

Robert Lemieux on Quebec

"Peaceful organization does not work"

by Dorothy Wigmore

"The people of Quebec have attempted to organize for change in a democratic and peaceful movement. But when they are told by the establishment they must do this, they are illegally placed in jail, they are illegally robbed, the elections are fraudulent," says Robert Lemieux.

The well-known Quebec lawyer was speaking to about 500 people at the Weldon Law Building, November 12.

"So when men and women are not able to achieve rightful change by organizing democratically their duty as free men and women is to organize on another terrain where they will not be put in jail illegally, where they will not be deprived of legal instruments necessary to carry out their work, and where they will not have their elections screwed up by all kinds of devious means," he added.

He traced Quebec's problems from the BNA Act to the present time, showing Québécois oppression and how they have attempted to overcome this.

THE BNA ACT, an English piece of legislation was a new form of colonialism pushed on the Québécois by force of arms, he said. The bulk of opinion at the time, judging from newspapers et cetera, show there was "a decisive majority of the people of Quebec who were opposed to the British North American Act scheme".

The so-called Father of Confederation, Cartier, was not an authorized representative of Quebec, he added.

The Québécois have been trying to reverse their situation since 1789. And they have always been forcefully put down, he stated.

Electoral and judicial democracy do not exist for the Québécois, Lemieux explained. The last election provided ample evidence. Terrorist tactics, such as claiming that nine Brinks trucks were leaving the province with securities, were proved false by a Montreal television station. Bourassa's promise of 100,000 jobs within a year was not true.

Besides the dollars paid by corporations to political parties, there are smaller and better hidden frauds during the last election, the lawyer explained. For example, 225 voters were registered at the address of a Montreal sports arena. The eighteen to twenty-five year olds also were hindered from getting their names put on voters' lists.

THE OCTOBER CRISIS LAST YEAR came just before the Montreal city election. "There were all kinds of 'cries d'alarmes' and sloganeering by M. Drapeau and he effectively wiped out the opposition, (FRAP)," Lemieux stated.

"Elections have become a sort of giant bingo," he added, "to give the people the illusion they are deciding. But both parties are saying the same thing."

Judicial democracy is hard to come by too. Quebec juror laws mean that trial by one's peers, is trial by 12 men picked from 20% of the population, the richer, generally more conservative ones, he explained.

Judicial progress is a new court building, "but this isn't progress," Lemieux said, "because the numbers of people coming to the courts increase. I think this is where lawyers and the law just caution social injustices that create most of our problems."

The FLQ trials in which Lemieux is taking part are not just either, as he showed. When Bernard Lortie defended himself, two of the most respected lawyers in the city were against him. At the same time, a Mafia trial was being prosecuted by an inexperienced lawyer, and the defendants have three very reputable defense attorneys.

Paul Rose was absent during his trial. Lemieux said "the trial is held in an armed camp with several dozen policemen everywhere to intimidate the jury," an illegal act.

Illegal anti-demonstration by-laws, holding people like Pierre Vallieres and Charles Gagnon in jail for 48 months and 44 months respectively, are other injustices he discussed.

Peaceful social change does not work, Lemieux said.

"ANY OF THE REVOLUTIONARIES IN QUEBEC, including Jacques Rose, would like to see any part of their program brought about peacefully . . . but there is no group that has got out of a colonial situation peacefully."

The Québécois have faced the violence in the system for so long, and have lost, that "the masses of the people support victory . . . When a revolutionary organization is able to win, I think they will support it."

The recent CNTU document on real socialism for Quebec, supported by all provincial CNTU locals is one example of this support. Another is the student and labour support for the FLQ manifesto during the October crisis. The 1966 socialist FLQ is responsible for this, he explained.

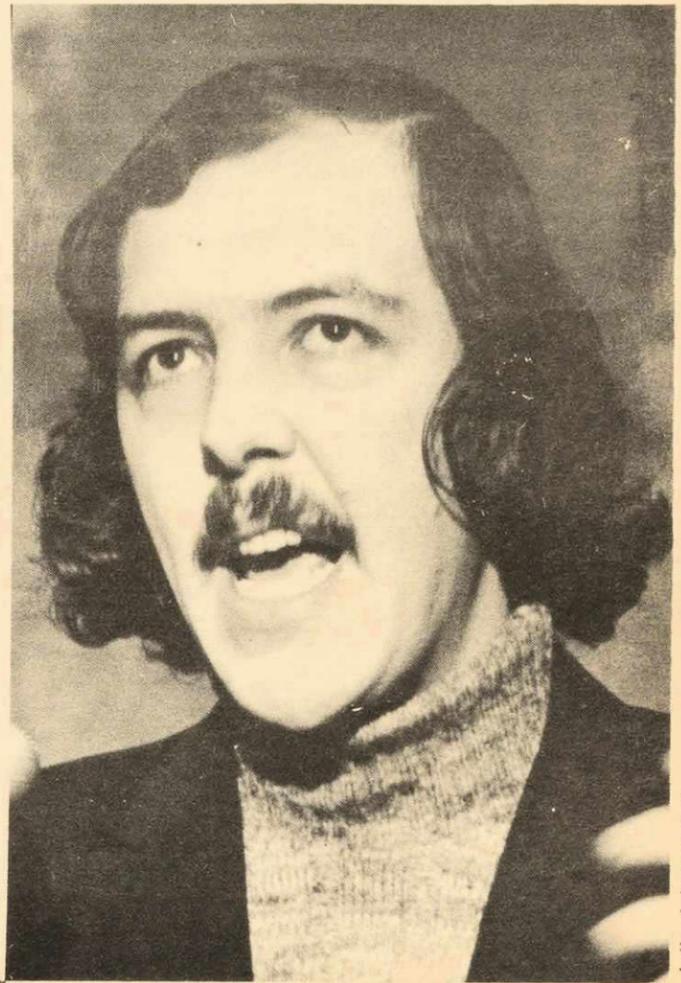
An independent and socialist Quebec must come about. "The fact that people speak French is what is being used to oppress them," Lemieux explained. "The fact that they're 'white niggers' because of the French language, culture and background. So this is the vehicle of exploitation and the vehicle of liberation."

Bilingualism will not work he said. Bilingualism means 15% of the population (in Quebec) forcing their language on the rest of the people. A homogeneous society is necessary — in Quebec this means a Québécois French-speaking society.

The language oppression of the Québécois is different and makes their oppression one notch higher than that in other parts of Canada, he explained. "They have a struggle with a potential for rallying the masses of the people."

DEMOCRACY, IN LEMIEUX'S VIEW, extends to production and means decentralization. He suggested the Québec goal is "a highly decentralized social organization where the people in the plants, in the region, in the schools, in the communities decide the maximum of thing for themselves there."

The Parti Québécois does not support goals like this he explained. They are a petit-bourgeois party. "In other words, they want to bring about



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fundamental constitutional change . . . and Quebec independence under more or less the same economic and social regime."

Lemieux does foresee the Canadian government bringing the troops in again, if the people

try to achieve independence. And this "is what Québécois face every time there's a serious threat to the regime."

However, he discounted the possibility of American troops coming in when Quebec separates.

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