

Spicer says

"Jump on Quebecois...lucidly"

by Danièle Gauvin

"Trudeau and Levesque are engaging in a Dawson city shoot-out but confrontation politics are out. Voters want to be given a clear vision of the situation. There is too much rampant ambiguity in this nation", said Keith Spicer during his Tuesday night talk in the McInnis room. Spicer, journalist and political commentator for the Vancouver Sun, spoke on the Quebec referendum and outlined his predictions on the next ten years of Canada/Quebec political relations.

In Spicer's view, over the next three to four years Canadians will continue to search for their elusive identity while a round of referendums and elections takes them to the threshold of impatience. He calls this the 'valium' stage because of the state of anxiety English Canadians have been in since the Nov. 15 'freak out'.

Before we can enter the second stage, that of participation, Spicer says that we must get to know the people of Québec better. "We must put the shoe on the other foot. Imagine Nova Scotia surrounded by

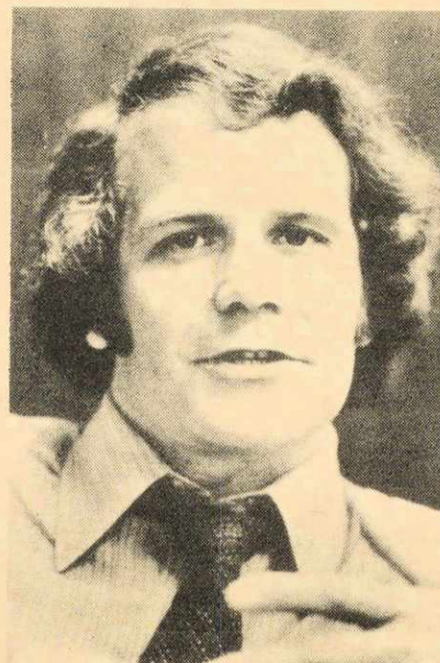
a sea of French-speaking people who continually put you down for wanting to be educated in English. Put in this context it becomes easy to understand Quebec's fortress mentality and its paranoia about language rights," Spicer explained.

The way to win back Québec, Spicer says, is to offer them a rosier vision than the P.Q. He noted that a show of force such as Trudeau's unsheathing of the War Measures Act sword would not regain French Canadian trust. "We need an attractive alternative to the powerful seductiveness of the P.Q. The feds should steal the third option idea and use it before Levesque does."

Spicer insisted that the individual can play an important part in the struggle for understanding. He pointed out that negative involvement from individuals such as "hate" letters to the editor already had an impact: They give many Quebecois the impression that all English Canadians are bigoted, he said. He urged positive participation such as taking part in student exchanges, leaning on 'bad' journalists and generally, "showing the power of the moderate."

Spicer went on, "when you do get to know a friendly Quebecois, don't talk to him about the flight of capital; invite him to see the Rockies while they're still his. Don't dump on each other without reason; do it lucidly."

Spicer sees the last stage in the struggle as a conciliatory one. He



sees the post-referendum scenario as a re-creation of Canada, this time with a better economic relationship for the West and the Atlantic area. He foresees that trade-offs will take place between the 5 economic regions and the federal government until a balance is struck. "We must all adopt a post-referendum mentality. We must stop worrying about our identity crisis and concentrate on alternatives for the future," he said.

According to Spicer, the cosmic error of the government has been its perception of Canada as a country of lawyers. "They have played with

the constitution, cosmeticized the Supreme Court and proposed French language legislation for Manitoba. They must replace these dry games with creative, intelligent and humane problem solving", argued Spicer.

During the question and answer period that followed the lecture, Spicer was criticized on a number of grounds. One questioner felt that he had skirted the issue of language rights entirely; Spicer's reply was that as former Commissioner of Official Languages for Canada he preferred not to dwell on his favourite subject. Most criticisms were centered on the format of his lecture. Many felt that Spicer had overly simplified the issues and glossed over them with a veneer of pop psychology and pop politics. Nevertheless, Spicer's relaxed style and pointed one-liners held the attention of the audience for over an hour.

In response to one woman who presented a socialist point of view, Spicer said, "I agree with you in many ways. However, we have divergent interpretations of worker freedom." He then described himself as a "closet NDP-er" and Canada as a nation suffering from "second-ratism".

Spicer concluded, "We are planning the Canada of the next 60-70 years. We cannot afford to go through this every ten years; this time we have to sort it out for at least a generation and a half. . . we have to think of our children.

To smoke or not to smoke?

The National Education Week on Smoking, Jan. 22-28, is for people who need help to stop smoking and non-smokers to stand up for their rights.

Persuading young people to stop smoking is a priority this year, the organizers say. "Some kids are smoking more than any adult", according to Anne Schultz of the Nova Scotia Council on Smoking and Health. Among boys, the percentage of regular smokers has dropped since 1970 to about one-third, but the number of female smokers has increased.

Smokers often say that the figures are merely statistical, and they are as likely to be killed by a car accident as by tobacco. But some 30,000 people die each year as a result of diseases related to cigarette smoking, according to N.S. health minister Dr. Maynard MacAskill. Less than one tenth that number are killed in car accidents.

For all smokers the risk of developing lung cancer is seven to 14 times as great as compared to non-smokers, MacAskill continued. Male cigarette smokers incur twice the risk of contracting cardiovascular disease as opposed to non-smokers, and heart disease today accounts for greater than 50 percent of the nation's deaths. Chronic bronchitis and emphysema are about 18 times as common in smokers as non-smokers, he said. Death rates from these diseases are 4 to 25 times greater for smokers.

Smoking during pregnancy leads to an increase in infant mortality. Some of the substances in cigarette smoke pass through the placenta and cross over into the baby's blood, according to the American Lung Association. Mothers who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to have an undersized baby.

"There was a time when cigarette smoking was socially acceptable almost anywhere. But knowledge has changed that attitude." In his endorsement of National Education Week on Smoking, MacAskill says that it is now "common knowledge" that smoking and serious health problems are related.

How to talk about drinking & driving

to your teenagers

We all know going out is fun, and no parent wants to take away those good times. But these days, with teenagers in and out of cars so much, it's crucial that they understand the dangers of drinking and driving, and that they can avert potential trouble by making the right decisions.

First, set your son or daughter straight on this often-misunderstood fact: beer, wine and spirits—in excess, all three are just as dangerous on the road.

A good way of avoiding trouble is to plan ahead. Suggest that your teenagers review their evening before going out. If they see drinking involved, far better to leave the car at home than to take chances later behind the wheel.

Far better also to say no to a drink, to refuse to drive, or to turn down a lift with an impaired friend than to go along with the crowd and maybe regret it.

You can support your teenagers and give them confidence by letting them know that if they ever need help you'll go for them, pay their cab or do whatever is necessary to get them home safely.

Most important, be a good example. Never drive if you've had even one drink too many. Better still, don't let it come to that. Know your limit and stay within it.

to your parents

If you're not of legal drinking age, don't touch a drop. But if you are, and you drive, then you're old enough to do your part in reaching an agreement with your parents on the subject.

Sure they worry. Because even if you don't drink, others in your group may. The friend driving you home one night may have had too much.

Show that you're equally concerned. Get serious. For instance, what have you read lately about the dangers of drinking and driving? Do you know how much beer, wine or spirits your body can safely handle before your judgment becomes impaired? Do you know the law in your province? And what happens if you break it?

Get the facts and discuss them calmly. Then take the initiative and propose a few family ground rules.

No driving if you've been drinking beyond your limit. (We'll send you a valuable free chart on responsible limits if you write us.) No riding with a friend who's been drinking. And whenever you parents in a situation ever turns dicey, you won't hesitate to phone for help.

Finally, remind your parents you're concerned for their safety, too, and that the family rules on drinking and driving apply to them, as well.

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