

*The Address*

ordeal the best wills in Quebec and English Canada have suffered is bitterness, suspicion, lack of understanding and a profound collective alienation. We are about to lose the very will to face reality squarely.

More importantly, there is the waste of time. I am not only referring to that of the people who, in the excitement of the sixties, dreamed of solving our conflicts and building in Quebec and Canada societies that would be tolerant, imaginative, open to the world and concerned with social justice. I am thinking of our two nations in particular. Because time is running out for them too. While we mope around, the world is coming apart and rebuilding around us. The boat is going by and we are missing it.

Whether we like it or not, there will be a debate on our political future, and it will take place right here. The government is free to stonewall as has been the practice in this House with regard to the sovereigntist aspirations of so many Quebecers. Is it out of fear or powerlessness that they are evading subjects that put into question the old political structures of Quebec and Canada as well as their capacity to solve social and economic problems? Whether fainthearted or resigned, this total silence is irresponsible and leads to paralysis. The Bloc Québécois has been sent here precisely to break this conspiracy of silence.

• (1555)

We will not be afraid to point out that Quebecers are and will always be in a clear minority position within the federal system. The population ratio is three to one. We can fool ourselves and believe that we can determine the course of events despite this ever-present handicap which relegates Quebec to second-place status when interests diverge. This would imply constant tension and a superior performance on our part. In other words, utopia.

If the truth be told, the Trudeauesque utopia is not foreign to the annals of French Canadian history. For many decades, French Canadians believed that their destiny was prophetic. In many respects, Pierre Trudeau is the last missionary of French Canada.

Here again, we are confronted with a paradox. Canada needed measures to safeguard against the demographic and economic weight of the United States. Hence the creation of the Foreign Investment Review Agency and the implementation of the new energy policy. Quebec, on the other hand, did not require measures to protect itself from the demographic and economic weight of English Canada. Competence was all that was required and everything else would take care of itself. How very naive! And this was seen as reason triumphing over passion.

In reality, Quebecers want to live a normal life. They are tired of fighting for basic things that have been denied them. They are quite willing to confront the challenges of the day, but they want all of the odds to be on their side. On the one hand, they want greater economic integration and a stronger competitive position internationally, while on the other hand, they want political sovereignty in order to face Quebec's competitive partners on a level playing field.

Quebec sovereigntists advocate a modern concept of political sovereignty, one which is exercised within the framework of major economic structures and which is respectful of minorities. Under no circumstances will the 630,000 francophones outside Quebec be sacrificed. Moreover, Quebec sovereigntists were not the ones who rejected the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and NAFTA. There is a difference between withdrawing into oneself and pulling out in order to perform better in the new global economy.

The close economic integration between Quebec and Canada forces us to take a careful look at what is happening in Europe. What lessons can we draw from the European model?

[English]

Some pundits like to believe the European Community will gradually transform itself into something resembling Canadian federalism and use this as an argument against Quebec sovereignty. Thus they reveal their lack of familiarity with European developments. In fact the other way around appears much more likely. To solve the Canadian political crisis our present institutions should and I dare say will evolve along the lines of the European Community.

A few facts seem in order. The European Commission in Brussels has a budget that amounts to 1.2 per cent of the global GNP of the community. It has no fiscal powers and—such a tragedy—cannot run a deficit. The federal government in Ottawa spends 22 per cent of GNP and has the whole gamut of fiscal powers. As for deficits we all know what has happened. The commission in Brussels has no army, no police and a small bureaucracy when compared to national governments. Community decisions are in fact executed by national bureaucracies. If we exclude trade matters, national sovereignty remains the basic ingredient of the community.

For instance the 12 members could modify the structure and the workings of the EC without the commission having any say in the decision. For these countries co-operation is the master word, not subordination.

This is a far cry from the Canadian brand of federalism. Who will pretend, for example, that only the provincial governments determine the future of Canada? Who will pretend that the federal government is but a benevolent arbitrator of inter-regional conflicts? For Quebec the central government is the problem. For English Canada it is part of the solution.