

Canada and — through its embassy and consulates — while they are there. To a travelling reporter who has too many stories to cover in too short a time, those briefings are crucial to his orientation. And those briefings express the US tilt in favor of "a united Canada."

Presidents have used that phrase and so have State Department people. It is natural in a situation in which the US has better relations with Canada than with any other country, and Canada's crises appear manageable compared to difficulties that confront the United States in other parts of the world. An independent Quebec would be an unknown, an unpredictable stranger. When the PQ talked about taking Quebec out of NATO and NORAD, this disturbed the Pentagon, which also gives journalistic briefings. When the PQ reversed itself on the military pacts, the US Departments of State and Defense wondered whether the new position was not opportunistic, something that might be re-reversed when the right moment presented itself. And that fear manifested itself in reporters' copy.

This background may help to explain why Lévesque has sometimes been defiled in the American press with epithets ranging from "another Castro" to "fascist." The first is probably tied to the nationalization of certain industries. The second is a product of the "language police" and the flight of Quebec Jews, both of which received more coverage than they would have without those resonant phrases.

News agencies set tone

Many newspapers and radio and television stations in the United States depend on The Associated Press and United Press International for their foreign news, including news of Canada and Quebec. And even those publications with their own correspondents in Canada (there are no broadcasters) sometimes print wire service stories because their reporters are otherwise occupied. Yet neither wire service has a single person stationed in Quebec. The AP, which has one correspondent in Toronto, depends on Canadian Press (CP) for its Quebec coverage and UPI has a contractual relationship with its offshoot, United Press Canada (UPC). Wire service copy is much more widely distributed than anything that is staff-written for a newspaper. Wire copy is also the most important source of local and network radio and television news. Frequently, the copy is read on the air word-for-word as it appeared on the wires.

This is important because what Americans are seeing and hearing is an Anglo-Canadian version of events in Quebec. As of this writing, all four UPC reporters in Quebec are Anglo-Canadians. CP, with a much larger staff, has three French-Canadians among the twenty-two filing on the English wire from Quebec. But all CP and UPC copy goes through the agencies' Toronto clearing-houses before it is passed on to New York for US distribution, and those who run desks in Toronto are Anglo-Canadians.

There is no charge of conspiracy here, not even a suspicion that the editors in Toronto are suppressing certain stories or details. The problem is more complex, having to do with differing world views. It is exacerbated by the ill-feeling that exists between the two societies. A recent example may illustrate that difficulty. I was told by a Quebec government official about the proclivity on the part of the anglo press to "exaggerate" violence in Quebec.

asked: "Who said, 'We have met the enemy and they are ours?'" Was it *The Washington Post*? Or was it Pogo?

It is worthwhile to pause over this misinterpretation because it fits so neatly into the preconceived notions of many observers of the US press, especially in regard to the Quebec situation. Charlotte Gray, writing in the Canadian magazine, *Saturday Night*, for example, gullibly picked up the allegation, failed to check it, but seized the opportunity to heap scorn from the vantage of the ivory tower on *The Washington Post* and implicitly on the American press in general. The *Post's* actual position on the referendum, as expressed on the editorial page, was quite moderate:

Growth and stability now depend on those political leaders who urged Quebec to vote "non." On their response . . . depends whether the issue of separatism has now finally been put to rest.

But as in the news business, there is no catching up with a mistake. *The Washington Post's* "ludicrous" statements will pass into history as such on the basis of publication by those Syracuse "researchers."

If one is looking for clear hostility to the separatist movement in the American press, the best places to search are business publications. *The Journal of Commerce* frequently calls attention to economic reverses in Quebec. In an article appearing on January 6, 1982, reporter Leo Ryan calls attention to the heavy deficit on which the province is operating, and concludes, "Premier Rene Levesque is skating on thin ice." Similarly, *Barron's*, in the issue of November 9, 1981, comments editorially:

Americans often assume that the Quebec Anglophones are paying for past sins. This is naive. The Anglophones largely built Quebec, their rule was mild by world standards and the Francophones' prolonged failure to participate fully in the commercial system was mainly the fault of their own rural predilections and rapacious politicians.

The editorial also calls attention to the budget deficit, and charges that finance minister, Jacques Parizeau, "talked of extorting \$150 million a year," from Hydro-Quebec in order to bring more money into the provincial coffers.

So when, in July 1982, Standard and Poor's and Moody's Investor Service, both New York firms, lowered their credit ratings for Quebec, the news got heavy play in *The Wall Street Journal* and other financial chronicles. The harshness among business publications, if that is what it is, should be seen in the light of their responsibilities to their readership. They are providing information that is designed to be useful for investments. It is the nature of the investor to want to reduce variables. Political unrest is a very large variable. The financial community is uncomfortable with it, and its publications reflect their discomfort.

And it is not just a question of independence. The problem to business writers is the whole social and political outlook of the Parti Québécois, which considers itself social democratic, i.e., left of centre. The PQ early expressed ideas about foreign investment and Quebec control over its natural resources that it modified to some extent after it achieved power. For the American capitalist world, these statements had an ominous ring to them.

US government attitude

The United States government does not control what reporters write, but it briefs reporters before they visit