

The White Paper

The Quebec government proposes sovereignty-association. It suggests that Quebec could negotiate a mutually beneficial economic association with the rest of Canada. In the words of the white paper, a sovereign Quebec would have the power:

"To levy all taxes, to make all laws and to be present on the international scene," and it would also be free to share with Canada "certain national powers."

Sovereignty-association is treated as a single concept and the white paper emphasizes the idea of sharing. It proposes that:

"Given the situation of our two communities and because the economic area that Canada and Quebec share must be both preserved and developed, . . . the two communities [would] remain in association, not only in a customs union and a common market but in a monetary union as well."

The paper recognizes some of the difficulties of negotiating the complete package as a unit.

"These negotiations (which would come after a 'Yes' vote in the Referendum) should bear first on the repatriation to Quebec of those powers exercised by the federal Parliament and on the transfer of the corresponding resources."

It adds, "It is obvious that the process the Quebec government is beginning with this docu-

ment will not be completed for some years. . . ." and it says reassuringly, "Any unilateral declaration of sovereignty immediately after the Referendum is completely out of the question. . . ."

Critics have suggested that the Government of Canada may simply refuse to negotiate on the question of sovereignty, but the white paper expresses a conviction that, "If the majority of Quebecers say 'Yes,' Ottawa and the rest of Canada, though they will be disappointed, will have no choice. They will negotiate." It cites two polls indicating a willingness by other Canadians to negotiate under certain circumstances. One, by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, reported that 50 per cent of the respondents in other provinces think English-speaking Canada should agree to negotiate "if a majority [of Quebecers] opt for sovereignty-association." (The Referendum, however, will not ask voters to make a final choice but only to give the Quebec government a "mandate to negotiate the proposed agreement.") The other poll, taken by York University in May 1979, indicated that a "majority of Canadian leaders" believe the rest of Canada should be willing to negotiate an economic agreement with Quebec "if Quebec becomes independent."

The Quebec Government's Program

This is the program proposed for a sovereign Quebec as outlined by the white paper:

Laws and Taxes

The only laws and taxes would be those adopted by the (Quebec) National Assembly.

Territory

The boundaries of Quebec would remain as they are.

Citizenship

Every resident or native would have an automatic right to citizenship; landed immigrants who could meet requirements would be eligible for citizenship. Canada and Quebec would have a common passport.

Minorities

Anglophones would have all rights now given them. Amerindians and Inuit would be able to maintain their cultures on their territories.

Courts

Quebec judges now on the bench would remain. A joint Quebec-Canadian court would interpret the treaty of association.



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