

'Quebec-Canada like two scorpions in a bottle'

By GARY CAMERON

According to Parti Quebecois leader René Lévesque, Quebec has two choices. Quebec and Canada can remain, as Churchill put it, "two scorpions hooked in a bottle, capable of poisoning each other"; or Quebec can break the cement of Confederation and "opt out", as will happen if the Parti Quebecois becomes the government of Quebec.

Lévesque, speaking in a packed audience, was on campus last Friday at the invitation of the UNB Political Science department. Lévesque reminded the largely

English speaking crowd that close to one third of the Canadian population lives in Quebec, and that 81 percent of this population is French-Canadian. He emphasized the fact that Quebec is "a huge land gap." He continued saying "what happens in Quebec affects you all."

Lévesque, stating that Parti Quebecois was "not interested in the federal election", pointed out that on Oct. 31 we woke up with "two countries facing us", with Quebec and English-speaking Canada reflecting two different ways of thinking.

He stressed that in the last Quebec election his party had only existed for one and one half years and yet had received 24 percent of the vote. According to Lévesque, the dues-paying members of the Parti Quebecois now number 60,000 or two percent of the adult population of Quebec, and that his party would increase its representation in the next election to as high as 50-60 seats.

Lévesque claimed that it was naive to think that one could change things from the inside major parties, as these parties are

one half to three-quarters supported by corporate slush funds. He stated that his party was counting strictly on the support of citizens.

Lévesque, a 50 year old former newsman, said he had been a separatist for five years. Having grown up in New Carlisle, across the Bay of Chaleur from New Brunswick, he was given an "object lesson in what it is like to be a minority."

According to Lévesque, people are still thinking of Quebec as "quaint old, priest-ridden Quebec," and illustrated the fallacy of such clichés with examples of how the Quiet Revolution has changed Quebec.

The start of the Quiet Revolution was "the incredible discovery of how backwards we were "in such fundamental services as education. However, Quebec is now emerging as a cultural leader. According to Lévesque it has a greater cultural productivity than the rest of Canada in fields such as writing and entertainment.

However, Quebec must have the opportunity to develop and grow in directions it chooses for itself. He said, "We're in one hell of a hurry to get moving on social problems in Quebec."

The federal government, he feels, is controlling such important functions as immigration ("we even paid the freight for you English types") and according to Lévesque "we can handle our own problems."

Lévesque stressed that he did not like the negative aspect of the word "separatism," as his form of separatism is a "consciousness of the potential of Quebec, which is negative to Canada." He described the traditional one colour of Canada on world maps as "your security you grew up with" and stated that (of the traumatic experience of a succeeding Quebec) "none of you believe this will come about." He des-

cribed Confederation as a "sick partnership, instead of a good neighborhood," and stated that Quebec-Canada relations are not getting better and that "we're a pain in the neck, and will continue to be."

According to Lévesque an independent Quebec could be an economic reality. He cited the fact that 87 new countries had been formed since World War II and that "many countries have managed to bridge the massive problems." He felt that the common market, in uniting countries that have traditionally hated each other, serves as a model for economic growth and trade. An independent Quebec would form "new links, separate identities" This new Quebec would get capital from the world money markets and have a sound financial and technological base.

It would retain control over important industries such as the media, with no domination by the United States, although it would not immediately break essential economic ties such as markets for its paper.

The English speaking minority (19 percent of the population of Quebec) would be guaranteed full rights BUT Lévesque felt it was obvious that "they could not earn a living in a national Quebec without learning French."


The English-speaking Canadians in the national Quebec "will have to accept the fact that they are a minority" and many will leave. However, according to Lévesque the English speaking group is mainly concentrated in the Montreal area and is made up largely of ethnic minorities (such as the large Jewish community) who after a few years of transition will adapt to the change.

In order to play its role in North America, the national Quebec would stress the early learning of English as a second language.



Photo by Ken De Freitas

UNB now has a new method of bridging the communications gap between the university and parents. Shown are a "Parents Day" group touring the BRUNSWICKAN Office, Saturday.



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