

Unit 11: Video 2 Transcript

Q:7 Did political issues matter to rural people in Quebec?

A: I think for people in rural Quebec the issues of language, religion, culture, and that were not under threat because there were few Anglo-Saxons around to give them a sense of threat, at least in the area around Quebec City, the Beauce south of Quebec City. I think people took their — all of these things for granted, and actually they still do. You go there now, hardly anyone speaks English. An English person comes along, they jump at the chance to practice English maybe. But, so there's that whole other world.

Serge Courville mentioned it several times when he talked about New France. There's a, the world [was] tied to the Atlantic economy. The other world [was] made in the local spaces. And the even the French-speaking elite from the city, I don't think they were — they represented the same world for the people of the rural areas. So I think if people were asked, well, is your language, your culture, religion important? People would say "yes". But I don't think they carried it around as a preoccupation on a day-to-day basis. It's not to say that the concerns of the elite were misplaced, because the Union of 1841, for instance, was specifically designed to assimilate the French-Canadians on Lord Durham's recommendation. But thanks to the alliance of Baldwin [and] LaFontaine, whose names are largely forgotten by almost all Canadians, not just in Quebec, maybe thanks to John Ralston Saul their reputations will be put back where they deserve to be; on a very high pedestal. But thanks to their efforts, the worst things that people feared didn't happen. And a lot of good things came out of it. The alliance of French and English to build Canada, for instance. But I think the people in the rural countryside, again, had greater preoccupations and when I ask my students today how important are politics to you, it's getting better. It's up to ten percent now. But for a few years people were just — they're totally into their lives. And I think farming in the 19th century was far more time consuming and all encompassing for people than even iPods are today.