

ENTRE LE OUI ET LE NON

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"The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk."
G. W. Hegel. *The Philosophy of Right*

As darkness invaded the late autumn sky, the hopes of a nationalist win in the Quebec referendum slowly faded. The early returns from Eastern Quebec and the chateaux forts of francophone Quebec gave way to the massive 'no' vote from the island of Montreal running along the Ottawa River to Hull and beyond into the Pontiac and Gatineau counties where large numbers of civil servants dependent on the national capital for their livelihood predictably voted in favour of the Canadian link.

The closeness of the vote (50.6% No and 49.4% Yes) was perhaps the biggest story of the night of October 30, 1995. The federalists had avoided the worst which had been predicted in the polls of the last two weeks of the campaign. A last minute rally in the centre of Montreal saved the Canadian federalist forces from the jaws of defeat. On the other side, the nationalists seeking a mandate to negotiate Quebec out of the Canadian federation could lay a claim to victory since a majority of Francophone voters supported their electoral thesis. Moreover since the last referendum in 1980, there had been a progression in the nationalist vote from the low 40 percentile up and almost over the 50% mark.

Writing in *Le Devoir* several days after the referendum, political scientist and Quebec nationalist Guy Laforest gives a political meaning to the results: "La remarquable poussée du vote souverainiste vient de révéler, à la face du monde, l'ampleur du malaise qui secoue la fédération canadienne... Dorénavant, il est



clair que le Québec n'acceptera pas le statut de province comme les autres dans la nation canadienne. Dans la relation entre le Canada et le Québec, le référendum du 30 octobre a brisé le statu quo" (Laforest, 1995b).

The *aftermath* of the 1995 referendum will doubtless see the emergence of a plethora of analyses from what has become a homegrown industry in Canada and Quebec: political scientists or spin doctors. However this is not the objective of this essay. The hegelian precept upon which political analysis exists is to be found in the history or rather clash of ideas. To begin to understand what happened on the night of October 30th in Quebec, it is essential to understand the ideas that French nationalism in Quebec promotes. To understand the English Canadian response (which has ranged from paralysis to panic), one has to evaluate another form of nationalism. For Canada is a land of ideas, in fact, a phantasmagoria of cleavages, divisions

and competing paradigms of thought, a real political laboratory. Urban versus rural, French versus English, young against old, immigrant against non immigrant, Aboriginal against colonial peoples. This celebration of difference provides us with an invaluable instrument of theoretical analysis. It is not however a call to mediocrity nor should it validate shallow claims of Canadian nationalism based on hypothetical polls performed by UN agencies.¹

1. Pre referendum manoeuvres

The early years (1750-1980)

The complete background to the French-English rivalry can be traced as far back as the Hundred Years War in the mid 1750s. Although it is not the objective of this paper to describe this background, it may be useful to quickly review the history of the clashes. One might perhaps begin with the English victory over the French in 1756 on the Plains of Abraham, adjacent to the city of Quebec. This English victory signalled the decline of French military might on the North American continent and confirmed the French colonists' suspicion that the French monarchy had abandoned her subjects to a foreign

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1. Federalist campaign slogans repeated ad nauseum that according to the United Nations, Canada is the finest country in the world to live. The implication being why would anyone wish to break up such a perfect union?

power who shared neither their language nor their religion. The new British governor however was modest in victory and ensured that the French Canadians could continue to develop their French culture and traditions including their religion (Catholicism) and language. This general policy permitted the British to call upon the Canadians to repel the American invader during the War of 1812. Indeed most English Canadians fondly recall this chapter of Canadian history as proof of French Canadian loyalty to the British crown and by extension to Canada. In reality, it may have had more to do with saving their farms and families from yet another incursion by English and Protestant forces.

Before Confederation in 1867 which created Canada, the French Canadians attempted a rebellion against British rule in the name of responsible government. The Papineau rebellion of 1837 was easily crushed but it created the first martyr for French Canadian nationalism, Louis Papineau. The British North America Act formally created Canada which at the time consisted of Lower Canada (Quebec), Upper Canada (Ontario) and the Atlantic provinces. Conceived more as a contractual deal designed to forestall US designs on Canada (let us not forget that the doctrine of Manifest Destiny was designed not only for Mexico but for Canada too) between two businessmen, Georges Etienne Cartier and John A. MacDonald, the BNA Act divided powers between the provincial and federal governments. For example, education was to be a provincial responsibility as it was explicitly stated in the Act as were other taxing powers, etc. There were few explicit powers for the central government although the "good government clause" was left open to interpretation. As time passed and the country developed and more provinces were created, so the powers of the federal government grew. And so the balance of

power and demography militated against the French Canadians.

Philip Resnick in his book *Thinking English Canada* is particularly critical of the process by which the BNA Act created Canada. He will draw a parallel with the way in which the Meech Lake (1987) and Charlottetown (1992) accords were negotiated: "I would argue that Canadians, by and large, have not known popular sovereignty in its fullest measure. The process by which the British North America Act came to be framed involved closed-door meetings of the elected politicians of the day; the constitutional proposals in question were never submitted directly to the people of the then colonies for approval but were passed as a statute of the British Parliament..." (Resnick, 1994: 87).

As if to counter this growing political imbalance in the country between the French nation based in Quebec or Lower Canada and the English nation in Ontario (Upper Canada) and the Atlantic provinces, Louis Riel, a French Canadian Métis in the newly created province of Manitoba in the West rebelled against the central government. Supported by the French Canadian clergy in Montreal and Quebec City, Riel scored a number of victories with his Métis army until MacDonald's troops captured him. Riel was hung and French Canada now had a second martyr. Riel's death would signal the end of a politically viable French nation in the Canadian West. The two world wars confirmed the downward spiral of French influence in Canada as the central government increased its powers by leaps and bounds using its spending power to invade hitherto provincial realms of authority. The BNA Act which had been passed to protect French culture and traditions by entrenching provincial rights now turned against their makers in an almost unconscious historical development.

The obsessive inward years of Duplessis² conservatism in the forties and fifties in the province of Quebec gave way to the Quiet Revolution led by the Liberal Party of Quebec. Its leader, Jean Lesage, sought to awaken Quebec from

its political, economic and social isolation. During this period of intense intellectual ferment fuelled by other movements of the sixties, Quebec society changed considerably by limiting the power of the Catholic clergy which had dominated Quebec social and political life for so many years. In the late sixties, one sees the development of an anti-clerical coalition composed essentially of organized labour and left wing intellectuals. Like many other values and traditions in Quebec, this questioning included for the first time the possibility of establishing an independent Quebec. At the same time, some of the opponents of Duplessis including the "three wise men", Gerard Pelletier, Pierre Trudeau and Jean Marchand, steer the federal Liberal party towards a historic policy of bilingualism and biculturalism. Moulded during the Quiet Revolution, these three Quebecers seek to demand French rights from Ottawa by occupying key positions in a federal party.

By 1970, despite having "French Power" in Ottawa, a former Lesage cabinet minister bolted and unified various factions in Quebec behind the banner of "independence" from Canada. The new party called the "Parti québécois" is gaining ground in provincial elections. In the Fall of 1970, terrorists known as the "Front de libération du Québec" (FLQ) kidnap the British trade Commissioner and the provincial Minister of Labour, Pierre Laporte. The FLQ Manifesto is read on television and wins a measure of support from sections of Quebec society. From Ottawa, the response will be swift; it is the War Measures Act and Canadian army units invade the streets of Montreal. The crisis ends with the death of Laporte and the flight of FLQ members to Cuba. Canada, once known for its democratic tradition, shocks the world press. Federalists take advantage of the crisis to imprison Parti Québécois supporters based on the theory that there had been an apprehended insurrection. Octobre 1970 joins the list of nationalist rallying calls. The PQ under René Lévesque, the popular Que-

2. Maurice Duplessis was elected Premier of Quebec under the banner of provincial rights for the Union nationale party.

bec leader, takes power in 1976. A referendum is called in the Fall of 1980 on the possibility of a pact of "sovereignty-association" with the rest of Canada. Quebec will now try to negotiate its way out of Canada.

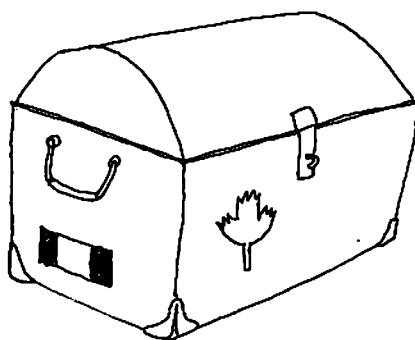
2. Constitutional wrangling (1980-1995)

The 1980 referendum in Quebec took place in a highly charged emotional climate. The actual question was not very daunting since it called for the negotiation of a pact of sovereignty association with the rest of Canada. Moderates within the PQ had argued successfully that an economic association with the rest of Canada was as important as creating a sovereign country and the final question reflected that duality. Finally Trudeau succeeded in convincing Quebecers that separation of Canada was the real question and argued for changes within Canada to accommodate some of the desires of Quebec. The result gave the federalists a resounding victory approaching 60% of the vote.

However the changes Trudeau had in mind did nothing to calm the waters. Determined to repatriate the Constitution formerly known as the BNA Act, Prime Minister Trudeau overrides Quebec's opposition and repatriates the constitution from Britain. Agreement was secured amongst all provincial premiers except René Lévesque who claimed he had been betrayed by his English Canadian colleagues. The Quebec nationalist reading of the repatriation exercise is summed up by Laforest in an article published in the English Canadian daily *The Globe and Mail* two weeks before the October 30th referendum: "... the court system was still studying whether Quebec had a right of veto according to Canadian laws and conventions... it remains improper for the government to behave as if a favourable decision had already been given by the courts. This amounts to a clear intimidation of the tribunal" (Laforest, 1995a). Trudeau's provocative action was condemned by English Canadian opponents of repatriation as 'Bonapar-

tism'³ while Quebec nationalists opposed repatriation as much for the way in which it was effected as for the content of the act. Quebec does not sign the constitution and has no veto power over federal legislation. By the mid eighties, new players are in power in Ottawa and Quebec City. Prospects for constitutional change including giving Quebec a veto power and a form of special status vis a vis the other provinces appears possible now that Trudeau's Liberals were out of the way.

Leading up to the 1995 referendum and heralding the surge in the Quebec nationalist vote were two attempts at constitutional reform. It must be remembered that to change the constitution, an almost impossible consensus is



required from the regions of Canada. However the impossible almost happened with the approval of the Meech Lake negotiations in which the Liberal leader of Quebec Robert Bourassa could take some comfort. Yet in 1989, aboriginal groups and a rump of provincial premiers opposed to special status for Quebec succeeded in blocking the Meech Lake proposal. This rejection was seen by many French Quebecers as a rejection of their specificity and many joined the swelling ranks of the PQ. In an insightful article titled *Shared and Divergent Values*, the Canadian Hegel scholar Charles Taylor employs the Hegelian notion of mutual recognition in his support of Meech Lake which would have conferred on Quebec distinct socie-

ty status. He writes, "With the demise of Meech, something snapped. I think it can be rather simply described. Quebecers would no longer live in a structure that did not fully recognize their national goals. In the early 1980s, after the defeat of the "yes" in the referendum, many toyed with the idea of accepting the marriage of convenience, and making a go of it with or without recognition. The new confidence could also have been motivated by this rather different stance, which marginalized the issue of recognition. After all, if you know your own worth, why do you need the other? But, in a sense, Meech wiped out this possibility just because it raised the hope of recognition" (Taylor, 1993: 171).

In an effort to stem the tide of alienation in French Quebec, the Conservative Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney attempted to once again change the constitution to accede to some of Quebec's historical demands. This process which was designed to circumvent opposition from recalcitrant premiers contained less than Meech and was rejected by Quebec in the 1992 Charlottetown accord. Mulroney's view was that when the question of constitutional change was clearly set before the Canadian people as a whole, the desire for unity and keeping Quebec in confederation would triumph. The Charlottetown compromise offered however less than Meech Lake and was brought forward by an intensely unpopular government. The fragile accord worked out at Charlottetown went down to defeat in Quebec and the West, the former believing it was not enough for Quebec while the latter believed it was far too much since it would confer a special status on "la belle province".

The defeat of Meech and Charlottetown was accomplished in different ways yet the result was the same: constitutional deadlock. As a result, Quebec had not signed the repatriated constitution of 1982. However the Meech and Charlottetown debacles had decisive political ramifications which can be di-

3. Philip Resnick was of this persuasion.

rectly traced through the results of the 1995 referendum results. These political events had the effect of resurrecting the Quebec nationalist forces that had been defeated in the 1980 referendum. The nationalist forces in Quebec increased their momentum and refined their political and electoral machine while everyone awaited the inevitable fall of the Mulroney and Bourassa governments. Resnick opposed both Meech and Charlottetown in the name of the as yet ill-defined English Canadian nation. His analysis highlights the two solitudes of the French and English nations in Canada: "One variant, which underlay both Meech and Charlottetown, is that of wholesale devolution of power to the provinces. In attempting to address Quebec demands for greater autonomy, one will place limits on federal spending powers; transfer jurisdiction over labour market training, housing, tourism, and culture to the provinces... The price of renewing the Canadian federation would thus be a significant weakening of the federal government... The formula of devolution is, therefore, extremely divisive where English Canada itself is concerned."⁴

The decision of the Canadian people, tired and disunified by constitutional failure was swift and merciless. Mulroney's Conservative majority was eradicated in the Canadian general election of 1993 leaving them only two seats in the entire parliament. More menacing however were the two new opposition parties: the Reform Party based in the West and instilled with the fervour of fiscal reform, prevention of crime and no special deals for Quebec and, at the opposite spectrum, now holding a majority of federal seats in Quebec, the Bloc québécois led by a former Mulroney cabinet minister and Quebec nation-

alist, Lucien Bouchard. The Liberals under a former Trudeau acolyte, Jean Chretien, obtained a majority government in Ottawa but the presence of strong regionally-based political parties was ominous to say the least.

On the heels of the federal campaign, the Quebec provincial election of 1994 ended with the election of the PQ led by Jacques Parizeau. Both nationalist wings were now united: the PQ and the Bloc. In Quebec, both federally and provincially, the trend was clear. The Quebec nationalist forces were gathering and on the move poised to deliver independence and sovereignty to French Quebec. Predictably, the anglophone, allophone and aboriginal vote in Quebec was massive and directed against the PQ. The minorities of Quebec had not changed their allegiance to Canada since 1980 and PQ strategists knew that if victory was to be theirs, they would have to count on the Francophone majority especially dominant in regions outside the island of Montreal, the cosmopolitan business capital of the province of Quebec.

3. The campaign

The unofficial referendum campaign had begun well before the official announcement in late September 1995. The "yes" and "no" campaigns had effectively spared throughout the previous summer working assiduously in preparing their electoral machines. In this sense, the real campaign began on June 12th with the regrouping of the three nationalist political parties: the Bloc, PQ and the PADQ.⁵ The Agreement, which had been the object of a long debate between the interested parties, joined the three nationalist forces within the umbrella of the "yes" campaign. Parizeau and the more radical nationalist elements of the PQ had been convinced that a pure sovereignty position would fail to collect the "soft nationalist" vote. Both Bouchard and Dumont favoured a referendum question which would contain an offer of association to Canada. If after a year, English Canada were to reject the offer to

negotiate an offer of economic association then Quebec could legally separate.

The early weeks of the campaign appeared to confirm the comfortable lead enjoyed by the "no" committee despite the complete absence of any new offers of decentralization or change similar to Trudeau's promises just before the 1980 vote. Federalist strategists believed that the onus of proof was on the "yes" supporters. Meanwhile a "gag" order had gone out from Ottawa to the provincial premiers advising them and their colleagues not to intervene in the Quebec referendum. It really seemed as if the 'Phony War' had arrived in Quebec.

It was felt by federalists that nothing had to be done except wait for the inevitable "no" result.

Soon however polls began showing that the federalist lead was being cut. Premier Jacques Parizeau, the titular chief of the "yes" campaign increasingly gave way to Lucien Bouchard, leader of the BQ whose popularity in Quebec continued to rise. Suddenly Canadian and Quebec federalist forces began to question the "no" campaign strategy of doing nothing and non-intervention. During the last ten days of the campaign, the federalist forces were being routed and the possibility of a "yes" vote became very real indeed. Even Chretien now began to make several promises for some change including the addition of a "distinct society" clause to possibly be included in the constitution (an element of Meech!). Then on the eve of the vote, droves of panic-stricken English Canadians invaded downtown Montreal for a "solidarity rally" pleading with Quebecers not to vote "yes". Federal bureaucrats were given the day off and airlines put on additional planes. Despite nationalist claims that the Quebec Elections Act had been violated by these practices, the rally went forward and was perhaps the only reason why the "no" side won the October 30th referendum. Chretien's referendum strategy lay in ruins and his leadership questioned. Despised by a vast majority in his home province and obviously unable to effectively evaluate

4. Thinking English Canada, page 97.

5. Parti d'action démocratique du Québec led by a former member of the youth wing of the provincial Liberal Party, Mario Dumont. The PADQ captured one seat in the Quebec National Assembly as a result of the 1994 Quebec election.

public opinion, the Canadian PM was obliged to overhaul the federalist strategy with one week left. Laforest notes with conviction that "Tardivement, à mots couverts, il a été forcé d'ouvrir son jeu. Dans la dernière semaine, sur un mode de panique indescriptible, il est intervenu à cinq reprises dans la campagne référendaire. Il a promis des changements" (Laforest, 1995b).

4. The result

The closeness of the result 50.6% "no" and 49.4% "yes" indicates just how close Canadians came to losing their country. There are a number of elementary political lessons to be extracted from this popular consultation. Clearly the "soft nationalist" vote by French speaking Quebecers was won over by the Bouchard appeal and strategy. The gamble of the June 12th accord, which had diluted somewhat Parizeau's pure sovereignty position, had succeeded. Secondly, Prime Minister Jean Chretien's unity campaign was a miserable flop. Without the last minute Montreal rally which would have been unthinkable in the early days of the campaign, the "no" side may well have lost the day. Bouchard was the big winner on October 30th especially since his leadership largely eclipsed that of Jacques Parizeau who announced his resignation as Quebec Premier ostensibly to make way for Bouchard. The general sentiment is that the strength of the nationalist vote heralds a cry for change in the Canadian federation, in particular devolution of more powers to Quebec and the other provinces.

Before interpreting the result, let us first rapidly look at the regional and linguistic breakdown of the vote. Why was the vote so close? Normally in a close vote, one can usually conclude that the polity was undecided or torn between attractive options. Not so in Quebec where anglophones and allophones voted in high numbers for the Canadian link whilst a majority of Francophones voted in favour of the Bouchard version of sovereignty-

association. An example of bloc voting can be gleaned from the Montreal island riding of 'd'Arcy McGee' where there is an extremely low percentage of Francophone voters. In the 1980 referendum the "no" side won an overwhelming 96.1% of the vote.⁶ In the 1995 vote, this high score was actually improved on and went up to 96.7%. This is to be contrasted with majority Francophone ridings where the yes side won convincing victories usually outside Montreal and the Ottawa River corridor.

The region of Abitibi located in north-west Quebec running along the Ontario border but north of the national capital region voted "yes" 55%, Lanaudière and Laurentides located north of Montreal 64.9% and 57% respectively, the Que-



bec City constellation of Mauricie Bois-Francis, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and Quebec City 56.2%, 68.8% and 53.4% respectively and finally Gaspésie where the "yes" forces amassed nearly 60% of the vote. South of Quebec City running along the USA border to just south of Montreal which contains a large number of smaller export driven industries there was a relative dead heat. The "no" victory essentially racked up huge majorities in Montreal especially the anglophone and allophone West and Centre. Populous Montreal West went 76.8% to the "no" while Montreal East was closer with the "no" win substantially less at 51.4%. Fifteen years ago, Montreal East supported independence and was the home of a strong majority

of native French Quebecers. Predictably the Outaouais region west of Montreal along the banks of the Ottawa River voted massively in favour of Canada 71.6% perhaps since independence might have seen a reduction in government jobs for the inhabitants of that region.

5. The canadian sisypus

The Canadian federation was a big loser of the Quebec October 30th referendum. It may be months before the full political fallout of the referendum becomes known. Jacques Parizeau resigned as Quebec Premier after the narrow defeat paving the way for a triumphant Lucien Bouchard. Canadian PM Chretien's leadership was revealed to be shaky at best and his role in Quebec has been reduced even further than the marginal role he played before the referendum. Perhaps more important and in keeping with the hegelian ethos, it may be more important to look beyond the daily political scuffling and wrangling to observe the real impact of the October referendum. What is the impact on a society as it nears ever closer to the brink of destruction?

First of all, it should be noted as one might deduce from the historical sketch offered at the beginning of this article that the genesis of the October referendum is a long one. Historically the roots of the crisis can be retraced to the Riel rebellion, Manitoba school question, the federal elections of 1911 and 1917, the two conscription crises during the World Wars, the October 1970 crisis and the election of the first PQ government in Quebec headed by Rene Levesque.

Let us try to imagine that the question of Canadian unity is an allegory much like Nietzsche's theory of eternal return in which everything that has been lived will be relived and that nothing new will be created. It is often said that Nietzsche's intent was to create a kind of psychological test based on a

6. The election results and vote percentages are taken from the Montreal daily *La Presse* of October 31, 1995.

seemingly nihilistic hypothesis. This situation can be likened to a sort of Canadian Sisyphus slowly rolling the rock of Canadian unity up the slippery slope only to watch it roll back down the hill. The powers of Quebec and Canadian nationalism sow the seeds of disunity and effectively prevent any nation building of the type enjoyed by other polities including the American neighbour to the south. Think the unthinkable: what if disunity were to be a permanent feature of Canadian politics and society? What if in this sea of competing paradigms of nationalism, disunity is to be our Manifest Destiny? Like Nietzsche's refrain in Zarathustra of Shakespearian inspiration that life is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury but meaning nothing. Indeed any unilateral attempt to deny the contradiction may be interpreted as an act of bad faith, a denial of the necessarily fragmented nature of social being.

Let us however tempt nihilism and try to make some sense of what may be a clue to understanding the October 30th referendum in Quebec. It may also provide us with some modest insight into the entire genesis of this wealthy but brooding band of neophytes of the north ready to defy economic realities at the drop of a hat. To be sure, this view of the 'Quebec or Canadian problem' does not tend to validate the Quebec nationalist dream of a sovereign state nor does it support a sense of English Canadian nationalism born out of an desire for popular sovereignty or town hall government. Its philosophical inspiration frees this analysis from the fetters of the prophets of innate culture and tribalism. Is it then a formula for liberalism, a political form of skepticism?

Although their reading of Canadian history and politics differs from Quebec successionists, David Bercusson and Barry Cooper in their book *Deconfederation* promote the separation of Quebec from Canada. Spurning both Meech Lake and Charlottetown as responding only to Quebec's desire for more powers, these Western Canadian political theorists reflect the *ras le bol* of the English

Canadian political class. Their thesis is simple but clear: "We have already indicated that the separation of Quebec from Canada is a first step to resolving the ongoing economic and constitutional crisis that we have endured for practically a generation... we are very confident that the Canadian state cannot remove itself from its chronic state of crisis so long as Quebec remains within it" (Bercusson and Cooper, 1991: 17). Resnick also argues for the emergence of a self conscious English Canadian nation although his conclusions are less provocative than those of Bercusson and Cooper. Yet the conclusion is the same: there is a solution to Canada's problem and it entails the separation of Quebec. At last, the Canadian Sisyphus' trial is over. The contradiction which has haunted and indeed shaped Canadian politics can be eliminated and each nation can then live a peaceful co-existence. These conclusions reflect a naivety which is shared by both Quebec and Canadian nationalists. They deny the essential fragmented nature of being and its historical evolution on the territory called 'Canada'. At the very least one could argue that a purely political analysis misses the mark when applied to Canadian political relations particularly regarding the notion of mutual recognition of nations and their self conscious development.

To help contrast the views of the present article with those of our erstwhile nationalist friends, let us briefly look at the origins of the issue of bilingualism. This policy long reviled by Quebec and English Canadian nationalists will apparently not be necessary once affairs sort themselves out. Bercusson and Cooper argue that the reason for the Official Bilingualism Policy was to please Quebec. They note "Official bilingualism is only the most blatant of a series of futile policy initiatives designed to retain the allegiance of Quebec" (*ibid.*: 60). In a word, this policy had been designed to strengthen Canadian unity or in the words of English Canadian nationalists, to placate Quebec. By contrast, "Bilingualism can be understood

not as an attempt to create a monolithic Canadian state, rather it is inextricably linked to the imagination of disunion... The ambiguous character of bilingualism in Canada is the following: pursued since it was thought that it would unify the country, its actual role was mistaken... Its meaning might best be understood in the context of fragmented national being or disunion. In this sense, bilingualism is not a project for a unified Canadian political culture. Rather it is a reflection on the project of disunion in harmony with the political imagination. As a policy, it is a timely affront to Quebec national being and American social conformism. It also plays a key role in preparing Canadians and social Quebecers for the difficult challenges of globalization and internationalization" (Mabley, 1994: 99).

Separation or not, the differences which have invaded the Canadian political agenda due to the 'Quebec problem' will not disappear. The reason is quite simple: the nature of disunity in the Canadian federation is not a political problem. It is much more of an existential dilemma linked to social and economic factors. Contrary to the Bercusson-Cooper thesis, the requirement to defend the French language in Quebec through special laws and use of the notwithstanding clause will not vanish. Rather it would increase under continental pressures and influences from the United States. Nor would the problems associated with aboriginal self government and linguistic minorities inside and outside Quebec and Canada disappear. Charles Taylor identifies the major difficulty inherent in the 'nationalist' thesis: "Finally, after dividing to form two polities with uniform citizenship, both of the successor states would find that they had failed after all to banish the challenge of deep diversity... Neither Quebec nor Canada outside of Quebec could succeed in imitating the United States -or the European national states in their chauvinist prime. So let us recognize this now and take the road of deep diversity together" (Taylor, n/d: 184).

Conclusion

The October 30th referendum in Quebec is yet another chapter in the saga of the Canadian story of disunion. Rather than to accept this essential fragmented quality of Canadian and Quebec national being, many Canadian political theorists have heeded the seductive calls of empirical analysis in the name of conformism and nationalism in order to achieve a 'solution'. Perhaps there is no real solution (understood as the taming of difference and diversity) and certainly not one which would be of any real consolation to the Canadian Sisyphus. The question of whether Quebec separates from Canada is in this sense somewhat secondary since like the perfect imaginary Canadian union promoted by Canadian federalists, it will change very little in terms of the fragmented nature of this region of the world. Canadians and Quebecers might do well to accept their existential dilemma (which does not mean that separation should not be considered as an option) recognize their

differences and profit from them to develop capacity for foreign trade and build an international work force. In any case, with globalization of economic relations between Canada and the world, the delightful dance of the dialectic can only serve to enhance the irksome destiny of this northern people whose politics are as arcane and complex as any Central or Latin American nation.

When observing the existence of factions within the state, a French political philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau provided the following advice: "Thus if the general will is to be clearly expressed, it is imperative that there should be no sectional associations in the state, and that every citizen should make up his own mind for himself - such was the unique and sublime invention of the great Lycurgus. But if there are sectional associations, it is wise to multiply their number and to prevent inequality among them, as Solon, Numa and Servius did. These are the only precautions which can ensure that

the general will is always enlightened and the people protected from error" (Rousseau, 1984: 73). ♦

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