

FRAP: struggle for municipal power

By ANDRE BLAIS
 Because of the arrests of prominent members and candidates of the Front D'Action Politique (FRAP), and especially because of the irresponsible statements of Jean Marchand and Jean Drapeau, FRAP is now, in the minds of many people a mere extension of the FLQ. While it would be futile to deny that both FLQ and FRAP are rooted in the very real and urgent problems of Quebec, it must be made clear that FRAP has had its own unique development. Therefore, a short history is relevant.

sumers' cooperatives, citizens' groups, tenant groups, etc.
 At the same time, students were occupying CEGEPs (College d'Enseignement General et Professionnel which correspond to Community Colleges) and student activists were forming links with citizens' committees and union leaders.
 This was also the time when Michel Chartrand was elected as president of the Conseil Central de Montreal (affiliated with the CNTU).

Regional studies point to municipal power

Animation social
 An understanding of FRAP requires an understanding of the concept of 'animation sociale', a term which has come to mean a great deal to the left in Quebec. It is an approach which aims at mass social involvement and politicization by relating workers, the underprivileged etc., to their very immediate needs such as housing, welfare programmes etc., in this way making them conscious of their potential power.

The following summer the unions agreed to work together on the organization of 15 regional colloquiums. These colloquiums involved the CEQ (corporation des Enseignants du Quebec, the teachers union), the CNTU, the FTQ, the UCC (the farmers union) and the 'Conseil de la Corporation du Quebec'. They were intended to analyze the condition of wage-earners and to figure out ways of assuring their participation in the loci of political and economic decision-making.

The history of 'l'animation sociale' begins around 1964, about the same as the first FLQ cells. The first real attempt was 'L'Action Sociale Etudiante' which was mainly concerned with problems of urban renewal during work projects for three summers. At first, this approach was practiced by students and was in fact, financed by the government, although it did influence the thinking of the unions, especially the confederation of National Trade Unions.

In the last chapter of the document prepared for these meetings, it was proposed that the solution to the corruption of most of the city councils was the taking over of municipal power through the CAP (comites d'action politique).

In 1965, the FTQ (Federation des Travailleurs du Quebec, the Quebec branch of the Canadian Labour Congress) published an important study on the problems of housing, education and health in Montreal, quoting as its inspiration Pope Paul VI. The conclusion of the study, even though it established that uneducated people were exploited by the system, was surprisingly mild and optimistic: "interest groups and the different levels of government must work together in the fight to eliminate poverty and this fight should not cease as long as the sad existence of the poor continues — the third solitude."

Out of this general background emerged FRAP (Front de'Action Politique). In its manifesto "Les Salaires au Pouvoir", it declared that its action will focus on three issues: election, consumer affairs and working conditions. The taking over of municipal power was to be only one of its purposes and not even necessarily the main one (in contrast, for instance, to the Parti Quebecois). FRAP considers itself a movement rather than a party. An even more radical connotation is given by their initials — FRAP. In French, 'frapper' means to hit.

Unfortunately, this study was not followed by means enabling people to become conscious of the exploitation of which they were specific victims; no subsequent information, no money, no technical assistance.

Non-debates

FRAP's first activity was to organize a series of debates with the councillors in each section. People in FRAP considered it to be a first test: a way of assessing its own strength. The experience was not very successful. First, most of the councillors did not show up, so that there was no real confrontation. Moreover, the attendance was usually small; the different meetings attracted the same people; those attending were already convinced, and so on. Despite this, the electoral prospective seemed attractive.

The official decision was to be taken at the congress in August. But, as early as May and June, FRAP launched a campaign to lower the voting age and to reform the electoral map. The campaign was a



traditional one; consisting of press conferences, briefs to the government...

Elections without a democratic climate

There was no doubt, even at the time, that FRAP would run in the election. It is important to note however, that when it decided to get involved in the election, many of the CAP of which FRAP is the central organization were not well structured. FRAP hoped to strengthen these citizens committees through electoral activity.

Now, what about the election results? At first, they seem to indicate a complete FRAP failure. Drapeau got more than 90% of the vote; all the 52 Civic Party candidates were elected. FRAP would appear to have been completely demolished.

Bread and butter programme

This helps to explain the nature of FRAP's programme. It is obvious that the programme is concerned with basic bread and butter issues.

Moreover, while the programme does not refer to any basic ideology, many FRAP leaders do adhere to an ideology but downplay it, hoping rather to sensitize and politicize people through concrete issues.

From this perspective, then FRAP might not look that different from Drapeau's Civic Party; both keep promising more than they can afford to deliver and both are somewhat less than completely open. The main point on which FRAP departs from Drapeau is the whole question of participation and democratization; in fact, this is the only issue in which there is consensus among FRAP members.

The results may be very misleading however, since it would be unrealistic in any city for 90% of the people to agree with one party especially in a city facing the economic and social problems of Montreal. It is obvious that the whole climate in Montreal during the last two weeks hurt FRAP badly.

The existence of democracy becomes a delusion when two candidates are arrested (in a well publicized way) by the Montreal Police, and when Marchand makes a statement that FRAP is an FLQ 'front'.

Even Claude Ryan, who favoured the Civic Party, asked that the election be deferred because "l'election sera, en un sens tres real videe de sa substance democratique" (the election will be, in a very real sense, emptied of its democratic essence).

People who want to bring in substantial reform in Quebec society are likely to become more and more skeptical about the democratic process.

FRAP'S platform for Montreal

Translated from Le Quartier Latin, Oct. 10-23.

Housing

In Montreal, most people are tenants (three out of four Montrealers, as opposed to one out of three Torontonians). But it is a majority without protection (We have leases imposed on us by the landlords); a majority pay extremely high rents (nearly 25% of their income), one of the highest percentages as compared to the other cities of Canada, the United States and Europe.

The present administration: a big zero for housing

- 0.4% of the city's budget (1969-70).
- 2,000 housing units demolished each year.
- but only 2,238 units of low-cost housing in construction or finished in 10 years.

Whereas, according to Montreal's own City Planning Department, 10,000 units, at a minimum, are necessary each year.

FRAP offers Montrealers emergency housing

- 10,000 units of public housing per year.
- complete renovation of the old sections of the city.
- ensure that citizens participate in the renovation of their own neighbourhood and administer the housing complexes built there.
- eliminate the land speculation which has been

responsible for our high rents by the "municipalization" of land.

- protect tenant's rights by:
- outlining model leases to protect them against their landlords.
- placing control of all rents under a renewal board.
- allowing tenants of the same landlord to negotiate collective agreements and go on rent strikes.

Health

In Montreal, the populace takes care of itself as best it can. The lower income sections of the city have fewer doctors available than the upper income sections. Whole sectors of the city's population have no psychiatric services available at all. The result: the state of health of the families of Montreal wage-earners is lamentable; infant mortality, poor performance in schools, industrial accidents, etc.

The present administration: a big zero for health

In Montreal, more importance is attached to Man and His World and to the Olympics than to the health of the citizens. Out of an annual budget of 280 million, less than 3% is devoted to health care. The result: only 10% of our children were able to pass medical check-ups in Montreal schools.

FRAP offers Montrealers emergency health care

The establishment of public health clinics in each area, beginning with the areas needing the most, these clinics would include nutritional hygiene services, family planning and home nursing care. These clinics would be administered by the citizens of each section with the collaboration of the clinic's staff.

Pollution

Water purification around Montreal. To require industries, under threat of fines, to dispose of their wastes without endangering public health.

Social and economic development with the present administration

Everything is improvised; nobody knows where we're going or what the present administration's plans or priorities are. They would like to have us believe that the development of a city as important as Montreal depends on such ephemeral, albeit spectacular, projects as Expo and the Olympics.

There is no regulation of private enterprise: the mess which is the Concordia Estate in the St. Louis section is a prime example. The populace is not informed; well-organized publicity campaigns are launched promoting big projects but we are not told what they will cost or what fate awaits us. They hide information. They do not ask the opinions of those who will be affected: for example, the citizens of 'le petit Bourgogne' didn't have any say in the renovation of their section. There is no dynamic long-term social policy: the present administration improvises, is incapable of any planning and doesn't take into account the urgent needs of wage-earners. Eight million dollars was devoted to health and housing out of a budget of 280 million in 1970.

Faced with this situation, FRAP offers Montrealers:

A city development plan which would take us out of the

anarchy into which we've been plunged by private industry left to pursue their own profits.

A real democratization of politics where wage-earners would take their place and install at city hall a politics of information; of consultation; of decentralization; of decisions to the level of each section; by the establishment of community centres providing necessary services (day care, health clinics, legal aid, municipal information).

A reform of administrative structures; creation of a planning office including local planning committees in each section; these committees would be composed of citizens advised by civil servants.

Transportation

In Montreal the transportation system is deteriorating. The MTC has increased its rates 66% in the last 2 years and 500% in ten years. The flow of traffic becomes heavier and heavier: the downtown is congested and free parking is unavailable.

The taxi industry is in a complete state of anarchy. Drivers are exploited; they earn 93¢ per hour and work 75 hours per week.

The Metro and the buses are a public service the cost of which is borne entirely by the users.

Faced with this disturbing situation, FRAP offers Montrealers:

The city should give priority to public rather than to private (automobile) transportation: while the cost of a mile of subway is equal to the cost of a mile of city street, the subway can carry five times as many people and still reduce street traffic.

The long term objective should be free public transit. An American urbanologist, Mr. Blumenfeld, who has frequently been consulted by the city of Montreal, affirms its feasibility. The department stores and offices downtown, which benefit from the Metro as much as the users, should defray a part of the cost.

Meanwhile fares should be frozen and certain groups should be given reduced fares; particularly students, welfare recipients and old people.

A taxi board, with a unified dispatch centre, resulting in the disappearance of the present fleets which are responsible for the present anarchy and exploitation of drivers.

Leisure and culture

More than 40% of Montrealers have not yet been able to afford the luxury of going to Expo '67 or to Man and His World even once.

Whole sections are deprived of any playgrounds or parks.

Faced with this situation, FRAP offers Montrealers:

The creation of a genuine programme of leisure based on the advice of councils elected by the citizens of each section.

Man and his World to be made permanent and to answer to the needs of wage-earners and youth by the creation of a free public university, a youth centre.

French to become the working language in Montreal industries under threat of fines.



Public housing... We've built 313 units in 10 years.

We won't be able to speculate any more.

Public health! Not more than for Westmount. Place des Arts.

Public parks! I widened the streets so the children could play there...

Every so often there is a bus. This winter, if you're cold in your slum, pay 30¢ and get warm on my Metro.

C'EST PAS L'IDEAL POUR APPROUCHER SI VOUS ETES PRES CONTRE LA PLACE DES ARTS.

LES PARCS PUBLICS! J'AI FAIT ELARGIR LES RUES POUR QUE LES ENFANTS JOUENT...

DE TEMPS EN TEMPS IL YA UN AUTOBUS.

Housing: 10,000 units of public housing will be necessary each year.

Public health: We need medical clinics in the neighbourhoods.

Parks: You want green spaces? Go to Westmount.

Transportation: More and more freeways aren't any use to Montrealers... but they attract American tourists.

Jacques Ives Morin, a prominent spokesman for the Parti Quebecois will address a rally on Monday November 2, at 4:00 p.m. in the Winters College Common Room. Morin is president of the Estates General of Quebec which has advocated that (if a new formula for federalism in Canada is not developed) Quebec should separate from Canada. The rally is being organized by the Waffle at York. Jim Laxer, a Waffle member and student of French Canada will also speak.