

Voting problems at polling station

by Ingrid Hein & Gazette staff

Helène Larocque, of the Chief Electoral Office of Québec, said poll clerks have the right to ask people to swear on the bible, or give a solemn oath that they are really the person they claim to be.

"You couldn't have used I.D. or a driver's license. You had to swear on the bible. They will probably not ask for I.D.," said Larocque.

However, some students never even got as far as the polling stations. Many were never enumerated, despite going to great lengths to get on the list.

McGill student Adam Jamieson said his experience trying to get enumerated was frustrating and horrendous. He waited for four hours in a line-up at the office of the Chief Returning Officer with his lease, passport, driver's license, and other identification in hand, but he was still turned away.

"I wasn't the only one. There were tons of people turned away, some of them were crying in the stairwell," he said.

Noah Beggs, a fourth-year Arts and Science student at Concordia, said he and his roommate were rejected after they showed all the relevant documents and their B.C. health cards to enumerators.

"They [the office of the Chief Returning Officer] asked my roommate 'How do we know you're not going back to Vancouver?'"

According to Mario Couture, the Returning Officer for the Westmount-St. Louis riding, potential voters were asked for their medicare cards because it was a proof of domicile in Québec.

Couture explained that representatives from both camps decided who was eligible to vote.

Students were asked for their medicare cards because possessing a health card from another province means they are still eligible to vote in their home province.

As with any provincial election, this means they are not eligible to vote in Québec, explained Couture.

Concordia philosophy student John Lee ran into similar disputes with an enumeration officer.

"The tone was that they didn't want you to be enumerated," he said. "It was the questions they asked like, 'Are you planning to stay in the province?'"

Lee noted that he has been living in Québec for two years, and is a Canadian citizen.

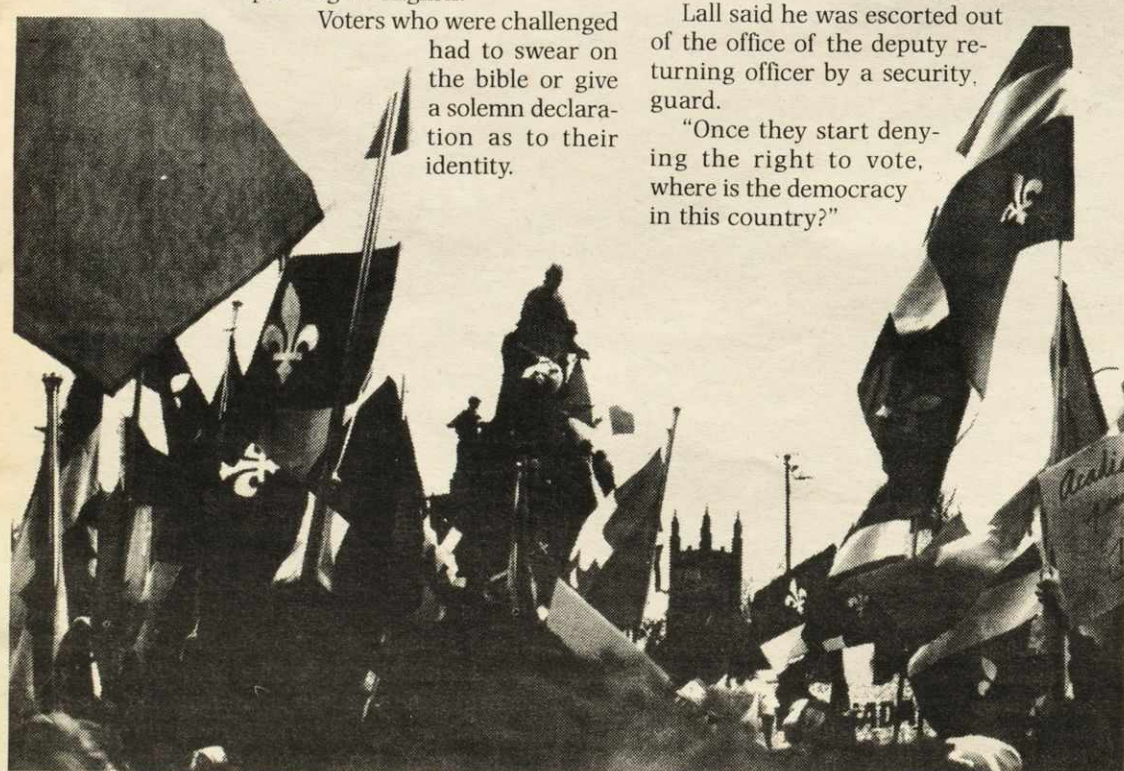
Nigel Lall, the proprietor of Café Cirque, a coffee shop near Concordia, was also denied the right to vote.

"They said I didn't have adequate proof of domicile," he said. "I had my lease with me for the business. I pay 70 to 80 thousand dollars to Québec in tax a year and I can't vote because I haven't got a Medicare card."

Lall said he was escorted out of the office of the deputy returning officer by a security guard.

"Once they start denying the right to vote, where is the democracy in this country?"

Voters who were challenged had to swear on the bible or give a solemn declaration as to their identity.



Le ralliement pour l'unité nationale

IL A FALLU 14 heures de route pour se rendre à Montréal mais ça en valait la peine. L'après-midi du jeudi 26 octobre, on était réunis au bureau de la Gazette, et l'idée d'aller au ralliement pour l'unité nationale à Montréal a circulé. On était partants, et à 21h00 on louait une voiture, empaquetait quelques affaires, et trouvait des sacs de couchage... et on était partis! Un trajet sans problème, le lendemain matin on était au Québec. Les rues étaient encombrées de voitures arborant des symboles de l'unité canadienne. On a dépassé plusieurs convois d'autobus pleins d'Acadiens et d'Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick, à qui l'on a klaxoné et fait de signe de joie.

On s'est arrêtés à un relais-rou-tiers près de Montréal, et en essayant de mettre en pratique le français que l'on avait appris au secondaire, on a réussi à faire comprendre immédiatement que l'on n'était pas d'ici. En regardant le restaurant bondé, on a remarqué d'autres Canadiens fatigués, mais heureux, qui comme nous, n'étaient pas loin de leur destination: le ralliement pour l'unité nationale. On est arrivés au centre-ville de Montréal à 11h00 et on a garé le camion dans un stationnement sous-terrain. Le gardien, en regardant les plaques d'immatriculation, nous a demandé où on allait. Immédiatement, il nous a donné des cartes pour qu'on trouve la Place du Canada. En sortant du stationnement, on a réalisé qu'on n'avait pas besoin de ces cartes: on s'est joints à l'un des nombreux groupes qui agitaient des drapeaux et on les a suivis jusqu'au point de ralliement.

À 11h30, une demi heure avant le commencement du ralliement, les rues autour de la Place du Canada étaient comblées. On s'est retrouvés noyés dans la foule sur le Boulevard René Lévesque. On était assourdis par la foule qui scandait: «NON! NON! NON!» et «Je Canada! le Canada!» On ne pouvait pas ignorer l'ironie de ces milliers de Canadiens et de Canadiennes qui applaudissaient sur la rue même, dédiée à l'un des plus célèbres séparatistes québécois.

Les estimations ont varié, mais de notre point de vue, il y avait bien cent cinquante mille personnes.

Avec un si grand nombre de personnes rassemblées, la Police était présente afin de contrôler la foule. La manifestation s'est déroulée dans le calme.

Les étendards et les drapeaux nous empêchaient de voir, et d'où on était, c'était impossible d'entendre les discours de MM. Johnson, Charest et Chrétien mais on suivait les fortes acclamations de la foule assemblée; l'émotion était totale.

Le ralliement a duré deux heures, et heureusement s'est terminé juste avant la pluie. Alors que tout le monde essayait de retrouver son chemin, on a décidé de sortir de la mêlée pour observer la foule. Assis sur le trottoir avec notre bannière faite maison «La Nouvelle-Écosse dit Non», les Québécois, francophones et anglophones, nous serraient la main et nous remerciaient chaleureusement d'être venus.

On a regardé la foule défilé de-



vant nous et nous a semblé à prime abord, qu'elle était composée de personnes plus âgées et plus conservatrices, mais de toutes façons, c'était difficile d'avoir une vue plus globale et plus précise. À 16h00 on a trouvé l'ami qui nous accueillait pour la fin de semaine et on est allés souper. Une fois partis, on a pu mieux comprendre le climat réferendaire à Montréal. En effet, notre hôte nous a expliqué que la plupart des affiches du camp du NON avaient été défigurées, réutilisées au profit du «OUI».

Les endroits de Montréal qu'on a visités étaient décorés de «OUI» — leur campagne publicitaire ayant été définitivement bien menée. Avec des pâquerettes, des symboles de paix et des globes terrestres à la place du «O» dans le mot «OUI», ces affiches ciblaient plus tôt une jeune population contrairement à la campagne d'affichage menée par le «NON» qui est restée plus traditionnelle. Notre hôte nous a expliqué que la plupart des affiches du camp du NON avaient été défigurées, réutilisées au profit du «OUI».

Ce soir-là, en regardant les nouvelles, on a été déçus d'entendre que beaucoup de gens pensaient que le ralliement n'aurait aucune conséquence. On était surpris d'entendre le camp du OUI dire: «Qui êtes-vous pour nous dire ce que l'on doit faire?» D'autres pensaient que cette manifestation n'affecterait pas les 14 pourcent de Québécois et de Québécoises toujours indécis à ce moment-là.

On a quitté Montréal à 6h00 le samedi matin, et repris la route pour la Nouvelle-Écosse: cette fois-ci, 16 heures de voiture au beau milieu d'un ouragan. Fatigués et déçus, on est arrivés à Halifax le samedi soir et on est rentrés chez nous ne sachant pas de quoi le Canada de l'après-voix serait fait.

Quand on jette un coup d'oeil rétrospectif au référendum, les résultats sont si serrés que peut-être le ralliement y a été pour quelque chose. Il a fallu peu de gens pour faire la différence entre le OUI et le NON. Peut-être que ces cent cinquante mille Canadiens qui ont assisté au ralliement ont pu démontrer aux Québécois indécis que le reste du Canada aimait le Québec.

Et maintenant, après cette «petite» victoire du NON au Québec, la balle est dans le camp du Canada: à nous de démontrer combien le Québec compte pour nous. Les négociations, commençons-les.

DESTINATION

Rally for national unity

IT WAS AN exhausting 14 hour drive to Montreal, but it was worth it.

On Thursday afternoon, five of us gathered in the Gazette office, and tossed around the idea of going to the unity rally in Montréal. The idea grew on us, and by 9 p.m., we had rented our car, gathered together a change of clothes and sleeping bags, and were on our way. The driving conditions were perfect, and by morning we were in Québec. The roads were crowded with cars displaying symbols of unity, and we passed several bus convoys filled with Acadians from New Brunswick, to whom we honked and waved jubilantly.

We stopped at a truck-stop somewhere close to Montréal, and in our attempt to make some use of our high school french, succeeded in immediately giving away the fact that we were from elsewhere. Looking around the crowded diner, we recognised other tired, but happy Canadians who, like us, had almost reached what we were calling 'destination unity.'

We entered the downtown core of Montreal at 11 a.m. and parked the van in an underground garage. The parking attendant, seeing our Nova Scotia plates, asked us where we were going, and immediately gave us maps to Place du Canada. When we got outside, we realised that we didn't really need them, and instead we just joined one of the many groups of flag-waving Canadians that filled the sidewalks, and followed them to the rally.

By 11:30, half an hour before the rally was set to begin, the streets surrounding Place du Canada had reached their critical mass, and we found ourselves buried deep within the crowd on René Levesque Blvd.

Although we were nearly deafened by the cheers of "Non! Non! Non!" and "Canada! Canada!" we found it impossible to overlook the irony of tens of thousands of Canadians cheering for Canadian unity on a street named after the most famous Separatist.

Reports varied, but from our vantage point, the estimate of 150,000 people seemed accurate.

In the spirit of Canadian unity, we decided to print the story of our trip to Montréal in both of Canada's official languages.

Dans l'esprit de l'unité canadienne, nous avons décidé de traduire l'histoire de notre voyage à Montréal en français.

With such a large number of people gathered, the local police force made their presence known, but their main duties were centred around crowd control. The demonstration remained peaceful.

The waving banners and flags obscured our vision, and hearing the speeches of Johnson, Charest, and Chrétien was an impossibility from where we stood, but judging from the loud cheers of the assembled crowd, emotions were high.

The rally lasted for two hours and, conveniently, was over just before the rain began. As the crowd jostled to find their way to their various destinations, we decided to step out of the chaos and take the opportunity to observe the crowd.

Sitting on the sidewalk with our hand-made sign which read "Nova Scotia says 'Non,'" we were greeted by both Francophone and Anglophone Québécois who shook our hands and thanked us warmly for our participation.

We sat and watched as every type of person walked past. The crowd seemed to be primarily composed of older, more conservative individuals, but it was hard to get an accurate overview.

By 4 p.m., we had found the friend we had planned to stay with, and headed out for dinner.

Once we left the rally, we had the chance to gain a better understanding of the climate in Montréal. We were told by our host that if we were to go out Friday night, we'd be wise to keep our mouths shut and hide any signs that we were from out of town. We laughed it off — until we watched an indi-

vidual wearing a Canadian flag in his hair get accosted by three people outside the place we were eating. After a heated exchange, the individual wearing the flag came into the bar, flushed and angry. He received support from the others in the bar, but our host warned us that the scenario we witnessed was a common one.

The parts of Montréal that we saw were primarily decorated with "Oui" signs. The "Oui" campaign materials were definitely very well done. With daisies, peace symbols, and globes taking the place of the 'O' in "Oui," these signs were obviously designed to appeal to a younger demographic than the conservative straight-lines of the "Non" campaign materials. Our host told us that most of the "Non" signs had been torn down, and we saw many that had been defaced, either with the "Non" replaced by a "Oui" (thereby completely reversing the message of the sign), or with the "Non" punched out of the sign.

That night, while watching the news, we were discouraged to hear that most people did not feel that the rally had any effect. We were surprised to learn that the main sentiment on the "Oui" side was, "Who are you people to tell us what to do with our Province?" Most people, it seemed, didn't think that it would have any effect on the (then) 14% of Québécois who were undecided.

We left at 6 a.m. on Saturday morning, and embarked on what turned out to be a 16 hour drive through a raging hurricane. Tired and discouraged, we arrived in Halifax on Saturday evening and went home uncertain about what kind of Canada we would be living in after Monday night.

In retrospect, the vote was so close that maybe the rally did have an effect. With so few people making the difference between "Oui" and "Non," it is certainly possible that the 150,000 people who showed up helped those who were undecided to know that the rest of Canada does care about Québec.

And now, after a narrow "Non" victory in Québec, it is up to the rest of Canada to go beyond flag waving and truly demonstrate how dearly we care. Let the negotiations begin.

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All together now...

BY STEPHANIE PIERI

The Halifax Metro Centre was host to an evening of song, merriment, but most importantly, a message on October 26.

All Together Now — Un billet-doux pour Québec, was a concert unlike many others. Its goal was to promote Canadian unity, a task most desperately needed in this time of uncertainty.

With roughly 13 percent of eligible Québec voters still undecided just days before the referendum, any effort to sway those voters would certainly not be in vain.

The concert was a great success, with over twenty different bands performing, from the likes of Holly Cole to Annick Gagnon. Big picture rocked and helped set the mood for the evening, getting people out of their seats and dancing around.

A band of teenagers ran rampant throughout the Halifax Metro Centre, encouraging the audience to clap and cheer. A conga line of Canadian and Québec flags circled the floor, while the drunks in the nosebleed section offered a comical interlude. Even the stern-looking cop I saw when I walked in could not help but to sing along when his favourite country singer came on stage.

All in all, the evening was a great success. The organizers certainly got their message across: people in Halifax want Québec to stay.