

**The Federalist and Separatist Sentiments of Quebec Nationalism:  
A Comparative Perspective of Evidence and Assumptions**

by

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### **Abstract**

**This thesis examines the federalist and separatist sentiments of Quebec nationalism, for which the former is typified by the Quebec Liberal Party, and the latter, by the Parti Quebecois.**

**Through this examination, the author determines that because federalists and separatists differ not only in terms of their reading of the historical and contemporary record (evidence), but also in regards to their opinions about future prospects (assumptions), they advocate different solutions to assist the Quebecois in realizing their identity as a nation.**

### **Abbreviations**

**MNA - Member of the National Assembly**

**PQ - Parti Quebecois**

**QLP - Quebec Liberal Party**

**UN - Union Nationale**

### **Acknowledgements**

From the formative stages of this thesis, to the penultimate draft, I owe a large debt of gratitude to Dr. Ian Stewart. His advice, guidance and encouragement were a source of inspiration as I attempted to navigate my way through both the federalist and separatist sentiments of Quebec nationalism.

While there are too many names to list individually, I would also like to thank those who agreed to be interviewed, because, without your time and cooperation, this project would not have been possible.

Finally, I would be remiss without mentioning the contributions of Nancy Douglass, who was invaluable in her role as my “personal secretary,” and, John Legresley, who went above and beyond the call of duty during this entire project.

To all of the above, I extend my deepest appreciation.

### **Dedication**

**For my family, whose unconditional love and support were invaluable throughout the course of this thesis.**

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**Chapter 1:**  
**Quebec Nationalism in Perspective**

## Chapter 1: Quebec Nationalism in Perspective

### Introduction

In her 1996 best-seller *Fighting For Canada*, Diane Francis laments that there appears to be a stigma attached to those non-Quebecois who attempt to gain a greater understanding of affairs in Canada's French homeland. According to her, many English Canadians have been frightened away from Quebec politics because "the issues are complicated, rooted in history, subtle, and comprehensible only to persons who speak and understand French."<sup>1</sup>

These assertions of Diane Francis are justified. Reflecting on the 1995 Quebec referendum, both English and French media were highly critical of the fact that Prime Minister Chretien had chosen Anglophones as his principal advisers on the Quebec question. As the final vote was tallied, "Canadian federalism...got the scare of its 128-year life,"<sup>2</sup> as only 52, 000 votes separated the victors from the losers. As a result, pundits vehemently denounced the No campaign, and subsequently reached a consensus that, if the Prime Minister had associated himself with Francophone counsel, the results might have been much different. Accordingly, the use of English advisors in a French political milieu was deemed to be imprudent.

To what can we attribute the view that only those of French extract can adequately study Quebec society? Perhaps it can be traced to the commonality that is shared by all the members of the French community in Quebec; unlike the rest of the country, Quebec emerged initially as a

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<sup>1</sup>Diane Francis, *Fighting For Canada*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Jeffrey Simpson, *The Anxious Years - Politics in the Age of Mulroney and Chretien*, p. 80.

colony of the French Empire.<sup>3</sup> This colonial relationship established within Quebec a distinctive community unlike that found anywhere else in North America because of the language and culture of its inhabitants. According to one Francophone academic now employed by the Quebec justice department,

...Quebecers are reluctant to accept the findings of those who do not meet the criteria for being a Quebecois....[That is], in order to profess an understanding of Quebec politics, culture, society in general, you must be a member of the group. The group is of course those whose mother tongue is French. If you don't make the grade, then just forget it. That's why it appears to me that others, *les autres* as most Quebecers refer to them as, have very little chance to have their views about Quebec taken seriously. It is a sad fact but nonetheless, that's the reality of the situation.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it appears that for those English Canadians zealous enough to undertake an analysis which deals with Quebec, one is initially confounded by the baggage which is invariably attached to such a study. However, perseverance remains the crucial element, as those who push forward with their endeavours are sure to be rewarded by the vastness, complexity, and fascination which is Quebec politics. For myself, the choice of Quebec politics as a field of study for a master's thesis seemed as natural as the human progression of birth to death. Having been born and raised in the province as an English Canadian, and possessing certain biases which result from being a member of this social group, I have always been keenly interested in the intricacies of my homeland. While this study will in no way attempt to debunk the view that only French speaking Quebecers can do justice to a study about Quebec, I do sincerely hope that this undertaking will result in some new insights.

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<sup>3</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, "Quebec; Province, Nation, or 'Distinct Society'?", p. 77.

<sup>4</sup>Quebec civil servant, anonymous, June 10, 1997.

While I have readily admitted that it was quite likely that my master's thesis would be based on Quebec politics, I was promptly confronted with the realization that the field of study was indeed quite prodigious. Thus, the task was to limit my field of study so as to have a thesis topic which was interesting, yet manageable. After much deliberation, I decided to illuminate the nationalism expressed within the Quebec provincial party system. Of course, the two principal political parties vying for control of the Quebec state are the Quebec Liberal Party, which epitomizes the federalist sentiment of Quebec nationalism, and the Parti Quebecois, which exemplifies the separatist sentiment of Quebec nationalism.<sup>5</sup> What this thesis will argue is that because federalists and separatists differ not only in terms of their reading of evidence, but also with regards to assumptions, the two sentiments advocate different solutions to assist the Quebecois in realizing their identity as a nation. When using the term evidence, the common reference is to the historical and contemporary record, while assumptions denotes future prospects. For this thesis, the theoretical model employed is interpretivism; however, before discussing this theory, the concept of nationalism will be explored.

### **What is Nationalism?**

In order to understand Quebec nationalism, it is necessary to regress to September of 1759, when the British forces of General James Wolfe defeated the French troops led by Louis de Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City. This battle was one of the most important of several defeats that ultimately forced France in 1763, under the conditions set out in the Treaty of Paris, to cede to Great Britain all of New France east of the Mississippi. Quebec, along with its

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<sup>5</sup>Of course, it must be noted that Mario Dumont's Action Democratique party tries to secure a middle-ground between the Quebec Liberal Party and the Parti Quebecois.

60, 000 French inhabitants, became part of Britain's colonial empire.<sup>6</sup>

For French Canadians, the Conquest emphasized their distinctiveness. Separated from their Roman Catholic mother country, they became a minority part of an English speaking empire.<sup>7</sup> Existing parallel with their minority status was the belief sponsored by the Church and the French elite that "la survivance Francaise" was being threatened. For over 200 years, the historical precedence of the Conquest has not dissipated, as the French population of Quebec continues to uphold their belief that as a minority, they must be united to ensure their survival.

Any review of the literature on Quebec politics will point to the fact that indeed, the "sense of identity,"<sup>8</sup> and the purpose of French Canadians to preserve their identity in the late eighteenth century contained the roots of what may be called French Canadian nationalism.<sup>9</sup> Typically nationalism is defined as

[t]he belief that a particular group of people is a natural community, which should live under a single political system. Nationalism is often linked to a struggle for independence and political self-determination. It can, however, also be a convenient tool for political leaders to mobilise support and overcome opposition by stressing internal or external threats to national unity.<sup>10</sup>

However, this definition, while adequate, does not capture the true essence of nationalism. A

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<sup>6</sup>Maurice King, *The First Step*, p. 60.

<sup>7</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec, and the Uses of Nationalism*, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup>Stephane Dion, "Explaining Quebec Nationalism," p. 77.

<sup>9</sup>Richard Jones, *Community in Crisis - French-Canadian Nationalism in Perspective*, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup>Rod Hague, Martin Harrop and Shaun Breslin, *Comparative Government and Politics - An Introduction*, p. 94.

more accurate statement of meaning is offered by Leon Dion. According to him, the common ideological reference is usually to

...a set of representations specific to a given community, called a people or nation, characterized by an amalgam of features which include among others (none of them itself determining or even necessary) an origin, a history, a territory, a culture, institutions, and a language, common to members of that community, providing a feeling of solidarity in its ties with the past and in its future prospects, often in the face of other communities seen as foreign or inimical; and also defined by its projects concerning the organization of the community's cultural, economic, and political life in ways that best suit it.<sup>11</sup>

While Quebec nationalism was a product of pre-Confederation Canada, it remains as a very visible feature of the province's political environment. Nationalists continue to have a "preoccupation with [their] own survival in North America,"<sup>12</sup> and, as a result, there continues to be a "...striving to make culture and polity congruent, to endow [the Quebec] culture with its own political roof..."<sup>13</sup>

### **The Interpretivist Approach**

As the world we live in grows fundamentally more complex with each passing breath, our daily lives will continue to be inundated with new happenings and processes. Thus, theories are often employed as a means to help us make sense of the apparent confusion which we are surrounded by. In dealing with Quebec nationalism, a number of cogent theoretical models could have easily lent themselves to this study. Chief among them were functionalism, rational choice, and

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<sup>11</sup>Leon Dion, *Quebec: The Unfinished Revolution*, p. 108.

<sup>12</sup>Reed Scowen, *A Different Vision - The English in Quebec in the 1990s*, p. 75.

<sup>13</sup>Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 43.

political-psychology, to name but a few. However, after considering the various competing theories, it was decided that interpretivism was the preferred mechanism to explore the intricacies of Quebec nationalism.

The *terra firma* upon which the interpretivist account is built, which can be traced as far back as classical Greek antiquity, is the view that human action can be explained by interpreting it, that is, by giving its meaning. According to Max Weber, the term meaning

...may refer...to the actual existing meaning in the given concrete case of a particular actor, or to the average or approximate meaning attributable to a given plurality of actors....<sup>14</sup>

Thus, for interpretivists, “meaning is the making of man.”<sup>15</sup> According to McGill University

Professor Charles Taylor

...the fact that words and other signs have meaning can seem incredibly deep, enigmatic, difficult to understand. The sense of depth comes...from...the very pervasiveness of meaning in our lives.... We are in a sense surrounded by meaning; in the words we exchange, in all the signs we deploy, in the art, music, literature we create and enjoy, in the very shape of the man-made environment most of us live in....<sup>16</sup>

In recent years, hermeneutics, a term originally dedicated to a theological branch which interpreted the Bible, has served as the name for the science of interpretation in general.

The etymology of hermeneutics carries with it a direct relation to the Greek messenger god, Hermes. In order that he deliver the messages of the gods, Hermes had to be conversant in their idiom. As a result, he had to, understand and interpret for himself what the gods wanted to

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<sup>14</sup>Max Weber, “The Interpretive Understanding of Human Action,” p. 21.

<sup>15</sup>John B. O’Malley, *Sociology of Meaning*, p. 110.

<sup>16</sup>Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language - Philosophical Papers 1*, p. 248.

convey to the mere mortals for whom the message was destined.<sup>17</sup>

According to proponents of hermeneutics, finding the meaning of an action is the equivalent of deciphering a text.<sup>18</sup> As Taylor succinctly puts it:

Interpretation, in the sense relevant to hermeneutics, is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of, an object of study. This object must, therefore, be a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused....The interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense.

This means that any science which can be called “hermeneutical” even in an extended sense, must be dealing with one or another of the confusingly interrelated forms of meaning.<sup>19</sup>

According to interpretivism, for a text to be deciphered so that its meanings may be uncovered, it is necessary that the language used be understood. This language can be reduced to series of rules that govern the text; and, once these rules have been learned, the meanings are readily identifiable. To illustrate this point, if a person is asked if they are thirsty, and they respond by saying yes, there is a general realization that the person in question is indeed thirsty. What this implies is that there is a rule in the linguistic community that expressions of assent are given by responding yes.<sup>20</sup>

For interpretivists, this is the key to understanding human action, or expressed another way, meaningful behaviour. Practitioners of hermeneutics posit that it is absolutely necessary to

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<sup>17</sup>Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, “Introduction - Language, Mind and Artifact: An Outline of Hermeneutic Theory Since the Enlightenment,” p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Social Science*, p. 91.

<sup>19</sup>Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences - Philosophical Papers 2*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup>Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Social Science*, pp. 92-93.



...identify the rules under which it [meaningful behaviour] falls because they are what give its meaning. The rules under which actions fall are reflected in the intensional content of the desires and beliefs that lead to them. That is why desires and beliefs explain action. Human action is thus a matter of following rules, and the aim of social science is to uncover these rules.<sup>21</sup>

While these rules can be broken, any breaking of them is punishable. It seems obvious that if we could not break such rules, there would be no need for an enforcement mechanism. Because rules have these enforcement mechanisms, they can be regarded as facts about a community, since it requires a community to ensure that persons comply or are punished for non-compliance.<sup>22</sup>

According to the logic of interpretivism, these rules that explicate our actions are represented within all of us. It is quite correct to assume that rules could not explain our behaviour if we acted only in accordance with them by accident or through the operation of a causal mechanism. If rules do indeed explain our behaviour, and interpretivists insist they do, then it logically follows that we must act out of recognition of these rules, though it may be no more than an unconscious recognition. It must be the case that rules would be formulated, given the right setting, time, and thought. Otherwise, how could rules possibly serve to give meaning to the actions they explain? As a result, rules must have an intensional existence in our minds.<sup>23</sup>

To undertake an interpretivist account of Quebec nationalism, one must be cognizant of what one is searching for. That is, one must look at how human actions relate to the significance of a person operating within a culture of given meanings. Why, then, is interpretivism the most cogent

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<sup>21</sup>Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Social Science*, p. 93.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 95.

theoretical model to explain the intricacies of Quebec nationalism? The answer is that interpretivism permits one to gain a knowledge and understanding as to what the Quebecois actually mean when they undertake various forms of action. In this respect, interpretivism seems to be the most compelling theory to uncover the way the Quebecois actually describe themselves through their actions.

As the interpretivist logic dictates, in order to understand the meanings that underlie people's actions, one must adhere to the metaphor of a narrative text. That is, one must treat the development and evolution of Quebec nationalism as a history which can be read and analysed.

As Johann Martin Chladenius put it in the mid 1700s:

A history which is told or written to someone assumes that the person will use his knowledge of the prevailing conditions in order to form a reasonable resolution....A speech or written work is completely understandable if it is constructed so that one can fully understand the intentions of the author....<sup>24</sup>

In reading the history of Quebec, one is able to uncover what it is that the society has expressed. Put another way, the concept of "history as inferential"<sup>25</sup> can assist an analyst to tap into the meanings of actions that the Quebecois have undertaken. According to the logic of interpretivism, if history is treated like a story, then we may conclude that the Quebecois understand themselves as a part of this story. From this it is possible to deduce that any analysis of Quebec nationalism is simply a reading of yet another chapter in how the people of the province are protecting as well as realizing themselves.

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<sup>24</sup>Johann Martin Chladenius, "Reason and Understanding: Rational Hermeneutics," pp. 54-57.

<sup>25</sup>R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 252.

In attempting to uncover what the actions of the Quebecois actually mean, what is required is a broad collection of data. For the purposes of this thesis, personal in-depth interviews were conducted with both members of the QLP and the PQ in order to access the meanings contained within the culture of the society.

Admittedly, there are potential weaknesses with any study which relies on interviews as a research tool.<sup>26</sup> Firstly, it is quite difficult to assess the accuracy of generalizations based on intensive interviewing because: (1) such studies are based on small nonprobability samples, with little effort to obtain a random sample; (2) the results obtained do not lend themselves to quantitative analysis; (3) they lack any type of standardization; (4) there is a variation in degree given to one question from one respondent to another; and (5) they are vulnerable to interview bias. However, despite these potential drawbacks, interviews do provide any researcher with a number of advantages: (1) the interviewer has flexibility in asking the question; (2) the investigator has the capacity to conduct analysis while asking the questions; and (3) the interviewer can tap into respondent's answers, thus uncovering deeper meanings. While any study based on interviews must deal with the pros and cons associated with this research method, it must be noted that any source of data collection suffers from strengths and weaknesses.

Besides conducting interviews, other tools at one's disposal which have been employed in this interpretivist account of Quebec nationalism was a reading of literary works by Quebec authors. A literary review of important Quebec writers provides an analyst with much valuable insight into the meanings behind the actions of Quebec nationalists. Classic works such as Louis Hemon's

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<sup>26</sup>John B. Williamson, David A. Karp, and John R. Dalphin, *The Research Craft - An Introduction to Social Science Methods*, pp. 188-190.

*Maria Chapdelaine* and *Francois Xavier Garneau's Histoire du Canada*, as well as more contemporary studies like *Leon Dion's Quebec -The Unfinished Revolution*, and *Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Federalism and the French Canadians*, to name but a few, provide any student of Quebec nationalism with a written view of Quebec society. From studying such compositions, one has an indirect access to the meanings of the culture, as expressed through the intentions of various writers who hail from the province.

As was stated previously, in uncovering meanings of actions, language is crucial. As August Boeckh put it, "of the varied signs and symbols in which the human spirit expresses itself, the most adequate to express knowledge is speech."<sup>27</sup> From this, it is possible to deduce that in order to interpret Quebec nationalism properly, one must strive to understand the language of Quebec, that is, the French language. Contained within this language one can discover linguistic clues which may lead us to reach some determination as to the intentions of Quebec nationalists. Clearly, in attempting to interpret the French language, one must be conversant in the language of Quebec in order that an accurate reading of the situation can be rendered.

In addition, one must also be conversant with Quebec in general. The problems that interpretivists may encounter if unfamiliar with the milieu in which they may be studying has been articulated by Christopher Hookway. As he states:

Anthropologists often attempt to ascribe beliefs and desires to the members of alien tribes that they are studying: they hope to secure an understanding of the alien's behaviour by attributing various cognitive attitudes to them and providing interpretations for the language they use. The evidence available to them is apparently strictly limited: they can observe the actions the aliens perform,

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<sup>27</sup>Boeckh, as quoted in Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, "Introduction - Language, Mind, and Artifact: An Outline of Hermeneutic Theory Since the Enlightenment," p.20.

although they cannot observe the intentional descriptions which characterize those actions; they can observe what linguistic performances the aliens volunteer or approve of; and they can observe in what circumstances these actions and utterances are forthcoming. It is not clear that there is much more evidence than this. They are given a non-intentional characterization of the subject's behaviour and certain relations of the subjects to his environment....<sup>28</sup>

Clearly, one must be able to comprehend the society under investigation. For the purposes of a thesis on Quebec nationalism, it could logically be argued that a student of this society would have to spend sufficient time in the province in order to decipher the culture. Put another way, to tap into the intentional character of the society, one must be immersed in the Quebec culture. For the purposes of the thesis, I believe I can adequately undertake such an interpretive analysis. Having resided in the province for some seventeen years, I am convinced that far from being an outsider to the norms that govern Quebec, I have had the opportunity to be exposed to these norms for nearly two decades. Such an exposure has provided a much higher degree of insight - an insight which has prove to be absolutely invaluable in attempting to uncover the meanings behind the actions of Quebec nationalists.

When applying interpretivism to any type of political analysis, one must be aware of the epistemological, ontological, and agency assumptions that the theory makes. Beginning with epistemology, it seems clear that interpretivism assumes that it is possible to have some type of indirect access to the intentional structures of the agents. For the purposes of this thesis, as has already been articulated, interpretivism will serve as an invaluable mechanism to uncover the intentions of the actors through the use of interviews. By making use of interviews, one is able to

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<sup>28</sup>Christopher Hookway, "Indeterminacy and Interpretation," p. 17.

figure out what people were saying when they acted. That is, one is able to tap into what the Quebecois actually mean when they undertake a certain course of action. According to Johann Martin Chladenius,

we express both our perceptions of things and our desires when we speak or write. In fact, in some speeches and written works, we have no other aim than to explain to someone else what we know or want....<sup>29</sup>

If an analyst is somehow able to reach an understanding of what the intentions of actors are, then a very important step has been made towards a realization of what actions mean. It seems for the purposes of this thesis, interpretivism is the most cogent theory one could use to uncover the meanings that lie behind Quebec nationalism. Epistemologically speaking, interpretivism simply asserts that it is indeed possible to access the intentions behind actions. As Johann Gustav Droysen put it:

An utterance, in order to be fully understood, must also be comprehended as an expression of something internal which discloses...besides its obvious meaning...the attitude, intention, or state of mind of its originator.<sup>30</sup>

According to Droysen, true understanding is possible only through a comprehension of the intention of the actor, and interpretivism serves as the perfect tool to assist any analyst in the quest for true understanding.

Turning to the question of ontology, the assumption which interpretivism makes is that all action is an articulation of an identity from within a context of given meanings. To elaborate,

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<sup>29</sup>Johann Martin Chladenius, "Reason and Understanding: Rational Hermeneutics," pp. 60-61.

<sup>30</sup>Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, "Introduction - Language, Mind, and Artifact: An Outline of Hermeneutic Theory Since the Enlightenment," p. 19.

according to the interpretivist account, most action is certainly some type of identity formation. That is, all political action in one manner or another gives meaning to oneself. In seeking to identify ourselves through our actions, interpretivism asserts by studying language, for instance, we are somehow able to disentangle the meanings that lie behind our actions. Of course, the ontological assumption is premised on the fact that any interpretivist account of Quebec nationalism must deal with how various actions relate to the significance of a person operating within a culture of given meanings. If interpretivists are correct when they posit that we simply choose from meanings that are already given, and it seems that they are, then there is absolutely no way for nationalists to act outside of the Quebec culture. Granted, one might argue that in this respect, interpretivism is constrained because it simply assumes there is no creativity in human life. All we as individuals can do are follow established norms. According to the interpretivists, the preference for nationalism is governed by cultural norms and rules, historically set in the culture of Quebec. As Hans-Georg Gadamer pointed out, "the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past."<sup>31</sup> Thus, as a result of its historical past, Quebecois, in pursuing the course of action they do, are actually choosing a way of life which best leads towards the desired goal. As nationalists undertake various courses of action, they are in fact articulating a sense of their identity from within a context of given meanings.

With respect to agency, interpretivists insist that we act to signify. Without wanting to sound repetitive, this theoretical model assumes that when people act, they are attempting to convey some type of meaning. Of course, the most practical way at uncovering meaning is through

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<sup>31</sup>Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, "Introduction - Language, Mind, and Artifact: An Outline of Hermeneutic Theory Since the Enlightenment," p. 37.

studying language. As Wilhelm Dilthey succinctly expressed:

Because our mental life finds its fullest and most complete expression only through language, explication finds completion and fullness only in the interpretation of the...testimonies of human life.<sup>32</sup>

From this quote, it is possible to deduce that people, through language, will convey meanings which, if scrutinized under the proper theoretical lens, can be illuminated. Interpretivism appears to be the perfect tool to capture the underlying meanings of the actions of Quebecois. As Quebecers act to signify, we, as political scientists, must examine the meanings of the actions. It is simply not enough to accept things without further investigation. Interpretivists, by posing the question “what is the meaning of this?”<sup>33</sup> are able to extend beneath the surface to uncover the underlying intentions behind people’s actions. For the purposes of this thesis, as Quebec nationalists act, they seek to signify. By conveying a meaning in their action, it reveals much about the culture and the people of la belle province.

It seems from the above discussion that interpretivism is indeed a quite cogent theory for the analysis of Quebec nationalism. Interpretivism assists us in uncovering the meanings behind people’s actions. One is reminded of Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*, in which people, trapped in a cave are able to grasp only shadows; but, upon escaping the confines of the cave, they can finally grasp the true form of the objects. Interpretivism appears to strike a very similar chord. In the absence of the theory, one cannot come to a true realization of people’s actions; however, by employing the theory, the true meaning of actions are unearthed. As Dilthey puts it:

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<sup>32</sup>Dilthey, as quoted in Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, Introduction - Language, Mind, and Artifact: An Outline of Hermeneutic Theory Since the Enlightenment,” p. 27.

<sup>33</sup>Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Social Science*, p. 91.



**Understanding and interpretation constitutes the method used throughout the human sciences. It unites all of their functions and contains all of their truths. At each instance understanding discloses a world.<sup>34</sup>**

**A further factor which leads one to believe that interpretivism is the preferred theoretical model to be used for a thesis dealing with Quebec nationalism is the whole question of causality. This thesis is essentially a non-causal analysis. As such, the thesis is not attempting to uncover the causes that lie behind Quebec nationalism. Interpretivism fits what is required for this thesis, since it too is essentially not a causal analysis. As Rosenberg puts it:**

**Our recognition of the rules governing our actions is in some way at least part of the cause of the action. Thus, when social scientists search for the rules that make behaviour meaningful, they are also engaged in a causal inquiry, within limits. It can't be denied that deciphering the rules governing people's behaviour increases to some extent our ability to predict it. How could that be, unless our learning what the rules are that "govern" an activity reveals to us at least something about its causes?**

**But, the interpretationalist argues, these concessions miss the point of the social scientist's interest in rules. Improvements in predictive power with respect to human actions are a relatively unimportant by-product of our study of human behaviour. Our dependence on minimal causal hypotheses reflects nothing of importance about the kind of knowledge social science aims at. Understanding the meaning of a stranger's actions provides predictive knowledge only up to the limits of our own quite weak powers of predicting one another's actions. In any case, prediction is not the aim of such understanding.<sup>35</sup>**

**Thus, one can conclude that while predictability may be a by-product of an interpretivist analysis,**

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<sup>34</sup>Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, "Introduction - Language, Mind, and Artifact: An Outline of Hermeneutic Theory Since the enlightenment," p. 23.

<sup>35</sup>Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Social Science*, pp. 95-96.

such is not the goal. Interpretivism allows the analyst the means to discover the intentional structures of the human actors. This is vital if one seeks to understand meaningfully the nature of Quebec nationalism.

### **Conclusion**

With the separation of Quebec from their French, Roman Catholic mother country in 1759, the roots of French Canadian nationalism were born. As both a movement as well as an ideology, Quebec nationalism has continuously served as a defensive mechanism for the protection of the French community in Quebec. This defensive reaction on the part of French Canadians was not without its justifications, since there did appear to exist within the English speaking victors of the Conquest a deep commitment to the assimilation of the minority French. These views were clearly stated by George Brown in 1864. As he wrote: "All right!!! Constitution adopted - a most credible document - a complete reform of all injustices we have complained of!! Is it not wonderful? French Canadianism entirely extinguished!"<sup>36</sup>

Thus, since the transfer of Quebec to the British, Quebecers have united as a nation to promote and defend the French fact. Every government that has exercised power within the province has been nationalist in its orientation. For Rene Levesque, "proof of this [was]found consistently in the stands taken by all those who, over the decades...succeeded each other at the helm of the Quebec government...."<sup>37</sup> Today, the Quebec Liberal Party and the Parti Quebecois are the two main vehicles by which the Quebecois are able to articulate a concept of themselves. For the QLP, federalism provides the best method for the Quebec people to realize

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<sup>36</sup>Brown, as quoted in "The Constitution comes home," p. P6.

<sup>37</sup>Levesque, as quoted in Maurice J. King, *The First Step*, p. 71.

their true identity, while the PQ advocate that only in a sovereign country can their true selfhood be accomplished.

In conveying disparate means to achieve a sense of identity realization, the QLP and the PQ are guided by evidence and assumptions which is clearly at variance. Because they differ not only in terms of their reading of the historical and contemporary record (evidence), but also in their opinion regarding the prospects which the future holds (assumptions), the federalist and separatist sentiments of Quebec nationalism offer two competing visions of achieving nationhood. Thus, both evidence and assumptions will be explored in order to enlighten the process by which both sentiments arrive at the conclusions they do. However, to set the stage for the subsequent discussion, chapter 2 will deal with the evolution of Quebec nationalism from 1759 to present. With the historical backdrop having been rendered, the next two chapters will comparatively look at the federalist sentiment (the QLP) and the separatist sentiment (the PQ) of Quebec nationalism, with chapter 3 dealing with questions of evidence, while chapter 4 will address questions of assumptions. Chapter 5 will summarize the arguments and offer a prognosis for the future of Quebec and Canada.

**Chapter 2:**  
**The Evolution of Quebec Nationalism**

## Chapter 2:

### The Evolution of Quebec Nationalism

#### Introduction

In his 1968 work *Federalism and the French Canadians*, Pierre Elliott Trudeau suggested that there was hope that “the glue of nationalism [would] become as obsolete as the divine right of kings.”<sup>1</sup> In retrospect, it appears that the former Prime Minister was too optimistic. Far from disappearing from the political landscape in Quebec, nationalism remains a dynamic force, and will most likely endure as long as there is a Quebec people.

Nationalism, far from being static, has evolved through several distinct phases. It must be noted that the various time periods examined are perhaps not as easily delineated as this chapter would indicate. As is obvious, “there was [no] linear development from one phase to another. On the contrary, even though one particular type may have dominated all the others at any given point in time, they all co-existed. This was and still is the case in Quebec.”<sup>2</sup> However, for strictly heuristic purposes, by dividing the evolution into various epochs, it provides a much more logically coherent and comprehensible overview than would otherwise have been possible. It is this evolution of the nationalism expressed by the government of the province which this thesis will now address.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians*, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup>Leon Dion, *Quebec: The Unfinished Revolution*, p. 113.

<sup>3</sup>It must be noted that Leon Dion suggests four types of nationalism: conservative, liberal, social democratic, and socialist, which serve as a foundation for the evolution expressed in this thesis. Dion’s four types of nationalism can be found in *Quebec: The Unfinished Revolution*, pp. 113-162.

### **Conservative, Non-Separatist Nationalism, Pre-Confederation Canada-1959**

With the French defeat by the British in 1759 at the Battle of Quebec, the French population found itself to be a minority within the British empire, an empire in which it would have to secure a future for itself.<sup>4</sup> This formative event shaped the nationalism that would dominate Quebec until the mid-part of the twentieth century. The severing of ties with France, and the subsequent public declarations of various British governors about the desirability of assimilating the population, such as The Royal Proclamation of 1763, produced the first consistent feature that would mark the lives of all French people of Quebec: isolation. It was believed that only by remaining within their own people could the French nation survive. As Leon Dion, a noted expert on Quebec nationalism succinctly put it:

French Canadians were henceforth perceived as a lonely people, different from all others in America, and threatened by extinction in the huge 'Anglo-Saxon sea' in which they formed small scattered islands....Conservative nationalism provided an image of a world turned in upon itself...Condemned to live as a permanent minority among strangers infinitely more numerous than they, French Canadians could only survive, it was emphasized, if they knew how to protect themselves against all sources of contamination by remaining within their own closed circle.<sup>5</sup>

However, before exploring this idea of isolation, it is necessary to provide some historical background, for, as Marcel Rioux explains, history is vitally important to the “successive definitions Quebeckers have held of themselves.”<sup>6</sup> With the transfer of Quebec to the British completed by 1763, the Quebec Act of 1774 was enacted. Under this act, the British

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<sup>4</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, “Quebec: Province, Nation, or ‘Distinct Society’?,” pp. 83-84.

<sup>5</sup>Leon Dion, *Quebec: The Unfinished Revolution*, p. 115.

<sup>6</sup>Marcel Rioux, *Quebec in Question*, p. 8.

government opted, rather than to pursue a policy of assimilation, to win the collaboration of the French leadership, and thus, the entire Quebec people. As well, both the traditional values and structures of the society were to be strengthened: the seigneurial system was re-established, the Church was empowered, as was the case in the past, to collect tithes, French civil law was re-established, and the need for Catholics to renounce their faith was abolished. While the Act did indeed assure the survival of the French Canadian society, it was a society based on the past. Furthermore, “there was nothing to challenge the firm control over the colony’s economic life that English speakers had secured in the wake of the Conquest.”<sup>7</sup>

With the passage of the Constitution Act of 1791, which included for a representative assembly, nationalism and nationalist politics were given a tremendous boost. The Lower Canada Assembly provided the Quebec nationalists with a forum.<sup>8</sup> However, more importantly for the stimulation of the nationalist movement, under the Act, the differences in actual power that existed between the French majority and the English minority were institutionalized.<sup>9</sup> While

...the Constitutional Act of 1791 ushered in - after a fashion - representative government...the Canadiens...were quick to realize that, although their ethnic group composed 94 percent of the population, it had elected only 68 percent of the Assembly; and that furthermore they were in a minority in both the non-elective bodies - the Legislative and Executive Councils, where the seat of power truly rested.<sup>10</sup>

As the development of the nationalist movement continued through the 1820's and 1830's, it

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<sup>7</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, “Quebec: Province, Nation, or ‘Distinct Society’?,” p. 84.

<sup>8</sup>Maurice King, *The First Step*, p. 63.

<sup>9</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>10</sup>Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Against the Current - Selected Writings - 1939-1996*, p. 81.

drew extensively on the belief that the French people were suffering “political, economic, and cultural domination at the hands of the English.”<sup>11</sup> This sentiment culminated in 1838 when the Patriotes, led by Louis-Joseph Papineau, staged an uprising, declaring Quebec to be an independent nation state. However, the superior British forces, supported by the Catholic Church, quickly crushed the rebellion.<sup>12</sup>

While this battle may appear brief and insignificant, it did indeed have a rather profound impact on the ensuing history of Quebec nationalism. The reformist, secular nationalism with an independentist thrust that had been advocated by Papineau was now replaced by an anti-reformist clerical nationalism that promised loyalty to the state. The Church, with unchallenged spiritual authority, considerable economic resources, and as the provider of numerous social services, penetrated most aspects of Quebec society. The ideological coherence and the bureaucratic capacity of the Church, combined with the lack of any opposition, were the guiding forces of a conservative Quebec nationalism that was paramount until the 1950s.<sup>13</sup> According to Denis Moniere, the failure of Papineau’s rebellion “...hastened the process of inferiorization in French Canadian society,” bringing “a defensive conservative resistance and the ideology of survival”.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the Church, having assumed “its role as the ‘natural leader’ of the French Canadian

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<sup>11</sup>Richard Jones, *Community in Crisis - French-Canadian Nationalism in Perspective*, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>John F. Conway, *Debts to Pay - English Canada and Quebec from the Conquest to the Referendum*, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup>Pierre-Francois Gingras and Neil Nevitte, “The Evolution of Quebec Nationalism,” pp. 4-5.

<sup>14</sup>Moniere, as quoted in Graham Fraser, *PQ - Rene Levesque & the Parti Quebecois in Power*, p. 3.



population<sup>15</sup> began their mission, with isolation becoming the main thrust to ensuring “la survivance Francaise.” Dion is perhaps the most eloquent in explaining the isolationist policy that Quebec nationalism followed:

...French Canadians might only preserve their separate identity if they remained faithful to their past; it was thus incumbent on them to abide by their own tradition and to refuse or reject any change likely to jeopardize these. Language and faith were the most sacred of such traditions. And neither stood alone, as attested to by the often quoted saying our language is the guardian of our faith...French Canadians were perceived as having a spiritual role to play in North America, which they might only fulfil by resisting any seepage into their culture of Anglo-Saxon materialism.<sup>16</sup>

The sentiment is also voiced in Francois-Xavier Garneau’s *Histoire du Canada*, when he wrote in the early 1800s: “May the French Canadians remain faithful to themselves; may they be wise and persevering; and may they not let themselves be seduced in any way by the glitter of political and social innovations.”<sup>17</sup>

As a result, it followed that what the society needed was the protective framework of family, rural parish, and Church. Convinced that both city and industry were but elements of the “Anglo-Saxon spirit,” conservative nationalism preached the virtues of remaining close to the soil. Only by remaining rural could the Quebec people hope to survive as a nation. While conservative nationalism was devoted to ensuring that Quebec remained essentially traditionalist and different from the rest of the country, it was not a nationalism that threatened the existence of Canada. For

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<sup>15</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec - Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 54.

<sup>16</sup>Leon Dion, *Quebec - The Unfinished Revolution*, 115.

<sup>17</sup>Garneau, as quoted in Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Against the Current - Selected Writings 1939-1996*.

nationalist politicians of the day such as Henri Bourassa, “Canada, founded on a federation of autonomous provinces and a compact of two distinct races living on terms of equality from Halifax to Vancouver”<sup>18</sup> was a country whose merits were to be lauded and defended. However, conservative nationalism did not support any type of pan-Canadianism. Rather, it stressed that while Quebec would remain a part of the federation, what was necessary was a decentralization of powers, or, as it was expressed at the turn of the century, “autonomism.” According to the logic of autonomism, the Quebec government needed broad powers vis-a-vis Ottawa to ensure the survival of the Quebec nation.<sup>19</sup>

With the exception of L.A. Taschereau’s Liberal government from 1920 to 1936, which promoted the industrialization of Quebec by encouraging foreign investment, and Adelard Godbout’s Liberal government, which did make some significant reforms between 1939 and 1944, conservative nationalism remained as the dominant force in Quebec politics. Every government advocated, in an attempt to ensure the survival of the Quebec people, the twin pillars of conservative nationalism: a dedication, as outlined by the Catholic Church, to keep Quebec traditional; and a desire to remain within the federation, but to check any advancement of the federal government.

Most scholars agree that the epitome of conservative nationalism was the long reign of the Union Nationale government of Maurice Duplessis, especially in the post World War II period. The Union Nationale (UN), which was a merger between the Conservatives led by Duplessis, and the Alliance Liberale Nationale (ALN), was an astute attempt to unite all the anti-government

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<sup>18</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, p. 90.

<sup>19</sup>Leon Dion, *Quebec -The Unfinished Revolution*, pp. 115-118.

forces. What united the Conservatives and the ALN was an unhappiness

...over the policy pursued by successive Liberal regimes of promoting the industrialization of Quebec by encouraging foreign capital to invest in the province - an industrialization process which not only resulted in a system of absentee ownership of Quebec industry, but also destroyed the old rural society whose maintenance most French-Canadian leaders had always considered essential for cultural survival.<sup>20</sup>

Under Duplessis, Quebec did not question its relations with the rest of Canada, being satisfied to practice a negative nationalism, shut in on itself.<sup>21</sup> According to Dominique Clift, the conservative nationalism of Duplessis was based on

...an unshakable opposition to any idea or trend which might threaten the historical trinity of la foi, la langue, la race - faith, language, and race - on which French cultural survival had long been said to depend...Provincial autonomy became the rallying cry which helped keep the Union Nationale party...in power until 1960.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, there were other factors which assisted the UN in holding on to power in Quebec.

Chief among them was the “carrot and whip” technique employed by the party.<sup>23</sup> As Prime

Minister Jean Chretien wrote in his autobiography, when describing the Duplessis regime:

In those days politics penetrated every aspect of Quebec life. Partisan considerations decided if your village got an asphalt road, if your organization got a grant to hold a sports event, if your restaurant got a liquor licence, and if your university got funding.

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<sup>20</sup>Herbert F. Quinn, *The Union Nationale - Quebec Nationalism from Duplessis to Levesque*, p. 28.

<sup>21</sup>Daniel Latouche, *Canada and Quebec, Past and Future: An Essay*, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup>Dominique Clift, *Quebec Nationalism in Crisis*, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup>Herbert F. Quinn, *The Union Nationale - Quebec Nationalism from Duplessis to Levesque*, p. 139.

**Duplessis seemed omnipotent. His enemies, such as Pierre Trudeau, were denied teaching jobs; his friends' illegalities were overlooked by the police; and corruption was so much part of the system that most people just came to accept it and hope for a piece of the action.<sup>24</sup>**

As well, the role the Roman Catholic Church played in maintaining the UN government cannot be under-estimated. Paul-Henri Leblanc vividly recalls the extent to which the Church attempted to influence voters. As he states: "I remember going to church, and hearing the Priest say, 'don't forget, tomorrow is vote day, and don't forget that Heaven is blue...and Hell is red...so vote for Duplessis....' And I've seen some priests doing the distribution of the wine bottles and a pair of socks...."<sup>25</sup> This view of the Church acting on behalf of Duplessis is echoed by Jean Chretien.

According to the Prime Minister,

**His [Duplessis] authority was backed by the Roman Catholic Church, which used its position as an arbiter of what was right or wrong for the people to become an instrument of Duplessis. They shared an interest in keeping Quebeckers poor, rural, uneducated, and bound to the church teaching that life on earth is just a grim passage to Heaven. Society is based on privileges, not rights; obedience and gratitude were essential parts of the people's mentality. Even as late as 1960 I had a fight with my parish priest, who suggested in his weekly newsletter that we owed our allegiance to the Union Nationale because it had given us a tennis court.<sup>26</sup>**

Despite the firm grasp with which conservative nationalism had controlled the province for years, changes were afoot in Quebec that would soon lead to the downfall of this strand of nationalism. Firstly, the close relationship between the Church and the Duplessis government

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<sup>24</sup>Jean Chretien, *Straight From The Heart*, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup>Paul-Henri Leblanc, personal interview, June 7, 1997.

<sup>26</sup>Jean Chretien, *Straight From the Heart*, p. 13.

began to deteriorate in the 1950s. Both the higher and lower clergy began to object to the government's ultra conservative economic and social policies, its hostile attitude towards trade unions, the administrative and electoral abuses, and the attempts of the UN to increase its influence over charitable and educational institutions controlled by the Church.<sup>27</sup>

As well, beginning in the 1950s, an emerging middle class of salaried professionals began a major assault on the old conservative nationalism espoused by the Church as well as Duplessis. A major focus of this assault came in the form of historical revisionism. Expressed by academics such as Maurice Seguin, Guy Fregault, and Michel Brunet, they challenged the view that the Church remained to save the Quebec people after the Conquest. Instead, they argued that the Church, by advocating ruralism, and condemning commerce and state intervention, had left the British to occupy the economic realm unopposed. Now, as industrialization and urbanization were part of the landscape of Quebec, the Quebecois had little control of their economy and indeed their existence in a province where they were a majority. As a consequence, French Canadians had to begin to use the state to expand the opportunity for Francophones within the Anglophone-dominated economy.<sup>28</sup>

Along with the criticism directed at the role of conservative nationalism in the economic realm, demands for the Church to be replaced by the state in the provision of social services began to appear, such as the 1961 request by Francophone academics and teachers that the education system be secularized. Articles appearing in such magazines as *Cite Libre* and newspapers such

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<sup>27</sup>Herbert F. Quinn, *The Union Nationale - Quebec Nationalism from Duplessis to Levesque*, p. 161.

<sup>28</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, pp. 92-93.

as *Le Devoir* pounded home the fact that Quebec's conservative nationalism was a hindrance to the advancement of the Quebec people.<sup>29</sup> According to Pierre Elliott Trudeau, one of the founders of *Cite Libre*, nationalism was preventing Quebec from advancing. As he stated in a 1956 article:

Our nationalism, to oppose a surrounding world that was English-speaking, Protestant, democratic, materialistic, commercial, and later industrial, created a system of defence which put a premium on all the contrary forces: the French language, Catholicism, authoritarianism, idealism, rural life, and later the return to the land.<sup>30</sup>

A further stimulant towards the collapse of conservative nationalism was the increasing militancy of Quebec's unions, evidenced by the bitter Asbestos strike of 1949, when the Confederation des travailleurs catholiques du Canada took on both American interests as well as the Duplessis government. With this increased militancy, unions also began to call for a more equitable handling of labour disputes, as well as for government provision of public health insurance, improved social security, and stricter regulation of working conditions.<sup>31</sup> As one academic put it, "[a] number of the leaders of these unions, who had supported the Union Nationale in the past, or at least had not actively opposed it, had finally become disillusioned with that party's economic and labour policies."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, "Quebec: Province, Nation, or 'Distinct Society'?", pp. 88-89.

<sup>30</sup>Trudeau, as quoted in Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*, p. 96.

<sup>31</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, "Quebec: Province, Nation, or 'Distinct Society'?", pp. 88-89.

<sup>32</sup>Herbert F. Quinn, *The Union Nationale - Quebec Nationalism from Duplessis to Levesque*, p. 158.

Under the severe stress of all of these challenges, conservative nationalism was bound to collapse. By the late 1950s, with Quebec more than 60 percent urban, and quickly moving towards greater industrialization, a nationalism that emphasized the mentality, spirit, and values of a pre-industrial society seemed a strange contradiction<sup>33</sup>. The “death of Premier Duplessis in 1959 probably removed the cap from the frustrations felt by Quebecers, though it is unlikely that even he could have prevented the explosion indefinitely.”<sup>34</sup> With *le chef* gone, and the subsequent defeat of the Union Nationale by the resurgent Liberal Party led by Jean Lesage, Quebec was about to embark upon a new form of nationalism - a liberal, non-separatist nationalism devoted to the continued preservation of the Quebec nation.

#### **Liberal, Non-Separatist Nationalism, 1960-1976**

In 1877, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, in a speech to the Club Canadien, conveyed his belief in the values of liberalism. It read: “I am a liberal. I am one of those who think that always and everywhere in human things there are abuses to be reformed, new horizons to be opened up, and new forces to be developed.”<sup>35</sup> Clearly, with the election of 1960, a new wave of liberalism was swept into power - a liberalism dedicated to reforming the anachronistic manner of governing prevalent during the Duplessis regime.

Writing in 1978, Marcel Rioux, in his book, *Quebec in Question*, described the 1960 electoral victory of Jean Lesage as a watershed in Quebec politics. As he stated:

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<sup>33</sup>Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*, p. 83.

<sup>34</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, p. 94.

<sup>35</sup>Laurier, as quoted in Edward Greenspon and Anthony Wilson-Smith, *Double Vision - The Inside Story of the Liberals in Power*, p. 227.

**This was no ordinary election...something more than a transfer of power from one party to another, like the elections in a good Anglo-Saxon type of democracy. This election implicated all of society, affecting every part of it; it called in question established power and conventional wisdom. It marked the end of a period in Quebec's history, and the beginning of an era which many a French Canadian believed would lead his country to a greater political autonomy....<sup>36</sup>**

While the entire period from 1960 until 1976 can be classified as liberal, non-separatist nationalism, it was paramount under the Premiership of Jean Lesage from 1960 until 1966, a period that has been referred to as the Quiet Revolution. However, Quebec during the early 1960s was far from a quiet place, as the reforms introduced had a rumbling effect throughout the province. In fact, Quebec "was in an uproar."<sup>37</sup>

With the victory by the Lesage Liberals, who had campaigned on a platform that promised to defend Quebec and to make full use of provincial powers, there was a new hope of attaining what had so far been unattainable. According to the new proponents of liberal nationalism, the old conservative nationalism had promoted strict cultural isolation and tradition in order to prevent unwelcome social change. The new nationalism would liberalize Quebec, thus freeing it from the social constraints which weighed too heavily upon the province, and setting it on a course towards modernity.<sup>38</sup> The replacement of conservative nationalism by a new liberal nationalism was represented by such campaign slogans as "High time for a change!" And indeed, change did occur quickly, especially in the economic and educational realms. New themes aimed at setting

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<sup>36</sup>Marcel Rioux, *Quebec in Question*, p. 74.

<sup>37</sup>Robert Bothwell, *Canada and Quebec: One Country, Two Histories*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>38</sup>Dominique Clift, *Quebec Nationalism in Crisis*, pp. 18-21.



Quebec on the course towards modernity and development were now voiced openly and actively.<sup>39</sup> According to William Johnson,

[t]he Quiet Revolution, when it came at last, began as an outbreak of hope. Suddenly, after a century of withdrawal and retreat into the past, Quebec decided to join the modern world. Everything seemed possible. Quebec began to change its institutions rapidly and deeply. The attitudes and values of the people changed even more rapidly. History quickened its pace. Long-standing walls crumbled.<sup>40</sup>

Unlike the old conservative nationalism that argued that the only way for the French people to survive was to remain traditional, this new nationalism advocated that survival depended on a rattrapage, or catching up. It was argued that precious time had been lost in Quebec's social and economic development,<sup>41</sup> so the state would have to assume full responsibility for the services that the Church had previously provided, just as it had to assume responsibility for the direction and modernization of the economy. For liberal nationalism, the Quebec of the future would be urban, industrial, and now secular. Thus, the Quebec state, now regarded as the only institution that could achieve these objectives, would be the lever to revitalize the Quebec of the 1960s, and ensure the survival of the Quebec people by making them "maitres chez nous - masters in our own house."<sup>42</sup> As Lesage himself said in 1960, the Quebec government had a duty to protect "the

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<sup>39</sup>Leon Dion, *Quebec - The Unfinished Revolution*, p. 130.

<sup>40</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup>Pierre Francois Gingras and Neil Nevitte, "The Evolution of Quebec Nationalism," p. 8.

<sup>42</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, "Quebec: Province, Nation, or 'Distinct Society'?", pp. 89-90.

French face of Quebec.”<sup>43</sup> In its attempts to protect and promote the French nation, the government undertook a number of interventionist policies. Two clear examples stand out: (1)the creation of a provincial ministry of education; and (2)the nationalization of hydroelectricity.

With the passage of Bill 60 in 1963, the Church, the traditional provider of education, was replaced by a provincial ministry of education. What was significant about Bill 60 was that since control over education had always been regarded as fundamental to the defence of Quebec’s distinctive culture, the state would now be given the responsibility of providing the curriculum that would be taught to the subsequent generations of young Quebecois as they prepared for life in the new Quebec.<sup>44</sup> As the new education system became entrenched, every subsequent government that exercised power throughout the era of liberal, non-separatist nationalism ensured that what the youth of the province would learn would be the history of their people and their nation. Hence, both primary and secondary level courses, while offering insight and instruction into the nature of Canada, emphasized the Quebec component above all else. As a result, courses were given with such titles as the “History of Quebec and Canada,” and “Geography of Quebec and Canada,” to name but a few. Through the secular control of the education system, Quebec governments exercised their discretion in ensuring that the history of the Quebecois would be passed down, thus guaranteeing that future generations would recognize how united they were as a people, and that above all else, how they had to strive to retain their identity.

As evident as the nationalist sentiment was in the creation of a provincial ministry of

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<sup>43</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 21.

<sup>44</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, pp. 128-129.

education, it was equally explicit in the nationalization of hydroelectricity. While Douglas Fullerton is correct in his assumption that there was an “economic logic”<sup>45</sup> in the plan to rationalize the system of private and public ownership, it was nationalist sentiment that drove the nationalization program. Rene Levesque, the Minister of Natural Resources and chief architect of the plan put the case in this manner: “The state must not be absent from the economic scene, for in our particular case that would be equivalent to pure and simple abandonment of the most effective instrument of economic liberation that we possess.”<sup>46</sup> For the Quebec Liberal Party, as their 1962 election manifesto stated: “The era of economic colonialism [was] finished in Quebec.” It was clear that the colonized French Canadians would have to be liberated from the English Quebecers who owned the power companies. The “Liberal campaign platform suggested that French-speaking Quebecers were not free, even though they constituted 80 per cent of the population of the province and controlled its government. They were not free, and - though it was not stated baldly - the Anglos had enslaved them.”<sup>47</sup>

With the 1962 Liberal victory, nationalization by 1963 had placed the hydro industry in the hands of the Quebec state. As Alain Gagnon and Mary Beth Montcalm correctly point out:

...the so-called nationalization of Hydro-Quebec indicated the new economic ambitions of Quebec’s francophone majority, which had

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<sup>45</sup>Douglas H. Fullerton, *The Dangerous Delusion - Quebec’s Independence Obsession*, p. 46.

<sup>46</sup>Levesque, as quoted in Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, p. 129.

<sup>47</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 25.

implications for the status of anglophone-dominated business...Hydro-Quebec...soon became both a major player in the provincial economy and a promoter of francophone interests within that economy. It shifted the working language within this sector to french, thereby opening up key professional positions to francophones.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, hydroelectric power was “turned into a symbol of the national power of Francophone Quebecers. Hydro-Quebec became the symbol suggesting that French Canadians [were] collective giants, able to build huge dams and generate mega-watts of electricity. It was a form of water therapy for a people who felt weak and inferior.”<sup>49</sup>

Clearly, liberal nationalism advocated the use of the state in an aggressive interventionist manner to further the interests of the Quebecois. From the creation of the Societe generale de financement which was formed to inject capital into Francophone-owned industries, to the establishment of crown corporations like SIDBIC, to the establishment of a social welfare net,

...[the Lesage] government undertook state-led economic and social policies, and became as etatiste as its predecessors had been anti-etatiste, shifting from hostility toward state intervention to reliance on government as a leader, innovator, and symbol of Quebecois identity. The Quebec state was going to lead the blossoming of Quebecois and facilitate the necessary social and economic catching up of the province.<sup>50</sup>

This type of liberal nationalism epitomized by the Lesage government from 1960 until 1966 remained in the Union Nationale governments of both Daniel Johnson and Jean-Jacques Bertrand, and the Liberal government of Robert Bourassa. In fact, many academics believe that despite the

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<sup>48</sup>Alain Gagnon and Mary Beth Montcalm, *Quebec Beyond the Quiet Revolution*, p. 54.

<sup>49</sup>Willaim Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, 26.

<sup>50</sup>Alain Gagnon and Mary Beth Montcalm, *Quebec Beyond the Quiet Revolution*, p. 44.

change in governments, “the quiet revolution continued” under the new administrations.<sup>51</sup>

Although,

...the Union Nationale during its period in power between 1966 and 1970 continued the Quiet Revolution, the pace of reform was considerably slower and there were few new or innovative programmes. This...should not be attributed altogether to the caution or conservatism of the Johnson and Bertrand administrations. With a heavy burden of public debt and high level of taxation there were severe financial restraints on undertaking further extensive programmes....In spite of this, a close look at the Union Nationale record in office shows that the party’s contribution to the modernization process of the sixties was by no means negligible.<sup>52</sup>

For instance, the UN carried through the recommendations of the Parent Commission, and established a network of Colleges of General and Professional Education (CEGEPs); the Societe Quebecoise d’Initiatives Petrolieres (SOQUIP) was established in 1969 to develop the province’s natural gas and oil; and Radio-Quebec, a provincial television and radio network was created.<sup>53</sup>

The Liberal Party of Robert Bourassa, elected in 1970 under the slogan of “Quebec au travail,” upheld the Liberal tradition of reform, although in a much less dramatic manner than was the case during the Lesage administration. Most experts agree that the absence of a strong commitment to dramatic modernization was a result of the change in the political leadership of the party, with the new elite professing a much greater faith in private economic forces to serve the

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<sup>51</sup>Herbert F. Quinn, *The Union Nationale - Quebec Nationalism from Duplessis to Levesque*, p. 229.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.

interests of the Quebecois.<sup>54</sup> However, despite its lack of economic intervention, the Bourassa Government remained active in the social realm, passing legislation such as Bill 22. Under this piece of legislation, French became the official language of the province, and, as a result, it was “incumbent upon the government of Quebec to employ every means in its power to ensure the preeminence of that language and to promote its vigour and quality....”<sup>55</sup>

While liberal nationalism was clearly committed to using the Quebec state as a lever of intervention to promote the interests of Quebecois, it remained essentially a non-separatist nationalism. Each government that held power between 1960 and 1976 accepted the Canadian political community. Despite occasional shades of revolt, federalism was not in jeopardy. However, the Quebec state did become very aggressive in its dealings with Ottawa as it sought to develop Quebec, so as to protect and promote the interests of the people. In seeking as much autonomy as was possible, the Lesage Liberals sought a form of special status within the federation.<sup>56</sup> And indeed, the federal government of Lester Pearson did accept special status for Quebec by making accommodations to Quebec in federal programs. At the time it was called co-operative federalism. As Lesage put it:

First, we won the right to a tax compensation for all continuing joint-cost programs and for continuing conditional grants. Second, we caused the aborting of the program for student loans. Third, we received tax compensation for school grants. Fourth, our model of a pension plan won out over Ottawa's.... We had won almost everything that we wanted to win in 1964, and we began to attack the grey areas. We demanded that the residual powers of the

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<sup>54</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, pp. 219-222.

<sup>55</sup>Bill 22, as reproduced in *Quebec's Language Policies: Background and Response*.

<sup>56</sup>Leon Dion, *Quebec - The Unfinished Revolution*, p. 131.

constitution should belong to the provinces; we wished to make an inventory of all the grey areas there were - cultural affairs was one of them, and in fact it still is. And from there, we went on the attack to declare our sovereignty, our jurisdiction in the area of culture....<sup>57</sup>

The Union Nationale under Daniel Johnson was equally zealous in its relations with the federal government.

From the time of his appointment as head of the Quebec government in 1966 until his sudden death in 1968 Johnson threw all his energies into a drive to achieve two goals; vastly increased powers for Quebec under a new constitution along the lines outlined in his *Egalite ou Independance*; the establishment of some form of international status for Quebec, particularly among the French-speaking community of nations. At federal-provincial conferences, meetings with the governments of other provinces, addresses to national organizations or service clubs, Johnson waged a tireless campaign to achieve these two goals.<sup>58</sup>

Refusing to abandon the nationalist field to the political opposition, the Bourassa government also posed as ardent defenders of the province's constitutional powers. For instance, despite initially agreeing to the proposed Victoria Charter in 1971, which would have patriated the constitution, Bourassa, under extreme pressure from all opposition parties, the Quebec Federation of Labour, The Confederation of National Trade Unions, the Federation of St. Jean Baptiste societies, as well as other groups, was forced to reject the proposal.<sup>59</sup> Pierre Trudeau recounts Bourassa's renegeing on the deal:

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<sup>57</sup>Lesage, as quoted in Willaim Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 27.

<sup>58</sup>Herbert F. Quinn, *The Union Nationale - Quebec Nationalism from Duplessis to Levesque*, p. 233.

<sup>59</sup>Richard Simeon, *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy - The making of recent policy in Canada*, p. 120.

When he got back to Quebec, Bourassa encountered the predictable storm of opposition from the nationalists. On June 23, just five days before the deadline, I received Bourassa's call. I was travelling in Ontario, staying in a motel, and I took the call after ten o'clock in the evening, which is late for me. Bourassa said: "I've been having a lot of consultations and I can't sell it to my ministers. Claude Morin is against it, and Claude Ryan is against it and he intends to write a lot of editorials in *Le Devoir* saying that we're giving up our bargaining power, so my answer has to be no."<sup>60</sup>

Despite the large scope of reform, and the early successes in the 1960's, by the end of the decade, liberal nationalism had appeared to reach the limit of social reform, and the population was becoming quite disenchanted. Quebec nationalists were worried that the continued anglicization of immigrants threatened the continued predominance of French in Montreal, if not in all of Quebec, given the declining birth rate of the Quebecois.<sup>61</sup> But, probably more importantly than this, it was the impression of failure in the economic realm that most discredited liberal non-separatist nationalism. Despite all the money spent to wrestle control of the economy away from foreign interests, the economy remained in the hands of outside interests, with few Quebecois occupying positions of power, and little improvement in French Canadians earning power, as compared to other ethnic groups. Despite many promises, liberal nationalism could not satisfy the needs of the people in the underprivileged sectors. Indeed, there was no promotion for the working class masses.<sup>62</sup> According to Kenneth McRoberts, the sources of discontent in the mid-1970s

...can be traced to the modernizing reforms of the Quiet Revolution

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<sup>60</sup>Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Memoirs*, pp. 233-234.

<sup>61</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, "Quebec: Province, Nation or 'Distinct Society'?", p. 91.

<sup>62</sup>Leon Dion, *Quebec - The Unfinished Revolution*, pp. 138-141.



in the early 1960s, with their massive growth in public spending and the proliferation of new structures of authority. Through its rhetoric and actions, the Lesage regime had led many Quebecois to the firm conviction that the Quebec state had both the capacity and the obligation to bring about major change: in particular, to give Francophones the preeminent position within the Quebec economy and to ensure that all Quebecois, regardless of class position, would enjoy satisfactory levels of services in a wide variety of areas, such as education, health, welfare, and housing.

In many cases these new expectations were not met. The forms of the Quiet Revolution served to expand and strengthen social categories that were especially likely to view the existing order with ambivalence or suspicion. These social categories included new-middle-class technocrats who argued that only concerted action by the Quebec state could ensure proper economic and social development; university graduates who saw little possibility of integrating themselves into Quebec's Anglophone dominated enterprises and therefore looked to the Quebec public sector; white-collar and blue-collar public-sector employees who depended on the Quebec government for their livelihood; union leaders who increasingly saw the Quebec government as hostile to themselves and the interests of their constituents.<sup>63</sup>

Adding to the growing social unrest was the fact that the federal government, now led by Pierre Elliott Trudeau, was exercising the upper hand in its dealings with the province. No longer would Quebec gain special status, as Trudeau set out to "put Quebec in its place" in his own style. As he wrote, "[m]y political action and my thought, to the extent that I embrace one, can be summarized in two words: build counterweights. And it was because the federal government was weak that I agreed to be catapulted there."<sup>64</sup>

As a result, demands began to surface to "increase the provincial government's power even to

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<sup>63</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 209.

<sup>64</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, pp. 89-90.

the point of making it sovereign.”<sup>65</sup> This climate of unrest produced a number of small, often feuding, separatist movements. Among them were the Rassemblement pour L’Indépendance Nationale founded in 1960 on the concept of Quebec as a colony which had to be liberated. A further stimulant to the separatist sentiment of Quebec nationalism occurred in 1967, when French President Charles de Gaulle uttered the words “Vive le Québec...libre” to a gathering outside Montreal’s City Hall. According to René Lévesque, before de Gaulle spoke that day, people in the crowd were saying that “...something’s going to happen that our grandchildren will still be talking about.”<sup>66</sup> It seems that the words of the masses gathered that day were indeed prophetic, as an international statesman gave credence to the creation of a sovereign Quebec.

In October of 1970, as a result of the frustration with the existing system, the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) began a terrorist campaign that targeted “all the colonial symbols and institutions.”<sup>67</sup> All of the early separatist movements believed Quebec was a colony - a colony in desperate need of liberation. As FLQ activist Pierre Vallières stated in his book, *White Niggers of America*,

...[It is time for] Quebec to put an end to three centuries of exploitation, of injustices born in silence, of sacrifices accepted in vain, of insecurity endured with resignation; to bear witness to their new and increasingly energetic determination to take control of their economic, political, and social affairs and to transform into a more just and fraternal society this country, Quebec, which is

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<sup>65</sup>William D. Coleman, *The Independence Movement in Quebec - 1945-1980*, p. 128.

<sup>66</sup>René Lévesque, *Memoirs*, p. 205.

<sup>67</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 47.

theirs....<sup>68</sup>

But, it was only in 1968, when Rene Levesque left the Quebec Liberal Party, that the first major party committed to national independence since Papineau's disastrous rebellion, was formed.<sup>69</sup> A coalition of various separatist movements, the Parti Quebecois grew steadily in support, culminating in 1976 when the PQ was elected to form the government, capturing 71 seats in the National Assembly. It was a stunning victory, a "miracle" in Rene Levesque's words. Many factors contributed to the PQ's triumph. Firstly, the party capitalized on all of the aforementioned dissatisfactions of the Quebec population. Secondly,

by the mid-1970s the Bourassa regime and, most notably, Bourassa himself experienced difficulty in simply presenting themselves as able to carry on the normal tasks of government. Rising unemployment and inflation undermined its pretensions to a special competence in economic management; [and] recurrent allegations of scandal extended to the cabinet itself.<sup>70</sup>

Thirdly, Bill 22, Bourassa's language bill satisfied no one. Anglophone Quebecers were enraged by the prospects of any restriction to English schools, and were equally incensed by regulations making knowledge of French compulsory in various occupations. "Quebec nationalists were appalled that any immigrant or Francophone child who could be coached to pass a test could enter the English, rather than the French, school system."<sup>71</sup> Fourthly, nationalists were angered by a decision of the federal government to delay granting the right to Francophone pilots to use

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<sup>68</sup>Pierre Vallieres, *White Niggers of America*, p. 17.

<sup>69</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, p. 95.

<sup>70</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 236.

<sup>71</sup>Graham Fraser, *PQ - Rene Levesque & the Parti Quebecois in Power*, p. 61.

French when communicating with traffic controllers in the major airports in Quebec. While the number of individuals was very small, it became a symbol for many Quebecers.<sup>72</sup> This “outrage added to the sense that the Liberals had failed to protect the French language, either in Quebec or Ottawa.”<sup>73</sup> Fifthly, the Bourassa government was hampered by the resurgence of the Union Nationale in the 1976 election. As Rene Levesque himself stated in an interview just weeks before the election:

Apart from the natural optimism dictated by election campaigns, I’ve never said what I’m saying this year. You can check it out. The Union Nationale is a nuisance element that is mainly going to hurt the Liberals....If they pick up the 20 per cent they’d like to get and don’t give up the ghost, we’re home free.<sup>74</sup>

While the UN failed to capture 20 per cent of the vote, they did manage to secure 18 per cent, and in so doing, drained votes away from the Liberals, thus allowing the PQ to earn victory in a number of ridings.

As a result of all these pressures, the Bourassa regime, after having served two terms in office, was soundly rejected by the Quebecois in the 1976 election. According to Levesque:

Since there is also an element of justice inherent in every defeat, however, and since a defeated government almost invariably deserves to lose, if only because it’s been around too long, it must be said that the Liberals had really been asking for the good thrashing French Quebec administered them. And to use the old cliché that covers electoral upsets, it was really time for a change.

It wasn’t just a question of six years of wear and tear, but of general rot that had taken years to uncover. Its sickening odour

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<sup>72</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, pp. 236-237.

<sup>73</sup>Graham Fraser, *PQ - Rene Levesque and the Parti Quebecois in Power*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>74</sup>Rene Levesque, *Memoirs*, p. 270.

found an illustration in the public mind with the “tainted meat” scandal, the widespread sale of beef unfit for human consumption that had taken years to uncover.<sup>75</sup>

Yet notwithstanding the PQ victory, did there exist in the voting public support for the idea of sovereignty? While it cannot be denied that a segment of the population voted for the PQ for reasons other than sovereignty, “...these voters could not have been fiercely antagonistic to the idea of Quebec independence.”<sup>76</sup> And the data does seem to confirm this. According to a 1977 survey, which posed a question in which independence was linked to an economic association, 60 per cent who had voted for the PQ in 1973 or 1976 said they were in favour; and among those who had voted for the PQ in 1973 and 1976, 80 per cent were in favour.<sup>77</sup>

With such support, the newly elected Parti Quebecois government ushered in a new form of nationalism, one which was social democratic in orientation, and committed to the sovereignty of Quebec.

#### **Social Democratic, Separatist Nationalism, 1976-1980**

In the Quebec provincial election held on November 15, 1976, Rene Levesque’s Parti Quebecois was chosen to form the next provincial government. Whatever the reasons underlying the choices of individual voters, by capturing 71 of the 108 seats in the National Assembly, the province would be governed by a party social democratic in nature, and committed to the

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<sup>75</sup>Rene Levesque, *Memoirs*, p. 271.

<sup>76</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 238.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 239-240.

secession of Quebec.<sup>78</sup> As Levesque expressed it in his 1968 work, *An Option for*

*Quebec*:

...we must secure once and for all, in accordance with the complex and urgent necessities of our time, the safety of our collective 'personality.' This is the distinctive feature of the nation, of this majority that we constitute in Quebec - the only true fatherland left us by events, by our own possibilities, and by the incomprehension and frequent hostility of others. The prerequisite to this is, among other things, the power for unfettered action....<sup>79</sup>

For Levesque, this power of unfettered action could only be achieved if Quebec was to escape the chains that the Canadian political system had bound Quebec in since Confederation. As he stated:

For our own good, we must dare to seize for ourselves complete liberty in Quebec, the right to all the essential components of independence, i.e., the complete mastery of every last area of basic collective decision-making.

This means that Quebec must become sovereign as soon as possible.<sup>80</sup>

While sovereignty was always the main principle of the Parti Quebecois, once elected, it moved slowly on the question of independence. As a result, the social democratic nature of the party became very visible. The term social democratic does not lend itself to a precise definition, but, it

...can be taken to mean a commitment not only to strengthen political democracy but to apply democratic principles to economic life. Typically this has entailed a concern with state intervention to arrange "a better deal" for organized labour and lower income groups, and more generally to manage more effectively the

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<sup>78</sup>James De Wilde, "The Parti Quebecois in Power," p. 15.

<sup>79</sup>Rene Levesque, *An Option for Quebec*, p. 21.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27.

economy.<sup>81</sup>

While the term social democracy does not appear in early versions of the PQ program, both leaders and militants would always point to Sweden, the quintessential social democracy, as a model for the Quebec they wished to create.<sup>82</sup>

After the 1976 election, following a social democratic logic, the Parti Québécois sought to repatriate the centres of economic decision making through state enterprises and the regulation of non-Quebec ownership of the province's economy. This technocratic thrust was coupled with a populist thrust that advocated policies to help the socially disadvantaged.<sup>83</sup>

According to the logic of the Parti Québécois, Quebec was a colony, subordinate not just to the English language culture, but most fundamentally to American and Canadian capitalism. According to this new strand of nationalism, Quebec would have to gain complete control over its own economy if it wished to correct these deficiencies, and produce a society where the Québécois would be the truly dominant group. Of course, social democratic nationalism saw independence as the best way to ensure the creation of this type of society.<sup>84</sup> For the newly elected PQ Government,

...the greatest attention was given to reorganization of the Quebec economy. The persistence of a capitalist system was presumed, along with a continued presence of American capital and initiative. But it was argued that through the transition of Quebec to sovereignty many of the worst effects of Quebec's economic

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<sup>81</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 254.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>83</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, "Quebec: Province, Nation, or 'Distinct Society'?", p. 92.

<sup>84</sup>James De Wilde, "The Parti Québécois in Power," p. 22.

dependence could be eliminated: the economy would be made more dynamic and more evenly developed, and Francophones would play a greater role in its direction and management. The key to this transformation was to lie in the new capacities sovereignty would bring to the Quebec state, which would have full legal authority to plan and regulate economic activity and would have the fiscal resources for more effective direct intervention and for support of private enterprises.<sup>85</sup>

In its attempts to follow a social democratic logic, the Quebec state remained very active and very aggressive at the outset of the administration. From 1976 until 1979, while in no way threatening the Quebec private sector, the state became active economically. It sponsored small-scale cooperative enterprises such as the worker takeovers of paper mills at Cabano and Timiskaming, as well as a textile plant in St. Jerome. Besides this, the Caisse de depot et placement became actively involved in the process of state capitalism. Pierre Arbour, former head of the variable income portfolio at the Caisse revealed in his book, *Quebec Inc. And the Temptations of State Capitalism*, the government's unwise use of the pension fund management agency to encourage indigenous capital in such enterprises as the Asbestos Corporation, Quebecair, SIDBEC, as well as the paramunicipal corporations of the city of Montreal. Arbour correctly articulates that state intervention permitted the politicians "...to compensate for the collective absence of Francophone Quebecers from the controls of economic power."<sup>86</sup> Clearly, state intervention was directed at placing control of the economy in the hands of the Quebecois.

In the social field, the government remained active as well, reforming elements of the social security as well as consumer protection policies. Also, measures were introduced to enhance

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<sup>85</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 247.

<sup>86</sup>Pierre Arbour, *Quebec Inc. And the Temptation of State Capitalism*, p.121.



the status of women; the minimum wage was raised to three dollars an hour, and it was indexed to the cost of living; and, the PQ in 1978 began to index income taxes to the cost of living only for those whose salaries were under \$30,000 - a strategy which particularly benefitted middle and lower income earners. As Finance Minister Jacques Parizeau put it, “[t]he curve of the tax on personal income in Quebec is going to remain very progressive. It corresponds to the objectives of a social democratic government....”<sup>87</sup> But, the most important role played by the state in the social field was the introduction of Bill 101. Besides restricting non-anglophone access to English schools, for Dr. Camille Laurin, the minister responsible for the bill, it would do much more. As he said:

...the economic life and the labour market of Quebec are dominated by interests which are foreign to the majority and by an economic elite that does not speak our language.

A government that has taken on the responsibility to give back to Quebecers their collective identity does not have the right to refuse this task even if it seems an enormous challenge.

We cannot help francophones to fulfill themselves in all areas of activity in Quebec without opening up them doors of the management of the large companies and large establishments in Quebec.<sup>88</sup>

Clearly, the Quebec state was actively engaged in protecting and strengthening the Quebec people. But, working within the confines of Canadian federalism would not suffice. As a result, the Parti Quebecois began to pursue its goal of independence for the province. On October 10, 1978, Premier Levesque addressed the National Assembly on the proposed referendum on

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<sup>87</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 267.

<sup>88</sup>Laurin, as quoted in William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 151.

sovereignty-association to be held in 1980:

**We do not want to end, but rather radically transform, our union with Canada, so that, in the future, our relations will be based on full and complete equality. From our distant colonial beginnings, to our present half-fledged state allowed by the federal regime, we have constantly sought to rid ourselves of authority exercised from without.<sup>89</sup>**

On May 20, 1980, by a 60-40 split, the populace voted no in the referendum asking the people to give the government a mandate to negotiate a new deal with the rest of the country. Two main arguments have been constantly advanced to explain why the Yes forces could not obtain its goal of political sovereignty accompanied by an economic association with the rest of the country. The first cause of the failure may well have been the capacity of the Parti Quebecois to provide good government for the province. The effective promotion and protection within the confines of the federation demonstrated that independence, which was viewed by many as risky, was unnecessary. In the social fields, the government had passed Bill 101 which established that the French face of Quebec would remain dominant. As well, the economic reforms were being hailed as a success. French-Canadian ownership was increasing dramatically, and Franchophone salaries had equalled or in some cases surpassed those of Anglophones.<sup>90</sup> The second argument that has been advanced to explain the yes defeat is the etapiste logic used by the government. By advocating a policy that would lead to independence in stages, the yes forces were trying to minimize the prospect of change. Despite this, the voters believed that independence would have serious ramifications for the province. Add to these two arguments the constant efforts by

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<sup>89</sup>Levesque, as quoted in Maurice King, *The First Step*, p. 71.

<sup>90</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, p. 96.

English-Canadian politicians to convince Quebecois that sovereignty association would never be accepted, and the results were not surprising.<sup>91</sup> However, all of these explanations, while quite true, do not take into account Prime Minister Trudeau's promises for constitutional reform. As he stated during the heat of the campaign: "I know that I can make a most solemn commitment that following a No vote, we will immediately take action to renew the constitution and we will not stop until we have done that."<sup>92</sup> In the final days before Quebec would vote on their political future, the Prime Minister had delivered the final blow that caused many a Quebecois to vote no.

The failure of the referendum on sovereignty was devastating to the Parti Quebecois. For Levesque, as a result of the defeat, "...it would be very difficult...to recharge the batteries...and to start up another movement"<sup>93</sup> to achieve sovereignty. By not being able to "secure from Francophones, let alone the Quebec population as a whole, clear support for even the most minimal of mandates: simply to negotiate sovereignty with the federal government,"<sup>94</sup> the people seemed content to continue to remain within the confines of the federation. While the Parti Quebecois, still regarding itself as the defender of the French people, was able to win re-election in 1981, capturing a majority of 80 seats in the National Assembly, Quebec nationalism evolved into a liberal, non-separatist sentiment.

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<sup>91</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, "Quebec: Province, Nation, or 'Distinct Society'?", p. 94.

<sup>92</sup>Trudeau, as quoted in Stephen Clarkson and Christina McCall, *Trudeau and Our Times - Volume 1: The Magnificent Obsession*, p. 239.

<sup>93</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 340.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 345.

### **Liberal, Non-Separatist Nationalism, 1981-1985**

The 1981 PQ election campaign “was a textbook example of a well-organized, well-structured, well-marketed campaign...[The PQ] strategists had learned from the referendum defeat: this time, there was to be no challenge to the electorate, no sense of risk....”<sup>95</sup> While the party remained committed to sovereignty,

...it becomes clear that in fact the PQ was re-elected despite its neo-nationalist project. It did this by carefully distancing itself from its *souverainiste* goals. The PQ electoral program stipulated that the party would fully respect the result of the 1980 referendum and would not call another referendum within a new mandate. Beyond this formal renunciation of any campaign to secure sovereignty-association, at least over the short term, the PQ leaders by and large ignored the national question. They even avoided discussion of the federal government’s project of unilateral patriation.<sup>96</sup>

For strictly electoral imperatives, the PQ, by abandoning its main goal, the sovereignty of Quebec, was able to capture voters who had previously been inhibited from voting for the party because of its *raison d’être*.

Adding to the PQ’s fortunes was Liberal leader Claude Ryan.

Ryan was, as an aide admitted, a terribly undisciplined campaigner. He made needless gaffes - saying that Louise Cuerrier was incompetent as deputy speaker, but that because she was a woman the Liberals hadn’t complained. At times he was on the defensive - as in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, trying to explain his remark that the riding had voted yes in the referendum because it was cut off from the mainstream. He spent too much time reaching too few voters in

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<sup>95</sup>Graham Fraser, *PQ - Rene Levesque & the Parti Quebecois in Power*, p. 267.

<sup>96</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 342. It appears that the decision of the PQ to abandon sovereignty was quite astute, and reflected a general sentiment in the voting public. CROP opinion polls taken during the campaign revealed constitutional repatriation was cited by only 6 per cent of respondents as the most important issue during the campaign, with inflation being the most important, at 38 per cent.

villages and small towns. He made long speeches, so crammed with information that the reporters following his campaign had a choice among six possible stories - and he was so disdainful of media deadlines that sometimes none of them would make the television news. He wasted energy in ceaseless campaigning.<sup>97</sup>

For Levesque, the PQ's "...greatest luck was to be matched up with a Claude Ryan who, ever since the revealing ferocity of that referendum night, had taken off on a power trip of disconcerting intensity."<sup>98</sup>

As a result, the PQ was returned to power in the general election on April 13, 1981.

However, changes were afoot in the western world - changes which would have a profound impact on the social-democratic orientation of the PQ. As a result of taxpayer revolts and the ascendancy of neo-liberalist doctrines in most advanced capitalist societies during the early 1980s, the well established notions of the Keynesian welfare state suffered attacks. As well, western capitalism was suffering a protracted crisis, a crisis that severely limited the maneuverability of all states. Quebec was no exception to the norm, as concern escalated regarding the condition of Quebec's public finances in the New York financial houses, and the neo-liberal critiques of state intervention found echoes among Quebec intellectuals. Among the most vehement critics of an interventionist Quebec state was the Quebec capitalist class. Large Francophone-owned and managed enterprises, which had benefitted from an interventionist government in the past, now became openly critical of social-democratic nationalism. For Francophone capitalists, an interventionist state could no longer be of any assistance, since many of these corporations had reached scales of resources and operations beyond the provincial government. As well, in the

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<sup>97</sup>Graham Fraser, *PQ - Rene Levesque & the Parti Quebecois in Power*, p. 273.

<sup>98</sup>Rene Levesque, *Memoirs*, p. 317.

capitalists' opinion, the welfare state had become a burden, and they overwhelmingly supported its retrenchment.<sup>99</sup> Responding to these pressures, the PQ government adopted a new anti-statist discourse. As the 1982 industrial policy propounds:

[t]he responsibility of ensuring sufficient, sustained development lies first of all with the private sector, since most enterprises are in this sector. The gouvernement du Quebec has as one of its prime objectives to create and maintain conditions favourable to the development and dynamism of private initiatives, and feels that the best system of effectively allocating resources remains the market economy.<sup>100</sup>

While the thrust under social democratic nationalism had been for state intervention, it was all but abandoned under liberal nationalism. Now, private enterprise became the vehicle which would guide the Quebec economy - the vehicle to provide jobs for Quebecois. Private industries became eligible for financial assistance whether on the grounds of potential growth or simply because of need. Because of the recession of 1981-1982, Levesque's PQ government had fewer resources at its disposal. Consequently, shifting the emphasis to the private sector seemed a prudent decision. For the PQ, it was absolutely clear that expenditures would have to be reduced. In order to safeguard the interests of current and future generations of Quebecois, fiscal restraint would be necessary. As Levesque himself stated in his Inaugural Address in May of 1981:

...because we must keep reminding ourselves, and not only for this last year, that the times of unlimited growth are over. The same is true for automatic growth in the economy and, consequently, an equivalent growth in spending. Like all other societies, without exception, Quebec is now confronted by very visible limits from which it is absolutely impossible to escape....

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<sup>99</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, pp. 359-362.

<sup>100</sup>Alain Gagnon and Mary Beth Montcalm, *Quebec Beyond the Quiet Revolution*, p. 64.

**Thus, while maintaining and even accentuating the measures of [budgetary] reorganization and retrenchment that we have been pursuing since 1976, henceforth we will have to select with the greatest of care each of our new programs, knowing that it has become unthinkable to keep adding them to those which already exist, as was done in the past.<sup>101</sup>**

In its assault on the provincial debt, nothing was immune from government cutbacks. Among the many areas to be hit by the economics of the new liberal nationalism was the teaching sector. Under Bill 105, 66,000 of Quebec's primary and high school teachers were forced to suffer a three month, 20 per cent wage rollback. According to the portrayal by the government, teachers were "living high off the hog while the province [plunged] ever deeper into debt." Not surprisingly, the teaching profession bitterly denounced Bill 105. As one teacher said, "A lot of people had hopes that the PQ would be honest and pure. A government of the people. They're treating people worse than they've ever been treated."<sup>102</sup> Under this new liberal nationalism, the state would remain active and aggressive, but the new thrust of the government would not be to stimulate the economy through intervention, but, rather, to act as the cold hard force of restraint. Without doubt, under the new nationalism, economic measures to return the province to stability affected virtually every part of society. As Finance Minister Jacques Parizeau put it, "no program is a sacred cow."<sup>103</sup>

Besides the problems of trying to get its fiscal house in order, in 1982, the Quebec government suffered yet another defeat in regards to its place within the Canadian federation. Acting on a

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<sup>101</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 362.

<sup>102</sup>Victor Malarek, "Shocked by wage rollback of 20%, teachers take militant anti-PQ stand," p. 8.

<sup>103</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 365.

referendum promise, Prime Minister Trudeau set out to patriate the constitution. For him, there would be one Canada with two official languages from coast to coast, and rights for all citizens vested in a charter.<sup>104</sup> For Levesque, the new constitution did not provide the province with the veto it needed to protect the interests of the Quebecois. Despite the disapproval of Quebec, the constitution was patriated in 1982, and Quebec's distinctive demands had simply been dismissed. According to Trudeau, the Quebec Premier had played the game and lost.<sup>105</sup> As Clarkson and McCall put it, "it was Levesque the separatist who was vanquished and Trudeau the federalist who had triumphed."<sup>106</sup>

In the National Assembly, the government passed a resolution condemning patriation because it did not recognize the demands of Quebec. Contrary to his promise, Levesque did not do everything in his power to stop patriation. According to the Parti Quebecois, while all of the events surrounding the patriation seemed perfect for a rekindling of nationalist sentiment, all was quiet in Quebec. As one observer put it:

This situation contained all the elements apt to provoke huge demonstrations of Quebec nationalism: Quebec was isolated, scorned, reduced to silence. Yet nothing happened. That majority of Quebecers which had always been favourable to "renewed federalism" remained strangely silent and resigned. No mass meeting, no concerted opposition; only a few letters to newspapers and that was it. People were glum or just not interested in the

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<sup>104</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 185.

<sup>105</sup>Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Against the Current - Selected Writings 1939-1996*, p. 265.

<sup>106</sup>Stephen Clarkson and Christina McCall, *Trudeau and Our Times - Volume 1: The Magnificent Obsession*, p. 386.



constitutional question.<sup>107</sup>

After the so-called betrayal of Quebec during the patriation process, the Quebec government's commitment to sovereignty began to be debated within the inner ranks of the party. Cognizant of survey findings which revealed that the PQ had a more realistic chance of winning another election if it were to distance itself from the goal of sovereignty,<sup>108</sup> Levesque, the avowed separatist now began to flirt with the idea of Quebec remaining a part of the federation. With the ascension to power of Brian Mulroney in September 1984, Levesque believed that perhaps Quebec could enter negotiations to renew its place within the federation. This beau risque for Levesque resulted in great division in the party ranks. It eventually led to the resignation of such prominent ministers as Jacques Parizeau and Camille Laurin. Like dominoes falling, Levesque himself soon resigned, to be replaced by Pierre-Marc Johnson. Despite the uncertainty over exactly what policy to follow with regards to the future of the province, the new leader soon made his views quite clear, as he affirmed that the party would remain committed to sovereignty; but, he also assured voters that if the Parti Quebecois were re-elected, there would be no referendum on Quebec's future during that term of office. While the government party continued to broadcast its political rhetoric, the Liberal Party under resurrected leader Robert Bourassa advocated that in order to safeguard the interests of the province, Quebec would, under his government, become a signatory to a new Canadian Constitution.

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<sup>107</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>108</sup>In March-April 1983, a CROP poll revealed that those who supported sovereignty-association or independence was at only 33%. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

With separatism having been discredited by the referendum and neutralized by the patriation,<sup>109</sup> a resurgent Liberal Party was returned to power on December 2, 1985, winning 99 of the 122 seats up for grabs. Clearly, the voters had vociferously exercised their displeasure towards the incumbent PQ. Among the most important factors which precipitated the PQ's demise were: (1) the division within the party with regards to the question of sovereignty; (2) the party's steady movement away from social-democratic ideals, and the new neo-liberal agenda which resulted in severe cuts which affected much of the PQ's traditional base of support, especially among public-sector workers<sup>110</sup>; and (3) the desperate state of Quebec's economy.

Under all of these strains, the PQ suffered a resounding electoral defeat, and subsequently, separatist nationalism appeared passe; however, the possibility existed that it could "be revived again by a demagogue or a sorcerer's apprentice rash enough to set loose once again the nationalist demons that had tormented Quebec for two decades."<sup>111</sup>

#### **Liberal, Non-Separatist Nationalism, 1985-1994**

With Robert Bourassa returned to power, liberal, non-separatist nationalism was returned to power, and so was the hope that Quebec would now remain firmly within the federalist ranks.

"Because it was the only province not to agree to the 1982 Canada Act, most politicians felt it

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<sup>109</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 186.

<sup>110</sup>According to one poll taken during the campaign, 68% of public-service workers said they were opposed to the government's policies. Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, p. 386.

<sup>111</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 186.

essential, as soon as possible, to have Quebec become a full partner in the federal polity.”<sup>112</sup>

For Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, the time appeared perfect to attempt to bring Quebec into the constitutional fold, and in so doing, rid the province of the humiliation he believed it had suffered during the patriation process of 1982. After opening up this Pandora’s box, he began to work closely with Premier Bourassa to cobble together a deal that would satisfy all the parties involved. For Quebec to become a partner in the federation, certain demands had to be met.

...as one of its conditions for accepting the new constitution “inscription, in the preamble of the new constitution, of a statement explicitly recognizing as the hearth of a distinct society and the cornerstone of the French-speaking element of the Canadian duality.” Other conditions, designed to give meaning to that concept, included a veto on constitutional amendments, limitations on the federal spending power, constitutional recognition of the Cullen-Couture agreement on immigration, and the right of the Quebec government to participate in the nomination of Supreme Court justices from that province.<sup>113</sup>

After much debate and negotiation, Mulroney, along with the other nine premiers agreed to Quebec’s five basic demands as outlined above, plus the provision that the provincial governments participate in the nominations for senate appointments. This document, signed in June of 1987, became known as the Meech Lake Accord. As Alan Cairns has pointed out, “the enterprise was noble in its aspiration to return Quebec to the constitutional family and politically shrewd in rounding up support from all provincial governments by offering them the same package received by Quebec, except for the distinct society provision.”<sup>114</sup> At least for a time, it seemed that

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<sup>112</sup>Ronald G. Landes, *The Canadian Polity - A Comparative Introduction*, p. 97.

<sup>113</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, p. 163.

<sup>114</sup>Alan Cairns, *Charter Versus Federalism*, p. 102.

Mulroney would achieve what Trudeau had been unable to secure in 1982, the signature of Quebec.

Despite a favourable response initially, protest soon began to surface from federalists outside Quebec in reaction to the accord. Among the most voiced reasons of discontent was the failure to consult the general public, and the weakening of the federal government's power. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, a French-Canadian, and architect of the 1982 Constitution, perhaps most aptly captured the discontent of English Canadians:

In addition to surrendering to the provinces important parts of its jurisdiction (the spending power, immigration), in addition to weakening the Charter of Rights, the Canadian state made subordinate to the provinces its legislative power (Senate) and its judicial power (Supreme Court); it did this without hope of ever getting it back (a constitutional veto granted to each province).<sup>115</sup>

But, the most troubling part of the accord for English Canada was the fact that it recognized Quebec as a distinct society. The notion that Quebec was not simply one of ten equal provinces struck an emotional chord with many English Canadians. But, according to the Bourassa government, this was the most important aspect of the entire agreement. For Quebec, far from being only a symbolic recognition, distinct society did grant to the provincial government additional powers to promote the French language. As Bourassa stated when questioned in the National Assembly on May 8, 1986, “[w]e are asking in the federal-provincial negotiations...that Quebec be recognized as a distinct society. That implies an interpretation by the courts which would give us a clearly predominant power (over language).”<sup>116</sup> This was the first time that it had

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<sup>115</sup>Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Against the Current - Selected Writings 1939-1996*, 233.

<sup>116</sup>Graham Fraser, “Bourassa defines recognition benefit,” p. 1.

been suggested that legal recognition as a distinct society would have concrete effects. As Trudeau stated, according to Meech, “the government of Quebec must take measures and the legislature must pass laws aimed at promoting the uniqueness of Quebec.”<sup>117</sup>

Adding to the opposition regarding the distinct society clause, the language debate, which Bourassa himself had described as “one damn mess” began to intensify. The Supreme Court struck down a provision in Bill 101 that required that commercial signs be in French only, on the grounds that it violated a fundamental freedom as stipulated in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; this ruling “was unacceptable to Quebecois nationalists, who organized mass rallies in a matter of days, to denounce any significant abridgement of Bill 101.”<sup>118</sup> As a result, Bourassa used the “notwithstanding clause” of the Charter to reinstate a modified version of Bill 101 in the form of Bill 178. In its attempts to appease nationalists and safeguard the interests of all Quebecois, the Bourassa government had to defend the integrity of Bill 101.<sup>119</sup>

On June 23, 1990, with three years having elapsed and with the accord not having been ratified in the legislatures of Newfoundland and Manitoba, according to protocol, the accord died. As Brian Mulroney had predicted, because of the failure of Meech, separatist sentiment became greatly intensified. For the Quebecois, rejection of Meech had signalled Canada’s rejection of the province. As a result, support for sovereignty reached unprecedented levels, climbing as high as 64% by November of 1990. For Canada, the belief that with the referendum defeat in 1980, Quebec nationalism in its separatist expression was a “spent force” was proven wrong. Far from

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<sup>117</sup>Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Against the Current - Selected Writings 1939-1996*, p. 230.

<sup>118</sup>Philip Resnick, *Toward a Canada-Quebec Union*, p. 5.

<sup>119</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, “Quebec: Province, Nation, or ‘Distinct Society’?,” p. 97.

being “dead,” it was, in the words of one Parti Quebecois MNA only “hibernating.”<sup>120</sup> According to William Johnson,

[w]hen Meech failed, on Friday, 22 June 1990, all the clocks in Quebec seemed suddenly to have turned back to 1967. Nationalism swept back into fashion and into passion and became again what it had for a few brief years ceased to be: the most dynamic political force in Quebec.

Vive le Quebec libre echoed again, as though the...interval since Charles de Gaulle’s cry had vanished into a black hole. The counter-revolution of Pierre Trudeau seemed itself overthrown. The failed Parti Quebecois referendum on sovereignty of 1980 was cancelled. Nationalism emerged triumphant once again, regaining the initiative and presumption of moral superiority. Federalism was stigmatized as having failed.<sup>121</sup>

With this spread of nationalist sentiment, both the Allaire Report, as well as the Belanger-Campeau Commission, issued reports in 1991 that called for sovereignty if an agreement could not be reached. But, Bourassa, before committing Quebec to a referendum on its constitutional future, was still willing to making a deal that would keep Quebec within the federation. After much negotiation, what emerged in August of 1992 was the Charlottetown Accord. In order to satisfy English-Canadian demands that Quebec be treated as one of ten equal provinces, the distinct society clause was now only one of eight “fundamental characteristics” of the country contained within a “Canada clause.” But, despite this, the deal would recognize the distinctiveness of Quebec. Under Charlottetown, Quebec’s representation in the House of Commons would increase (as would that of Ontario), and the province would be guaranteed 25%

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<sup>120</sup>John F. Conway, *Debts to Pay - English Canada and Quebec from the Conquest to the Referendum*, p. 5.

<sup>121</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 252.

of all seats in the house, even if its population dropped below this level. For many outside Quebec, Charlottetown was as flawed a document as was Meech. In Quebec as well, the document was not well received, as it was seen as representing no significant gains for the province. In a national referendum held on October 26, 1992, Charlottetown suffered a resounding defeat throughout the country; in Quebec, 57 per cent of voters rejected the Mulroney-Bourassa attempt at constitutional renewal. According to Jennifer Smith, when explaining the failure of Charlottetown, said “[t]here needs to be a balance, and the authors of the accord were unable to strike it. They could not get the right adjustment of competing principles, certainly not one acceptable to enough Canadians.”<sup>122</sup>

Between 1987 and 1992, the federal government of Brian Mulroney and the provincial government of Robert Bourassa attempted, in both the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords, to bring Quebec into the constitutional fold, ensuring in both documents that the distinctiveness of Quebec would be recognized. However, with the failure of both accords, nationalist sentiment was rekindled. As Ramsay Cook stated:

Dormant or drowsy nationalism is easily awakened or aroused.... In the years between 1987 and 1992, drowsy nationalisms were awakened in both Quebec and among many Canadians in the rest of the country. It was aroused by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney’s ill-advised decision in 1987 to reopen the constitutional question in an effort to satisfy the Quebec government’s insistence that the 1982 constitution was unacceptable to the legislature of that province.<sup>123</sup>

Because of the constitutional fiascos that were both Meech Lake and Charlottetown, and the

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<sup>122</sup>Jennifer Smith, “The Unsolvable Constitutional Crisis,” p. 68.

<sup>123</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec, and the Uses of Nationalism*, pp. 18-19.

subsequent increase in nationalist sentiment, as well as a general dissatisfaction with the government's failure to create economic growth in the province, the Quebec Liberal Party, under the leadership of Daniel Johnson, was defeated in the provincial election on September 12, 1994. The Parti Quebecois under Jacques Parizeau would now usher in a new era of liberal, separatist nationalism.

#### **Liberal, Separatist Nationalism, 1994-**

With the ascension to power of the Parti Quebecois, sovereignty for Quebec would be the primary goal which the government would pursue. Jeffrey Simpson accurately captures PQ leader Jacques Parizeau's commitment to Quebec separation:

Jacques Parizeau, forty minutes into his speech, produces another rhetorical thunderclap.

"For us, Quebec is *notre patrie, notre pays*, for which we alone are responsible. Sovereignty is first and above all else to be responsible for ourselves."

The Parti Quebecois, its leader growls, makes choices, unlike the dithering, unequivocal Liberals. "We make choices because we have a country to build. We want a Quebec that is solid, advancing, doing things, offering equality of opportunity. We have a vision for Quebec." That vision, friends, is independence: pure, simple and undiluted.<sup>124</sup>

According to the new Premier of Quebec, a yes vote in a future referendum

...was going to be an irrevocable vote for the separation of Canada. It was not going to be a renewed partnership or some halfway measures. He flippantly said that Quebec Yes voters would be like lobsters in a lobster trap: once inside, they would not be able to get

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<sup>124</sup>Jeffrey Simpson, *The Anxious Years - Politics in the Age of Mulroney and Chretien*, p.



out no matter how hard they tried.<sup>125</sup>

With the date of October 30, 1995 having been selected as the date for a referendum on Quebec's future, almost immediately, tensions began to surface between "hard-line" separatists like Parizeau who wished a total, unequivocal break with Canada, and the "soft-line" separatists like Lucien Bouchard, who favoured independence coupled with an institutionalized link with Canada. However, after realizing that sovereignty coupled with an offer of a political and economic partnership with the rest of the country would be more likely to achieve success, Parizeau and his followers reluctantly softened their hard-line stance. Adding to the separatist fortunes was the increased role of Lucien Bouchard, the most charismatic and popular of Quebec's politicians, who was recruited from Ottawa, where he was serving, ironically enough, as the leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition, to become chief negotiator for the province in the event of a yes victory. After Bouchard's *de facto* takeover of the Yes forces, the results were immediate and impressive. The separatist forces began gaining momentum, as vacillating Quebecois began to accept Bouchard's rhetoric concerning the inevitability of an economic and political partnership. On the opposite side, the No forces appeared in disarray, as it was becoming increasingly obvious that the federal argument was harder to sell in Quebec than it was in 1980.

As Simpson put it:

Canada, whether federalists like to admit it or not, has done itself quite a bit of damage since the last referendum. Three attempts to change the Constitution either exploded (Meech Lake and Charlottetown) or ended in controversy (patriation). While these constitutional efforts sapped energy and created controversies, the country's fiscal situation deteriorated significantly....

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<sup>125</sup>Diane Francis, *Fighting For Canada*, p. 51.

In 1980, politicians such as Jean Chretien could plausibly argue that secession would divorce Quebecers from a fiscal powerhouse, evidence for which abounded in federal programs, many of high visibility in Quebec. Now, there is little defence against the correct secessionist prediction that the federal government will be cutting social programs....<sup>126</sup>

With exactly one week remaining until the vote, the federalist campaign “was in free fall.”<sup>127</sup>

...the federalist forces were reeling. Prime Minister Jean Chretien and the leader of the No forces in Quebec, Liberal Leader Daniel Johnson, had become ensnarled in problems over the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society. Newfoundland Premier Clyde Wells had weighed in with a spectacularly ill-timed and club-footed intervention. Finance Minister Paul Martin’s credibility blew sky-high with his prediction that secession would imperil one million jobs.

...Canadian federalism, whose easy victory had seemed assured before the campaign began and during the first two weeks, was definitely teetering.<sup>128</sup>

Finally realizing the gravity of the situation, the No campaign began a series of last minute efforts to try and attract voters, especially a large chunk of undecided voters. From huge rallies in Montreal’s Place du Canada, to the Prime Minister appealing to Quebecois directly on television, the federalist forces resorted to every effort to swing the tide.

On October 30th, with the two sides in a virtual dead-heat, the Quebec people voted on what

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<sup>126</sup>Jeffrey Simpson, *The Anxious Years - Politics in the Age of Mulroney and Chretien*, p. 75.

<sup>127</sup>Edward Greenspon and Anthony Wilson-Smith, *Double Vision - The Inside Story of the Liberals in Power*, p. 319.

<sup>128</sup>Jeffrey Simpson, *The Anxious Years - Politics in the Age of Mulroney and Chretien*, p. 80.

many have called an “insidious referendum question”<sup>129</sup> regarding their future. While deeply rooted anxiety dominated the federalist camp, the separatist camp was optimistic that at last, the Quebec people would climb the mountain, and reach the promised land. This hope was evident in the preamble of *An Act Respecting the Future of Quebec*, introduced by Premier Jacques Parizeau in the National Assembly in 1995. As it states:

The time has come to reap the fields of history. The time has come at last to harvest what has been sown for us by four hundred years of men and women and courage, rooted in the soil and now returned to it.

The time has come for us, tomorrow’s ancestors, to make ready for our descendants harvests that are worthy of the labours of the past.

May our toil be worthy of them, may they gather us together at last.<sup>130</sup>

The referendum results were closer than anyone had expected. With 81 of 125 ridings voting for separation<sup>131</sup>, the No side won by some 52, 000 votes. Thus, “...Canadian federalism survived, battered and bruised, in spite of the fact that 60 per cent of Francophone Quebecers voted...for secession.”<sup>132</sup> After the yes defeat, in a fit of poor judgement, Jacques Parizeau blamed the loss on both money and the ethnic vote. It clearly revealed the bitterness of a man who had dedicated his life to achieving the dream of nationhood for Quebec. It also sealed his political fate as he

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<sup>129</sup>Guy Bertrand, *Enough is Enough - An Attorney's Struggle for Democracy in Quebec*, p. 24.

<sup>130</sup>*An Act Respecting the Future of Quebec*.

<sup>131</sup>Maurice J. King, “Distinctly dangerous,” p. 7.

<sup>132</sup>Jeffrey Simpson, *The Anxious Years - Politics in the Age of Mulroney and Chretien*, p. 80.

soon resigned as Premier. This left the door open for Lucien Bouchard to return to “la belle province” as its next premier.

With the swearing in of Bouchard, it became obvious to the new administration that the province’s fiscal house was in dire straits. Some tough economic decisions would have to be taken to tame the province’s massive public debt. As a result, the PQ moved solidly to the right of centre as cut and slash became the strategy to achieve fiscal stability. Of course, these tough budget cuts are not winning the favour of the province, especially of the unions, who, despite being traditional allies of the Parti Quebecois, have denounced a government proposal to recoup \$1.4 billion from public sector workers for its 1997-1998 budget.<sup>133</sup>

Clearly, Premier Bouchard faces a turbulent future as he continues to push Quebec towards the attainment of sovereignty. Of course, another referendum will be contingent on the Parti Quebecois winning a general election. For, according to Quebec law, a government cannot call two referendums on the same subject during one mandate. Bouchard, insisting that there will not be a snap election, seems poised to finish this term in office before launching another campaign in which the Quebecois will vote on their political future. However, as Bouchard has promised, there will be a referendum, probably before the turn of the century. For him, only in a sovereign country can the Quebecois achieve their goals. According to the Quebec Premier, Canadian federalism is an obstacle that must be overcome. As he stated, “countless negotiations have been held between Quebec and the rest of Canada over the past 30 years. All have

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<sup>133</sup>Peter Ray, “No snap election - Bouchard: Public sector unions to seek strike mandate,” p. B16.

failed....”<sup>134</sup> According to the nationalism of the Quebec premier, the only future is one where both nations will be separate.

### Conclusion

As the classification below illustrates, Quebec nationalism as a social force has undergone a constant evolution. Each political party which has exercised power has embodied a sentiment of nationalism which it considered in the best interests of the Quebecois.

	Conservative	Social Democratic	Liberal
Non-Separatist	UN		PQ (1981-1985) QLP
Separatist		PQ (1976-1980)	PQ (1994-)

From this schema, it is clear that historically, the UN, the QLP, and the PQ have been concentrated along both a horizontal and vertical cleavage. Horizontally, parties have been divided based on whether they were separatist or non-separatist; and, vertically, a distinction can be drawn between parties which were conservative, social-democratic, and liberal in orientation. These two cleavages have ultimately determined the type of nationalism expressed by all parties which have formed the government in Quebec.

For the purposes of this thesis, both of the modern-day political parties in Quebec (the QLP and the PQ) vying for control of the Quebec state are also concentrated along these horizontal and vertical cleavages. Vertically, both parties are essentially liberal. This is not startling given the fact that many governments have embraced a liberal understanding of the world.

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<sup>134</sup>Bouchard, in Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Against the Current - Selected Writings 1939-1996*, p. 275.

However, turning to the horizontal cleavage, it is easily discernible that the QLP and the PQ remain divided. For the federalist Quebec Liberal Party, "...the flexibility of the Canadian system has responded to the legitimate needs of Quebecers,"<sup>135</sup> and as such, "[c]ontinuing the Canadian experience offers the best hope for the future of Quebec."<sup>136</sup> The separatist sentiment, typified by the Parti Quebecois believes "...that continuing within Canada would be tantamount to condemning...[all Quebecois] to languish and to debasing [their] very identity."<sup>137</sup> Thus, Quebecers must escape the confinements of federalism, and form an independent country.

As a result, in order to illuminate the nationalism within the Quebec provincial party system, it is this horizontal cleavage which must be examined. These two competing visions, one federalist and one separatist, which both offer a means for Quebecois to realize their identity as a nation, are at variance. The essence of this divergence can be found in both evidence and assumptions. It is these questions of evidence and assumptions which this thesis will now address.

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<sup>135</sup>Daniel Johnson, "The Case For A United Canada," p. 2.

<sup>136</sup>*Quebec's Identity and Canadian Federalism - Recognition and Interdependence*, p. 1.

<sup>137</sup>*An Act Respecting the Future of Quebec*.

**Chapter 3:**  
**Questions of Evidence**

### **Chapter 3:**

#### **Questions of Evidence**

##### **Introduction**

When addressing the question of evidence with regards to Quebec nationalism, it is clear that there is a mutual dependence between the two. While evidence and nationalism are inter-related, it is impossible to state with any degree of certainty as to what direction this cause and effect relationship unfolds, since it is probably dialectical in any case. It appears that either the sentiment of Quebec nationalism which one embraces causes a different perception of evidence, or vice versa. Undoubtedly though, for the Quebec Liberal Party and the Parti Quebecois, the historical and contemporary record is interpreted quite differently. As one QLP activist put it:

...In looking at Quebec nationalism, it seems to me that events, both past and present serve as a guide - perhaps a sign post is a better word. No, come to think of it, the best term is a weather vane.... The way Quebecois look at evidence is different depending upon whether you are a federalist or a separatist. Either way, evidence is extremely important if one wants to get to the heart of the matter....That's the way I see things, and I believe it is logical....<sup>1</sup>

Both the federalist and separatist sentiments of Quebec nationalism offer, through their reading of evidence, two perspectives of the historical and contemporary record. While both readings of evidence must be regarded as valid, I did discover, through the course of my research, some rather interesting facets of this reading by both the Quebec Liberal Party and the Parti Quebecois. Thus, before discussing the perceived historical and contemporary record, it is useful, if not beneficial, to begin with a cursory examination of the manner by which both sentiments of Quebec nationalism interpret evidence.

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<sup>1</sup>Quebec civil servant (anonymous), personal interview, June 10, 1997.



### **The Reading of Evidence**

My interviews revealed that federalists and separatists alike decipher evidence through different lenses. That is, the same event provoked quite different responses from the two sentiments. Because of their political orientations, the QLP and the PQ see events very differently. It appears that the lenses by which each sentiment views the world serve to narrow and restrict vision. These lenses can perhaps best be likened to blinders, which serve to restrict one's peripheral vision. But, besides limiting the field of vision, these lenses also serve as a filter through which the historical and contemporary record is refined. Much like a search for gold in which one filters silt from riverbeds in an attempt to uncover riches, these lenses also serve as filters, purifying both the historical and contemporary record. It's much like the analogy of a glass of water, which some see as half full, and which others view as half empty. In its simplicity, this parallel captures the essence of the manner in which Quebec nationalists of both the federalist and separatist sentiments interpret the same evidence through different lenses, and thus arrive at divergent conclusions.

However, there is more at play here than just the presence of lenses. The Quebec Liberal Party and the Parti Quebecois, in their reading of the historical and contemporary record, carefully scrutinize all available criteria, meticulously weeding out any information which does not support their cause, while highlighting that which substantiates their claims. This is perhaps most blatantly obvious when turning to the use of statistics, for, as a popular saying states, "statistics are innocent and only confess under torture."<sup>2</sup> Thus, evidence is easily manipulated to suit one's

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<sup>2</sup>Kimon Valaskakis and Angeline Fournier, *The Delusion of Sovereignty - Would Independence Weaken Quebec*, p. 65.

case. William Johnson, in his book *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, clearly reveals the manner in which Camille Laurin was able to skew statistics in his 1977 white paper on the French language. As he writes:

**If there was one egregiously false statement that stood out, it was the following sentence, which the white paper claimed was based on the research of the Gendron commission: “English predominates clearly in general communications at work: 82 percent of all communications are carried out in English in Quebec as a whole; 84 percent in Montreal, and 70 percent in the province outside Montreal. English is also preponderant in more specific methods of communication.”**

**...I [Johnson] searched through the Gendron commission’s research and found at last the pertinent passage. Here is what it had found for the work situation of anglophones: “The predominance [of English] is found, as with francophones, in their general evaluation of the use of languages at work: over all, they use English 82 per cent of the time at work; in Montreal, 84 per cent, and 70 per cent in the province outside Montreal.” These were the very figures, applicable only to Anglophones, that Laurin’s white paper applied to all Quebecers.<sup>3</sup>**

Thus, it is clear that separatists are guilty of massaging data to support their claims. However, federalists are equally culpable. If we recall the 1995 referendum, federal finance minister Paul Martin claimed that separation would cost Quebec some 1, 000, 000 jobs. Undoubtedly, this figure was not accurate, and can be attributed more to hyperbole than to fact.

Thus, it is clear that when examining evidence, one must realize that both the employment of lenses and manipulation of data play a prevalent role for both the federalist and separatist sentiments of Quebec nationalism. With these two caveats in mind, the thesis will now turn to the Quebec Liberal Party and Parti Quebecois’ reading of the historical and contemporary record.

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<sup>3</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 150.

## **The Conquest**

Nationalists are united in the fact that the most important event in the history of Quebec was indeed the Conquest. This transfer of power from France to Britain differentiated the province of Quebec both culturally and linguistically from the rest of British North America. As one QLP activist put it: "French people have a different mentality than Anglophones."<sup>4</sup> This event more than any other sowed the seeds of a belief that Quebec was a nation - a nation which would have to secure a future for itself. As one Quebecois asserted:

I think it's correct to believe that the Battle on the Plains of Abraham and the Treaty of Paris were sufficient to turn French Canadians into believing that they were a group of people that could be called a nation....I mean, if you look at other nations in the world, Quebec does not appear that different from the rest of them. There is a territory with borders inside which you find people who have the same beliefs and speak the same language....Why wouldn't Quebecers feel they were a nation.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the course of my interviews, members of both the Quebec Liberal Party and the Parti Quebecois conveyed a deep belief that because of the Conquest, the Quebecois were faced with the reality of survival or extinction. Because of the statements of various British governors such as Lord Durham, who advocated the desirability of assimilating the French population, nationalists believe Quebec, a Francophone community, was in a most precarious state as it attempted to exist in a predominantly English world. For the QLP and the PQ, the French defeat in 1759 set the tone for the ensuing history of all Quebecois. According to one PQ activist:

...we need look no further than the defeat of Montcalm by Wolfe.

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<sup>4</sup>Liberal Party activist and chief returning officer for the 1997 federal election (anonymous), personal interview, June 15, 1997.

<sup>5</sup>Quebec civil servant (anonymous), June 10, 1997.

**When the French forces were defeated, it caused a reaction within French people that persists 'til this day. This reaction was a system of defence against the now foreign world. It was the birth of nationalism, Quebec style....I don't think that these early settlers realized how much of an impact this nationalism would have on the Quebec nation.<sup>6</sup>**

**This view is echoed by Dr. Camille Laurin, a PQ MNA and the father of Bill 101. Before entering politics, he published a number of articles in a medical journal in which he revealed his belief that French Canada was a child that had been damaged traumatically because it had been wrenched away from its natural parent, France, and taken over by a brutal foster parent, the English.<sup>7</sup>**

**For nationalists of both sentiments, because of the Conquest, Quebec clearly became a nation within Canada. Thus, steps would have to be taken to ensure that Quebecois could realize their identity. The solution was Confederation.**

### **The Confederation of 1867**

**While the federalist and separatist sentiments of Quebec nationalism express similar views with regards to the conquest, this mutual agreement suffers a clear disjuncture concerning the 1867 act of Confederation.**

**According to members of the QLP, it set the tone for the next 130 years. For Liberals, the union of 1867 is generally accepted and lauded. For QLP leader Daniel Johnson,**

**The British North America Act of 1867 laid the foundations of a new federal state. At the time it was a bold move: The only other modern federal state, the United States, had just finished a bloody**

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<sup>6</sup>PQ party activist (anonymous), personal interview, May 13, 1997.

<sup>7</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 149.

civil war, and many legislators originally favored a unitary state. Yet the Canadian founding fathers understood that a federal system was the only way to balance the distinct needs of two founding linguistic groups, while laying the foundations for a great nation *a mari usque ad mare* (from sea to sea).<sup>8</sup>

Federalist Quebecers believe that through Confederation, Quebec was able to become a part of a much larger entity - a country where its presence could be better served. As Paul-Henri Leblanc put it:

...there is an old saying that says separate we fall, and united we progress...and I feel that...since Quebec was there from the beginning...it is the root of Canada, and if you take the root out of a tree or plant, you're bound to damage the whole....The Civil Code, the laws we got from Napoleon, all these things were granted to us by the victors in the war between England and France, so I think Quebec should be grateful...Quebec must remain part of the whole pie which is Canada.<sup>9</sup>

According to federalist sentiment of Quebec nationalism, Confederation must be viewed as a compact between two nations which allowed for the cultivation and survival of the Quebec people. For Liberals,

...Confederation was the provision of a range of powers, limited but sacrosanct, over its own affairs. It meant that the province of Quebec could serve as a concrete political unit, protected by the Constitution, in which the French-Canadian community could be clearly dominant and thus have a chance to survive on its own terms.<sup>10</sup>

According to federalists, Canada opened up a whole new world for the Quebecois - now they

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<sup>8</sup>Daniel Johnson, *The Case For A United Canada*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>Paul-Henri Leblanc, personal interview, June 7, 1997.

<sup>10</sup>K. McRoberts and D. Posgate, as quoted in Stanley B. Ryerson, "Disputed Claims: Quebec/Canada," p. 65.

would be an equal part of a glorious country from the Atlantic to the Pacific. As a QLP activist and chief returning officer for the 1997 federal election put it: "I am a nationalist and I am proud of what I have but I like to live in a large country, and I don't want separation."<sup>11</sup> Perhaps Sir Wilfrid Laurier was the most eloquent at expressing the benefits of Quebec's presence in a larger union:

We are French Canadians, but our country is not limited to the territory around the Citadel in Quebec: our country is Canada. Our fellow citizens are not only those who have French blood in their veins. They are those, regardless of race or language who have come here among us as a result of the vagaries of war or the whims of fortune or by their own choice.<sup>12</sup>

However, unlike federalists, separatists argue that Confederation was no solution to assist the Quebecois in maintaining their identity. For the Parti Quebecois, the 1867 union institutionalized the fact that French-Canadians would be a permanent minority, where their rights would be subject to the Anglophone majority. According to historian Michel Brunet, the 1867 union set the stage for the subsequent subjugation of French Canadians. As he writes: "Canada is an English country, inside which survives a French Canadian province, which is really an economic and political colony of the English Canadians."<sup>13</sup> According to Owen Fugere, Confederation institutionalized the fact that the Quebecois, once a majority in their homeland, would now be a minority in the new country of Canada.<sup>14</sup> For separatists, Confederation sealed the fate of all

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<sup>11</sup>1997 federal election chief returning officer (anonymous), June 15, 1997.

<sup>12</sup>Laurier, as quoted in Edward Greenspon and Anthony Wilson-Smith, *Double Vision - The Inside Story of the Liberals in Power*, p. 120.

<sup>13</sup>Brunet, as quoted in "the Constitution comes Home," p. P2.

<sup>14</sup>Owen Fugere, personal interview, June 13, 1997.

Quebecois - a fate which would contain hardship and discrimination. As Camille Laurin asserts, the French community has been “humiliated, impoverished, and wounded” by the majority. For him, Ottawa was a unilingual capital, where the colonizers treated French Canadians with the upmost contempt. “The few Francophones that they tolerated there have always been *rois-negres* who, in English (‘Speak white!’)...”<sup>15</sup> Separatists are convinced that still today, discrimination exists because of the fact that the Quebecois are a different people, unlike the majority. Peter C. Newman recounts an incident in Jacques Parizeau’s life that convinced him that French were second class citizens: “It probably dated back to his early twenties, when he crosses Canada with a friend. They were chatting in a Winnipeg bar when somebody yelled at them to Speak white!” He broke his right hand in the ensuing fist-fight and its little finger still juts out at an awkward angle.”<sup>16</sup> Martial Henry, a committed sovereignist, vividly recounts the discrimination he endured as a Quebecois:

I went into the military service for five years with a lot of hope, and that’s when it started to fade away. I could see the difference between the French Canadian and the Anglophone as far as promotion was concerned. I could see my friend getting promoted and I stayed the same...and I don’t think it was my qualifications because I was an electrical technician on aircrafts and as far as I’m concerned, they sent me to Churchill, Manitoba all alone as a technician so I must have been good in some way. But as far as promotions, there was no way I could get promoted. There was always that phrase, not fit to become an airmen, not fit to become a leader.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>William Johnson, *A Canadian Myth - Quebec, Between Canada and the Illusion of Utopia*, p. 149.

<sup>16</sup>Peter C. Newman, *The Canadian Revolution, 1985-1995 - From Deference to Defiance*

<sup>17</sup>Martial Henry, personal interview, June 16, 1997.

Thus, it is abundantly clear that while Confederation was designed to unite divergent social groups into a common union, for separatists, it instead heightened the awareness of English Canada and Quebec as to their respective positions within the new country. According to humorist Eric Nicol, "Confederation has been like a mail-order bra: intended to contain and uplift, it has instead drawn attention to the cleavage."<sup>18</sup>

The watershed that was the Confederation of 1867, while serving as a source of animation for both federalists and separatists alike, produced a country whose 130 year constitutional history has been interpreted quite differently by the two sentiments of Quebec nationalism. The wranglings which have attempted to define Quebec's place within the country has created a sense of hope for a renewed Canada in federalists, while for the PQ, "we can never get this puzzle together until Quebecers vote for the yes."<sup>19</sup>

At the core of the nationalist reading of both the historical and contemporary record are these constitutional attempts to find a place for Quebec within the confines of Canadian federalism. As any student of Canadian politics is aware, attempts at constitutional renewal are many in number, and an all-inclusive treatment lies beyond the scope of this thesis, so, it follows that I will attempt to illuminate this with a very wide brush, drawing attention to those events which merit particular attention. So, with that said, it is these efforts to settle the Quebec question which will now be addressed.

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<sup>18</sup>Nicol, as quoted in "The Constitution comes home," p. P3.

<sup>19</sup>Owen Fugere, personal interview, June 13, 1997.



## **The Quebec Question**

In the course of my interviews with both members of the Quebec Liberal Party and the Parti Quebecois, there is a general view that the history of Canada has been dominated by trying to appease Quebec. From 1867 until 1996, every federal government has in one way or another tried to settle the score with their Quebec counterparts. And, according to both sentiments, there have been some important gains made in the 130 year history of the country. Federalists and separatists alike are especially quick to cite the advances achieved during the Quiet Revolution. All nationalists applaud the efforts of Jean Lesage's Liberal government to capture as much power as was possible from the central government. Among the accomplishments most lauded is the triumph of the Quebec government with regards to the battle over old-age pensions in the early 1960s. As political scientist Richard Simeon writes:

The pension plan was a compromise. Quebec and any other province that wanted could have its own plan. Quebec agreed to the amendment to the British North America Act so Ottawa too could provide supplementary benefits. Benefits and contributions were a compromise, though the result was closer to Quebec's position. Quebec was deeply committed to an exemption of the first \$1,000 of earnings from contributions; both sides compromised at \$600, which virtually everyone later agreed retained all the administrative difficulty Ottawa feared and little of the redistributive benefit Quebec wanted. Ottawa was most committed to a short transition period, and Quebec conceded this point. Finally, the settlement offered to turn over 100 per cent of the fund - now much higher than previously envisioned because of the higher contribution rate - to the provinces.<sup>20</sup>

For the Quebec Liberal Party, the devolution of responsibility for old-age pensions is a clear indicator that Canadian federalism can accommodate the needs of Quebec. To further

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<sup>20</sup>Richard Simeon, *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy - The making of recent policy in Canada*, p. 59.

substantiate their claim, they cite the regional vetoes granted by the Chretien government, as well as the decision by Ottawa to withdraw from manpower training, that Quebec's voice is indeed being heard. For the QLP, federalism as a political system adequately accommodates the needs of Quebecers.

However, this enthusiasm is not shared by the Parti Quebecois. For them, federalism is a dead-end which Quebec must escape from. According to separatists, the current relationship has always been an unequal one in which power has resided at the centre (Ottawa), to the detriment of the periphery (Quebec). This negates the principle that in a federation, "...the central authority and the regional authority are "coordinate", that is to say, neither is subordinate to the other."<sup>21</sup> According to the PQ, Quebec has always had to scratch and claw for additional powers, which were, as many pundits have stated, mere table scraps. Besides the quest for additional powers, according to the logic advanced by the separatists, the Quebec government has always been shunned by the rest of the country in its attempts to gain a place for itself within the constitutional framework of Canada. Of course, the most blatant example is the 1982 patriation of the Canadian Constitution without the consent of Quebec. For separatists, this act of political "treason" sent a clear message that the central government would never be receptive to the demands of Quebec. As Rene Levesque recounts in his memoirs:

'I am infinitely sorry , ' I told them, 'to see Quebec back in the place the federal regime has traditionally reserved for us: once again Quebec is all alone. It will be up to our own people to draw what conclusions they can. When they have done that, I think you may feel a little less joyful than you seem to be now.'<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Peter W. Hogg, *Constitutional Law of Canada*, p. 98.

<sup>22</sup>Rene Levesque, *Memoirs*, p. 333.

For separatists, “...the present Canadian Constitution, the one from 1982, was imposed on Quebec in an undemocratic fashion.”<sup>23</sup>

However, this is not the sole example to substantiate their claim that the central government has continuously exercised a heavy hand when dealing with Quebec. For them, examples abound to prove that Ottawa has failed to accommodate the province in negotiations. Because of the seeming reluctance by the federal government to meet the demands of various Quebec governments, there exists no solution but to advance towards nationhood. The PQ logic is succinctly summarized by Pierre Provost, a committed separatist and former chief-of-staff to Agriculture, Food, and Fisheries Minister Marcel Landry. For him,

...there is no other option, because always when someone in Canada said we can negotiate the distinct society in the Constitution, there was always a reaction of the other parties that said no...It's like an old couple who don't fit together, so one wants to go this way and the other wants to go that way; so, if you stay at home there is always fighting....Why don't we just separate?<sup>24</sup>

By advancing the thesis that Canada is like a couple whose marriage has run amuck, sovereignists believe that the best solution for both parties involved is a clean split - a political divorce if you will. Then, at last, the long march to freedom will be realized. Each party can go their separate ways - with both sides being better off as a result. For Provost, while Quebec wants more power, the rest of Canada is not willing to make such concessions. Separatists are quick to cite the numerous failed attempts to settle the question of what does Quebec want, such as the collapse of both the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords. Separatists also believe that

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<sup>23</sup>*Our Hearts in our Work*, p. 71.

<sup>24</sup>Pierre Provost, personal interview, June 10, 1997.

the 1997 election of Preston Manning's Reform Party as Official Opposition sends a strong message that the wishes of Quebec will never find an ear in Ottawa. According to the PQ, "a lot of people in Quebec have realized what the rest of Canada, through Ottawa, thinks."<sup>25</sup> As Pierre Provost put it, "there is no more negotiation possible."<sup>26</sup> Thus, as Lucien Bouchard said when addressing the first annual convention of the Bloc Quebecois on April 7, 1995: "We are seeking sovereignty, because it is absolutely essential, like the ripening of a fruit, like reaching adulthood, like the opening of a river into the ocean."<sup>27</sup>

However, the Quebec Liberal Party is reluctant to accept the separatists reading of evidence. Yet, both sentiments do agree on one point - that the 1982 patriation of the Constitution was unacceptable for the province. Former Prime Minister Kim Campbell correctly articulates the grievance that both the PQ and the QLP felt towards the retrieval of the 1867 document from Westminster. As she writes:

For the first time in Canadian history, the Constitution could be amended in Canada, and this necessitated that an amending formula be codified within it. It had been a tradition in Canada that no significant amendment would be sought over the objection of Quebec. Although that right to veto did not exist in law, the patriated document contained an amending formula in which Quebec's practical veto was confined to issues requiring the unanimous consent of the provinces. Furthermore, the Charter had serious implications for the exercise of provincial powers and was imposed over Quebec's objections. From Quebec's perspective, patriation had resulted in a change in Quebec's traditional

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<sup>25</sup>Martial Henry, personal interview, June 16, 1997.

<sup>26</sup>Pierre Provost, personal interview, June 10, 1997.

<sup>27</sup>Bouchard, as quoted in Peter C. Newman, *The Canadian Revolution, 1985-1995 - From Deference to Defiance*, p. 341.

relationship to the federation.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the mutual agreement between federalists and separatists regarding the 1982 patriation, federalists are inclined to look at disappointment and failure with guarded optimism. Even though the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords both suffered defeat, the QLP believes there are important lessons to be learned. Firstly, these agreements prove that compromise between the federal and provincial levels of government is possible; that there remains a commonality between Quebec and the rest of the country with regards to changes in the federation; and, that Canadians generally respect the position of Quebec, and want it to remain as one of the country's ten provinces. For federalists, the last point, that Canada wants Quebec to remain within the federation, was dramatically brought to light by the huge rally of over 150, 000 Canadians organized in Montreal's Place du Canada on October 27 by No forces to convince Quebecers to reject sovereignty. This outpouring of emotion and goodwill was a strong message for federalists. Sovereignists scoff at the unity rally. In an interview with Diane Francis, Louis Laberge, former director of the Caisse de Depot et Placement du Quebec and the Quebec Federation of Labour, and an avid separatist, stated the display of affection was unimpressive. As Francis writes:

"It's very nice that English Canada says we love you, but this is too much today," Laberge said. "On the eve of a referendum all those people taking trains and planes and driving here should save their money and spend it on the sick and poor in their own provinces."

He said Ottawa's demonstration was too little too late. "I knew a guy once who went to jail for beating up his wife every time he had a drink, and each time she visited him in jail he told her sincerely that he loved her. His kind of love wasn't good enough."

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<sup>28</sup>Kim Campbell, *Time and Chance - The Political Memoirs of Canada's First Woman Prime Minister*, pp. 127-128.

To Laberge, Canada was a wife-beater and nothing could salvage the marriage.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, it is apparent that the federalist and separatist sentiments of Quebec nationalism differ in their reading of the various attempts to settle the Quebec question. For the former, there have been many important gains made, while for the latter, Quebec has always been in a position of subordination to Ottawa. This divergent reading of evidence with regards to the Quebec question is equally prevalent as we now turn to address the costs and benefits of federalism.

### **Costs and Benefits of Federalism**

For Quebec Liberals, being part of the Canadian federation has and will continue to play an important role in the economic development of Quebec. By being part of Canada, the province gets to share in the riches produced by the nation.<sup>30</sup> As one observer put it:

...being part of a larger entity, Canada, has been a tremendous economic advantage for Quebec. I can't believe that the province would enjoy the wealth it does today if it was not for the union of 1867. It seems that there is truth in the old saying membership has its privileges. For Quebec, the privileges have been, among other things, a higher standard of living....<sup>31</sup>

For nationalists of the federalist sentiment, federalism has and will continue to be a tremendous boost to the economy of Quebec. The QLP is quick to cite the advantages of being part of a larger federation such as equalization payments, that "Canadian icon that ...has even been entrenched in Section 36 of our constitution,"<sup>32</sup> of which about half goes to Quebec. According

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<sup>29</sup>Diane Francis, *Fighting For Canada*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>30</sup>Jean-Marc Fournier, written response to questions, June 7, 1997.

<sup>31</sup>Quebec civil servant (anonymous), personal interview, June 10, 1997.

<sup>32</sup>Gordon Gibson, *Thirty Million Musketeers: One Canada For All Canadians*, p. 128.

to the principle of fiscal equalization,

**Parliament and the government of Canada are committed to the principle of making equalization payments to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation.<sup>33</sup>**

The Quebec Liberal Party also stresses direct federal government spending in the province in the form of infrastructure programs. As Thomas Schnurmacher writes,

**[i]n order to help out Quebec, Ottawa places government buildings across the border in the city of Hull, Quebec, instead of Ottawa, which is the capital. They put these buildings inside the Quebec border to help revitalize Hull. They put tens of millions of dollars into government buildings and create thousands of jobs in Hull.<sup>34</sup>**

As well, for Quebec Liberals, the federal government has been a tremendous boost in terms of employing Quebecers directly in the federal civil service and other government agencies; and indirectly by such initiatives as Challenge '94, which was a \$2.5 million program unveiled in April of 1994 to create summer employment in Eastern Quebec.<sup>35</sup> For the QLP, Quebec has benefitted tremendously from federalism. As Valaskakis and Fournier put it:

**it may be difficult to navigate through the statistics that do not always agree. One conclusion is inescapable however: Quebec has benefitted handsomely from the federal system.**

**Since 1972, Quebec has received an average of \$2.3 billion per year more than it has paid to Ottawa.<sup>36</sup>**

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<sup>33</sup>Thomas K. Shoyama, "Fiscal Federalism in Evolution," p. 278.

<sup>34</sup>Thomas Schnurmacher, *Canada Is Not A Real Country*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>35</sup>Patrick Gagnon, *Parliamentary Report*.

<sup>36</sup>Kimon Valaskakis and Angeline Fournier, *The Delusion of Sovereignty - Would Independence Weaken Quebec?*, p. 67.

However, unlike federalists, according to separatists, “federalism costs Quebecers a lot, and Quebec does not get its fair share of federal spending.”<sup>37</sup> With regards to the first point, that federalism costs Quebecers a lot, sovereignists believe that Quebec pays more to Ottawa in the form of taxes that it gets back. As Martial Henry puts it, Ottawa keeps “...saying that they are giving us more than we are producing. If I have an employee that’s costing me money, I don’t tap him on the back and say I love you and I’m keeping you. There’s something fishy somewhere. We’re being drained somewhere.”<sup>38</sup> For Louise Beaudoin, the MNA for Chambly and the Minister of Culture and Communications as well as the Minister responsible for the Charter of the French Language, the problem is that Quebec is forced to pay most of its revenue to Ottawa. According to her, when addressing the National Assembly on September 13, 1995, 34.6% of Quebec’s revenue is returned to the central government.<sup>39</sup> Thus, as Owen Fugere expressed it: “sovereignty is the only way for Quebec to fulfill themselves by reappropriating their income taxes.”<sup>40</sup> For separatists, federalism also remains costly to Quebec because of the duplication of services. With overlaps of federal and provincial programs amounting to 42% of all federal programs,<sup>41</sup> Quebec must opt for sovereignty where this waste can be eliminated.

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<sup>37</sup>Kimon Valaskakis and Angeline Fournier, *The Delusion of Sovereignty - Would Independence Weaken Quebec?*, p. 67.

<sup>38</sup>Martial Henry, personal interview, June 16, 1997.

<sup>39</sup>Louise Beaudoin, “La Souverainete: Une Solution D’Avenir Pour S’ Adapter Aux Nouvelles Realites Internationales Et Pour Notre Culture,” p. 2.

<sup>40</sup>Owen Fugere, personal interview, June 13, 1997.

<sup>41</sup>Kimon Valaskakis and Angeline Fournier, *The Delusion of Sovereignty - Would Independence Weaken Quebec?*, p. 77.



Turning to question of federal spending, separatists are firmly convinced that Quebec is indeed the “poor cousin” of Canadian federalism. Separatists bemoan the capital spent in other provinces, while asserting that Quebec does not get its fair share. As one separatist put it, “name me just one federal project of \$ 10 million.”<sup>42</sup> For separatists, federal government initiatives have benefitted the other provinces at the expense of Quebec. Turning to direct federal spending in the form of infrastructure programs, and indirect spending in the form of job creation, separatists remain unimpressed. The same federal government buildings in Hull which the QLP applauded are interpreted quite differently by political scientist and PQ advisor Josee Legault.

...In an editorial in *Le Devoir* entitled “Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Flag” [Legault] describes the...government offices, draped in their oppressive maple leaf flags...[as constituting]...an “occupation” of Hull. So, when Canada gives tens of millions of dollars to Hull as a gift, the name of the gift is an “occupation.” Quebec is being “occupied” by the rest of Canada.<sup>43</sup>

With regards to federal employment in Quebec, separatists believe that this is absolutely no advantage for the province. According to Martial Henry, French Canadians who are employed by the central government are in fact “sold” to Ottawa. For him, they are “sold” in the sense that because of their jobs, they are forced to reject sovereignty.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Quebecers are forced to support a cause that is against their best interests.

Thus, it is quite clear that in their reading of evidence, nationalists disagree over the costs and benefits of federalism. For federalists, being part of Canada has been an economic advantage for

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<sup>42</sup>Martial Henry, personal interview, June 16, 1997.

<sup>43</sup>Thomas Schnurmacher, *Canada Is Not A Real Country*, p. 88.

<sup>44</sup>Martial Henry, personal interview, June 16, 1997.

Quebec, while, according to separatists, federalism has cost Quebec. However, these disagreements between the two sentiments does not end here, as their respective views on the French language are also at variance. This divergence regarding linguistics must now be addressed.

### **The French Language**

Turning to the question of the French language, for the QLP, federalism has served well in its capacity as a protector of the French language. In fact, according to federalists, the quality and use of French in Quebec has attained unprecedented levels, with French spoken as a mother tongue by 84 per cent of all Quebecers.<sup>45</sup> Because Canada is the only country in the world which can boast of an increase in the geopolitical base of the French language since World War II<sup>46</sup>, coupled with the collapse of the French language in states like Louisiana, and it becomes clear that the situation in Canada has been far more advantageous for the continued prosperity of French than has been the case in the United States and other countries. Federalists often cite the dramatic success that Quebec language policies have had. For them, Bill 101, a law enacted by the PQ government in 1977, stands as a testament that Quebec has adequate powers to protect the French language. As Stephen Brooks<sup>47</sup> has pointed out, Bill 101: (1) established French as the sole official language in Quebec, and as a result, the only language to be used in the provincial legislature, the courts, and in public administration in the province; (2) sought to increase the use

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<sup>45</sup>Daniel Johnson, "The Case For A United Canada," p. 7.

<sup>46</sup>Kimon Valaskakis and Angeline Fournier, *The Delusion of Sovereignty - Would Independence Weaken Quebec?*, p. 165.

<sup>47</sup>These 3 features can be found in Stephen Brooks, *Public Policy in Canada - an introduction*, pp. 243-244.

of French as a working language of business in the province by requiring that businesses with fifty or more employees receive a “francisation” certificate as a condition for doing business in the province; and (3) restricted access to English-language schools. For the QLP, with the provincial government having the power to pass laws like Bill 101, the French language is in no danger.

As well, ingenuities like section 33.1 of the Constitution, the infamous “notwithstanding” clause or “legislative override” as it has been referred to by academics, provides “precisely the flexibility required”<sup>48</sup> for Quebec to safeguard the French language. For the QLP, this “stands as a dramatic example of the great capacity of federalism”<sup>49</sup> to accommodate the needs of Quebec. As well, federalists like Jean-Marc Fournier, Paul-Henri Leblanc, and John Legresley are quick to applaud the efforts of Ottawa to ensure the vitality of the language. Of course, what they are referring to more than anything is the Official Languages Act, passed by the Trudeau government in 1969. Trudeau eloquently explains the rationale behind the act in his memoirs. As he writes:

This act proclaimed first of all that Canada recognized two official languages within its borders, French and English, and that the two languages were equal before the law. It also established the principle that every Canadian citizen had the right to communicate with federal authorities, institutions, and agencies in the official language of his or her choice. The act also stipulated that both official languages be recognized and employed as working languages within the federal government and its agencies. The aim of these reforms was simple enough to grasp, but it postulated an order of things that was in stark contrast to the way they had been in the past.<sup>50</sup>

According to Paul-Henri Leblanc, while Trudeau took a risk in 1969, it seems to have played

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<sup>48</sup>Gordon Gibson, *Thirty Million Musketeers: One Canada For All Canadians*, p. 39.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>50</sup>Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Memoirs*, p. 123-125.

important dividends for the French language, as it [French] has taken on a footing of equality with English. Leblanc cites the fact that English federal cabinet ministers from western Canada have learned French and are able to converse in the language.<sup>51</sup> These are important gains which prove that the French language can remain well protected within the confines of federalism. For Quebec Liberal Party leader Daniel Johnson, “the increased use of French in Quebec by francophones, anglophones, and immigrants...” as well as the federal government’s support in assisting Quebec to become a member of the Francophonie proves that “...Canada has demonstrated genuine good will and has made considerable progress in responding to the legitimate concerns of French Canadians....”<sup>52</sup>

Turning to the separatists, they believe, unlike federalists, that the country has not been able to protect the French language adequately. According to separatists, “...the situation of Francophones can be likened to a cube of sugar slowly melting in a cup of coffee.”<sup>53</sup> For Marcel Landry, the MNA for Bonaventure and the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Fisheries in the Parizeau government, the decline of the French population stands as a testament to the failure of federalism to protect Canada’s second language. As he posits, “when I was young, 42 or 43% of the population of New Brunswick was French. Now they are at 30 or 35%, and I think if we stay the way we are, we will continue to decline because we have no control of our development....”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Paul-Henri Leblanc, personal interview, June 7, 1997.

<sup>52</sup>Daniel Johnson, “The Case For A United Canada,” pp. 11-12.

<sup>53</sup>Kimon Valaskakis and Angeline Fournier, *The Delusion of Sovereignty - Would Independence Weaken Quebec?*, p. 162.

<sup>54</sup>Marcel Landry, personal interview, May 9, 1997.

While the PQ believe French is not threatened in the regions of Quebec, such is not the case in Montreal. Sovereignists believe that "...[t]he tools we now have available don't allow us to curb this decline of French in Montreal. The French Language Charter, Law 101, was considerably weakened by the Supreme Court. Three times, Federal Courts have invalidated whole sections of it."<sup>55</sup> For instance, in a 1979 decision, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the establishment of French as the sole official language of the province and its institutions invalidated section 133 of the BNA Act, which guaranteed co-equal status of both French and English at the federal level and in the province. As well, in a 1988 ruling, the Court held that Bill 101's attempts to increase the use of French as the language of business in the province violated the freedom of expression guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And, finally, the Court rejected the attempt to restrict access to English-language schools on the grounds that it violated section 23 of the Charter.<sup>56</sup> Thus, because decisions made in Ottawa have a detrimental effect on the language of Quebec's majority, Quebec must push ahead towards sovereignty. Then, and only then, will the Quebec government have all the tools necessary to curb this perceived decline of the French language.

Adding to the separatist's concern over the French language is the futility of Official bilingualism. While the PQ does not deny that Trudeau's initiative was a good attempt to promote the French language, separatists believe that this legislation has not accomplished what it was intended to achieve - to make English and French equal working languages in the federal state. As the 1996 annual report of the Commissioner of Official Languages put it:

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<sup>55</sup>*Our Hearts in Our Work*, p. 38.

<sup>56</sup>Stephen Brooks, *Public Policy in Canada - an introduction*, pp. 243-244.

The fact of the matter is that, in the bilingual regions, French is not used in communications between public servants to anything like the extent or anything like the freedom of regularity that the numerical presence of Francophone public servants would lead one to expect. If one were to judge the official status of French, for instance, from its use in inter-departmental committees or at meetings of deputy heads, one would be hard pressed not to conclude that it has no status to speak of whatsoever.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, unlike the Quebec Liberal Party, which lauds the capacity of the federal system to protect French, for the Parti Quebecois, federalism has been a dismal failure at protecting the language spoken by the vast majority of Quebecois.

### **Conclusion**

It seems abundantly clear that federalists and separatists differ in terms of their reading of both the historical and contemporary record. It appears that the one event which all nationalists unequivocally agree upon is that the Conquest led to the birth of the Quebec nation. However, after 1760, there is a clear and definite disjuncture between the Quebec Liberal Party and the Parti Quebecois.

Beginning with the 1867 act of Confederation, federalists regard this union as a great compromise which opened up to the Quebecois a great, vast land where French Canadians would be accepted. Of course, it is hard to deny the fact that French Canadians are not accepted in this country, since "...English Canadians have often accepted a French Canadian as Prime Minister...."<sup>58</sup> In fact, since 1968, a Quebecois has led this country except for three very brief interludes. For Liberals, this is evidence to support their claims that the 1867 act has been a

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<sup>57</sup>As quoted in Stephen Brooks, *Public Policy in Canada - an introduction*, p. 248.

<sup>58</sup>Gerard Mercier, "No to the break-up of our beautiful country, Canada!," p. 1.

success. However, separatists see the formation of Canada as a political decision which institutionalized the Quebecois as a permanent, unequal minority in a country they had helped to build. Citing grave injustices suffered at the hands of English Canada, for separatists, Confederation means nothing but over a century of pain and suffering.

For both sentiments, the 130 years that have elapsed since 1867 have stood as a testament to their respective views. For the Quebec Liberal Party, Canadian federalism has been tremendously successful at fostering the growth of a vibrant Québec community. From various measures to solve the Quebec question, to the economic benefits derived from being a member of the federation, to the steps to protect the French language, Quebecois have benefitted handsomely from their membership in the Canadian union. Not surprisingly, this reading of the evidence is not shared by separatists. For them, federalism has failed to meet the demands of Quebec, failed in protecting the French language, and costs Quebec much more than it is worth. For them , because Ottawa has always acted with a heavy hand, the Quebecois are moved towards the sovereignty option as a means to realize their identity. As one separatist put it: "I was not born a sovereignist. The federal government made me a sovereignist."<sup>59</sup> However, federalists reject this line of reasoning, stating baldly that identity realization is only possible under a renewed federalism. These opinions about the future course of events are assumptions, and, much like questions of evidence, both sentiments make a number of assumptions which are clearly at variance. Thus, it is this divergence about future prospects which must now be addressed.

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<sup>59</sup>Louis Laberge, as quoted in Diane Francis, *Fighting For Canada*, p. 61.

**Chapter 4:**  
**Questions of Assumptions**



## Chapter 4: Questions of Assumptions

### Introduction

In his 1859 work *The Physiology of Common Life*, C.S. Lewis asserted that “[w]e must never assume that which is incapable of proof.”<sup>1</sup> It seems in retrospect that Lewis’ words have found few adherents, as we all are guilty at one time or another throughout the course of our daily lives of making assumptions. From our presupposing of the eventuality of the changing of the seasons, to our taking for granted that one day we will all return to the earth from which we were born, the human race is constantly engaged in making suppositions.

Quebec nationalists of both the federalist as well as separatist persuasions are not immune from this human tendency. Both the Quebec Liberal Party as well as the Parti Quebecois muse about future prospects for Quebec and Canada. Put quite simply, the assumptions which they make serve as a guiding force, directing them towards quite divergent solutions to solve their perceived mutual dilemma of assisting the Quebecois in realizing their identity as a nation, be it within or outside the confines of Canada. Regardless, the assumptions which both sentiments make offer a vision of the future which is radically different from the present status-quo. Before exploring the assumptions which the two sentiments make, it is necessary to explore the foundation upon which these views about the future are constructed. From my interviews with various members of both the QLP and PQ, some interesting revelations were brought to light.

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis, as quoted in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, p. 314.

### **The Foundation of Assumptions**

In the course of my research, it was clearly observable that for a vast majority of the membership of the QLP and the PQ, assumptions were made early in life. As Paul-Henri Leblanc, a Quebec Liberal Party activist since 1948, and a former chief returning officer at both the federal and provincial level put it, "...my father was an organizer for the Liberal Party and I guess I followed in his footsteps."<sup>2</sup> This view is echoed by a former PQ activist who accepted sovereignty because his parents were committed to the cause, so it naturally followed that he was immersed in a sub-culture in which federalism was seen as the enemy, and separation was hailed as a saviour.<sup>3</sup> According to Alexander Himelfarb and James Richardson, the formation of assumptions during the formative years is not unusual. According to them, a "...child internalizes social norms, that is, makes them part of his personality; he carries society around in his head and follows the rules of society in every situation."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, a child

...is born into a ready-made world which will shape him far more than he shapes it. If we are born in Canada, for example, we will inevitably share certain features with others who were also born and raised in Canada. However, we are not all exposed to the same aspects of Canadian culture. It will make quite a difference, for example, if one is born in New Brunswick or in "Upper Canada." These regional differences are made more complex by internal subcultures along ethnic, religious and class lines. The family unit itself does more than simply relay the larger culture to the newborn. It also selects aspects of social reality, modifies and interprets the culture for the child. It presents the world outside as a social milieu to be feared or trusted. Indeed, the family must be treated as a

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<sup>2</sup>Paul-Henri Leblanc, personal interview, June 7, 1997.

<sup>3</sup>Former PQ riding association president, personal interview, May 29, 1997.

<sup>4</sup>Alexander Himelfarb and C. James Richardson, *Sociology for Canadians - Images of Society*, p. 105.

**social system in itself. The socialization of the child will be different...[from family to family].<sup>5</sup>**

**Thus, it appears that indeed, the formative years of life are crucial for the assumptions which nationalists of both sentiments make. As an individual develops, the family provides the backdrop against which presumptions are established. This view of the child as a “tabula rasa” or blank slate which is moulded by the forces surrounding him is not a recent idea. Indeed, such a view can be traced back to Aristotle, who was cited as stating: “The soul of a child is like a clean slate on which nothing is written; on it you may write what you will.”<sup>6</sup> This view was repeated by John Early in 1628: “A child is a man in a small letter, yet the best copy of Adam before he tasted of Eve or the apple....His soul is yet a white paper unscribbled with observations of the world....”<sup>7</sup>**

**Having been socialized into a world in which a preference for federalism or sovereignty predominates, an individual’s life seems to be a constant reaffirmation of one’s assumptions. For Marcel Landry, the PQ MNA for Bonaventure, and the Minister of Agriculture in the Parizeau government, his opinion that sovereignty was the best option for Quebec congealed during his college years. For him, the various courses he was exposed to as a student prompted him to believe that Quebec could pursue a course towards nationhood.<sup>8</sup> This view is echoed by**

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<sup>5</sup>Alexander Himelfarb and C. James Richardson, *Sociology for Canadians - Images of Society*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>6</sup>Aristotle, as quoted in Anthony Synnott, “Little Angels, Little Devils: A Sociology of Children,” p. 128.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>8</sup>Marcel Landry, personal interview, May 9, 1997.

Owen Fugere, a PQ militant and former party executive in Rimouski. As he stated: "...when I went to college and studied in the social sciences, we studied a lot of the questions about Quebec...and all of this related to the reality of our history...and all of the contradictions...led me to believe sovereignty was a necessity."<sup>9</sup>

This development of assumptions is also affected by one's intellectual understanding about the nature of the world in which we live - in other words, evidence is also a large determinant in the formation of one's opinions regarding the future. The reading of the historical and contemporary record cause some to embrace Canada, while in others it is an affirmation that Quebec must become sovereign.

However, some individual's assumptions are radically transformed by what might be regarded to as a formative event.<sup>10</sup> By this, the common reference is to a circumstance, the magnitude of which is grave enough to produce a metamorphosis in the type of nationalism expressed by individuals. For instance, many have speculated that the formative event which made Jacques Parizeau a separatist was the failure of the federal Liberals to appoint him the Governor of the Bank of Canada.<sup>11</sup> However, over dinner with author Diane Francis, Parizeau recounts a different explanation for his conversion from federalism to sovereignty. As Francis writes:

After graduating from university in Montreal he went to Britain and France for a few years, to do postgraduate work. He attended the Institut d'Etudes Politiques et Etudes Superieures de Sciences Economiques in Paris. After completing his studies, he decided to

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<sup>9</sup>Owen Fugere, personal interview, June 13, 1997.

<sup>10</sup>The term formative event is attributed to S.M. Lipset, "Revolution and Counter Revolution: The United States and Canada."

<sup>11</sup>Diane Francis, *Fighting For Canada*, p. 16.

see the rest of the country and took a train trip westward in 1967 across Canada. He set off, a proud young man with a Ph.D. and a wealth of sophisticated knowledge and experience.

There were “incidents,” he told me, without going into detail. He hinted at confrontations with bigots, the kind of nasty experience that still occasionally occurs: name-calling by anti-French bigots, who are mostly pathetic little people attempting to elevate their own low self-esteem by stereotyping ethnic minorities. All Parizeau said was that the trip convinced him that French Canadians would never be accepted in English Canada, and that independence was therefore the only option.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, it seems that for Parizeau, the formative event was his trip west. This voyage caused a reaction which resulted in a change of opinion.

However, formative events can also have a reciprocal effect - converting sovereignists to federalism. For instance, Guy Bertrand, a founding member of the Parti Quebecois, renounced separation as a result of the 1995 Quebec referendum. As he writes:

...the Parti Quebecois government, led by Jacques Parizeau and supported by Lucien Bouchard, plotted, in 1995, a constitutional coup d’etat in the form of a unilateral secession that would have driven all of Quebec society into a serious crisis. Thus I chose to bring part of my struggle before the courts in order to challenge our separatist leaders, who had knowingly decided to flout democracy and the fundamental principle of the rule of law, according to which Quebec separation requires the consent of the partners involved, and a negotiated amendment to the Canadian constitution.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, it appears that assumptions which nationalists form are developed during the formative years. Sponsored by the family and buttressed against lived experience (evidence), assumptions become solidified. However, there exists the possibility that somewhere on the proverbial road to

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<sup>12</sup>Diane Francis, *Fighting For Canada*, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup>Guy Bertrand, *Enough Is Enough - An Attorney's Struggle for Democracy in Quebec*, p.

Damascus, a reversal in opinion can result from a shock to an individual's equilibrium - this shock is of course a formative event. Much like a cataclysm, a formative event destroys conceived notions with unrelenting recalcitrance, and as a result, replaces the old with the new.

### **The Need for Change**

Members of both the QLP and the PQ agree that change is absolutely imperative. Federalists and separatists alike maintain that the Canada of tomorrow will and can not be like the Canada of today; status-quo federalism is not acceptable for Quebec. However, this appears to be the sole point on which nationalists agree. For the QLP, change must be accomplished within the federation, while for the PQ, change must come in the creation of a sovereign Quebec.

As Quebec Liberal Party leader Daniel Johnson puts it:

...there is work to be done. Federalism must continue to improve in order to meet fiscal realities and better serve citizens' disparate needs across Canada. At some point, outstanding constitutional issues must be addressed in a way that ensures that Quebec is never excluded from changes to the basic framework of the Country, as happened with the 1982 "patriation" of the constitution, as the document's retrieval from Great Britain, along with a formula for amending it, is known.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, "federalism should be flexible, and it should be soon, before too much harm is done."<sup>15</sup>

With the QLP united in the belief that the 1982 Constitution is unacceptable to Quebec, steps must be taken to alleviate this grievance. According to Jean-Marc Fournier, the Liberal MNA for Chateauguay, and the party's intergovernmental affairs critic, the referendum of 1995 sent a strong message that Quebecers are still not at ease in Canada, so the country has to be

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<sup>14</sup>Daniel Johnson, "The Case For A United Canada," p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Paul-Henri Leblanc, personal interview, June 7, 1997.

modernized so that Quebecers will be welcomed and recognized. For Fournier, federalism is flexible enough to permit the provinces to play a much larger role, which can be achieved through limiting the federal powers and expenses affecting the provincial government.<sup>16</sup> This view is shared by a fellow Liberal MNA, who asserts that Quebec can become a viable part of the federation, "...with some changes as those included in the Meech Lake Accord, of course!"<sup>17</sup> The federalist position is accurately voiced by a long time QLP activist:

...Quebec is a part of Canada. However, this does not mean that everything is all right with the arrangement. What we need is some change. Canada has changed since 1867 quite a bit, and I believe that there is room for more improvements. Of course, this would require a legitimate effort by both sides - Ottawa and Quebec, to reach a settlement which both sides can live with. It seems that this is a small price to pay for keeping this country together.<sup>18</sup>

For the QLP, the future of the country depends not on separation, but on a massive devolution of powers to the provincial government. As a QLP activist and chief returning officer for the 1997 federal election put it:

...I already explained to my son what the difference between independence and having good relations with parents is. If at the age of 18 if he says go to hell father, I don't need you anymore, and leaves, and two days later he needs my truck and 100 dollars, then you are not independent. What you are is autonomous, and that's a big difference from independence....It's like a family, and once you realize that the children can be autonomous, you give them more responsibilities. The same is true in politics, and they [Ottawa] should give more to the province instead of keeping it at the

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<sup>16</sup>Jean-Marc Fournier, written response to questions, June 7, 1997.

<sup>17</sup>Liberal MNA (anonymous), personal interview, May 27, 1997.

<sup>18</sup>Liberal Party activist (anonymous), personal interview, June 1, 1997.

center.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, "Ottawa has to be flexible"<sup>20</sup> and grant to Quebec a constitutional package of additional powers. For the Quebec Liberal Party, the recent withdrawal of the federal government from manpower training signifies a step in the right direction. While the central government has constantly voiced a genuine reservation to a devolution of the powers assigned in sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution, the QLP sees these assertions as "scarecrows. A scarecrow is a phoney threat put out in fields by farmers to fool the birds. A political scarecrow is a phoney threat put into a debate by politicians to fool the people."<sup>21</sup> For the QLP, Switzerland, a model of solidity, serves as a shining example that a country can be highly decentralized, and still not collapse. This view is supported by Gordon Gibson, a former executive assistant to Pierre Trudeau, and a past leader of the British Columbia Liberal Party. As he writes:

Suffice it to say that Canada is not the most decentralized country in the world, by a long shot. Switzerland, that paragon of fiscal and political stability over the centuries, is much more decentralized, and other federations (Australia, Germany) have lessons to give us all....

There is just no evidence that at some point soon we will fall over the decentralization cliff and disintegrate into little competitive fragments.<sup>22</sup>

However, for the Quebec Liberal Party, this decentralization must be accompanied by a

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<sup>19</sup>1997 federal election chief returning officer (anonymous), personal interview, June 15, 1977.

<sup>20</sup>John Legresley, personal interview, June 11, 1997.

<sup>21</sup>Gordon Gibson, *Thirty Million Musketeers: One Canada, For All Canadians*, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 29.



constitutional recognition of Quebec as a distinct society. According to the logic of the party, “Quebecers want to find in the Canadian constitution a definite recognition of their society, of that which characterizes it as distinct, meaning its language, which for the majority is French, its Civil law and its institutions.”<sup>23</sup> As the 1996 report of the Committee on the Evolution of Canadian Federalism states:

Quebec must be recognized as a distinct society within Canada.

This goal of Quebec’s is also fundamental to the future of Canada. In seeking the recognition of its distinct character, Quebec is not trying to gain for itself an unfair representation in federal institutions, nor does it want to take advantages from the Federal government that are not given to the other partners of the federation, nor does it seek privileges or a nature which would give Quebec a superior status. The goals of Quebec are of a different nature.

Quebecers want to feel at home in the Canadian federation.

This explicit recognition of Quebec as a distinct society would create an important sense of security on the political and legal level.<sup>24</sup>

According to John Legresley, a long-time QLP activist, distinct society can be explained by a simple analogy. For him, if there is a parking lot full of identical cars, and a different brand of automobile is parked along side them, then that car will be distinct. “Distinct just simply means different...it’s a small price to pay to save the country.”<sup>25</sup> For the QLP, distinct society must be achieved at any cost, and by whatever means necessary. As one party activist put it: “...I am

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<sup>23</sup>*Securing Our Future - Policy Paper*, p. 54.

<sup>24</sup>*Quebec’s Identity and Canadian Federalism - Recognition and Interdependence*, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup>John Legresley, personal interview, June 11, 1997.

Roman Catholic, and before dying you have the right to recognize that God was your God. Either you recognize Him as your God because of love or because you're scared. Regardless of whether it's love or you're scared, it's better to have that than nothing."<sup>26</sup>

However, this optimistic view of the future offered by the Quebec Liberal Party is not shared by the Parti Quebecois. For separatists, 130 years of constitutional squabbles sends a strong message that Quebec will never assume its rightful place within the Canadian federation. For them, the only future is one where Canada and Quebec are separate. As Martial Henry put it; "it's a benefit for everybody."<sup>27</sup> For the separatists, a sovereign Quebec will finally allow the Quebecois to realize their true identity as a nation. No longer will the efforts of Quebec be thwarted by a central government which does not speak for the province. As Marcel Landry put it: "...we [Quebec] will no longer be a problem for Canada, and the federal government will not be a problem for us."<sup>28</sup>

For the Parti Quebecois, federalism, at least Canadian federalism, as a political system, is not flexible enough to meet the legitimate demands of the Quebecois for more control of their own affairs. According to one PQ activist,

...Ottawa will never take seriously the needs of Quebec. We ask for powers and Ottawa says no. This has always been the way and it will continue. Chretien may be a Quebecer, but he certainly hasn't looked out for the interests of Quebec. He's the Prime Minister of the rest of Canada, but not Quebec. What Ottawa will offer us will always be only small, insignificant powers. Any real

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<sup>26</sup>1997 federal election chief returning officer (anonymous), personal interview, June 15, 1997.

<sup>27</sup>Martial Henry, personal interview, June 16, 1997.

<sup>28</sup>Marcel Landry, personal interview, May, 9, 1997.

powers always stay at the centre. It's damn maddening for me to see rights and responsibilities that should be ours to manage kept from us....<sup>29</sup>

Thus, for the PQ, if any additional powers are to be conferred upon Quebec in the future, they will not result in any real changes with regards to Quebec's place within the federation. For separatists, all the future holds is the odd table scrap for Quebec. Thus, the Quebecois must opt now for sovereignty in order to recoup all of the powers and responsibilities currently administered by Ottawa, but which rightly belong to the Quebec state.

In turning to the question of distinct society, separatists remain absolutely unimpressed.

According to the PQ, "distinct society is just [two] word[s]."<sup>30</sup> It means absolutely nothing for Quebecers, as it offers no additional powers to the province. As Peter Hogg writes:

In my opinion, even this provision [distinct society] could not plausibly be regarded as creating a special status for Quebec, in that it was an interpretive provision only. It did not directly confer any new powers on the province, and, if its interpretive role did lead to some expansion of Quebec's powers, that expansion was bound to be minor - well within the variation in provincial powers that is now to be found within the Constitution of Canada.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, separatists firmly believe that only a separate Quebec provides the Quebecois with the capacity to realize their identity as a nation. For them, decentralization and distinct society are not solutions, but merely a continuation of a federal system which simply does not work. This is in stark contrast to the Quebec Liberal Party, which advocates that change must occur in the form of an entrenchment in the Constitution of a distinct society clause for Quebec, as well as a massive

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<sup>29</sup>PQ party activist (anonymous), personal interview, May 13, 1997.

<sup>30</sup>Martial Henry, personal interview, June 16, 1997.

<sup>31</sup>Peter W. Hogg, *Constitutional Law of Canada*, p. 103.

devolution of power to the provincial government. While it is apparent that the two sentiments disagree in their assumptions about the need for change, this divergence is also prevalent when discussing the question about what majority must be achieved in a referendum in order for Quebec to separate.

### **The Referendum**

With regards to the question of how much of a majority is enough in a referendum for Quebec to separate, the Quebec Liberal Party is torn over the issue of 50% plus one. According to Paul-Henri Leblanc, no stranger to the practices of voting, since he himself was a chief returning officer at both the federal and provincial levels, the situation is not so clear. For him, 50% plus one is not sufficient for the break-up of a country. Leblanc recounts an encounter with Rita Marsolais, a minister in the PQ government, in which she asked that because she was only elected by 50% plus one, did that not mean she was legal. Leblanc's response was that she was indeed legal, but she was an error that could be corrected in four years. However, the separation of Quebec would be irreversible, so more than half of the voting public must respond in the affirmative to as grave a scenario as the break-up of the country. For Leblanc, if unions require 66% to be disbanded, then at least this percentage of the Quebec population must respond in the affirmative if Quebec is to separate from Canada.<sup>32</sup> As a chief returning officer for the 1997 federal election expressed it: "with 51% you can pull the strings to get a yes."<sup>33</sup> For the Quebec Liberal Party, because of the importance of a vote regarding Canada's future, perhaps 50% plus one is not sufficient.

Apparently, Jean-Pierre Derriennic was endorsing this approach

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<sup>32</sup>Paul-Henri Leblanc, personal interview, June 7, 1997.

<sup>33</sup>1997 federal election chief returning officer, personal interview, June 15, 1997.

when he wrote that article 356 of the Quebec civil code stipulates a two-thirds majority is necessary to dissolve a professional association: "This detail places the separatist leaders in a paradoxical situation: they must explain to us why, when disbanding a fishing club, certain precautions must be taken against the risk of an abuse of power by the majority, yet such precautions become useless when it comes to dividing a state."<sup>34</sup>

However, according to separatists, 50% plus one is sufficient for Quebec to separate from Canada. As Owen Fugere put it, "yes, it has to be 50%. In any democracy it is the rule...In elections the rule is 50%. If not, we could put it at 60 or 70."<sup>35</sup> Sovereignists are united in their belief that if a simple majority of Quebecois assert their desire in a referendum, then, the country will have no choice but to accept the results. Separatists are quick to voice their belief that in a democracy, people must be given the opportunity to choose their path in life. For sovereignists, the case of Newfoundland serves as a perfect example that proves their case. As they state, Newfoundland decided to join Canada in 1949 by a simple majority, so it logically follows that Quebec can leave by the same margin. As one PQ activist put it:

...Of course it has to be 50% plus one . In 1995, Quebec remained part of Canada by an incredibly slim vote. The rule of democracy prevailed there and it must prevail if the yes side wins by such a margin. If a majority votes yes, then Canada must accept the results the same way Quebecers have accepted two past referendums.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, it is clear that nationalists are divided on the question of how much of a majority is required in a referendum for Quebec to separate, with federalists advocating more than a simple

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<sup>34</sup>Trevor McAlpine, *The Partition Principle - Remapping Quebec After Separation*, p. 30.

<sup>35</sup>Owen Fugere, personal interview, June 13, 1997.

<sup>36</sup>PQ party activist (anonymous), personal interview,

majority, and separatists arguing that 50% plus one is sufficient. These different assumptions are also quite clear with regards to the right of Quebec to declare independence unilaterally.

### **A Unilateral Declaration of Independence**

Turning to the question of the capacity of the Quebec government to invoke a unilateral declaration of independence, nationalists of the federalist sentiment are convinced that the provincial government has no such right. While Quebec "...had the power to join in, they do not have the [absolute] power to opt out."<sup>37</sup> For the QLP, what would be required is an amendment to the Canadian constitution to allow Quebec to separate. This view is echoed by political scientist Robert Young: "It is clear that for separation to take place legally, the Constitution Acts must be amended. Until this happens, Quebec will remain a part and a province of Canada."<sup>38</sup>

To arrive at such a conclusion, federalists recognize that Canada is a federal state bounded by the Constitution of Canada which is the Supreme Law of the land. As section 52.1 states, "The Constitution of Canada is the Supreme Law of Canada, and any law that is inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution is, to the extent of the inconsistency, of no force or effect."<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, it is clear for members of the QLP that any secession must be achieved through an amendment to the Constitution of Canada. This opinion is substantiated by the federal government, in their factum filed with the Supreme Court on February 28, 1997. According to Ottawa, Part V of the 1982 Constitution identifies the relevant institutional participants for purposes of amending the Constitution. These are, the "legislative houses" - which are at the

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<sup>37</sup>Paul-Henri Leblanc, personal interview, June 7, 1997.

<sup>38</sup>Robert Young, *The Secession of Quebec and the Future of Canada*, pp. 245-246.

<sup>39</sup>*A Consolidation of The Constitution Acts - 1867 to 1982*, p. 72.

federal level, both the House of Commons and the Senate; and at the provincial level, the legislative assemblies of each province. However, Part V (s. 45) also states that in certain limited circumstances, unilateral constitutional amendments - by Parliament at the federal level and by legislatures at the provincial level - are possible (Parliament denotes involvement of House of Commons, Senate, and Governor General, while legislature denotes provincial assembly and Lieutenant Governor). But, in no case is either the federal or provincial governments - meaning the executive authority of government - authorized to effect or assent to constitutional amendments.<sup>40</sup> As a result,

[t]he institutions of the province of Quebec have no legal authority beyond that contained in the Constitution of Canada. It follows from Part V that the National Assembly and the legislature of Quebec are the only provincial institutions of Quebec with the status of formal constitutional participants in the amendment process, and that the executive government of Quebec has no such status under any circumstances.<sup>41</sup>

For the federalist forces, precedent dictates that Quebec cannot unilaterally declare independence. What is required is the consent of the other parties involved. Guy Bertrand correctly articulates an example in Canadian history which validates the view of the QLP.

Take, for instance, the case of Nova Scotia in 1867. Bolstered by a petition bearing 40, 000 signatures (out of a total population of 50, 000), the Nova Scotia legislature sought to separate unilaterally from the rest of Canada. This decision was brought before the Privy Council, which annulled the separation on grounds that it had been carried without the consent of the nation's other three founding members, Quebec, Ontario, and New Brunswick. Thus

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<sup>40</sup>*Factum of the Attorney General of Canada*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

Nova Scotia was made to return to the fold.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, for the Quebec Liberal Party, "...the composition of the federation can be altered only by an amendment to the constitution. Until further notice, this is the law of our land."<sup>43</sup>

The position of the Quebec Liberal Party is further substantiated when examining both international law and the right to self-determination. With regards to the first, according to Professor James Crawford, in international practice, outside of the colonial context (and Quebec is not a colony), no state attempting to secede unilaterally has been admitted to the United Nations since 1945 against the wishes of the state it was attempting to secede from. Even in the case of colonies, which do have a right of self-determination, independence has always been achieved through, negotiation, rather than by a unilateral declaration of independence, and always within the territorial integrity of the state.<sup>44</sup> For the Quebec Liberal Party, an example often voiced by members to substantiate the opinion regarding the illegality of a unilateral declaration of independence is the 1965 case of Southern Rhodesia. As constitutional law professor Peter Hogg writes:

In *Madzimbamuto v. Lardner-Burke* (1969), the Privy Council had to decide whether validity should be accorded to the acts of the legislature and government of Southern Rhodesia after the 'unilateral declaration of independence' (U.D.I.) from Britain. Their lordships held that post-U.D.I. acts were not valid, because it could not be said 'with certainty' that the break-away government was in effective control of the territory which it claimed to govern.

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<sup>42</sup>Guy Bertrand, *Enough is Enough - An Attorney's's Struggle for Democracy in Quebec*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>44</sup>James Crawford, "State Practice and International Law in Relation to Unilateral Secession."



**Their lordships pointed out that Britain was still claiming to be the lawful government and was taking steps to regain control.’<sup>45</sup>**

**Turning to the right of self-determination under international law, there is both an internal and external aspect. In neither case does it involve any right to unilateral secession from an independent democratic state.**

**Outside of the context of colonies and people under alien domination, the right of external self-determination can only be exercised by the entire people of a state. In independent states, the external aspect of the right of self-determination is the right of the people of the state to determine without external interference, their form of government and international status. This right is exercised fully by all Canadians, including Quebecers, within Canada.**

**The internal aspect of the right of self-determination involves the right of the people of the state to a government representing the whole of that people on the basis of full equality. Quebecers, along with all Canadians, participate fully in their governmental institutions, federal and provincial, on a basis of full equality and thereby exercise the right of self-determination in its internal aspect.’<sup>46</sup>**

**For the QLP, their view with regards to the question of a unilateral declaration of independence by Quebec will be validated by the Supreme Court of Canada, when they deliver their decision to the reference of three questions posed by the Government of Canada on September 26, 1996. For federalists, Quebec can't declare unilaterally the independence of Quebec - what is required will be the adherence to the rules of law. As one QLP member put it:**

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<sup>45</sup>Hogg, as quoted in Guy Bertrand, *Enough is Enough - An Attorney's Struggle for Democracy in Quebec*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>46</sup>*Factum of the Attorney General of Canada*, pp. 40-41.

**“if a province could decide to get out like that, then we wouldn’t have a country.”<sup>47</sup>**

However, separatists are diametrically opposed to federalists in regards to their assumptions about the right of Quebec to declare independence unilaterally. The PQ’s position is absolutely clear: **“if the people of Quebec decide they want to go sovereign, nobody can stop us.”<sup>48</sup>** For the separatists, the right to self-determination provides political license for the Quebecois alone to determine their fate. Separatists cite the fact that their right to self-determination is recognized in a number of international treaties. For instance, the United Nations Charter asserts in article 1-2 that the goals of the United Nations are **“to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of the equal rights and self-determination of peoples....”** As well, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted such things as the Declaration on Friendly Relations, which reasserts the principle of the equality of the rights of peoples and their right to self-determination as established in the United Nations Charter.<sup>49</sup> As political scientist Reg Whitaker has pointed out, with regards to self-determination, there exists a broad consensus that such claims have a plausibility when the following criteria are met:<sup>50</sup>

1) a people has developed clear self-consciousness of itself as a distinct nation (and could potentially form a viable nation state),

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<sup>47</sup>1997 federal election chief returning officer (anonymous), personal interview, June 15, 1997.

<sup>48</sup>Owen Fugere, personal interview, June 13, 1997.

<sup>49</sup>Daniel Turp, “Quebec’s Democratic Right to Self-Determination: A Critical and Legal Reflection,” p. 108.

<sup>50</sup>The three criteria, listed here verbatim was derived from Reg Whitaker, “Quebec’s Self-Determination and Aboriginal Self-Government: Conflict and Reconciliation?,” p. 198.

2) individuals identities as members of this nation cannot be realized in their present political and economic conditions of citizenship, because:

3) another, dominant group has imposed a state structure on them that expressly denies their identity and/or actively seeks to repress it.

According to separatists, Quebec meets all of the above three criteria. According to PQ finance minister Bernard Landry, as all the former colonial nations have recognized their independence, it is time for Quebec, "the world's last colonized nation,"<sup>51</sup> to assume its true identity.

As Mario Dumont, Lucien Bouchard, and Jacques Parizeau, the then leaders of the Action Democratique, Bloc Quebecois, and Parti Quebecois respectively, stated in a joint press release on June 12, 1995:

Insofar as the negotiations unfold in a positive fashion, the National Assembly will declare the sovereignty of Quebec after an agreement is reached on the Partnership treaty. One of the first acts of a sovereign Quebec will be a ratification of a Partnership treaty. The negotiations will not exceed one year, unless the National Assembly decides otherwise.

If the negotiations prove to be fruitless, the National Assembly will be empowered to declare the sovereignty of Quebec without further delay.<sup>52</sup>

In their unwavering belief that Quebec could unilaterally declare independence, the PQ government on September 7, 1995 tabled Bill 1, *An Act Respecting the Future of Quebec*. This Bill,

[...] authorizes the National Assembly, within the scope of its

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<sup>51</sup>Landry, as quoted in Peter C. Newman, *The Canadian Revolution, 1985-1995 - From Deference to Defiance*, p. 336.

<sup>52</sup>*Factum of the Attorney General of Canada*, p. 6.

provisions, to proclaim the sovereignty of Quebec and to give effect to the Declaration of sovereignty appearing in the Preamble.<sup>53</sup>

For sovereignists, the three questions posed to the Supreme Court by the federal government on September 28, 1997 mean absolutely nothing. In fact, according to Premier Bouchard, the government of his province would not even take part in the Supreme Court's examination of the legitimacy of a unilateral declaration of independence. As Owen Fugere put it, "you can't prevent a society from taking its own direction....so, the court decision shouldn't change anything."<sup>54</sup> This divergence between the two sentiments is also prevalent when discussing the hypothetical separation of Quebec.

### **The Transition to Sovereignty**

In discussing the hypothetical separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada with various members of both the QLP and the PQ, it appeared that while federalists looked upon such a scenario with deep anxiety, separatists were intrigued and excited by the thought.

For the QLP, if separation ever was achieved, "...it would be 25 years of misery for both sides...filled with unknowns...It's a hell of a hole."<sup>55</sup> Firstly, federalists are convinced that the partnership which separatists claim is inevitable is not absolutely guaranteed. Eugene Forsey expressed the remote chance of a partnership when he stated: "...you can no more negotiate sour sugar, dry water, boiling ice or stationary motion."<sup>56</sup> According to the QLP, once a country has

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<sup>53</sup>*Factum of the Attorney General of Canada*, p. 8.

<sup>54</sup>Owen Fugere, personal interview, June 13, 1997.

<sup>55</sup>Paul-Henri Leblanc, personal interview, June 7, 1997.

<sup>56</sup>Forsey, as quoted in Peter C. Newman, *The Canadian Revolution, 1985-1995 - From Deference to Defiance*, p. 334.

been torn in two, the rest of Canada will hardly wish to negotiate with a government that has caused the destruction of the nation which the United Nations consistently ranks as the best to live in throughout the world. For federalists, the offer of a partnership is an “empty shell [because] an offer is never a guarantee of an agreement.<sup>57</sup> Liberals are firmly convinced that a sovereign Quebec would be unable to continue to use Canadian currency and passports, for, as federalist leaders like Daniel Johnson have often expressed it, it is impossible to have a divorce and marriage at the same time. As one QLP activist asserts:

...I can't possibly imagine that Quebecers are naive enough to believe the words of demagogues like Bouchard and Parizeau. These men would say the moon is made of cheese to get their way. Far from a partnership, I firmly believe that what's left of Canada will hardly wish to negotiate with separatists. Can you imagine Preston Manning and Lucien Bouchard sitting across the table from one another, negotiating. It's laughable, absolutely laughable. No, I am afraid that there'll be no deal - Quebec will be isolated in North America once and for all.<sup>58</sup>

For the Quebec Liberal Party, emotion will play a large part in the break-up country of a 130 year old institution. “Faced with Canada's predictable rejection of its ‘partnership’ deal, the government of Quebec will doubtless state that negotiations with Canada are exercises in futility, and proceed with separation.”<sup>59</sup> According to the QLP, this would signal disaster for the province, as the flood gates of confusion would be opened up on helpless victims. As one Liberal put it:

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<sup>57</sup>*Referendum '95 - Manifesto Of Quebecers For The No*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>58</sup>Quebec civil servant (anonymous), June 10, 1997.

<sup>59</sup>Guy Bertrand, *Enough is Enough - An Attorney's Struggle for Democracy in Quebec*, p.

**...Economy, culture, language, everything that Quebecers have worked for would be placed in jeopardy. While the elite of the PQ, men like Parizeau and Bouchard say that all will be well, I'm not convinced. I've had a chance to travel around the world, and I've lived abroad, so I know what goes on in other countries can go on here to....I'm reminded of the story of Chicken Little, and this time the sky will actually fall.<sup>60</sup>**

For an estimated 500, 000 to 1, 000, 000 Quebecers, the solution will be simple - to abandon the province of their birth and flee to other parts of Canada or the world. For federalists, these may be the lucky few, as those who remain behind will be part of a Quebec turned upside down. Separation would involve far reaching negotiations to settle a multiplicity of factors. Firstly, of course, Quebec would have to agree to assume a portion of the national debt, somewhere between 18 and 25 percent which amounts to somewhere between 150 and 225 billion dollars, not to mention an additional 100 billion dollar debt engendered by the public/parapublic sectors. To make matters worse, it would cost another third of a billion dollars for Quebec to take on the responsibility of areas currently managed by the federal government such as defence, postal service, unemployment insurance, and so on.<sup>61</sup> Further precipitating this economic downturn would be the anticipated flight of capital which would result from the separation of Quebec from Canada. As one party member put it: "I think it's hard to live as a sovereign country and I'm afraid companies will leave. While Bombardier is still a Quebec company...but for how long, how long?"<sup>62</sup> The Liberal view of economic uncertainty for a sovereign Quebec is reinforced by their

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<sup>60</sup>Quebec civil servant (anonymous), personal interview, June 10, 1997.

<sup>61</sup>Guy Bertrand, *Enough is Enough - An Attorney's Struggle for Democracy in Quebec*, p. 115-117.

<sup>62</sup>1997 federal election chief returning officer (anonymous), personal interview, June 15, 1997.

view that Quebec's admittance to partnerships like the Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement "...won't happen automatically. Everything will have to be renegotiated, by a Quebec whose bargaining power will be weakened. Indeed, Quebec runs the risk of losing crucial acquired rights that it needs both for the survival of its culture and for certain industries."<sup>63</sup> Federalists are quick to cite that the government of Canada currently enjoys a veto over new entrants to the North American Free Trade Agreement, so Quebec's entry could be certainly rejected in this union, and many others. For the Quebec Liberals, Quebec is far better served by remaining a powerful province in a country which boasts membership in some of the most important international forums like the G7 and the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-Operation Council. For federalists, a small state like Quebec would lose their membership in these organizations, and would thus be in a position of less importance. For federalists, the comments by former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali regarding Quebec are telling. For him, "micro-nationalism," or the division of countries into small entities was flawed, since if every minority in the world sought their independence, there would be five hundred to one thousand countries in the world as opposed to the current 184. For Boutros-Ghali, this would not be in the interests of peace or economic development.<sup>64</sup>

Adding to the Quebec Liberal Party's fear about the break-up of the country is their assumption that the French language would suffer in an independent Quebec. Concordia University Professor Kimon Valaskakis and Angeline Fournier, vice-president of the Gamma

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<sup>63</sup>Kimon Valaskakis and Angeline Fournier, *The Delusion of Sovereignty - Would Independence Weaken Quebec?*, p. 117.

<sup>64</sup>Diane Francis, *Fighting For Canada*, p. 47.

Institute, adequately capture the Liberal position: "...if Quebec separated, it would lose this cultural "shock absorber" called Canada and would really become a beleaguered Francophone island surrounded by an Anglophone ocean...Quebec independence therefore goes against the interests of the vitality of Quebec's Francophone culture and threatens its survival."<sup>65</sup>

Thus, for the QLP, all of the above factors are enough to convince them that sovereignty is not the best option for Québec. Liberals believe that with such uncertainty, Quebecers will suffer drastically as the economy of a sovereign Quebec will be thrown into turmoil. According to federalists, there is no such thing as a "velvet divorce." Because of the emotional response that would invariably accompany independence, "violence is not out of the question"<sup>66</sup> according to federalists. As Paul-Henri Leblanc put it: "A war could be started here. Canada and Quebec are not excluded from this. You see in the world today brothers against brothers, one religion against another, one colour against another, one race against another in one country. All it would take is one crazy nut to shoot a bullet."<sup>67</sup> For federalists, the case of the former Yugoslavia remains etched in their minds. The violence and bloodshed that followed this break-up remains for Liberals a chilling example of the bellicosity of a democratic people when confronted by extraordinary circumstances. As one observer put it: "I believe this is a prescription for civil strife unprecedented in North America."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Kimon Valaskakis and Angeline Fournier, *The Delusion of Sovereignty - Would Independence Weaken Quebec?*, p. 171-174.

<sup>66</sup>John Legresley, personal interview, June 11, 1997.

<sup>67</sup>Paul-Henri Leblanc, personal interview, June 7, 1997.

<sup>68</sup>Saul Pfeffer, "Come Clean PQ, what are the real perils and costs of your sovereignty project?," p. 13.



As a result of the uncertainty that surrounds the whole concept of a sovereign Quebec, federalists began to debate seriously what strategies could be adopted to fight the separatist forces. One of these options was the so-called Plan B - a strategy to be enacted if all other strategies to keep Canada together failed. The main tenet of Plan B is partition, the act of dividing the province up into various geographically defined territories. The concept is still relatively new. In fact, it wasn't until the late 1970's that the idea of partition was given some credibility when Prime Minister Trudeau declared that "if Canada is divisible, Quebec should be divisible too."<sup>69</sup> While the QLP's official policy has been that Quebec's borders were not subject to change, even leader Daniel Johnson has publicly admitted that partition may be the end result of Quebec's separation. As he stated, "[n]obody can guarantee that on an international level if Quebec secedes from Canada everything will stay the way it is today...nobody can offer any guarantees about territory, about citizenship. It is all up in the air."<sup>70</sup> While federalists admit that partition would be difficult to manage, they are equally adamant that "what's good for the goose is good for the gannet."<sup>71</sup> For federalists, the possibility of Quebec's landmass being dismembered must be taken seriously as a possible consequence of separation. As the QLP has pointed out,

Quebec's native peoples have voted in their own referendum - overwhelmingly - not to separate from Canada. At the same time a strong partition movement in the Anglophone and ethnic parts of Quebec, dedicated to staying in Canada regardless of what Quebec

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<sup>69</sup>Trudeau, as quoted in Trevor McAlpine, *The Partition Principle: Remapping Quebec After Separation*, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>71</sup>Paul-Henri Leblanc, personal interview, June 7, 1997.

does, is even now gathering strength, conviction and adherents.<sup>72</sup>

The deep anxiety expressed by the Quebec Liberal Party was not shared by members of the Parti Quebecois. For them, the future is something to look forward to, as Quebec will finally achieve sovereignty. In his 1995 best-seller, *The Canadian Revolution, 1985-1995 - From Deference to Defiance*, Peter C. Newman satirically characterizes the opinion of sovereignists like then Premier Jacques Parizeau who believed that at last, with separation, Quebecers would finally be a nation, with a leader who would be the one true spokesman for all Quebecois. As he writes:

The only real change, one assumed, would be in his [Parizeau] own status. Instead of being the lowly premier of an important province, he would become the exalted president of a marginal republic, able to arrive at the United Nations with the *fleur-de-lys* proudly fluttering from the fender of his limousine and to bore the Assembly with one of his avuncular lectures blown through his moustache. Parizeau would at last be officially installed in his Quebec City presidential palace, instead of merely living in a donated house with pretensions of becoming one.<sup>73</sup>

Humour aside, for separatists, after a yes vote, democracy will prevail and the transition will be smooth and peaceful, as a deal between the two new states is inevitable. Both former PQ cabinet minister Marcel Landry and his chief-of-staff, Pierre Provost, recount an incident while the two were travelling in Ontario, which reflects their assumption that a partnership is a logical part of sovereignty. As Provost puts it:

...Like when I was travelling with Marcel Landry in Ontario, and we met with the Prime Minister, Bob Rae, and some Ontario farm organizations, and it was just a month before the referendum, and

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<sup>72</sup>Saul Pfeffer, "Come clean PQ, what are the real perils and costs of your sovereignty project?," p. 13.

<sup>73</sup>Peter C. Newman, *The Canadian Revolution, 1985-1995 - From Deference to Defiance*, p. 335.

they told us, we hope the no wins, but if the yes wins, don't forget, we are good partners and we want to negotiate.<sup>74</sup>

For Provost and other separatists, globalization and economic realities of interdependence have produced a climate where it is absolutely necessary for alliances to be formed between a sovereign Quebec and the rest of Canada, so it will be "business as usual...things will go on...and people will find their place."<sup>75</sup> As MNA Marcel Landry put it:

...The European community are all independent states that have learned to work together....It will be quite smooth because in Quebec and Canada, we are all democrats....We are both willing to have scientific, cultural exchanges and joint contributions for projects....When a change happens, you try to reach a settlement, a new status-quo. We will not be in a sense of turbulence.<sup>76</sup>

Downplaying the emotional reaction which will undoubtedly be produced in the rest of Canada following a yes vote, according to the logic of the PQ, "...we can have a good deal - winner and winner."<sup>77</sup> For separatists like Pierre Provost, there will be no violent reaction on either side. Provost recounts when the PQ was first swept to power on November 15, 1976, there was no violence then, and the same will hold true when sovereignty is achieved.<sup>78</sup>

For separatists, the transition to sovereignty will be marked by not only a partnership with Canada in which Quebec would continue to use the Canadian currency, but it would signal Quebec's entrance into such international agreements as the North American Free Trade

<sup>74</sup>Pierre Provost, personal interview, June 10, 1997.

<sup>75</sup>Owen Fugere, personal interview, June 13, 1997.

<sup>76</sup>Marcel Landry, personal interview, May 9, 1997.

<sup>77</sup>Pierre Provost, personal interview, June 10, 1997.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

Agreement, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, to name but a few. In an interview with Diane Francis, Jacques Parizeau candidly revealed his thoughts about life after separation. As she writes:

He stated for the first time that a separate Quebec would agree to assume only 17 percent of the federal debt, even though it represented 24 percent of the population. He said that, like it or not, Quebec would use Canadian currency and demand seats on the Bank of Canada's board of governors. He threatened that if Canada did not like those terms and others, Quebec might simply disrupt traffic on the St. Lawrence Seaway. He said that Quebec would demand to be a third-party signatory of every treaty or trade agreement that Canada had signed. Or else....

“What we want is everything to have a third, Quebec signature. What if the Americans don't want a third signature and push Quebec out of the Free Trade Agreement? Then Quebec must have the right to look at each treaty signed in our name. NORAD, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and dozens more. Either we countersign all these treaties in one afternoon, or we renegotiate them one by one....”<sup>79</sup>

For sovereignists, when separation is achieved, Quebec will simply “...take over from Canada at the side of our allies in organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.”<sup>80</sup>

According to those who advocate sovereignty, the velvet divorce of the former Czechoslovakia proves unequivocally that the separation of Quebec and Canada can smoothly occur. For separatists, violence is to be dismissed, as “it would be better for both Canada and Quebec if we went our separate ways.”<sup>81</sup>

From my research, it seems to be no exaggeration to state that for separatists, a separate

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<sup>79</sup>Diane Francis, *Fighting for Canada*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>80</sup>*Our Hearts in Our Work*, p. 33.

<sup>81</sup>Martial Henry, personal interview, June 16, 1997.

Quebec would be a utopia - a place where the Quebecois would prosper economically and the French language would thrive.<sup>82</sup> As Premier Bouchard put it, "...there are many cases where we cannot act because those policies are in the hands of the federal government, which has its own priorities and timetables....It is a waste of time when we have the ability to act more quickly, and on our own."<sup>83</sup> In terms of economics, "in the first year following a Yes, Quebecers will recover taxes paid to Ottawa and will at last be able to invest appropriately in research and development...[so] concrete benefits in terms of the number and quality of jobs will be felt within the next three or four years."<sup>84</sup> As the 1994 program states,

sovereignty will bring about substantial savings thanks to the rationalization of public expenses, once the operations of the two levels of government are merged. A reduction of the administrative costs of government operations would result in savings.<sup>85</sup>

For separatists, the situation of the French language will also improve in a sovereign Quebec as "...ways to check the decline of French in Montreal..."<sup>86</sup> will be imposed by the government of the country. Finally, the Quebec government will have all of the tools at its disposal necessary to both strengthen and promote the French language. No longer will interference from Ottawa thwart the efforts of the Quebec state.

This road to utopia for the PQ seems to be buttressed by the explosion of a large-number of

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<sup>82</sup>Refer to *Our Hearts in Our Work*.

<sup>83</sup>Lucien Bouchard, interview with *World State Magazine*, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup>*Our Hearts in our Work*, p. 27.

<sup>85</sup>As quoted in Kimon Valaskakis and Angeline Fournier, *The Delusion of Sovereignty, Would Independence Weaken Quebec?*, p. 67.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39.

micro-states on the international scene, especially in the past decade. As Louise Beaudoin points out, the United Nations has ballooned from only 51 members in 1945 to 184 currently. For Beaudoin, small geographical areas like Singapore with a population of 2.7 million, and Hong Kong with 5.8 million inhabitants, profiting economically, proves that sovereignty is the only alternative. It seems that for the PQ, if these countries can do it, why can't Quebec.<sup>87</sup>

Reinforcing this growth in the international community of states, the PQ adamantly believe that there exists support for a sovereign Quebec. As Pierre Provost puts it:

...France, I'm sure would recognize us...and other countries such as the African nations...which they have sway over....The big catch is the U.S. In their official discourse, they say Quebec is a part of Canada...and our first choice is to have a united neighbour, but if Quebec wants to go sovereign, America will recognize this....The U.S. never said they will intervene in the debate...They never said they would send in the marines to stop independence.<sup>88</sup>

While the verdict remains out as to whether the United States would recognize a sovereign Quebec, there appears to be little doubt that France would come to the aid of the Quebecois. In an interview on CNN's "Larry King Live," aired October 23, 1995, French President Jacques Chirac, responding to a question from a caller which asked if France would recognize a unilateral declaration of independence by Quebec, responded in the affirmative.<sup>89</sup>

Chirac: "The French government do not want to interfere in Canadian affairs."

King: "That was not the question. The question was will you

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<sup>87</sup>Louise Beaudoin, "La Souverainete: Une Solution D'Avenir Pour S'Adapter Aux Nouvelles Realites Internationales Et Pour Notre Culture," pp. 4-5.

<sup>88</sup>Pierre Provost, personal interview, June 10, 1997.

<sup>89</sup>Interview derived from Diane Francis, *Fighting for Canada*, pp. 153-154.

recognize...”

Chirac: “Yes, yes, I’m coming. You have referendum...”

King: “Next week.”

Chirac: “Next week. And we’ll see. And we’ll say what we think just after the referendum. But we don’t want to interfere.”

King: “Well, if Quebec decides to separate, the question was, will you recognize the new government?”

Chirac: “If the referendum is positive the government will recognize the fact.”

King: “So France will recognize Quebec.”

Chirac: “That is fact, of course, and...”

King: “You have no recommendation to the people of Quebec as to how they should vote?”

Chirac: “I told you I don’t want to interfere in the Quebec affairs.”

Not surprisingly, if separation is achieved, separatists renounce partition as but another means by which federalists can prevent the Quebecois from achieving sovereignty. Premier Bouchard’s remarks about partition were telling:

I think deeply and intensely that in Quebec we are a people, we are a nation and as a nation we have a fundamental right to keep, maintain and protect our territory....Canada is divisible because Canada is not a real country. There are two people, two nations, and two territories - and this one is ours.<sup>90</sup>

For the separatists, “there is absolutely no future in partition.”<sup>91</sup> Quebec must retain its

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<sup>90</sup>Bouchard, as quoted in Trevor McAlpine, *The Partition Principle: Remapping Quebec After Separation*, p. 13.

<sup>91</sup>Pierre Provost, personal interview, June 10, 1997.

territorial integrity or there could be violence. For separatists like Pierre Provost, international cases of partition serve as a reminder that partition is the worst possible outcome for Quebecers. As he asserts, "...look at what's happened in Israel, Ireland - they fight with guns, tanks, and the army...and what did it was partition. Also, look at India and Pakistan, and the fight between Hindus and Muslims...."<sup>92</sup> As Premier Bouchard is quick to point out,

...Canada...in recent years has recognized a large number of new countries within their original boundaries. All these people's included in their midst linguistic or regional minorities democratically and legitimately opposed to the sovereignty of their new states. In these cases, Canada proposed neither changing the rules of democracy nor changing boundaries.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, for separatists, the territorial integrity of Quebec must be respected and preserved in the event of a secession from Canada - Quebec will remain in its exactness with or without separation. For those nationalists who support partition, the PQ believe that these people are not true Quebecois. As Martial Henry expressed it: "men like Marc Lalonde, Guy Bertrand, they are traitors...because they are supposed to be Quebecois, and they're stabbing their own people in the back...."<sup>94</sup> This rejection of partition by the PQ reached its most extreme manifestations in the April issue of former FLQ terrorist Raymond Villeneuve's publication 'La Tempete' which boldly proclaimed death to all partitionists.<sup>95</sup>

From the above discussion, it is clearly evident that both federalists and separatists are

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<sup>92</sup>Pierre Provost, personal interview.

<sup>93</sup>Lucien Bouchard, "The Problem With Pierre Trudeau: Would-be Imitators," p. 8.

<sup>94</sup>Martial Henry, personal interview, June 16, 1997.

<sup>95</sup>"'Death to partitionists,' La Tempete declares," p. 8.



divided over the hypothetical separation of Quebec. While the former expressed deep anxiety, the latter expressed enthusiasm for the future. The one final area where there appears a disjuncture between the two sentiments is the inevitability of separation, and it is these assumptions which must now be addressed.

### **The Inevitability of Separation**

In the course of my interviews with the various members of the Quebec Liberal Party, I soon realized that the only inevitability which federalists accept is the view that both the federal and provincial governments are dependent upon one another, and, as a result, must learn to work together to solve mutual problems. As a 1996 Quebec Liberal Party publication asserts:

**Fundamental point: the two orders of government must understand that they are in an inevitable relationship of interdependence.**

**The two orders of government, dealing with the same populations, must respect each other and work together to manage their interdependence. It is unrealistic to believe that today's challenges can be overcome exclusively by one level of government.<sup>96</sup>**

Admittedly, because of the great gains made by sovereigntists since the 1980 referendum, many argue that Quebec separation is inevitable; but, federalists dismiss such assertions, referring to the fact that in the 1995 referendum, many Quebec voters were confused by the ambiguous question posed by the PQ. They point to televised interviews with Quebecois who claimed that even if the yes won, they would still be Canadians. As one party activist put it: "If they ask the straight question...they're not going to have independence because many people last time were fooled."<sup>97</sup>

This opinion is substantiated by a February 1995 poll by SONDAGEM which revealed that two in

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<sup>96</sup>*Quebec's Identity and Canadian Federalism - Recognition and Interdependence*, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup>Quebec Liberal Party Activist, personal interview, June 12, 1997.

five Quebecers who intended to vote for sovereignty believed that a sovereign Quebec would remain a part of Canada.<sup>98</sup> For the QLP, allowing for the fact that voters did not fully understand the ramifications that would accompany a yes vote, combined with the rejection of over 80, 000 votes by election scrutineers, and the results of the last referendum could have mirrored the 1980 results. Thus, according to the QLP, chatter about the inevitability of separation is utter nonsense.

For the PQ, however, there appears to be a belief that the sovereignty of Quebec is inescapable - a fate which was pre-determined centuries past. According to the logic of separatists, sovereignty has been a force which has been bubbling below the surface, awaiting its opportunity to explode. As Owen Fugere put it, "if we follow the history of Quebec...sovereignty is inevitable. The history of Quebec has been an evolution....A natural progression."<sup>99</sup> While militants readily admit that there is an uncertainty as to when Quebec will become a nation, there is unanimous agreement that it shall not be a prolonged struggle. In an interview with the *World State Magazine*, Premier Lucien Bouchard was asked if he believed an independent Quebec was inevitable. His response was hardly startling:

Yes I do [believe sovereignty is inevitable]. A very large portion of the people who now support sovereignty in Quebec has spent part of their lives trying to carve out an appropriate place for Quebec in the Canadian federation. Some leaders of the Parti Quebecois who came before me began their political careers as federalists, and then became disheartened at Canada's inability to respect Quebec's desire for autonomy. I myself spent two years of my life as a federal cabinet minister, trying to persuade Canada to grant Quebec

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<sup>98</sup>Richard Gwyn, *Nationalism Without Walls: The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian*, p. 136.

<sup>99</sup>Owen Fugere, personal interview, June 13, 1997.

**its rightful place and to offer recognition of its distinctiveness. But we failed. Division amongst Canadians on that issue, and years of useless talks make me believe that Canada is unable and will remain unable to offer anything substantial to Quebec. That is why I believe that sovereignty is inevitable.<sup>100</sup>**

**For separatists, it is not a “a revelation that federalism could not meet the needs of Quebec.”<sup>101</sup>**

**Thus, for separatists a sovereign Quebec “...will be infinitely more efficient, more prosperous, more fair, more open to others, and more sure of itself than the one we have today - and that this is something the current regime will never allow it to become.”<sup>102</sup>**

### **Conclusion**

**It seems abundantly clear that there exists a great divergence between both the federalist and separatist sentiments of Quebec nationalism when speculating on the future. Despite their mutually held belief that the Canada of tomorrow will be very much unlike the Canada of today, the two visions offered by the Quebec Liberal Party and the Parti Quebecois are clearly at variance.**

**According to party literature, “[t]he Quebec Liberal Party must be the champion of an inclusive Quebec.”<sup>103</sup> To achieve this, it**

**...must convince a majority of Quebecers to restore their confidence in the party. To do that, the Quebec Liberal Party must demolish the myths and half-truths espoused by the Parti Quebecois. It will also have to cry out loud and strong that electing the Quebec Liberal Party will put an end to political uncertainty in Quebec. Of**

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<sup>100</sup>Lucien Bouchard, interview with World State Magazine, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup>Owen Fugere, personal interview, June 13, 1997.

<sup>102</sup>Rene Levesque, as quoted in *Our Hearts in Our Work*, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup>*Quebec's Identity and Canadian Federalism - Recognition and Interdependence*, p. 5.

course, it will have to do more: remaining faithful to its tradition, it will have to present a program that is coherent, rallying, pragmatic, and having as its only priority the greater welfare of everyone. This program must present concrete solutions to the real problems facing Quebec today. These solutions must capitalize on our strengths and emphasize our most precious resource: our people.<sup>104</sup>

However, the federalists' speculation of the future is not shared by the Parti Quebecois. For them, the only solution is sovereignty.

Its goal of independence has always been fuelled by the idea of a "French" state in North America and by the belief that the French-speaking majority in Quebec could only evolve in its own way "normally," if it were freed from membership in the Canadian federation, in which many of the essential powers remain in the hands of a central government dominated by an English speaking majority.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, both parties offer visions of the future which are in direct contrast to one another - visions which are undeniably motivated by the assumptions which both sentiments make.

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<sup>104</sup>*Securing Our Future - Policy Paper.*

<sup>105</sup>Reed Scowen, *A Different Vision - The English in Quebec in the 1990s*, p. 19.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Some Final Thoughts on Quebec Nationalism**

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### **Some Final Thoughts on Quebec Nationalism**

#### **Introduction**

This thesis has proven that because federalists and separatists differ not only in terms of their reading of the historical and contemporary record (evidence), but also in regards to their opinions about future prospects (assumptions), the two sentiments advocate different solutions to assist the Quebecois in realizing their identity as a nation.

When addressing the question of evidence, my findings indicate that the sole point upon which all nationalists agree is that the Conquest of 1760 led to the emergence of a Quebec nation. Separated from their French, Roman Catholic mother country (France), the Quebecois became a minority in a now majority Anglophone country which they had helped to found. After 1760, the story of the Quebecois became one of survival. For the Quebec Liberal Party, the Confederation of 1867 was a great compromise which provided Quebec the opportunity to develop within the confines of a larger entity - Canada. According to federalists, the 130 years that have elapsed since 1867 abound with evidence to prove their position. From various measures to solve the Quebec question, to the economic benefits derived from membership in the federation, to various measures taken to protect the French language, Quebec has benefitted handsomely from its membership in the Canadian union.

However, this view of history is not shared by the Parti Quebecois. For them, Confederation institutionalized the fact of Quebec's minority status - a status which lead, according to separatists, to years of discrimination and hardship. Furthermore, for them, federalism has failed to meet Quebec's's demands, failed in its protection of the French language, and costs Quebec

more than it's worth.

This divergent reading of evidence is buttressed by conflicting assumptions. For federalists, status-quo federalism must be rejected: for them, a massive devolution of powers from Ottawa, combined with a distinct society clause enshrined in the Constitution can appease Quebec. By granting to Quebec a special place within the federation and emasculating the federal government, the Quebec Liberal Party is convinced that the province will finally be able to realize its true identity as a nation.

Clearly, Quebec's official opposition party subscribes to the view that Quebec must be a nation without becoming a state. Perhaps Montreal comic Yvon Deschamps described it best when he said: "We want an independent Quebec within a strong and united Canada."<sup>1</sup> For the Quebec Liberal Party, the Canada of the twenty-first century will be a federation in which Quebec will ascend to its rightful position. As one activist put it:

I very often mention that if you ride on one of the streets in Montreal, and it is crowded, take your place....Don't leave a space between you and the front row, because someone else will take it. We have as a French nation to step ahead and take our place...and be recognized.<sup>2</sup>

For federalists, the vision of one Canada epitomized by former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau is simply not acceptable. What is required is for the country to revert back to the view of Canada as two nations. As Laval University political scientist Guy Laforest writes in his book, *Trudeau and the End of the Canadian Dream*,

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<sup>1</sup>Deschamps, as quoted in Peter C. Newman, *The Canadian Revolution, 1985-1995 - From Deference to Defiance*, p. 333.

<sup>2</sup>1997 federal election chief returning officer (anonymous), personal interview, June 15, 1997.

**We Quebecers are being asked to accept the principle of limited and shared national sovereignty in this era when integration in all its forms is being reinforced. So be it, but Canada should do no less. Let Canada renounce the sovereignty and monopoly on the Canadian national identity by creating a space for Quebec by its side in the definition of our political system.<sup>3</sup>**

For the QLP, the rest of Canada must accept their view that Quebec must be recognized as a nation. For them, this is the preferred course of action, since it offers the benefits of Canadian federalism, without the risks they assume separation would bring. Perhaps this is type of “profitable federalism” often voiced by former leader Robert Bourassa - a Quebec that can have its cake and eat it too!

While separatists agree that status-quo federalism is unacceptable for Quebec, they differ from the federalists in that they advocate that only in a sovereign Quebec can the Quebecois realize their identity as a nation. For the Parti Quebecois, the transition to sovereignty will be a smooth one as Quebecers and Canadians come to accept the new reality of this corner of North America which they share. Joined intricately by a close proximity and a shared history, as well as the mutual interdependence of today’s world, sovereignists are animated by an assumed partnership that will benefit all parties involved. For the PQ, a separate Quebec will assume its natural place in such organizations as NATO, NORAD, and in trade agreements like the FTA and NAFTA - Quebec will truly become a nation in every sense. In this perceived utopia, the Quebec government, armed with all the additional powers federalism has long denied it, would at last be able to safeguard language, culture, economy, and institutions - all of the facets of life which could not be guaranteed under the present arrangement.

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<sup>3</sup>Laforest, as quoted in Richard Gwyn, *Nationalism Without Walls: The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian*, p. 140.



Perhaps, in always trying to settle the question of what does Quebec want, it would be more fruitful to turn our thoughts to the question of what does Quebec want to be?<sup>4</sup> From my research, it is clear that all nationalists value above all else the realization of their identity as a nation. However, because of evidence and assumptions, the federalist sentiment advocates that Quebec must become a nation without becoming a state, while separatists argue that only in an independent state can Quebecers realize their identity.

Thus, for federalists and separatists alike, Canadian federalism must evolve to meet the needs of Quebec - or suffer the consequences. The question which begs to be answered is can either of these visions offer a solution to the Quebec question.

### **Debating the Federalist and Separatist Visions**

I must admit that when addressing the question of whether or not the federalist or separatist vision offers hope for the future, I inevitably revert to my centralist tendencies as well as my adherence to the perspective of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, so I cannot be completely unbiased. However, I will try to approach this with as little baggage as possible.

Turning first to the Liberal vision, I see very little optimism that this will resolve the current dilemma. Distinct society does not serve as a source of animation for Quebecois. Rejected as a principle by the voters during the Charlottetown Accord referendum, distinct society has never been a slogan that the Quebecois have embraced. Besides this, other Canadians will never agree to some form of asymmetrical federalism, or rather, special status or a *deux nations* arrangement. For Canadians, every part of the country is distinct in some way, so a special status for Quebec

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<sup>4</sup>Peter C. Newman, *The Canadian Revolution, 1985-1995, From Deference to Defiance*, p. 332.

would never be accepted. As to the second prong of the QLP argument, a massive devolution of powers, this is also a dead-end. By emasculating the federal government, no longer would Canada be a federal system in which each level of government is coordinate.<sup>5</sup> As Kenneth McRoberts writes:

For its part, over the last two decades, English Canada has become firmly attached to a constitutional vision of its own. Central to this vision is the ideal of Canada as the pre-eminent political community. Coupled with this is a concern to protect and strengthen the role of the federal government as the 'national' government of all Canadians. In recent years, survey after survey has demonstrated rejection among most English Canadians of any substantial decentralization of powers and responsibilities to the provinces. Equally integral to this conception of Canadian political community is the principle of absolute equality among the provinces, Quebec included.<sup>6</sup>

The vision of the QLP is a solution which is the next best thing to independence.

According to Liberal Party documents, what they propose is a political, economic, and social union. This sounds very much like the vision offered by the Parti Quebecois - one that is as flawed as that offered by the federalist sentiment. If we critically scrutinize the PQ logic, it is abundantly clear that the smooth transition they envision is illogical. For the PQ, the velvet divorce of the former Czechoslovakia should serve as a lesson. As this case clearly illustrates, Slovaks were forced, soon after the separation, because of pressures from financial markets, to mint their own currency, which is now considered weak. As well, open borders in the former

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<sup>5</sup>Peter W. Hogg, *Constitutional Law of Canada*, p. 98.

<sup>6</sup>Kenneth McRoberts, "Disagreeing on Fundamentals; English Canada and Quebec," p. 250.

Czechoslovakia soon fell by the way side.<sup>7</sup> Besides this is the fact that Quebec, with an economy about the size of Massachusetts, would be in a severely weakened bargaining position with regards to the rest of Canada. The separatists' view that Canada will want to bargain seems to be overly optimistic, to say the least. Having just had their country destroyed, the rest of Canada will be in no position to negotiate with those who caused this catastrophe. With Preston Manning being the likely heir apparent to govern what's left of Canada, a negotiation, at least one favourable to Quebec, seems highly remote. For Quebec, separation seems to be a black hole which the province would never return from. As a sovereign country straddled with a massive debt, nothing can be dismissed -including violence.

### **Conclusion**

In the preliminary report of the Laurendeau-Dunton Royal Commission issued on February 1, 1965, it was argued that "what [was] at stake [was] the very fact of Canada: what kind of country [would]it be? [Would] it continue to exist?"<sup>8</sup> Over three decades later, the words of the Commission still hold true, as Canada, in Lord Durham's words, continues to be "...two nations warring in the bosom of a single state."<sup>9</sup>

In his 1995 best-seller *Nationalism Without Walls*, Richard Gwynn argues that the

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<sup>7</sup>Guy Bertrand, *Enough is Enough - An Attorney's Struggle for Democracy in Quebec*, pp. 112-115.

<sup>8</sup>Gerard Pelletier, "1968: Language Policy and the Mood in Quebec," p. 252.

<sup>9</sup>Durham, as quoted in Marcel Rioux, "The Development of Ideologies in Quebec," p. 349.

national unity crisis has been our Cold War.<sup>10</sup> With nationalists remaining "...as bound to their creed as their forebearers had once been to Rome...",<sup>11</sup> and the rest of Canada growing ever more disenchanted, it seems that it is becoming ever more difficult to find the "...ultimate compromise between French dreams and English impatience."<sup>12</sup>

As the two sentiments of Quebec nationalism continue to be locked in a struggle, the Parti Quebecois remains the most popular of the two political parties vying for control of the Quebec state. Public opinion polls consistently rank the PQ ahead of the QLP, and Premier Bouchard, despite some scathing commentaries, remains the most popular politician in Quebec. As a result, it seems likely that the PQ will emerge victorious in the next provincial election, so Quebecers and Canadians must brace themselves for yet another promised referendum to be held in the PQ's second term of office. Because of the near separatist victory on October 30, 1995, many believe that the next referendum will lead to Quebec's departure from the federation. This belief is not without justification.

Firstly, the constitutional impasse which has troubled politicians for decades remains ever present. Attempts to solve the Quebec question seem doomed from the outset. With the federal government and its provincial counterpart in Quebec at a loggerhead, and with very little hope of a compromise satisfactory enough to both sides ever being reached, the separatist option becomes increasingly attractive to Quebec voters. For many, if a solution cannot be achieved within

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<sup>10</sup>Richard Gwynn, *Nationalism Without Walls: The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian*, p. 131.

<sup>11</sup>Peter C. Newman, *The Canadian Revolution, 1985-1995 - From Deference to Defiance*, p. 333.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 332.

Canada, then, perhaps, separation is the only alternative.

In addition, one cannot overlook the role that the Quebec media continues to play in provincial politics. Undoubtedly, Quebec's major newspapers, as well as television and radio stations display a certain sympathy with the separatist cause, while downplaying the federalist position. As Jean Chretien put it, the Quebec media, in their efforts, try to "drag down" any federalist politician or federal success story.<sup>13</sup> Because the media is such a pervasive institution, penetrating almost every aspect of life in Quebec, and because people are invariably swayed by what they read or hear, voters are presented with a perspective which is biased towards the separatist forces.

Along with the media, the Quebec educational system is also guilty of providing students with a biased account of Quebec and Canada. Primary, secondary, and university level curriculum continues to concentrate its emphasis on Quebec at the expense of Canada. As well, educators also disseminate information in such a manner as to add credibility to the separatist cause. This of course colours the minds of the youth as they move throughout the system.

And, finally, generational change will be also aid the separatist forces. For instance, looking at the English in Quebec between 1976 and 1991, its population declined by 110, 000 people.<sup>14</sup> Some of this was due to natural causes, but most of this decline can be attributed to out-migration. And, this exodus continues, as the English continues to dwindle in both absolute and relative numbers. What this means is that people who have overwhelmingly voted federalist are departing the province. Add to this the fact that as Quebec's population continues to age, and the old are replaced by the young, and the future looks dismal, since the province's youth tend to be

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<sup>13</sup>Lawrence Martin, *Chretien - The Will to Win - Volume 1*, p. 236.

<sup>14</sup>Reed Scowen, *A Different Vision - The English in Quebec in the 1990s*, p. 9.

the most ardent supporters of sovereignty.

Thus, it is clear that the federalist option has a number of factors to overcome if it is to convince a majority of Quebecers that their option is preferable to separation. What is needed will be for Quebec federalists to unite in a common front to challenge the separatist threat. By presenting a clear, viable blueprint for the future, enough soft nationalists can be swayed towards a renewed federalism. What will also be required is a clear question which will leave no confusion in the minds of the voting public. As well, every effort must be taken to ensure that the rejection of mainly federalist ballots which occurred after the last referendum must never happen again. This fiasco was detrimental to the No forces in 1995, and if it is not attended to, it could pose a serious problem once again. Thus, if federalists can successfully address all of these factors, combined “with goodwill, tolerance, and a little luck, [as well as] the distinctive Canadian capacity to discover unity in diversity...”<sup>15</sup> we may reach a breakthrough. As a Portuguese proverb states, “the worst is not always certain.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, for those Canadians who value and cherish this country, we must dare to hope....

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<sup>15</sup>Patrick J. Monahan, “The Sounds of Silence,” p. 246.

<sup>16</sup>Pierre Elliott Trudeau, “The Poverty of Nationalist Thinking,” p. 441.

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