

How does the future look for Canada? I don't think anyone is naive enough to imagine that we have heard the last of the FLQ, or that violence, which is a growing threat to society everywhere, will leave Canada unscathed. I think we have given notice to the FLQ, and any other groups of like mind, that the Government of Canada is not an easy mark, and that the governments and people of Canada will act together swiftly and firmly to deal with terror wherever it appears, without at the same time allowing our democratic system to become warped in the process. We have been reminded in a tragic but unforgettable way that freedom is written in the blood of those who down the centuries have resisted terror, that freedom does not issue from the muzzle of an assassin's gun.

Terrorism in society is akin to a virus in the blood-stream. The virus must be identified and neutralized. At the same time, the weakness in the body that permitted the virus to take hold must be diagnosed and the necessary measures taken to increase the body's immunity.

The FLQ terrorists do not represent the people of Quebec or their aspirations. They are not so much Quebec separatists as extremists verging on anarchism. They are sometimes identified as neo-Marxist revolutionaries. I have no idea what that term really means, but I can tell you that what we know about the aims of the FLQ strongly suggests that they are rather short on ideology of any kind. They are determined to destroy the ordered society that is the underpinning of civilization as we know it, but they offer only vague generalities in its place.

I have likened the FLQ to a virus in the system and implied that there are weaknesses in the Canadian body politic that have allowed the virus to take hold. Long before the crisis erupted, the Canadian Government had been dealing with the very real problems in Canadian society. Some of these we share with the rest of the Western world; some are native to Canada. Western society everywhere has to come to grips with the very real threats posed by partly-alienated groups -- ethnic and racial minorities, the poor and under-privileged, the impatient young. Affluence and permissiveness, widespread though they may be, are not universal in our society. Poverty and frustration are still the common lot of millions. Our young people are not prepared to be patient, not prepared to accept that intractable, embedded problems call for long-term, gradual solutions. Here is injustice, they say -- remedy it. Our institutions are not yet sufficiently geared to rapid advance; we lack the answers to many of the problems we face. Even when we do know what to do, the right decisions made today may take months or even years to show results. This is particularly true in the economic field.

In the meantime, alienated groups, particularly among the young, are questioning the adequacy and relevance of our institutions -- the churches, the judicial system, even democracy itself. They are questioning the values our institutions exist to protect. They are questioning the human worth of Western civilization, of the acquisitive, so-called "consumer" society. What worth, they ask, has a system that cannot guarantee to all its people a decent life and reasonable chance of fulfillment?

These are very pertinent questions. They have always been asked; the difference now is that the explosion in communications brings the whole world together. The process of government is no longer arcane, it is patent.