

# CanadaWatch

PRACTICAL AND AUTHORITATIVE ANALYSIS OF KEY NATIONAL ISSUES

a publication of the York University Centre for Public Law and Public Policy and the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies of York University

## SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE: CANADA AFTER THE REFERENDUM

### POST-REFERENDUM REFLECTIONS: SOVEREIGNTY IS ALIVE AND WELL, PARTNERSHIP REMAINS THE ROADMAP TO THE FUTURE

BY DANIEL TURP

The disconcerted voices and messages sent to Quebecers from the rest of Canada and the hope that Mr. Bouchard, following his November 21 announcement, will become the leader of the Parti québécois merit examination. Many Quebecers believe that the sovereigntist option is alive and well. Such a belief is also founded on the referendum results and the shifting roles in Ottawa and Quebec City.

#### EXAMINING THE RESULTS OF THE OCTOBER 30 REFERENDUM

No serious analyst from Quebec, Canada, or, indeed, the rest of the world has misread the October 30 referendum results. As can be seen from the

table (see page 42), 49.42 percent of those Quebecers who cast valid ballots voted "yes" to a question that would have authorized the National Assembly of Quebec to proclaim Quebec sovereignty. By contrast with the 1980 referendum question, which would have given no such mandate to the government of Quebec, the vote of October 30 is a clear indication that Quebecers seriously considered the option of sovereignty and almost gave it a majority in 1995.

With a question that was more daring, there was an 8.98 percent increase in support for the Yes side (49.42 percent in 1995 versus 40.44 percent in 1980) and such an increase is

reflected in all age groups. Hence, of those aged 18 to 34, the "yes" voters were 51 percent in 1980 and 55 percent in 1995; of those aged 35 to 54, the "yes" voters were 51 percent in 1980 and 52 percent in 1985; and of the people over age 55, the "yes" voters were 28 percent in 1980 and 32 percent in 1995. Regarding the geographic distribution of the vote, one must realize that the "yes" vote was

in the majority in 80 of the 125 ridings of Quebec (64.00 percent), whereas it had won only 22 out of 110 ridings in 1980 (24.20 percent). The obvious consequence of this progression of the Yes side is the equivalent loss of the No side. The decrease from 59.56 percent to 50.58 percent, the losses in all age groups, and the new geographical voting patterns are of

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### FACING REALITY (AND THE NEXT REFERENDUM)

BY JEFF ROSE

On October 30, Canada came within 50,000 votes of national disintegration. As federalists face up to that reality and begin planning for the next referendum, here are some considerations they might bear in mind.

#### THE PROMISE OF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

First, however ill-advised those pledges may have been, failure

to come through on the federalist leaders' recent promises of constitutional change could engender bitterness in Quebec, virtually guaranteeing majority backing for the separatists in the next referendum.

Parliament should, therefore, take the first step toward fulfilling the leaders' promises, ideally before Christmas. This

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## FACING REALITY (AND THE NEXT REFERENDUM) *from page 17*

step ought to comprise declaratory wording that recognizes Quebec as a distinct society and that provides a de facto veto over significant constitutional change.

Because the federalist leaders' pledges were vague, virtually any formula of words, particularly with regard to Quebec as a distinct society, could be described as fulfilling them. Likewise, any formula of words can be rejected as insufficient. It ought to be apparent, however, to even the most stubborn practitioner of what might be called thesaurus constitutionalism that declarations containing sly resonances but little substance would be worse than nothing.

In the next few months, the national government should offer the provinces a genuine realignment of responsibility in the area of labour market training, accompanied by a fair distribution of the available money. Quebec had a good case for the arrangement that would have been permitted under the Charlottetown Accord, and certain other provinces, notably Ontario and Alberta, have at one time or another expressed interest as well.

Taken together, these elements — distinct society recog-

niton, de facto veto, and labour market training — would begin to create a new track record, demonstrating Canada's capacity to evolve, at least insofar as the national government is concerned.

Second, federalists should confirm that their continuing objective is to obtain the public support necessary to enable the Constitution to be modified, at the opportune moment, in the foregoing areas. The possibility that these issues could form the basis of a future federal referendum should not be ruled out. The most sensible forum in which formal discussions could begin to take place would be the one scheduled for 1997. Federalists have every justification in explaining, however, that as long as separatists hold power in Quebec City, it makes no sense for federalists to attempt a traditional constitutional offer because it will be rejected by the Quebec government for its own strategic reasons.

Coordination among federalists will be required because there are voices among Quebec Liberals who, for reasons of electoral tactics, leadership positioning, or pure habit, will be inclined to seize the leverage created by the recent vote and

use it against Ottawa themselves, on behalf of Quebecers. These federalists should reflect seriously on where this would be likely to leave federalists in the rest of Canada (ROC).

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*It is time for a profound democratic enterprise aimed at defining the core values and unifying assumptions of a hypothetical Canada without Quebec, including the conditions of exit of a sovereign Quebec, to begin to unfold.*

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### **BROADENING THE AGENDA: EXIT QUEBEC?**

Third, it is time for a profound democratic enterprise aimed at defining the core values and unifying assumptions of a hypothetical Canada without Quebec, including the conditions of exit of a sovereign Quebec, to begin to unfold. Obviously, the development of the greatest possible measure of general consent will ultimately need to be fashioned through the political system and political insti-

tutions. But the Canadian public will insist that such an endeavour emerge in a genuinely unscripted way — and rightly so — rather than be strategically managed.

Part of this enterprise would need to be accomplished well before the next referendum. This is the part respecting the ROC's conditions of exit for Quebec. Initially, therefore, more energy should be put into this particular aspect, and it should be accomplished first. It could have a profound effect on the thinking of Quebecers in the next referendum itself.

The rest of the enterprise would not need to be fully accomplished before the next referendum, and the result of that referendum could, in fact, render unnecessary any further effort. But it should be started now. This is the part often referred to as defining the terms of reconfederation. At stake would be the kind of country in which the ROC would want to live together in the hypothetical wake of Quebec sovereignty.

This has a Pandora's box aspect; its contemplation moves some people to sarcasm and others to migraines. In their own self-interest, most Canadians would understand the importance of self-discipline in

# CanadaWatch

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such an undertaking, though it would still have the potential to become clogged and conflictual, thereby giving ammunition to the separatists. But, frankly, a democracy that just came within 50,000 votes of its national undoing has little choice about whether or not to undertake such a discussion.

The point is not to begin to accept a sovereignty scenario as inevitable, which it is not. The point is that, on grounds of simple prudence, a collective effort should begin, without delay, in order to think through Canada's future in the hypothetical context that came perilously close to reality in October, even as federalists are striving actively (and perhaps successfully) to avoid it.

#### DEFINING CANADA'S INTERESTS

Fourth, returning to the issue of exit conditions for Quebec, the ROC should try to reach the greatest possible measure of general consent on the meaning of their collective self-interest and on their response to the issues that could end up on a table of negotiation between Quebec and the ROC. This would include issues such as citizenship and passports, the use of a common currency, the time frame and conditions of Quebec's accession to NAFTA, borders, the division of assets and debts, aboriginal sovereignty, the nature of the economic ties, coas-

tal waters, labour mobility, customs and immigration issues and a whole host of other issues on which the separatists have, until now, been able to characterize the ROC's self-interest with sole authority in the eyes of many Quebeckers.

In place of that characterization, Quebeckers would be provided with insights into what the other solitude would actually mean by Quebec sovereignty, if it were ever to come to pass. The motivation for this would not be that of strategically discomfiting the advocates and supporters of a sovereign Quebec but, instead, that of genuinely defining, for the ROC's own sake, the boundaries of its collective self-interest if it were ever obliged to deal with Quebec as a foreign country, as a competitor.

Fifth, would the ROC's conditions be tough? Possibly; possibly not. The key point is that whatever they would be, they would be real and, thus, incapable of being dismissed on any rational basis as posturing. Instead of assessing the costs and benefits of sovereignty by making assumptions about the ROC, Quebeckers would be facing real evidence about how the ROC would see its collective self-interest in relation to a sovereign Quebec. It would then be up to Quebeckers to recognize the fundamental significance of this information for

their ultimate self-interest and for the choice they will be making in the next referendum.

Accordingly, it could make strategic sense for federalists to help develop the greatest possible measure of general consent in the ROC on the conditions of exit, and then help provide this

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to Quebeckers, in various respectful and effective, formal and informal ways for their knowledge and consideration.

There is, of course, no guarantee that Quebeckers would value such information above their own longstanding beliefs about the ROC, the power of leverage, and the transformational capacity of social solidarity. But this may be the only approach federalists have that would be capable of overcoming in some Quebeckers' minds the complicated intellectual meshwork of experience, intuition, and faith on which many Quebeckers' support for the sovereignty project rests.

Sixth, the fact that Quebeckers would be receiving this information at more or less the same time that the federalist leaders' promises were being fulfilled would have a certain

symbolic completeness in relation to the choice Quebeckers will be making in the next referendum. This might help to produce the referendum outcome that most Canadians would prefer. But if Quebeckers were to decide that they wanted to become sovereign, notwithstanding the real evidence that would be before them for the first time about how the ROC would actually see its collective self-interest in relation to a sovereign Quebec, that would add a democratic element to the equation that would be compelling. And Quebeckers would have to live with what they had wrought.

#### THE NEXT AND FINAL REFERENDUM

Seventh, the next referendum will be the final one for the foreseeable future. Either the sovereignty side will increase its support, in which case the separatists will win because the increase that is needed to give them a majority is minuscule, or support for that side will decrease, in which case, treading in the wrong direction after three losses, the separatists will have a hard time rationalizing yet one more vote in this generation.

If any federalists are thinking of trying to shut down a third provincial referendum through creative juridical devices, they should follow the idea through in their minds until they get to the endgame, at which point they should abandon such thoughts. Instead, their goal should simply be to move Quebec popular sentiment back onto a more propitious footing before the next referendum. ♦

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## A NOTE ABOUT SUBSCRIPTIONS

As noted in our previous issue, commencing with vol. 4, no. 1, *Canada Watch* is being published six, rather than eight, times per year. In addition, vol. 3 of *Canada Watch* included only seven issues, rather than the eight we had originally planned. To ensure that our subscribers are not negatively affected by this change, current subscriptions will be extended by one issue. For example, a subscription that was due to expire with vol. 4, no. 1 will now extend through vol. 4, no. 2. Renewals after September 1995 will run for six issues. ♦

# CHOCK-A-BLOCK FEDERALISM: LESSONS FOR NEXT TIME

BY DANIEL DRACHE

The unthinkable happened. The Yes side almost won by a hair, while the No side sneaked past the finish line with a slim victory. Whatever happened to the federalist game plan? Only weeks before R-Day, the No leaders had boasted of an impending "victoire écrasante" over the Yes forces just before the tide turned.

Ottawa was not the only player to be asleep at the wheel. Most professional media experts had all but written off the chances of the Yes side to come anywhere close to winning. Ottawa's Plan A seemed unassailable — no new constitutional offers to Quebec, defend the status quo aggressively, and drive home the costs of separation to the undecided voter. Stéphane Dion made this very case in *Canada Watch*, maintaining that the separatists would get between 38 and 42 percent of the vote because only 30 percent of Quebecers are true sovereigntists. Quebecers, says Dion, are seduced by moderate options, not outright independence. So what went wrong?

## THE MEDIAN VOTER CHANGES SIDES

The first lesson the referendum taught was that secession does suit the median voter in a two-way fight between Ottawa and Quebec. This is the most startling fact that emerged from the referendum campaign. Moderate options such as asymmetrical federalism, distinct society, and decentralization are losing strategies. Quebecers now want 50 percent of the decision making with 25 percent of the population.

Second, federalists are fooling themselves to blame the

wording of the referendum question for their near defeat. By the time of voting day, every Quebecer knew that they were voting on a hard question. The public opinion polls were spot on and predicted the sea change that the median voter was abandoning the No side with unerring precision. The last polls released revealed that the two sides were in a virtual dead heat. Yet, these figures hide other critically important changes.

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*A majority of francophones no longer regard the federal Liberals as the party of national unity. Politically, the federalist option has been in trouble in Quebec since the end of the Trudeau era.*

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On the eve of the most important decision confronting Quebecers and Canadians, the most important change was that the No side had lost 10 percentage points in popular standing since the beginning of the campaign. The median voter — that abstract concept used by political scientists — had changed sides. Support grew among women voters for outright independence. Women were supposed to be the most cautious voters, but it did not turn out that way. They voted against Ottawa in record numbers. Many predicted that Quebec nationalism was a dead letter in the 18-25 age group. They, too, voted massively for Quebec independence. More

surprising still was the fact that three out of five Quebecers altered their views during the campaign. As many as 700,000 people changed sides during the campaign. This also refutes the idea that Quebecers are suffering from any constitutional fatigue syndrome, particularly with a voter turnout of over 90 percent. The volatility of public opinion in Quebec is hardly a new phenomenon, but it underlines an even larger, long-term shift in public opinion that English Canadians need to weigh carefully.

A majority of francophones no longer regard the federal Liberals as the party of national unity. Politically, the federalist option has been in trouble in Quebec since the end of the Trudeau era. There has not been a solid Liberal majority there since the 1980s. In recent times, Quebecers voted for the Bloc rather than for the Mulroney Conservatives or the federal Liberals. Many Quebecers turned against the federalist vision in the 1980 referendum, many more after the 1982 repatriation of the Constitution, and, again, in even greater numbers in voting down the Charlottetown Accord. When the opportunity presented itself, they chose Parizeau over Johnson by a tiny margin in 1994. One year later, the anti-Ottawa vote had gained another 200,000 supporters. So what is the reason for this political "virage"?

## FATAL MISTAKES OF STRATEGY

Federal strategy misfired because Ottawa continues to underestimate the intelligence of the Quebec voter and ignores the fact that politics and vision matter more than ever to ordinary Quebecers. This is why the federalist camp came so close to losing. It is counter-intuitive for Daniel Johnson, the leader of the No camp, to claim that there are only economic costs if Quebec separates. Job-loss figures failed to persuade

Quebeckers to stay in Canada, particularly when Ottawa is firing a record number of public employees and gutting social programs.

There were other devastating errors that the No side strategists committed. The most serious was when Laurent Beaudoin, the head of Bombardier, threatened to pull its investments out of Quebec in the event of a "yes" vote. Polls later revealed that his intervention, in particular, turned many undecided blue collar voters against the No side. Other prominent federalist business leaders made the same error when they tried to bully Quebecers into voting "no." They, too, were forced to publicly apologize for their remarks.

In all of these mistakes and others as well, there is a hard lesson to be learned. The referendum battle drives home a simple fact: the No side did not have a leader that could win the confidence of Quebecers. Who was the person who could speak "straight from the heart"? Certainly not Chrétien. His dismal leadership was the most important factor responsible for the federalists' bruising defeat.

A September public opinion poll asked Quebecers to rank all the referendum leaders in terms of credibility. In the poll, Chrétien, Johnson, and Robillard were at the bottom, just ahead of Parizeau. By contrast, Bouchard had a confidence rating twice that of any other leader — just over 50 percent. His personal credibility and the now famous "virage" of June 12 proposing sovereignty with economic partnership were the two factors that created the momentum that brought the separatists to within a hair's breadth of winning.

Many in English Canada still ridicule the idea that sovereignty and separation require

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# CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR

BY REG WHITAKER

"A razor-thin margin."  
"No — by a whisker."  
"Too close for comfort."

The headlines and the TV one-liners said it all. The rest of Canada got the message, not least the politicians. Quebec almost voted for sovereignty. A clear majority of francophones voted for sovereignty. In the 15 years since the 1980 referendum, about 10 percent of the electorate has shifted from federalism to sovereignty. Just a few thousand more, and Canada would have been facing the vertigo of having to respond to a "yes" vote.

All this is true, and it is imperative that the rest of Canada keep these realities in mind. That said, a "no" is still a "no"; a defeat is still a defeat. As the old showbiz saying has it: "Close, but no cigar." Jacques Parizeau's astonishingly graceless — not to say tasteless — concession speech on referendum night, followed by his brutally swift resignation announcement less than 24 hours later, together encapsulate just how devastating the paper-thin defeat really was, both to the sovereigntists and to the sovereigntist project. They are weaker, much weaker, than the margin of the vote would indicate. Simple-minded projections of what will happen *à la prochaine* — the apparently irresistible rise of sovereigntist sentiment to eventual victory — suffer from the typical flaw of futurology, the tempting fallacy that the future will be like the present, only more so.

## DECONSTRUCTING THE FUTURE

The political point of the referendum result remains the same, whatever the margin. The Yes option failed, and with that failure, the PQ is suddenly reduced

from the shepherd of historical change to just another provincial government. The BQ's shrinking is even more dramatic: from a sovereigntist sword in the federal Parliament, to a motley collection of MPs with no clear idea of why they are there, or what they have in common. With Lucien Bouchard heading to Quebec City to pick up after the departing Parizeau, the BQ will have lost their charismatic leader as well.

Could the PQ, as provincial government, not simply return to square one and start building for another referendum in 1997 or '98? The electoral law would have to be amended to permit a second referendum in the life of the same government, but the *péquisite* majority could easily take care of that. Technically, yes, it could be done. But practically, it is a non-starter. There is no way that any government can put a society through the emotional and economic wringer of a referendum on the fundamental nature of the political community year after year. But more pointedly — as the government of Quebec, the PQ has inescapable obligations to govern in the here and now, and not just to conjure up visions of the future. And since its behaviour from day one of its present mandate has been directed relentlessly toward the single goal of winning the referendum, it has, as a by-product of that campaign, created a potentially ungovernable mess that will make the launching of another sovereignty campaign a very risky venture indeed.

Central to the PQ's strategy has been the forging of social "solidarity." As Parizeau referred to it in his now infamous referendum night speech, "this

solidarity among generations, this solidarity among people from the right and the left, the solidarity among people from the union movement and the bosses, the unemployed and those who have jobs, all together." This corporatist dream has been glimpsed before, in the late 1970s when the first PQ government mobilized support for its sovereignty association referendum. After the referendum loss and the subsequent re-election of the PQ, the

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*Simple-minded projections of what will happen à la prochaine — the apparently irresistible rise of sovereigntist sentiment to eventual victory — suffer from the typical flaw of futurology, the tempting fallacy that the future will be like the present, only more so.*

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dream quickly fell apart as the government found itself putting a lid on social spending and legislating striking public sector workers back to work with Draconian severity, while slashing salaries by up to 20 percent — in short, acting just like any other provincial government.

## NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY: FACT OR FICTION?

Then and now, this notion of solidarity is illusory because it is based on the dubious notion that nationalism can override all the material and ideological divisions of contemporary capitalist society, that everyone will sacrifice their own interests in favour of the collective good of the "nation" (as defined, of course, by

the PQ). Worse, it is fraudulent because it is bought momentarily by nothing more elevated than old-fashioned pie-in-the-sky political bribery. Lucien Bouchard actually spoke of sovereignty as a "magic wand" that would whisk away Quebec's problems — problems that face all contemporary societies and states. More concretely, the PQ, in its first year, assiduously worked at postponing any potential divisions by the simple expedient of buying off discontent. When public sector workers became restive, Parizeau simply threw money at them. When uneconomic firms like the MIL-Davie shipyard threatened shutdown, more money was thrown. No serious effort was made to reduce the provincial deficit because they wanted above all to avoid antagonizing any client groups prior to the referendum.

When it became apparent in the course of the year-long referendum campaign that despite the *péquistes'* best efforts, francophone business elites were by and large not very supportive of a leap into the sovereigntist dark, the PQ lurched leftward. In early October, Parizeau declared that with a "yes" vote, Quebecers will rise against the Quebec billionaires who built their fortunes on the backs of the province's people. "Now they spit on us. We are the ones who financed their projects," Mr. Parizeau said of Bombardier Inc. chief Laurent Beaudoin and Power Corp. president Paul Desmarais, who had warned that separation would threaten Quebec's prosperity: "My friends, we have to get out. If not, they will constantly kick our asses." However incredible such rhetoric might seem from a man once characterized as a "banker in banker's clothing," the Quebec labour movement was persuaded to throw their

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## CHOCK-A-BLOCK FEDERALISM: LESSONS FOR NEXT TIME *from page 20*

partnership. If Quebec goes, why should it be entitled to a special deal on a common passport, citizenship, or joint management of the economy? In theory, an independent Quebec is on its own "tout court." English-Canadian opinion makers ought to think again. The new factor that makes this an impossibility is the global economy and Canada's foreign indebtedness.

### THE DEFINING MOMENT THAT NEVER WAS

All countries need to negotiate the terms of their interdependence. Sovereignty and independence are not absolutes. They evolve and change as conditions dictate. Federalists are fond of these words for good reason: for more than 30 years, Canada's two founding peoples have been trying to negotiate a new relationship, largely unsuccessfully. Now there is a new option on the table: partnership and new state structures. In almost winning the referendum, politically and morally, Quebec has created a level playing field on which to negotiate its independence with the rest of Canada *égal à égal*.

Even if this option remains undefined at the moment, the old constitutional game is over for good, no matter what initiatives Ottawa will propose. Ottawa can try to resurrect special status, tinker with the veto, and

propose more decentralization. But there are few takers. None of the provincial premiers have shown the slightest interest in any of these proposals. These

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reform measures are yesterday's news headlines.

So what of the future? The final lesson is that the 1995 referendum held English Canada's feet to the fire in a way few could have imagined. No one should doubt for a moment that there will be a next time — a third referendum. In a non-crisis atmosphere, English Canada still has time to find ways to address the fundamental problem that has pushed the country to the edge.

Canada's constitutional crisis has two sides: symbolic and

real. The 1982 Constitution represents the worst of both worlds — a flawed process and an unsustainable text. It gave Canada's provincial premiers something they never had previously, a veto over all future constitutional reform; it raised provincial rights to an all-time high. Provincial rights were made more important than recognition of Quebec's status as a founding people. Before the constitutional changes of 1982, Quebec could veto constitutional changes that were relevant to it. It lost this as well.

It is not surprising that in these circumstances, there is no constitutional peace in Canada or in Quebec. A modern constitution sets the basic rules of the game for society and government, protects individuals from the misuse of power and authority, and recognizes the collective rights of the founders. Canada's 1982 constitutional accord fails to meet Quebec's needs. Worse still, it excludes Canada's First Nations. They were not at the table, nor part of any new beginning.

Finally, there is the democratic deficit. The "suits" made the Constitution; Canadians did not negotiate or ratify it. So the only hope for Canadians is to set things right, get back on track, and jettison the 1982 Constitution that has become the constant source of so much

rancour, division, and national bitterness.

Ending Canada's constitutional impasse requires a defining moment. At the giant flag-waving rally in Montreal, Chrétien could have used it for very different ends to refound Canada. This was the moment to tell Canadians and Quebecers that the 1982 Constitution had to be scrapped and that there would be new rules of the game for Quebec (transfer of powers, veto, national recognition), for Canada's First Nations (empowerment and entitlement), and a social charter (entrenchment of Canada's national programs and guarantees of social well-being and an alternative process of constitutional revision). The new constitution would have to be approved by popular vote in a referendum. None of this happened.

When the next referendum is held, Canadians need to remember this lost opportunity when Chrétien had the moral and political authority to move Canada forward. There is an important lesson here, too. Constitutional reform will succeed only by non-conventional means. There is no other way to build a level playing field inside Canada. ❖

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## CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR *from page 21*

support wholeheartedly into the "yes" campaign, on the promise that a sovereign Quebec would be a worker's paradise. The constitution of the new nation would be virtually written by labour representatives, along with women and youth groups and other social movements, and would enshrine social rights as the foundation of the state. So it was promised. It worked

in mobilizing these forces for the "yes" campaign, although not quite enough to win.

When Parizeau declared that sovereignty had been stolen from "us" by "money and the ethnics," he egregiously threw into a public spotlight a cruel reality for the sovereigntists. The "solidarity" they had tried to conjure up was a hoax — there was no solidarity between

"workers and bosses," "right and left." Worse, support for sovereignty stopped at the limits of the francophone community.

### TOUGH CHOICES AHEAD

And now they must govern Quebec for the next three to four years. Despite campaign protestations that Quebec must be spared the right-wing assaults of Mike Harris's Ontario, there

are brutal fiscal realities and very tough choices facing the PQ government, choices that Mr. Parizeau has adroitly avoided by retirement, but that cannot be avoided by his successor. Only two days after the referendum result, the New York bond rating agencies were warning that Quebec had better get its fiscal house in order or face a downgrading of its credit sta-



tus (the warning was also to Ottawa, but there is no doubt where their primary attention will be focused). Quebec, it should be remembered, has one of the heaviest cumulative debt loads of any province. The "ma-

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gic wand" of sovereignty would not, of course, have swept away this problem. Quite the contrary. But the wand, with its false promise, was broken on October 30. A PQ government, as a government rather than as an evangelical electoral entertainment, does not possess even a rhetorical alternative to combat the power of international capital in defining and confining the agenda of governments. Ask Bob Rae if you want to find out what happens to social democrats in provincial office. And to top it all off, soon the effects of Ottawa's downloading of costs for health and post-secondary education will be coming down the pipe.

A simple primer for the péquistes: the only real room for savings in provincial budgets is in health and education and, here, the primary scope is in the public sector wage bill. Labour solidarity will quickly dissolve when unionized workers find themselves the targets for cut-

backs and their job security down the drain. Social movements will shrink back in horror when, far from making new gains, as promised, they will likely see old programs and benefits, to which they believed themselves entitled, withdrawn or pared back. Off-loading costs to the municipalities (the dog-eat-dog mirror of what Ottawa is doing to the provinces) will gravely threaten the integrity of the decentralization and regionalization initiatives of the PQ, not to speak of intensifying ugly squabbles over ever-diminishing spending resources.

Of course, Mr. Bouchard could try wearing the premiership as nothing more than a decoration pinned to his chest, while singlemindedly pursuing his *neverendum*. This could be done only at the cost of economic catastrophe for the province. Or it could be done by plunging Quebec immediately into a second referendum, or, worse, a snap election that the PQ would attempt to treat as a sovereignty vote, presumably to be followed by a unilateral declaration of independence, even if they had won a plurality of seats with a minority of votes. To say that the latter options are high-risk scenarios would be a vast understatement. The more sensible course will be to try to provide what they promised in the last election campaign: sound, competent government of the province. But it is very difficult to see how they can emerge from the wrenching decisions that this will involve, with anything like the "solidarity" so artificially, and irresponsibly, constructed in the run-up to the referendum.

For the sovereigntist dream, October 30 may be a case of "so near, yet so far." Close, but no cigar. ♦

*Reg Whitaker is professor of political science at York University.*

## EDITORIAL

# SIX PRINCIPLES ON WHICH TO STRUCTURE A CANADIAN RESPONSE TO THE REFERENDUM

BY PATRICK J. MONAHAN

On May 14, 1980, Pierre Trudeau staked his and all Liberal Quebec MPs' seats on a pledge to effect constitutional renewal. Now Prime Minister Chrétien has made "change" the watchword of the 1995 No campaign.

Just as in 1980, some elements of "change" may need to wait until there is a federalist government in power in Quebec City, but what is included in the concept of change is easy to define. During the final days of the referendum campaign, the prime minister identified three items that his government would proceed with in the event of a "no" vote:

1. a recognition of the distinctive character of Quebec society;
2. a guarantee that no future constitutional changes that impinge on Quebec's powers will be made without Quebec's consent; and
3. devolution of powers to all provinces.

Some commentators have raised objections to the first two items on this list. On the one hand, the rest of Canada appears to be in no mood for a new "Quebec round" of constitutional negotiations. At the same time, the Quebec government has already indicated that it is unwilling to engage in any negotiations aimed at renewing federalism. Lucien Bouchard has described any further discussions about distinct society as "boring." The PQ strategy is to discredit any new "offers" from the rest of Canada, thus proving that Mr. Chrétien's promises of change during the

referendum were hollow and meaningless.

I have no quarrel with those who observe that reopening the constitutional file — and particularly the loaded phrase "distinct society" — is fraught with difficulty. My response is simply to observe that Mr. Chrétien

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*Regardless of the merits of these promises of constitutional change, the fact remains that they have been made. Either the promises will be honoured, or those who made them will pay the price.*

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tien made formal promises to the Quebec people that these matters would be addressed in return for a "no" vote. Some commentators in English Canada have criticized the PM for making these promises, and argued that a different referendum strategy would have produced a more successful outcome. The fact is, however, that had these promises not been made, it is very likely that the Yes side would have gone over the 50 percent mark on October 30 — a result that would have produced an economic and political meltdown across the country. In any event, regardless of the merits of these

*Six Principles To Structure a Canadian Response to the Referendum, continued on page 24*

## SIX PRINCIPLES TO STRUCTURE A CANADIAN RESPONSE TO THE REFERENDUM *from page 23*

promises of constitutional change, the fact remains that they have been made. Either the promises will be honoured, or those who made them will pay the price. In this particular instance, that "price" will be paid not merely by particular politicians, but by all Canadians, in the form of a divided country and a dramatically lower standard of living.

I conclude that the "do-nothing" option on the three items identified above is no longer viable. If this is accepted, it leads immediately to the next question: What is to be done? I suggest that any actions taken over the next 12 months be guided and informed by the following six principles.

### 1. Keep the agenda as short as possible.

Any attempt to develop a comprehensive constitutional package would be doomed to the same sorry fate that befell the Charlottetown Accord. The Charlottetown experience demonstrated that there is simply no consensus on the need for, much less the terms of, any fundamental rewrite of the Canadian Constitution. I suggest that the agenda be limited to the three items identified earlier: distinct society, veto over constitutional change, and devolution of powers.

### 2. Proceed with each item separately rather than as a single package.

The three agenda items should be "delinked" so that progress on one item is not conditional on progress on any other. International experience with constitutional change suggests that this kind of incremental, piecemeal approach is more likely to succeed than is an attempt to develop a large package of amendments.

### 3. Respect the principle of the equality of the provinces.

In the wake of the referendum, certain academic commentators have suggested that the solution to the impasse is some form of "special status" for Quebec. These commentators envisage an asymmetrical arrangement, whereby Quebec would receive additional powers or jurisdiction that would not be granted to the other provinces. Supporters of "asymmetry" argue that it is the only way to reconcile Quebec's desire for more powers with the rest of the country's desire for a "strong central government."

The difficulty with the approach is simply that there is no public support for it outside the province of Quebec. If there is anything that has been made crystal clear over the past decade, it is the fact that Canadians outside Quebec will not countenance any form of "special status" for a particular province. In my view, asymmetry is a total non-starter outside Quebec and is not worth serious discussion. Any changes to the division of powers must respect the principle of the equality of the provinces. Further, any recognition of Quebec as a "distinct society" must be defined in such a way as to counter the suggestion that it amounts to "special status" for Quebec.

Critics of this approach argue that it is doomed to failure because Quebec's demands for devolution of powers will inevitably exceed the willingness of Canadians elsewhere to decentralize powers to the provinces. I am not at all certain that this analysis is correct because polls have consistently demonstrated strong public support for devolution. But even if this were so, it would merely indicate the

impossibility of achieving a political accommodation acceptable to all parts of the country, rather than represent a justification for abandoning the principle of provincial equality. Nor is the fact that the Constitution already contains a number of exceptions to the princi-

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*It goes without saying that governments should not take up the suggestion made by Premier Wells and others to establish some form of "constituent assembly." A constituent assembly would have to be elected for it to be legitimate. But what would give these elected representatives any greater legitimacy or right to make decisions than governments, which are themselves elected?*

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ple of provincial equality a justification for abandoning the principle. The exceptions that do exist are relatively narrow and are, in some cases, already regarded as politically controversial. (See, for example, the guarantees for "denominational schools" that exist to varying degrees in different provinces.)

In short, if there is to be an accommodation with Quebec that is acceptable to the rest of the country, it will necessarily respect, to the greatest extent possible, the principle of the equality of the provinces. This is not to say that such an accommodation will necessarily be achieved, but merely that any attempt to construct an

accommodation based on the principle of asymmetry is not realistic or practical.

### 4. Do not convene a formal constitutional conference prior to April 1997.

There is no need to commence any new "round" of formal constitutional negotiations. The amending formula contemplates legislative resolutions passed by individual legislatures and Parliament. It does not mandate any formal constitutional conferences (except for amendments dealing with aboriginal matters). I believe it would be unwise to convene one in the near future. Canadians have no patience for politicians travelling to hotel ballrooms across the country, at taxpayers' expense, discussing constitutional minutiae. Any formal constitutional conference would highlight divisions among the premiers, and would provide Premier Bouchard with a national platform to attack and discredit the prime minister. This is not to suggest that the federalist side should not proceed in a coordinated and orderly fashion. I simply suggest that there is no need for a formal constitutional conference in advance of the meeting mandated for April 1997.

### 5. The federal government should take the lead.

This fifth principle follows necessarily from the fourth. If there is no formal set of constitutional negotiations or conferences, the initiative must come from Ottawa. Provinces should be discouraged from introducing constitutional resolutions of their own, unless such an initiative were sanctioned by Ottawa. It is imperative that there be a coordinated federalist response, and this coordination can come only from the na-



tional government. Moreover, I believe that Canadians outside of Quebec still look to the national government to play a lead role on national unity matters. This is not to suggest that the provinces should be passive or that Ottawa should move unilaterally, without advance notice and consultation with the premiers. Further, certain provinces, particularly Ontario, have a key role to play in the process. Nevertheless, I believe strongly that the first move in any new initiative must come from Ottawa.

It goes without saying that governments should not take up the suggestion made by Premier Wells and others to establish some form of "constituent assembly." A constituent assembly would have to be elected for it to be legitimate. But what would give these elected representatives any greater legitimacy or right to make decisions than governments, which are themselves elected? Who would define the mandate, membership, or terms of reference for such a body? Would there be special representation or "set asides" for particular groups, such as aboriginals, women, racial minorities, francophones outside Quebec, anglophones in Quebec, the disabled, trade unions, and a host of other interest groups? These questions may seem to be quibbling over details, but any responsible government contemplating such a proposal had better have answers to all of them before it proceeds.

More fundamentally, even if a legitimate constituent assembly could be established, and even if such a body could come to some "agreement" as to the terms of a revised constitution, the result would be a broadening rather than a narrowing of the agenda. The country would be presented with a comprehensive rewrite of the entire

constitution, just as was attempted in Charlottetown. As in Charlottetown, the concerns of Quebec would likely be buried or inadequately represented in both the process and the outcome. The danger is that Canada would be presented with a constitution written by and for special interests. Is it plausible to imagine that this would bring constitutional peace to the country? Surely the answer to such a question is self-evident.

#### 6. Take the path of least constitutional resistance.

This principle suggests that non-constitutional options should be preferred over constitutional ones. Moreover, in the event that a constitutional amendment must be proceeded with, amendments under the less-restrictive 7/50 formula should be preferred over those requiring unanimity. This principle also reflects my earlier suggestion that constitutional amendments should be treated as separate "stand-alone" items rather than as a single package because the chances of securing the necessary consent for a limited, narrow amendment are significantly higher.

These six principles provide a general framework to guide the federal response in the months ahead. What remains is to define, in concrete terms, the nature of the federal initiatives that should be undertaken in the areas of distinct society, veto and devolution of powers. That task, as well as the consideration of how Canada ought to prepare for the next referendum, will be the subject of a future *Canada Watch* column. ❖

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## AN EXEMPLARY REFERENDUM

BY PIERRE DROUILLY

With such a small majority for the No forces (52,448 votes), the sovereigntists might be tempted to blame the anglophones, the francophone voters of the Outaouais, the older voters, and the First Nations who voted against them. But the results of the referendum need to be examined more carefully to discover the social base of the "yes" and "no" votes.

### THE ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

The electoral participation in the Quebec referendum was exceptionally high. With 93.5 percent of voters going to the polls, this referendum set a record for Quebec and even for Canada. Even the 1980 referendum — which was at the time a historical record since Confederation — attracted only 85.6 percent of voters.

A closer look at the 1995 referendum reveals that out of 125 ridings, the participation exceeded 95 percent in 23 ridings and was lower than 90 percent in only 5 ridings. A statistical analysis shows that there is no significant correlation between the rate of participation and the linguistic profile of the ridings. The differences are more likely to be linked to the social stratification of the ridings. As usual, the suburban voters participated more (95.2 percent around Montreal) than the voters in the peripheral areas of Montreal (89.8 percent in northwestern Montreal, 90.2 percent in Bas-Saint-Laurent/Gaspé-Côte Nord, and 92.7 percent in Saguenay/Lac-Saint-Jean). In every riding, though, the 1995 rate of participation exceeded that of 1980. Such a strong participation could have been foreseen. Indeed, the number of registered voters was

higher than last year by 2,000. As well, a large number of people (300,000) voted in advance.

### THE PROGRESSION OF THE SOVEREIGNTIST MOVEMENT

The number of registered voters better translates the actual level of support while it allows comparisons that are not based on the level of participation. With the support of 49.4 per-

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*A closer look at the "yes" votes among the francophones allows an interesting sociological analysis of the electoral habits of the Quebec francophone electors.*

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cent of the registered voters, the No forces actually did worse in 1995 than in 1980, when they relied on 50.1 percent of the registered voters. On the other hand, the sovereigntist forces got the support of 45.4 percent of the registered voters compared with 34.0 percent in 1980. Another comparison of figures reveals that at Charlottetown in 1992, the No side gained the support of 45.9 percent of the registered voters (and 56.7 percent of the valid votes). Moreover, compared with the elections of 1981, 1993, and 1994, the sovereigntist movement achieved its second best score. Indeed, 40.2 percent of the registered electorate voted for the Parti québécois in 1981, while 35.8 percent voted for the Bloc qué-

*An Exemplary Referendum,  
continued on page 26*

## AN EXEMPLARY REFERENDUM *from page 25*

bécois in 1993 and for the PQ in 1994. There is a strong similarity between the 1995 and the 1980 results (correlation of .90) as well as between the 1995 and 1992 results (correlation of .98). The 1995 results for the Yes forces are well correlated with the 1994 score of the Parti québécois (.92). Similarly, the 1995 score of the No forces shows a strong correlation with the results obtained by the Liberal Party in the 1994 election (.90).

### THE LINGUISTIC VOTES

According to every poll, a majority of francophones were going to vote "yes," while the non-francophones would massively support the No side. The polls were right.

A spectral analysis of the referendum outcome shows that about 60 percent of the francophones voted "yes" and that less than 5 percent of the

non-francophones supported the Yes forces, as it was foreseen in the polls. On that basis, we have looked at the distribution of the "yes" votes in each riding and region appearing in the attached tables.

If the ridings are grouped according to their francophone population, it appears that the "yes" votes decrease where the number of francophones decrease (Table 1). In the ridings where the francophones make up more than 50 percent of the population, the "yes" votes represent about 60 percent of the total results. The linguistic profile of every riding acts as a screen in the analysis. Indeed, the weaker results of the Yes forces are to be explained by the votes of the non-francophone electors rather than by the bad performance of the francophone voters. In the Island of Montreal, the Yes forces scored only

34.5 percent. However, 61.3 percent of the francophone Montrealers voted "yes" and 66.7 percent of the francophones in the PQ ridings of

*Among the factors accounting for the variable scores of the Yes forces, the linguistic factor strongly explains the division of the votes.*

eastern Montreal supported the Yes forces. Those figures are well above the Quebec average of 60 percent support for the Yes side (Table 2).

### THE FRANCOPHONE VOTES

A closer look at the "yes" votes among the francophones allows an interesting sociological anal-

ysis of the electoral habits of the Quebec francophone electors.

The data given in Table 2 clearly reveal the more urban and even metropolitan character of the sovereigntist vote. In eastern Montreal, 66.7 percent of the francophones voted "yes"; in the Montreal suburbs, the Yes forces gained 65.2 percent of the francophone votes. However, in western Montreal, and especially in the most bourgeois ridings of western Montreal, the Yes supporters were in the minority in 17 ridings. In 8 of these 17 ridings (Acadie, D'Arcy McGee, Jacques Cartier, Mont Royal, Nelligan, Robert Baldwin, Saint Laurent, and Westmount-Saint Louis), only 42.2 percent of francophones voted "yes."

The percentage of francophone "yes" voters were lower in the metropolitan area of Quebec City (57 percent) as well as

**TABLE 1 RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM ACCORDING TO THE PERCENTAGE OF FRANCOPHONES**

Francophones in riding	Ridings	Voters	Participation	"Yes" votes	Francophones	Francophone "yes" votes
90%+	69	2,733,666	93.0%	57.7%	96.4%	59.8%
80-90%	21	890,420	94.1%	52.1%	86.1%	60.5%
50-80%	23	927,773	93.7%	41.1%	67.3%	61.1%
Less than 50%	12	535,121	94.6%	17.6%	35.7%	49.3%
Total Quebec	125	5,086,980	93.5%	49.4%	82.4%	60.0%

**TABLE 2 RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF RIDING**

Type of riding	Ridings	Voters	Participation	"Yes" votes	Francophones	Francophone "yes" votes
Western Montreal	15	665,551	94.3%	22.1%	41.9%	52.6%
Eastern Montreal	12	493,583	93.9%	55.3%	83.0%	66.7%
Northeaster periphery of Montreal	16	721,360	95.2%	56.3%	86.4%	65.2%
Quebec City	11	501,383	93.8%	55.1%	96.6%	57.0%
Highly urban	28	1,184,547	93.0%	55.6%	93.5%	59.5%
Highly rural	35	1,211,799	92.1%	52.7%	92.5%	56.9%
Total Quebec	125	5,086,980	93.5%	49.4%	82.4%	60.0%

**TABLE 3 RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM ACCORDING TO REGION**

Region	Ridings	Voters	Participation	"Yes" votes	Francophones	Francophone "yes" votes
Bas St-Laurent-Gaspé-Côte-Nord	10	303,242	90.2%	60.3%	94.0%	64.2%
Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean	5	206,300	92.7%	69.6%	98.8%	70.4%
Quebec	11	480,958	93.5%	54.4%	96.6%	56.3%
Chaudière-Appalaches	8	287,487	92.2%	50.7%	98.8%	51.3%
Mauricie-Bois-Francs	8	316,526	93.0%	57.2%	98.0%	58.3%
Estrie	8	315,120	93.4%	49.6%	89.4%	55.5%
Montérégie-Rive-Sud	18	797,679	94.7%	53.7%	86.5%	62.2%
Laurentides-Lanaudière	13	567,581	93.8%	61.6%	93.6%	65.8%
Outaouais	5	214,362	93.8%	27.5%	81.1%	33.8%
Nord-Ouest	4	129,834	89.8%	55.8%	87.4%	63.9%
Laval	5	236,117	95.3%	46.7%	78.4%	59.6%
Île-de-Montréal	30	1,231,774	93.9%	34.5%	56.3%	61.3%
Total Quebec	125	5,086,980	93.5%	49.4%	82.4%	60.0%

in the urban or strongly urban ridings (59.5 percent) or in the mostly rural ridings (56.9 percent). In the area of Quebec City, the percentage of "yes" voters was lower than expected. The political tension between the public sector employees and the PQ government is one of the many reasons that may account for this fact.

In any case, francophones in the area of Quebec were more moderate Yes supporters, with 58.3 percent of "yes" votes in Mauricie-Bois-Francs and 55.5 percent in Estrie. Let us compare these figures with the percentages of "yes" votes in Saguenay/Lac Saint-Jean (70.4 percent) and the northwestern regions (63.9 percent) as well as in Bas-Saint-Laurent/Gaspé (64.2 percent), Montérégie-Rive Sud (62.2 percent), and the Laurentides-Lanaudière (64.2 percent). The regions with the lowest percentages of francophone "yes" voters were Chaudière-Appalaches (51.3 percent) and the Outaouais (33.8 percent). The No forces won in the Beauce-Nord and

Beauce-Sud, Bellechasse, and Montmagny-L'Islet. The PQ's position has been weak in the Outaouais and Beauce for 25 years.

**BACK TO THE LINGUISTIC VOTE**

Among the factors accounting for the variable scores of the Yes forces, the linguistic factor strongly explains the division of the votes. The Yes forces won in 80 ridings, but they gained the majority of the francophone votes in 108 out of 125 ridings. The No forces won 17 francophone ridings (8 in western Montreal, 5 in Outaouais, and 4 in Beauce). But the final result was 50-50 for the No forces despite a 60 percent majority of francophone Yes supporters and at most 5 percent of non-francophone "yes" voters. The almost homogeneous vote of the minority seems to have played against a strong support for the Yes side among the majority. However, it may not sound politically correct to underline this because all votes are equal in a democratic society.

The Yes forces have been

defeated. No one would deny it. Sociologically speaking, the problem is not that the minority vote has prevented the expression of the majority vote. Even if the Yes forces had won, the unanimous vote of the non-francophones against the sovereigntist project would have presented an obstacle. In 1992, when the Charlottetown Accord was rejected by 56.7 percent of votes — with two-thirds of francophone votes — the anglophones of Quebec supported the accord although a majority of the anglophones from the rest of Canada voted against the agreement.

Anyone is, of course, free to vote in whatever fashion. However, when almost one million people express the same opinion in a vote, one may wonder about the freedom of choice that these people gave to themselves. A democracy is based on the existence of free and rational individuals who reach decisions after objectively looking at the proposed options. When all the members of a com-

munity vote in the same direction, one cannot help but think that they may have a common political cause, especially when this pattern has been repeating itself for 25 years in 10 different elections.

With such a unanimous vote, the non-francophone voters are expressing a systematic and obstinate rejection of francophone Quebec. We have never called this racism. It must, however, be dealt with because it is the source of the ethnic character of the division between francophones and non-francophones.

Despite the results of the referendum, the sovereigntists have to overcome their bitterness and offer the allophones and anglophones of Quebec a role in the building of a country. Without them, Quebec would not be what it is. ❖

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BY JOSÉE LEGAULT

Three days before the October 30 Quebec referendum, tens of thousands of Canadians from outside Quebec convened in Montreal for a massive federalist "love-in" demonstration. Although the intentions of those who partook in this event are not to be questioned, one must remember that this was not a spontaneous reaction to polls showing a possible Yes victory. Rather, it was an event planned and organized by the federal government in order to sway the upcoming vote in favour of the No option. No less, no more.

## A MAJOR REDEFINITION OF CANADA

So what of this "love" and the explicit — although murky — promises of change that shortly preceded and followed this demonstration of Canadian unity? The question of "What now, my love?" or "What happens next?" speaks to the essence of the uncertainty and political volatility of this post- or inter-referendum period. It begs to know what can best be envisaged as the most probable scenarios following a referendum result that had been considered most improbable.

In his book *Reimagining Canada*, McGill law professor Jeremy Webber begins with this observation:

In 1990 Canada entered the most serious crisis of its 123-year history. The crisis took most Canadians completely by surprise. Its cause seemed absurdly small. The Meech Lake Accord . . . failed to obtain the unanimous provincial approval needed for ratification. . . . [T]he failure of Meech

plunged Canada into its worst constitutional crisis, one that threatened to result in the secession of its second most populous province. . . . The suddenness and seriousness of the breakdown shocked Canadians, unprepared as they were for a collapse of their national debate.

And so, we have just come out of a second referendum on the issue of secession. Canada has yet again been thrown into a major constitutional crisis. And, yet again, it appears that for many Canadians, the causes remain mysterious. They are once more waking up "unprepared." It seems that this unpreparedness is a permanent state for a good part of the rest of the country, whatever we in Quebec may be going through. This problem is one that should be addressed in depth. It constitutes a crucial part of a political equation whose solution remains unattainable.

In the case of this latest referendum, the "shock" came before the final result itself as polls were beginning to show a clear upward trend for sovereignty. As this started to shake the foundations of a deeply entrenched confidence in a clear and decisive federalist victory, many Canadians were once again woken up by the thought of being hung early in the morning. This is reputed to allow one to focus one's mind.

But what was the immediate result of this new shock? At first, public opinion in the rest of Canada (ROC) did not appear overly moved. It was the Quebec Liberal Party that sounded the alarm, at first,

faintly in the voice of a quickly debunked Daniel Johnson. But because the polls were confirming this possible Yes victory, and as the Chrétien government had no intention of making any concrete counter-proposals, a device was found to carry a message similar to Lucien Bouchard's — the message of change and of bargaining power. This was the gigantic Canadian love-in of October

response and restructuring. The negotiation of aboriginal self-government and the setting up of a structure that is best able to address the explosive dossier of land settlements will not be achieved in the laissez-faire atmosphere that has been dominant in Canada since the rejection of the Charlottetown Accord.

As for the Quebec issue, much has been made of the obstacle found in the PQ sovereigntist government. It is said to be impossible to discuss with a government still aiming for all-out sovereignty. But then, why were the promises of change made a few days before October 30?

The answer is simple. It is because the promise was made under false pretenses — there was never any intention of making major changes. There is no plan in Ottawa to address either the aboriginal or Quebec questions in a real and permanent way. Even if there was a plan, the political dynamics in English Canada and Quebec are such that any attempt to address these issues constitutionally is doomed to fail.

But the Quebec-Canada relation still requires a constitutional answer because the contemporary expression of the problematic is of a constitutional nature. The unresolved issue remains the unilateral repatriation of 1982. An entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms — the heart of the new supreme law of the land — has worked to diminish the sovereignty of the Quebec government in as crucial a field as language as well as in the provincial jurisdiction of education.

So what of the chances of a new round of constitutional talks, should Prime Minister Chrétien ever convene them?

To best answer this question, one must look at the political actors in place. In Ottawa, the Trudeauite vision of Canadian federalism still governs in the

*What Now, My Love?*  
continued on page 30

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*The promise was made under false pretenses — there was never any intention of making major changes. There is no plan in Ottawa to address either the aboriginal or Quebec questions in a real and permanent way.*

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27 in Montreal. We may never know the precise impact of this event, but it was intended to carry the vote on October 30. Now, had the prime minister been other than Jean Chrétien, one might also think that the message of change was designed to prepare English Canada for a major redefinition of the Canadian federation and its constant unpreparedness.

But such is not the intention of the present federal government. Nevertheless, let us take this promise seriously and look at the possibility that it may or may not be fulfilled.

## MORE BROKEN PROMISES?

Two of the ever-prevailing issues at hand — the aboriginal and Quebec questions — cannot be fully addressed in what has been presented by a growing number of federalists as some mysterious "non-constitutional way." Both problems call for a clear constitutional re-

# THE NATIONALIST DILEMMA IN QUEBEC

BY ALAN CAIRNS

Lise Bissonnette, in her full-page October 26 *Le Devoir* editorial supporting a "yes" vote, succinctly summed up the ethnic dilemma confronting the sovereigntists. She recognized that a Yes victory could not only be constructed along "lines of cultural belonging" with anglophones, allophones, and aboriginal peoples voting "no" "en bloc," and with a majority of francophones voting "yes." The result, if the Yes side won, would be the imposition of a political order on well-established minorities who do not wish it and who feel profoundly Canadian. The necessary reconciliation to re-establish social cohesion, she observed, would not be easy. On the other hand, the enormous moral dilemma this posed was no more troubling than its converse, the blocking of the wishes of the founding majority by these same minorities and aboriginal nations.

The dilemma is fairly posed. It is useful, however, to draw out its analysis and implications in a series of propositions.

## CIVIC VERSUS ETHNIC NATIONALISM

Scholars and sovereigntists claim that the sovereigntist project is based on a territorial civic nationalism, or what several writers call liberal nationalism. This, however, is not reflected in its support. The constituency of sovereignty supporters extends only minimally beyond the Quebec francophone majority. Aboriginal nations, anglophones, and allophones are almost monolithically on the No side. In self-administered votes prior to the official referendum, the Inuit, Cree, and

Montagnais nations voted "no" by overwhelming majorities — 95, 96, and 99 percent, respectively. Anglophone and allophone "no"s were projected at 85-95 percent. In other words, Quebec reveals itself to be a deeply federal society.

The ethno-national cleavages on an issue of high symbolism such as sovereignty challenge the political cohesion of Quebec. In the lead-up to the referendum, such division generated apprehension, insecurity, and a partial self-silencing among the non-francophone communities. Further, if the francophone majority is frustrated in attaining its constitutional objective, some of its most passionate members are likely to scapegoat the non-francophone communities. If the frustration of the majority is repeated, anger and scapegoating may become institutionalized. The attribution of blame will be selective. Significantly, although francophone "no" voters vastly outnumbered the combined anglophone, allophone and aboriginal "no" voters, little finger-pointing by frustrated Yes leaders was directed at the former. It is, paradoxically, more legitimate for a francophone than for a non-francophone to vote "no."

When the majority in a federal society behaves as if it exists in a unitary state or a homogeneous society, the losers — if the population divides along ethno-national lines — will see the resulting decision as illegitimate. The conscription crises in WWI and WWII amply illustrate the point. Would aboriginal nations, and to a lesser extent anglophone and allophone

minorities, behave differently if francophone majoritarianism made them citizens of a country whose emergence they had almost unanimously opposed?

In a federal society, such as Quebec, the majority and the ethnic communities and aboriginal nations develop different historical memories. Minority memories of their unjust treatment are nourished and

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*Scholars and sovereigntists claim that the sovereigntist project is based on a territorial civic nationalism, or what several writers call liberal nationalism. This, however, is not reflected in its support. The constituency of sovereignty supporters extends only minimally beyond the Quebec francophone majority. . . . Quebec, in other words, reveals itself to be a deeply federal society.*

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often embroidered by parties/organizations/governments that represent them — the PQ and the 1980-82 "betrayal" thesis, for example, or the Assembly of First Nations bitterly recalling in its publications and rhetoric the state-sponsored historical assault on Indian cultures. Memories of a referendum victory based on ethnic nationalism, and of the passions aroused in the campaign and its immediate aftermath, therefore, will not quickly go away.

## THE SOVEREIGNTISTS' DILEMMA: IS THERE A WAY OUT?

The sovereigntists, accordingly, are caught in an inescap-

able dilemma. Either they triumph by reinforcing their appeal to the francophone majority, with the resultant exacerbation of post-independence ethno-national cleavages, or they transform their project of society into one that seeks to transcend and appeal across the internal ethnic and aboriginal cleavages of a heterogeneous society.

Realistically, if vote calculations are paramount, Quebec francophone nationalism feeding on historic grievances attributed to the country-wide anglophone majority is the obvious engine to drive the independence movement. Is it then possible to build a post-independence civil society on the basis of a referendum whose support, reflecting its appeal, is confined to francophones? Lise Bissonnette's answer is "yes." The Quebec Charter, like its Canadian counterpart, strengthens the respect for individual rights and the protection of minorities, and it would be a central feature of an independent Quebec's constitutional culture. Further, for a Quebec finally finished with its obsessive quest for affirmation of its identity, she argues that the anglophones and allophones will no longer be living symbols of historic domination. More generally, according to Bissonnette, the ethnic nationalism that she agrees has recently flourished in Quebec is a perverse effect of Quebec's position in the federation, and the minimalist recognition that Canada is willing to offer.

Accordingly, her hypothesis is that the francophone majority in an independent Quebec will leave behind the ethnic nationalism that mobilized the Yes forces and also put its stamp on the independence campaign. Although this may be a some-

*The Nationalist Dilemma in Quebec, continued on page 30*

## WHAT NOW, MY LOVE? *from page 28*

Prime Minister's Office. The diehard opposition to any radical form of asymmetrical federalism is deeply entrenched.

### WILL THE FEDERALISTS EVER GET THEIR ACT TOGETHER?

More important, we are facing a prime minister who behaves as if he were the head of a unitary state. Consensus building does not appear to be anywhere near the federal government's agenda. In the House of Commons, chances are Preston Manning's Reform Party is destined to become the Official Opposition. If this happens, one can expect a flamboyant polarization between the Liberals and Reformists. This will serve only to show Quebecers a divided federalist camp united only by its refusal to grant Quebec any real special status.

The political leadership in English Canada is another wild card. The sheer mediocrity of most of these leaders, their utter lack of a sense of Canada, their staggering ignorance of Quebec, and their fascination with their own parochial short-term interests are a recipe for disaster from a federalist point of view. Those whom political scientist Daniel Latouche once branded "Kiwanis Club premiers" are destined to feed into

the implosion of Canada more rapidly than the sovereigntist movement ever could. Chances are they will prove unable to respond to the challenge put to them by the accumulation of decades of constitutional failures and of a growing dissatisfaction of many Quebecers.

Much more than an emotionally driven sense of rejection, it is these failures and this dissatisfaction that feed and strengthen the sovereignty movement. The failure to accommodate Quebec with a special status is what guarantees the continuing progression of the sovereignty option.

In Quebec, other than a revitalized PQ government, the provincial Liberal Party remains under Daniel Johnson a weakening factor for the federalists. Many nationalist federalist francophones could no longer identify with a vision that runs counter to the positions this party has taken for the past 35 years. Johnson's leadership has been gravely shaken by the referendum result and it is only a question of time before it is openly challenged. But if he steps down, he will have to do so quickly in order to allow his party to hunt down an effective Bouchard antidote.

In this, as in other related

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issues, time is of the essence. Hope is possible, many federalists say, because of the constitutional conference of 1997. What of it? The 1982 *Constitution Act* says the following in article 49:

A constitutional conference composed of the Prime Minister of Canada and the first ministers of the provinces shall be convened by the Prime Minister of Canada within fifteen years after this Part (V) comes into force to review the provisions of this Part.

Although this obligation has already been fulfilled through the negotiations leading up to Meech and Charlottetown, one could entertain the thought that for expediency, Prime Minister Chrétien might convene such a conference. It should, therefore, be noted that article 49 contains no obligations of a positive result and refers only to Part V, or the amending formula, and to no other part or section of the *Constitution Act*.

But if Jean Chrétien holds such a conference, the most probable outcome is failure. 1997 could reveal itself to be the ultimate proof of the incapacity of Canadian federalism to renew itself in a way satisfactory not only to Quebec, but to the other constituents of the Canadian political equation.

In this event, if none of this takes place and Jean Chrétien eventually decides to do absolutely nothing — which I find to be the most probable scenario — we are sure to be facing another referendum two or three years from now. ❁

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## THE NATIONALIST DILEMMA IN QUEBEC *from page 29*

what plausible prediction for the majority, the reciprocal assumption that the minority communities and aboriginal nations will forget is not credible. The practical question, therefore, is simple: Can the means of ethnic nationalism be the instrument for the goal of an independent Quebec whose allegiance is to be based on civic nationalism? At a minimum, this is surely doubtful for a lengthy transition period. It presupposes that forgetting will

be quick and easy and that the passions aroused have been shallow rather than deep, and ephemeral rather than enduring.

### CALMING NATIONALIST PASSIONS

On the other hand, if the sovereigntists eschew appeals that are directed primarily at the francophone majority, is it possible to mobilize a heterogeneous majority, drawing reasonable support from nearly all communities around the pro-

ject of creating a superior civil society to the one outside Quebec? This is extremely unlikely. A proposal to leave the coast-to-coast civil society of Canada to gain independence for the civil society of Quebec provides no sustenance for nationalist passion. The attempt to stimulate the latter by injecting social democracy and the defence of the welfare state into a "distinct-society" justification for sovereignty, as in the recent referendum, is to obliterate the

distinction between a referendum to create a new country and destroy an old one, and an election. Are there to be no more elections in an independent Quebec?

To govern is to choose. The necessary resort to nationalism as the means to independence occasions even more difficult choices. ❁

*Alan Cairns is a professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto.*



# YOU ASKED FOR IT

BY DANIEL LATOUCHE

The referendum is barely a month old and already the number of half-truths, clichés, misgivings, and aphorisms has reached unprecedented levels. It will probably take years to do away with them. Better we start early.

## BLOWING SMOKE

*First and foremost*

Quebeckers and Canadians alike seem to have forgotten that sovereignty lost and that the constitutional status quo won. True, the sovereigntists came close — and it was worth it for a while, watching the face of Peter Mansbridge, but there is no escape from the fact: the proposal to turn Quebec into a sovereign country within a new political and economic partnership with the rest of Canada lost — once more. True, Quebeckers might change their minds in two months, or in five years, but for the moment they have said “no” to the package presented to them.

In the short-run, this means that the Quebec government has no mandate to change anything in the political structure of the country and should in no way object to the abrupt move to the right that Chrétien, Klein, and Harris want to impose on Canadians. Let them and the federalists who have rallied to their cause have their country and eat it, too.

*Second*

In no way should the referendum be interpreted as a mandate for constitutional change. The referendum question was about sovereignty and a new political partnership. It said nothing about any reconstruction of the federal format. If a

package of constitutional reforms is ever agreed on, it should be presented at another referendum. It will then be judged on its merit, and if Quebeckers once more reject it, nothing prevents them from holding another referendum on sovereignty. Democracy is an ongoing process.

## CANADA'S LOVE-IN AND OTHER NATURAL FEELINGS

*Third*

It is simply not true that Quebeckers can be tricked into voting for sovereignty only under the most dramatic of circumstances. Support for sovereignty has nothing to do with some poor guy trampling the Quebec flag in Regina. Quebeckers can, indeed, support sovereignty under the most “ordinary” of circumstances. For many of them, sovereignty is like breathing. You either do it naturally, or you don't and then you die.

*Fourth*

Support for sovereignty has nothing to do with either a lack of affection or a lack of interest in the rest of Canada. Surveys indicate that the great Friday love-in had no impact on the final decision. Some even suggest that it contributed to a better showing of the Yes side. In fact, French Quebeckers, federalists and sovereigntists alike, have shown remarkable indifference to what Canadians think or feel with regard to Quebec.

*Fifth*

Canada seems to have lost all of its appeal to Quebeckers except, of course, as an economic insurance policy. More than

three-quarters of those who voted “no” confirmed that their vote was guided principally by fear of economic retaliation and by a lack of confidence in Quebec's ability to go it alone.

*Sixth*

The belief of many Quebeckers that some English-Canadians, especially among intellectual and progressive circles, would be sympathetic to the sovereignty option, has met its defi-

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nite Waterloo. In fact, the situation has somewhat worsened since 1980. The best that can be expected is an offer to officially recognize the democratic validity of a referendum. The lessons for the next time around, or for any offer of constitutional change, have not been lost on Quebec.

## WALKING TALL: THE POLITICS OF ASSERTION

*Seventh*

The idea that 20 or 30 of the 49 percent who voted “yes” are soft separatists who can be turned around with a few symbolic gestures is probably true. In fact, all those who voted “yes” can one day change their mind.

There is no such thing as a fundamentalist separatist. Sovereignty is a transitional political situation. Hopefully, one day, it will have disappeared from the political landscape. But it may not be correct to believe that soft support for sovereignty can be turned around by equivalent soft measures of political and constitutional accommodation. In fact, it is precisely those soft separatists who expect the most from Ottawa and the rest of Canada.

*Eighth*

Although Lucien Bouchard played a decisive role in the Yes campaign, his appeal had nothing to do with any tribalistic messianism. His success had to do with what Quebeckers consider the ultimate rationality of any political decision, that of their *raison d'être* as a people.

*Ninth*

The era of the French-Canadian Lieutenant, or of the favourite son à-la-Trudeau seems to be over. Clearly, Quebeckers and Canadians no longer see eye to eye about the role of the federal prime minister and who can best fulfill this role.

Does this mean that federalism cannot be reconstructed in such a way as to satisfy a majority of Quebeckers? Of course not. Constitutions can always be amended and rebuilt. Very ordinary countries do it all the time.

Reconfederation is not only possible, it is eminently feasible. But first, you should check your dictionary for the word “people.”

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# THE QUEBEC REFERENDUM: A VIEW FROM THE WEST

BY F.L. MORTON

On the evening of the referendum, the University of Calgary's Department of Political Science held a large student-alumni forum to observe and discuss the outcome of the Quebec vote. Attendance was more than 200 (by the far the largest turnout we have ever had for such a function), and there was a noticeable collective sigh of relief when TV screens showed the No side finally creeping past the Yes side. Most of us went home happy, filled with pizza and thinking that, the separatists having been defeated yet again, the country could — and should — now refocus its attention on other pressing economic issues.

What a surprise when we awoke the next morning to be told by all three newspapers that the No victory meant a mandate for constitutional change. Constitutional change? Who had won? Toronto's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, summed up the view from central Canada: "Firm rejection of the status quo is only clear result."

For many in the West, there is a distinct feeling of déjà vu to all this. Ottawa can no longer unilaterally negotiate with Quebec while ignoring opinion in the rest of Canada (ROC). The Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords show that this is a formula for constitutional fiasco. This problem was aggravated in the Quebec referendum because there was no meaningful mode of participation of non-Quebeckers. Indeed, the official message from the Prime Minister's Office to the ROC was to stay out of Quebec, at least until the desperate last

week. Canadians outside Quebec were reduced to "official observer" status. For the pious, there was the option of prayer. The candlelight vigils held in Calgary and other cities were touching displays of patriotism and goodwill, but also somewhat pathetic.

## NO DEALS ON SPECIAL STATUS

Goodwill is not the same as constitutional concessions. When the prime minister — himself a Quebecker — began his last-minute promises of constitutional change for Quebec, the seeds of the current dilemma were sown. Although many Westerners would be willing to accommodate Quebec by continuing the devolution of powers to the provinces, they will balk at "special status" demands such as the "distinct society" clause and a constitutional veto for Quebec. Opinions on these issues may be soft now, but could and would be whipped up by Western nationalists such as the Reform Party. On the issue of the ROC's public demonstrations of affection for Quebec, Bouchard was right: "Where were they when we needed them?" (i.e., for Meech Lake).

This is not to say that those who participated in the public rallies were not sincere about Canadian unity and "keeping Quebec." Even in Calgary, almost everyone's preferred outcome was a decisive 60-40 No victory. But — and here is the catch — the second choice for many was a 60-40 Yes victory. That is, for many — perhaps a majority in the West — the strongest desire is for closure on the Quebec/national unity is-

sue. There is a widespread resentment that the "Quebec question" has distracted us from more pressing issues of restoring fiscal balance, improving our international competitiveness, and creating jobs.

Most of my contemporaries have spent their entire adult lives — now almost 30 years — watching a series of Quebec-based prime ministers preoccupied with satisfying Quebec. Much of this attempt at appeasement consisted of lavish

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*The Chrétien government is, thus, on the horns of a dilemma. Its offer to Quebec is more that the West is willing to concede, but still not enough to satisfy Quebec nationalists. Any move to placate one will only antagonize the other.*

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deficit spending, not to mention significant transfers of wealth from the West to Quebec. So after 30 years, what do the Quebec federalists have to show for their efforts (and our money)? That 60 percent of the québécois now support sovereignty — an all-time high! This hardly inspires confidence in launching yet another round of "national unity" initiatives. Western resentment is nourished by the fear that Trudeau, Mulroney, and now Chrétien have mortgaged the future of our children by trying to appease the unappeasable ambitions of Quebec sovereigntist demagogues. For this segment of Western Canadians, last month's 50-50 stalemate represents the worst of all possible outcomes.

## CHRÉTIEN'S DILEMMA

This, then, is the shape of Canada's new dilemma: Quebec's new minimum is beyond the ROC's maximum. Buoyed by their highest-ever vote total, Quebec nationalists will no longer be satisfied by the equivalent of a new Meech Lake Accord. But the expectations for change within Quebec are not matched by the ROC. While Chrétien is busy trying to sell constitutional changes to the ROC by blurring their meaning, Bouchard has already indicated that Ottawa's proposal for a distinct society clause is now "boring." The Chrétien government is, thus, on the horns of a dilemma. Its offer to Quebec is more that the West is willing to concede, but still not enough to satisfy Quebec nationalists. Any move to placate one will only antagonize the other. This, it should be noted, is the same dilemma that crushed not just Brian Mulroney, but the entire Conservative Party after the defeat of the Charlottetown Accord in 1992.

As if this scenario is not bad enough, it is aggravated by non-constitutional issues. Once again, Ottawa's budget deficit reduction plan is jeopardized by the threat of Quebec separatism. The Liberals have already delayed announcing new cuts in social programs and provincial transfers until after the referendum. This was pointed out repeatedly by Bouchard during the campaign as yet another reason to vote "yes": Why stay in Canada if Ottawa is broke? If the Liberals bring them down now, it will only vindicate the Parti québécois/Bloc québécois charges. But if the government further delays them, they will miss their deficit reduction target and the rest of us will have the privilege of paying higher interest rates or using a still weaker dollar — hardly policies

that endear Mr. Bouchard and his crusaders to the rest of Canada. Summed up, the prospects for political paralysis have never been greater.

### CULTURE FOR TRANSFERS

There is one ray of hope in this otherwise dark scenario: to swap culture for fiscal transfers. That is to cut Quebec loose — let it be as “distinct” as it wants with respect to culture, language, and the Charter — but, in return, force dramatic cuts in regional transfers, both the explicit ones (such as equalization and regional development) and the hidden transfers (especially unemployment insurance). The Reform Party seems to have something like this in mind already and, if embraced by the Liberals, it could probably be sold in the ROC. In the West, there has never been any great affection for the Westmount plutocracy. Nor is there any reason to suspect that a Quebec government “unrestrained by the Charter” will suddenly start treating them as second-class citizens. Quebec anglophones can take care of themselves without the constant intervention of Ottawa via the Supreme Court.

Could a “culture-for-transfers” swap be sold to Quebec? Are the québécois patriots ready to give up their subsidies for cultural autonomy, their “pogey” for their purity? Is the issue really language and not money?

### THE OLD AND NEW CANADAS

For Canada to avoid the abyss will require no small degree of statesmanship. What are our prospects? Applauded for sustaining a strict moratorium on the Constitution during his first two years in office, Chrétien has now had his “road-to-Damascus” conversion, the price of which has yet to be calculated. Overconfident, Chrétien and his advisers misjudged and

then panicked. Their credibility has been severely damaged — within Quebec and without.

It is doubtful that Canada can be saved by statesmanship alone. The schism is more than just a matter of shuffling some constitutional powers to decentralizing administrative jurisdictions. It is a struggle between an old and a new Canada — an old Canada that refuses to die, and a new Canada that refuses to be suppressed any longer. The old Canada really was the Canada of “two founding nations,” centred on the St. Lawrence, in which the English and French “races” were paramount, and Quebec was one of the two principal pillars.

But Canada, like most immigrant nations, has changed. Demographically, economically, culturally, linguistically, and politically — today’s Canada is vastly different from that of our grandparents. Population and wealth have moved West, first to Toronto, and more recently to Alberta and British Columbia. This population is much more diverse — racially, culturally, and linguistically — than the old Canada. Political power has followed wealth. On each of these fronts, Quebec’s relative status has declined and will continue to shrink.

The new Canada is not hostile toward French-Canadians (in the way the Ontario Orangemen were), but rather indifferent. This indifference, however, is fatal for Quebec’s claims to special status. In the multicultural West, there is nothing special about being ethnic. Diversity is respected but relegated to the private sphere. Every group’s self-interest in civil and political equality dictates that ethnicity and race not be enshrined in law. Ironically, the Quebec nationalists are correct when they point to 1982 as a turning point in Canadian history. The *Constitution Act, 1982*

gave legal and symbolic expression, as it were, to the new, emerging Canada while marking the relative decline of Quebec. For nations, as for individuals, there is no going back.

### THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

What price unity? The answer depends on where you sit — in the old Canada or the new Canada. For those who think, like the prime minister, that “Canada without Quebec is unthinkable,” the price they are willing to pay will be high. Indeed,

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*What price are they willing to pay to “keep Quebec”? Many Westerners think they have already paid too much and all they have received in return is a demand for still more. Suffice it to say that the bid price for national unity continues to drop the further west you go from the Manitoba-Ontario border.*

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monstrosities like the Charlottetown Accord suggest that for Quebec politicians (and civil servants) who have spent their careers in Ottawa, no price would be too high. Similar thoughts are expressed by the Canadian literati whose being Canadian (and, thus, not American!) requires Quebec.

The Canada that the professors want to save is the old Canada. For them, as for Mr. Chrétien, Canada without Quebec is unthinkable. I respect this view, but think that those who hold it are fast becoming a minority in the new Canada. For many in the new Canada, it is not un-

thinkable. For Westerners, immigrants, and younger Canadians, who have grown up in an environment where Quebec is in many ways more “foreign” than the United States, or even Asia, the Quebec card has much less emotional purchase. What price are they willing to pay to “keep Quebec”? Many Westerners think they have already paid too much and all they have received in return is a demand for still more. Suffice it to say that the bid price for national unity continues to drop the further west you go from the Manitoba-Ontario border.

The suggestion that the ROC has anything to “prove” to “dissatisfied Quebeckers” plays poorly in the West. It has the hauntingly familiar ring of Trudeau’s old promise of “renewed federalism.” As David Bercuson and Barry Cooper have pointed out, this is a “back-to-the-future” scenario. As for the outcome this time, Canada is not the same country in 1996 that it was in 1976. By my lights, what has proven difficult over the past 20 years will prove impossible in the next 20. ❖

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# THE RESPONSE TO PARIZEAU'S "ETHNIC VOTE"

BY JEREMY WEBBER

Jacques Parizeau's referendum-night speech has dominated much of the subsequent debate. In those remarks, he blamed "money and the ethnic vote" for the Yes defeat. More important, he made clear that, for him, the "nous" québécois — the consummate political actor of Quebec's national life — consisted solely of Quebecers of French mother tongue. This group alone made up "ce que nous sommes."

His comments were significant and revealing. They gave renewed voice to the current of ethnic nationalism that persists in Quebec, despite some sovereigntists' attempts to rephrase their goal in civic nationalist terms. They pushed two crucial questions to the fore: How important is ethnic nationalism to the Parti québécois's vision? How important is it to Quebecers' demands for cultural accommodation generally? And, of course, those lead to a third practical question: How should we respond to comments like Parizeau's?

Although the questions are crucial, most of the answers have been inadequate, if not pernicious. I will look here at two common responses — one, from the sovereigntist movement; the other from outside Quebec.

## THE RESPONSE FROM THE SOVEREIGNTISTS

Some sovereigntist commentators — Alain Gagnon, for example — quickly and vigorously denounced Parizeau's remarks. And, of course, Parizeau's remarks contributed to his resignation. For many, however, the dominant note was one of excuse: "Parizeau was

tired, or profoundly frustrated at the defeat of his option." The excuses were often combined with attempts to minimize the remarks: "Parizeau was drawing attention to the mere fact that the vast majority of non-francophones vote 'no,'" or "If he was doing more, he was not representative of mainstream sovereigntists, only of an extreme fringe."

These responses betray an impressive ignorance of the meaning of Parizeau's remarks, or at least a strong desire on the commentators' part to avoid their implications.

To begin with, Parizeau was not indulging in voting analysis. His remarks were about membership. He defined those who count: those Quebecers whose political will mattered, those who made up "ce que nous sommes." And that, combined with his assertion that non-francophone "yes" votes were no longer necessary, testified eloquently to the fact that, for him, all the talk of an open and pluralistic nationalism had been a ruse — a way of appealing, when necessary, to voters beyond the true "people."

Nor were his remarks a slip. In his opening words, he expressly raised the civic nationalist's phrase for Quebecers of French mother tongue — "québécois francophones" — and threw it away in favour of the restrictive "nous." It was a conscious rejection — a deliberate stripping away of the mask.

## ETHNIC NATIONALISM: STILL A FORCE?

How representative were Parizeau's remarks? In recent years, sovereigntist intellectuals have, indeed, been banishing ethno-

nationalism, rhetorically, to the fringes. As a result, the language of civic nationalism has tended to dominate sovereigntist intellectual discourse.

But Parizeau is hardly on the fringe. He was the premier of Quebec, the leader of the No committee, the person generally credited with the resurgence of separatism in Quebec. There have been other comments throughout the debate, from many participants, that expressed similar views. That was, after all, one of the main

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*At the very least, then, exclusive definitions of political membership continue to surface even among sovereignty's principal tribunes. One has to wonder whether the pluralism of sovereigntist intellectuals is representative of their movement.*

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problems with Lucien Bouchard's assertion that Quebecers were one of the "races blanches" with the lowest birth-rate in the world. On any civic definition, Quebecers are not a "race blanche" (and Bouchard's suggestion that this was a "technical term" is laughable). More than once, we heard from sovereigntists that non-francophones should respect the will of the "majority" — not the majority of electors, but a majority of the majority whose first language is French.

At the very least, then, exclusive definitions of political membership continue to surface even among sovereignty's principal tribunes. One has to wonder whether the pluralism

of sovereigntist intellectuals is representative of their movement. It often seems more like the age-old strategy of moral argument in which one attempts to persuade people to be virtuous by asserting that they are so already.

At the popular level, the sovereigntists' appeal is much more visceral. Bouchard's rhetorical power came not from paeans to openness and pluralism, but from innovations of grievance and humiliation at the hands of "le Canada anglais." How different is this from humiliation at the hands of "les anglais"? In response, we heard once again the chants of "Le Québec aux québécois." Who really believes that in that phrase, québécois includes a Quebecer like me?

## CIVIC NATIONALISM

The point is that the sovereignty movement has always had a powerful strain of old-style nationalism. That strain has been partially submerged by the recent shift in nationalist discourse, but it has not disappeared, nor has it been reduced to a fringe. In that context, it is worrying to see attempts to excuse or minimize Parizeau's comments. The lack of strong public denunciation — the unwillingness even to acknowledge the prevalence of such views within the movement — throws into question the depth of the commitment to civic nationalism. Indeed, without more, how do we know the extent to which civic nationalism — as opposed to the premier's tactical stupidity — was responsible for Parizeau's resignation?

The sovereigntist movement is a blend of ethnic, cultural, and civic nationalisms. Some activists tend more toward one, some toward another, but all join in the alliance for sovereignty. The muted response to Parizeau's comments

reveals that, for many, commitment to that alliance strongly conditions whatever commitment they have to civic nationalism. If they are willing to dampen their criticism of ethno-nationalists now, what hope is there for Quebec after a vote for independence when anglo migration and economic hardship increase the pressure to find scapegoats?

### THE RESPONSE FROM OUTSIDE QUEBEC

Strangely, much of that reaction has adopted a similarly simplistic and monolithic conception of Quebec. Parizeau's remarks are taken as representing the aspirations of all French-speaking Quebec, as revealing the ethno-nationalism supposedly present in all demands for cultural recognition. The only solution, then, is to hold the line, strongly resisting any concessions.

At the very least, this shows profound ignorance of the state of public opinion in Quebec. After all, a majority of Quebecers voted "no." Many who voted "yes" did so in order to signal their desire for constitutional reform. The clear majority of Quebecers, then, had no sympathy whatever with Parizeau's comments. But many Canadians were unable to see past him. For them, he was the voice of all Quebecers dissatisfied with the status quo.

This has created a regrettable and artificial polarization in which every proposal for change is treated as a concession to ethno-nationalism. It ignores the voices of federalists in Quebec. Indeed, it reveals a fundamental blindness of many Canadians to the relevance of culture in their own lives. Often, they care deeply about Canadian culture without believing that that makes them closed or intolerant. Why can they not see that the same holds true for many Quebecers, legitimately

concerned with affirming their own distinctiveness?

We should listen to what those Quebecers are telling us, rather than damning all as ethno-nationalists, open or disguised. I agree that we cannot appease ethno-nationalism. But we should not lose sight of the

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*Too often, the reaction outside Quebec reminds me of the William Howard Taft approach to trade unions where one is so mesmerized by the fear of communism that one is incapable of responding constructively to the real demands of want and penury.*

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majority of Quebecers who are not in that camp. Too often, the reaction outside Quebec reminds me of the William Howard Taft approach to trade unions where one is so mesmerized by the fear of communism that one is incapable of responding constructively to the real demands of want and penury.

Most Quebecers support an accommodation within Canada. They do so precisely because they want to live within a multilingual and pluralistic state. That very framework constitutes an important check on ethnic nationalism. We should recognize that and attempt to find solutions within that framework. And any such solution has to speak to that great body of Quebecers, not play the ethno-nationalists' game by taking them as representative of the whole. ♦

*Jeremy Webber is a professor in the Faculty of Law at McGill University.*

## PLEASE, LET US BREATHE

BY LOUIS BALTHAZAR

Nothing was more typical of the chronic misunderstanding between English Canada and Quebec than the pre-referendum Montreal rally. Those 1,000 Canadians who invaded the streets of Quebec's metropolis were undoubtedly inspired by genuine feelings of goodwill toward Quebecers, by a strong Canadian nationalism and a conviction that Canada must include Quebec if it is going to make any sense. The effect on French-speaking Quebecers, however, was minimal at best.

### KISSY, KISSY: THANKS, BUT NO THANKS

For those who thought of voting "yes," this last-minute demonstration of love was seen as condescending, superficial, and insignificant as long as it was not accompanied by any sign of recognition of Quebec for what it is or should be: an autonomous political entity. What kind of love is it that does not allow the partner to be itself, to be distinctive? For most Quebecers, this tight embrace was unbearably suffocating, hardly allowing us to breathe.

Sure, we are attached to Canada. Sure, we like English-speaking Canadians and want nothing more than to maintain our various relations and friendships with people all across the country. But there is such a thing as a distinct Quebec network. It includes all anglophones and allophones who live in Quebec and share in the distinctive mix of a common public culture while retaining their own particular features. Notwithstanding Premier Parizeau's unfortunate words and the misinterpreted occasional linguistic mishaps on the part of

some Quebec leaders, the dynamism of Quebec nationalism is definitely pluralistic, multi-ethnic, and faithful to the spirit of our 1975 *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*.

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*What kind of love is it that does not allow the partner to be itself, to be distinctive? For most Quebecers, this tight embrace was unbearably suffocating, hardly allowing us to breathe.*

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Our pluralism is different from Canadian multiculturalism. This is why the great majority of Quebecers have repudiated for quite some time the all-inclusive Canadian nationalism that was cultivated by Pierre Elliott Trudeau and espoused by many Canadians outside Quebec. It is sad to say to our good friends across the country that we cannot respond to their invitation to belong to a symmetric and indissoluble Canada. We have to repeat again and again: "We want to be with you, but we don't want to be part of you." Fortunately, there are some Canadians who understand this message. William Thorsell, editor-in-chief of *The Globe and Mail*, has shown himself to be more enlightened than many of his colleagues when he wrote beautifully:

The fact that our solitudes come to "protect and touch and

*Please, Let Us Breathe, continued on page 36*

greet each other" (in the words of R.M. Rilke) made for a wonderful country. Solitudes cannot do this by living in each other's faces or by pretending that they share each other's essence. They cannot do this by denying each other's distinctiveness.

—The Globe and Mail,  
October 28

This is equivalent to saying that it is about time to get rid of the phony, unrealistic, and unfair pretention that Canada is a homogeneous nation consisting of 10 equal provinces. When one Canadian province votes for its own sovereignty in the proportion of 49.4 percent, should we not wake up to the obvious reality of asymmetry?

#### WE ARE DIFFERENT TOO

Once that asymmetry were recognized, accepted, and operationalized (which, I admit, would require a good deal of imagination and subtlety), we could go a long way together toward maintaining a Canadian union, intensifying economic integration, and pooling many of our resources.

As far as Quebec is concerned, there are two unmistakable elements of a valid equation for the future. A majority of Quebeckers are committed federalists. Not only do they remain attached to Canada (let us never forget that Quebeckers were the first to call themselves "Canadiens"), but they have repeatedly demonstrated that they are open to federalist formulas, Pepin-Robarts and Meech Lake being the most prominent, both of which would have reduced the sovereigntist movement to marginality.

But at the same time, a solid

majority of Quebeckers are profoundly conscious of forming a distinct people, of belonging to a sui generis network of communication. If you are not persuaded, just turn on your television and tune in to Radio-Canada. They are also aware that Canada's Constitution does not recognize this fact and consequently does not allow Quebec to behave as a people. Quebeckers are concerned with unemployment, economic security, and social welfare as much as other Canadians. But they believe these matters ought to be dealt with by their own Quebec government rather than by a distant so-called federal Department of Human Resources.

If Canada can one day reconcile these two views, so much the better; Quebeckers will be the most loyal Canadians. They will gladly give up the prospect of a sovereign Quebec nation-state in exchange for the renunciation of a Canadian all-inclusive nation-state. If, on the other hand, this tradeoff does not prove possible, another referendum will, of course, be on the agenda. And let us not be mistaken, the question will remain basically the same. It will include sovereignty and a desire for association or partnership.

#### FLEX POLITICS: PARTNERSHIPS

Another manifestation of Canadian misunderstanding is the fact that the referendum question was seen as clear and fair by most Quebeckers, while most Canadians outside Quebec (and some within, undoubtedly) saw it as fuzzy, convoluted, and even dishonest. There were two elements to the question. First, there is the element of sovereignty — the expression of autonomy and collective identity made necessary by the deadlock of Canadian

federalism. Sovereignty is a flexible word that allows for limitation (especially in our contemporary world), much more than "independence" (which appears as the opposite of interdependence). "Separation" is a negative word that will never be used to express an as-

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*It is about time to get rid of the phony, unrealistic, and unfair pretention that Canada is a homogeneous nation consisting of 10 equal provinces. When one Canadian province votes for its own sovereignty in the proportion of 49.4 percent, should we not wake up to the obvious reality of asymmetry?*

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piration toward a very positive project. Canadians should understand that more than any other people. They have never subscribed to "separation" from the British Empire, and Canadian sovereignty was acquired very gradually, indeed. We did not have a Department of Foreign Affairs before 1993.

The other element of the question was "a formal offer of partnership." This corresponds to a deep-rooted willingness on the part of Quebeckers to share with other Canadians. Perhaps some Quebeckers took their wishes for reality when they thought they could still send members to a Canadian parliament (conceivably on the model of the European parliament) even though Quebec

would be a sovereign nation. But they were happy with "an offer of partnership." It was and will always be important for them, were it only for the record, to express this kind of openness to the rest of Canada, even if other Canadians would insist on thorough separation. For if ever Quebec and Canada become completely separated, Canadians outside Quebec should bear their part of responsibility for such an unfortunate turn of events.

In the meantime, let us all hope it will be possible to share and be united while respecting each other for what we are in a flexible and multinational federation. Let us be together but, please, let us breathe! ♦

*Louis Balthazar is a professor in the Département science politique at the Université Laval.*



# THE QUEBEC REFERENDUM: FROM POLLS TO BALLOTS

BY EDOUARD CLOUTIER

In order to begin to understand the meaning of the Quebec referendum, one must grasp, first, the way in which vote intentions moved during the campaign and, second, the way in which vote intentions translated into actual votes.

The table shows the results of all polls conducted and published in the course of the official campaign. If we exclude the

period following the last day in which polling was done (October 26), four significant events marked the campaign, according to most observers.

## THE FOUR TURNING POINTS

- September 24: Claude Garcia, CEO of the Standard Life Insurance Co., and a key official of the No committee, declared in a well-

publicized speech that the No must not only win the vote, but crush the Yes side. A very loud uproar followed this pronouncement.

- October 3: Laurent Beaudoin, CEO of Bombardier, and a key spokesperson for the No committee, announced that following a majority "yes" vote, he would have to consider moving some of his business out of Quebec, a statement that also produced a strong reaction on the Yes side.
- October 7: Lucien Bouchard was officially named by Jacques Parizeau as the chief

negotiator for Quebec in the talks to be held with Canada after a "yes" vote.

- October 17: Paul Martin, the federal minister of finance, said that one million jobs could be jeopardized if the Yes side won the referendum.

Unfortunately, the time between the second and the third events (October 3-7) is too short to isolate, for analytical purposes, the specific effect of each event. In fact, the only poll conducted during that period was by Léger et Léger and it overlapped both events. We

*From Polls to Ballots, page 39*

## VOTE INTENTIONS OF QUEBEC ELECTORS FOR THE OCTOBER 30, 1995, REFERENDUM

Fieldmark Period	Polling Firm/Sponsor	Sample Size	Yes (%)	No (%)	Others* (%)	Source
Sept. 7-8	Léger et Léger/Journal de Montréal	959	44	43	13	Journal de Montreal, Sept. 9
Sept. 8-12	SOM/Le Soleil/Radio-Québec	1,003	37	45	18	Le Soleil, Sept. 15
Sept. 11-14	Compas Inc./The Financial Post	500	36	40	24	The Financial Post, Sept. 23
Sept. 15-19	Créatec/Comité du Non	1,004	39	47	14	Le Devoir, Sept. 23-24
Sept. 19-25	SOM, Environics/Le Devoir, Le Droit, Radio-Canada, Le Soleil, The Gazette	1,820	39	48	13	Le Devoir, Oct. 3 /Richard Nadeau
Sept. 20-25	CROP-TVA/La Presse, The Toronto Star	2,020	39	47	14	La Presse, Sept. 30
Sept. 23-25	Decima Research	750	40	42	18	Le Devoir, Sept. 29
Sept. 25-27	Angus Reid Group	1,000	41	45	14	Dow Jones News, Sept. 29/Richard Nadeau
Sept. 25-28	Léger et Léger/Journal de Montréal, The Globe and Mail	1,006	44	45	11	Journal de Montréal, Sept. 30
Sept. 25-29	Parti Québécois	1,369	44	46	10	La Presse, Oct. 2/Richard Nadeau
Oct. 1-4	Léger et Léger/Journal de Montréal, The Globe and Mail	1,015	43	44	13	Journal de Montréal, Oct. 6
Oct. 3-9	Parti québécois	1,285	45	42	13	Le Devoir, Oct. 6
Oct. 8-12	Léger et Léger/Journal de Montréal, The Globe and Mail	1,002	45	42	13	Journal de Montréal, Oct. 14/ The Globe and Mail, Oct. 14
Oct. 9-12	Créatec/Comité du non	635	43	49	8	La Presse, Oct. 13/Créatec Le Devoir, Oct. 13
Oct. 10-12	Gallup/Radio-Québec, CFCF TV	1,013	39	43	18	La Presse, Oct. 14
Oct. 13-16	SOM/Le Soleil, The Gazette	981	43	43	14	The Gazette, Oct. 17
Oct. 13-16	CROP/La Presse, The Toronto Star	1,151	44	43	13	La Presse, Oct. 18
Oct. 16-18	Angus Reid Group/Wood Gundy, CIBC	1,012	45	44	11	La Presse, Oct. 20
Oct. 16-20	Léger et Léger/Journal de Montréal, The Globe and Mail	1,005	46	42	12	Journal de Montréal, Oct. 21
Oct. 19-23	CROP/TVA, La Presse, The Toronto Star	1,072	45	42	13	La Presse, Oct. 26
Oct. 22-25	SOM/Le Soleil, Radio-Québec, The Gazette, CFCF	1,115	46	40	14	Le Soleil, Oct. 27
Oct. 23-25	Angus Reid Group	1,029	44	40	16	Le Devoir, Oct. 27
Oct. 23-26	Léger et Léger/Journal de Montréal, The Globe and Mail	1,003	47	41	12	Journal de Montréal, Oct. 28

\*Includes undecided, refusals, and abstentions.

Source: Le Group de recherche sur la mobilité de l'opinion publique et le Service de recherche et de documentation, Département de science politique, Université de Montréal.

# CAN QUEBECKERS BE A SOVEREIGN PEOPLE?

BY PETER H. RUSSELL

Three years ago, I published the book *Constitutional Odyssey*. The subtitle, *Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?*, questioned the capacity of Canadians to live up to the new constitutional philosophy that most of them have embraced — the sovereignty of the people.

In the book, I express my doubts about the possibility of a positive answer to my question in this way:

If a constitution derives its legitimacy from the consent of the people, then those who share a constitution must first agree to be a people. There is no evidence that either the québécois or the aboriginal nations have agreed to be part of a Canadian people sharing a constitution determined by simple majority rule. By the same token, there is no evidence that the aboriginal and English minorities in Quebec have agreed to be part of a Quebec people whose constitutional destiny lies in the hands of a majority of the people in that province.

The results of the recent referendum confirm my belief in the veracity of this passage, including its final sentence.

## THE MYTH OF A SINGLE "PEOPLE"

Indeed, the strongest message I take from the October 30 Quebec referendum is how deeply divided Quebec is on national lines. If the Quebec electorate as a whole demonstrated anything in the referendum, it is

that they do not constitute a single people. The English-speaking people of the province, the allophones, and several of the indigenous peoples whose historic lands are within Quebec's boundaries indicated, as clearly as peoples can, that they do not wish to be part of an independent Quebec state. Is their will not to be accorded the same respect as the will of Quebec's French majority?

In multinational societies, majoritarian solutions to constitutional differences are both unjust and unwise. Imposing the will of an ethnic majority on minorities who have not accepted being subject to that majority's will cannot provide secure and fair foundations for a constitutional democracy. The logic of this position led me to oppose the 1982 constitutional settlement in Canada. Canada is a federal society in which majorities of the whole have no right to bind all the constituent components of the federation. Proceeding with new constitutional arrangements that were opposed by the province of Quebec and the Canadian majority broke a fundamental understanding at the foundation of this country. Ever since then, we Canadians have been living dangerously, sharing a constitution whose legitimacy is questioned by a constituent element of the political community.

Quebec sovereigntists may contend that their project does no more than inflict on the constituent elements of Quebec society the same injustice inflicted on them in 1982. But surely this is not a case, if ever there was one, where two wrongs make a right. To establish a sovereign Quebec solely on the basis of

the will of its francophone majority and impose that sovereignty on strongly dissenting minorities within its boundaries will not produce a coherent and legitimate constitutional democracy. Nor can it be a means through which a harmonious new nation-state can be forged.

## THE DANGER OF NATIONALIST SOLUTIONS

Quebec nationalists cannot push their nationalist projects through to completion, any more than Canadian nationalists can, without abandoning the practice of mutual respect and tolerance that has been the

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essential condition for whatever the peoples of Canada have achieved together as citizens of a single state. Among populations marked by the deep diversity of Canada and Quebec, sovereign solutions — solutions in which one part claims sovereignty over the others — threaten to rupture the civility of the body politic.

Canadians have tried twice — in Meech Lake and the Charlottetown Accord — to repair the damage done in 1982. We all

know how badly these efforts failed. Rather than healing our wounds, these efforts rubbed salt in them. They deepened the rifts in the Canadian political community to a more grassroots level at the very time that Canadians were opting to resolve their differences through popular, rather than elite, accords.

Prime Minister Chrétien's panic-stricken promise of change in the eleventh hour of the referendum campaign may lead to yet another attempt at constitutional reconciliation. One cannot be optimistic about the success of such an effort — especially if its centrepiece is recognition of Quebec as a "distinct society." In the present context, this symbolic gesture would likely be too little to stem the tide of nationalism for Quebec, but more than enough to arouse resentment of Quebec in the rest of Canada. The distinct society clause should be retired to the museum of constitutional history as a curious piece of constitutional artillery from an earlier and unsuccessful campaign.

## THE 1997 CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

The review of the amending formula that section 49 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* requires before April 17, 1997 is slightly more promising. An elite consensus might be reached on re-establishing Quebec's historic constitutional veto, if, as in the Meech Lake Accord, all the provinces are given a veto and aboriginal peoples have a veto over provisions that affect their rights. A rule that prevents constitutional change from being imposed on any of the constituent elements in our federation is in accord with the founding principle and best constitutional practice of our country. However, a rule of unanimity is likely to fare badly in a popular referendum against those who believe some constitutional changes are so impor-

tant that they should be proceeded with despite their risk to national unity.

Even if some modest constitutional or administrative restructuring of the Canadian federation is achieved in the next year or so, this is not likely to persuade Quebec secessionists to abandon their project. If the PQ government survives the next Quebec election and begins to organize a third referendum on Quebec sovereignty, the government of Canada must not duplicate its performance in the recent referendum and chicken out of stating clearly the matters that will have to be negotiated in the event of a win for the Yes side. These matters include the collective rights of the national minorities in Quebec whose clearly expressed will is to remain in Canada. In taking this position, Ottawa must make it clear that there will be no non-negotiable issues — including the territorial boundaries of a sovereign Quebec.

#### SOME SOBERING ADVICE

Such a position will give Quebec voters a better sense of the issues with which they will have to deal in the event of a referendum win by the sovereigntists. No doubt, such a tough stand will increase the tensions associated with another referendum campaign. But it should have the sobering effect of enabling Quebecers to recognize that they are as far from being capable of acting as a sovereign people as are Canadians.

In these circumstances, the most prudent policy for Canadians is one of strict constitutional abeyance — at least on the big issues that divide us. But asking our constitutional agitators and junkies to be prudent is like urging smokers to switch to chewing gum. ❖

*Peter H. Russell is a professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto.*

## THE QUEBEC REFERENDUM: FROM POLLS TO BALLOTS *from page 37*

are, thus, forced to consider these two events as having occurred simultaneously, which leaves us with three breaking points that separate the campaign into four periods.

For these four periods, the average percentage of "yes"-vote and "no"-vote intentions are as follows:

	Yes	No
	percent	
Before Garcia . . . . .	39	45
Between Garcia and Beaudoin-Bouchard . . . . .	43	45
Between Beaudoin-Bouchard and Martin . . . . .	43	44
After Martin . . . . .	46	41

#### THE BOUCHARD FACTOR AND THE FINAL VOTE

Contrary to what most analysts have said, it is not obvious that the promotion of Bouchard to the de facto leadership of the Yes side made the difference, providing the impetus for the surge of "yes" votes. Rather, the Yes side appears to have made significant progress *before* Bouchard became the chief spokesperson for the Yes campaign, such progress coinciding with the strong reaction to Garcia's "crush" statement. Furthermore, the arrival of Bouchard seems to have made little difference in voting intentions as a simple comparison between scores in the second and third periods readily indicates. On the other hand, *after* Martin's "one million jobs" pronouncement, the "yes" votes jumped three points and the "no" votes dropped three points, thus creating a significant five-point spread favouring the Yes side.

Consequently, it can be argued that Bouchard's arrival was not the turning point in the campaign but, rather, that the campaign tides were associated with adverse popular reactions

to statements made by business spokespersons.

What about the great discrepancy between the scores — 46-percent Yes to 41-percent No — of the fourth period ending October 26, and the actual ballot results of 49.4 percent for the Yes and 50.6 percent for the No?

Informed opinion explains it by allocating the "undecided" in voting intentions by a ratio of 3 to 1 in favour of the No side. Although such an allocation ratio does, in fact, correspond to what appears to have happened in the last few elections and the referendum in Quebec, I tend to find this procedure somewhat unsatisfactory in this instance.

Theoretically speaking, last-minute deciders are best conceived of as "swinging with the swing." For this to happen, there must be a detectable momentum toward a given side in the last days preceding an election. We know for a fact that such was the case in the last two Quebec elections of 1989 and 1994 and in the referendum of 1992, opinion movements being detected in favour of both the Liberal Party as well as the Charlottetown Accord.

#### THE YES MOMENTUM: THE FINAL PUSH

Our polling numbers of the 1995 campaign definitively indicate a momentum in favour of the Yes option up until October 26, the Thursday preceding the vote. Events of the final few days before the referendum must, therefore, be taken into account to understand how vote intentions translated into a majority for the No side. More specifically, one thinks of the televised address to the nation by Prime Minister Chrétien on Wednesday night, followed by Lucien Bouchard's reply and the rally for the Yes held at the Verdun arena. Fi-

nally, the huge rally at Place du Canada on Friday by people from all over Canada cannot but have had an impact.

The incredible 93.48 percent turnout of eligible voters on referendum day offers another clue in the explanation of the final results. In a system where voting is not mandatory, such a turnout is a product of a set of extraordinary circumstances. In the present case, the fact that the issue was much more dramatic than in 1980 or 1992 and that everyone expected the final results to be extremely close certainly contributed to the exceptional turnout score. But these two factors are not quite sufficient to explain the turnout. When nearly every voter physically capable of voting actually does so, it must be the case that both sides have mobilized their maximum potential support. Both sides were thus riding a momentum on October 30, the Yes momentum finding its long-winded source in a reaction to business arguments against Quebec sovereignty, and the No momentum in a final desperate sprint to save Canada. ❖

*Edouard Cloutier is a professor in the Département de science politique at the Université de Montréal.*

# SUSTAINING CANADA

BY DAVID V.J. BELL

The departure of Quebec from confederation seems inevitable unless a successful project to revitalize Canada is achieved. If it proves nothing else, the 49.6 percent "yes" vote makes clear that loyalty to the existing Canadian state is tenuous and decreasing. Support for the current prime minister, and his vision of Canada and of Quebec, is extremely limited. Many pollsters believe that the slim No victory was achieved only because of Jean Chrétien's vague promise to "change" the status quo.

But what sort of change might win the day? Many sovereigntists have already rejected the "distinct society" solution, especially if it merely takes the form of resolutions passed in Parliament or provincial legislatures. Efforts to recreate Meech Lake or Charlottetown may be dismissed as attempts to put stale wine in different bottles. If Meech Lake had been approved, it might have secured the federalist cause for some years and taken away the possibility — perhaps even the need — for a referendum on sovereignty in this century. Attempts to turn the clock back and revive the Meech formula now seem hopelessly anachronistic. Indeed, any effort to capture Quebec's allegiance on the basis of reform of the federal-provincial "bargain" strikes me as backward-looking 19th-century thinking.

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

In less than five years, we enter a new century and a new millennium. All of humankind faces challenges that will threaten our continued survival as a species. These challenges cannot be met by shuffling legislative

powers from one level of government to the other, or by inscribing words in the Constitution about distinctiveness.

These challenges arise from the complex interaction between society, the economy, and the natural environment. We are suffering from a social lifestyle disease that will eventually destroy us, because it is destroying the ecosystem that sustains humankind. To survive beyond the next century we must fundamentally change our culture, social structures, and institutions of governance. The search for sustainable patterns of living is the stuff of 21st-century politics. It forces us to look ahead and develop creative responses, rather than look back in either nostalgia or anger to old injustices and failed responses. It is the essence of political leadership and vision for the future.

The subject of sustainability has been notably absent from recent political debate, and we ignore this challenge at our profound peril. Imaginative exploration of these issues is taking place at the local level in every part of Canada, most noticeably perhaps in British Columbia, where over 300 high-energy people came together last month for a conference entitled "Sustainability: It's Time for Action." The building of a new Canada committed to sustainability is too important a task to be left to politicians. Few current leaders seem even dimly aware of the challenge. Opportunities for widespread participation by non-politicians must be part of the process — indeed, the politics of sustainability require reimagining governance and replacing top-heavy bureaucratic structures

with new forms of participatory arrangements and democratic administration.

## A NEW QUEBEC-CANADA UNION

This enterprise might form the basis of a new union between Quebecers and people from the rest of Canada. It may be Canada's best hope for survival. But how might this kind of renewal of Canada be achieved? The barriers are obvious. Current political elites have focused (some might say fixated)

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their attention on other matters. For Chrétien, first on his agenda is avoiding serious constitutional change. The promise he made with dark reluctance in the final days of the referendum campaign contradicted personal policies and predilections that go back over 30 years to his maiden speech in the House of Commons, when he declared that separatism was a weak force that neither required nor deserved a serious response. Bouchard has embraced a single-minded commitment to sovereignty, and insists that he will not even participate in discussions about changing the status quo to rehabilitate Canadian federalism. Preston Manning has outlined a series of changes that can be achieved without constitutional amendment and that diminish the role of government overall while devolving certain powers to the provinces. The premiers for now are very reluctant to countenance any serious discussion of constitutional reform

that accords special treatment to Quebec, though most would welcome further decentralization of federal powers to the provinces. They seem profoundly unimpressed by Trudeau's warning, echoed by Chrétien, that further weakening of the federal government might undermine the edifice of national power to the point of collapse.

No leader has projected a vision of a vital new Canada that includes Quebec and that embraces ideals and commitments that can rejuvenate patriotism of all Canadians. No leader seems able to tap into the energy and enthusiasm so evident among those who participated in the Montreal rally. No sovereigntist leader will (officially, at least) consider innovative proposals that might capture the imagination of the Quebec people and persuade them to stay within a revitalized Canada — not because of what it has been, but in anticipation of what it can become.

## THE PROMISE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Yet the roots of renewal are deep in the soil of recent Canadian history. Canada played a leadership role at the Earth Summit. The federal minister of the environment who attended the Rio meetings and greatly impressed environmentalists from Canada and elsewhere was Jean Charest. He had succeeded the most high-profile environment minister ever appointed, under whose direction the federal green plan was introduced: Lucien Bouchard. Canadians had earlier pioneered in responding to the Brundtland commission by establishing round tables on environment and economy at the federal level, in each province, and in many local settings. Members of the general public throughout Canada have had their environmental consciousness raised by both local disasters, global cataclysms, and constant educational efforts.

There is an untapped reservoir of public support for imaginative leadership in applied sustainability. But how to mobilize it?

### DON'T WAIT FOR THE POLITICIANS TO ACT

We cannot wait for the politicians. NGOs, educators, enlightened business leaders, representatives of First Nations, and others who understand the urgency of transforming our structures, culture, and lifestyle to meet the challenge of sustainability must come together across barriers of jurisdiction and ideology to forge this new vision. We must find a way of reaching out to the majority in Quebec (and elsewhere in Canada) who would prefer a renewed, revitalized Canada to the risks and uncertainties of secession and sovereignty. This is not an easy task, but we can adapt for the purpose the methodology of participatory "search conferences" that has been used so successfully in both the private and public sectors. A country-wide consultation could be sponsored and coordinated by a coalition of NGOs in partnership with universities and sympathetic foundations and corporations. It would aim to develop a vision and statement of core values that will help define a future course for Canada.

No one knows whether it is possible to put this country back together again. I believe it will require a very different kind of glue from what current leaders are offering. We must go beyond the mechanics of federal-provincial relations to inspire the soul and sensibility of the new millennium. ♦

*David V.J. Bell is dean of Environmental Studies and founding director of a new Centre for Applied Sustainability at York University.*

## NOW WHAT? REFLECTIONS ON CANADA AFTER THE REFERENDUM

BY DAVID CAMERON

The vexed issue of Quebec as a distinct society, which surfaced as an issue in the latter half of the referendum campaign, is now haunting the post-referendum scene.

Unquestionably, this expression speaks to a structural reality of Canadian life — the duality that has existed as long as Canadians have inhabited the top half of North America. The equal partnership of the two founding peoples, special status, the two-nations theory, distinct society, and even asymmetrical federalism — all have been attempts to express and accommodate the fact of duality in a way that is satisfactory to both halves of the whole, to both French-speaking and English-speaking peoples.

### SPECIAL STATUS: A CANADIAN ICON

But consider this. Each of these has failed to find a permanent home in the iconography of Canada, and all have been discarded. The exception is the distinct society, which appears to retain its currency. It is, however, my suspicion that it is close to being thrown on the scrap heap of history, and for the traditional Canadian reason: it is becoming obsolete in Quebec before the rest of the country has found the strength to accept it. The phrase is tainted goods, carrying memories of Meech and Charlottetown.

Yet Ottawa, as a result of its referendum "promises," feels itself condemned to push for the recognition — probably the constitutional recognition — of Quebec as a distinct society.

Before doing this, three questions need to be answered.

### WILL THE MODERATE NATIONALISTS BUY IN?

1. Is it what Quebecers, especially moderate nationalists, want and is it all they want?

Consider when and how the issue of the distinct society came up. It was used in the ref-

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erendum campaign as a useful stock to beat the federalists with. It symbolized the rest of the country's refusal to recognize Quebec for what it is and it was a short-hand reference to the failed Meech Lake Accord. When the No side began to panic, Chrétien started to talk about his acceptance of Quebec as a distinct society. By the end of the campaign, delivering change and especially making good on the distinct society commitment had become "a promise" of the No side to which Canada would be held.

But is it clear what the people of Quebec want at this point?

The sovereigntist leaders imply that this is what the people of Quebec want, but their motives are hardly pure. Interestingly, on referendum night, Claude Ryan began speaking about "le peuple de Québec." The first hint of a new way of defining duality, perhaps?

2. Can you bring it off successfully?

What did Meech Lake and Charlottetown teach us? One thing for sure: Do not start down the constitutional path if you are not confident that you can reach the destination successfully. Each time we try and fail, we weaken ourselves. The prime minister does not know whether he has all the necessary provincial ducks in a row for his specific proposal. He needs six provinces, including Ontario, to push a constitutional amendment into the face of the PQ for approval. British Columbia, probably even with a new premier, will not be cooperative and it is by no means clear how Alberta would line up. Newfoundland is run by Clyde Wells, who made one of his usual helpful interventions on this very subject in the course of the campaign. Ontario is not speaking clearly on this subject yet. Preston Manning, for his part, will oppose it.

The politics are still very tricky on this one. They need to be turned from tricky into predictable before the plunge into this swamp.

### THE DISTINCT SOCIETY TRAP

3. If you can bring it off successfully, can you ensure that Quebecers will accept it as a meaningful gesture?

We have a lot of painful evidence that the sovereigntists are far more able to structure historical myth and memory

*Now What? Reflections on Canada After the Referendum, continued on page 44*

**RESULTS OF THE 1980 AND 1995 REFERENDUMS**

Year	Registered voters	Yes (% of valid votes)	No (% of valid votes)	Spoiled (% of votes)	Total votes (and % of participation)	Total valid votes (and % of valid votes)	Majority
1980	4,367,584	1,485,851 (40.44%)	2,187,991 (59.56%)	65,012 (1.74%)	3,738,854 (85.61%)	3,673,842 (98.26%)	"No" 702,230 (19.12%)
1995	5,087,009	2,308,360 (49.42%)	2,362,648 (50.58%)	86,501 (1.82%)	4,757,509 (93.52%)	4,671,008 (98.18%)	"No" 54,288 (1.16%)

great significance and a great cause for concern for federalists in Quebec and Canada.

When it comes to linguistic patterns of voting, one must emphasize that nearly 60 percent of francophones voted "yes" in 1995 compared with 48 percent in 1980. By contrast, the anglophones of Quebec voted almost unanimously for the No side (95 percent), whereas the allophone population of Quebec also voted overwhelming against the sovereignty proposal (92 percent). Yet the support for sovereignty in the allophone population increased since 1980, especially in areas such as the Latin American community, 44 percent of whose members voted "yes."

**THE CONSEQUENCE OF A "YES" VOTE**

Some politicians, and one can think of the prime minister of Canada, have attempted, and will continue to attempt, to discredit the formulation of the referendum question and to suggest that Quebeckers did not understand the consequences of voting "yes" and did not believe that voting "yes" on October 30 meant that Quebec could become a sovereign country. Furthermore, such a paternalistic attitude is an insult to the intelligence of Quebec voters. It fails to mention that the agreement that was signed by the leaders of the Yes forces on June 12, 1995, which was sent to every Quebec household

more than one month before the referendum, clearly states that the common project would lead to the accession of Quebec to sovereignty.

It is also disrespectful to Mr. Parizeau, his longstanding commitment and emphasis on sovereignty, and his insistence throughout the campaign that a "yes" vote would allow Quebec to proclaim its sovereignty within one year after the vote. It ignores the very clear declaration of Mr. Bouchard, reported in the last days of the campaign in a major headline of Montreal's major French language newspaper, *La Presse*, that a "yes" vote clearly signified that Quebec would become a sovereign nation. Furthermore, it neglects, among other things, the fact that the federalists' main campaign theme was "No to Separation," and that the prime minister of Canada, on several occasions, and in particular during his address to "the nation" on October 25, told Quebeckers that voting "yes" was an "irrevocable" decision to leave Canada.

This transparency on the issue of sovereignty is not affected by the fact that sovereignists were also proposing that Quebeckers present a formal offer of partnership to Canada. To depict this offer as muddying the waters and solely as a dishonest trick to fool Quebeckers is simply to ignore the consistent attempt of sovereignists to devise a project

whereby the newly acquired sovereignty of Quebec would accommodate itself to a form of association or partnership with the rest of Canada. Quebeckers themselves have been adamant in telling the government of Quebec, through regional and national commissions on the future of Quebec, that they wanted to maintain formal links with Canada in the event of sovereignty. They were also well aware in 1995 that the conclusion of a partnership agreement was not a condition of the proclamation of sovereignty, contrary to what had been proposed by the government of Quebec in 1980. Thus, one cannot and should not blame sovereignists for their decision to obtain from Quebeckers not only an authorization to proclaim sovereignty, but a mandate, consistent with the wishes of Quebeckers themselves, to offer an economic and political partnership to the rest of Canada.

Rather than making patronizing comments on the sense of the votes of 2,308,360 persons who voted "yes" to the 1995 referendum question, federalists should reflect on the reasons for their narrow victory and mainly follow up with those promises that probably allowed them to win this referendum, albeit by a 1.16 percent margin. Those promises, which some commentators now suggest should never had been

made, were to change Canada to accommodate Quebec, a discourse reminiscent of the promises made by Pierre Elliott Trudeau during the 1980 referendum. Yet the promises made by Jean Chrétien to Quebeckers seem even more explicit than those of his former mentor and announce a shifting of roles on the Canada-and-Quebec political agenda for the coming months.

**THE SHIFTING ROLES IN CANADA AND QUEBEC**

The government of Canada has embarked on a perilous journey, a journey toward reforming Canadian federalism and most likely the Canadian Constitution, in order to satisfy the demands of Quebec federalists and deliver on their promises of the final days of the referendum. Those who steadily repeated during the election campaign and their two first years in office that such reforms were unnecessary have thus been forced to navigate in deep and troubled waters. Those who probably knew that such reform was doomed to failure, and for that reason avoided tackling the authentic and real problems of Canadian federalism, must now come up with a set of proposals to satisfy their referendum promises.

These referendum promises concern the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society, a veto for Quebec over future constitutional changes, and the de-



centralization of powers. On all these issues, consensus in the rest of Canada is far from evident, as was witnessed during the first days that followed the October 30 referendum. Hence, on the distinct society clause, it was evident that the Reform Party would oppose the constitutional recognition, even if it was of a symbolic nature and of no real consequence. The recognition of a veto for Quebec also seemed to meet with fierce opposition in the rest of Canada. And, finally, on the issue of decentralization, there was no clear indication of the path that the federal government was planning to follow; it is quite obvious, however, that the Liberal government could not espouse the claims for a real devolution of powers to Quebec, but could only revive the Charlottetown proposals on redefining roles and responsibilities of legislatures and governments in those areas that already come under provincial jurisdiction and had been the subject of the federal spending power.

#### **DISTINCT SOCIETY AND QUEBEC'S VETO**

In any case, these promises appear to be far removed from Quebec's real claims. The distinct society clause has exhausted its potential and appears to be moot today. Even the former leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec and a committed federalist, Claude Ryan, is calling for the recognition of Quebec as a "people." The formula that seemed to have been devised by the federal government and that would have granted a veto to the people of Quebec on future changes to the Canadian Constitution, rather than to the National Assembly, would meet great opposition in Quebec and be seen as trespassing on the rights of the National Assembly. It would not deal with the thorny issue of the changes made to

the Constitution of Quebec in 1982 without Quebec's consent. That remains, according to Michel Bélanger, one of the key figures of the No committee, and to the former prime minister of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, a problem that needs to be addressed and solved in order to bring Quebec back in the Canadian family. And as far as decentralization is concerned, only a massive real and constitutional transfer of cultural, social, and economic powers to the Quebec National Assembly will be acceptable to Quebecers, who are, as shown in poll after poll, including one taken after the October 30 referendum, repeatedly claiming such a transfer.

And while the rest of Canada will be debating the Constitution and trying to find a way out of "la quadrature du cercle" with leaders such as Jean Chrétien, who have lost a great deal of credibility in Canada as a whole, Quebec City will be putting the emphasis on good governance and will endeavour to implement the 1994 election slogan, "l'autre façon de gouverner."

To tackle the deficit and debt problems, to revise the social safety net, to reform the education system, and to consolidate Quebec's culture, the government will look into imaginative and creative solutions and will not favour measures that will attack the integrity of a state that generations of Quebecers have proudly built and whose foundations should be reinforced. Equity and social solidarity shall blend with efficiency and economic responsibility in an effort to deal with those problems that affect the social fabric of Quebec, such as high unemployment among young people and women, child poverty, the accessibility and quality of health care, etc. These principles of governance and the first ideas for a program of government were sketched

on November 21 by Lucien Bouchard, whose credibility and prestige have been enhanced during the referendum campaign and who will exert the necessary leadership to implement these principles and ideas. Such principles and ideas will likely be well received by Quebecers, who should also be well informed on the impact of the decisions taken by the government of Quebec. They will expect, and rightly so, that participatory democracy should apply in these areas of decision making, just as they have applied in the matter of Quebec's political future.

#### **THE NEXT STEPS**

Good government will strengthen Quebec and give the government the necessary tools and legitimacy to obtain meaningful support from Quebecers to bring the Quiet Revolution to its logical political conclusion: sovereignty for Quebec. Although the rest of Canada might come up with a proposal of constitutional renewal of federalism, the competing proposal will still remain sovereignty and will most likely be the path preferred by Quebecers during a future referendum. And one should expect another referendum to occur most likely after a constitutional conference to be convened in 1997. No threats from the federal government could stop the drive for full autonomy of the people of Quebec or prevent them from deciding in a democratic fashion their political status.

Any attempt to thwart the process by which the Quebec National Assembly and government of Quebec ask Quebecers to decide on their future, be it through those powers of disallowance or reservation that have fallen into disuse or by any other means, would cast a shadow on the principle of democracy and bring Canada into disrepute in the world commu-

nity. And do not expect sovereigntists to forget about partnership with Canada — the belief in the advisability and interest of maintaining an economic and monetary union with Canada, and of going beyond such a union to look into forms of political partnership, will continue to be put forward as a means of preserving an authentic, albeit different, relationship with Canada. Do expect, however, that the architects of the partnership proposal will rethink and revise the blueprint contained in the June 12 agreement and will look into the comments, objections, and suggestions for improvements to the innovative formula put forward by the coalition of sovereigntist forces of Quebec.

The October 30 referendum has been a fascinating experience in participatory democracy and will likely be an important event in the history of Canada and Quebec. Quebecers have, once again, proved to be strategic voters and have told their government and the sovereigntist forces to refine their common project and to demonstrate that the government of Quebec could be ready to manage the affairs of a sovereign country. They might have also given the rest of Canada a last chance to overhaul the federal system to accommodate the long-lasting and traditional claims of Quebec, but they have, above all, told the rest of Canada to get ready for the next step, to absorb the shock of Quebec's forthcoming decision on sovereignty. ♦

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## NOW WHAT? REFLECTIONS ON CANADA AFTER THE REFERENDUM *from page 41*

and to shape opinion in Quebec and the prospect of Lucien Bouchard assuming the premiership of Quebec City. There is little reason to believe this has changed.

Having laid the distinct society trap, the sovereigntists will watch it spring with delight. They will say that recognition of Quebec as a distinct society is a completely inadequate response to a referendum in which sovereignty almost won. It is one-fifth of Meech Lake. Robert Bourassa insisted on and almost got five minimal conditions in Meech Lake, just one of which was the distinct society provision, and he is a federalist, for goodness sake. It is insulting to offer this paltry gesture after all we have gone through.

In this competition for the good opinion of Quebecers, who will win? If the gesture is spurned, how will those political leaders and citizens in English-speaking Canada feel who spent time and political capital in getting the measure approved?

What, then, should Ottawa do? I think it is still too early to select a shiny set of constitutional proposals and try to get people to buy them. Some work needs to be done first.

### REGAINING THE INITIATIVE

*Take stock of the situation. Let the dust settle a bit so you can be sure you understand the situation with which you are dealing.*

Although Lucien Bouchard's personal plans are now clear, it would be unwise to assume that his full strategy is settled and known. The view of provincial premiers on Quebec, on decentralization and on the role of the government of Canada, will be crucial in determining Ottawa's freedom of manoeuvre. Public opinion in Quebec is likely to be developing rapidly. Is it demobilizing and shifting back to its earlier default posi-

tion (no real interest in constitutional/unity issues), or have the referendum results and Bouchard's decision to come to Quebec City kept the discontent and desire for change alive? What is the state of opinion in English-speaking Canada? In the absence of coherent national leadership, one suspects that it will revert more or less to the status quo, despite the shock that English-speaking Canadians received.

*Stop reacting to the separatists. Look for ways to take the initiative.*

The separatists have been effective at setting the agenda and establishing the timetable for debate about the national question. They are about to do so again. The federal government should be searching for ways in which the initiative can be seized from Lucien Bouchard and the PQ. At the moment, we seem to be stuck in mental grooves that block innovation. We need new ideas. Like it or not, sovereignty is a simple, positive idea. Which positive idea will we set against it?

*Reach beyond the separatist leadership and provincial premiers to the people. Bring the people into the choice making. It is their country after all.*

Why do we always leave consultation with the people of Quebec to the separatists? Why not look to involve moderate nationalists in deep, open discussion with federalists and with the government of Canada? Ottawa should take the lead in helping other Canadians come to terms with the necessity of change and in working through the changes with them. We know that premiers want decentralization, but do Canadians?

### THE FUTURE OF CHRÉTIEN

*Set partisanship aside wherever possible.*

Respect, involve, and use Daniel Johnson and the Quebec Liberals. Their constitu-

tional platform should be developed in the closest collaboration with Ottawa and provincial premiers. Respect, involve and use Jean Charest, one of federalism's best resources. Who cares if it helps him rebuild the Conservative Party? In narrow partisan terms, a weak to non-existent Tory party suits the federal Liberals very well, but if the country survives, it is going to need something other than the Bloc and Reform. Link up with significant elements of Quebec society. Seek their help and listen to what they have to say.

*Finally, give meaning to the referendum outcome. Help shape Canadians' understanding of what happened on October 30 and what the consequences are likely to be.*

We need some leadership from the government of Canada. Prime Minister Chrétien needs to decide for himself what happened on referendum night and to speak frankly and forcefully to the Canadian people about it. It is a notable lack of leadership that he has not done so and shows no signs of doing so. If he does not help us sort through this, will it be surprising if Canadians go back to sleep, even after the shock therapy they have just received?

Chrétien has been damaged by the referendum. He, and we, got it all wrong. He needs to re-establish his claim to leadership by showing that he has learned from the experience and that he has a plausible approach that he and the country can follow. Honest, truthful talk is badly needed.

We have got ourselves into a terrible mess and finding the path out of it will be difficult. If Ottawa tries to offer "goodies" to Quebec, the approach will be rejected in English-speaking Canada and denigrated by the sovereigntists in Quebec. If Ottawa reverts to business as usual — jobs and

the economy — Canadians will do likewise and the country will be no better prepared when the national unity crisis resumes.

### THE NEED FOR BIG-PICTURE POLITICS

Doing anything else poses a dreadful challenge. Yet something else seems to be needed. I have a hunch that we need to change the terms of the debate. We need, all of us in Quebec and elsewhere, to rediscover the reasons for political union, or discover sadly that those reasons no longer exist.

At the founding of our country more than 100 years ago, the Fathers of Confederation knew that there were military, economic, political, and cultural reasons to unite, and they found the strength to make the historic compromises necessary to bring a new country into existence. We have now had 30 years of destructive conflict and travail. Are we, as a national community, up to the act of political creation that will be necessary to turn these years of conflict to our common benefit and mutual advantage?

That, I cannot help thinking, is the question that we and our political leaders are facing today. It is, however, difficult to conceive of a challenge of greater magnitude. It calls for statesmanship of a high order, a willingness to abandon old categories of debate and entrenched policies and programs that no longer serve the public's needs, and an openness of spirit that has not been much in evidence in Canadians in recent years. ♦

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