

has warned Quebeckers that a "no" vote would lead to negotiation of Quebec's separation.

In the rest of Canada, federal and provincial government leaders are similarly arguing that a "no" vote would necessarily lead to political and economic instability. Conversely, a "yes" vote would bring constitutional peace. (At the same time, of course, they stress that a vote in favour of the agreement would be a vote of confidence in Canada.)

Such essentially "strategic" arguments are inherently speculative. There is no certainty that rejection of the Accord would lead to major new economic difficulties. Arguably, the money market has already taken into account the prospect of a "no" vote. After all, the collapse of the Meech Lake Accord was fol-

lowed by a surge in the dollar. However, one could also credibly argue that the failure of a second attempt to renew the constitution would have much more serious repercussions. The options would have narrowed and there would probably be little disposition among political leaders, let alone the general public, to initiate a new round of discussion and negotiation. The potential for resolving the Canadian crisis through a "renewed federalism" would be significantly reduced.

By the same token, the political and economic impact of a "no" vote would vary with the form it takes. A "no" vote in English Canada coupled with a "yes" vote in Quebec could be very destabilizing: Quebeckers would feel an even stronger sense of rejection than they did after the collapse of the Meech

Lake Accord. Conversely, a "no" vote in Quebec coupled with a "yes" vote in all the other provinces could cause many English Canadians to feel enormous frustration with Quebec. A "no" vote in both Quebec and a few English-Canadian provinces might be less destabilizing.

Nonetheless, however speculative, arguments about the negative consequences of a "no" vote may prove powerful in shaping the referendum decision. Equally powerful in English Canada (but not Quebec) would be appeals to Canadian patriotism. In the process, grievances over the terms of the Accord might be overlooked—at least temporarily.

*Kenneth McRoberts is Director of the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies and Professor of Political Science at York University.*



## THE CHARLOTTETOWN ACCORD

by Peter Lougheed

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*On September 23, 1992, former Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed delivered the inaugural Pierre Genest Memorial Lecture at Osgoode Hall Law School. The following is a partial transcript of his remarks.*

What are the implications of a "yes" vote on October 26? Well, obviously I feel very positive in that then we can get on with a job-creation focus. Now, two arguments have been raised against this — both of which I think are simply wrong.

First, some have suggested that if we vote "yes" in Quebec and elsewhere, it won't end anything. Quebec will be back at the national table with more demands from the nationalists. Second, there's another view that says vote "no" and we'll have a constitutional moratorium for five years. My view is that these arguments are simply wrong, and I would like to explain why.

If you go back to the period 1981 to 1986, what was troubling Canada was

that we had a country and a constitution of which Quebec was not legitimately a part because they hadn't signed it. The motivation to respond to Quebec wasn't threats, the motivation was the view that we really had to have a constitution with Quebec a signed party to it. The motivation was to get them to sign up.

So if after October 26 there is a "yes" vote in Canada and elsewhere, the government of Quebec, the Assembly of Quebec in its majority, will be obliged to sign up. After the signature, it's over. Yes, it's over. It won't get on the national agenda for a dozen years. I was there in 1977 and 1978, and I saw the PQ try to put it on the national agenda and they didn't even get close. And after what we've gone through in this country

between 1987 and 1992, it won't get on the agenda. So for those people who make the argument, which I believe is fallacious, that if we vote "yes" we'll never satisfy the demands of Quebec nationalists, I say this: yes, they'll always be there. The nature and the history of Canada will make it so. But the concept that these demands will be on the national agenda in the period ahead of up to a dozen years, in my opinion, is false.

Now there's another view, which primarily comes from the West, and it says: "Vote 'no.' The deal's not perfect. We'll have a moratorium for five years, during which time the status quo will continue and then we'll negotiate again." Well, my

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first problem with that point of view is it isn't very smart for us westerners. Because the fact is, we did gain some important things here. The view that we would be able sometime in the future to re-establish those gains, particularly with an elected Senate and a control over national appointments, simply isn't in the cards. Because it was only because of the pressure for national unity, to make trade-offs, to "come aboard," that these gains for the West were achieved in this agreement. So I don't think it's a very smart decision to take, to say "we'll vote 'no' and then we'll negotiate a better deal later."

Second, what about this view that the status quo would simply continue in the face of a "no" vote. Gee, who are we kidding? Quebec is going to drift away and become more isolated. We'll have a divided country. There will be no national effort to reach consensus on other issues, and there are a lot of other issues. Now, I'm not saying there aren't good grounds to have logical debate about these questions. Is there too much decentralization, will the Senate that is proposed ever work, what are the consequences of aboriginal self-government, and can we pull them all together? And many others. There are a lot of reasons for very healthy debate over the weeks ahead.

Let me conclude this way. We haven't had much experience outside Quebec in referenda. I had one experience: I was running for office. We had a plebiscite in Alberta about daylight savings. I was trying hard to convince this farmer one morning to vote for me. He said "Peter, I don't want to talk about that. Don't you know that we're having a plebiscite on daylight savings? And you tell me, are we going to have to get up one hour earlier every single day?" And I was trying to get the subject back to voting for me, but that was in his mind.

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*"So if after October 26 there is a 'yes' vote in Canada and elsewhere, the government of Quebec, the Assembly of Quebec in its majority, will be obliged to sign up. After the signature, it's over. Yes, it's over."*

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Now referenda are funny things. My experience is pretty limited, but I'm told by those that know that it will be pretty volatile and emotional, and that those against will turn out to vote. There will probably be people south of Calgary who will vote "no" because they don't like the provincial law with regard to Sunday shopping. That'll happen. It'll happen all

across the country. For those who are on the side of "yes," there had better be a large turnout.

Now, in my world today, friends — and I'm involved in international business — Canada is being passed by in this new global reality — by investment, by purchase of our goods, our resources, our services. I am deeply troubled that my children's generation — my four kids — will not have as good a life as mine. That they won't have the same degree of opportunities and they'll have much more risk of job-loss than my generation has had. We can develop new attitudes in our country with regard to skills training and growth areas. I believe Canadians can be the best traders in the world. We can provide for young people the job opportunities that our generation had. But we have got to get on with it — and we have got to get on with it soon. We can only get on with it with a unified country, seeking and securing and focusing a place in the new global reality.

*Peter Lougheed was premier of Alberta from 1971 to 1985 and is currently a partner in the Calgary law firm Bennett, Jones, Verchere.* 

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