

Quebec visitors politicized, want power

by Eleanor Copeland

Not an overwhelming number of York students took part in the discussions with 45 students from Quebec universities of McGill, Montreal, and Bishop's, held in the Vanier JCR last weekend.

Too bad, because it was both interesting and successful.

The French Canadians present were very politicized. The fact that many were law students accounts for this in part, but they insisted that the French Canadian youth has been pushed towards becoming politicized. In Quebec, culture has become a political issue. They want official bilingualism at every level in Canada, not just the school level so they can freely travel in their country and communicate at least with those in public service fields, in their own language. To achieve this and other goals they want more political power. Quebec, in their opinion, is politically inferior and if to remain Canadian they must remain inferior, they will secede.

Most Québécois are not Separatists they said. They freely admit that the Rassemble-

ment pour L'Indépendance Nationale has fascist tendencies, but assert that people adhere to its ideas more in reaction to their situation rather than because they consider it a viable solution.

Moderator Norman Depoe of the CBC suggested we not ask what Quebec wants because it wants a multiplicity of things and we just don't know how to pin them down. The French-Canadians in one voice replied "WE know." They know that in the year 2000 they will likely be a minority in their own province and will then never achieve their rights. They want French to be the language of success in Quebec as well as English. They do not want to destroy the English-Quebecois, but only to counterbalance his power there.

An important point was the emphasis on collective rights and action. They are not concerned with individuals or those French Canadians living outside Quebec. If they were, they say the fight in Quebec would be lost because legislation must have collective force to be constructive, and provide political backing for their position.

They said the mental attitude of the people must change so they see the inherent value in being bilingual, but they realize this would take more than a revised school system of French instruction.

Depoe stated that whether or not we like it English is the common language in Canada. To this the French replied that nevertheless all dealings in Quebec should be conducted in French and that the Federal and provincial governments should force this. Right now the French business culture is too weak to enforce this — the corporations are not planned in French.

The French Canadians say they will not accept a compromise because they know what they want and figure it is time they got it. They feel they do not have equality of opportunity and the power to resolve their problems themselves.

The English Canadians in Quebec feel threatened and a lot are leaving and taking their money with them. The French Canadians were divided in their reaction to this possible

continued on page 14

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