

SPECTRUM

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Perspectives

Why Quebec won't Separate

The idea of separatism, ultra-nationalism, is so much against the gut feeling and the gut interest of the average French Canadian that when the elite is ultra-nationalist, as it has been at various times in our history, it is not only wrong for itself but it is leaving the people to wander aimlessly and therefore passively by outside events, whether those of English Canada, or of the United States. Pierre E. Trudeau, Dec. 21, 1971.

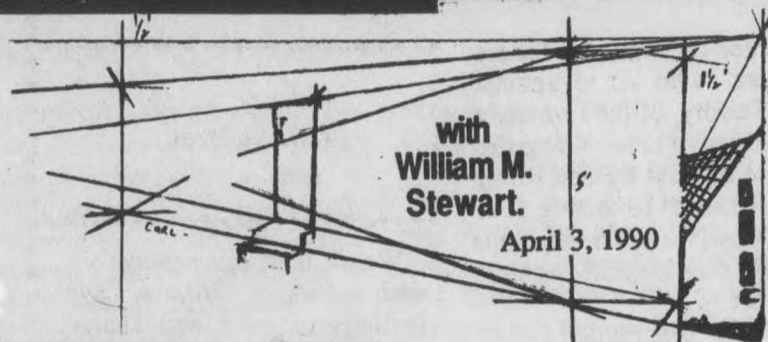
Two Canadian Banks have released reports stating that the Quebec economy will not be badly damaged by separation from Canada. A report from Merrill-Lynch echoes their assessment. Jacques Parizeau, leader of the separatist Parti Quebecois, has announced that it is now time to detail a mechanism for separation.

As the June 23rd deadline for ratification of the Meech Lake Accord approaches, the shrill warnings and sombre pronouncements of doom, will increase. If we are to believe the Accord's proponents, Canada will be almost instantly destroyed if the Accord is not unanimously ratified by this date.

This strategy of bargaining by threat is counter-productive. Furthermore, the threat is empty. There are two things we may be sure of: The Meech Lake Accord will not pass, and Quebec will not separate from Canada when it doesn't.

Anyone who believes that the Meech Lake Accord might still pass either has not been listening to Manitoba and Newfoundland or considers the leaders of these provinces to be outrageously duplicitous.

Newfoundland and Manitoba consider their constitutional



considered: The distinct society clause will give Quebec the ability to override the Charter of Rights; the unanimous amending formula will prevent senate reform and the creation of new provinces; and the spending powers provision will hamstring the establishment of new national shared-cost programs and perpetuate regional disparity.

While Manitoba and Newfoundland are amenable to further negotiation, on the other side of the table the Quebec government has set a brand new standard for the meaning of 'intransigence'. Compromise by the Quebec government is now impossible without an unacceptable political loss of face.

Actually, this is all Meech ado about nothing. The spirit of the Meech Lake Accord died the day Premier Bourassa used

the notwithstanding clause to override the Charter of Rights in order to ban outdoor English signs. This flagrant abridgement of basic civil rights cut the throat of the Meech Lake Accord in its infancy. English Canada saw the distinct society clause in action, and were greatly shocked and deeply appalled.

The deadlock, then, will not be broken, and the Meech Lake Accord will not be passed.

However, notwithstanding threats to the contrary, Quebec will not separate from Canada. The fundamental reasons are the same as they've always been: insurmountable structural difficulties.

The first difficulty would be the establishment of a new and independent Quebec currency--this was always Premier Bourassa's main bone of

contention with the separatists in the early seventies. Second, there is the national debt--how does Quebec account for its share? And third, there is the inextricable inter-dependency of Quebec's economy with the Canadian economy as a whole.

With regard to this last point, it is very interesting to note that the Business Council on National Issues (the CEO's of the 150 largest corporations in Canada) recently visited Premier Bourassa to convey their view that separation would be an economical catastrophe: our currency would collapse, interest rates would sky-rocket, and the markets would crash.

But most importantly, Quebec will not separate from Canada because the majority of the people of Quebec do not want separation. Mr. Trudeau had it right: it has always been the Quebec elite--the academics and editorialists--who have been the ultra-nationalists. The average folks rarely agree with the elite: the elite are idealistic, the people are pragmatic.

A recent poll confirms this long-held view: even after all the exhortation of nationalist fervour over the last three years, only 43% of the Quebec people currently support separatism (CROP, March 1990). In an actual referendum, it is reasonable to suppose that this percentage would drop somewhat further.

English Canadians want to welcome Quebec back to Canada--we must never lose sight of this fact. At the same time, we may justifiably resent the use of threats to the survival of our country as constitutional negotiating tactics.

First Ministers Mulroney and Bourassa would do well to heed the words of General A.G. McNaughton, spoken at Queen's University on October 21st, 1944: "When... you face the acute issues which may divide our country part from part, may I commend this principle to your best thought and interest--compulsion is ruled out: we proceed by agreement, or for a time we rest content not to proceed at all."

The woman's room

by Alexandra Fremont

In my newfound feminism, one of the struggles which has endured is how to live my life, as a feminist, in a man's world. Although I have left insurmountable anger and disgust at the behaviours of certain men, I cannot discount the fact that I LIKE MAN! A few of the men in my life have challenged me in my sometime radical views, and have led me to develop a more realistic feminist mindset. For these men, I am thankful.

I asked one of my newest friends, Philip, to write this final column. I feel his views about women are a refreshing breeze of fresh air. Further, I believe that ending off the year by hearing from a man who likes women is most appropriate.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to all those people who supported me this year in writing this column - there are too many to list. I hope everyone has a great summer and I'll see you next year in THE WOMAN'S ROOM.

In Support

by Philip Carleton

I was very flattered to be asked to be the first man to make a contribution to this column, and a number of thoughts and memories came to mind. I began, for the first time, to appreciate how it may have felt for people like Mary Tibbits to become pioneers at UNB. For this I am honoured. I am also distressed, because some women may feel as though their forum, perhaps their only space, is being threatened by men yet again. This fear is certainly well founded, for it is men who choose to infringe upon the rights of women, be it through economic, political or social influences.

I thought of the many events over the past year: the Massacre in Montreal, and a candlelight vigil in which both men and women stood together in solidarity. This became an important time for me because, for the first time, I was able to feel the emotion in the cause, rather than merely understanding it's logic. For the times I had made damaging remarks that allow sexism to fester, I felt guilt, and vowed to never let that happen again, but I have.

Recent incidents on our own campus in which seemingly educated people continue to commit crimes against disadvantaged groups also come to mind. The ignorant students who parade sexist T-shirts lead me to wonder: if these people ever become lawyers or judges, will they make crucial decisions on the basis of an individual's sex? Will some teachers of the class of 1990 give preferential treatment to sexist, racist, or homophobic students? Would these same people permit an individual to threaten a woman in

one of our own residences? Without even realizing it - they have!

I am particularly surprised when I speak to young women who "believe in human rights, but do not wish to be considered feminists." Why is there such a stigma attached to this label? Perhaps it is because men have used their power to create an air of radicalism or negativism around the women's movement. Perhaps the idea of a label is threatening, or perhaps these women do not realize that they are feminists because they subscribe to the male definition of feminism. Feminists are not a bunch of radical, man hating lesbians. Feminism, in fact, means a number of different things to all individuals. Generally, though, feminism is a shared collection of values that promote equality (political, economic, social and sexual) between men and women.

Finally, I am reminded of a friend, whose husband left her and threatened her (in that order) because of the resentment he held towards her for returning to school and for developing her

independence. This reflects the reality of thousands of relationships in this country. Men want to control their partners, feel threatened or inadequate when they cannot, and attempt to regain control through exercising power. It takes a great deal of strength for a woman to leave a relationship, to face the economic realities of earning less than a male counterpart, and the emotional hardships of single parenthood. But she is no doubt better off with her children, her life to look forward to, and her autonomy. I must say that any man would be lucky to meet such a bright, confident, and caring woman and accept her for what she is; a person deserving of equitable treatment.

I now begin to think ahead, to the 1990's and what they will mean not only to men and women, but to people of colour, and to those of various linguistic backgrounds. I hope that it will be a time when men will stand behind women in an effort to shed antiquated ideals and rituals.

LEGAL EASE CONTINUED

of their education. However, just to be safe, it is always wise to have it deducted and then claim it all back.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM FIRED OR NEED TO LEAVE MY JOB?

Generally, the amount of notice required in these circumstances depends on how long you have been working

and the manner in which you are paid. For most students, you need to give, or be given, one or two weeks notice. If you are paid weekly, one week's notice will do, and if you are paid bi-weekly, two weeks notice is required. If your employer is letting you go because of something you have done, he or she may ask that you leave immediately, but you will be entitled to one

or two weeks pay in lieu of notice.

Note: This legal column is written for information purposes only. It is not intended to be a replacement for professional legal advice.

