

"Unity and the Quebec Issue"

Self-determination: moral or business issue?

By Tony Carty

Academics and journalists from Quebec and Ontario took part in an engaging discussion on the future of Canada at Osgoode Hall last Saturday.

Laurier LaPierre of CBC fame and a prof at McGill, John Harney and Virginia McDonald from Atkinson and Gerald Godin, the Parti Quebecois member of the Quebec assembly who defeated Premier Robert Bourassa in his own riding in last November's election, all joined in.

The discussion, part of the Atkinson Day celebrations, was chaired by Rob Perin, who teaches Quebec history at Atkinson.

Entitled *Unity and the Quebec Issue*, the discussion became quite vigorous, with panelists, especially La Pierre and Godin, disagreeing with each other, at times fundamentally.

At the start of the discussion, one of the important points mentioned by McDonald was the idea of "self-determination". She noted that in his now-famous report, Justice Thomas Berger stated that northern peoples have a right to self-determination, and addressing a question to Mr. Godin, she elicited his view as to how that compared with the Parti Québécois' idea of self-determination.

In his turn, Godin said:

"We are radicals who know how to count. We want equality between the two nations."

McDonald seemed dissatisfied

with this response and pressed Godin for a more detailed answer.

"Self-determination is not so much a moral thing, but a business venture," he remarked laconically.

Laurier LaPierre stressed that federalism, despite its drawbacks, has been a remarkable success. He suggested the present practice, as distinct from jurisdictional obligations, need not be fundamentally changed.

Godin disagreed, and wondered:

"What kind of federation is it where the margin of the unemployed between the Maritimes and central Canada has been the same for forty years?"

He accused the federal government of allowing ninety per cent of the automobile industry to be established in Ontario, "so that investment money flows into Ontario."

A former professor of journalism at the University of Quebec, in Montreal, Godin indicated the Canadian history did not start in 1867.

After the Parti Quebecois has won the referendum, "then we'll come to whoever is the Prime Minister and say, 'now we're equals, let's begin this thing again.'"

"We'll decide then what we'll have total jurisdiction over, and what we'll share."

Everyone seemed to be trying to get at what Quebec wanted. Panelist John Harney thought it was time to ask "English-Canada, what do we want?"

Harney felt "the edifice of Confederation is floundering, the elements of the structure are not holding together."

While the economic sector is equally important, Harney thought that constitutional problems needed to be tackled urgently.

He intimated that with the economy in disarray, and a turbulent political climate, it is difficult to see how the economy can easily be righted, while constitutional problems remain unsolved.

The potential problems of special status for Quebec within Confederation were also touched on by Harney. He seemed to see this in a different light from McDonald.

Professor McDonald thought Canadians outside of Quebec needed "to get it out of our system."

Special status was, she said, a special problem.

She reminded her audience of sixty, that the Inuit and other native peoples have for a long time had special status. As the Berger Report

indicated, this is an issue endemic to our country.

Harney noted an example of his view: we in "English-Canada" may decide we do not want natural resources or education in provincial hands.

But then education has to be a provincial responsibility, because it is in Quebec.

"And that's what's sending us down the drain."

Godin immediately interposed: "That's the problem: conflicting views in Canada, among the provinces."

"We've got more 'waffle' members in our party than in the rest of Canada," he quipped, drawing a chuckle from his listeners.

At this point, LaPierre, who now spoke with passion, stressed that he was not a Quebecois, but rather, an Acadian.

LaPierre ended by saying that the PQ does not see Canada as a nation, but as a set of regional entities.

"This is due to their ignorance, but in this they are no worse or better than the rest of us."

He thought it was illusory to believe that the dissolution of this partnership would be easy. In such an eventuality, he foresaw massive retaliatory measures.

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Pioneer woman at Atkinson Day.

Expanding Horizons on Atkinson Day

By Sandra Bullock

Equality in Canada was the basic theme of a forum called "Expanding Horizons" at Atkinson College Saturday November 5, part of the Atkinson Day celebrations.

A series of four panel discussions divided the overall vision into specific areas of politics, economics, culture, and education. The struggle between the elite and working-class was the focal point of each debate.

As well as a debate on the future of Canada, a stimulating discussion on the issue of "Post-Secondary Education - Does Society Benefit?" was introduced by President Macdonald and Robin Harris of the Higher Education Group.

Both men agreed that it did benefit society in the long run. From this point they went on to discuss means of reforming rather than restructuring the system.

Social and economic benefits in the creation of a more sensitive society and the principle of accessibility to education were two of the more relevant areas touched on.

"The Constitution of Society", a panel discussion on various changes taking place in our society, centred

on the changing relationship of the man's role in birth and within the family, specifically the need for change in the basic male-female relationship and its relation to children. It was suggested that more emphasis should be put on the needs of the parents than those of the children. These issues and others were debated by Mary O'Brien of OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) and Edward Shorter of the University of Toronto.

Foreign ownership, the Berger Report and public interest in the Government energy policy were issues debated in an open forum on the consequences of the current energy problem "Energy - The Crucial Question".

The panel consisting of Ian Scott, Commissioner of the Berger Commission, Ian MacDougall of Osgoode Law School, Former President Canadian Arctic Gas Study V.L. Horte, and Mel Watkins, University of Toronto. They debated and answered questions on the utilization of existing resources, the attitudes of industry, ecology and claims of the Native peoples.