

Alright, now that you've spotted a heading phrased in French and done your best to translate it, you're wondering what this not too eloquent statement has to do with you. You've been wondering what all the things that have been cropping up since you got here have to do with you. Well, you're all part of this big world see? You and your friend and your friend's friend. And because you're part of this world you're also a part of this country. You're a Canadian. And that's what this is about.

Three weeks ago you may have noticed a blurb in the local rags about a political move that took place in the province of Québec. Two of the three major separatist parties in Québec joined ranks to form a new party. The old parties were the **Mouvement Souverainete-Association** and the **Ralliement National**. Their place was taken by the new **Parti Québécois** with M. Rene Levesque as president.

And so another step was taken in the forging of a stronger force to oppose the membership of Québec in the Canadian Confederation. The **Rassemblement pour L'Independence National** of Pierre Bourgault has also shown an interest in joining this alliance of forces.

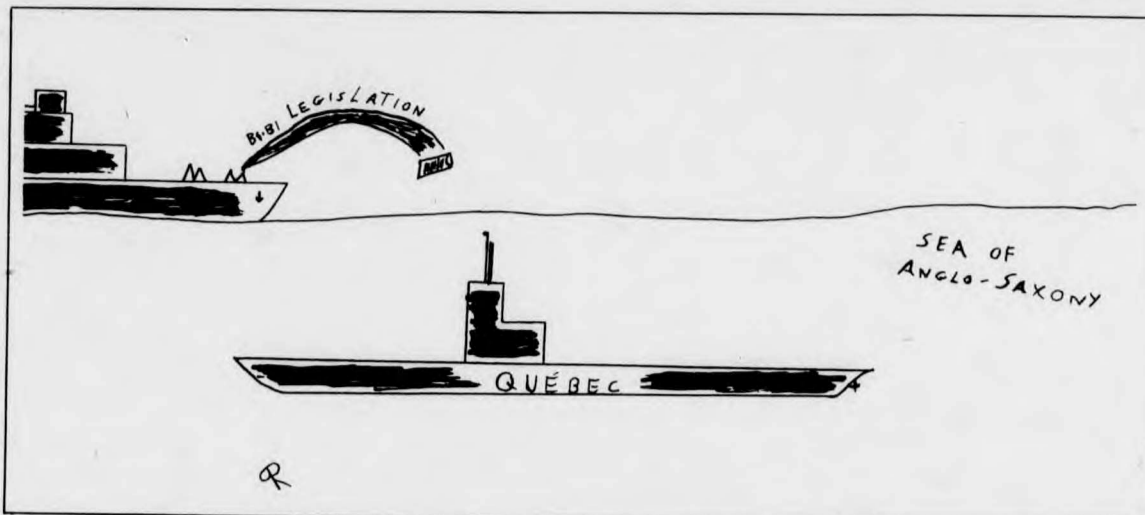
To the majority of Canadians living in and out of Québec, this event has no great meaning. Just something to hear and forget about. But there are some who will find all sorts of implications and meanings in the joining of these separatist factions. And it's to these that this is addressed. To the people who have all sorts of fears and misconceptions about what Québec is and what Québec wants.

Quebec's desire

Just what is Québec's desire in our system of Confederation? How do French-speaking Québeckers, Les Québécois, feel for their province and their country? How and what do they think of their position in our modern world?

Firstly, the French-speaking Québecker is a man fighting for his language, his heritage, his culture. It's been a hard fight and he is losing steadily.

When the first French settlers arrived in our wild and hostile country they found cold and rock and death. From it they built a



Les Québécois sont les Canadiens

by Pete Reeder

somewhat prosperous colonial community that had many more freedoms than they had been granted in their place of birth. And they called themselves Canadians. Not Frenchmen or even Normands or Men of Brittany, the places from which they had originated. They called themselves Canadians and were proud of it.

They had their old traditions from their homeland in France, but these were intermingled with a new tradition and heritage that they were building for themselves in this new world. A tradition of hard work and determination, of a zeal to wrest from the land a livelihood and a pride in these achievements.

Then came a time of despair and disenchantment. The new people of this land were conquered by a foreign and powerful nation, the British. They were left abandoned by their old homeland of France, a homeland they had long before lost any great interest in except for the economic viewpoint of existence.

So now they were subject to a foreign power with a foreign language and a foreign culture. The conquerers were as just with the conquered as was possible under the circumstances. The Canadians were allowed to keep their culture and the use of their language and civil laws. This was fair enough.

But as time passed there came a greater influx of non-French speaking people to Canada. Mostly to Ontario and the Maritimes.

These were the Loyalist refugees from the American Revolution. People who were staunchly for all that was British in the world. All that was "good".

Friction inevitable

With this greater presence of English-speaking people it was inevitable that friction should result in the relations of the Québeckers and the rest of the country, as it then existed. The solution of the British, Lord Durham to be exact, was to simply assimilate the French-speaking people into the now majority-by population English peoples. The political union of the two Canadas, Upper and Lower was to be the process used.

It wasn't all that simple. A man faced with the prospect of losing his language, his heritage and culture, is a man who will resist anything brought against him, be it political pressure or quiet discrimination. The result was an even stronger effort by the French-speaking peoples of Québec to keep their language and way of life free from the corrosion which was attempted to be placed on them. It was at this time that the name "French Canadian" first came into use. It was used as a stamp, a label placed on a whole segment of the population of this country. It was both self-imposed and dictated by

the circumstances of the times. Unfortunately it has remained so to the present and has as its counter-part the "English-Canadian". A country and its people have imposed on themselves name tags, as if it were some sort of insignia of recognition of a fact. And it is. The fact that there are those in this country who don't know what they are wasting, what they are debasing.

With Confederation came a chance for the "French-Canadians" to gain a new lease on their way of life. They took the chance and placed themselves in an abstract ghetto with the name of Québec. They shut themselves from the rest of the country to save their culture from oblivion. They were now submerged in a sea of millions of Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking people and of their province they made a submarine sheltering them from the world.

And so it was until a very short time ago. Until the "Quiet Revolution" of the Lesage era, Québec was seen by tourists and most of its fellow provinces as a large, lusty and backward region of pea soup and baked beans. Of maple syrup and poor farms.

Then the change that was long due came at last. There were Québeckers who were not satisfied with this illusion of contemporary life in La Belle Province. Québec flowered into all that its resources said it was. The resources of power, of mineral-rich areas never touched before. The resources of its own people.

The old fear-ridden power of the Church was broken. A new fever of liberalism and concern with the modern world of today replaced the old style image of Québec. The best and most enduring example of this continuing surge as a leading force in Canada was last year's Expo '67. This was a great presentation of the ability of Québec to stand in the front ranks of modern, technologically advanced areas. And it was not a Québec-only type of show. It was for Canada and representative of Canada. There was no petty jealousy shown in trying to make it look like a Québec enterprise entirely.

Thus, Québec has emerged from relative unimportance in the past to a position of prominence in the future of this country. Only a fool will deny this. And this is my second point. Québec is very real and very alive. You can't hide it anymore. And it won't let you.

With this in mind, Québec's fear for its culture and all its entails, and its wish to be recognized as a very integral part of this country, let's go a little deeper.

Québec has a very unique and uncommon role to play with respect to languages. Québec is a majority of French speaking

people and also a majority of Catholics. In its membership as a province of this country it has given to the minority English speaking, non-Catholic people in its political boundaries the right to the use of their own language and the right to have that language taught in their own schools. There is no extra burden placed on the minority for this privilege. No double taxation as in Ontario, where a French speaking person must send his child to a private school in order to keep the child learning French, but at the same time support public schools also, even though they will never be used by the child. Beyond this there are English-speaking people in Québec who are not Protestant. Regardless of this, they too are given their own schools.

After education comes the business world. "French-Canadians" in the upper echelons of business in Québec are few. They seem to have some strange malady which prevents them from reaching positions easily tenable to English-speaking men. They speak French instead. That is their grave error. Being born to the wrong language. Even the common job of secretary requires that a French-speaking girl knows English as well, but does an English girl have to know French? Not at all. Department stores have certain girls who deal solely with French speaking customers.

The list of examples in which the French language has been put aside for mere convenience or lack of respect for a person's birthright, is unending. It is easier to bypass and just drop something than forge through it to the right ending. But when a man's culture, his heritage and very existence is at stake, convenience is the way of fools. Fools who can't see that they destroy themselves in trying to destroy something they can only gain from.

And now, after waiting 300 years for their language and culture to be recognized as being a factor in Canada which cannot and should not be overlooked, some of them have decided to try and do it on their own. They're tired of waiting for rights that may never come, and they believe they won't.

This is what separatism is about. It's a group of people trying in the only way they know how, perhaps the only way left, to try and salvage their culture and way of life from oblivion.

They did not want this choice. They did not ask for it. Separatism isn't a strictly one sided affair. It takes two forces to launch something like this. The separatists of Québec have their English counterparts. Men like Ralph Cowan; organizations like the Bulldogs of the Civil Service. And then there is the ordinary Canadian who doesn't know or care. He's the one who loses the most.

Fortunately, the French speaking and English-speaking separatists of this country are a very small minority. But they are there. Are we going to help them grow?

Québeckers, Les Québécois, want their language to be given the recognition as outside Québec as English is given inside Québec. And they want the right to join the rest of Canada in making this country what it can and surely will be if we want it to.

Let's get rid of those labels, "French-Canadian" and "English-Canadian". Let's just be Canadians. A country unified in desire and aspirations; diverse in culture and heritage and making full use of this diversity. Not fighting it.

Canada is for us. Let's make sure it stays that way.



Ladies warmly welcomed at Toronto-Dominion.

Glendon Campus Branch
Toronto-Dominion Bank
Open Tuesday & Friday

York Campus Branch
Toronto-Dominion Bank
Normal banking hours