

while retaining economic and monetary links. The rest of Canada thinks it won't or shouldn't work.

Surely that final sentence would have had a different ring to it if the audience had known that the speaker was a product of the opposing force.

When the networks are confronted with a fast-breaking story in Canada, they have no hesitation about using reporters from CBC or CTV. Again, the Anglo-Canadian perception is the one transmitted, though the stories are sometimes specially done for the American networks. Canada is the only country in the world in which the US networks frame reports by foreigners as if they were done by network staffers. Even from England, BBC reports, when they are used, are identified as such. The reason must be that the Anglo-Canadian accent falls so easily on American ears. If so, that disadvantages Quebec, since Anglo-Canadians are the only ones who are permitted to tell the United States the Anglo-Canadian news and the Franco-Canadian news.

In the Quebec context, television's need for interesting pictures means that the issue of independence is reduced to personalism. The American TV eye sees Pierre Trudeau as a hero. Always the most casually dressed at any summit conference, he is a smiling, athletic nation-builder. He has been around for some time, and today he is an elder statesman who has been humanized by the ordeal his wife put him through.

If Trudeau is a builder, René Lévesque is a termite. He is a crybaby, a nuisance. He appears infrequently on US television, always to complain. He does not like the constitution, which would snap the apron strings to Mother England. He ungraciously objects to the visit of a perfectly pleasant Queen Elizabeth. His legislature even votes to withhold congratulations on the birth of Prince Charles's son — as if saying something courteous would introduce disturbing sunshine into a nice gloomy day.

These caricatures exist because television prefers confrontation — preferably of a violent nature — to anything else. The quick glimpses, the preference for confrontation, have resulted in distortion. Trudeau, given time on television, comes across as aloof, academic and close to humorless, while Lévesque, a professional TV performer in the past, is an amusing, persuasive, sometimes brilliant speaker. His television appearances in Quebec have been, according to Giniger, "masterpieces." But the American television audience has not seen any such thing.

Quebec fights back.

Despite the formidable obstacles to fair and thorough treatment in the US press, Quebec keeps trying. Lise Bissonnette, editor of *Le Devoir*, in *The American Review of Canadian Studies* (Spring, 1981), describes "Opération-Amérique," devised in 1978. Its purpose was, in part, to establish a communications program aimed at opinion leaders in the American media. She writes, "Budgets increased, energetic public relations operations had the effect of improving American press coverage following the disastrous distortions of 1976-77."

According to a Canadian reporter, Quebec officials "worry about American opinion, they think about it, they're oriented to it." But their actions sometimes belie that concern. Lévesque has sometimes said that he prefers the United States to English Canada. He is proud to have worn a US uniform during World War II, and he still spends

vacations in New England. Last July, Lévesque visited Washington at the invitation of Republican Senators, who meet on a regular background basis with foreign officials. Before the visit, Quebec spokesmen sent out numerous conflicting messages to reporters in Washington and New York. First, the Prime Minister would hold a news conference in Washington. Then, the Prime Minister would not hold a news conference but would be available to those who staked out (hung around) the Senate Foreign Relations Committee room. Then, the Prime Minister would not be available to reporters because this was a private visit. Etc. After this carousel had gone around a few times, one Washington reporter told the Quebec official who had been telephoning him, "Thank you very much. Please tell the Prime Minister that if he wants to see me, I will be in my office."

The uncertain signals, the lack of coordination, unnecessarily created a negative feeling about Lévesque himself and the plausibility of working with the Quebec government. In a two-paragraph story, *The New York Times* noted that Lévesque had "slipped into Washington" and that the Canadian Embassy was not involved with the arrangements. All in all, it was a maladroitness performance that did nothing to modify the American image of René Lévesque as a nay-sayer.

Yet barring dramatic news events, US coverage of Quebec can be expected to diminish when Lévesque leaves the premiership. No one else in the Parti Québécois has demonstrated the personality and the forcefulness of the incumbent. There will undoubtedly be a surge of coverage of the new election when that occurs, but there is nothing on the horizon to suggest a fundamental change in the present system of news gathering and dissemination — a system that has led to the inequities and sins of omission described in this article. □

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