

liberators were not more impatient. And certainly, the rhetoric of certain Quebec nationalists could lead one to believe that this was exactly the situation. "Slow genocide", "colonialist spoliation", threats to the survival of French-speaking people and many other things have been mentioned. But this was all, as I have said, so much rhetoric. The Quebec government's White Paper, which started off the referendum campaign, and which is the official manifesto of the secessionists, deals swift justice on these lyrical exaggerations. Here is how the White Paper describes contemporary Quebec:

"We are a young and educated people. In less than a generation, we have completely transformed our educational system; among the least educated 20 years ago, we are now in the front ranks of the industrialized countries. Today, our colleges and universities produce graduates by the thousands.

"Our work force is competent and efficient. Various studies have shown that the Quebec worker is often prouder and more industrious than his North American colleagues.

"In science and technology, Quebec has made giant strides thanks to its laboratories and research centres, and many of our consulting engineering firms excel in their field; three of the top ten such firms in the entire world are Quebec enterprises!

"In the past few years, the dynamic progress of our regions and the birth of many new enterprises belies the old cliché about Quebecers' lack of entrepreneurship; increasingly, our firms have been joining forces so as to make a better contribution to the expansion of our economy.

"Quebecers are well known, too, for their inclination to save, and thanks to their savings, they now have a significant supply of capital; the extraordinary success of our credit and savings co-operatives, as well as our insurance companies, provides eloquent proof of that. The *caisses populaires Desjardins* (Desjardins credit unions) and the *caisses d'économie* (savings unions) have more than four million members, and assets of more than \$10 billion; in 12 years, the total assets of the *caisses d'entraide économique* (economic credit unions) went from \$1 million to more than \$1 billion. Moreover, by creating a universal pension plan we have been able to increase our collective savings considerably: the *caisse de dépôt et de placement* (deposit and investment fund) now ranks among the largest investment companies in Canada in terms of size and the variety of its holdings. As for Hydro-Quebec, its assets make it the biggest firm of any kind in Canada and one of the largest producers and distributors of electricity in North America.

"We are already a rich province. In 1978, our *per capita* gross domestic product ranked Quebec fourteenth among 150 countries in the world.*"

We Quebecers are therefore not the damned of the earth, even in the eyes of the harshest critics of the present system. Those critics may have denounced the "crimes" committed under federalism, pointed out certain very real cases of injustice of which we were the victims, but they have to admit that we are not emerging from a century

* Source: OECD, main economic indicators, April 1979. These comparisons are based on the national GDP/*per capita* in American dollars.