

## Quebeckers and Anglos meet in B.C.

# "I'm a bloke, you're a frog, kiss me..."

By Ara Rose Parker

The Summer Language Programme (SLP) at the University of British Columbia was host to 85 Quebecois students who attended the intensive language and cultural session this summer.

There were two sessions of six weeks each, a period of time which seems short to those of us who have eight months of university to look forward to, in which, time lost dimension due to the intense nature of the programme.

The Secretary of State, through the provincial governments, offered bursaries, covering cost of books, tuition and room and board, at various universities across Canada for this second official language programme designed to promote bilingualism.

A French programme with the same aims ran parallel to the English programme. This permitted English and French Canadians to have bilingual exchanges and for cross-country friendships to establish themselves.

Culture shock was inevitable and something one had to be sensitive to. Quebec represented not just home, but political and social ideals foreign to those of the English Canadian culture.

I was working for the programme at UBC this past summer as a

'cultural assistant', a term which gained meaning as the sessions progressed. The CAS's became role models; for English Canadians, an awesome responsibility.

We led workshops in topics from cultural awareness to theatre and song, and organized freetime activities. As a liaison between the programme and students, it was our job to control the introduction of our culture to the Quebecois and provide them with a bouncing board for their reactions to it.

Self-questioning on both the part of the students and the staff concerning the interaction and importance of the respective cultures, led to a deeper comprehension of both.

There were moments of confusion and doubt regarding the political future of Canada. Separatism was the topic of debate throughout.

Living in residence and spending the days with the Quebecois allowed for personal exchanges on cultural perspectives.

During one bilingual exchange an interesting turn developed. The topic started out to be theatre, progressed to the arts in Canada, then to culture. The anglophones related their resentment of American cultural influence and predominance, the Québécois, pride in their cultural identity and in-



Summer Language Programme students enjoy a musical interlude at the U of BC this summer.

dependence.

Some Quebecois were not aware of English Canadian frustration regarding cultural identity. One Quebecois asked, "We are aware of the difference between Quebec and the rest of Canada, but where does the common ground lie, socially and culturally, if at all?"

The challenge left everyone stumped. The question is fundamental regarding Canada's unity.

I was glad to hear it asked but disappointed in the lack of response.

The other week the Quebecois held their first reunion of those present at UBC, in Quebec City. Almost all attended; hugging, singing and remembering highlights of their experience. The immediate purpose of the programme was the acquisition of a second language; in retrospect the socio-cultural exchange left the biggest impression on the students.

Most students who attend either CEGEP (colleges equivalent to senior high school grades in Ontario) or university, had never been outside the province of Quebec. The bursary programme granted them their first encounter with other Canadians.

Prejudice and preconceptions about English Canadians had changed because of the experience.

Rachel, a Montreal girl, said, "When I arrived on the bus with my suitcase, I was amazed by people's willingness to help. People are easy to talk with here, I can't say that for Montreal."

Louise, married and a Sherbrooke University student, travelled alone to Vancouver for the course.

"I found teachers and staff very kind, helpful and patient. I won't forget them or Vancouver."

Most students attended the programme to learn or improve their knowledge of English for its own sake, for travel, for jobs, for school (most university texts are in English), and for the opportunity to see the rest of the country. The experience was positive, as were the results.

In many cases the students' views on separatism have been affected.

"Seeing English and French Canadians living and working together at UBC, made me realize it is possible," one student commented.

"They are no different as people from us," Michel contributed.

Students stated that although they are pro-Quebec, committed and expect several political changes to be made in the near future, they are not sure what Quebec's role will be in Canada to come.

Marc-Andre, a recent graduate of the University of Montreal, feels there is no choice.

"We have to separate. Before I went to UBC I was separatist but I didn't know why, now I do."

"I got to know the English Canadians better, I like them, but there are certain differences which cannot be altered short of assimilation."

"Francophones in other parts of Canada are not Quebecois. When we do separate if they want to live here, they can, if not... I'm not going to worry about them."

"Compromises are not enough; a new tie or shirt alters your style, it does not change you. Separation is the only answer, maybe not this time around, but it is inevitable. If Levesque doesn't do it... I will."

Whether the students became more separatist, more indecisive, or more federalist, what the summer experience did was to help them become more aware of themselves and other students across the country. More importantly they are sensitized to the issue.

That at least is a beginning.



### comment

## Media's coverage of national unity debate clouded by prejudice, hysteria

By Paul Stuart

As the Parti Quebecois steadily builds support for separatism on the other side of the Ottawa River, a truly ominous backlash against them, is rearing its head in the English language media.

This phenomenon mirrors and feeds the almost hysterical reaction in English Canada to the efforts of the PQ to preserve and build French culture.

The worst example yet: Harry Bruce's column in the October 8 issue of *The Canadian Magazine*. First Bruce lumps together the signs of a Nazi revival in West Germany, the growth of fascism in South America, the spectre of the National Front in England and the language legislation of the Quebec government.

Oh Bruce does play the good liberal, "balancing things" with the following feeble insertion in the last paragraph:

"I know the men who run Quebec are not Nazis. I know that honorably and desperately they are only trying to save their own

culture from extinction. Still I hate to see any government award itself the legal right to penalize minorities for what it decides are their cultural shortcomings."

The column is accompanied by a graphic depicting a Nazi banner with a maple leaf in the centre of it. The equation is clear if implicit: Rene Levesque - Adolf Hitler. Odious.

Bruce's own words on the defensive character of the PQ's aims, pull the rug out from under his insinuation that the pequistes are careening towards Nazism. But I fear it is the insinuation which will remain with most readers.

On Sunday, October 9, the public affairs program CTV Reports had a segment on the exodus of Jews from Montreal. It claimed upwards of 25,000 may have fled the city since the PQ victory last November. The show continually linked nationalism to anti-semitism.

But it presented absolutely no evidence that the PQ represents

this kind of nationalism. You can't blame the children of Auschwitz survivors for being suspicious of nationalist movements generally. The question is do Jewish fears of this specific movement have any basis in fact?

On what grounds can the PQ be accused of anti-semitism? Where is the obscene hate literature which characterized the Nazis from the beginning?

These questions have an obviously rhetorical ring to them. However they have not been thought up by this writer out of the blue, but are a response to a column in Canada's largest magazine and a national network's showcase public affairs program, both of which should have provided answers but failed even to pose the questions.

I have no wish to imply that the PQ can guarantee a rosy future for all Quebecers, or that the pequistes are immune to the illusions inherent in all nationalism.

But I do object to the depraved

way good men like Rene Levesque and Camille Laurin have been smeared by the English press. Laurin, architect of the language legislation, has been compared to both Robespierre and Dr. Goebbels.

There just isn't enough of the kind of reporting which appeared in *Maclean's* on September 19. In an article on the possible effects of Quebec independence on the Atlantic provinces, Marty Dolen, research assistant to the leader of the Nova Scotia NDP, commented:

"Quebec wants political separation and economic union. Alberta wants economic independence with political union. Alberta's more dangerous to us than Quebec. They can kill us."

Which means the question of Canadian unity is a complex one.

Prejudice and hysteria will doom any attempt to report the facts.

And for much of the English media, the bell is tolling.

HARRY BRUCE



### Canada, 1977: Can Hitler happen again?

Graphic accompanying article in Canada's biggest circulation magazine, that tied the Parti Quebecois to fascism — with little supporting evidence.