

A French-language newspaper headlined the "decapitation" of the separatist movement in the election, but only one major figure departed the upper echelon of the Parti Québécois, though several suffered defeat. Mr. Levesque expressed his personal regret at the resignation of Jacques Parizeau, PQ council vice-president and chief economic adviser who, however, remains as a party member. The resignation followed an election post-mortem at which, informants said, the council was criticized for making the economic aspects of Quebec independence a main theme of the campaign. Critics felt voters had been inundated by statistics beyond their comprehension.

Even while the campaign was in progress, the Parti Québécois "image" of independence softened somewhat and the concept has come under further public debate in party ranks in the post-election period. Mr. Levesque told campaign meetings it would take at least 18 months to two years of negotiations before Quebec independence could be declared after a Parti Québécois win. He pledged a referendum in the form of a vote on the constitution of a sovereign Quebec. He even conceded more than one referendum might be required — Newfoundland, after all, had required two on the way into Confederation in 1949.

Shortly after the election, Andre Normandeau, a university dean and defeated Parti Québécois candidate, caused a stir by proposing a re-examination of goals with the idea of presenting independence in a different manner. The ideas of Claude Morin, another professor who had been a close adviser to four Liberal and Union Nationale premiers before going over to the independence cause, created a greater stir. Defeated in a close race in a Quebec City riding, this formidable former civil servant proposed that the PQ program should envisage independence by stages. The gradual approach would reassure those voters fearing the economic consequences of an abrupt break. Still another professor, and Party official attacked not so much ideas as attitudes and illusions. He criticized cocksure confidence and tendencies to despise political opponents.

Some observers feel the post-election picture makes it difficult for Mr. Levesque to shed his mantle, even though he has commented on the physical and intellectual drain imposed by 13 hard years in politics. He also continues to earn his bread as a newspaper columnist, journalism being his first calling. Mr. Levesque came close to resigning after the 1970 election. He was deterred only by the kidnap-murder crisis of October of that year. He saw a risk that the Parti Québécois would be discredited by identification in the popular mind with the activities of the Front de Liberation du Quebec, the terrorist organization that kidnapped British trade diplomat James Cross and assassinated Pierre Laporte, Quebec labor minister.

Reviewing the scene, Dominique Clift, Quebec editor of the Montreal *Star* said

of Mr. Levesque and his party: "He is under considerable pressure to remain at the head of a party which has a hard time imagining what its prospects would be without him. It is a party which the process of ageing makes extremely uncomfortable."

In one interview, Premier Bourassa said it appears the Parti Québécois is, in effect, trying to find "a position in which they can accept a federal tie." The party has always espoused economic association with the rest of Canada and Mr. Levesque personally rejects the word "separatism" in favour of independence and sovereignty.

Nothing is simple

An oddity is how both federalists and "independantistes" point to the European common market to bolster their opposing views on constitutional evolution. Nothing is simple in Quebec. Political scientists who conducted public opinion polls for Montreal *La Presse* disagreed with those who saw the election as a straight federalist-separatist fight. The results of three polls conducted among 1,300 citizens indicated only 12 per cent "very favorable" to federalism and opposed to independence. About 40 per cent fell in the undecided list and 30 per cent had not made a definite choice, eight per cent did not consider the options irreconcilable.

An earlier analysis of 10 opinion polls conducted over a 10-year period up to 1973 indicated separatist sentiment as such never exceeded 15 per cent in the whole electorate or 17 per cent in the French-language sector. Quebec's population of six million is 80 per cent French. The polls found that factors in Parti Québécois support distinct from separatist sentiment — included the personal appeal of Mr. Levesque, the desire to support a left-of-centre party and discontent resulting from unemployment and social injustice.

At any rate, many citizens find an endlessly fascinating study in the aims of French Canadian nationalism, which assumed new and more aggressive forms in the Quiet Revolution.

The opinions of Claude Castonguay, Liberal social affairs minister who resigned from politics before the election, though he has continued to serve as consultant to both federal and provincial governments, carry considerable weight on this question. Architect of Quebec's social security system, he was regarded as one of the ablest ministers in the first Bourassa cabinet and a tough bargainer in federal provincial matters. In a major interview with Montreal *Le Devoir*, which has a special place in the intellectual life of French Canada, Mr. Castonguay makes it clear that he regards nationalism as a positive force. But he fears it has taken on a character that does not always serve the true interests of the province. It breeds intolerance amid proponents and opponents alike.

"The debate on independence which we have had in 1970, again in 1973, and which

will have to be carried out all over again in 1977, is too broad and comprehensive," said Mr. Castonguay. It distracted attention from such issues as education, justice, social affairs, foreign investment and natural resources development.

"How many other problems have been ignored? And in the periods between elections how many issues are discussed solely from the angle of federal-provincial relations, in an atmosphere of conflict between Ottawa and Quebec? Instead of looking at them on their own merits, such issues are distorted in the end.

"All this is very sterile, in my view. Before going off on this road for the next four years, we should think about it."

Voters had shown something less than "profound enthusiasm" for the Parti Québécois in two trips to the polls while at the same time a "definite malaise" is apparent in attitudes to Canada. "It shows up in the votes given to the Parti Québécois and by the vote given to other parties in the past. Even the vote given to the Liberals comes from people who are not blindly enthusiastic about Canada. But to say that they want to break everything up, that is a different proposition altogether."

Cultural status

The former minister maintains Quebec's constitutional claims should be specific, not broad and general lest other provinces think they are forever asked to do favors for Quebec. "It is in the things that concern our culture that we should have asked for special status, on things which concern the organization of our society, such as education. As for other matters, such as fiscal relations, we should have been ready to play the game according to the same rules as the others..."

Some observers see Mr. Castonguay's words as an outline of future Liberal policy. Others feel the opposition parties could profit from his ideas in trying for a comeback. The Union Nationale went into the election campaign with more nationalistic fervor in some respects than the Parti Québécois. Though sadly humiliated, the party still has a big war chest and its leader, Gabriel Loubier, has indicated the party will fight another day, but he is resigning.

Even Premier Bourassa concedes the Credistes have a future in Quebec politics, though they fell into rival factions after the election. The two sitting Creditiste members have rejected the leadership of Yvon Dupuis, a city boy who failed to establish a city bridgehead for the rural party and instead went down to personal defeat.

What are the main challenges now facing the Bourassa Liberals?

In an era leery of big government, the very size of the Bourassa majority perhaps requires skills differing from the kind of expertise shown by the premier in holding the tax line and creating industrial development in earlier years. Mr. Bourassa has already expressed willingness to negotiate