

The Quiet Revolution and the Creation of Concordia University

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ABSTRACT

Concordia University was created in 1974 out of the merger of Jesuit-run Loyola College with Sir George Williams University, but the process leading to this new university stretched back to the mid-1960s, along the way reflecting the secularization of Quebec society that was one of the hallmarks of the province's Quiet Revolution. Loyola College faced an existential crisis when the Université de Montréal ended a long-standing arrangement by which it granted degrees to Loyola students. This arrangement reflected the power of religion, and especially Catholicism, in Quebec society that was now under attack, with language taking its place. Ultimately, Loyola was only able to continue offering university degrees by merging with Sir George Williams to form Concordia, a development that was deeply embedded in the combustible politics of language in Quebec at the time.

RÉSUMÉ

L'Université Concordia a été fondée en 1974 de la fusion entre le Collège Loyola, une institution jésuite, et l'Université Sir George Williams. Mais le processus menant à la création de cette nouvelle université remonte au milieu des années 1960, reflétant, en cours de route, la sécularisation de la société québécoise reconnue comme l'une des caractéristiques de la Révolution tranquille de la province. Le Collège Loyola a fait face à une crise existentielle lorsque l'Université de Montréal a mis fin à leur accord de longue date par lequel elle octroyait des diplômes aux étudiants de Loyola. Cet accord reflétait alors le pouvoir de la religion, principalement celui du catholicisme, dans la société québécoise. Cependant, ce pouvoir était en déclin, la langue prenant la place de la religion. En fin de compte, le Collège Loyola ne pouvait continuer à offrir des diplômes universitaires qu'en fusionnant avec l'Université Sir George Williams pour former l'Université Concordia, une évolution qui était, à l'époque, profondément liée à la politique linguistique explosive du Québec.

In the Shadow of Bill 22

In August 1974, the Quebec government discreetly passed a series of orders-in-council that allowed the creation of Montreal's Concordia University, bringing about the merger of Jesuit-run Loyola College with Sir George Williams University. This action

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ended a decade-long process which provides the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the Quiet Revolution on the structure of Quebec's university system, and more specifically, the role of religion and language in connection with higher education in the province.

Much has been written about the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s and early 1970s, which saw a significant change, both in how French-speaking Quebecers viewed themselves and in how the Quebec state provided services to advance that population's interests.¹ As Jocelyn Létourneau has put it, there was "the transition from the old-time French Canadians who thought of themselves as conquered, humiliated and demoralized to the new Québécois who were accomplished, entrepreneurial, and ambitious."² And an important tool in that transformation was the province's educational system, which had long been organized along confessional lines, but which was now to be directly shaped by the provincial government and to be defined with an eye towards language as the key marker determining how services were delivered.³

These changes were most visible in terms of Quebec's public schools, which since the mid-nineteenth century, had been organized around school boards that were defined as either Catholic or Protestant. By extension, it was impossible for a public school in the province to be considered religiously neutral. Within these confessional boards there were schools in which the language of instruction was English and others in which it was French.⁴ In practice, this meant that nearly all of the nominally Protestant schools provided an education in English, while within the majority Catholic sector there were schools providing instruction in French or English, the latter bolstered by the postwar arrival of Catholic immigrants who gravitated to institutions where their children might learn the dominant language in North America, if not in Quebec.⁵

The apparent role of English-language schools in weakening the place of French within the province led to significant conflict, largely between non-francophones, who upheld their right to choose their children's language of instruction, and an increasingly interventionist provincial government that was focused on bolstering the place of French, now that language had become the primary marker that mattered.⁶ In that context, in July 1974, the Quebec government introduced Bill 22, which (in addition to declaring French the official language of the province) for the first time provided rules as to which students could attend an English-language school, regardless of which confessional board was involved. In the process, religion was pushed to the side and language took centre stage. While there would be further tweaking of the rules regarding access to English-language education in the years to follow, Bill 22 established the dominance of language over religion in regard to primary and secondary education in Quebec.⁷

While Bill 22 received much attention at the time and has been the focus for considerable analysis over the subsequent half century, little has been written about the impact of the Quiet Revolution upon university-level education in the province, but the creation of Concordia provides precisely such an opportunity. As we will see, it was no coincidence that the orders-in-council that made Concordia possible were enacted only a few weeks after the introduction of Bill 22 and were shaped by

the same forces that had redefined education at the primary and secondary levels. From beginning to end, Concordia's story reflected both the decline of the power of religion, and more specifically Catholicism, and the growing power of language as a defining force in Quebec.

At the Université de Montréal

The road that led directly to the creation of Concordia University began, not on the campuses of the two schools that would merge to form the institution, but rather at the Université de Montréal. Going back to the late nineteenth century when it constituted a branch of Université Laval, Montreal's only Catholic-run university provided a route for several Jesuit colleges to set their own rules so they could effectively convey the degree of *baccalauréat ès arts*, which allowed admission into the university.⁸ While all of the Catholic-run *collèges classiques* provided eight-year programs leading to that degree, only the Jesuit institutions had the right to set their own curriculum and exams, the others having to comply with rules established by the university. The autonomy of the Jesuit colleges was first confirmed in regard to Montreal's Collège Sainte-Marie, which by way of a papal edict from 1889 (what was known as the Jamdudum Constitution) was able to provide certificates to students it deemed to be qualified; these certificates could then be exchanged for degrees from the Université de Montréal.⁹ Students who may never have set foot in that university and had met none of its requirements were able to claim a degree from the institution.

This arrangement was extended to Loyola College when it became autonomous in 1896. Loyola had begun as part of Collège Sainte-Marie, where it provided English-language instruction, mostly to Montreal's Irish-Catholic community.¹⁰ The Jesuits running Loyola were not content, however, with its dependent status, a situation that did not seem to bother their counterparts at Sainte-Marie, who appeared comfortable with operating as a degree-granting institution in practice, if not in law. Loyola's administrators concluded that since they were serving a linguistic minority, it would be prudent to have their own degree-granting powers to protect themselves from unforeseeable challenges in the future, a view that turned out to be prescient.¹¹

In that context, they pushed in 1899 for a charter with all the powers of the full-fledged universities, and a bill towards that end received second reading in the Quebec Legislative (later National) Assembly. However, the rector of Université Laval, Mgr J. C. K. Laflamme, unwilling to abandon influence over Catholic university-level education in the province, opposed the bill, which was amended so that Loyola College continued to have the same status as Collège Sainte-Marie.¹² In the decades that followed, there were various efforts by Loyola to secure degree-granting powers, but none succeeded. For instance, in the 1920s the Quebec government seemed well-disposed to create an English Catholic university, but this time it was blocked by Mgr Paul Bruchési, the archbishop of Montreal, who insisted on preserving the Université de Montréal's control.¹³

By the end of the 1950s, however, even the Jesuits running Collège Sainte-Marie recognized that the forces of secularization were gaining strength in Quebec, joining

their Loyola counterparts in seeking a university charter, in their case to create a Université Sainte-Marie, which would also incorporate another Jesuit institution, Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf.¹⁴ But while the Sainte-Marie initiative appeared to be offensive, building on a right secured in 1959 to grant its own university degrees in religion and theology, the Jesuits at Loyola were playing defence, fearful that the Université de Montréal might pull the plug on its arrangement with the English Catholic institution.

Loyola's concerns were also somewhat different from Sainte-Marie's, since its curriculum had evolved in the postwar period to approximate that of English-language universities in North America, effectively offering the education for a bachelor's degree, even if it was still only able to convey the *baccalauréat ès arts*, and only with the participation of the Université de Montréal, which issued the degree.¹⁵ But this participation seemed to be hanging by a thread when in 1959 Reverend Irénée Lussier, the last clerical rector of the Université de Montréal, welcomed his counterpart, the last rector of Loyola College, Father Patrick Malone, to his new position by explaining how the relationship between the two institutions was based upon "a somewhat antiquated convention which [was] no longer acceptable." In response, Malone observed that "any convention short of complete autonomy is antiquated since it does not provide Loyola with the identity, prestige, and voice to discharge its duties towards its constituency."¹⁶ By "complete autonomy" Malone meant that Loyola needed to be made into a university.

These efforts in the early 1960s to create new Catholic-run universities were a far cry from the movement across the world to form what Jill Pellew and Miles Taylor called "utopian universities." As they explained, "seldom has there been so much experimentation in what a university should look like physically; how, what, and whom it might teach; and how it should be governed."¹⁷ In Canada, this movement could be seen in the creation of Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and York University in Toronto; and in Quebec there were certainly utopian ideas surrounding the opening of the Université du Québec à Montréal in 1969, part of a province-wide system of campuses, what Martial Dassylva has described as "a new-style university" marked by "the originality of its programs and its methods of teaching."¹⁸

By contrast, the proposed Jesuit universities harkened back to older models in which religion played a central role, and as a result, they ran up against those who wanted less, not more, clerical influence over Quebec education. Opposition particularly focused on the Université Sainte-Marie project, French-speaking leaders such as André Laurendeau pointing to the fact that "at the moment French Canadians have five universities. All of them are under ecclesiastical control. This is a medieval situation.... It is hard to believe that a lay person, in the French-Canadian community, is currently unable to serve as chancellor or rector of a university."¹⁹ Laurendeau's skepticism as to whether this was the best way to expand Quebec's university system was echoed from various quarters and played a key role in the decision by the newly elected provincial government of Jean Lesage to appoint a royal commission in late 1960 to examine all aspects of Quebec's educational system.²⁰ As Gilles Dussault explained, "one event in particular led to the establishment of the Royal Commission,

namely the demand by the Jesuits to found two new universities in Montreal.²¹

The Parent Commission did not entirely close the door to the Jesuit projects since it proposed creating new “limited charter universities” which would be “autonomous ... vested with the power to give all the instruction for the first university degree (the bachelor’s degree) and to confer this degree themselves.”²² In practice, however, the commission’s formula could not work in regard to Université Sainte-Marie, whose promoters had conceived of a full-fledged university, with the same status as the Université de Montréal.²³ Loyola University appeared to be a better fit for the “limited” model, because the institution was never conceived as one dedicated to graduate studies and research. Nevertheless, this was also a project without a future as it was impossible, with the growing sensitivity about the status of French in the province, to countenance a third English-language university in Montreal, alongside McGill and Sir George Williams, when there was still only one with French as its language of instruction. Even the Association des professeurs de l’Université de Montréal, which hated the idea of a clerically run French-language university, could recognize “the patriotic duty” of those supporting the Université Sainte-Marie project in the face of the possible creation of Loyola University.²⁴

In that context, by the mid-1960s there was little likelihood that either Jesuit college would become a university, but there now emerged a threat to their very existence as institutions of higher education when the Université de Montréal moved to end the confessional relationship that had made their indirect granting of degrees possible. This threat, linked to the secularization of the Université de Montréal, was symbolized by the appointment in 1965 of Roger Gaudry as its first lay rector. As Gaudry observed, “I couldn’t understand why the Université de Montréal should continue to grant degrees over which it had absolutely no control,” given that “the university is distinguished by being one of the great French-language institutions in the world and not by its religious character.”²⁵

The wheels were now turning to end the relationship between Gaudry’s university and the Jesuit colleges. In 1965, a report tabled at a meeting of the Université de Montréal’s Commission des Études noted that “the connection between Loyola College and the Université de Montréal was based solely on religious ties.” Given that those ties no longer meant what they once did, the report concluded that such “affiliations are no longer justified and should be cancelled.” To avoid leaving Loyola students without a path to a degree, the report called on the Quebec government to create an English-language Catholic university, which would have solved the university’s dilemma. This suggestion provoked objection at the meeting from, among others, the nationalist historian Michel Brunet, who could not countenance another “English-language university in Montreal.”²⁶

There was no sudden breaking of the ties with Loyola, but the end was on the horizon when Gaudry and his colleagues brought in a massive reform of the university’s charter in 1967.²⁷ In terms of the creation of Concordia, the important part of the new charter was the setting of a terminal date for Loyola College (along with Collège Sainte-Marie) to grant degrees via the Université de Montréal. Students admitted to the Jesuit colleges after July 1972 would no longer be able to go this route, meaning

that the clock was now ticking for the colleges to choose one of two options: “either become a CÉGEP or disappear by way of merging with another university.”²⁸

In the restructuring of the Quebec education system in the late 1960s, the final years of the collèges classiques were recast as Collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel (cégeps), which would fit between secondary schools and universities, providing a path towards university education for those so inclined, while also offering professional training for students not intending to attend university.²⁹ Loyola and Sainte-Marie might have become cégeps, but this would have ended their goal of having the right to grant university degrees. To stay true to that goal, their only remaining option was to join with another institution. In the case of Collège Sainte-Marie, this meant integration into the new Université du Québec à Montréal, as some of its professors and facilities became part of the second, full-fledged French-language university in the city, an institution that had long been sought by those pushing for the secularization of Quebec education.³⁰ As for Loyola College, it was now on a journey that would ultimately lead to its merger with Sir George Williams University.

Sir George Williams University and the Path to Concordia

While Loyola College's history was marked by its inability to secure university status, this was not the case for its eventual merger partner. Sir George Williams College was created in 1926 to offer higher education as an extension of the Montreal YMCA (Sir George Williams was the Y's founder), at first providing education, mostly in the evening, to people who were working during the day. In 1948, the college secured full university status with degree-granting powers and was renamed in 1959 as Sir George Williams University. Into the 1960s, the downtown university took on the trappings of a modern institution, with numerous departments creating graduate programs and with the construction of the mammoth Hall Building, which sported the brutalist architecture so common on campuses at the time, giving it the appearance of permanence and modernity that was sorely lacking at Loyola, which was located in a residential neighbourhood in Montreal's west end and whose main buildings dated back to the early twentieth century.³¹

To be sure, Sir George Williams was not without its problems: too little space for too many students, no student residences, and no green space; but it also had no reason to be concerned about whether it would exist over the long run. As a result, when Loyola, starting in 1967, was faced with its existential crisis, the response from Sir George administrators was less than enthusiastic. As Michel Despland, a philosophy professor who would play an important role in the merger process, observed: “There was no positive enthusiasm [at Sir George] for the prospect of the merger of Sir George Williams and Loyola.”³² Similarly, Jack Bordan, at the time dean of engineering, recalled that there was some consideration of the merger idea at a deans' meeting “in light of difficulties Loyola was having yet again on getting a charter.” Bordan describes how “the idea was simply stonewalled; it was shot down in flames by at least one other member of the Deans' Committee. Sam Madras, the Dean of Science, said at the time, ‘Look, we've got troubles of our own enough; we don't need *their* troubles.’”³³

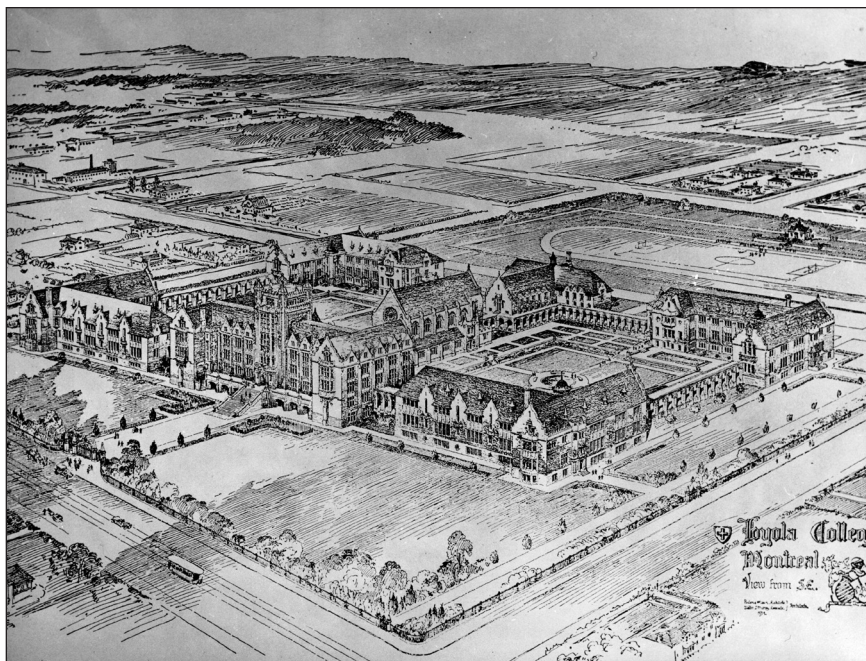


Figure 1. Architect's original conception of the Loyola Campus, view facing the campus from the south-east on Sherbrooke Street. Design by Architects Peden & McLaren, 1913. I007-02-55, Concordia Archives.



Figure 2. Hall Building under construction, ca 1965. View from Guy and de Maisonneuve (then Saint-Luc/Burnside). P184-02-0, Concordia Archives.

In spite of this reticence, informal talks began in 1968, according to Despland, because of the encouragement of the Quebec government, which made it clear that “the only option for the two institutions was by working in a unified manner.”³⁴ For his part, André Laprade, who would serve as secretary on the Sir George Williams Committee on Cooperation with Loyola, described how, following a certain initial lack of interest, pressure was felt from Quebec City: “It must have been in the meetings with the government over financing that we got wind that they wanted us to take a more positive role. In fact I think we must’ve got the message very clear that they expected Sir George to do something rather than just sit and wait.”³⁵

Successive Quebec governments could hardly remain unconcerned with the situation created by the Université de Montréal’s withdrawal from its long-standing arrangement with Loyola College. If it allowed Loyola to become a *cégep* or to simply cease to exist, it ran the risk of alienating the large and vocal alumni, particularly among English-speaking Catholics, who viewed the college as a crucial part of their community. At the same time, as we have seen, with efforts afoot to bolster the French language, there was never any possibility that Loyola would become a university in its own right.³⁶ Even with the creation of the Université du Québec system in 1968, there were four French-language universities in the province (UQ, Laval, Montréal, and Sherbrooke) and three English-language institutions (McGill, Bishop’s, and Sir George Williams). Given growing nationalist sentiment, creating a fourth English-language university, resulting in parity with the French sector, was unthinkable. Ultimately, a merger of some sort was the only way out for the province.

In that context, André Laprade described how “Loyola was out fishing,” looking for a partner. They were in contact with McGill, but this was a non-starter when McGill only showed interest in swallowing Loyola to create “a satellite campus in the west end of Montreal,” dismissing the idea of maintaining anything of the Loyola identity. As the college’s administrators put it at the time: “Loyola is unique among the institutions of higher education in Quebec. For seventy-five years, it has remained a Catholic college, an institution of liberal education, and an undergraduate school.” Even in such disciplines as engineering, Loyola pursued “humanistic goals.”³⁷ There were also talks about Loyola becoming an English component in the Université du Québec system that was just taking shape. But this option floundered when the president of the new province-wide university, Alphonse Riverin, suggested that serious talks could only take place “perhaps in five years,” far too late from Loyola’s perspective.³⁸

While these overtures were being made, and with a nudge from the Quebec government, exploratory talks began between Loyola and Sir George Williams in fall 1968, but from the start, it was clear that Loyola, in spite of its weak bargaining position and the growing secularization of Quebec education, was ever preoccupied with avoiding complete absorption and maintaining something of its Jesuit roots. Writing at the time, Laprade described how “merger is not Loyola’s favourite pattern of cooperation.... We conclude therefore that Loyola College does not see merger with Sir George Williams and the setting up of a new merged institution as being in the

interests of Loyola College.” He speculated that Loyola’s concerns might be allayed if there were a loose federation between the two institutions, but he “fail[ed] to see how this would be in the interest of Sir George Williams.” Nevertheless, “we still want to discuss cooperation with Loyola.”³⁹

In that context, talks continued in 1969 between two professors, Michel Despland, then the assistant dean of arts at Sir George Williams, and Donald Savage, a history professor from Loyola. Recognizing Loyola’s sensitivities, they set out to create what they called “the federal university,” in which the arts (humanities, social sciences, and fine arts) would be “decentralized in two Arts Colleges, namely [the existing] Loyola College and [a newly constituted] SGWU College,” the idea being that the arts at Loyola would reflect something of its origins. As for the other faculties (science, engineering, and commerce), they would be located entirely in the recently constructed Hall Building on the Sir George Williams campus, even though there had been teaching in these fields at Loyola.⁴⁰

While Despland and Savage may have believed that they were responding to Loyola’s concerns, that was not the view of a high-level Loyola committee on the college’s future. The Sir George Williams Board of Governors approved the report shortly after it was distributed, but at Loyola, there was a sense that the document was “unacceptable because it reduces Loyola to the status of a liberal arts college. The essence of the proposal involves such a radical change that the basic philosophy and identity of Loyola would be unrecognizable.” And when Loyola expressed its concerns, the Sir George Williams administration became “rather cool” towards the merger.⁴¹

Quebec Intervenes

And so the clock continued to tick towards the termination of Loyola’s relationship with the Université de Montréal at the end of July 1972. Over the previous two years there had been sporadic meetings on a possible merger with Sir George Williams, but negotiations were going nowhere, that is until the province’s Conseil des universités dropped a bomb that ultimately led to the creation of Concordia. The conseil, an advisory body that reported to the minister of education, conveniently tabled a report that touched largely, although not exclusively, on the future of Loyola College only weeks before the Université de Montréal arrangement was slated to end. Pulling no punches, the conseil made it clear that, from its perspective, Loyola’s days were numbered:

The government of Quebec cannot approve the entrance of a new institution in the university network unless it is justified by the needs of the population.... The government has, in all instances, refused the transition of Loyola to a full-scale university by not granting the charter that it requested. Therefore, the question today is not when will Loyola become a university, but rather what are the possibilities of its association with another higher education establishment or its integration into it.⁴²

Starting from this premise, the report showed the technocrats in Quebec City, the new masters of the province following the Quiet Revolution, working their magic.⁴³ The document lacked any particular vision for university-level education in English, since it constituted instead an exercise in bean-counting, reflecting a larger pattern in Canadian universities by the early 1970s when the growth years of the 1960s, the period of “utopias,” were replaced by efforts to rationalize and reduce. As John Saywell noted in regard to belt-tightening at York University in the early 1970s, “the party was over.”⁴⁴

In that context, the Conseil des universités forecast that there would be 20,000 students in Quebec’s English-language universities by the start of the 1980s, while there would be capacity for 28,000. There were slightly more than 3,000 students at Loyola, so if the college were shut down and its resources absorbed by other institutions, there would still be excess capacity. In this context, the Conseil was sympathetic to the idea of a merger with Sir George Williams, if “there will be only a downtown campus.”⁴⁵ But regardless of whether a merger occurred, the conseil wanted to see an end to all university-level education on the Loyola campus after June 1975 (which is when the last cohort accepted under the soon-to-be-terminated agreement with Université de Montréal would be graduating), with the result that the buildings at Loyola would no longer be “included in the inventory of physical resources of English universities.”⁴⁶

The conseil’s report definitely grabbed the attention of Loyola’s administrators. Although they might have come to this conclusion sooner, it finally seemed to penetrate, after decades of rejection, that they would never be getting their university charter, and that even the continuation of university education at Loyola (if not by Loyola College) was in peril. As Russell Breen, then dean of arts at Loyola, put it: “The chips were now down, and it was going to be necessary for us to go for broke.”⁴⁷ He suggested going to Quebec City to see the minister of education, François Cloutier. But before that meeting took place, in July 1972, Father Breen arranged to get together with Claude Ryan, the highly respected director of *Le Devoir*, whom Breen had known when both were involved with Action catholique canadienne, a movement dedicated to finding a place for Catholicism in postwar Quebec, of which Ryan was national secretary from 1945 to 1962.⁴⁸

Ryan asked Breen when the meeting with Cloutier was scheduled so that he could publish an editorial in *Le Devoir* the day before it took place. In his piece, “Why Should Loyola Be a Scapegoat?”, Ryan did not deny that the English-language universities had proportionately greater resources than their French counterparts (taking into account the linguistic division of the population) but wondered why Loyola had to be the scapegoat. He touted the distinctive nature of Loyola’s “university” education and pointed to its increasing role in teaching part-time students (not included in the Conseil’s calculations). If cuts had to be made, he wondered why Bishop’s University, located in the Eastern Townships and even smaller than Loyola, had not been considered, and even suggested that it might be “more realistic to eliminate certain boondoggles at McGill and elsewhere.” Finally, he had trouble seeing what was gained by concentrating all English-language university education in downtown

Montreal, when there was the option of “the integration being sought between Loyola and Sir George” as opposed to the “brutal absorption proposed by the Conseil des universités.”⁴⁹

As Breen tells the story, when they entered Cloutier’s office, *Le Devoir* was on the minister’s desk, opened to the Ryan editorial. The minister assured the delegation that he had no intention of following the recommendation to end university-level education at Loyola, but at the same time wanted to see progress on merger negotiations. Towards this end, he called upon representatives from Loyola and Sir George to meet with him in his office in early August 1972.⁵⁰ Within weeks of that meeting, a joint committee from the two institutions (which had been meeting since late 1971) came up with a “model for the new university,” which envisioned adapting the existing Sir George Williams charter to create what became Concordia, precluding the need to seek government approval for a new institution. The model also imagined a full range of academic activity on the two campuses, a considerable improvement, from the Loyola perspective, over earlier proposals that would have significantly limited the scope of teaching on that campus.⁵¹

The model was approved by both the Board of Trustees at Loyola College and the Sir George Williams Board of Governors in November 1972, and in the months that followed, the details were fine-tuned including the selection of “Concordia” as the new name.⁵² Then, in early August 1973, the pertinent boards met again, this time to approve the transfer of assets to the new institution, following which the reconstituted Sir George Williams board, now including representatives from what had been Loyola College, held its initial meeting.

While it appeared that Concordia University had been born, the actual birth only took place a year later due to the Quebec government’s delay in adopting orders-in-council that would officially change the name and, more importantly, provide provincial guarantees for loans that had been taken out by Loyola College and that would now be assumed by the new university.⁵³ In the year that followed, for all intents and purposes, Sir George Williams University operated as if it were Concordia, but without the name, with the new board meeting regularly. But behind this appearance of normality, the final act in the merger story once again reflected the social and political tensions in Quebec at the time.

The Final Act

For the first months following the internal approval of the merger, the Liberal government of Robert Bourassa was reluctant to act on the Concordia file during the lead-up to provincial elections that were held in October 1973. Bourassa was facing off against the Parti Québécois (PQ), which had emerged as its only real competition and which was eager to paint the Liberals as bending over backwards to accommodate English-speakers by creating this new university.⁵⁴ The delay in finalizing the merger was designed to prevent the PQ from making such accusations.

But even following the election, nationalist elements continued to make their voices heard about the creation of Concordia, only protracting the delay by the

Bourassa government to take the final steps. In November 1973, the Association des professeurs de l'Université de Montréal, which had earlier opposed providing university charters to the Jesuit-run colleges, now came out strongly against the merger, holding to the line that any new universities should be French-language institutions run by laypeople. With the historian Michel Brunet again playing a central role, the professors resolved that "in view of the real needs of the Quebec population..., McGill and Sir George Williams provide sufficient facilities for the English-speaking population."⁵⁵

And the way forward seemed no clearer by early 1974 when the government was still weighing its options. Lysiane Gagnon, writing in *La Presse*, observed that "the Department of Education has produced numerous studies over the past six months to determine whether the transfer of the Loyola charter to the new Concordia University could be done by an order-in-council rather than by the National Assembly." Regardless of how the government chose to proceed, Gagnon characterized the merger as a not-very-veiled attempt "to create a third English-language university in Montreal," given that there would be a certain redundancy of teaching on the two campuses, resulting in expenditures that would not be available in the French sector. As she put it: "We are looking at an incredible duplication of services at a time when the universities (and in particular the anglophone universities) are experiencing a decline in enrolments."⁵⁶

Clearly, the order-in-council option had the advantage of being out of the glare of public scrutiny, so that it might preclude the blowback from critics such as Gagnon, and ultimately this was the route that was followed in August 1974, almost a year to the day from the internal agreement regarding the merger.⁵⁷ Reflecting on that year in limbo, Alexander Duff, chair of the Sir George Williams Board of Governors, recognized that without governmental approval, "we might have had to take [the merger] back. We carried on, but what the problem was at the governmental level, I can't tell you."⁵⁸ In the end, however, both the problem causing the delay and the incentive for finally, legally creating Concordia University were deeply embedded in the combustible politics of language in Quebec at the time.

In this regard, it was significant that the Bourassa government moved Bill 22 through the National Assembly in late July, only weeks before the Concordia orders-in-council were approved. Among its various provisions, the bill set regulations regarding exactly who could attend English-language schools, reversing legislation from the late 1960s that had effectively provided parents with freedom to choose their child's language of instruction. With Bill 22, students would have to indicate sufficient knowledge of English to attend an English-language school, resulting in the testing of five-year-olds to determine their linguistic competence.⁵⁹

In an effort to cut the legs out from under the increasingly powerful PQ, Bourassa hoped that Bill 22 would win nationalists to his side, figuring that English speakers would stick with his party no matter what it did. But just to make sure that this was the case, the Liberal government had the opportunity in August 1974, with the next provincial election nowhere in sight, to throw English-speakers a bone, by finally taking the steps required to make Concordia a reality.⁶⁰ In a sense, it was only

fitting that Concordia was, at least in part, born out of linguistic conflict, since the start of this story—the Université de Montréal’s termination of its link with Loyola College—spoke to the secularization of Quebec’s institutions, the decline of connections along religious lines, and the emergence of language as the primary marker that mattered in terms of education in the province.

Notes

A shorter version of this essay appears in *Concordia at Fifty* (Montreal: Concordia University Press, 2024), a collection of essays to mark the university’s fiftieth anniversary.

- 1 The Quiet Revolution has generated a substantial literature. For an introduction, see Peter Gossage and J. I. Little, *An Illustrated History of Quebec: Tradition and Modernity* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- 2 Jocelyn Létourneau, “La production historique courante portant sur le Québec et ses rapports avec la construction des figures identitaires d’une communauté communicationnelle,” *Recherches sociographiques* 36, no. 1 (1995): 9–45. This and all subsequent passages in the article that were originally in French have been translated by the author. The original French versions are in the notes. Létourneau described “le passage du Sujet vaincu, humilié et démoralisé (L’Ancien Canadien français) au Sujet accompli, entreprenant et ambitieux (le Nouveau Québécois).” For a discussion of the decline in the power of religion in Quebec, see Geneviève Zubrzycki, *Beheading the Saint: Nationalism, Secularism, and Religion in Quebec* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
- 3 For an overview of the history of Quebec education, see Andrée Dufour, *Histoire de l’éducation au Québec* (Montreal: Boréal, 1997).
- 4 Roderick MacLeod and Mary Anne Poutanen, *A Meeting of the People: School Boards and Protestant Education in Quebec, 1801–1998* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004).
- 5 For an introduction to the place of postwar immigrants in the English Catholic sector, see Donat Taddeo and Raymond Taras, *Le débat linguistique au Québec: La communauté italienne et la langue d’enseignement* (Montreal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 1987).
- 6 Dufour, *Histoire de l’éducation*, 95–96.
- 7 Marc Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 98–107.
- 8 The *baccalauréat ès arts* should not be confused with the bachelor’s degree that was conferred after taking courses at a university. Nevertheless, the *baccalauréat ès arts* had a certain legitimacy since it bore the stamp of a university. As Gilles Dussault noted in 1963, because of the arrangement between the colleges and Université de Montréal, there was “la confusion totale.” Gilles Dussault, “L’Université devant la Commission Parent,” *University Affairs* 4, no. 4 (1963): 8.
- 9 Jean Cinq-Mars, *Histoire du collège Sainte-Marie de Montréal* (Montreal: HMH Hurtubise, 1998), 208–09. Also see Carolyne Hébert, “La genèse de l’Université du Québec, 1960–1967” (MA thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2007), 16–18.
- 10 For the early history of Loyola College, see T. P. Slattery, *Loyola and Montreal: A History* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1962).
- 11 Slattery, *Loyola and Montreal*, 72.
- 12 Leo Bissonnette, “Loyola of Montreal: A Sociological Analysis of an Educational Institution in Transition Between 1969–1974” (MA thesis, Concordia University, 1977), 41–42.

- 13 Bissonnette, "Loyola of Montreal," 44.
- 14 Cinq-Mars, *Histoire du collège*, 351–64.
- 15 Slattery, *Loyola and Montreal*, 275.
- 16 Lussier to Malone, August 27, 1959, as reproduced in Loyola College, *Brief Submitted by Loyola College to the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education* (Montreal: Loyola College, 1961), 14. For Malone's response, see Malone to Reverend Irénée Lussier, September 4, 1959, Fonds Secrétariat-général, D35/c10/95, Archives de l'Université de Montréal.
- 17 Jill Pellew and Miles Taylor, eds., *Utopian Universities: A Global History of the New Campuses of the 1960s* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 1–2.
- 18 Martial Dassylva, "L'Université du Québec: université nouvelle, nouvelles universités," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 16, no. 2 (2008): 245. Dassylva described "une université nouvelle" marked by "l'originalité de ses programmes et de ses méthodes d'enseignement."
- 19 *Le Devoir*, October 21, 1960. "Les Canadiens français possèdent à l'heure actuelle cinq universités. Elles sont toutes à direction ecclésiastique. C'est une situation médiévale.... Songez qu'à l'heure actuelle aucun universitaire laïc, dans la communauté canadienne-française, ne peut aspirer à devenir chancelier ou recteur d'université."
- 20 Association des professeurs de l'Université de Montréal, *L'Université dit non aux Jésuites* (Montreal: Éditions de l'Homme, 1961).
- 21 Dussault, "L'Université devant la Commission Parent." "Un événement précis occasionna l'institution de la Commission Royale: la demande de la Compagnie de Jésus de fonder à Montréal deux nouvelles universités."
- 22 Québec, *Report of the Royal (Parent) Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec*, 2A (1964), 216.
- 23 Cinq-Mars, *Histoire du collège*, 364–69.
- 24 Association des professeurs de l'Université de Montréal, *L'Université dit non aux Jésuites*, 24. They referred to "le devoir patriotique" of those supporting the idea.
- 25 Hélène Bizier, *L'Université de Montréal: La quête du savoir* (Montreal: Libre Expression, 1993), 241–42. "Je ne voyais pas pourquoi l'Université de Montréal aurait continué de décerner des diplômes sur lesquels elle n'avait absolument aucun contrôle," given that "c'est le fait d'être une des plus grandes universités d'expression française au monde qui caractérise l'Université de Montréal et non son caractère religieux."
- 26 Commission des études, December 9, 1965, Fonds Secrétariat-général, D35/c10/94, Archives de l'Université de Montréal. "Le rattachement de Loyola College à l'Université de Montréal a été provoqué et réalisé pour la seule raison de professionnalité.... [Telles] affiliations ne sont plus justifiées et devraient être annulées." Brunet opposed creating another "université anglophone à Montréal." I discuss Brunet's career in *Making History in Twentieth Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). The historian also opposed granting a university charter to Collège Sainte-Marie as lead author of *L'Université dit non aux Jésuites*.
- 27 *Charte de l'Université de Montréal*, Quebec Statutes, 1967, c. 129.
- 28 Cinq-Mars, *Histoire du collège*, 376. The options were "ou devenir un cégep, ou disparaître en s'assimilant à une autre université."
- 29 Dufour, *Histoire de l'éducation*, 88–89.
- 30 Cinq-Mars, *Histoire du collège*, 369–78.
- 31 For the history of Sir George Williams College/University, see Henry Hall, *The Georgian Spirit: The Story of Sir George Williams University* (Montreal: Sir George Williams University, 1967); D. B. Clarke, *Decades of Decision: Sir George Williams University, 1952–53 to 1972–73* (Montreal: n.p., 1973). Sir George Williams University was perhaps best known for the 1969 Computer Affair, an important moment in African-Canadian history, triggered by discriminatory behaviour by a professor towards

- his Caribbean-born students. There are many treatments of the affair, but to view it in a larger context, see Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), ch. 5.
- 32 Interview with Michel Despland, 1980, file I0010-11-0010, Office of the Principal fonds, Concordia University Records Management and Archives (hereafter Concordia Archives), <https://archive.org/details/I0010-11-0010>. This is one of numerous interviews (some referenced below) conducted in 1980 with administrators and faculty who had some connection with the merger.
- 33 Interview with Jack Bordan, 1980, Concordia Archives, <https://archive.org/details/I0010-11-0006>.
- 34 Denis de Belleval, Directeur de la recherche, Direction générale de l'enseignement supérieur, Ministère de l'Éducation, to Father Patrick Malone, Rector, Loyola College, November 20, 1969, box 433, file I0147, series 11A, Loyola College, Office of the President fonds, Concordia Archives. "Il n'y avait d'avenir pour les deux institutions que dans un développement unifié."
- 35 Interview with André Laprade, 1980, Concordia Archives, <https://archive.org/details/I0010-11-0014>.
- 36 Bissonnette, "Loyola of Montreal," 44.
- 37 "Historical Survey: Relations Between Sir George William University and Loyola," June 13, 1972, Office of the Principal fonds, Concordia Archives, <https://archive.org/details/1972-07-13-historical-survey-relations-between-sgwu-and-loyola/mode/2up>.
- 38 Loyola College, Interim Report, Joint Board/Senate Committee on Future of Loyola, September 22, 1970, Ready Reference file, Concordia Archives. The Concordia archives pulled documents from various files to form a small collection pertinent to the merger.
- 39 André Laprade, Memorandum, March 18, 1969, box 433, file I0147, series 11A, Loyola College, Office of the President fonds, Concordia Archives.
- 40 Donald Savage and Michel Despland to the secretaries of the Joint Loyola-Sir George Williams Negotiating Committee, September 30, 1969, Ready Reference file, Concordia Archives.
- 41 Loyola College, Interim Report, Joint Board/Senate Committee on Future of Loyola, September 22, 1970, Ready Reference file, Concordia Archives.
- 42 Québec, Conseil des universités, *Report of the Council of Universities to the Minister of Education regarding the General Orientation of English-Speaking Universities and the Future of Bishop's and Loyola* (Québec: Conseil des universités, June 16, 1972), 8.
- 43 Gossage and Little, *Illustrated History of Quebec*, 238.
- 44 John Saywell, *Someone to Teach Them: York and the Great University Explosion 1960–1973* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 229.
- 45 Conseil des universités, *Report*, 30.
- 46 Conseil des universités, *Report*, 34.
- 47 Interview with Russell Breen, 1980, Concordia Archives, <https://archive.org/details/I0010-11-0020>.
- 48 Ryan's role in the Action catholique canadienne movement is discussed in Michael Gauvreau, *The Hand of God: Claude Ryan and the Fate of Canadian Liberalism, 1925–1971* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).
- 49 *Le Devoir*, July 12, 1972. In his article "Loyola doit-il servir de bouc émissaire?" Ryan wondered whether it might be "plus réaliste d'éliminer certaines boursoffures à McGill et ailleurs." He called for "l'intégration recherchée entre Loyola et Sir George" as opposed to the "absorption brutale que propose le Conseil des universités."
- 50 Statement from the Very Reverend Patrick Malone, president of Loyola College, July 14, 1972, Ready Reference file, Concordia Archives.
- 51 "A Model for the New University," September 21, 1972, Ready Reference file, Concordia Archives.

- 52 Joint Committee to the Board of Trustees of Loyola and the Board of Governors of Sir George Williams University, May 8, 1973, Ready Reference file, Concordia Archives. The name was derived from the Latin motto of the Ville de Montréal, “Concordia salus,” and had the advantage of being neither English nor French. It was selected following a call for suggestions from the two communities that yielded over 120 ideas. Some built on historical references (such as Hochelaga University) and others on the names of famous Canadians (such as my favourite, Norman Bethune University). See Concordia Name Contest, 1973, box HA 3288, series I002.1/18, Public Relations and Information Office fonds, Concordia Archives.
- 53 Interview with Alexander Duff, 1980, Concordia Archives, <https://archive.org/details/I0010-11-0011>.
- 54 Gossage and Little, *Illustrated History of Quebec*, 267.
- 55 *The Georgian*, November 30, 1973.
- 56 Gagnon, “Sans bruit, Loyola va devenir une université ... de trop,” *La Presse*, March 16, 1974. She explained how “le ministère [de l'éducation] a multiplié depuis six mois les études pour savoir si le tranfert de charte de Loyola à la nouvelle université Concordia pouvait se faire par arrêté-en-conseil plutôt qu'à l'Assemblée nationale.” She viewed the creation of Concordia as an effort “à instituer une troisième université anglaise à Montréal... On assiste à un incroyable dédoublement des services à l'heure où toutes les universités (et en particulier les universités anglophones) voient leur clientèle baisser.”
- 57 Quebec, Orders-in-Council, 3004-1974; 3005-1974; 3006-1974. To make the name legal, an official notice was published in the *Gazette officielle du Québec* 106, no. 34, August 24, 1974, 6012.
- 58 Interview with Alexander Duff, 1980, Concordia Archives, <https://archive.org/details/I0010-11-0011>.
- 59 Gossage and Little, *Illustrated History of Quebec*, 267–68.
- 60 *The Georgian*, August 9, 1974.