

outside Quebec. They would look to a joint protocol, agreed upon by both Quebec and Canada, recognizing the same constitutional rights of aboriginal self-government and self-determination on both territories. There are possible variations on this process: a "best offer" approach along labour negotiation lines might be one. Another would be a solemn declaration by Quebec to match any Aboriginal rights recognized in the rest of Canada. (The latter is not so farfetched, given that the PQ has already declared its intention to use the Canadian dollar, thus abrogating any power over monetary policy.)

Borders must be rendered irrelevant to the question of aboriginal self-government. A joint constitutional protocol would set the question of Quebec sovereignty aside from the aboriginal question. Negotiating such a joint protocol broadly acceptable to Quebec and Canada as well as to all the key aboriginal parties would be a very complex and difficult process, especially in the volatile context of the secession of Quebec and the inevitable redrawing of relations within Canada between the regions and provinces. Yet, however difficult, it may be the only way to avoid a potentially fatal nexus of conflicting rights claims.

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## WHERE ARE THE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE DEBATE?

by Marie McAndrew

Where will the ethnic vote go in the '95 referendum? The answers of various ethnocultural organizations offer a range of possibilities, but few to comfort the PQ.

Ethnocultural organizations appeared before the Montreal Commission régionale sur l'Avenir du Québec. The briefs of these organizations demonstrated a basic cleavage between the so-called pre-1977 (that is, Jewish, Italian, Portuguese, and Greek) communities and post-1977 (that is, Haitian, Southeast Asian, South American, and Lebanese) communities. The cleavage is not of a "no/yes" variety. It reflects, rather, a range of perspectives about arguments for and against Quebec independence.

The briefs from pre-1977 communities usually come from larger umbrella organizations, seemingly representative of a wide percentage of the community. They almost unanimously reject the PQ project and sometimes question the legitimacy of the consultation using "classical" non-ethnic federalist arguments. These concerns overshadow any stated fear of Quebec nationalism, despite the focus placed on this issue by the media. Only a minority of individuals who have integrated into the French milieu, such as writer Marco Micone, or an alternative leadership, more "to the left," support the PQ project.

The briefs from post-1977 communities present much more variety, both in terms of the type of organization involved and their contents. These organizations ac-

knowledge the divisions in their communities, but also support the PQ project in some cases. They unanimously declare that the consultation is a testimony to the democratic nature of Quebec society. Some of these briefs take a clear

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"no" or a clear "yes" position, generally depending on their interpretation of the impact of independence on the future of ethnic relations in Quebec. Thus, the "insecurity theme" of some ("the state of confusion following independence would be favourable to more intolerance and scapegoating of immigrants") is opposed to the "security thesis" of others ("when the francophones are secure, a pluralistic Quebec, already in development, will be more easily fostered"). But the majority adopts a

*Continued, see "Ethnic Communities" on page 90.*

*"Ethnic Communities,"*  
continued from page 89.

more attentive stand that could be summarized as follows: "Do what you want. After all, we have just arrived, but whether in a Canadian or an independent Quebec, these are our concerns." The list that then follows generally includes an official recognition of the pluralistic or multicultural nature of Quebec society and a request for better governmental support of economic equality and anti-racism. The exception to this trend comes from anglophone immigrant communities (such as the Jamaican or Pakistani) who support federalism, like most pre-1977 communities.

### THE POVERTY OF THE ETHNIC EQUATION

From this brief analysis of the positions taken at the Montreal commission, it appears that the political behaviour of ethnic communities in Quebec is largely influenced by socio-historical factors. The communities that have integrated into the anglophone milieu have been socialized to adopt a position on Quebec's future that resembles closely that of the anglophone community. On the other hand, the newly arrived are more integrated into the French milieu and react warily, as any first-generation immigrant would, in a country divided by a conflict over political loyalty. A minority that have already developed a more significant link with the host society seem to be more ready to accept the vision proposed by the PQ government. Because the francophones themselves are divided on this issue, this latter trend is limited.

The complexity of the positions outlined here show the poverty of

the equation "Quebec nationalism = Ethnic nationalism" that is popular in English Canada. The extent to which Quebec nationalism, as any other, is the product both of a civic inclusive project and of historical factors that highlight ethnic origin is certainly an interesting question. So would be a comparative analysis of the debates raging

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in English Canada and other countries about how much pluralism and how much unity is desirable in a democratic society. We need to go beyond the reduction of "Quebec nationalism = Ethnic nationalism" if any relevant explanation is to be sought. The equation is a mere ritual crutch for English Canada.

### A MORE INNOVATIVE DISCOURSE

If, to convince the ethnic communities to vote "yes," the PQ government had only to prove to them that an independent Quebec would fare as well (or as poorly, depending on one's perspective) as Canada in matters relating to civic nationalism, tolerance, and equality, the task would be relatively easy. But to convince newcomers who lack a sense of Quebec's history to become part of an adventurous project, the PQ needs to do much more. It should convince them that an independent Quebec would fare *better* than Canada. This case has not been made, either because this is an almost impossible task or be-

cause today's PQ is not interested, as it was in the progressive 1977 referendum. To convince the ethnic voters that independence is desirable, a more innovative discourse is required.

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Canada Watch welcomes submissions on issues of current national interest. Submissions should be a maximum of 1,000 words.

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