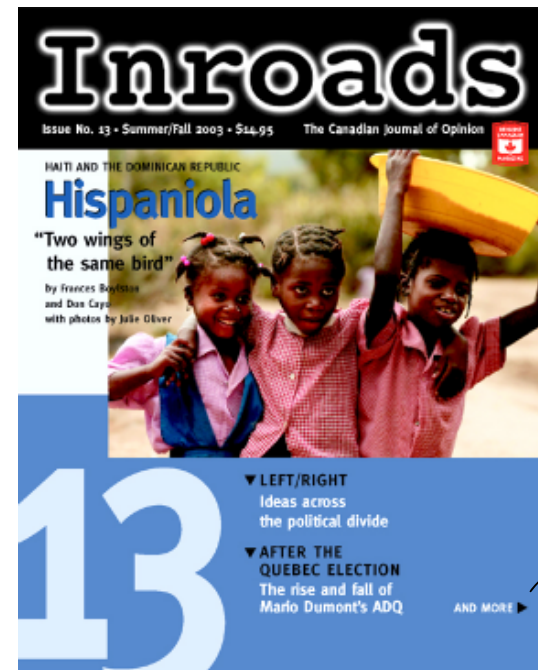


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ADQ LEADING LIGHTS Mario Dumont, leader of the Action Démocratique du Québec, embodied Quebecers' desire for change in 2002, but Jean Charest outflanked him in the 2003 election.

After the Quebec election

The rise and fall of Mario Dumont's ADQ

Three views

MARIO DUMONT'S ACTION DÉMOCRATIQUE DU QUÉBEC (ADQ) WAS THE GREAT disappointment of the April Quebec election. After leading the polls in the fall of 2002, the ADQ plummeted during the campaign and was reduced to 18 per cent of the popular vote and only four seats. The result reflects a longstanding theme of this journal, that our winner-take-all electoral institutions marginalize important but secondary political currents.

It is uncertain at this point what the future holds for the ADQ, but it is certain that the party reflects a profound development in Quebec. We asked three respected observers on Quebec's political scene to assess the meaning of the ADQ's rise and fall. Though largely written before the election, their contributions help us understand why the ADQ ultimately failed in its efforts.

Jean-François Lisée vigorously defends the "Quebec model" that the ADQ seeks to demolish. His analysis points up some of the weaknesses of the ADQ's program that emerge when it is subjected to the scrutiny accorded to a frontrunner in the run-up to an election.

Both Éric Bédard and Gary Caldwell write from a perspective that is more sympathetic to the ADQ, and both add further dimensions to our understanding. Bédard's

critique is that the ADQ was too negative. Instead of projecting a coherent alternative view, it did little more than reflect the petty fears haunting today's Quebecers. In contrast to the forces that emerged in the 1930s and the 1950s to challenge entrenched regimes, the ADQ shows few signs of progressing from anger to plan, from resentment to program.

Caldwell makes a parallel argument, including in his historical models the emergence of the Parti Québécois in the 1970s. Unlike Bédard, however, he sees in the ADQ the seeds of a "generational party" for the early twenty-first century. The failure was in the party's electoral strategists giving way to professional organizers who reflected the same technocratic values the ADQ had been founded to oppose.

— Henry Milner

The odd couple

Mario Dumont's ADQ and the "Quebec Model"

by Jean-François Lisée

HOW ARE WE TO ACCOUNT FOR LAST YEAR'S SUDDEN ASCENDANCE of Mario Dumont, the young leader of Quebec's third party, the Action Démocratique du Québec?

There is, of course, the man himself: he has style, energy, determination. He comes across as sure of himself but not arrogant. He calls for dramatic changes, yet his style is anything but that of a damn-the-torpedoes radical. An experienced political tactician despite his age, he has good timing and a developed ear for popular sentiment and for what would play in the media. Above all, and contrary to his Parti Québécois and Liberal foes, he didn't seem torn, anguished or burdened by Quebec politics and his place in it. He seems at ease, like a fish in water. In Quebec, a complicated place that breeds inferiority complexes, this is a refreshing posture.

Yet Mario Dumont had all these qualities two, four, six years ago. But he rose to prominence only last year. And although his star has waned since his party garnered more than 50 per cent of the votes in four byelections in June 2002, and ended up – despite a rather strong team of candidates including the former mayor of Montreal – with only four seats in the election, he won almost 20 per cent of the vote and has made a significant impact in the Quebec political landscape.

George Bush, Sr., used to say, "Ninety per cent of politics is showing up," and there are indeed times when persistence pays. But here, it is the Quebec landscape that shifted

to make Dumont man of the hour, not the other way around. In early 2002, what seemed to be an endless series of ethical blunders and patronage accusations tarred the PQ leadership and – at another level – the Chrétien Liberals, with serious spillover for their Quebec cousins. All of a sudden, every incumbent politician seemed on the take, passé, good for retirement. Dumont alone – literally a single-member caucus – did not suffer from that alienation, his own previous considerable legal problems with political party financing having left no apparent trace in the electorate.

The consensus that sovereignty – though supported by more than 40 per cent of the electorate – is not an issue to be revived in the foreseeable future helped Dumont by blurring an essential political divide. He had been in the sovereigntist camp in the 1995 referendum; today he proclaims – while being careful not to fully reject the notion – that the issue is "no longer on the radar screen." Hence former PQ voters could join him without renouncing their ideal. At the same time, Jean Charest had not yet won acceptance as an alternative premier among francophones, so malcontent Liberal voters were temporarily redirected to the rising ADQ.

An early spring 2002 byelection in a riding in the Saguenay region was a key moment. Dumont seized on the byelection and campaigned as though he was running himself. People came out to "vote for Mario" (his name is always on the ballot, since the official name of his party is). Yet now it was no longer just Mario: the Saguenay vic-

tory broke the dike. Now other victories could ensue.

Moreover, Dumont paradoxically benefited from the very thing he attacked: the so-called Quebec model. He repeatedly insisted – as did Charest – that Quebec is poorly managed, smothered initiative and entrepreneurship, confiscates productive capital and discourages individual success. And he promised to take the government "out of the way" of job-creating enterprises, cut red tape, trim the Quebec state, lower taxes – the ADQ toyed, for a while, with the flat tax – and bring the private sector into health care. A Dumont government would not follow the lead of the unions, social advocates and civil-society summits that were the trademark of the PQ government. And business (which flocked to his side, wallet in hand, in the few months before the election) will at last take its rightful place.

The irony is that had he won power, as if by magic, he would have inherited the most buoyant economy in North America, in fact the fastest growing economy among the seven most industrialized nations for five long years. He would also have inherited a healthy business climate, reflected in the fact that production costs in its metropolis of Montreal are lower than elsewhere in North America or in Europe, even when taxes and regulation costs are factored in.¹

Quebecers are not accustomed to being on top of these charts. They know that Montreal's economy is going well – even Dumont acknowledges that. They see their purchasing power growing – indeed it grew

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by more than 7 per cent in real terms during the last economic cycle (1989–2000), while it remained static in Ontario.² They can see that more Quebecers are working (more than at any other time in recorded statistical history). But they are absolutely convinced that they are lagging behind! They feel richer than before, but not as rich as the Joneses and, for the first time, they feel they can reasonably ask: why not?

It is these feelings that have turned some of them toward Mario Dumont. Quebecers, a notoriously prudent lot, came to feel economically confident enough to consider gambling on a leader with no managerial experience whatsoever. If times were bad, with deficits and unemployment growing, they would never been so brash. But be-

Because public finances are sound, deficits are gone, investment and employment are up, they could afford a political fling with that bright young man. Dumont's rise is a symptom of the success of the "Quebec model" as it has developed in the past decade.

cause public finances are sound, deficits are gone, investment and employment are up, they could afford a political fling with that bright young man. Dumont's rise is a symptom of Quebec's newfound wealth – indeed, of the success of the "Quebec model" as it has developed in the past decade.

It is also a sign of impatience with the state. Why are taxes higher in Quebec? Why are salaries higher in New York? Something is wrong, claims Dumont, with Jean Charest, most of the media, the business class and economic analysts in tow. The Parti Québécois government (full disclosure: I was

an adviser to PQ premiers Parizeau and Bouchard from 1994 to 1999), which climbed aboard the tax-reduction wagon for a while, helped fuel this perception, and only later came around to defending more forcefully the Quebec model's cost/benefit package against that of its neighbours. Quebecers still perceive that they have the wrong package. There is, however, mounting evidence to the contrary.

Wealth and growth: Some facts and figures

What is the "Quebec model"? Definitions, accusatory and laudatory, abound. We can start with one crafted in 1998 under Premier Bouchard. We honed in on four basic elements:

- a premium on solidarity as a central value of our collective life, expressed as a more robust social safety net and lower income inequality than elsewhere on the continent;
- a consensus-building approach that seeks to unite labour, business, government and, more recently, community groups in setting national goals and managing local development;
- an economy in which the government takes a more active role, and of which cooperatives, employee investment funds and the social economy take a greater share;
- finally, Quebec's special responsibility as the only state controlled by the franco-phone minority on the continent.

Much of what one finds in the specific policy proposals of the ADQ or the Liberal Party is compatible with this definition. It does not preclude more private sector in-

tervention in health care, more individual choice in day care, lower taxes or outsourcing. The level of state intervention in the economy can vary and has varied significantly over the years, now taking, as it should, a back seat to a very healthy, and rather recent, home-grown business class. Yet it seems that the particular dosage attained in the last decade pays off.

Look at the numbers: growth in Quebec was stronger than in the United States for each of the last four years and stronger than in each of the G7 countries for at least three of the past five years. In all, over the last five years, growth in Quebec, at 19.6 per cent, has been more than double the G7 average of 9.5 per cent. The difference is even greater per capita. On this basis, Quebec grew by 250 per cent of the G7 average.³

Population growth in Quebec during these same five years was exactly equal to the G7 average. And since the birth rate has been falling faster in Quebec than elsewhere, this growth is even more dependent on Quebec's ability to attract and retain immigrants. Despite what is commonly believed, Quebec's economy exerts a stronger attraction on immigrants than that of the average

industrialized country. Canada, and in particular Ontario, is far more attractive than the norm, which makes Quebec look bad in comparison. Yet over the last decade, Quebec had almost twice the population growth of northeastern American states like New York or Massachusetts.

According to November 2002 forecasts by the Bank of Montreal for North America and by the European Commission for Europe and Japan, Quebec will still be leading the pack in 2003 and 2004. In gross figures, Quebec is expected to grow at a rate 10 per cent above the average of its American neighbours and 60 per cent above that of the G7. Taken individually, no country will perform better than Quebec.

This does not mean that Quebec is richer, per capita, than these countries. Quebec has been poorer than Ontario, Canada, the G7 and OECD average since these statistics have been gathered. The right question about Quebec's model of development is whether it is causing Quebec to lose ground, falling further behind, as Dumont and Charest assert, or whether Quebec is closing the historic gaps. The critics routinely use raw GDP figures to claim that Quebec is losing ground in North America. Yet when

Table 1: Quebec's economy compared to the OECD, Canada and the USA, 1992–2004 (GDP per person in PPPs)

	1992	1998	2000	2002	2004
Quebec/OECD	101%	102%	107%	111%	114%
Quebec/Canada	89%	89%	91%	92%	93%
Quebec/USA	74%	71%	74%	79%	81%

Sources: 1992–2001: OECD and Institut de la Statistique du Québec; Estimates 2002 and forecasts 2004: Statistics Canada, Bank of Montreal.

Table 2: Median earnings, 1997 in 1995 US\$ (in PPPs)

Canada	20,300
Quebec	20,500
Ontario	21,600
United States	21,700

using per capita figures based on purchasing power parities (PPPs) to take cost of living into account, as is now the rule at the OECD, the World Bank and the IMF, the results are stunning.

If placed among the 30 members of the OECD, Quebec went from 17th place in 1992 to 10th place in 2002 in wealth per capita in PPPs; only Ireland climbed higher faster. This rise occurred because the Quebec model, especially since the mid-eighties, was able to evolve from its 1960s form and reengineer itself.

As we can see,⁴ Quebec has been stead-

ily narrowing the gap. And this does not take into account Quebec's greater income equality. The obscene accumulation of wealth of late by the top 1 per cent of U.S. earners (almost 20 per cent of after-tax income), makes averages less than meaningful. As economist Paul Krugman put it in his New York Times column earlier this year, when Bill Gates enters a bar at which 40 workers are seated, all patrons automatically become, on average, billionaires.

There can be no doubt: the top 10 per cent of earners in Ontario, British Columbia and, especially, the United States are much richer than in Quebec. If that is the objective, Quebec, with the lowest Gini coefficient of income inequality⁵ on the continent, is out of the game. If, instead, greater wealth for the whole population is the objective, then we need note that the 25 per cent of the population with the lowest income live better in Quebec than in Canada as a whole, while those in Canada, in turn, have it better than those in the United States.

What of the middle class? Quebec econo-

mist Pierre Fortin used Michael Wolfson and Brian Murphy's landmark study of incomes in North America in 1997⁶, adding PPP differentials for Quebec that the study did not take into account, and came up with the figures for median income set out in table 2.

Two facts stick out. First, the Quebec figure is slightly higher than the Canadian one, no doubt a recent development. Second, the differential with the United States is less than 6 per cent, far from the 20-per-cent-plus gap arrived at when using non-PPP-adjusted average figures. Since growth has been significantly higher in Quebec than in the U.S. since 1997, and much more evenly distributed, it is a good bet that more recent data will show the gap disappearing.

Taxes, services and the weight of the Quebec state

Mario Dumont frequently expresses a strong distaste for the state and for civil servants. The state is too heavy, he argues, too intrusive, too all-encompassing. Dumont is the freshest face on a very old right-wing talk-show rant against civil servants' cushy jobs and security. There is ample room for debate on the nature of state intervention in Quebec life, but the numbers don't quite add up.

A comparison with Ontario – the rich cousin who, Quebecers all assume, knows how to handle things – does not buttress the Dumont case. According to comparisons compiled by Quebec's Conseil du Trésor this February, and essentially drawn from Statistics Canada, it is true that Ontario has 8 civil servants per 1,000 citizens, and Quebec 12. A huge gap, except that many civil-service tasks in Ontario have devolved to city workers, who are more

numerous there. When this is taken into account, Quebec has 22 civil servants per 1,000 inhabitants, Ontario 20. Not quite worth storming the Bastille over.

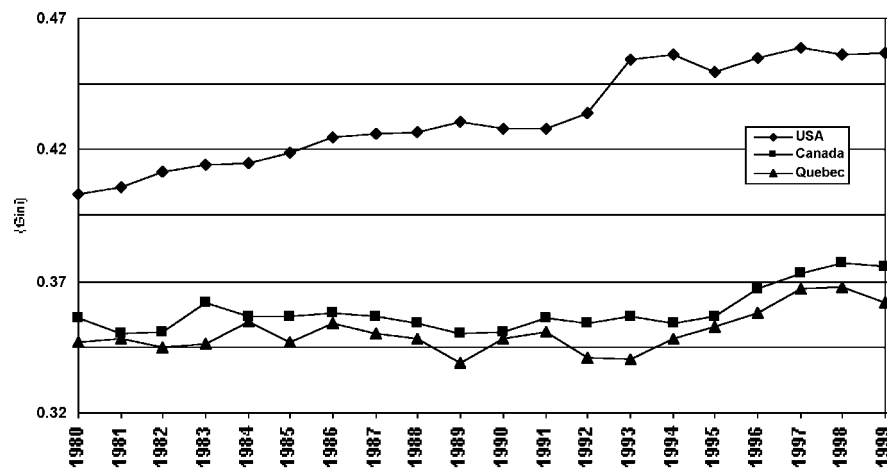
Furthermore, Quebec carries out tasks that Ontario leaves to the federal government: job training, immigration selection and integration, GST management, the pension plan. Quebec has also a revenue department, state auto insurance and pharmacare, a more robust presence in child care, culture, social housing, international relations – the list goes on. One can argue that Quebec should not be in these fields, although neither Dumont nor Charest does so since both demand even more decentralization from Ottawa to Quebec, and therefore more work for Quebec civil servants.

If we listen to Dumont and friends, Quebecers live in a “fiscal hell.” One can argue the merits of lower taxation per se. But the critics assume that Quebecers get nothing in exchange for their tax dollars, that this money is somehow dumped into a great bureaucratic black hole.

When Quebec's Conseil de Trésor factors in the federal-provincial differences, it finds that Quebec's civil-servant ratio falls to 20.3 per 1,000, just above Ontario's 20.⁷

We thus come to the bottom line, the costs. If we listen to Dumont and friends, Quebecers live in a “fiscal hell.” Again, one can argue the merits of lower taxation per se. But the critics assume that Quebecers get nothing in exchange for their tax dollars, that this money is somehow dumped into a great bureaucratic black hole. One Dumont electoral ad went as far as to claim that “50 per cent of our tax dollars are

Figure 1: Gini Index, households 1980–1999



Source: Statistics Canada, US Census

wasted.” “Do we get better health care for this money?” asks one of Dumont’s star recruits, fiscal adviser Yvon Cyrenne. “Shorter waiting lists, better education?” (In fact we do get better overall education and health, and waiting lists under the Canadian average, but Cyrenne, like most Quebecers, doesn’t believe so.)

I have not found a scholarly comparison of taxes and services collected and provided by the governments of Quebec and Ontario, and thus rely on the Quebec Finance Department’s computation of what it would look like if the Ontario tax structure had been applied in Quebec in the 2001–2 fiscal year. On the tax side, Quebecers would have paid \$4.2 billion less; but Quebec businesses would have paid \$1.4 billion more. So the net extra burden is \$2.8 billion.

On the expenditure side, a simple perusal of the spending reports of both governments in 2001–2 shown in the table below indicates some of the services provided by the Quebec government but not by Ontario. Two big-ticket items, \$5-a-day daycare and pharmacare, bring us to \$2.7 billion. Add Quebec’s supplement to the federal child benefit, its generous student grants program (Ontario provides only loans), its grants to private education (non-existent in Ontario and very much middle-class-oriented), its strong involvement in local development and its larger investment in culture, and the sum climbs over \$4 billion. And this does not include additional administrative activities related to the Quebec pension plan, the revenue department (which also handles the GST), immigration selection and integration, and foreign delegations.

The conclusion is inescapable. Not only

do Quebecers get their money’s worth in terms of services, but they actually get considerably more bang out of each tax buck than Ontarians.

Dumont, a pre-Reagan Republican

If Mario Dumont had a consistent neoconservative vision of where he wants to go, it would at least allow for a well-drawn electoral debate between social democrats and conservatives. Unfortunately he does not walk the talk. He voted in favour of Quebec’s 1996 groundbreaking pay equity law, which mandates pay hikes for women in the public and the private sector over 10 years and imposes a burdensome assessment process on businesses. And in 1998, he pushed the Bouchard government to craft Quebec’s distinctive law banning dual pay scales, thus protecting younger workers against this discriminatory practice.

More recently, after calling for deregulation in well-attended speeches before businesspeople in Toronto and Montreal, Dumont voted in December in the National Assembly for a bill extending labour regulation and worker protection in Quebec to a level unmatched on the continent. Soon afterwards, despite speeches denouncing the tax burden and vowing to lower upper tax brackets, he voted for the law against poverty and social exclusion, which commits the government to provide funds – tax funds – to lift poor citizens out of poverty.

His team of star candidates hardly complemented his ideological stance. Former Montreal mayor Pierre Bourque talked of wealth redistribution at every turn, and didn’t seem to have read the party platform.



ADQ LEADING LIGHTS Guy Laforest, a political science professor at Laval University and prominent Quebec political analyst, is president of the ADQ. He ran unsuccessfully in a Quebec City riding. Laforest has contributed to Inroads in past issues.

sells their businesses. All this summit/partnership/let’s get-together-and-have-a-consensus business would go; instead he would represent the “silent majority” who are not invited to these gatherings – though it is unclear how he would consult them, and though he has attended every summit to which he was invited since 1994.

Dumont never comments on international affairs. Globalization doesn’t seem to bother him, as long as we can trade with the United States. Quebec’s delegation network should stay, he says, but get behind our entrepreneurs and cut down on . We can get better policy pronouncements from taxi drivers.

Overall, we are in the presence of a pre-Reagan Republican – a soft reactionary, not a feisty revolutionary. If he had won power, it is doubtful that he would have succeeded in turning the Quebec model upside down – although his proposal to import U.S.-style education vouchers could have wreaked havoc on a Quebec education system that, according to the OECD’s PISA survey⁸, has been producing the best high school results in science, math and reading in the West, overall and especially among economically disadvantaged students.

The pace of reform was extremely brisk after the PQ was elected in 1994 and reelected in 1998, as manifested in particular in decentralization in education and economic development and in enhanced performance in the public sector. The rise of the ADQ gave impetus to reformers within

Diane Bellemare, who used to head the board of Quebec’s labour-training agency on which union, business and community representatives sit, was a symbol of the Quebec corporatist culture that Dumont publicly loathes. His health critic, Joëlle Lescop, contradicted him on the ability of patients to pay for care. Taking an approach rooted in mainstream thinking, she argued that the private sector could deliver the service, but the state should pay. None of these candidates were elected on April 14.

When questioned about his values, Dumont’s small- conservatism emerges. He’s not keen on abortion, though he would not act to restrict access to it. Gay marriage is not his thing, though he voted in 2002 for Quebec’s very progressive law on the issue. He would not legalize marijuana – a federal responsibility. He clearly doesn’t like unions, and pledges to repeal the section of the Quebec labour code that gives unionized workers some protection when employers

the PQ, which found its way both into social policy projects, like a right to a four-day week for parents of young children, and efficiency-oriented ones, like further reduction of the corporate tax burden. This did give a boost to PQ fortunes and made possible a comeback that, for a while in the spring of 2003, seemed to point to reelection. The outgoing Landry government actually ended the campaign with a 50-per-cent-plus satisfaction rating, and lost.

The ADQ's rise also forced the Charest Liberals to redraw their policy positions without trying to outflank Dumont's boldness. At first, their decision to be mild seemed risky. But a series of Dumont blunders and reversals got many Quebecers to rethink their choices. Yes, a majority of them were satisfied with the government, but a bigger majority were ripe for a change, and with Charest giving his best personal performance since the 1995 referendum, change without radicalism was back in style.

If nothing else, then, Mario Dumont and the ADQ will leave their mark in further changes in the Quebec model. The election allowed voters to set the direction of these changes, and the place of individualism in it. On the PQ side lay a balance between social and economic development with an eye to social cohesion; on the ADQ side, a gradual weakening of the state and of civil organizations to accommodate a more individual approach, creating a more unequal society than Quebecers have known. By choosing the Charest Liberals, Quebecers decided to try to have both. ■

Notes

- ¹ See the latest KPMG report, (January 2002), at www.competitivealternatives.com
- ² For a detailed Quebec-Ontario comparison, see my (2001) at <http://www.vigile.net/ds-lisee/docs/01-12-6-news-myths.html>, or the more complete French version, (2002), at <http://www.vigile.net/ds-lisee/docs/02-2-mythes.html>
- ³ See my "The Quebec Model: A Remarkable Performance," , December 12, 2002, at <http://www.vigile.net/ds-lisee/docs/02-12-3-news-performance.html>, and the table at <http://www.vigile.net/ds-economie/docs/02-12-3-lisee-modele.html>
- ⁴ For a discussion of these issues, see Pierre Fortin, (Université du Québec à Montréal and Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, Revised, January 2002) at <http://www.crde.umontreal.ca/cneh/fortin-txt.pdf> Quynh-Van Tran and Henri-Claude Joseph, (Institut de la statistique du Québec, Extract de la publication , June 2001) at http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/bul/economie/pdf/eco2_01.pdf ; and my (April 2003) at <http://www.vigile.net/ds-lisee/docs/Quebec-Region-State-06-2002.doc>
- ⁵ The theoretical minimum Gini is 0.0, i.e. all income equally distributed; the theoretical maximum is 1.0, i.e. all income going to the 10 per cent of households receiving the most income.
- ⁶ Michael Wolfson and Brian Murphy, "Income Inequality in North America : Does the 49th Parallel Still Matter?", in the , Statistics Canada, August 2000, Ct 11-010-XPB, at http://www.statcan.ca/francais/indepth/11-010/feature/ea2000_aug_f.pdf
- ⁷ These numbers are drawn from Conseil du Trésor du Québec, , February 17, 2003.
- ⁸ See www.cmec.ca/pisa/2000/rapportcanada.fr.pdf

Is the ADQ Quebec's next generational party?

by Gary Caldwell

In A MUCH-COMMENTED-ON ARTICLE IN 1986, LAVAL POLITICAL scientist Vincent Lemieux argued that in the last century of Quebec politics there had emerged, every 30 years or so, a which eclipsed one of the existing parties and took power. Basing his analysis on Quebec voting patterns, Lemieux detected three major realignments:

the emergence of Laurier and the federal Liberals in 1896, of Duplessis and the Union Nationale in 1944 and, finally, of Lévesque and the Parti Québécois in 1976. Each of these realignments, he argued, was the work of a new generation which produced a dominant party in its image.

The rhythm of this dynamic meant that the next realignment election would take place early in the twenty-first century – in other words, where we are now. The question is thus: is Mario Dumont's Action Démocratique du Québec (ADQ) the next

generational party? To answer this question, we need to go beyond Lemieux's political dynamics to prior social causes and their cultural manifestations, to the profound underlying cultural change that led to political upheaval. Before asking whether the ADQ is the generational party for our era, we need to ferret out the prior changes that underlay the political realignments of the past. Then we can turn to the present, looking at contemporary social changes that may be behind the current potential political realignment.

Social causes of political realignments

There are changes at different levels that can result in the emergence of such generational political parties. These causes include minor ones which are a function of historical societal particularities, and major ones which are manifestations of more general social phenomena. The arrogance and tiredness of political parties that have been in power too long, provoking a backlash against their perceived abuse of power, is a minor cause. So is the nature of our parliamentary and electoral institutions (“first past the post takes all”), in which a rather moderate displacement of the vote – 15 to 20 per cent – can result in the complete eclipse

Technocrats convinced us that a municipality of under 500 inhabitants, a school of fewer than 40 pupils or a credit union of fewer than a thousand members was undesirable. Not unexpectedly, they ended up replacing local community representatives in the structure of influence and power in these organizations.

of one political party in favour of another.

Far more consequential are societal structural causes such as changes in the economic structure of our market-economy societies. These economic structural changes include the emergence of new markets (e.g. the market for manufactured products in the 19th century); major technological change (e.g. electricity at the start of the 20th century); the coming on the scene of

new transportation facilities (e.g. use of the private automobile after World War I); or the exploitation of new natural resources (e.g. mines and forests in the Canadian Shield). Accompanying these socioeconomic structural developments have been major changes in how political power is modulated and distributed (e.g. the extensive recourse to the state in Canada and Quebec after World War II) and in the dissemination of information (e.g. television in the fifties and the Internet in the nineties).

All of these socioeconomic and geopolitical changes, combined in various ways, give rise to new classes, such as the entrepreneurs and merchants who emerged in Quebec the last quarter of the 19th century or the technocrats who administer the public and parapublic sectors in contemporary Quebec. It was these technocrats, for instance, who convinced us that a municipality of under 500 inhabitants, a school of fewer than 40 pupils or a credit union of fewer than a thousand members was undesirable, if not unfeasible. Not unexpectedly, they were the ones who ended up replacing local community representatives in the structure of influence and power in these organizations.

There are two particularities of Quebec society – products of Quebec’s social and cultural history – which might be called endogenous causes. They are the nature of Quebec society and its . Because of these, Quebecers are able to mobilize themselves for a rapid 180-degree change in social behaviour or policy in very short order.

The face of contemporary sociocultural change

Turning to the present, the most consequential development has been the emergence of a dominant new class in post–World War II Quebec: the technocracy, consisting of all those whose material welfare depends on resources (wealth and social influence) gained as a result of a state mandate. This can occur directly (the public service and public systems of education, health and social services) or indirectly via state-created monopolies (municipal employees, police and firefighters, construction workers, etc.). The Caisse de Dépôt, which enjoys a state-conferred monopoly over the administration of all public and semipublic pension plans, is a striking instance of this new postwar social formation.

The new class has also been, despite itself, the beneficiary of a centralized and paternalistic institutional model inherited from the now marginalized Catholic Church of Quebec. I say despite itself, because to advance its legitimacy, the technocracy has promoted an exaggerated secularization of Quebec society that is simultaneously radical and very damaging. It is damaging because it has resulted in the liquidation of an existing social ethic without being able to substitute anything in its place. We have gone from obligatory Catholicism to obligatory secularism.

The technocracy’s acquisition of power via the state and the progression of exaggerated secularization have combined to give rise to a number of social phenomena which have themselves become social determinants. These are, most notably, the creation of new monopolies (e.g. the public health system), the politicization of in-

stitutions which were formerly in the domain of civil society (e.g. public primary and secondary schools), and a rupture in cultural consciousness (e.g. the that took us out of the). These new social determinants have contributed to the intensification of a number of processes inherent in modernization everywhere. Quebec has experienced a distinctive process of social change with unexpected consequences.

The consequences of social change in contemporary Quebec

To better understand the social frustrations to which the ADQ appears to be a response, I identify 10 consequences of the sociopolitical change that has been at work in Quebec over the last quarter century. They are listed here in no particular order, and without any attempt to be exhaustive or establish the relationships among them:

- Fifty years ago the project of establishing one’s own family was universally accepted and accessible to almost everyone. Today it has been marginalized.
- A nonnegligible proportion of youngsters arrive at school inadequately socialized. Schools do not have the means to remedy this situation.
- The birth rate is well below replacement levels in Quebec. Even with very considerable immigration, absolute population decline cannot now be avoided.
- Costs formerly assumed by the family and civil society are displaced to state and parastate agencies, and in the process multiplied by factors ranging from 2 to 15, resulting in fiscal burdens which will eventually suffocate Quebec taxpayers.
- When state monopolies are instituted in

Gary Caldwell is the author of *La culture publique commune: les règles de jeu de la vie publique au Québec et les fondements de ces règles*.

realms of activity which were previously voluntary, individuals cease to assume responsibility because they have no meaningful choices to make. This “deresponsibilization” is particularly evident in education and health care.

- The compound effect of fewer and smaller families and the intrusion of the state into spheres of activity once managed by civil society manifests itself in the presence of fewer willing hands to staff civil society institutions.
- The desacralization resulting from exaggerated secularization has resulted in a value vacuum which is being filled by a utilitarian ethic.
- There is a degree of consensus in the

Frustration is openly expressed by non-unionized workers, small business owners, autonomous professionals and others who have not benefited from the largesse bestowed by the technocracy on its own, and by a new generation for whom there are fewer openings in a contracting apparatus.

Quebec cultural and political elite that is inappropriate in a liberal and pluralistic society. This consensus is particularly evident in the media where there is no longer a very meaningful debate on a range of social and political issues.

- Some groups manage to impose their agenda by manipulating the media and infiltrating the political system, and thus gain great influence in many public institutions. The feminist and homosexual lobbies are instances of this.

- The church has been on the defensive for some time now and is so unsure of itself that it has abandoned its responsibilities with regard to the social and political issues that have traditionally concerned it.

How the ADQ blew it

In the past 20 years, as a result of these developments, many Quebecers have grown frustrated, as can be seen in the new interest in conservative political ideologies (notably neoliberalism), withdrawal of confidence in the state (growth of the underground economy) and retrenchment in the few remaining institutions that have not been appropriated by the technocracy (particularly municipalities). This frustration is openly expressed by non-unionized workers, small business owners, autonomous professionals and others who have not benefited from the largesse bestowed by the technocracy on its own, and by a new generation for whom there are fewer openings in a contracting apparatus. In a more diffuse manner, frustration is manifested in life choices such as early retirement or “home schooling” – a phenomenon that is very present in Quebec but rarely mentioned in the media.

Flying the banner of free choice of schools, civic responsibility (particularly with regard to public debt), privatization, paring down of the state apparatus and support for families, the ADQ attracted the sympathy of those elements of the population who were waiting for a political vehicle capable of expressing their frustrations. The unexpected popularity enjoyed by the party in 2002 could have made it a “generational party” on the verge of effecting a major political realignment. The ADQ’s program and



ADQ LEADING LIGHTS Diane Bellemare is a prominent Quebec labour economist. She was another star ADQ candidate who lost her bid to win a seat in the National Assembly.

cedure put into place to preselect candidates. Instead of relying on traditional methods such as the judgement of party leaders, personal acquaintance networks or a check on their reputations in their own milieu via letters of reference, it was decided to “prevent surprises” by submitting all potential candidates to a credit and criminal record check to be carried out by a private investigation company and paid for (\$700) by the aspiring candidates themselves. The technique, of course, backfired. On hearing the party leadership vaunting the procedure to the media, a young man recalled that the very person directing the candidate-selection process had been found guilty of an armed robbery 18 years earlier. Outraged, he went to the press, and the whole matter blew up in the party’s face.

Technocrats invariably underestimate the unquantifiable human factor. They are inclined to put their faith in the media rather than in direct human contact. For example, they organized the October 2002 party general convention so well that those watching the event on television knew more about what was going on than those actually present. Or consider the case of the newly confirmed “media-wise” Eastern Townships candidate, who had worked in a state media outlet prior to entering the race. When the sitting member withdrew for health reasons, the candidate sent off a press release claiming it was because she was afraid to confront the ADQ. As it happened, the member in question, who was widely respected in the riding for her availability and

the audacity of its leaders certainly gave it the appearance of such a vehicle. But a program and a leader are not enough – the party organization also has to be up to the challenge.

What actually transpired was that an influx of political adventurers swamped the party, particularly at the regional and riding level. This new party personnel, for the most part, had little ideological commitment or personal history of social involvement. Similar elements pushed to become ADQ candidates. This influx resulted in the party falling into the hands of “organizers” whose principal self-proclaimed competence lay in their media savvy. What was less immediately apparent was their technocratic mindset.

However, this mindset soon manifested itself in the way they set out to organize their ascension to power – for instance, the pro-

longstanding service, was sick, just as claimed. In the next few days all of this was pointed out in letters to local media outlets by angry voters; the ADQ campaign stalled then and there.

Yet another incident revealed the extent to which the party was in the hands of “organizers.” A party vice-president, who had been duly confirmed as an ADQ candidate at a public nomination meeting attended by Mario Dumont, was asked by local party organizers to step down in favour of a former Liberal member who, in their words, had both the organization and the money to win the seat. She refused and was subsequently called in by the chief Montreal organizer. She went and again refused to step

The unexpected popularity enjoyed by the party in 2002 could have made it a “generational party” on the verge of effecting a major political realignment. The ADQ’s program and the audacity of its leaders certainly gave it the appearance of such a vehicle.

down, and then sought out the press. When questioned, the organizers denied that the meetings had taken place and the chief election organizer denied knowing about the first meeting. However, the confirmed candidate had saved the messages on her telephone answering machine, and this evidence forced the organizer to backtrack.

Played out in the daily newspapers and on the radio as a human-interest story, this little drama came to the attention of the majority of Quebec voters – Quebec is, after all, a small community. No wonder the

once impressive ideological coherence of the party began to unravel. Under pressure from organizers focused only on winning, school choice (vouchers) was downgraded to a pilot project, while local autonomy, including the possibility of referenda on demergers, went by the boards to recruit star candidate Pierre Bourque, the former mayor of Montreal and an architect of the megacity merger. As the ideological fibre began to come apart, potential – and even confirmed – principled candidates began to withdraw from the electoral process, some not very discreetly.

What the media-savvy organizers forgot was that those who live by the media may also die by the media. Indeed, the media have been as vindictive in 2003 in revealing how much like the old parties the ADQ had become as they were zealous in 2002 in propelling to popular favour the new party that was going to govern. In the end, the party organization imploded as disappointed financial backers began withdrawing support and election expenses had to be cut back.

What a pity. A potential “generational party,” with an ideology in sync with the temper of the times and an exceptional leadership, missed a historical rendezvous. However, in politics anything is possible. If the still relatively young leaders, Dumont and party president Guy Laforest, can learn from their experience, reject the opportunistic and technocratic ethos of the “organizers,” and return, as they did in the last weeks of the campaign, to expressing the frustrations that are driving the potential political realignment, the ADQ may still have a future. If not, others will take up the mantle. ■

The temptation of the ADQ

by **Éric Bédard**

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THE ADQ’S SURPRISING BYELECTION VICTORIES AND SPECTACULAR rise in the polls in 2002 revealed an unmistakable longing for change. Pollsters mused about a mysterious shift of uncommitted voters. Commentators suggested Quebecers had had their fill of the current political class and simply wanted new, younger faces. And there was the

commonly expressed view that the Parti Québécois was on its way out, but not necessarily to an awkward Jean Charest who could not make up his mind on important matters.

While these analyses all have some truth, they don’t get us far in understanding the deeper meaning underlying the whims of the electorate. And demonizing the ADQ simply because its program is critical of aspects of the Quiet Revolution is really too easy. A lot of Quebecers, often the younger ones, just don’t feel the same way about the founding myth of modern Quebec. They see a deep gulf between the glorious tale and the mun-

dane reality that they have inherited from the Quiet Revolution.

It would be perverse to presume, as do some PQ and nationalist leaders, that Quebec is succeeding across the board and sovereignty is the only thing between us and nirvana. The reality is quite different. Seething with the resentment of a young anxious generation, haunted by a sense of failure among another, aging, generation, and exhausted by the debate on the “national question” after two lost referenda, today’s Quebec looks toward a muddled future. In this context, the ADQ becomes a temptation

which bespeaks a widespread unease. An intuitive politician, Mario Dumont articulates this unease in a variety of ways to attract those disappointed with the “Quebec model,” those living the anguish of idle withdrawal, those tired of the debate on the national question, the neverendum.

Consider the young adults, generation X, among whom the ADQ made its first gains in 1994 and 1998. Many are frustrated at not finding room in the \$5-a-day child care centres set up by the PQ, or are unable to find secure employment. To a generation that has to settle for contractual jobs or working on call, Mario Dumont looks like a Robin Hood. With Dumont in power there will be no more lazy bureaucrats, incompetents secure in their permanent jobs forcing the young to pay unjust taxes. These young adults cheer when Dumont threatens to do away with job security, a privilege they have never known. They weren’t around for the glory days, and unlike the pampered baby boomers, they have made it on their own, without the help of corporatist unions. A vote for the ADQ can be an outlet for sullen resentment, often held back yet undeniably present. Reactive rather than reflective, this vote is a cry of anger, or at least an unwillingness to bow meekly to present circumstances.

And these young adults are not the only ones tempted by the ADQ. Many in their late fifties and early sixties also sometimes dream of seeing Mario Dumont as Premier. In their case, the thirst for change is not fed by resentment, but rather by a steadily growing despair. Their horizons narrowing,

they have just seen their parents die and have come face to face with their own mortality. Unlike their parents, who lived through the hardships of the Depression, these baby boomers have known only abundance, prosperity and upward mobility. They have good pensions, and can afford lower taxes and a smaller state, but can’t accept the idea of ending their days in a shared room in an overflowing hospital, whose hard-working personnel will be obliged to treat them as if on an assembly line. A vote for the ADQ – even if it is at the price of their most cherished convictions about the role of the state – can thus be seen as an insurance policy for their old age.

Finally, for many, the ADQ is a way to sweep the eternal “national question” under the rug, to put paid to the constitutional failures of the last 30 years. The ADQ proposes a great family reconciliation, a long-awaited healing of fratricidal divisions.¹ At the Canadian Club last autumn, Mario Dumont promised an end to constitutional quarrels. This is an astonishing stance for a man who left the Quebec Liberal Party to keep faith with the controversial Allaire Report, adopted in 1991 by the Liberals under Robert Bourassa.² The ADQ played nimbly on the theme of our “cultural fatigue,” so well described by Hubert Aquin 40 years ago. Dumont is preaching, as Aquin would say, “renunciation and ambition in the same sermon.”³ Renunciation of our old collective grievances toward an equally weary English Canada, ambition for self-fulfilment as free individuals, liberated from the yoke of an inherited culture embedded in a ubiquitous

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ADQ LEADING LIGHTS Marie Grégoire is an articulate businesswoman and single mother, and key ADQ spokesperson. She defeated a high-profile PQ candidate in a by-election in 2002. In 2003, the ADQ elected four MNAs; Grégoire and the three other by-election victors of 2002 went down to defeat.

state. Tired of confrontation, tired of rebuffs, many are dreaming of a new start. Here again, the ADQ is more of a personal temptation than a promise of a collective future.

For now, the ADQ’s promised change brings no real hope for Quebec, much less any genuinely new thinking. The ADQ’s eclectic ideas have not yet achieved the coherence of a program; they merely express a will to “put the state back in its place, so that it stops being a brake.”⁴ To date, the ADQ is an effort to break with the state of mind inherited from the Quiet Revolution. This urge for change paradoxically reflects the desire for order of many young adults as well as the distress of many who are currently or on the way to becoming young retirees. Mario Dumont often speaks of uniting Quebecers, but this unity, should it come about, would be the result less of a confident and serene vision of the future than of the accumulation, in a legacy of bitterness and anxiety, of all the petty fears haunting today’s Quebecers.

Wait a minute, some will say, we can’t count on fine sentiments to build political programs. Here Quebec history is instructive.

The first case is the reaction to the generalized corruption of the Liberal regime in the 1930s, which took the form of Paul Gouin’s Action Libérale Nationale and its alliance with Maurice Duplessis’s Conservatives to form the Union Nationale. The Liberals had been in power since 1897, and it was widely believed they were beholden to “trusts.” This belief gave rise to a keen resentment which propelled many young people into political activism, and brought Duplessis to power in 1936. The second case took place in the 1950s, by which time the reformism of the 1930s had sunk into a stultifying coalition: francophone religious and political elites allied with anglophone elites in business. The focus of opposition was Duplessis and his regime. The long list of grievances against Duplessis is well known even today, and the children of Quebec boomers drank in resentment of the with their mother’s milk.

Twice, with a quarter century in between, popular misgivings took the form of lively political, social, even spiritual unrest. Both times, a young political generation was trying to break away from something. It started as a kind of allergy to the ways of their political elders, expressed at first in hard and unsubtle language. But anger gave way to a popular awakening, and with that came alternative programs with a certain coherence.

Today we may deplore the corporatist spirit of the the Gouin-Duplessis coalition's 1935 program, but there is no denying that it was an effort at renewal. It expressed an original and well-considered way of putting the "social question," inspired by the Jesuit-run École Sociale Populaire's social reform program, the Programme de Restauration Sociale. In the same way, what started as hatred of Duplessis and his regime quickly gave way to an effort at more considered reflection in forums such as the Institut Canadien des Affaires Publiques and magazines such as *and* . The great reforms of the Quiet Revolution and Trudeau's brand of federalism had their beginnings here.

The initial resentment and pain were not necessarily forgotten through this process.

At the Canadian Club last autumn, Mario Dumont promised an end to constitutional quarrels. This is an astonishing stance for a man who left the Quebec Liberal Party to keep faith with the controversial Allaire Report.

They did, however, evolve into something different, more mature and comprehensive. This progression from anger to plan, from resentment to program, is hard to achieve. But politicians are ultimately judged by the measure of this process. Those who stay mired in resentment will end up on the sidelines. We sometimes give them a sympathetic ear, because they evoke our youthful sentiments, but their proposals are left to die on the vine. We wouldn't think of handing over power to them. Instead, we rally behind those who have managed to think their way beyond our youthful outbursts,

those who can transform our diffuse discontent into constructive ideas.

Despite commendable efforts and some interesting proposals – notably on democratic reform – the ADQ has not transcended pure and simple rejection of the Quiet Revolution. Its often primal opposition to the state reflects more than anything else its being in the grip of a mindset imported from elsewhere; what is missing is well grounded, soundly oriented thinking. Its proposals show an uneasiness with the "Quebec model" – a discomfort which many of us recognize – but it brings no new vision of the Quebec of tomorrow.

The ADQ's proposals for financing the education system are incredibly superficial. Having failed to produce new thinking, the ADQ's leadership is reduced to falling back on "outside experts" – from who knows where – who improvise plans in point form from the remote heights of their expertise. With no secure grounding, Mario Dumont has to rely on the opinions of specialists, first the famous Dr. Morgan, and then Dr. Lescop – two health spokespersons who continued to contradict each other. This is the paradox of the ADQ. Its leaders want to break with technocratic rigidity and wall-to-wall bureaucracy, but they have nothing to offer but "plans" teeming with technical solutions.

But let us not be too severe. The ADQ represents, perhaps, a new "political generation." If this turns out to be true, it would really have been too bad to play that card prematurely by giving power to the ADQ in the recent election. Quebec would have found itself with an inexperienced team in power, defending an improvised program. An ADQ victory in 2003 would have had nothing in common with the 1976 election



ADQ LEADING LIGHTS Pierre Bourque, former Mayor of Montreal, was a star ADQ candidate. Unfortunately for the ADQ, he lost his bid to enter the National Assembly in a hotly contested campaign in Montreal's east end.

he has proved to be a formidable critic of the failures of the "Quebec model," as well as a shrewd politician with a gift for the telling phrase. But his achievements end there. We are far from a social movement, far from a new yearning for the common good.

Fortified by his byelection victories and his rise in the polls in 2002, Mario Dumont hasn't stopped flogging the ill-defined idea of "change." This has its tempting side. However, as a shrewd politician, he should know that in the media circus, individuals and ideas wear out quickly. The ADQ's real challenge, the one it should address now that it has failed to make the desired breakthrough in the April election, is defining a new synthesis, incorporating the best of the young generation's heritage. In the era of the ephemeral and the virtual, a time when fashions change with the wind, the ADQ's challenge is to offer Quebecers "endurance" rather than "change." ■

Notes

1. Summary of the ADQ program, available online at www.adq.qc.ca/programme/index.html
2. The Allaire Report – named for the chair of the Liberal Party committee that drafted it, Jean Allaire – went much further than the five conditions set by the Meech Lake Accord. It proposed a major decentralization of Canadian federalism.
3. Hubert Aquin, "La fatigue culturelle des Canadiens français," in (Montreal: Quinze, 1977), p. 97.
4. Summary of the ADQ program.