Sawula, in an article entitled "Why 1970, Why Not Before," asked why the federal government had not become involved in the administration of Canadian sport before 1970, when Dr. Ian Eisenhart had made the same suggestion in 1945 (1). Sawula pointed out that the announcement made by Eisenhart contained nothing significantly different from the task force report and subsequent policy (2) but that the historical circumstances of the period permitted the formation of a Canadian sport system. In the summary to his article, Sawula noted that his discussion of the topic was preliminary and was in need of further political, economic, and social analysis. Indeed, if he had gone beyond the purely historical factors, it would have been evident why 1970 and not before.

There is considerable literature available on the history surrounding the formation of the Canadian federal sport system. Of these, the work of Hallett (3) and of Macintosh, Bedecki, and Franks (4) are probably the most expansive and detailed. However, the degree of analysis these works contain varies in terms of how well they provide a deeper understanding of the events in the late 1960s and early 1970s that led to the formation of a national sport system.

The same could be said of articles and books written at dates later than the original presentation of this article. Most of these have focused on subsequent developments in the Canadian sport structure, particularly around the development of external relations (i.e., external affairs policy). Macintosh and Hawes have published a book focusing on the topic of "sport and Canadian diplomacy" (5). In the analysis of Trudeau’s political leadership years, much has been written on external affairs, although little is mentioned of sport in these works (6). Other than parts of an article by Lyon (7), there was little specific research on the particular topic of this paper.

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Trudeau was Prime Minister of Canada from 1967 to 1984 (except for a short period between mid-1979 and early 1980). His longevity in this office was comparable to that of Mackenzie King and Sir John A. MacDonald in Canadian history. It is certainly longer than any contemporary elected leader. His leadership was contentious, but certainly one that saw Canada undergo significant change. The legacy of his legislative actions is still part of the Canadian political discourse and action. Issues regarding the constitution, federalism and national unity, and anticontinentalism are still central to Canadian political thought.

This paper is presented to give further analysis and explanation of particular ideas that presage the events leading to the formation of a Canadian federal sport system, for, the evolution of the sport system was not an historical unfolding of fact after fact in linear causality. That is, we must delve into the events at a level of reality that is deeper than that of sensory perceptions and that of making initial sense of the empirical chaos (8). To realize this deeper level of analysis and understanding, we need to carry out C. Wright Mills’s “sociological imagination” and obtain dialectical understanding of the events.

Mills’s “sociological imagination” demanded that we “understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals” (9). That is, it would “enable us to grasp history and biography and the between the two within society” (10). E.H. Carr pointed to the same scientific grasp of historical development in his book What is History (11) as did Melvin Rader in Marx’s Interpretation of History (12).

Therefore, this paper will attempt to go beyond the works previously cited by looking into the writings of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Through Trudeau’s writings we perceive a consciously developed and determinedly carried out political praxis. We can look to his political philosophy and concomitant agenda through which he carried out that epistemic plan.

To fulfill the “sociological imagination” it will be necessary to tie this praxis into the wider historical trends (as so well noted by Hallett and by Macintosh et al.) to provide a comprehensive analysis of the genesis of the Canadian sport structure (13). In this regard the dialectical notions in transformation theory will support the contention being made about Trudeau’s role in the genesis of the Canadian sport structure (14).

Trudeau’s Political Thought and Agenda

My political action, or my theory—inasmuch as I can be said to have one—can be expressed very simply: create counterweights. As I have explained, it was because of the federal government’s weakness that I allowed myself to be catapulted into it. (15)