideology and structure, however. The 1960s did not necessarily represent such a radical breakdown in the OJC as has been presented. Indeed, as has been shown here, the Ordre de Jacques Cartier faced these same issues of democratization, opening up the ranks and activities of the Order to the public and the issue of Quebec independence throughout its evolving campaign against the Knights of Columbus, before the crisis years of the early 1960s. In many ways, one of the inspirations for the Order – the bitter association between Regulation XVII and the Knights of Columbus for Franco-Ontarian leaders – proved to be the conducting rod for its evolution and eventual decline by the 1960s. Pierre Vigeant, a fixture within the Chancellory throughout the 1950s, had staked his legacy on ridding the foreign influence of the Quebec Knights of Columbus. “Nous la poursuivrons,” he had argued in 1952, “jusqu’à la victoire finale et definitive.”⁴⁸⁷ The victory, however, never really came, and the OJC’s destiny seemed to be linked to its campaign against them. Vigeant’s death put finality to an already lost cause. Just as Maurice Duplessis’ death is symbolic of the end of an era rather than as a catalyst for the changes brought in during the Quiet Revolution, Vigeant’s death symbolized the end of an era for the Ordre de Jacques Cartier.

⁴⁸⁶ Martel, *Deuil d'un pays imaginé*, 145-147

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 276.

Thus, by the time the *Ordre de Jacques Cartier* dissolved in 1965, as a result of debates over internal power structures and the role of Quebec and shrinking membership, its longest running battle was already lost.⁴⁸⁸ The Knights of Columbus remained a strong Catholic association in Quebec, while the OJC's élan as an alternative and counterweight to associations like the Knights had evaporated in heated debates over the direction and leadership of French Canada by the 1960s. The Knights of Columbus, avowedly less aggressive in their patriotism, continued to thrive as a Catholic lay association, but in a milieu that put less emphasis on linking faith and religion.

In many ways, the inspiration for the OJC's creation also became an outward symptom of its often divided presence on the nationalist stage. French-Canadian leaders in Ottawa were fuelled by memories of the battles of the schools crisis of the First World War in Ontario and the prestige awarded the Knights of Columbus (even while some of their leaders fought against French schools) when they created the *Ordre de Jacques Cartier*. They took what they felt were the tools used effectively against them – the secrecy of groups like the Orange Order and the ritual and fraternal ambiance of the Knights of Columbus and their parish based activities in support of the Church, that they benefitted from – to create a new society in 1926 to try and put French-Canadians on an equal footing, particularly against their Irish coreligionists in the province. Borrowing liberally from the ritual and organization of the Knights of Columbus, it quickly became apparent that the *Ordre de Jacques Cartier* was an association meant to counter what they felt was what made the Knights of Columbus so successful. With the Knights of Columbus expanding rapidly in Quebec in the years after the war, becoming mostly

⁴⁸⁸ For more on the OJC's dissolution see Daze, *L'Ordre de Jacques Cartier*.

francophone at the leadership level by the 1920s, the OJC certainly appeared to need to play catch up in the province.

As the OJC expanded into Quebec, however, it realigned its nationalist ideology – moving beyond the feud over school language rights to larger issues of economic survival and provincial-federal relations. Maintaining their membership strength, though, was a constant problem for the OJC in the Depression years. The leaders in the Chancellory, for instance, began to discuss the possibility of adopting economic incentives like life insurance policies for members to increase member retention rates. While the decision to adopt a policy was continuously put off by the Chancellory, many of whose members feared competition to their own life insurance and mutual aid associations, it does reveal an increasing awareness of the important role of commerce and economic measures both for the Order and for French-Canadians on a broader scale. Indeed, throughout the late 1930s the Order began to promote economic nationalism, fostering and encouraging the *Ligue d'Achat Chez Nous*, for instance.

This increasing focus on economic levers of nationalist activity accelerated during the war, as the OJC also encouraged the creation of the *Union des Mutuelles-Vie française d'Amérique*. Many of these nationalist endeavours were inspired to the Order's increased ties with nationalist leader Lionel Groulx, who both received strong support from the Order and provided frequent inspiration for their own campaigns. The creation of the UMVFA, coupled with the birth of the *Clubs Richelieu* and the Order's own deliberations over adopting an insurance policy for members demonstrate not only the Order's adoption of many of Groulx's calls for action, but also of the Order's leadership underlying obsession with countering or even neutralizing an old foe. Largely influenced

by a pan-Canadian vision of French Canada influenced by memories of the Great War, their initial plans for attacking the Knights in the post-war years were met with surprise and even resistance by their Quebec brothers, forcing the Order to adjust their strategy to educate their own members first.

The Knights of Columbus, meanwhile, also focused on tightening the efficiency of their own insurance and recruitments strategies in the late 1930s in order to stabilize their membership. What ultimately benefited the Quebec Knights, however, was their renewed role as a high profile Catholic war auxiliary service during the Second World War. The resulting growth in the Order, however, also resulted in renewed struggles for an increase in French in the upper levels of the Supreme Council. While the demands of men like T.A. Fontaine offered little in the way of a threat of resistance to New Haven in the first years after the war, their continued dismissal by authorities in New Haven would eventually turn some members of the Order to a much more militant form of separatist sentiment in the early 1950s. The failure of the separatist movement to secure independence for the Quebec State Council of the Order after their provincial convention of 1952 pushed the OJC to turn to alternative measures to try and weaken the influence of the Knights now that they had proven unwilling to shake free of New Haven's control.

Driving much of the OJC's campaign against the Knights of Columbus in the post-war period, Pierre Vigeant in many ways symbolized the ideological and political shift that occurred within the OJC throughout the post-war era. His own opposition to the Knights fuelled by memories of his youth in New England, Vigeant readily latched on to the OJC's animosity towards the Knights after the experiences of many of its leaders during the Ontario schools crisis. Using his position at *Le Devoir*, Vigeant became the

lynchpin between the two provinces with the largest representation in the OJC – Quebec and Ontario. Vigeant's position as a leader with interests in both regions, however, was becoming increasingly rare in the OJC as the growing Quebec membership began to resent some of the Ottawa leadership's decisions and orders. Whether it was initial reluctance to fight against a fraternal association in which many of their friends, colleagues or even themselves were members, or fear of creating too much of a stir in the province, support for the campaign against the Knights of Columbus began to wane after the failure of the autonomist movement. Increasingly, members began to express their opinion that it was a wasted effort, particularly when it came to creating new associations to try and openly compete with the Knights. The Montreal CPR's refusal to carry out the Chancellory's directive to revive the Chevaliers de Carillon is symptomatic of this increasing resentment of an Ottawa leadership that appeared to be investing so much effort into lost causes when there were other, more pressing, issues in Quebec. This would eventually erupt into a full fledged debate over the question of Quebec's role in French-Canadian life and confederation in the 1960s which would cripple the OJC.

As historians, and society at large, continue to grapple with the long term impact of the transformations of the post-war era on French Canada and Quebec, the period before the Quiet Revolution has become an arena for new debate and analysis about the roots of the sweeping changes to state and societal structures in the 1960s in Quebec. In the case of French-Canadian nationalism, it is often an issue of analyzing the evolution towards to a territorially based nationalism based on the territory of Quebec and its largely francophone population, rather than on the traditional nationalist perspective of a continental French-speaking and Catholic culture. Here, studies of Catholic lay

associations have often provided fascinating insights into these shifts within the general population as well as the elites. Even within lay Catholic circles in the 1950s, questions of growth and politics often revolved around the 'reserve' of Quebec. For the leaders of the Ordre de Jacques Cartier and the Quebec Knights of Columbus, language was a crucial element of living their faith. Which should trump the other, however, remained to be seen. For the OJC, issues of autonomy and possible assimilation remained as important as the shared Catholicism of the Knights, reflecting its firm alliance in the 1940s and 1950s with the ideas of nationalists like Lionel Groulx. For them, in order for the richness of French-canadian culture – language, faith and tradition – Quebec Catholics needed to set the example and not enroll en masse in an American- controlled association.

For the Knights of Columbus in Quebec, meanwhile, the issue of being served in the language of the majority of members in Quebec as well as financial autonomy were issues that eventually exploded into a potential split with the brethren in the United States. Having been pushed to the brink by some of these staunch separatist members within the Order, the Knights' leadership was able, through a variety of manoeuvres, to eventually reach the compromise of establishing a secretariat in the province. Disillusioned members of the Knights split off to join the OJC's last attempt to weaken the strength of the Knights – the Chevaliers de Champlain.

The Ordre de Jacques Cartier was caught by, and was very much a part of, the ideological divide that grew amongst French-Canadians over the role of Quebec and the future tone of French-Canadian nationalism. The Knights of Columbus managed to escape the same fate as the OJC by steering clear of the political turmoil of the late 1950s

and early 1960s by ultimately choosing the Catholic element of their association (choosing to maintain links with the massive international Catholic association that the Order had become) rather than split off into an autonomous association like the Boy Scouts had done.

For forty years however, the Ordre de Jacques Cartier and Knights of Columbus walked similar paths, with the OJC shadowing the Knights in an effort to eliminate a threat to French-Canadian Catholic vitality. For the Ordre de Jacques Cartier, the Knights of Columbus were a constant thread in their development – be it in inspiring the creation of the secret society and its rituals, its attempt to block out the economic influence of international fraternal associations, or to counter its social influence through the creations of clubs like the Clubs Richelieu or the Chevaliers de Champlain. Through the evolution of their campaign one can see the planting of the seeds of division over changing views of French-Canadian nationalism that would eventually blow apart the leadership in the 1960s. The Quebec members of the OJC went on to work in nationalist circles that created the Parti Québécois, where issues of economic sovereignty, political autonomy and the protection of the French language continued to dominate debate, but without the pan-Canadian and religious backdrop that was present within the OJC. It was, in many ways, the passing of an era.

Appendice A

Joint Resolution by the Councils 1001 (Trois-Rivières) and 2669 (Cap de la Madeleine) of the Knights of Columbus, January 19, 1951 (translated).

Whereas the Order of the Knights of Columbus has been founded for the defense of religion and the protection of Catholic people;

Whereas the Order had been founded for social action;

Whereas the Order has been founded for patriotic action;

Whereas it has been founded, on March 29, 1882, by Catholic Irishmen at New Haven, United States, in their own interest;

Whereas local issues must now be considered;

Whereas the needs of French-Canadians are not the same as those of their fellow Catholics of the English language;

Whereas the means of defense of religion, and the protections of the French-Canadian Catholics of the Province of Quebec and of Canada, as well as the goals to be reached and the aid to be given to the Hierarchy call for stronger ties of all French-Canadian forces;

Whereas social conditions are not the same here as in the United States or in other parts of Canada; that they require the expenditure of a larger amount of money on the part of French-Canadians in our circles;

Whereas our French-Canadian patriotic interests are not the same as those of Americans and Canadians of English language, though they be Catholic;

Whereas all the sums paid, up to now, to the Order of the Knights of Columbus of New Haven have proved of little use in promoting French-Canadian interests, to the religious as well as to the social, cultural, and patriotic points of view;

Whereas the Order has reached maturity in the Province of Quebec, considering the number and the quality of its members; therefore,

Be it resolved that the State Council be urged to inform the Supreme Council that we wish to separate ourselves from our brothers of New Haven;

That we wish complete autonomy in every respect;

That the Order be incorporated at Quebec and at Ottawa under the name 'Chevaliers de Colomb' with the power of operating its business, including insurance as well as

contributions, of serving the religious, social, patriotic and cultural interests of the French-Canadians and this, without any prejudice to the deep respect we have for our Brothers of other language or country, or to the charity and mutual help that should unite Catholic societies.

Be it further resolved and ordered that the present resolution be entered in the minutes if this meeting for further action, if needed.

Source: KCA, *Luke Hart, Supreme Advocate Papers*, Misc. material, Quebec - Separatist movement, 1951-1954. SC-5-6-450 Box 242, Fernand Bellerive (Secretary Council 1001 T-R) and B. Paterson (Sec. Council 2669 Cap de la Madeleine) to Grand Knights of all Quebec Councils, January 19, 1951- translated copy.

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