

## Referendum in Quebec

In the ideal democracy, people would design the governments under which they live. In practical ones political parties offer options and the voters choose.

Significant decisions are being made in Quebec.

The premier of the province, René Lévesque, and his Parti Québécois wish to negotiate political sovereignty for Quebec combined with economic association with the rest of Canada. When the PQ was elected in 1976, it promised to let the people of Quebec vote on the question within five years and on May 20th this proposal will be put before them in both French and English:

*The Government of Quebec has made public its proposal to negotiate a new agreement with the rest of Canada based on the equality of nations.*

*This agreement would enable Quebec to acquire the exclusive power to make its laws, levy its taxes and establish relations abroad—in other words, sovereignty—and at the same time to maintain with Canada an economic association including a common currency.*

*No change in political status resulting from these negotiations will be effected without approval by the people through another referendum.*

*On these terms, do you agree to give the Government of Quebec the mandate to negotiate the proposed agreement between Quebec and Canada?*

*Le Gouvernement du Québec a fait connaître sa proposition d'en arriver, avec le reste du Canada, à une nouvelle entente fondée sur le principe de l'égalité des peuples;*

*Cette entente permettrait au Québec d'acquérir le pouvoir exclusif de faire ses lois, de percevoir ses impôts et d'établir ses relations extérieures—ce qui est la souveraineté—et, en même temps, de maintenir avec le Canada une association économique comportant l'utilisation de la même monnaie;*

*Aucun changement de statut politique résultant de ces négociations ne sera réalisé sans l'accord de la population lors d'un autre référendum;*

*En conséquence, accordez-vous au Gouvernement du Québec le mandat de négocier l'entente proposée entre le Québec et le Canada?*

**Yes—No**

**Oui—Non**

In its white paper, "Québec-Canada: A New Deal," the Quebec government tells why it believes citizens should vote "Yes." The Liberal Party of Quebec has criticized the Referendum question as misleading and its leader Claude Ryan said during debate in the province's National Assembly that whatever the outcome of the Referendum vote, the party would continue to fight for a program of constitutional reform that would maintain the Confederation but give the provinces greater authority. Whether or not René

Lévesque and his party manage to convince Quebecers to support them in the Referendum, the voters will soon go again to the polls. The Parti Québécois government, elected in 1976, is required to call provincial elections no later than 1981. Traditionally governments tend to call them every four years, which would mean this year.

In this issue of CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI we examine the two propositions, give a smattering of background and offer some incidental information.

*Cover photo: The Chamber of Deputies of the provincial legislature, the National Assembly, in Quebec City. The painting by Charles Huot depicts the debate over the official language of the Assembly of Lower Canada (now Quebec) in 1793. English and French were given more or less equal status.*