

## Letters cont.

This letter is an attempt to make two distinctions which I feel are fundamental in assessing this extraordinary and drastic measure.

First, Separatism is not an issue. If it were so, one would have expected police and military activities to be directed against all those persons acknowledging separatist sympathies or promoting programmes aimed at the political emancipation of Quebec.

This clearly has not happened. Reni Leverque, (to name but the most prominent of separatist politicians) is alive and well, and, to my knowledge, is not in the least cowed by the powers of the Liberal regimes at either level of government. (See Levesque's editorial, October 16 in Le Devoir, reprinted in EXCALIBUR October 12).

Evidently, many of the claims that the War Measures Act is being employed to thwart separatist ambitions are made by certain individuals and groups in anticipation of accruing assets in their stock of political capital.

Rather, the Act was invoked to combat a certain political element which had chosen to act from without the political system. In this sense, it is not so mistaken to think of the FLQ as an alien force threatening the internal integrity of this country — alien, not in a territorial perspective, not specially, but ideologically.

The demand for the release of twenty-three criminals who had been legally convicted by the judicial system is, in itself, an overt attempt to undermine and to subvert that system. Since the overall political system can only operate in the manner for which it is designed if the judicial substructure is able to effectively realize its function of social control, then it becomes quite clear that the FLQ activities aimed at profound and irreversible political upheaval — this despite the small number believed to be members of this organization.

Secondly, support for or against the administration's decision to implement the War Measures Act and the measure of its success or failure are two distinct issues — logically separated by the passage of time. There is, I think, from talking to various people, a great deal of confusion about this. Support for a specific action at a particular point in time does not entail or insure continued support into the future. Support is

engendered in the first instance by anticipation of successful action in pursuit of certain (unfortunately in this case, ill-defined) goals.

Into this calculus must also be included the costs or sacrifices involved. If then, little success is registered while costs are as high as predicted, support for the measure will decline accordingly. It is therefore consistent for a person to deny that he now supports the continuation of the exercise of the War Measures Act, but to assert, at the same time, that he did support it when it was brought into effect, and to maintain still that the Trudeau administration was behaving in a rational and responsible manner when it chose to implement this device. Rationality is not simply the function of success. More fundamentally, rationality is involved in the process of selecting one course of action from a limited list of alternatives — a course of action which seems at the time to offer the best prospects for success (both long-term and immediate).

Conditions and circumstances change, and the perception of these also changes. Second guessing is

always easy. This is not by way of an apology for Trudeau. But a true appreciation of the government's ability to fulfill the tasks assigned to it by the expectations of the electorate must needs require an appraisal of the government's continuing responses to this essentially dynamic situation in Quebec.

These are but two of the many instances of imprecise representation of issues — a practice which has had wide currency in this controversy.

Wayne Bowman, Winters II

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