

The Myth of the "Quiet Revolution in Quebec"

by Philip Rosen

The so-called quiet Revolution has been fundamentally an exercise in corporate liberal rhetoric since, as will be shown, the basic power structure in Quebec has been neither radically challenged nor transformed. First, however, let us examine some of the Quiet Revolution.

Much of the impetus for the development of the Quiet Revolution came from the reactionary conservatism of the Duplessis regime. The trade unionists of the QFL and the CNTU were aroused by the openly anti-unionist activities of the Union Nationale government. The progressive elements of the Church were upset by the corrupt conservatism of the Union Nationale regime (witness the 1956 pamphlet on electoral morals by the Abbes Dion and O'Neil which the hierarchy did not disown). The intellectuals were openly hostile to the administration which was demonstrated by the activities of the Laval University Faculty of Social Sciences, the creation of the reformist magazine *Cite Libre*, the changed tone of *Le Devoir*, and their political activities in *Le Ralliement* (a reformist intellectual political alliance) and the Social Democratic Party (an off-shoot of the CCF). It must also be remembered that after 1939 urbanization and industrialization proceeded at a rate previously unparalleled in Quebec. The effect of this rapid transformation was to create a French Canadian new middle class (white collar) which manned the bureaucracy of foreign-controlled (outside of Quebec) industrial corporations. This new middle class was unable, to a large extent, to attain the upward social mobility it desired within the foreign controlled bureaucracy or within the Duplessis government, which used civil service jobs as political payoffs to the faithful. As a result, the new middle class opposed the Union Nationale.

In the late 1950's the Liberals were able to establish an alliance of all those opposed to the Union Nationale conservative nationalism, and they adopted an autonomy-oriented social nationalism. The 1960 election was similar to the 1936 election in that a conservative, corrupt industrial capitalist party was defeated by a social nationalist party-alliance. In 1960 the Liberals were no longer seen as centralizers since the Conservatives were in power in Ottawa.

With the death of Duplessis the ancient regime political attitude ended in Quebec. A new type of

progressive nationalist, idealistic, intellectual politics and political activist emerged. The reform elements united behind the Liberals to take power in Quebec. Education was reformed with Bill 60, the establishment of a Department of Education, and the Parent Commission Report. The Church was shaken by its reformist elements, as exemplified in *Frere Untel*. A new type of indicative economic planning was implemented, as expressed in the General Investment Corporation and the nationalization of electric power. These economic initiatives replaced the Union Nationale's laissez-faire attitude toward foreign industrial capitalism.

A new political pluralism emerged from the breaking of traditional political loyalties by the Creditistes in 1962-63, and the emergence of the Parti Socialiste de Quebec, the Rassemblement pour l'Independence Nationale and other similar groups. Independentism emerged as a force to be reckoned within the person of, among others, Marcel Chaput, Raymond Barbeau, and Pierre Bourgault, their writings and their organizations.

A new progressive nationalism emerged, seeking an increasingly autonomous state to be utilized to bring some form of equity to the people of Quebec. This doctrine replaced the traditionally conservative, survival-oriented nationalism. This new type of nationalism is probably best exemplified by Rene Levesque. Even the Union Nationale adopted a species of this reformist nationalism at its 1961 convention.

CHANGED POWER STRUCTURE?

What has been the effect of the Quiet Revolution on the fundamental power structure of Quebec society? Has the traditional power elite of Church-government-corporation been altered by the Quiet Revolution, or is its name a misnomer for a reformist rather than a revolutionary change in Quebec society? The industrialization of Quebec has meant largely the creation of a powerful bureaucratic class which is unwittingly supporting the traditional tripartite power elite in Quebec. Foreign industrial corporations, by their activities in Quebec, have industrialized and urbanized a traditionally rural-dominated society. This situation created, in effect, a new bureaucratic middle class with administrative and technical skills but with no opportunity to rise to the upper strata of foreign-controlled corporate and non-existent government bureau-

cracies. This new middle class, then, demanded that new government and corporate structures be established.

The new middle class emerged into power under the Lesage administration which was responsible for the creation of public and semi-public structures which provided places and influence for this burgeoning new class. Even the elaboration of independist ideas has been largely a phenomenon of this new urban bureaucratic class, whose goals are more and better positions in public and private corporations for French Canadians, pensions, health plans, etc.

The lower and rural classes have been largely unresponsive to these nationalist appeals, whose goals are not their own. Their demands are more immediate - they want assurance of continued employment, protection from loan sharks, etc. This probably explains, to a certain extent, the success of the Creditistes in 1962-63, and the failure of the Lesage Liberals in 1966. The lower and rural classes are responsive to immediate solutions, whether they are practical or not, rather than to bureaucratic reforms as determined an enunciated by the emergent new middle class.

The emergence of the new middle class during the Quiet Revolution has not fundamentally altered the power configuration in Quebec society; rather, it has been rationalized and routinized. The Quiet Revolution in itself, however, has come under question among the lower and rural classes who, in June 1966, put a revitalized Union Nationale party into power. This is probably the most obvious example of the fact that the Quiet Revolution is not really revolutionary, but middle class reformist. We have, in this instance, a microcosmic example of a nascent corporate liberal structure where in a bureaucratic class ethos becomes institutionalized, rationalized and routinized and the emergent social structure is explained and justified by means of a revolutionary rhetoric which falsifies reality. In this case the lower and rural classes have been able to detect the inherent contradiction of the corporate liberal state and have attempted somewhat haphazardly and incoherently to express their disaffection with this nascent post-industrial capitalist social, economic and political structure as it has emerged in the Quiet Revolution in Quebec.

Nowlan Addresses Students

by P. J. Fitzpatrick

Mr. Patrick Nowlan, Member of Parliament for Digby-Annapolis-Kings, spoke to a group of students studying Canadian Government and Politics last Friday afternoon. He chose to analyse the institution of Parliament, rather than to make any type of partisan plea.

It was Mr. Nowlan's contention that the role of Parliament was not to legislate but rather to control the Executive - a concept expressed by Disraeli, but a concept considered by Canadians only in more recent years. He gave a lucid presentation of the Estimares procedure, and demonstrated how, under the previous system of procedure, the Cabinet could be controlled. It was his contention, however, that the present thirty-two legislative days do not give the Private Member of Parliament adequate opportunity to bring pressures upon the Cabinet. While he made reference to the revised Com-

mittee System in the Commons, he could have developed more fully the idea that Members may be controlling the Cabinet in committee, rather than on the floor of the House.

This would have illustrated even more clearly his contention that Canadians must take a long look at the institution of Parliament. His argument was that Canada may have to produce a hybrid - take the best of the Parliamentary system and the best of the Congressional system, admittedly a radical step, but one that has been quite successful in other Commonwealth nations. When one looks at the control the Indian Private Members may exert over the Indian Cabinet, one begins to see that Canada lags.

Mr. Nowlan dealt with a number of questions in a question and answer period, ranging from wage parity to the two party system. After listening to Mr. Nowlan one wished that all

Private Members were as interested in government as he and one wished that all Private Members knew as much as he does after only two years in the Commons. Parliament would be then looked upon in a better light by Canadians.

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