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Semi-balcony, semi-happiness

by Pierre Foglia

THE WALLET WAS THERE ON A BOX. MELISSA PICKED IT UP FURTIVELY, looking around her. Had someone seen her? Now that she had it in her hand, she didn't know what to do. She could feel the dollar bills bulging inside. "Put it in your bag," said her father.

Melissa, 15 years old, was with her father at the Greek grocery on Park Avenue near Laurier, the Marché P.A., well known to residents of the neighbourhood. It was on a pile of empty boxes beside the door that Melissa found the wallet.

After leaving the grocery store, Melissa and her father went into a local pizzeria and, seated at a table, they opened the wallet. It contained \$600, and an automated teller card for the Toronto-Dominion Bank. No name on the card; just an illegible signature.

"We'll share," said the father, "three hundred dollars for you, three hundred for me. Keep the wallet."

Melissa went home that evening. She doesn't live with her father. She lives in the St. Michel neighbourhood with her mother and her brother. They rent half a basement. Her mother is looking for work. Meanwhile – welfare.

Excited, Melissa sets the wallet down on the kitchen table, takes out her \$300, the automated teller card and tells her story.

"Show me the card," says the mother.

"There's no name," says Melissa.

"There's a number," notes the mother.

"We're going to call the bank; they'll find the owner. We'll give the money back."

"Dad will never accept that!"



"Your father can do what he wants. As for me, I want to give back the money. I'll explain that I only have half the money, without explaining what happened to the other half. I'll call your father to warn him."

"You may be crazy enough to do that, not me," said the father over the phone. "Anyway, I no longer have the money."

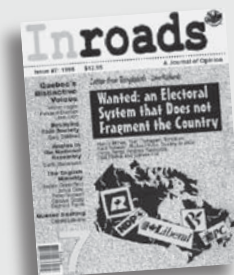
YOU SEE, LITTLE BOBINETTE, THAT'S how you tell a story. You start at the beginning and in the beginning there was your mother. Yes, your mother. And you, too, Bobinette. You're there, too. Moreover, this story is all because of you.

That day, your mother and you went to the Marché P.A. on Parc Avenue. You're leaving the grocery. Your mother is carrying you in her arms. She's also holding her wallet in her hand, the wallet from which

she paid at the checkout. At the door of the store – we'll have to find out why, Bobinette – you start throwing up like a geyser. It goes everywhere. Your mother puts the wallet down on the pile of boxes. She wipes herself; she wipes you. She picks up her bags and heads off, pushing your stroller.

Later, in the evening, the newspaper boy delivering La Presse comes to collect. Your mother looks for her wallet. She looks, and she looks. Suddenly, she remembers. The boxes beside the door of the grocery. Oh, fuck. She runs back to the store. Obviously, nothing. The \$600 was for the rent.

YOU CAN GUESS WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, Bobinette. The bank put your mother in touch with Melissa's mum who told her the good news and the bad news. The good news: "I have your money, madam, come and get it." The bad news: "I only have



1998 La Presse columnist Pierre Foglia has assumed an iconic role as a folk philosopher in Quebec. In its 1998 issue Inroads published several of his columns in translation. This column, which first appeared in La Presse on September 13, 1997, as "Demi-balcon, demi-bonheur," is perhaps the best.

half; I'll explain. You see, there's a garage, a bingo, and it's there at the bingo," explained Melissa's mother, in a manner of speaking.

It's the kind of neighbourhood where houses have a kind of semi-balcony which suggests a kind of semi-happiness. Nonetheless, you can put flowers out on them. I don't know how they wound up talking about God but, at some point, Bobinette, Melissa's mum said to yours: "Yes, I believe in God, but that's not the point. It's your money. Don't pity me. A reward? Rather than that, help me find a job. If you hear of anything, call me, thanks."

A few days later, Melissa's father left a message on the telephone answering

It's the kind of neighbourhood where houses have a kind of semi-balcony which suggests a kind of semi-happiness. Nonetheless, you can put flowers out on them.

machine of your mother: "I'm giving back the money."

There, Bobinette.

I told you that story – it's true obviously – because it describes the world you've been born into. A world not all grey. Full of people like Melissa. And her mum. And her dad, especially. Her dad who thought twice. Perhaps even three times. Perhaps even five times. To tell you the truth, Bobinette, I feel very close to him.

A world, too, that can be summed up in Melissa's mum's plea: "You want to help me? Find me a job!"

SURE ENOUGH, BOBINETTE, AT FOUR months you don't give a damn about all that. Your life turns around small things: sleep,

bottle, and a change of diapers. "You're just a little vegetable," I told you this morning. You were in your jolly jumper; you were smiling. Your mother said, "You stupid fool, have you ever seen a cauliflower smile?" I replied: "You're the thick one. Have you ever put a cauliflower in a jolly jumper? How do you know? Perhaps a cauliflower would smile if you put it in a jolly jumper ..."

Don't freak out, Bobinette. Your mother and I, we often call each other stupid, thick, crazy, baboon, black hooker, and other words that shock the gallery. It's a game I invented. In it you pretend not to love one another. It's very useful for the days (weeks, months) when you don't love one another really. It's also useful these days. A little meanness, even in jest, settles the royal jelly and the holy poutine.

Excuse me, Bobinette. What were we talking about? Ah yes, the world you've been born into. I see on the container of the medicine you're taking to cure some allergy or other that your doctor is called Maria Znojkwicz. And your pharmacist, Robert Cotchikian. It's a good indication that your town, Bobinette, is not a place where the non-francophones legitimately mistrust all the francophones; Montreal is not the kind of place that those in Ottawa and Saskatoon like to describe. You know what would be funny, Bobinette? If your first word, the very first, instead of "ma-ma," it was "Znoj-kie-wicz." With the correct pronunciation: "Snoi-kai-vish." It would be a great pleasure to send the cassette off to Monsieur Dion, our very obsessive minister of multiple identities.

What were we talking about, baby? Ah, yes. The world. Full of semi-balconies and semi-happiness. But, as I was saying as well, you can put flowers out on them. ■

— translated by John Richards

Invest in Quebec's uniqueness

A proposal to resolve the language dilemma

by Jean-François Lisée

W

HATEVER THEIR POLITICAL OR LINGUISTIC LOYALTIES, MOST Quebecers view the current linguistic situation positively. What concerns them is not the linguistic reality of today, but fears about tomorrow, fears growing out of a triple feeling of insecurity.

Insecurity exists among francophones due to their minority status in Canada and, even more dramatic, their minority status viewed from the perspective of North America. This insecurity is exacerbated by both a generalized misgiving over the long-run impact of economic and cultural globalization, and by the more immediate fear of becoming a minority on the Island of Montreal. In sum, francophones fear losing the linguistic gains painfully realized over the past 30 years.

A second insecurity exists among the anglophone community, which has experienced a significant exodus since 1960. Many

of its members continue to depart, especially among the young. This community fears for its long-term vitality. It fears that each and every new provincial linguistic initiative will curtail its language rights still further.

The third insecurity is that of the allophone communities, those with neither French nor English as mother tongue. They are doubly minorities, torn between their own complex identities and the contradictory expectations of the Quebec and Canadian host societies. They must manoeuvre in a peculiar – not to say confusing – political and linguistic context.

Insecurity has blinded us to a remarkable linguistic reality

These insecurities are real and justifiable. But they have obscured the remarkable reality that reigns as the new century commences. Throughout Quebec, in the Montreal metropolitan region and on the Island of Montreal itself, the current equilibrium allows Quebecers to enjoy a unique, fruitful, creative and generally harmonious linguistic experience:

- French is successfully establishing itself as the predominant language. What Robert Bourassa's Bill 22 declared in 1974 to be the official language of Quebec is now the "public language" (a concept used in recent language studies) used by over half of all allophones. And, according to a recent study, allophone children educated in French are speaking French among themselves on Montreal playgrounds.¹
- At least in the Montreal region, the anglophone community possesses a critical mass sufficient to support many dynamic institutions and has plans for new ones (for example, construction of a new anglophone super-hospital, enlargement of Concordia University).
- And allophones are sufficiently numerous to contribute to the metropolis in ways that are neither dated nor folkloric ...

Quebec is the most bilingual society in North America. Half of its active population is able to communicate in French and English, a proportion that rises to 63 per cent in Montreal. Quebec is also twice as trilingual as is the rest of Canada, which makes it one of the most open societies in existence, and puts it in an enviable position to participate in the new knowledge economy.² Montreal has undergone a veritable linguistic *métissage*. The number of mixed couples has exploded in the last quarter century: more than a third of Anglo-Quebecers are currently living with either francophone or allophone partners. This is twice the rate of 25 years ago.³

Relative to Quebec in the mid-20th century, or even in the years leading up to Bill 101, these trends have increased the complexity and volatility of Quebec's linguistic reality. We must think anew about language; we must decide what we want to achieve linguistically. In my view, it is a matter of identifying the appropriate balance between French, the official and dominant public language, and the other languages, first and foremost English, doing so in the context of political and economic globalization whose "lingua franca" is English.

For the foreseeable future, Quebec cannot submit its linguistic fate to the North American linguistic marketplace. We know what outcome the language market

entails for *la francophonie hors Québec*. However, Quebec cannot and must not seek to become as French as Ontario is English, a formula that some advocate. That reflects neither who we are nor, for most of us, what we want to be. Quebec must not try to persuade all allophones to use French as their home language. The presence of a reasonable proportion of individuals who retain their mother tongue – in addition to using our common language, French – is a social, cultural and economic asset. That applies equally for speakers of Aboriginal languages, whose rate of mother tongue retention is higher in Quebec than elsewhere in Canada ...

The predominance of French – a concept both realistic and potentially unifying

Quebec needs signposts for the future, signposts that are comprehensible and able to rally majority support. In addition to reaffirming that French is the official common language of Quebec, the government should adopt "predominance of French" as the general rule to guide its language policy. French in Quebec is, and must remain, the common language, occupying a central place. But it must coexist with other languages, principally English ...

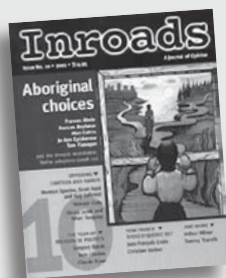
Remaining open is equally relevant for our economy: the extraordinary success of Quebec products on the Anglo-American continent – Quebec exports there more than half of all that it produces – and its status as employer of thousands of anglophones from English Canada and the United States – 320 Quebec businesses employ directly more than 60,000 U.S. citizens – make English

an indisputable component of the economic life of Quebec.

Quebec's linguistic equation now provides it with the originality necessary to compete with the most innovative societies. Montreal's rebirth as a New Economy metropolis (the sixth most important in North America, according to Wired magazine) is due in part to the large number of teachers, researchers and technicians who have simultaneous access to both Franco-European and Anglo-American research and innovations. The level of daily exchanges, in all fields, between Quebec and France – itself a conduit for European developments – is simply unfathomable for non-Quebecers. No two societies, separated by an ocean, enjoy this level of communication. Furthermore, Quebec's dual connection with Europe and America has encouraged the development of government social and cultural policies more original and often more generous than those elsewhere on the continent.

The predominance of French permits this creative mixture. On the one hand, French unilingualism would place roadblocks to adoption of Anglo-American concepts, hence a fall in competitiveness. On the other hand, loss of French predominance would gradually deprive Quebec, and Montreal above all, of its comparative advantage because it would reduce the flow of Franco-European ideas, methods and products.

"Predominance of French" has the merit of being embedded in reality, of affirming that the vitality of a minority French society in North America requires that French be and remain in a dominant position on its territory. The concept also implies the existence of minority communities and endorses, in its very wording, the will of Quebec society to preserve the existence of minorities. We



2001 In 2001 the Quebec-government-appointed Estates General on the French Language held hearings. Perhaps the most complete and balanced analysis was that of Jean-François Lisée. In a revised version prepared for Inroads, here abridged, Lisée spelled out policies necessary to secure the present linguistic equilibrium: predominance of the French language accompanied by a vital and secure anglophone minority. Lisée, journalist and author, served for five years as political adviser to Quebec premiers Jacques Parizeau and Lucien Bouchard. Martin Lubin and John Richards undertook the translation.

cannot expect significant support by non-francophones for the language policy of Quebec unless it is absolutely clear that the marginalization of other linguistic groups is not the logical end point.

On the contrary, the concept of the predominance of French signals that Quebec relies upon all its linguistic strengths. It is a concept consistent with the application of almost all provisions of *la Charte de la langue française* (Bill 101). There will inevitably be disagreements over interpretation of the concept, but it is a concept that can serve simultaneously as guide and as basis for bringing people together.

To ensure linguistic security tomorrow, maintain the equilibrium of today

No state should seek to regulate the language that citizens speak at home. But it can influence behaviour. Indeed, the linguistic future of Quebec rests upon the ability of the government to exercise influence over language choices.

The current linguistic equilibrium achieved in the 1990s is, I believe, nearly optimal. In coming decades, Quebec should measure its linguistic success in terms of preserving this equilibrium – in Quebec as a whole, in the metropolitan region and on the Island of Montreal.

The language most often spoken at home (the “home language” census measure of language use) is a crucial measure of the intergenerational success of a language. It is more real than the first language spoken and still understood (the “mother tongue” census measure of language use). The latter is a signal from the past and does not

account for language transfers during the lifetime of the respondent. Also, it ignores shifting realities: more than one of seven “home language” Franco-Montrealers lacks French ethnic roots; almost three of four Anglo-Montrealers lack British roots.

We know that variables other than linguistic shifts – such as urban sprawl – have played a role in eroding the francophone share of those living on Montreal Island. Currently, they are no more than 55 per cent, and could fall below 50 per cent 15 years from now. Francophones will still remain the most important group, a reason why some say this decline will not matter much. Yet we cannot argue with Marc Levine, the principal American observer of Quebec’s linguistic evolution, when he states that it “is difficult to imagine, given the fragility of the linguistic dynamic in Montreal, how the decrease in the number of francophones could have a beneficial effect upon the future of the French character of the city.”⁴

Simple prudence should lead us to maintain at least a modest francophone majority on the Island of Montreal. To achieve this may require tax incentives and other measures of general application to reduce migration to the suburbs, a migration in which four out of five are francophones.

It follows from the above that it is in the collective interest of Quebec that, within a reasonable margin of error:

- the overall proportion of francophones, as is the case at present, remain above 80 per cent, that in the Montreal metropolitan census region (MMR) it remain about 70 per cent, and on the Island of Montreal it remain above 55 per cent;
- the overall proportion of anglophones not fall below its present level of 11 per cent

and that in the MMR it remain near 20 per cent, thereby assuring the dynamism and vitality of English-language institutions;

- a significant proportion of allophones, including about 10 per cent of the MMR, continue to be part of the linguistic mosaic, to perpetuate the cultural diversity of Quebec;
- the Aboriginal nations in Quebec retain, pass on and develop their own languages and cultures.

To fix linguistic objectives for Quebec such as these would have a beneficial effect. Each linguistic group could recognize its respective interests, could contribute to public discussion, and offer proposals aimed at maintaining its own vitality – in full knowledge of the overall policy goal, namely maintenance of the present equilibrium.

Immigration and the maintenance of the linguistic equilibrium

Quebec’s linguistic future will be played out against the backdrop of imminent demographic decline. (The total population will begin decreasing after 2030 and, already, an important demographic decline exists among young people.) The variable with the greatest potential to affect language is immigration, whose effect is compounded by the fact that immigrants have a significantly higher birth rate than other Quebecers. The only growing segment of the Quebec population is that of allophones: they were 16 per cent on the Island in 1991, and are projected to become 35 per cent by 2041. The distribution of linguistic transfers between French and English among allophones who do transfer linguistically is an essential factor in pre-

serving the present linguistic equilibrium. Here it is not a question of teaching these newcomers French as a second language, a task largely accomplished, but of assuring a sufficient proportion adopt French as their home language.

The future linguistic choices of allophones is a subject of debate among Quebec demographers, editorialists and politicians. Not surprisingly, federalists think that the future is bright and warrants little action; sovereigntists think it bleak and in need of urgent change. I prefer not to predict the future, but to look closely at what happened

In addition to reaffirming that French is the official common language of Quebec, the government should adopt “predominance of French” as the general rule to guide its language policy.

in the 1990s, after two decades’ experience with the major policy changes of the 1970s (such as Bills 22 and 101 and an important shift in immigration policy). It is still a bit too early to tell how the most important change – the obligation, since 1977, of new immigrants to send their children to French schools – will ultimately play out. But enough evidence is available to know whether we are on the right path.

How might we assess the success or failure of the attempt to integrate allophones? A logical benchmark is the present distribution of anglophone and francophone populations. In the rest of Canada, 99.6 per cent of allophones who linguistically transfer do so to the majority language, English. Some think that the same measure should be applied in Quebec for French. Others

argue to use the linguistic distribution of the aggregate Quebec population, which, removing allophones from the calculation, gives a distribution of 88 per cent francophones to 12 per cent anglophones.⁵

I propose a lower, more attainable, benchmark. We can maintain the present equilibrium in the MMR if allophones who make a linguistic transfer do so in accordance with the prevailing ratio of francophones to anglophones: in metropolitan Montreal about 78 per cent to French, and 22 per cent to English; on the Island the required ratio is about 69 per cent to 31 per cent.

Ten linguistic indicators are available. Where they reveal behaviour respectful of our present equilibrium, the resulting deviation is zero. Where there is a gain for French, the deviation is a positive number; where a potential loss exists, the deviation is negative:

1. *The distribution of language among immigrants who already have French or English as home language upon their arrival:* The deficit for French, in percentage points, is 13 in the MMR.⁶
2. *Proportion in French-language K–12 schools, among children from allophone families in metropolitan Montreal:* The deviation is nil in the MMR, and probably positive for French on the Island.⁷
3. *Proportion attending French-language CEGEPs, among allophone CEGEP students:* At the postsecondary level, allophones have freedom of choice in language of instruction. Overall, in the MMR the deviation from the equilibrium value is substantially negative; furthermore, the trend is negative.
4. *Proportion attending French-language universities, among allophone university*

students: Freedom of choice at this level also illustrates a deficit from the perspective of French. Unlike the corresponding CEGEP statistic, this negative deviation is stable.

5. *Proportion using French as principal language of work (speaking French at least 60 per cent of the time at work), among allophones:* Use of French is below the equilibrium value for the MMR by 34 points.⁸
6. *Proportion using French as language of “public use,” among allophones:* This composite statistic prepared by the Commission de la Langue Française attempts to measure the language used in public. Public use of French is below the equilibrium value for the MMR by 20 points.
7. *Proportion with French as home language among mixed couples in which one spouse is an allophone:* After language of work, the language of mixed couples is by far the biggest factor in linguistic transfer. Exogamy among allophones displays a disadvantage for French of 41 points in the MMR. For language usage among children (less than 18 years of age) of mixed couples, the deficit for French is 24 points in the MMR.⁹
8. *Proportion identifying as “Canadians first” as opposed to identifying as “French Canadians first” or “Québécois first,” among allophones:* There is a strong correlation between language of home use and primary identification. Among those having linguistically transferred to English, 91 per cent are “Canadians first” whereas a majority (53 per cent) of those who have transferred to French are “French Canadians” or “Québécois” first. The proportion of allophones identifying

as “Québécois” or “French Canadians” in Quebec is 41 points below the equilibrium benchmark for the MMR.¹⁰

9. *Proportion with French as home language, among allophones having switched their home language to either English or French:* Among those having made such a transfer, French experiences a deficit of 41 points in the MMR.¹¹
10. *Proportion with French as home language, among Quebecers emigrating from metropolitan Montreal and the Island of Montreal to another province:* The large deficit in linguistic transfers would lead to a quick unravelling of the present equilibrium were it not for the impact of emigration. Each year, the anglophone community is losing one per cent of its numbers as a result of emigration to the rest of Canada. Between 1986 and 1996, only 15 per cent of emigrants from the MMR were francophones, yielding a 63 percentage point advantage to French.

From all of the above, we can now draw some conclusions.

- The linguistic orientation of immigrants matters. “Francotrope” immigrants, those coming from Romance-language countries or from regions formerly under French influence, are much more likely to make a linguistic transfer to French than are “anglotropes,” those coming from elsewhere in the world. Yet, despite having shifted immigration patterns in favour of francotropes, current patterns of allophone linguistic integration are not consistent with preservation of the linguistic equilibrium.
- After 30 years of effort there have been real improvements in the status of French in Quebec, but the forces tending to anglicize

allophones remain greater than those tending to francize them.

- Maintaining equilibrium over the 1990s depended upon constant departure of sizeable numbers of old-stock anglophones and newly anglicized allophones. Nothing indicates an end to this migration pattern. In other words, the Montreal region works as a machine to anglicize immigrants, then export them to the rest of the continent.
- This anglophone exodus is eroding the proportion of anglophone Quebecers who have the right to primary and

We cannot expect significant support by non-francophones for the language policy of Quebec unless it is absolutely clear that the marginalization of other linguistic groups is not the logical end point.

secondary education in English. In time, it will jeopardize the viability of these basic anglophone institutions.

- Urban sprawl is reducing the proportion of francophones on the Island, thereby calling into question the predominance of French in Montreal and foreshadowing a further reduction in the ability to integrate allophone immigrants to French.
- This situation is triply unhealthy: for the francophone majority, which is not attracting an adequate share of allophones; for the anglophone minority, whose vitality is not served by this hemorrhage; for the allophone communities, which are caught in this linguistic tug of war and which cannot and should not carry the burden of maintenance of the linguistic equilibrium.

More immigration, but better planned

There is a way simultaneously to increase immigration to Quebec, thereby offsetting our demographic decline, and to attract a larger share of allophone immigrants to French. To do this, we must turn to our postsecondary education institutions. Already, they have begun to suffer the effects of a decline in the number of young Quebecers. In 30 years, these networks will have an estimated 150,000 vacant places. This problem should be converted into an opportunity.

The postsecondary education network is an excellent integrator of immigrants. It transmits contemporary values and knowledge. And immigrants are at the stage of life

The Montreal region works as a machine to anglicize immigrants, then export them to the rest of the continent.

when they are forming permanent personal and social bonds. Finally, francophone education establishments generally link students with francophone employment channels ...

A vast campaign of recruitment, selection, integration and retention of foreign students with the intent of their becoming Quebec citizens is the best investment that we could make on behalf of maintaining the present dynamism of the province. If the distribution of these students between francophone and anglophone postsecondary education and job-training networks is done in a manner respectful of our linguistic equilibrium, we could substantially modify the distribution of language transfers without imposing major new constraints upon those currently living in Quebec.

Plainly, it will be necessary to find financial incentives if Quebec is to attract and retain a large share of this annual flow of 25,000 young immigrants ...

Education: Rethinking linguistic borders and bridges

College-level education has become a key to maintaining the predominance of French.

The data are clear: having completed secondary education, Quebec allophones are increasingly adopting anglophone college education. They are not alone. One quarter of those enrolled in Quebec anglophone CEGEPs are francophones. One implication of this is the desire among students to acquire a thorough knowledge of English. The francophone elementary and secondary system is not providing adequate instruction of English.

This desire for English fluency is legitimate, but the shift to anglophone college-level instruction is detrimental. First, collegial study is the most important time for linguistic transfers. During K–12 education, 31 per cent of allophone students undertake a linguistic transfer. During collegial education, this statistic rises to 88 per cent.¹² Second, collegial studies take place at a moment when couples are formed, an important factor influencing linguistic transfer. Third, an allophone undertaking studies in a francophone CEGEP is more likely to be hired in a francophone work setting which, in turn, will have an influence on linguistic choice.

Extending Bill 101's K–12 provisions to CEGEPs would affect those allophone students who received French-language K–12 education and have chosen English CEGEPs (43 per cent of those with French K–12

schooling). It would affect 35 per cent of all allophone CEGEP students (the 8 point difference arises because some allophone students are eligible for access to English K–12 education). No other measure would have such a structural effect on as many allophones, on the best educated among them, on the potentially most influential within their communities.

In thinking about this, we have to be careful to combine two imperatives: the desire of francophones and allophones to master English well, and the necessity of using the collegial years to induce a higher linguistic transfer to French.

We must modify the teaching system of francophone CEGEPs so that francophones and allophones graduate with a real command of spoken and written English. That could be done by means of a complete semester of teaching of English plus instruction in English of part of the program, followed by a summer period of internship/immersion in the student's own field of study.

A similar system should be introduced in the anglophone CEGEPs to allow effective command of French. These initiatives would contribute to making Quebec a veritable linguistic bridge, and should quench the thirst of non-anglophone students for competence in English. It would probably be necessary to phase in such changes over, say, five years, beginning with pilot projects. This would allow time for planned reforms aimed at improving English instruction in French K–12 institutions to take hold.

A bolder, more problematic – and ultimately better – option would be to merge the French and English CEGEP networks into a single one, in the Montreal area. What I here envision is that three quarters of the education be given in French, one quarter in

English. This option would require considerable effort to improve the English-language skills among francophones and the French-language skills among anglophone students at the time of admission. In a Quebec with French predominant, this would ensure, at the postsecondary level, a real acquisition of French and English by all, a better integration of allophones into the French majority and a better knowledge of French and of francophone society by young anglophones, which in turn would encourage them to remain in Quebec. It would further open francophones to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Montreal area, would give a common experience to the most educated strata of Quebec society and would foster cross-linguistic bonds and networks for the next generations, bonds that have been sorely lacking in the recent past.

This “French predominant CEGEP for all” would be an assertion of civic nationalism, of the breaking down of walls, of convergence, of *métissage*. It would contribute to the blending of Franco-European and Anglo-American influences that give today's Quebec what I like to call the “dividends of originality” ...

Primary and secondary English language education: Beyond dogmatism

We have noted the problem posed by the anglophone exodus on the number of children who have the right to an education in English. If we wish, through immigration, to integrate an adequate number of young allophones to French, it is also necessary to consider the role of immigration in maintaining the anglophone community.

In 2000–2001, 10.6 per cent of Quebec children were educated in English, slightly below the level required for maintenance of the linguistic equilibrium. The education provisions of Bill 101 apply both to allophones and to non-Canadian anglophones who establish themselves in Quebec – even though the probability of linguistically integrating into French young people from Liverpool or Milwaukee is extremely low.

In 1993, the Ministry of Education counted the number of primary and secondary school students from a country whose official language was English but who did not have the right to attend Quebec English

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schools. The number was 8,188 – which is still fewer than the 10,000 Quebec children who have the right to English schools but voluntarily attend French schools. If this additional 8,188 all chose English schooling, it would put English Quebec's share of K–12 education precisely at the proportion required to sustain its current vitality, no more, no less.

Some argue that this change poses insurmountable legal difficulties. The Canadian Charter of Rights accords the right to English-language schooling to Canadian children whose parents received primary education in English in Canada. I propose extending this provision to all children whose parents received primary education

in English – wherever. To simplify application of this rule, we would assume it to apply to immigrants coming from countries or states with English as the language of public schooling. The Supreme Court would be hard pressed to find this distinction unreasonable, or use it as a pretext for knocking down the core provisions of Bill 101 controlling access to English-language schools: indeed, why would the Court want to stop Quebec from relaxing access to the schools for an official-language minority? To introduce such a change would be politically difficult but, if combined with the proposed modifications for college-level study, it is doable ...

To solidify Quebec's identity: Québécois citizenship

My final recommendation is to create an internal Quebec citizenship, conferred upon all Canadian citizens residing in Quebec and all immigrants becoming citizens on Quebec soil. This recommendation, though symbolic in nature, would in my estimation have an immediate and profound impact on Quebec society and on the shared identity of all its citizens. It would denote in a formal way the existence of a singular territory in North America and in Canada, one in which French predominates, but one that leaves ethnic considerations behind.

Such an internal citizenship would not be the first in the West. Finland, a country with two official languages (Finnish and Swedish) has permitted the Swedish minority with a distinctive history on the island of Åland to create on its own territory an Åland internal citizenship, added to Finnish citizenship. It is not necessary to adopt the totality of Åland's arrangements; they go very far.¹³

However, if Quebec remains in the Canadian federation, a Quebec citizenship would contribute to the cohesion of its linguistic and civic collective life.

Such an internal citizenship would send a message of inclusion to all Quebec residents, whatever be their country of origin. It would be a way of saying officially: you are Québécois, all of you. It would equally send the message that there exists here a different way of being North American. More than a figment of the imagination, it would be a reality inscribed in the citizenship itself. We would be telling ourselves – and others – the meaning of their choice by becoming a citizen of this particular corner of North America. It would powerfully clarify the expectations of the host society.

Like the predominance of French as a principle, the idea of a Quebec citizenship linked to that of Canada corresponds to reality: more than anywhere else in Canada, people here define themselves by their attachment to their province. Moreover, a majority of Québécois feel themselves “Québécois and Canadians” – it would be a matter of rendering official that which is for the moment intuitive. ■

Notes

¹ Marie McAndrew, Calvin Veltman, Francine Lemire and Josefina Rossell, “Concentration ethnique et usages linguistiques en milieu scolaire,” *Montréal Immigration et Métropoles*, June 1999.

² Quebec ranks fifth among the world's economies in terms of its propensity to export (exports as a share of GDP).

³ Louise Marmen and Jean-Pierre Corbeil, *New Canadian Perspectives: Languages in Canada – 1996 Census*, cat. no. CH3-2-8/1999 (Ottawa:

Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1999), pp. 72, 78.

⁴ Marc Levine, *La reconquête de Montréal* (Montreal: VLB, 1997).

⁵ Quebec's population comprises 83 per cent francophones, 11 per cent anglophones and 6 per cent allophones. If we want to determine the appropriate linguistic transfer among allophones to maintain linguistic equilibrium, we must determine the relative share of francophones and anglophones: 88 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. The analogous exercise is used to determine the 78 per cent francophone benchmark for the MMR and 69 per cent benchmark for the Island of Montreal.

⁶ Marc Termote, *Perspectives démologiques du Québec et de la région de Montréal à l'aube du XXI^e siècle* (Quebec City: Conseil de la Langue Française, 1999), Table 4.

⁷ All the data on education are from Robert Maheu, *La mobilité linguistique en milieu scolaire*, Presentation from Ministry of Education to the États Généraux sur la Situation et l'Avenir de la Langue Française, January 25, 2001.

⁸ See Paul Béland, *Le français, langue d'usage public au Québec en 1997* (Quebec City: Conseil de la Langue Française, 1999).

⁹ Marmen and Corbeil, *New Canadian Perspectives*, pp. 72, 78.

¹⁰ See Jean-François Lisée, *Sortie de secours: comment échapper au déclin du Québec* (Montreal: Boréal, 2000).

¹¹ Data for indicators 9 and 10 are drawn from Termote, *Perspectives démologiques*, Tables 4 and 5.

¹² Maheu, *La mobilité linguistique*.

¹³ To be an Åland citizen, it is necessary to have Finnish citizenship, to have a good knowledge of Swedish and to have resided in Åland at least five years, or to have been born there. Only the holders of regional citizenship can vote in elections. Åland enjoys much governmental autonomy, including specific powers of international representation, and has, on its territory, only one official language, Swedish.

The new Cité libre

A precious legacy abandoned

by Pierre Joncas

In 1985, THE CANADIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA INCLUDED AN ENTRY ABOUT Cité libre, remarkable recognition for a small periodical that had ceased publishing nearly two decades earlier.

Cité libre was founded in June 1950 by Gérard Pelletier and Pierre Trudeau, and in its first decade printed 500 to 1,500 copies of, on average, two issues per year. Excellent writing and its contributors' boldness in tackling thorny issues like pervasive clericalism and reactionary nationalism earned the magazine a small but committed readership. From January 1960 until the final issue in the summer of 1966, with 7,000 copies of 10 issues per year, Cité libre was an important voice in what came to be known as the Quiet Revolution. Pelletier and Trudeau had gone on to political careers in Ottawa a year before the magazine ceased publication, and, if Cité libre was remembered at all in 1985, it was largely for the celebrity of its founding editors.

Jean Pellerin and Pierre Vallières (before his public involvement in the FLQ) took over Cité libre's editorship early in 1964, but Trudeau and Pelletier remained important contributors. With the exception of a three-month period in 1964, during which Pellerin was effectively pushed aside by Vallières and his cronies (they were soon dismissed by the board of directors), positions taken by contributors were generally consistent: Quebec's institutions and Quebecers' attitudes needed to be brought into harmony with the mid-20th-century realities of industrialization, urbanization, etc. While criticisms of

established institutions and prevailing attitudes were vigorous, they were by no means revolutionary, and the advocated reforms – to upgrade the educational system, secularize church-controlled public bodies, expand the role of the provincial state in fostering and directing economic growth, etc. – could all be achieved within the existing legal and constitutional framework. Canadian and international issues were also addressed, usually from a Quebec perspective, while other contributions focused on literary and artistic subjects. The editors and most contributors were self-consciously French-speaking Canadians from Quebec (the term *Québécois* had yet to come into fashion), with intense emotional ties to their people, but contributors with other backgrounds, from Quebec and elsewhere, were also welcomed.

I became an eager reader of Cité libre with the November 1954 issue. To the youth I was then, many articles were of limited interest, but the hope of finding at least one gleaming nugget made it worthwhile to pan through the rest. These exceptional pieces compelled me to reconsider sometimes strongly held views. Pierre Trudeau's articles, especially, had this effect. Two spring to mind: "De libro, tributo et quibusdam

aliis" (October 1954),¹ a favourable but not uncritical review of Maurice Lamontagne's centralist *Le fédéralisme canadien*, and "Les octrois fédéraux aux universités" (February 1957), a harsh but fair assessment of the Saint-Laurent government's policy of federal grants to universities. My family background had made me suspicious of Quebec City (Maurice Duplessis was then at the height of his power) and trusting of Ottawa, but never before had arguments in defence of provincial autonomy been put so logically, so clearly, so forcibly – and with no fleur-de-lys flag-waving. Several years later, Trudeau's arguments against emerging separatism, in "La Nouvelle trahison des clercs" (April 1962) and "Les Séparatistes: des contre-révolutionnaires" (May 1964), were similarly persuasive – not that I needed persuading. His stinging rebuke of then-Opposition Leader Lester Pearson's flip-flop on the storage of Bomarc missiles on Canadian soil spoke to my heart and to my convictions ("Pearson ou l'abdication de l'esprit," April 1963).

With separatism gaining ground (the term *indépendantisme* had yet to be coined, and *souverainisme* was even further in the future), Pelletier and Trudeau, despite their misgivings, joined Jean Marchand in the



2000 In 2000, Inroads 9 featured several articles that assessed the Chrétien regime. An especially memorable accompanying article told the story of the journal Cité libre and its relationship to Chrétien's mentor, Pierre Elliott Trudeau – from its founding by Trudeau and Gérard Pelletier through its death in 1966, resurrection in 1991, culminating in its takeover and transformation into the voice of virulent opposition to all forms of Quebec nationalism. The account, here abridged, is a poignant story of the author's love-hate relationship to this institution and the man most associated with it. The article concluded that Cité libre's "admonitions are so offensive, and its warnings so extreme, that wavering Québécois readers will see it as the face of future federalism and, as a result, will be likely to give up hope that Canada can ever be changed in a way that will make them feel at home." Soon after it was published Cité libre, no doubt to the relief of the author, ceased publication.

high echelons of the federal Liberals. I was heartened. I felt I could rely on a Pearson government, strengthened by Quebec's three wise men and advised by the Laurendeau-Dunton Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B&B), to do what was fair and necessary to restore the rights of French Canadians. Cité libre's loss, I thought, would be Quebec and Canada's gain.

In the next section the author describes how he lost confidence in Trudeau during his years as a politician. Nevertheless, he remained close to Cité libre when it resumed publication in summer 1991.

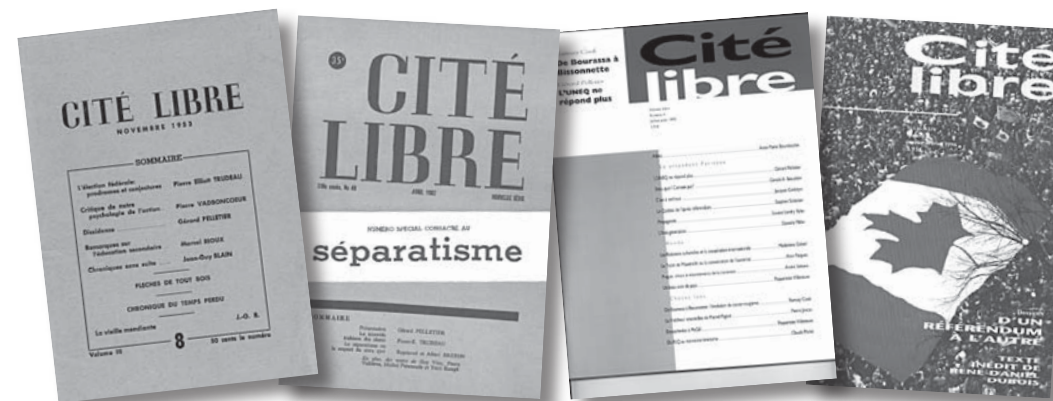
CONTINUITY WITH THE 1950s AND 60s was assured during the four years of [editor Anne-Marie] Bourdouxhe's stewardship especially by Gérard Pelletier [Bourdouxhe's father]: his name appeared on the masthead as a member of the editorial committee, and he contributed 12 articles. Pierre Trudeau offered no articles, but occasionally attended the monthly benefit dinners, and he delivered his Maison Egg Roll speech against the Charlottetown Accord as guest speaker at one such dinner. Jacques Hébert played the role of *éminence grise* on the board, exercising decisive influence on the election and removal of officers and directors, and effectively controlling the selection of speakers for benefit dinners.

I became involved in various capacities in 1993, and joined the editorial committee (not to be confused with the board of directors) in May 1994 ... I was at ease with the journal's underlying values, which hadn't changed. We were all federalists and, while those of us with French Canadian backgrounds valued that part of our identity, backgrounds were never an issue. Mutual

understanding, and the lasting friendship to which it gave rise, led to enjoyable and productive teamwork.

Near the end of her second two-year term as editor, Anne-Marie Bourdouxhe made known her intention not to stand for reappointment. In March 1995, five members of the editorial committee sent a letter to the board chairman, Dr. Aurèle Beaulnes, summarizing their guiding principles and suggesting a meeting if the directors wished them to carry on. The letter was never acknowledged, formally or otherwise. Soon after, the board of directors announced the appointment of co-editors Max and Monique Nemni, who in turn gave notice of their intent to abolish the editorial committee but invited outgoing members to submit articles. With one noteworthy exception (see below), none would ever contribute again ...

Although it took several months for the full significance to sink in, a huge change in outlook, spirit, style and editorial policy had occurred. A new roster of regular contributors began to appear: William Johnson, Montreal Gazette columnist and future president of Alliance Quebec, known for his fierce opposition to any recognition of Quebec's distinctness and his equally fierce criticisms of the province's language laws; Nadia Khouri, a philosophy professor at Dawson College and author of a fawning essay on Mordecai Richler's anti-Quebec writings (*Qui a peur de Mordecai Richler*, Les Éditions Balzac, 1995); Guy Bertrand, a then-recent convert from hard-line separatism to hard-line federalism, and lead litigator against Quebec's language and referendum laws; and David Kwavnick, a former professor of political science at Carleton University and author of a disturbingly candid statement in favour of preemptive partition.²



By then, most guest speakers at the monthly fundraisers were of the same hue: contributors Bertrand, Khouri and Johnson; Mordecai Richler himself, who takes pleasure in the periodic repetition of inaccurate and insulting judgements of the Québécois; Howard Galganov, advertising executive, rant-radio call-in show host and major advocate of partition.

From outside Quebec, contributors such as the National Post's Andrew Coyne (who also sits on Cité libre's advisory board), Reform Party MP Peter Goldring and press magnate Conrad Black express economic views very much at odds with Cité libre's earlier traditions. In the 1950s and 60s, important contributors such as Pelletier, Trudeau and Marchand had close ties to the then-struggling labour movement. Others, like Michael Oliver and Charles Taylor, were NDPers. (Anne-Marie Bourdouxhe had been an NDPer as well.)

According to a June 2, 1998, Canadian Press story by Norman Delisle, Gérard Pelletier wrote to the new editors as early as 1996 to express his dismay at "outrageous nonsense" and "irresponsible writings." He cited Johnson and Richler specifically and said he could no longer agree to contribute

to, or to be identified with, Cité libre. Pierre Trudeau has displayed no such reticence. While he had remained somewhat aloof under the Bourdouxhe editorship, he has since granted three interviews (January/February 1997; February/March 1997; February/March 1998), and several earlier articles (not all from Cité libre) have been reprinted ...

Pierre Trudeau's involvement is perhaps the only thing today's Cité libre has in common with earlier versions, but the reality about which he wrote in the 1960s has changed. At that time, when separatism was beginning to emerge and the most vocal separatists were quite intolerant, and a clandestine few violent, Trudeau said,

The fact is that, at bottom, the Separatists despair of ever being able to convince the public of the rightness of their ideas. For that long work of education and persuasion among the masses – undertaken decades ago by the unions, by the Crédiitistes themselves for thirty years – the Separatists have neither the courage nor the means, nor, most of all, that respect for the other person's freedom required to undertake it and lead it to success ("Les Séparatistes: des contre-révolutionnaires," May 1964).

Trudeau was right. The past and still-to-come excesses of the FLQ were to make the case for Quebec independence much more difficult to argue. But the separatists eventually found in René Lévesque a leader to steer them along the demanding path trod earlier by the unions and the Créditistes.

This reality was recognized by the editors of *Cité libre* when it was revived under Anne-Marie Bourdouxhe. In “Non à la politique du pire!” (March/April 1996), written six months after their departure from *Cité libre*, editors Bourdouxhe, Danielle Miller, Richard L’Heureux and Louis-Philippe Rochon took issue with its advocacy of partition:

Are the partitionists so bereft of arguments, or have they so little confidence in their powers of persuasion, that they despair of convincing the majority of Quebecers of Canada’s merits? Democratic separatists – although we reject their choice, we must acknowledge that most are democrats – started from scratch more than thirty years ago with makeshift means as their only resources, handicapped to boot by FLQ crimes for which they were held to account repeatedly and indiscriminately. Through perseverance and courage, they have managed to rally almost half Quebec’s population to their cause. It’s not by heaping insults on them, much less by inveighing against those whose trust and support they have earned, that the tide of separatism will be turned: on the contrary, such behaviour can but hasten its progress.

For the new editors, it was “through lies and demagoguery,” not “perseverance and courage,” that separatists had made their gains (“Non à la sécession!”, March/April 1996). Their chief and recurring complaint is Québécois unreasonableness; the mere

evocation of past injustice attests to an “ideology of resentment”:

*A collectivity is not a living being ... Individuals, not groups, are the ones who need recognition and respect. At *Cité libre* ... we denounce the politically convenient myth of the “Nous,” always humiliated and rejected, which displays its identity and spirit of solidarity by combating “l’Autre,” the root of all its troubles ... This ethno-cultural nationalism, which our elites ceaselessly extol in a variety of guises, can only divert us from the real problems of our society, and estrange us from other Canadians (“*Cité libre, Yesterday and Today*,” February/March 1998).*

The more one reads, however, the clearer it becomes that, for the current editors, not all nationalisms are reprehensible. While the mere idea of a French Canadian or Québécois people is an abominable pipe dream, the existence of a Canadian people is an admirable reality ...

It would seem that to the new editors the history of Canada begins in 1982. They are unconcerned with, much less do they seek to understand, the reasons that push a growing number of French speakers to consider their homeland to be Quebec rather than Canada. The abolition of French public schools in the Prairies and Ontario in the late 19th and early 20th centuries? A sad episode, perhaps, but old history unworthy of consideration. The population pressures inexorably assimilating most French-speaking minorities west of the Ottawa Valley and east of New Brunswick? An untruth propagated by ideologues masquerading as demographers.

It is difficult to escape the feeling one has fallen upon members of some new fundamentalist religious order. The 1982 Constitution is their holy writ, to be neither

altered nor challenged. Those so benighted as to deliberately break up “the best country in the world,” those who, however well-meaning, are willing to consider heresies such as “special status” or “distinct society,” in short anyone who won’t march enthusiastically to the drum of 1982, will be condemned to the hell of territorial partition and material indigence ...

A need unfulfilled

How many Quebecers previously sympathetic to Canadian unity but craving the recognition that they belong to a distinct – not superior or privileged – society have been driven, by the indiscriminate fire of federalist purists, to choose secession as a necessary evil? ...

In 1998, with substantial financial support from the Toronto-based Donner Foundation and advertising revenue from Fonorola/Sprint, *Cité libre* began publication – and countrywide distribution – of identical versions in English and French.³ It also began to style itself “Quebec’s Voice for Liberalism and Canadian Unity.” Yet this “Quebec voice” seems to need counsel from a board of 15 advisers, mostly academics, nine of whom are associated with Ontario institutions, one with a Manitoba college. And would a truly Quebec voice need to turn to Toronto for hundreds of thousands of dollars to support the propagation of its message?

When *Cité libre* was founded 50 years ago, its editors stated, “*Cité libre* wants to be a family home ... where all can display themselves perfectly naturally. To achieve this unconstrained atmosphere, it was necessary that the home belong to us ... All who labour together at *Cité libre* will share

in the property of the magazine. Accordingly, to know its owners it will suffice to read the signatures at the end of the texts” (“*Règle du jeu*,” vol. 1, no. 1, June 1950). When Anne-Marie Bourdouxhe was editor, the acceptance of large-scale outside financial help would have been unthinkable.

Quebec urgently needs a serious, independent French-language print vehicle where thoughtful federalists can argue for a united, reformed Canada, one in which English- and French-speaking Canadians alike, irrespective of racial, ethnic and religious background, would know they

Quebec urgently needs a serious, independent French-language print vehicle where thoughtful federalists can argue for a united, reformed Canada

are welcome and could contribute to the betterment of the common weal. *Cité libre* has ceased to be such a vehicle. ■

Notes

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from *Cité libre*.
- 2 See “Saying Good-bye to the Dentist” (Winter 1999).
- 3 The Laval University website (under Max Nemni in the political science department section) lists the “translation into English and publication of *Cité libre*” as a “subsidized research [!] project in progress,” with Nemni and his wife receiving Donner Foundation grants totalling \$231,000 over three years. I was told by one of the *Cité libre* inner circle that the Fonorola/Sprint contributions totalled \$300,000. The same source informed me that sales of the English version outnumbered those of the French three to one.

Remembering Claude Ryan

by John Richards

WITH CLAUDE RYAN'S DEATH ON FEBRUARY 9, QUEBECERS – AND all Canadians – lost a man of great lucidity, stamina and generosity. As well as, if not better than, René Lévesque, Ryan articulated the goals of the Quiet Revolution. If any one document can be claimed to do so, the set of constitutional reforms laid out in his 1980 “Beige Paper” epitomized the political aspirations of his generation of Quebec leaders.

Ryan sought throughout his life to define *le juste milieu* – between conformity to his Catholic faith and the compromises required of a very public life; between academic abstraction and *observations ponctuelles* in the daily press; between advocacy for Quebec nationalism and defence of Canadian federalism; between support for the liberating changes of post-1960 Quebec and hope that those liberated from the constraints of the parish would remain faithful to the wisdom of the Church; between the need for a generous welfare state and a puritan

sense of the duty of the individual to work and be useful to society.

A convinced Quebec nationalist, Ryan nonetheless sought out and communicated with Canadians across the country. This was how I came, in the last five years of his life, to know him. He attended a seminar I gave at the University of Montreal, and afterward he joined us for a modest lunch at a restaurant along nearby Côte-des-Neiges.

Readers of Inroads had the opportunity to appreciate Claude Ryan's writings. In 1999, he used Inroads as means to communicate to Canadians his critique of the Social Union Framework Agreement, a document that in his opinion – and mine – flouted the spirit



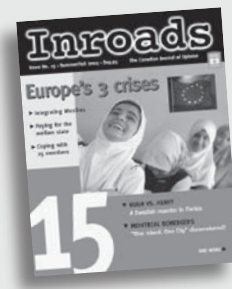
ILLUSTRATION
MICHEL GARNEAU.
REPRODUCED FROM
LE DEVOIR WITH
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of Canadian federalism. The next year we published, in translation, an epistolary exchange between André Burelle and Ryan on what is and what should be Quebec's role in the Canadian federation.

Ryan was attracted to St. Augustine's effort to reconcile Christian faith with active participation in the affairs of the world. In 2001 we published Ryan's essay on the appropriate role of the Christian engaged in what he described as *le rude métier* of politics. Knowing his passionate interest in defining a just compromise on language policy, we invited him to review Marie McAndrew's *Immigration et diversité*

à l'école for the Winter/Spring 2003 issue. Written by an education professor, this book on teaching the children of immigrants won the Donner Foundation prize for best policy book of 2002.

The last time we met was for coffee on the second floor of the McGill University bookstore, in the spring of 2003. As always, he was working. He had just finished delivering a lecture in a course he was offering on Catholic social thought. I introduced him to my brother and my niece, a McGill student. He had had problems with his stomach, he allowed, but he thought that his health was now restored. It was not. ■



SUMMER/FALL 2004 Inroads was fortunate to have Claude Ryan as a friend, supporter and contributor. His death in 2004 was a special loss for Inroads, and co-publisher John Richards paid him this tribute.

Arriving at a clear-eyed vision of Quebec

by André Pratte

“We

ARE CONCERNED.” SO BEGINS A NINE-PAGE DOCUMENT that attracted a good deal of attention last fall in Quebec.

For a Clear-Eyed Vision of Quebec (Pour un Québec lucide

in French) rapidly became known as a “manifesto,” and the group that wrote it as “les Lucides.” An unlikely group we were: former politicians, business men and women, university professors and a journalist; sovereigntists and federalists. Concern for the future of Quebec brought us together.

It all started in the spring of 2005. A few of us happened to meet on different occasions. When we discussed the state of Quebec we found we shared an understanding of certain issues; moreover, we shared a frustration at the difficulty of raising these issues publicly without being branded “neoliberals” or “enemies of the Quebec model.” We were also worried that every time the Charest government tried to make

even small changes in the way our province did things, it faced a huge wave of protest that stopped it dead in its tracks. Of course, some of the government’s problems were of its own making, but clearly Quebec could not progress if every common-sense idea was met with thousands of people protesting in the streets.

What were we to do? We started to have more formal meetings – former premier Lucien Bouchard, former principal Robert Lacroix of the University of Montreal, prominent economists Pierre Fortin and Claude Montmarquette, and myself. And

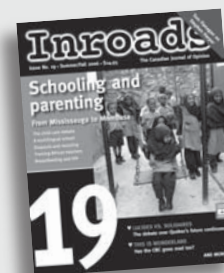
then someone – I think it was Mr. Lacroix – suggested that we write and publish a text. By the time it was published we were 12.

THE FIRST PART – DESCRIBING WHAT WE saw as the challenges facing Quebec and the difficulty of debating these issues – was easy to write. The challenges – demographic decline, rapidly rising health care expenditures, competition from emerging economies – are familiar to observers of developments in Western societies, except that Quebec’s particular situation, as a small distinct culture, makes them especially daunting.

Take demographic decline. Quebec’s population is currently 7.5 million. In 2050 it will be about the same: 7.8 million. Meanwhile, the rest of Canada’s population is projected to increase a bit faster, so that Quebec’s share will be 21 per cent, rather than 23 per cent as at present. Quebec’s political and economic clout inside the

country will continue to slowly diminish. But that evolution is nothing compared to Quebec’s situation on the continent. In 2050, the population of the United States will have increased to nearly 400 million, and South America’s will have exploded. Less than 50 years from now, fewer than eight million Quebecers will be surrounded by nearly 1.2 billion English-, Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking people; Quebec’s political, economic and cultural weight will be even less significant than it is today.

When one speaks of demographic decline in Quebec, most people shrug their shoulders. The problem seems far away and without impact on their lives. Besides, many resent what they see as an attempt to pressure them into having more children. But that has nothing to do with it. One obvious, yet little known, effect of demographic decline is economic. Population growth is one of economic growth’s main engines; slower population growth means that the economy will decelerate. As early as 2012



SUMMER/FALL 2006 In its Winter/Spring 2006 issue, Inroads introduced readers to a just-published manifesto, *Pour un Québec lucide (For a Clear-Eyed Vision of Quebec)*, the work of 12 prominent Quebecers including former premier Lucien Bouchard. It warned of a threat to the very survival of Quebec as a vibrant distinct society in North America due to an aging population, mounting Asian competition in the global market and growing public debt. In introducing it, we suggested that “given its timing, its eloquence and the stature of its authors, its contentions are not likely to fade away.”

In the months that followed, the manifesto gave rise to a profound public debate, including a countermanifesto which we published in abridged form in the Summer/Fall 2006 issue. We also introduced readers to two prominent authors of *Pour un Québec lucide*, Joseph Facal, former Parti Québécois cabinet minister, and André Pratte, editor of *La Presse*. What comes through most clearly in their statements, we wrote at the time, was that the driving force uniting these political adversaries was, as Pratte put it, “the frustration at the difficulty of raising these issues publicly without being branded ‘neoliberals’ or ‘enemies of the Québec model.’”

And, most recently, the March 2007 Quebec election has come to be described as the triumph of the “lucides.” It is thus fitting that Pratte’s insights into this “unlikely group [of] former politicians, business men and women, university professors and a journalist; sovereigntists and federalists” –how and why it was formed, and how it reconciled the different concerns of its members – should find its way into this special issue.



– six years from now! – Quebec’s labour force will begin to diminish. The Quebec Department of Finance has projected that in the next decade – 2010 to 2020 – economic growth will be cut by half simply because of demographic changes.

This economic impact is compounded by other factors that hurt Quebec’s competitiveness. Quebecers work fewer hours a week than other North Americans, and retire earlier. Because our companies invest comparatively little in machinery and technology, each hour worked is less productive.

Demographic decline and its economic impact will have dire consequences for Quebec’s public finances, already in a dismal state. Although poorer than most other provinces and states, Quebec spends proportionally more on its social programs. Low-cost daycare, generous pharmacare and frozen university tuition may be legitimate policies, but they are very expensive. And since Quebec already carries a huge public debt and Quebecers pay the continent’s highest taxes, something will have to give. Either we let the forces of demographic and economic decline decide what will break, or we make hard choices ourselves before it is too late.

Until now, most political leaders, intellectuals and union leaders have set the example by refusing to acknowledge the difficult situation we are in, and most Quebecers have simply followed. “Unfortunately,” we wrote in the manifesto, “at the very moment when we should be radically changing the way we view ourselves and the world around us, the slightest change to the way government functions, a bold project, the most timid call to responsibility or the smallest change to our comfortable habits is met

with an angry outcry and objections or, at best, indifference. This outright rejection of change hurts Quebec because it runs the risk of turning us into the republic of the status quo, a fossil from the twentieth century.”

We did not want the group to be so large that the document’s content would have to be watered down, nor did we aim to be representative of all quarters of Quebec society. It was very important for our credibility to be seen as nonpartisan – which in Quebec means neither separatist nor federalist. How then were we to deal with

Less than 50 years from now, fewer than eight million Quebecers will be surrounded by nearly 1.2 billion English-, Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking people; Quebec’s political, economic and cultural weight will be even less significant than it is today.

the “*question nationale*,” which the manifesto could not ignore? I dreaded the moment when we would sit down to write that part of the document. In fact, it proved very easy, a testament I think to the level of concern we shared in confronting what we all saw as the “real” challenges facing Quebec. We rapidly agreed on the following paragraph: “Some members of our group are in favour of sovereignty, others believe that Quebec’s future will be better ensured within Canada. Despite these different points of view, we are all certain that whatever choice Quebecers make, the challenges facing us remain the same.”

Having written the relatively easy first part of the manifesto describing the challenges, we faced the question of whether

there should be a second part with proposed solutions. We were divided on the issue. Some took the view that our priority was to change the mindset, to encourage a new way of looking at things: going into detail would distract from our main intent and provide an easy target for proponents of the status quo. “Our goal is first of all to make Quebecers aware of the challenges they face,” we wrote. “We have no program to sell; we are more interested in the change in attitude needed to tackle our problems.” But others in the group said that we could not leave it there – if we did not bring solutions forward, we would fail the credibility test. The first

As we expected, our ideas were rapidly attacked as “neoliberal.” But contrary to what we feared, the main message – that Quebec had to change its ways to meet the huge challenges it faces – got through.

question anyone reading the manifesto had would be, “What do you think should be done?” There was no way out: we would have to answer. We might as well plunge in right away – and so we did.

The thrust of our suggestions was to make Quebec a more dynamic, creative and productive society, to counter the effects of demographic decline. Our document therefore advocated a strategy to reduce the public debt, notably by increasing electricity rates in a “substantial and progressive” manner. We called for massive investments in education and training, paid in part by students through an end to the tuition freeze. We wanted major tax reforms to encourage work and investment, and a

guaranteed income plan to achieve Quebec’s social objectives with a less unwieldy bureaucracy.

“AT LAST!” THIS IS THE REACTION EACH of us heard most often after the manifesto came out last October. “At last, someone dares to bring these things out in the open.” “At last, the wall of silence is broken.”

The strength and breadth of that reaction surprised us. Our small website – www.pourunquebeclucide.com – was inundated by thousands of people downloading the French or English version of the document. Dozens of reporters attended the press conference, and members of the group, especially Mr. Bouchard, gave many interviews.

Of course, there were also many negative comments. As we expected, our proposed solutions were rapidly attacked as “neoliberal.” One group wrote a countermanifesto, *Manifeste pour un Québec solidaire*. Since then, new labels have been added to Quebec’s political debate: “les Lucides” against “les Solidaires.” The “Solidaires” agree that demographic decline, government debt and competition from emerging economies present Quebec with important challenges, but they find our concern exaggerated. And they vigorously oppose the solutions that the manifesto put forward.

Contrary to what we feared, however, our main message – that Quebec had to change its ways to meet the huge challenges it faces – got through. What is left of our effort, six months later? Needless to say, Quebec has not yet begun the transformation we think is necessary. But, believing as I do in the real, if slow, power of ideas, I am confident

that the manifesto has had a significant and lasting impact.

First and foremost, since the message was carried by a nonpartisan and diverse group, it dissociated the ideas from the Liberal government of Jean Charest. Since Charest was so unpopular at the time of our writing, it took some courage to publicly approve policies that he also advocated. After the manifesto came out, expressing concern about the public debt, demographic decline or the low cost to students of university education seemed to become more respectable. It was as if we had broken an ice jam.

Second, the manifesto, inevitably incomplete in its analysis of the situation and its proposed solutions, encouraged different groups to study the issues it raised in more depth. Conferences were and will be held on such topics as the level of electricity rates and the impact on Quebec of the rise of China and India. In its latest budget, the provincial government announced the creation of a *Fonds des générations*, the sole purpose of which is to start repaying the public debt. The idea was greeted favour-

ably by most commentators. I believe our manifesto had something to do with both the decision and the reaction.

No one knows where all this will lead. Quebecers are proud of the “model” they built, and it is easy to persuade them that any change will undermine our distinct society’s foundations. No doubt the Parti Québécois and the new leftist party (Québec Solidaire) will try to exploit that fear, and they may succeed. Still, the federal election results, with the unexpectedly strong showing in Quebec by the Conservative Party, show that many Quebecers are ready for a new approach and are looking for leaders who want solutions rather than just denunciations.

Whether Quebecers adopt a clear-eyed vision of Quebec, whether they rise to the challenge as they have done in the past will depend on the courage and determination of our political and intellectual leaders. What they choose to do will determine whether the distinct society that is Quebec has a future at all. ■

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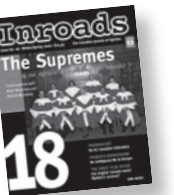
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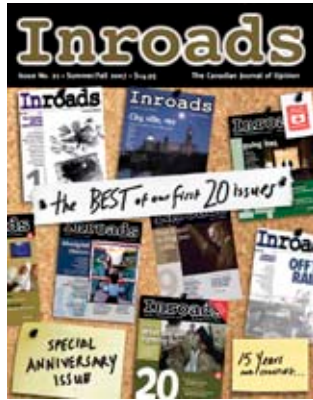
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