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Institute of
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Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario
Canada



THE QUESTION
Debate on the Referendum Question,
Quebec National Assembly,
March 4 - 20, 1980

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Documents of the Debate

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The Debate on the Referendum Question, Quebec National Assembly
March 4-20, 1980

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Preface

This is the first publication in a new Institute series, Documents of the Debate. It is designed to collect and present to readers some of the critical documentary materials relating to the debate on the future of the constitution and the federal system. It thus brings together and organizes scattered materials not easily available otherwise.

Document 1, The Question, represents the only existing translation of the historic debate in the Quebec National Assembly on the wording of the question put to voters in the referendum of May 20, 1980. The debates are edited so as to represent as fully as possible the major themes and arguments put forward. The sole responsibility for the selection and presentation rests with the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations.

More than the usual number of persons assisted in the preparation of this document. We are grateful to the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, government of Quebec, for a grant to cover translation costs. Evelyn Dumas and Chris Thomson of the Quebec government were especially helpful. Sheila Fischman did an excellent translation job. In Kingston, Marie-Hélène Bergeron did a careful job of editing the original debates. The manuscript was prepared by Patricia Candido and Laurie Burke.

Volume 2 in this series, The Response to Quebec: The Other Provinces and the Constitutional Debate is now available, in English and French.

Richard Simeon
Director
May 1980

Introduction

In March of 1980, the Quebec National Assembly conducted a debate with historic implications for Quebec and all of Canada. For 35 hours, the members discussed the question which the PQ proposed to put before the Quebec people in the referendum to be held May 20. The debate was fully televised and provided the launching pad for the referendum campaign to which the PQ government had committed itself before its election in November, 1976. Following the debate, and the approval of the question with only one minor change, the Assembly rose and the members fanned out to bring the campaign to meeting halls around the province. Thus, while Quebec's future and the PQ project of sovereignty-association had often been raised in the legislature, this was the only opportunity for a full and complete discussion of the issues in the National Assembly.

This study provides a condensed translation of what occurred. It brings to English speaking readers a sense of the style and flavour of the discussion. It summarizes virtually all of the arguments and appeals - from the loftiest of political ideals to the most trivial point-scoring - which were put forward, and which in various forms provided the basis of the referendum campaign itself.

Both the contending sides and the press agreed that the YES forces had "won" this referendum debate. Indeed the "victory" enabled the PQ to call the referendum date earlier than planned. It felt the parliamentary debate had launched the party on a winning campaign. In reading this translation, too, the reader may feel that the PQ got the best of the argument. Their speakers were well-prepared and coordinated. They exploited the television medium with finesse. They were able to range far beyond the project of sovereignty-association itself, to an evocation of the aspirations of Quebec society, to a

criticism of the existing federal system and the failure of past efforts at constitutional reform to respond to Quebec's demands, to a sharp critique of the proposals of Claude Ryan's Quebec Liberal Party, set out in the "Beige Paper."

The opposition seemed somewhat less effective in the debate. In part this was because of a strategic decision. The Liberals initially decided to focus their critique directly on the question itself and on the referendum campaign. They had not planned to use the debate as a forum for exploring the larger questions. They were thus rather out-flanked by the well-orchestrated PQ strategy. But there were other reasons for their weaknesses. The rules of the debate allocated time according to party strength: the result was that the PQ had far more time to develop its arguments. In addition, there were other parties represented in the Opposition, so it was harder to speak with one voice. The PQ concentrated much of its attack on federal policies and programs - and not surprisingly, the provincial Liberal members were less well-equipped to rebut them in detail than federal cabinet ministers would have been. Indeed, federal ministers used the later debate in the Speech from the Throne in Ottawa to rebut many of the PQ's assertions.

But despite this imbalance, strong arguments were put forward by both sides. While the debate on occasion degenerated, as all legislative debates do, into banal and trivial exchanges, and while on occasion passions ran high, in general the debate was conducted at a high level. Citizens watching on television had a sense of high drama, of critical decisions about to be made. Whether they were federalists or supporters of the OUI, they would have found lots of ammunition - and lots to worry about.

Canadians outside Quebec were spectators to this debate. No similar opportunity to discuss the very foundations of their political community presented itself to them. Reading the debates, one wants to jump in and participate too. The future not only of Quebec but also of the rest of Canada was on the table here, and throughout the referendum campaign.

Finally, Canadians outside Quebec have often been unaware of the significance and intensity of the debate in the province. They have not realized what profound questions are at stake. This selection helps convey that sense of urgency, of the agonizing of a society "qui se fait." This selection of the debate tries to communicate that feeling. It is not likely to go away.

The following pages reprint the major speeches of Premier Lévesque and Opposition Leader Claude Ryan in full. They then present excerpts from the speeches of other members, chosen to reflect all the major themes and issues which came out. Though some readers no doubt would have chosen somewhat different selections, we believe the excerpts accurately record the sense of the debate.

THE QUESTION:

THE GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC HAS MADE PUBLIC ITS PROPOSAL TO NEGOTIATE A NEW AGREEMENT WITH THE REST OF CANADA BASED ON THE EQUALITY OF NATIONS;

THIS AGREEMENT WOULD ENABLE QUEBEC TO ACQUIRE THE EXCLUSIVE POWER TO MAKE ITS LAWS, LEVY ITS TAXES AND ESTABLISH RELATIONS ABROAD - IN OTHER WORDS, SOVEREIGNTY - AND AT THE SAME TIME TO MAINTAIN WITH CANADA AN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION INCLUDING A COMMON CURRENCY;

NO CHANGE IN POLITICAL STATUS RESULTING FROM THESE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE AFFECTED WITHOUT APPROVAL BY THE PEOPLE THROUGH ANOTHER REFERENDUM;

ON THESE TERMS DO YOU GIVE THE GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC THE MANDATE TO NEGOTIATE THE PROPOSED AGREEMENT BETWEEN QUEBEC AND CANADA?

YES

NO

I. The Leaders Speak

A. René Lévesque, Prime Minister of Quebec
Opening Statement, March 4, 1980

Mr. President, it is with a measure of emotion, to be sure - but above all with a deep-seated pride, that I have the honour of opening this debate in the Assemblée nationale. Probably never before has the word "national" befitted our parliament more than it does right now and than it will during the coming days. I hope that the parliamentary wiles of the Member for Bonaventure, and the spectres he has raised, will not deter us from an examination of the entire question. For what we are discussing here is not merely the question which will be asked at the referendum; what we are discussing is very specifically the question of Quebec itself.

While all of us in this room, and all of us everywhere in Quebec who intend to vote "Yes" in the referendum, are confident, we sense at the same time a sort of uneasy pride. After all, this sort of event doesn't take place every day. This is the first time in our long history that we shall have the opportunity to decide by ourselves, as a group, what we want to be and where we want to go.

There are those, alas - of course it's their right but still I say "alas" - who seem determined to spoil the chance: people who, for example, with little concern for self-contradiction, will first try to convince us that this stage is of no importance, then will turn around and say in the next breath that it is all important. For this reason, the pride which we have been feeling will really be a mixed emotion until that night when, after we have all examined not just the question now submitted but every detail of the whole question of Quebec - of its evolution, of the effect this evolution has had on us, of our hopes and of our future - we will have given our answer.

At that time we shall be taking a step which, come what may, will always remain a historic one. The referendum will constitute the first exercise by the people of Quebec of that basic right of all peoples to take their future into their own hands: what's commonly called the right to self-determination.

This, then, is in itself a crucial stage in Quebec's development. And we who are submitting the question for the referendum draw our confidence primarily from knowing that the time is ripe. The referendum concept is not new: many well-known figures have already proposed recourse to a referendum when the most serious political choices had to be made. Until now, however, their proposals have never borne fruit: the time was not ripe, although everyone knew that one day it would be; just as anyone knows that if a fruit is not to wither on its branch, it must be plucked, and just as anyone knows that a child will one day reach maturity with all its attendant responsibilities.

This moreover, is what we tried to say on the first page of the White Paper the government released a few months ago. To every nation - as to every man - life brings moments of decision. Such moments are rare, fortunately, since they almost always entail a certain soul-searching. Two roads branch in front of us at an intersection : even if the new road promises much more than the old, we instinctively meant to exaggerate the new road's pitfalls: because we fear change, we persist in looking for new attractions on the old road. If we are to succeed, that fear must be overcome.

The men and women of Quebec are at a historic intersection. After years of discussions, constitutional crises, inquiry commissions and reports, the time has come for us to decide - freely and democratically - what road we shall take in the future. Whenever any people is called upon to make such a decision, and to determine its collective destiny, that people must first sit back and think maturely. Where did we Quebecers come from? How far have we travelled? What are our chances of growing and developing? Before we vote, we must ask ourselves these questions.

First, where did we come from? From almost 400 years of history, dogged determination, and continuity. With the exception of our fellow citizens among the native peoples, we have roots deeper than any other North American community. It hasn't been easy to hold out like that; don't we know it! They were only a handful 220 years ago, but they had been promised the fullness of nationhood like all the others - all those other colonies which Europe had established: Spaniards, Portuguese, Dutchmen and of course Anglo-Saxons - and who had managed to attain that fullness.

But 220 years ago that handful was conquered; decapitated; isolated from where the decisions were made; it was forced to concentrate solely on survival, "la survivance". And little by little, as we fiercely maintained our identity, each generation added more numbers, and collective rights and instruments were recovered by dint of our labours, until we became what it had been our destiny to become: a people. A people who, like the others, deserves consideration, if only to be worthy of all those who have led us this far; a people with not only the right but henceforth the duty to assert itself and take its affairs in hand because, less than half a century ago, something extraordinary - yet at the same time perfectly natural - happened to us.

Here, as elsewhere, time has telescoped. Anyone who can remember as far back as, say, 35 or 40 years ago, feels that today he is living in another world. Back then, society was simpler, less troubled, and not as complex. While the war did affect us from a distance, our society was still solidly based on traditional structures. But although it had more than all the necessary social and psychological requirements, that society still lacked self-confidence, and was still resigned to a state of perpetual dependency and small-time status.

Then suddenly - we realized it suddenly but surely it must have been creeping up on us and we didn't notice - it was spring, in a sense; a late spring, but nonetheless an irresistible one; like those springs

where the ice suddenly breaks its wintry bonds along the shores of our rivers, and new life throbs everywhere.

I guess it all started with the poets - as it does all over the world - and with the artists and the writers. We in Quebec had been living almost exclusively on the pittance our ancestors had earned and handed down to us; now, as never before, we began to make our mark as creators; in all countries, our songs were being sung; our authors were being increasingly read, our films were being seen, and our paintings were gaining in popularity. And this is to say nothing of the many other factors which we're modestly creating here - as much if not more so than could have been done in any other community of six million people - a sort of genuine cultural renaissance. And alongside this, social awareness blossomed in Quebec as never before.

It blossomed to an extent that frequently brought it to the forefront, not only in Canada but on the entire continent. Look at family allowances: since 1945 or thereabouts they had never been changed. Then in the sixties an idea was born in Quebec, an idea which later would become a concrete plan: to adapt these allowances to the changing nature of families and to their needs in today's world.

And old age pensions: they'd scarcely budged either, until, in Quebec, the concept of a supplement was born. That supplement would become our Pension Plan, financed by the Caisse de dépôt. In time the whole of Canada would adopt it. And quite recently Quebec at last set up a new automobile insurance plan. Today that plan is more human, more civilized and at least as effective as any other which has gone before it. And again in Quebec, using both our own resources and those which the federal government gives us, we are making headway toward providing our workers with a guaranteed minimum income.

Competence and creativity within the political and administrative arenas have been undergoing the same sort of transformation. Gradually over the past fifteen years, Quebec has taken what I believe are the first steps to be taken by any government on the continent to eliminate by stages - the most recent being Bill No. 2 on the financing of political parties - that unhealthy liaison between private interests and pressure groups and the public treasury. Also in Quebec, we have over the past twenty years been increasing our competence and administrative and budgetary discipline; mistakes have been made, but then mistakes will always be made and I still feel that our competence and discipline can compare favourably with anything seen elsewhere.

This is also true in the economic field, here perhaps more spectacularly than anywhere else, since this is an area where we had developed our strongest inferiority complex, which was carefully nurtured by others. How well I remember the sixties - and the Member for Bonaventure was around then, so he must remember that period too. The context was similar to that of a referendum, but the subject was the nationalization of electricity. How many people

kept harping away that we wouldn't be able to pull it off: that was beyond our capabilities to build our own dams, or develop a great transmission system and administer it ourselves. Yet today Hydro-Quebec is not only a sort of flagship for the Quebec economy; it is a world leader in its field.

In mining, look at SOQUEM - to take just one example. That firm, unless I'm wrong, should recover this year - in only one year - the equivalent of all the advances it has received from the state since it was created. And at the same time, all across our territory, an increasing number of small businesses have been springing to life or expanding.

So in terms of competence, efficiency, initiative and boldness, these past few years have witnessed a truly dramatic change. Like many others, I've travelled about observing this; I've seen it in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean area, in the Beauce, of course, in the Eastern Townships, and in the Bois-Francs. It's happening too in the metropolitan regions - we see evidence of this every day - although there it's not as evident, because people are not as close; but it's happening there too. We see this with every project we examine.

So much for background. Where are we today? Quite simply, we are at a point where, without seeking any delusions of grandeur, we can no longer, in any major segment of our society, see ourselves as anything less than what we really are. We can no longer assume that we would not be as capable as anyone else of taking our affairs in hand; indeed we would be better equipped than anyone else to manage our affairs.

We are now in the front ranks of what are called the developed countries. Our human resources are becoming increasingly competent and creative. We have always known how to save money, and this has enabled us to accumulate all the capital we need to ensure the essential part of our development. Our natural resources - as yet untapped in thousands of spots in our territory - secure for us a physical base which ranks among the world's richest and most highly diversified. A fortune in one of the vastest forest lands can be ours forever, provided we take proper care of it. As for energy, all we hear about - so much that we could get paranoid about it - is Alberta oil. Well, in a few short years, Quebec will be producing 25,000 megawatts of electricity, using conventional power plants, to which others should have been added long ago; it would take 700,000 barrels of oil to obtain the same yield; that already represents half of Alberta's annual production.

Now all this did not come about by mere chance. And certainly all this revival and all this creativity of the past twenty-five or thirty years cannot be attributed to the political regime in which we live. On the contrary: if we rank today among the highly developed countries; indeed if we stand 14th among 150 other countries with regard to standard of living, we have achieved this first and foremost through what we have accomplished here in Quebec: through the capacities we have developed, and through our resources. Had the federal regime not put snares in our path, complicated things and too often committed iniquities, we would have progressed far more quickly, with fewer problems; and we would have progressed a good deal further.

For this reason we say that instead of living in a regime which everyone - not the least our friends across the House, in their Beige Paper and other documents - admits is outdated, but without casting aside a long-standing tradition of coexistence which has given birth to a whole series of exchanges, we now owe it to ourselves to enter into a new agreement, between equals, with our neighbours and partners in the rest of Canada. This is the only logical culmination of our development; the only answer to the needs of the present, and the only way in which we can be assured in the future of continued, and ever more stimulating progress.

This would also clarify a misunderstanding which has persisted since the outset for a hundred and thirteen years. From the very beginning, the delegates from what was then called Upper Canada - Ontario - and the other English provinces or colonies at the time, wanted above all a central parliament which was supranational and as strong as possible; sufficiently strong, and possessed of sufficient centralized powers, to preside over the development of a new country to the north of the United States: a country essentially English in tongue but British in tradition. At the same time what the people of Quebec wanted above all was a provincial government as responsible and as autonomous as possible; a government which, up to a point, could become their real government - the one where they could always be sure of finding their true image.

As we all know, however, the first concept prevailed. Since that time, it has been, and still is, at the background of all the tensions we have experienced in what we now call "Canadian dualism", which is at the core of the institutional, constitutional crisis which has been steadily worsening for something like forty years.

Even the present Leader of the Liberal Party has admitted that this basic misunderstanding existed. This is seen in the document entitled "A New Canadian Federation". Some of the opinions expressed in that paper are remarkably similar to those we have expressed ourselves, although the conclusions are different. Our conclusion, in fact, is that now we must move, in deeds, not just in words, beyond that lengthy, headstrong list of Quebec's claims, incessantly and nostalgically repeated. While we never dared carry our thoughts through to their logical conclusion, always that underlying concept remained: equality between two peoples.

When we get right down to it, this was what Mr. Duplessis was aiming at - and he wasn't as mixed up as all that - when he spoke of bringing home the spoils of war. And Mr. Godbout - here I'll surprise at least one or two of you because Godbout has such a bad reputation in the history books - proposed in writing that a referendum be held for the purpose of arriving at - I quote, and hang on tight! - an agreement between equals, between Quebec and Canada. And that was in 1948, 32 years ago.

In the sixties, the Lesage government talked of our becoming "Masters in our own home"; toward the end of the same decade, Daniel Johnson spoke of "equality or independence" and, in the seventies, Mr. Bourassa's

goal was "cultural sovereignty". While I mention these for the record, I would like to look a little more closely at the very concrete statements put forth by the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission, which dates back to 1963. Nothing written in the intervening seventeen years has been able to match them for vigour or for clear-sightedness.

In that preliminary report, André Laurendeau and Davidson Dunton maintained, along with their colleagues, that in the drama unfolding at that time, the chief protagonists - whether they themselves were fully aware of it or not - were French Quebec and English Canada. The conflict was no longer between a majority and a minority; it was between two majorities: the majority in Canada and the majority in Quebec. In other words, for a long time French-speaking Quebec had been behaving a little as though it agreed to be just another favoured ethnic minority. Today, Quebec would see itself as an almost independent society, and would expect to be acknowledged as such. This attitude goes hand in glove with a hope long established in French Canada: equal partnership with English Canada.

English-speaking Canadians have to acknowledge that a vigorous French-speaking society exists within Canada. They must therefore agree that, if Canada is to survive, there will have to be a true association, of the kind which can only exist between equal partners. English-speaking Canadians must be ready to discuss - freely and without prejudice - the practical consequences of such an association.

All that was written seventeen years ago. Four years later, in 1967, the matter cropped up again in the final report. The authors maintained that the principle of equality took precedence over all historical and legal considerations. And today, after thirteen years, of all the recommendations in this report, only those regarding a certain linguistic equality have been implemented, albeit often vacillatingly and not all that well.

And the fundamental question of political equality - the only one which, between two national communities, can support and shore up all other forms of equality - was shunted aside.

The *raison d'être* for this referendum which we are proposing is not only faithful to the most profound and consistent aspirations of all Quebecers; it is also the only measure which can draw us out of the vicious circle into which this governmental crisis has drawn us. Only a political ostrich or someone very naive or very presumptuous will not admit that the repeated failures of all the governments which have sought a solution to this mix-up, and the ever widening gap between the reality of Quebec and that of English Canada, compel us to draw the following conclusion: that this indispensable process can be undertaken only if a majority - a massive majority if possible - of all Quebecers seek change with equality.

Of course, we are facing very strong nationalistic feelings in English Canada. We saw striking examples of these feelings after the provincial Liberal Party published its Beige Paper: thundering silences,

and expressions of sympathy which were half-hearted and basically embarrassed. Beyond the diversified interests of the provinces, and regionalism which can be more or less aggressive depending on the circumstances, the English Canadians too have their aspirations with regard to certain basic questions; aspirations which we cannot ignore. It was this community of aspirations which recently made it known to the Member for Argenteuil and his colleagues that what it wanted was a strong central government, and that the pan-provincialism advocated by the Quebec Liberals could well lead to a certain disintegration. The Quebec government respects this English Canadian national reality, and has no intention of saddling it with just any old political regime. We shall not fault the people in the other provinces for being attached to the federal regime essentially as it is, nor for seeing obvious advantages to it (which history proves that they have been correct in seeing) and for seeking to bring this regime closer into line with their own aspirations.

But this system has favoured the English-Canadian majority above all, particularly in Ontario. On that point everyone agrees. If we add to this the fact that Quebec's position is becoming increasingly that of a minority, it becomes only natural to seek out new forms of cooperation, by proposing a new solution which will attempt to respect both the needs and the most dominant aspirations of both parties. It was in this historical perspective, and with a hope which we have been nurturing for over a dozen years, that last December 20 I made public to the Members of this Assembly and to all our fellow citizens who wanted to know it, the text of the question which we have decided to ask at the referendum. Let it be recorded, incidentally, that our initial convictions as to the basic clarity, frankness and honesty of this question have only been strengthened since that time. I make no bones about saying so because it seems clear that a solid majority of Quebecers share our opinion.

Now about the strict legality of this question. There were those who fell over themselves splitting hairs on this very subject, but the many opinions which we have heard since the outset have been consistently in agreement; now to these opinions is added that of the battery of lawyers whose ongoing responsibility it is to advise the government in this matter: the lawyers of the ministère de la Justice.

That being said, just what does the question ask? It begins by setting forth the principle upon which all the rest is based: that of the basic equality of the two peoples who now make up Canada. Application of this principle has become a universal rule throughout the civilized world. With regard to fundamental rights and interests and to the exercise of those rights - and those rights and interests aren't off in the clouds somewhere - and the management of those interests, any self-respecting people will want to establish relations as between equals. The question next specifies the new agreement by which - and only by which - that principle can apply and indeed become a reality; no longer will it be something abstract, something academic, something hidden in a vapid cloud of some undefined desire, which unfortunately is how it is laid down in the Beige Paper of the provincial Liberal Party.

Indeed, the only way in which we can hope that this will come to pass within a new equilibrium - and how many years now have events been confirming this? - is on the one hand by having Quebec recover the power to make its own laws without others trampling all over us; to levy - for use at home - all our own taxes, all that public money which we are now paying out for our development, and, on the other hand, so as to maintain a common economic deal which no one on either side would benefit by refusing, the continuity of an economic association which would involve primarily common use of the same currency.

What the government is asking is a mandate to go and negotiate a new agreement which would satisfy this two-fold requirement: nothing more, and nothing less. But by the same token, we're not asking for a blank cheque. We are not asking the people to approve in advance the outcome of this endeavour, whatever it may be. It is our pledge that we shall in no way attempt to make any permanent change in the political status before we consult the people again: we are fully aware that no serious political change could be considered - much less effected - without the formal, sustained support of a majority of the people.

For this reason - I've said it a thousand times and I'll say it again - whatever way the majority decides in the referendum, the government will respect that decision until the end of its term. In no way will it attempt to override the collective will. And we would sincerely hope to receive the same type of assurance from those who are preparing to defend the negative option in the coming campaign. It would be fitting if such guarantees of democratic respect for the wishes of the people were provided immediately: right away, before we're all caught up in the intensity of the debate.

On that note, we must now ask ourselves, in brutal frankness, what the effect of a yes or a no vote would be as regards the foreseeable future. I think a great number of Quebecers - a number which is growing daily, unless I'm mistaken - have already weighed the consequences of a negative response. This type of response would signal the renewal - for a long time - of Quebec's dependence on the English-Canadian majority. It would signal the renewal - for a long time - of the Quebec people's inequality and, what is worse, an increasingly minority position within the federal system. It would mean the continuation - not to say the perpetuation - of interminable conflicts, federal-provincial dead ends, and ceaseless duplication with watered-down responsibility. And where sterility is thus constantly growing, time, energy and resources are always wasted.

A negative answer would also mean the permanent establishment of federal policies which, all too systematically, provide jobs and spur development elsewhere, while here they "compensate" by sustaining unemployment and relative underdevelopment. May I call your attention to an excerpt from a study commissioned in 1977 by the then Prime Minister - the new federal Prime Minister - on Ottawa's behaviour with regard to Quebec. This could be a word to the wise.

This study deals with the activities of one hundred federal departments and agencies over the period from 1967 to 1976. Its conclusions are painfully

clear. The document, incidentally, was not originally intended for publication but, as happens more and more frequently these days, it was leaked, so now everyone knows what was in it. At any rate, it mentions how the federal government often creates conflicts in Quebec by acting without being aware of the constitutional bases, or even of the probable consequences, of its actions.

Reading on, we learn that federal ministers frequently do not consult Quebec, even though programs might be of a special interest to it. Again, the document claims, rarely are the federal departments or agencies aware of the effects of such activities on the people of Quebec or on Quebec's priorities, policies or programs. And rarely is any attempt made to foresee the effects of these activities before they are undertaken.

In a context where this way of thinking has become rooted, how can anyone visualize a no vote as anything else but a prior justification for setting up a constitutional roadblock? How can such a vote be seen as anything else but a halt to the historic trend upon which, whether we like it or not, we have now embarked - the very trend of life? In short a referendum "non" may well be "Québécois" as so pitifully punned recently at the provincial Liberal Party convention - but any Québécois voting that way would be showing himself or herself to be inward-looking, outmoded, and fearful of self-assertion or of facing the future. And it will be many moons before anyone we talk to will dream of taking seriously even that Beige Paper to which our friends across the House have now officially resigned themselves, with its fear of affirming Quebec and its apparent shame of our most legitimate, our most repeated and our most deeply-entrenched aspirations.

In reply to this call for the status quo and for stagnation, a yes vote will mean - at last- a guarantee of release; the way will be open to change while an entire people continues to develop and to mature. A yes vote will be a clear proclamation of a wish for equality, and not just equality on paper; it will mean permanent cultural security, and an opportunity for that culture to develop fully along with the identity which it has carved out over generations; it will mean the development of all that unlimited potential for which, like any other society, we must first rely on ourselves. At the same time, a "yes" vote will be a vote for a better balance and a more just share in the economic partnership with the rest of Canada. With such a vote, it will be possible to remove various past obstacles to our development at many levels, particularly the economic level. All this can be speedily accomplished through an affirmative vote since all this is implied in the proposed question. This is the promise contained in the question, and no attempt at twisting the question can ever erase that promise.

Once again - I have to repeat it - this promise is also a fertile one; both parties will be able to breathe easier and forget their complexes. I shouldn't have to say it but I must: a "yes" vote in the referendum will not break up Canada, nor is it intended to. I shouldn't have to say this, although I feel I must, because when his party tabled a motion of censure here last October 11, the Leader of the Official Opposition and future head

of the committee for the "no" vote laid bare his gloomy convictions as to nothing less than the end of Canada.

He told how for the past ten years we have been doing everything humanly possible to discredit the whole of Canada and to prepare for its collapse: first in people's minds, then in the structures. Later he added that without a federal system Canada would collapse. While respecting the choice of those Quebecers who in all sincerity wish to continue as part of the federal system, even as it exists today - although it's hard to understand why they would want to - it is difficult to accept their claim, in the same breath, that to question Quebec's place within Canada is to repudiate Canada's existence or to prevent it from carrying on under a regime which suits it very well.

We must not forget the foundations on which this regime was established. This is in fact clearly recalled in the many introductions to the provincial Liberal Party's Beige Paper. First of all, we read that Canada was somewhat remote from England, with American power expanding at an increasingly alarming rate. The draft Canadian Constitution, adopted in 1867, was designed to create an economic deal for all the colonies of North America - British North America. The colonies were seeking to reinforce their respective economies by increasing domestic trade and by providing themselves with a sound infrastructure in matters of transport, financial institutions and public administration. They wanted to develop the territories of the Canadian west, keep the populations of the various colonies in Canada, while increasing them - and allow the colonies to develop more, and independently of outside control. That's what was behind the Canadian experiment.

What we are proposing is that this Canadian economic deal be maintained, practically as it is now. We wish to keep the existing common market intact. To us, it seems obvious that such a proposal will be to the advantage of all, both Quebecers and people of the other provinces.

In Ontario alone, over 200,000 jobs depend on the Quebec market. I have noticed how our friends across the House are continually writing about the benefits which Quebec can reap; they never seem to remember that such benefits can work both ways. They speak solely of the benefits which Quebec can reap from its sales to the rest of Canada, for instance. But don't forget - that coin has two sides. The Quebec market alone - for those who'd forgotten - represents 25% of all the exports by the other provinces.

So of course there has to be some give and take. That's only common sense, though there are those who forget it. When we suggest retaining this economic partnership, and all that can be achieved together, maintaining free circulation of persons, goods and money, a common currency, without customs or any such bother, we are surely advocating a step in the direction which is the most universally taken in equal relations between peoples. I mean sovereignty. For us, the end of domestic dependence, no matter how you want to label it: pact, council, community, association or whatever - we see dozens of such cases in the civilized world today and at the same time interdependence; an interdependence freely accepted and all the more stimulating.

May I also stress in closing that, if we are to break this vicious circle in which we are trapped institutionally, politically, constitutionally - regardless of which adverb you want to use - and if we can manage without hostility to dismantle that common front which any majority will always try to maintain in the face of a status quo which benefits it - and in this regard we must understand that it is perfectly natural for most of those speaking for English Canada to hang on to the status quo like a pup to a stick - if we wish without hostility to dismantle this common front, which any majority - and the English Canadian majority is no exception - always seeks to maintain when it can derive something from it, the referendum must constitute for Quebecers a chance for more than a minimum of collective solidarity.

I know, this is something which in many cases is more difficult to accept among English-speaking Quebecers, this measure of solidarity which is normally called for by an event such as a referendum or plebiscite on the national future. And I know, I think very realistically that many and probably most of our English-speaking fellow citizens will find it impossible to answer this call I just made because they feel - and so much of the past and so much also of the present is there to explain that - an unbreakable belonging, more to the English Canadian majority, than to the Quebec society, majority French. Not only is it understandable but it is something we must and we shall respect but may I say that we shall also respect, at least as much, the exceptional courage and to us the clearmindedness or all those for whom the referendum, on the contrary, and without breaking any ties will represent a chance to express positively, eloquently a priority for their attachment to Quebec but also to a better and more fruitful and eventually, friendlier relationship between all of us, both here in Quebec, and between Quebec and Canada.

Rarely, or course, in the history of any society, does just this type of solidarity manifest itself. In the most favourable of contexts, about two or three times in a century everyone will instinctively recognize when he has been brain-washed. It is just this sort of trend which everywhere in Quebec has gradually been building up, especially since the beginning of the year. I have seen it in a number of regions, during the journeys we have had to make: this solidarity striving to affirm itself in spite of the obstacles - and show me a society which does not have its obstacles, problems and interests which clash and conflict. This is a solidarity which strives to transcend party lines.

In this regard I must mention with a certain sadness that during the weekend I heard snatches of the provincial Liberal convention. I heard the Member for Bonaventure say - with that gusto of his which sometimes so admirably conceals his real intentions - that perhaps it was because we were ashamed of our party that, to tap this growing thirst for solidarity, we were trying to act as Quebecers as exclusively as possible: no more but no less. My reply to the Member for Bonaventure is simply this: how can anyone be ashamed of a party which has succeeded over thirteen difficult years, although its path was strewn with sacrifices, which has managed to

flourish in a political arena cluttered with old parties, and which has tried for the past three and a half years to provide Quebec with as good a government as possible, and to carry out all its commitments - and which will continue to do so until the end of its present term.

But given this commitment, which by reason of its weighty consequences for the entire population we consider non-partisan, this commitment which constitutes the referendum, we shall move heaven and earth to forget for a while what Mercier in the last century was already calling our fratricidal struggles. It is my firm conviction that all those who do so, including, deep down, some of our friends across the aisle, will experience an unprecedented pride when, on the night of the referendum it is recorded that a solid majority of the population has said "Yes": yes, Quebec; yes, you have matured; and yes, you have every opportunity for a free, responsible future. Thank you, Mr. President.

B. Claude Ryan, Leader of the Official Opposition and the Quebec Liberal Party:
Opening Statement, March 4, 1980.

Mr. Chairman, I listened to the Premier's speech with a great deal of interest. I thought his exposition was less aggressive than usual, with fewer dark, pejorative adjectives; some, in fact, were even acceptable, if we judge by the usual standards.

Obviously we can subscribe to a number of the points the Premier raised. I thank him for subscribing to certain declarations made by our side over the past few months. For once I was quoted without having any cause for complaint! I was quoted almost correctly, with no harm done to the context; I'm very happy about that. But I could tell the Premier something about each of the points he raised. For instance, when he talks about Quebec's original contributions to the social, political and economic life of the country and the continent, I would tell him that, first of all, it was possible to accomplish all of them within the political system in which we are currently living, even if I would concede that there have been times, perhaps, when we experienced some difficulty in bringing them about.

I would point out that if the Premier had wanted to draw up a balance sheet that was the least bit complete, the least bit objective, he might have indicated a number of federal government initiatives that were just as original in terms of social or economic progress. Consider, for example, the equalization programmes established in Canada independently of which province is benefitting from them now or will do so in 50 years; we don't know what will happen 50 years from now. The very principle of pooling social and economic changes embodied by the idea of equalization, and its most recent form, oil-price compensation payments, are all original achievements of Canadian federalism, that are not mentioned, needless to say, in the government's White Paper nor in the Premier's speech today. Still, this is playing the game. I think we all have our own interpretations of reality, our own interpretations of history. We, for our part, tend to emphasize the assets in the history of the past century. Our friend opposite emphasize, instead, the liabilities. When the time comes our fellow citizens will, in all freedom, decide.

I am grateful to the Premier for his dignified comments on our party's Beige Paper. Frankly, I listened to what was said earlier; on the whole, it's quite acceptable. I would just like to say one thing. Every time the Premier is tempted to see this document as a timid stand taken by people who, if I understand correctly, are almost ashamed to consider themselves Quebecers, I would suggest that he watch his step. I would suggest that he be careful not to insult gratuitously, 3000 people who came to our convention last weekend from every part of Quebec, who worked conscientiously for weeks organizing that convention, who deliberated quite freely, in a climate of serious, serene and constructive work of a sort not often seen in the lives of political parties. I want to pay tribute to all those people, to the thousands and thousands of people who contributed to setting down our party's constitutional position. I want to assure my fellow citizens that this position takes Quebec reality into account, while considering it entirely possible for Quebec to develop according to its own character but still remain part of the Canadian federal political whole.

Earlier, the Premier touched on the economic concerns that are at the root of the Canadian federation. He was quoting us, so his summary was relatively objective. Just one element was absent from the Premier's speech: for the Canadian economic union to bear fruit for the past 112 years, the framework of a political union had to be added; without such a political authority the economic union would have collapsed a long time ago. One of the great illusions of our friends opposite is to think that we can preserve intact the Canadian economic space without a political authority of corresponding scope, deriving its power directly from the legitimacy that can be conferred only by the popular vote, to frame it, to give it direction and to impose on it, when necessary, certain sacrifices and constraints.

In the coming weeks we will have ample opportunity to deal with the substance of the issue. I had understood, Mr. Chairman, particularly in light of the explanations that preceded your decision, that the debate we are beginning today would deal in particular with the question. We did not hear very much about the question in the Premier's speech, practically nothing, no explanation at all. We are going to examine the question together. It seems to me that this is the sense of the debate we are beginning today.

I would like first of all, Mr. Chairman, to make some observations grouped under three main headings. First, why we are mistrustful of our friends opposite as far as the referendum operation is concerned. Second, I shall analyze the question as objectively as possible. Third, I will tell you how we are going to vote. And finally, I will state under what conditions I would be prepared to make the commitment the Premier requested as far as the outcome of the referendum is concerned.

First, if we are to understand the meaning of the referendum operation we must understand what our friends opposite want, that is to say the persons who form the present government, who typify the leadership of the Parti Québécois, which dominates -- legitimately for the moment -- our present government. It has not been easy, over the years, to follow the thinking of the Parti Québécois and its leader, for the expression of their thought has constantly varied according to the needs and circumstances of the moment. From one minister to another, from one of the Premier's declarations to the next, the emphasis kept shifting, there were more and more explanations; but more often than not they led to more confusion, not less. When the Parti Québécois was in opposition, they were fond of referring to resolutions passed at the party's general meetings and to its official programme as the supreme standards of the will and intentions of the Parti Québécois.

But how many times since then have we noted a deep rift, an obvious divorce between the Parti Québécois programme and the electoral and political behaviour of the Premier and the party's chief spokesmen? The 1973 edition of their programme, which came out after the 1972 convention, said this concerning

a referendum: once a Parti Québécois government had come to power it would undertake to put into immediate operation the procedure for accession to sovereignty, and sovereignty would be proclaimed by a law passed in the National Assembly. They then said that in order to make this independence concrete they would adopt, by referendum, a constitution drawn up with the participation of citizens at the riding level, by delegates brought together in a constituent assembly.

Then in the next election -- there was not a great deal of time between the two -- in the fall of 1973, it got off to a good start. The Parti Québécois appeared in its true light, but then suddenly, a week before the elections, we saw in the newspapers, under the signature of the Parti Québécois, the following advertisement -- you will remember it, it appears in full in Vera Murrav's history of the Parti Québécois: "today I am voting for the only team that can form a real government. In 1975, in a referendum, I will decide on the future of Quebec."

This did not appear in the Parti Québécois programme. It was a completely different programme. It was an electoral stratagem intended to inspire the voters' confidence; and if the Premier is surprised I could show him the excerpt in a moment.

Second example. When the 1976 election campaign begins, the Parti Québécois claims to be using the programme set out by its convention the year before, in 1975 or 1974, I don't remember exactly which. The 1975 version was the last one before the convention and in it they maintained that they intended to set in motion the procedures for acceding to sovereignty as soon as a Parti Québécois government was elected, and they added the following: "Should it be necessary to proceed unilaterally, a Parti Québécois government commits itself to assuming the exercise of all the powers of a sovereign State, having previously made sure of the support of Quebecers through a referendum." It was quite clear that the referendum was to be used in case any obstacles arose to interfere with applying the decision taken at the time of the election.

Look at what happened in the 1976 election campaign. The gentlemen opposite will remember because they were its authors -- let us not speak of the slander, the mud-slinging against the government of the time, the insinuations of all sorts. Look at the advertisements -- it struck me at the time because I was a newspaper editor then myself and we were happy to publish the ads, as well as those by the opposing parties. Here is one and there isn't a word, Mr. Chairman, on the whole question of independence, of political sovereignty, the referendum, nothing at all. They talk about free health care, housing development, the new automobile insurance scheme, stimulating agriculture -- all good things. The other aspect was concealed. At press conferences, the Premier was questioned by television, radio and newspaper reporters. He was required to be a little more specific about what he intended to do in that area.

He said, and he no doubt remembers it as well as I do: "We'll deal with that in a referendum." We aren't talking about it in this campaign. We'll hold a referendum on independence after the election and that -- I see the member for Joliette-Montcalm shaking his head. I have a stack of quotations to refresh his memory. There are quotations by the Premier that are quite clear and the Premier himself remembers, I won't quote them out of context. I guarantee you that. Once again the true intent is being concealed. All under an exterior of the most crystalline honesty.

Third example. They realize the matter isn't clear. Now they're in power. They're in a better position to understand all the implications of what's to be done. They call a regular convention of the party, I assume, in 1977, around eight months after taking power. And what is decided there? There are still some flashes of lucidity. They decide that a Parti Québécois government -- this makes me laugh -- that a Parti Québécois government undertakes to -- already, confidence is pretty well messed up after what we've seen; in any case, it goes on -- ascertain through a referendum, at a time it considers appropriate, during its first mandate, that Quebecers support it on the question of the sovereignty of Quebec. There was no question of anything else at the time, no question of confusing the issue. It was a referendum on the sovereignty of Quebec.

The Premier will also recall that a few months earlier he went to New York to deliver his famous speech to the Economic Club. I had the honor of accompanying him on that visit, as a journalist. In his historic speech he told us: The independence of Quebec has become as natural, as normal, I would say almost as inevitable as American independence 200 years ago.

What is important for me, the important question is not whether Quebec will become independent or even when, but how Quebecers will assume complete mastery over their political life. I think this is one of the most truthful statements the leader of the Parti Québécois has ever made. What interested him in particular was how. We've had ample proof since then, and it's still going on.

Later, as a guarantee of good faith to that gathering of eminent American businessmen: "A referendum is the foundation of our commitment never to push Quebecers into any fundamental constitutional changes to which they have not previously given their clear acceptance. We have promised our fellow citizens to hold a referendum on the question of independence and it will allow all Quebecers of voting age..."

October 10, 1978, an important shift. We are told: The referendum will have two inextricably elements; the two aspects must be carried out without a break and simultaneously, and the whole will be done through negotiation. This is a new shift because previously they kept the steps

clearly separate; they respected the most elementary rules of logic; they recognized that declaring sovereignty was a necessary prior condition for any attempt to negotiate a new form of economic association between two sovereign states. They were aware of the elementary rules of logic, that to create an economic association between two sovereign states (as the latest edition of your programme declares) the two states must be sovereign. That's the most elementary logic, it's quite obvious. These are the logical pieces of evidence that unfortunately escape one's understanding when one is caught up in considerations of power. That's clear to everyone.

I could quote the laborious explanations the Premier was to give his members after his declaration in this House of October 10, 1978. To follow the confusion his comments sowed in many people's minds on that occasion, he sent party members a very interesting letter in which he tried hard to describe things as he saw them. It was quite clear that a YES meant a collective decision in favour of independence and the association project. You will see in a moment that this reminder will be useful for judging the question we are being asked today. The Premier said quite clearly: Independence is not negotiable. We will negotiate the ways and means for transferring power, the ways and means for transferring taxes, very well. But he said proudly -- frankly, I was very grateful to him then -- that independence is too valuable, too noble a concept when one is aiming at that objective -- even I respect him though I don't subscribe to the objective, when it is presented openly and fairly -- it's not negotiable. Economic association, very well, that's something we would want to negotiate, there's no problem.

After that comes the June 1979 convention. This is fairly close to what the Premier said: "Once Quebecers have given it a mandate, the Parti Québécois government (look at the difference in the wording) undertakes, through a referendum, first of all to demand the repatriation of all powers inherent in a sovereign state -- demand -- second, to propose to Canada to bring about an association of sovereign states between two states that will have become, from that moment on, at any rate in logical terms, in terms of fundamental positions, two politically distinct states."

The final example of this unfortunate zigzagging is the idea of a second referendum that was inscribed in the government's proposed question. The Premier was quite categorical on that point. We were on the same programme one evening, Mr. Premier, we were treated the same way by the moderator. I was pleased to note that the Premier's answers to the moderator were almost as though as mine at a certain point. We both told him to at least let us talk. That evening, the Premier said: "Besides, it would be humiliating to ask, in a referendum, if the mandate corresponds with the one obtained by the government, since the referendum question will be completely unambiguous, clearly presenting the government's intentions."

There was more. There was another in La Presse on October 27: "If the Yes side wins the referendum and the government then succeeds in negotiating an economic association with the rest of Canada, the sovereignty of Quebec could be proclaimed without having to consult the citizens again."

Any person has the right to change his mind, but when you change your mind too often, one may question the stability of the last opinion expressed.

Conclusions of this quick survey. The deep underlying design of the Parti Québécois has not changed over the years; I pay tribute to our friends for that. Their profound design has not changed; it is the independence of Quebec, that is to say the breaking of the Canadian federal link, with Quebec's accession to the rank of a sovereign state, that is to say an independent state. There is clear and abundant documentation on the subject. Another thing about their position that has not changed is that the aim of independence is essential, fundamental, primary; it is essential and fundamental whereas economic association is a desirable objective.

The logical consequence of all this: carrying out the Parti Québécois design necessarily entails destroying the Canadian federal link. And destroying the Canadian federal link, make no mistake about it, means breaking up the political entity called Canada that we have known since 1867. Carrying out this project postulates two independent and separate countries; proof of this is provided by the authors of the White Paper published last November 1: If there is an association it will be carried out by treaty, as in international dealings between two independent states.

Second conclusion of this survey: As the Parti Québécois realizes that the people of Quebec do not want its basic project, the more it uses every means to conceal this option, to cloak it in all sorts of disguises to make it more attractive, more digestible, easier to swallow. According to the needs of the moment, they play on the independence chord or the association chord, on the mandate to carry out a project or the mandate to negotiate. There was talk earlier of negotiations. Let me quote this excerpt from the Premier's message to this House on October 10, 1978: "Negotiations with our friends in the rest of Canada." Then the Premier goes to Chicoutimi where, before a Péquiste audience, he talks of the need for a Yes "to bring English Canada to its knees."

Reference was made earlier to a great historical deadline, an exceedingly important rendezvous, a decisive moment, an extremely serious collective decision. Reference was made earlier to a consultation that would be a commitment only to negotiate, with everything eventually submitted to approval or ratification by the people of Quebec. Reference was made earlier to a mandate to rid Quebec of the federal link, to free it of the federal yoke; and reference was made to a simple mandate to get things moving, to a Yes to the will for change that the Parti Québécois would express along with almost everything about us that is Québécois. The basic option of the Parti Québécois is sincere and respectable; I hope we will maintain this tone as we discuss our respective options. I have always spoken of the independence option with respect, even if I don't subscribe to it. I repeat that today, with no hesitation; but the way it has been presented for years too often verges on imposture, duplicity and fraud.

I would like to quote here this opinion expressed by someone who was a close advisor of the Premier -- the Premier acknowledged this -- Mr. Daniel Latouche, the Premier's former constitutional advisor. Here is what he told Le Journal de Montréal on April 1, 1978: "Everything that has to do with the pseudo-referendum is turning into a lottery. After going to the people it will be a matter of knowing which observers or experts have anticipated the right question.

"The Parti Québécois has already lost the referendum if the question is something like: 'Are you in favor of the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada?' The PQ's strategy now consists of not losing; this means the government must try to put together a majority with different options, such as complete independence, sovereignty without association, sovereignty-association and so forth."

On the other hand, he deplored the fact that the high hopes of November 15 had fallen into the maze of a cat-and-mouse game -- I'm sorry the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs isn't present to hear this reminder -- and "that the great collective project has thus been diluted." Here might have been added the testimony of the Member from Chauveau, the Member from Sainte-Marie and many others, but I think that we have had ample demonstration. You will understand, Mr. Chairman, that we felt some hesitation before embarking on the great nonpartisan dream, the great, largely ecumenical dream proposed by the Premier.

The question tabled in the National Assembly last October 20 is completely in keeping with the Péquiste pedagogy, which consists of bringing about independence one short step at a time, of trying to make us swallow it bit by bit without realizing it, without ever telling us openly. We had been promised a clear, simple question. We had been promised a straight-forward question, we had been promised a question that would invite the public to come to a decision on the essential contents of the Pequiste option: and we had also been promised, or at least led to foresee, an honest question that would do justice to everyone.

What are we to think, then, of the question that is supposed to provide the central element in the debate we are inaugurating today? It is, first of all, a question the wording of which arbitrarily and unfairly favors the government and the thesis of the Parti Québécois. To keep the endless preamble I've gone to the trouble of carrying a press clipping of it in my wallet. I can read it easily; it's a question that considers only the Parti Québécois option. It's as though the others didn't exist. There are in this House, as far as I know, parties that in the last general election took in 60% of the vote. But within this national venture, this venture in solidarity, we common civilians don't even exist. There is only the government, with the 70 seats it won three and a half year ago, by accident.

Second, the question carefully avoids picking out the essential elements we wish to submit to the judgement of the voters. In one of his very first political programmes, Mr. Chairman, I believe it was the one in 1971 -- could my neighbor, the Member for Bonaventure, locate it for me while . . . in any case I am going to quote it to you correctly, don't worry -- the Parti Québécois said this, it's very interesting. This is the first time there was mention of a referendum in the history of the Parti Québécois, I have it here.

A VOICE: They have so many programmes.

MR. RYAN: I like a programme that evolves from year to year. I'm not criticizing you for that, I'm criticizing you for not respecting it during an election period. You took shortcuts that now, with the passage of time, seem rather crude. I can't tell you that I intend to take liberties with our own programme before our next convention, but it's normal for a party to revise its programme as it moves on, provided it's done democratically. But what I criticize you for is having done it in the back rooms of those who wanted to win elections, for not first submitting it to the highest authority of your party when such basic matters were involved.

I don't want to take too much time because I have a lot to say, Mr. Chairman. The 1971 programme contained the first reference to a referendum. It was an initiative that was to have a bearing on the things they wanted to submit to public approval once independence had come about. That happened a lot faster in those days than now. Look at what was said, it's very interesting:

"Referenda will offer the people of Quebec clear and distinct options, formulated unambiguously. Questions will be divided up according to specific projects to allow the expression of a real choice," to which I subscribe completely. Even if it goes back nine years I find it very good. What are we being offered along with the question I displayed a moment ago, which seems to have disappeared from my sight for the moment? I don't know where it is.
VOICES: Oh! Oh!

MR. RYAN: First of all, the question of the referendum the big, big question.

MR. LEVESQUE: (Bonaventure): Oh yes, oh yes!

MR. RYAN: In one single question, Mr. Chairman . . . It's unbelievable. A little of the sort of logical analysis we used to perform in high school would be very useful for the Premier and his colleagues. First of all, the principle of the equality of peoples; I wouldn't hesitate to speak to that. I would say yes to that immediately.

A VOICE: Ah!

MR. RYAN: Yes, and I've been practising that for a long time too. I don't know any other way to behave. Second, the political sovereignty of Quebec. That is a point in the programme of that Parti Québécois. No objection. Third, the proposal for economic association, another matter that's quite different. Fourth, negotiating a new deal based on these three elements and fifth, the idea of a second referendum. Five different ideas, five choices.

MR. LAVOIE: The currency.

MR. RYAN: We'll come back to that point in a moment. Don't be in a rush. Mr. Chairman, listen to this. They're asking for a single, overall Yes to five different things. I've already answered two of them. It took some doing but usually you do one thing at a time. You're asking for five different things at once. A federalist might be tempted -- in fact he wouldn't have any problem -- to say Yes to the principle of the equality of the two peoples who founded this country and gave it its special character. He might also be tempted with no difficulty to answer Yes to the principle of negotiating a new deal so that our political institutions take today's realities more fully into account. There is no objection to saying Yes to the principle of having the public ratify new arrangements stemming from agreements that might emerge from negotiations. There's no problem about that at all. But at the heart of the five-headed monster that is the Parti Québécois question there are elements we do not subscribe to, do not wish to subscribe to, cannot subscribe to. That is why your question as it is now formulated is incorrect, dishonest and unacceptable.

Third point: this is a question that states the two main aspects of the Péquiste option, while we know very well that they don't have the same importance either in the mind of the Parti Québécois or of any objective observer. It's obvious that the aim of independence is not at all of the same order as the aim of economic association. The least we can do, if we want to be logical, straightforward, simple and lucid is ask the people: What do you think of the first aim and what do you think of the second? Don't confuse the issue. No one is going to let himself be manipulated that way.

The fourth point is a question that presents an incomplete and biased description of the two aspects of the Péquiste option. In the part that deals with sovereignty, Quebec's exclusive power to make laws, levy taxes and establish foreign relations is emphasized. Nowhere is it stated, or are we led to believe, that a Yes to these three elements logically and necessarily entails breaking the Canadian federal link, renouncing our right of ownership of the Canadian soil and the tremendous resources to be found in every part of it, that it also means giving up equalization programmes, the equal chances we mentioned earlier, giving up all the advantages and refusing the challenges that go with being part of the Canadian project or being part of this country.

On the subject of economic association, which is a monumental fraud, you say that an economic association with Canada will be maintained, using the same currency. The polls have shown gentlemen, that Quebecers are aware of the dangers this could represent for their dollar. You have said: We'll give them an insurance policy on their dollar. Nothing else is mentioned though. If you are to have a monetary association you must agree that it would require an economic association much more carefully worked out than you have been candid enough to admit so far. It will require coordinating fiscal policies and many economic policies too. You have brought out the issue suggested

by polls paid for with the taxpayers' money: We're going to keep their dollar. Besides, you don't even know . . .

MR. LEVESQUE (Bonaventure): That's true.

MR. RYAN: . . . if you're going to keep it. You don't even know what the other side is going to say.

It is deliberately ambiguous and deceitful question. Before the referendum (we've heard that tune before) to the partisans of independence we will emphasize that a Yes to the referendum will be a Yes to this country, to the logical continuation of everything we have been throughout our history. To those who don't want independence, we will emphasize the argument about bargaining power, the need for changes in this country, for a mandate to get things moving, the will for change that resides in the minds of our fellow Quebecers. To our fellow citizens: I say: Read the question carefully; get out your pencils, separate out the five elements I mentioned earlier and you will see that it is what is known in English as a loaded question, a question loaded with implications and not a simple, lucid question. After the referendum, if the public has answered Yes, you will hear as you did on the night of the November 15, 1976 election. They were already starting that night to talk about a country, we were no longer in Quebec but it was already a country, they thought it was already done -- that the people of Quebec have said Yes to a sovereign, independent country. They will take up the refrain you heard before the Economic Club early in 1977 and say to the rest of the country -- I would be very happy if the Premier contradicted me on this point, if he answered today: "The people of Quebec have chosen the path of sovereignty; they want an economic association with you; come and sit at a table so we can discuss how the transfer of power will be carried out so as to bring about independence and so we can talk about whether economic association is possible, and if so, how." If I have read your intentions incorrectly, you'll have to erase a lot of pages you've written over the past ten years.

Those who vote Yes unaware they are getting so deeply involved will be told it's too late; the people have spoken; a historic, irrevocable decision has been taken, etc. Obviously it was only the principle, but afterwards the way and means will be determined, don't worry.

Mr. Chairman, for my own information I've taken an inventory of the questions asked in referenda that have been held elsewhere. The former Minister for Parliamentary Reform went to England not once but several times, because it took him some time to understand everything that had gone on in England. Parts of it aren't yet in your projects, by the way. We have studied the British experience. We were obliged to go there at the taxpayers' expense. Some very good studies summarized all that. In addition, the people who carried out the referendum came here to see us.

I have a whole series and I don't want to dwell on them because I have other things to say. I have around ten referenda that were held elsewhere. Everywhere, the question is always straightforward. Take Western Australia: in 1935 a State wanted to withdraw from the Australian federation. The citizens were asked and listen carefully to this -- Do you agree that the State of Western Australia should withdraw from the Federal Commonwealth established in accordance with the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution? This is clear. Another, even Mackenzie King ... I think the Premier is in the process of overtaking Mackenzie King. With the help of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs we won't have any trouble doing better than Mackenzie King. Mackenzie King said this in his 1942 referendum -- he called it a plebiscite, that was his way of fooling the public: "Do you consent to freeing the government of every obligation resulting from internal agreements that limit the methods of mobilization for military service?"

This was so clear that Quebec realized it had to vote No. Quebec voted No and voting No was not a form of abdication. There are times when voting No is a gesture of affirmation. 75% voted No.

In Denmark -- the Danes are a very special people -- when the question about Denmark joining the European community was asked in October 1972, there was no question on the ballot. There was just a Yes and a No. Let's show some confidence in the people's intelligence. There was a separate little note with the ballot that read: The vote deals with the proposed law concerning Denmark joining the European community. Those in favour of the proposal put an "X" beside the YES. Those against it, obviously, an "X" beside the NO. Even General de Gaulle, whom you on the other side admire so much -- we admire him a suitable amount; there are some points ... idols to trace our road; we have never searched for blessing in any foreign country, and I will never do so. In his own referenda General de Gaulle was subtle. He got caught the second time and he had to go. You remember as well as I do. He, at least, asked outright: Do you approve of the proposed law? It's true that the proposed law was as complicated as the preamble we have here. That doesn't matter, he got a NO vote once.

In Ireland: Do you approve of the draft amendment to the constitution contained in the proposed law of 1971 concerning the third amendment? In Norway in 1971: Should Norway become a member of the European Economic Community? The United Kingdom: Do you think the United Kingdom should remain in the European Community, yes or no? It's clear. In Newfoundland in 1948, there were three options on the ballot: A commission government, Confederation with Canada, responsible government. Then one question was eliminated, a second referendum was held a month later, two questions were left and one was chosen. It was settled, it was clear.

I say to you: Do the same thing. Study the complete dossier. Do as every intelligent and responsible government has done where a referendum was concerned. We'll understand one another very well. I'm telling you quite simply. I would like to be able to say Yes to at least the text of the question. After that, on voting day we can answer Yes or No, but we should at least leave this assembly having agreed on a basic text we all consider to be honest. I heard the Premier say the other day -- some journalists reported it to me, if I've misquoted him he'll correct me -- that

he had conducted a poll inside the Parti Québécois that showed that nearly 61% of the people thought the question was honest. If I were Premier I would be ashamed that 39% consider it dishonest.

I think I owe it to you, Mr. Chairman, to state our reply to the question briefly. I have not taken advantage of this House's time as far as the actual contents of the great referendum debate are concerned; we will obviously say No to the wording of the question for the numerous reasons I have just stated. We deeply deplore the lack of consultation with the opposition parties, the absence of any attempt by the government to establish any agreement between the parties on a text that could have been accepted by the different parties so that we could have gone into the referendum with a broad basic consensus in view of the days that will follow the referendum -- nothing like that.

We will also say No to the content for the following reasons: Unless the question is greatly modified, a Yes to the referendum would be a Yes to each of the five elements in the question and thus a Yes to independence, to the political sovereignty of Quebec, to breaking the Canadian federal link and to a proposed economic association that under the best circumstances would still be highly problematic -- including the pseudo-insurance of a common currency that has been put on the ballot only to reassure people - whereas we have absolutely no idea how all that will work out afterwards.

Our own option is radically different. Quebec is our homeland. We are proud of it. We are part of it as much as you and no one has to give us any lessons in pride or patriotism. We are attached first and foremost to Quebec; I personally, Mr. Chairman, have conducted my entire career in Quebec since 1944, I have been active in every possible sector, no one has to give me any lessons in patriotism, including any of the associations that have become, purely and simply, branches of the Parti Québécois. We want Quebec to be French and free. We want Quebec to be French and free, but in a clear, straightforward way. In a way that can be reconciled with belonging to a broader political whole. We attach supreme importance to the government of Quebec, to the social cultural, political and economic institutions of Quebec. We want them to flourish and develop freely.

I think our party has accomplished more than any other and here I do not want to minimize the contributions of the Parti Québécois. We have, perhaps, accomplished more for the simple reason that we have spent much more time in power; we have perhaps accomplished more than any other party to permit such a flourishing of our institutions, but at the same time Canada is our country. We are attached to the Canadian soil. This attachment is visceral, deep, historic. It isn't out of any sentimental reflex, it's because we find ... We've been attached to the natural resources of this country, as much to Alberta's oil as to the gas in the great North West Territories and to the oil that might be found on the Atlantic coast and the resources in our own soil. We are attached to all of that. We are attached to the political institutions of Canada, not in every aspect of

their operation, some of which need to be revised, but to their underlying foundation, that is to the federal principle. We are attached to the role Canada has played in world affairs over the past 40 years. We want this role to continue and even to be enlarged.

We believe that the federal form of government makes it quite possible for our people to continue to exist with Quebec as a homeland and Canada as a country. This is the option we defend as openly and honestly as possible, with no attempt to dress it up or make it more attractive. Any reasonable change compatible with the just aspirations of Quebec and with maintaining the political and economic integrity of Canada is an objective for us. We have defined a large number of them. We make no claim to perfection. We will still make improvements in the programme we set out last weekend.

Between our option and the government's there is a deep and insurmountable opposition as far as principles are concerned. That is why it is unthinkable, Mr. Chairman, for any serious person aware of all the implications of his behaviour, to consider himself a federalist yet at the same time envisage saying Yes to a question that would eventually involve breaking up and discarding the Canadian federal link. This is impossible. Some people are going to do this. They have the right to be lacking in logic, but I would tell you that from a logical point of view -- I don't intend to impose my canons on anyone -- but I would tell you that from a logical point of view it seems to me unthinkable that a person could be at the same time in favour of maintaining the federal principle and still say Yes to a proposal that asks him to support the breaking of the federal principle. The people will be told: You won't be supporting independence. We need you. We understand, but we need you because we need a Yes to change and to getting things moving. On that point, I suggest a very simple reply to our fellow citizens: Vote in the referendum according to your conscience and your convictions, duly enlightened by a conscientious study of the questions and the implications of the choice the government is inviting you to make. Forget opportunistic calculations, the strategists in the Assembly, in caucus and in government who want to lead you into exercises in false mathematics. Say openly that you're for this or against that. Follow your deepest convictions. If your convictions support the political sovereignty the Parti Québécois wants to carry out, I tell you in all simplicity: Vote Yes on the referendum, you'll be happier that way. You'll be doing a greater service to the cause of democracy. If your preferences and convictions are in favour of the federalist option, you should vote No on the referendum; the government itself gives us no other choice.

We have been asked to take part in a non-partisan referendum venture. I accept the explanation we were given earlier, that it is not because of the Parti Québécois' lack of popularity that its members were asked not to talk about it too much, but rather to speak of the nation in general, the famous unanimous dream typical of the woolly romanticism of the turn of the century and impossible in an open, liberal democracy. Let's take your proposal at face value. If you want to do that how do you explain that the option defined in the proposed question reflects only the programme of a

party in power at the present with 41% of the vote, and does not take into account at all the preferences and convictions of the other parties, which represent in this House 59% of the votes cast on November 15, 1976, and 65% of the votes cast in the seven by-elections held in the past 18 months? How do you explain that the question has been conceived by the party in power alone, with supreme contempt for the opposition parties, with no sort of warning or advance notice, with no attempt, since the question was disclosed, to see if compromises might be possible or if any reconciliation might be envisaged? How do you explain that the government has twice refused the suggestion by the Human Rights Commission that the question be adopted by two-thirds of the Members of the National Assembly, a rule to which other far less important decisions have been submitted? How do you explain the spending of thousands and thousands of dollars from the public purse on preparatory, manipulative polls in which the option of the government and of the Parti Québécois was grossly and unfairly favoured in the balance and formulation of the question?

I could go on but I have said enough to conclude that this entire operation has been conducted by you, the members of the Government, in a deplorably partisan spirit. When I see you today publicly put on your mantle of virtue, the mantle of the nation above all partisan interests, I tell you quite simply that you make me laugh.

The true absence of any partisan spirit in the referendum campaign, Mr. Chairman, will be found on the No side, because it brings together all the other political parties in Quebec, federal and provincial, that are represented either in this Assembly or in the Canadian House of Commons, and the Parti Québécois will be alone. Under such conditions, how can it seriously claim to speak in the name of the entire nation?

Mr. Chairman, the Parti Québécois invites us to conduct the operation of the referendum in a spirit of non-partisanship. We should rise above party differences, they tell us. The Premier has been particularly eloquent in stressing this theme. But what have they been doing for the past three and a half years? In all things related to the referendum they have behaved and acted in a way which was extremely partisan. They have ignored the views and wishes of the Opposition, they have done absolutely nothing to try and work out the kind of consensus which should have allowed us to go into this very important test with a measure of understanding at least on the formulation of the question, which would have rendered the entire experience much more pleasant to all of us and much more constructive in the best interest of Quebec.

Mr. Chairman, if we want the referendum operation to take on its full meaning, we must be prepared to set right the situation on the government side. We're prepared to do our share to cooperate.

In this spirit, I would like to invite the government to envisage the following measures. The government would have to agree to simplify

considerably the present long and weighty preamble so that it suggests briefly soberly, objectively and honestly the proposal for a new political regime described in the White Paper. You've spent enough public money on the publication of the White Paper, you don't have to start all over on the ballot: Quebecers are more intelligent than that!

Second, the government would have to agree to reformulate the question so that it deals distinctly with the two essential aspects of the Péquiste project, so that it deals distinctly with the two essential aspects at a time and allows the voters to express their opinions directly on the contents, not just the form. Consequently, I propose that the question submitted to us on December 21 be amended to read as follows:

"That the motion be amended by replacing the last four paragraphs with the following: The Government of Quebec has made known, in its White Paper, its plan for a new political regime for Quebec; consequently, first, do you think that Quebec should become a sovereign State, Yes or No? "

No ambiguity, no nonsense, just Yes or No.

"Second, if Yes, do you think a sovereign Quebec should attempt, through negotiation, an economic association with the rest of Canada?"

This formulation is clear and straightforward, it respects the aim of negotiation while making a clear distinction and following the exegeses served up to us by the spokesmen of the government and the Parti Québécois as to what is negotiable and what is not. If it were accepted, Quebecers could, after three and a half years of waiting, express their opinion on the substance of the problem. If Quebecers say Yes to such a question, the government will automatically have the mandate to negotiate, it will even have a mandate to act.

I would say one thing to you, Mr. Premier: If you present me with a clear and honest question like that one, I myself will accept the verdict of the people. Is that clear enough? But I warn you in advance that if the question remains tangled up as it is at present, I think we are going to win the referendum. I'll make a prediction: I think the results of the referendum will be rather close to the results of the last by-elections. We will be obliged to start the whole operation over again in the general election that will follow. You can't seriously expect, you the members of the Government, that the Liberal Party, after taking the trouble to work out a programme as it has done, would, after such an ambiguous and equivocal referendum, set aside that programme so as to comply with the exhortations of Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so who sits on the other side of this National Assembly. We're more mature than that, we will present our own programme to the voters in the general election that would follow, and if we win the election it's obvious that we would have been given a mandate to carry out our programme. I suggest that you not commit Quebec to such a confused, tortuous path, strewn with implications that would be costly and painful. Commit Quebec to the path of clarity, to the path of lucidity and transparency you

announced; we will meet you half-way in the formulation of the question and whichever party wins the referendum, we will be good sports on both sides, for the greater interest and the greater good of Quebec.

C. Statements by Independents or Minority Parties:
March 4, 1980.

Michel Le Moignan, Interim Leader of the Union Nationale

The Union Nationale today, as in the past, is attached to two basic values which, far from opposing one another, are totally complementary: first, complete respect for the autonomy of the provincial governments in their spheres of jurisdiction and second, maintaining a decentralized federal framework as a preferential tool to allow Quebecers to attain their full flowering, both individual and collective. The Parti Québécois likes to present itself as the only apostle of Quebec nationalism ...

That's how the White Paper, with no hesitation, equates the traditional desire for autonomy Quebecers have shown at various times with the government's desire to arrive at sovereignty or the political independence of Quebec.

Camil Samson, Leader of the Cr ditistes

Since the flexibility and effectiveness of federalism have been demonstrated in very different circumstances and contexts, our party subscribes to maintaining a federal system in Canada. However, so it can respond to today's economic, political, social and cultural realities better, the party recognizes the need for constitutional revision. Since this is the case, the party suggests drawing up a Canadian constitution adapted to present needs, that would involve sharing the powers of the different governments so that the following elements would be given the importance they deserve.

First, the right and the freedom for every Canadian citizen to communicate in the official language of his choice, French or English, with federal, provincial or municipal authorities.

Second, the right and the freedom for every Canadian citizen to be judged in the official language of his choice, French or English, by the different judicial authorities.

Third, incorporating fundamental human rights into the new constitution.

Fourth, a reform and revaluation of the Senate, anticipating that the federal government would choose a certain number of senators while the others would be designated by the provincial governments, seeking a balance of the two founding peoples.

Fifth, a carefully defined power for opting in and opting out of programmes under shared jurisdiction, including an equitable financial compensation formula that could be used according to the programmes in question and the choices expressed by the province concerned or the federal government.

Rodrigue Biron, Independant

Mr. Chairman, as I declared in this House last Monday, at the price of giving up the leadership of a recognized party rather than resign in the face of the exhilarating challenge which is the accomplishment of a new deal for Quebec and Canada, a new deal that would allow us to blossom fully, and in the same spirit that has given to the party I have had to leave its moments of glory and nobility, I commit myself to the YES, to saying Yes to the future of Quebec

Saying Yes at this moment in our history also means following in the same line and ensuring a genuine consistency to what is most true, most beautiful and great in the administrations of Jean Lesage and Robert Bourassa.

Once again, to those to whom Daniel Johnson dedicated his book Equality or Independence, to those young Quebecers, the young people of Lotbinière in particular, heirs of the past and builders of the future, I offer my Yes, the Yes of my conscience and my soul, a Yes to the Québécois identity, a Yes to what Quebec will become

In order to make the question more clear and lucid, and to silence those who maintain that the question would lead us to the independence or the political separation of Quebec, I would like to

suggest the following amendment. The third paragraph of the referendum question reads as follows: "Any change in political status resulting from these negotiations will be submitted to the population through a referendum". I would like this paragraph -- and this is my amendment -- to be replaced by the following: "No change in political status resulting from these negotiations will be carried out without the agreement of the population during another referendum". No change in political status resulting from these negotiations will be carried out without the agreement of the population during another referendum.

I ask the government to accept my motion of amendment, because if I make this proposal Mr. Chairman, it is first of all in order to make the question even clearer. Second, it is to assure Quebecers that the present referendum will be only a mandate to negotiate a new deal based on the principle of the equality of peoples. Finally, it is to show even more clearly to those who are victims of scare tactics that there will be no change in political status resulting from these negotiations without the agreement of the majority of the population in another referendum which normally would follow the negotiations.

II. Debate on the Wording of the Question

The debate on the wording of the question was, more than any other issue, dominated by the strategy of the federalists. As demonstrated in Claude Ryan's opening remarks, the "non" side centred its criticism of the PQ option on its claim that the question was dishonest and ambiguous. For their part, the Parti Québécois ignored the federalist arguments and argued that the federalists would say "no" to any question the government posed.

Federalists:

A.

You have here what has often been described during the debate as a five-pronged question: the equality of peoples is the flag flying over the building; come down a floor and you have sovereignty, independence; next, one floor lower, you have economic association and, in the basement, the second referendum.

But on the ground floor there is the new deal, the mandate to negotiate, Canada. The prettiest part of the display is right there on the ground floor, at eye-level for every citizen walking by. But in the structure that is the question, Mr. Chairman, there is, and you know it, a poison that Quebecers have refused. There you have independence. It is found in very small print in the second paragraph of the preamble. That's where you find it, Mr. Chairman, and that's what will allow the present government, if Quebecers were ever to vote Yes, to say: You've voted, you knew what you were doing, it was all written down -- for the first time you've given your support to the principle of the independence of Quebec, to sovereignty-association, call it what you will. That's what you mean by this question.

You could have been far more transparent. You could have had a question -- and there's still time to do it -- that corresponds to your option, that corresponds to your commitments, that corresponds to article 1 in your programme. Take the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition, which is a clear amendment. It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that it would be ... Why is the other side opposed to such an amendment? The question would read: "The government of Quebec has made known, in its White Paper, its proposal for a new political system for Quebec. Consequently,

1. Do you think that Quebec should become a sovereign State?
YES. NO.
2. If affirmative, do you think that a sovereign Quebec should seek, through negotiation, an economic association with the

rest of Canada?

YES. NO.

That's too simple. It's too close to what you've proposed. Why have you come here with a question filled with ambiguities and confusion? You will get a reply that's equal to the question. The quality of the reply will be equal to the quality of the question.

G erald D. Levesque
(Liberal - Bonaventure)

B.

You will remember, Mr. Chairman, that in 1976 the Parti Qu eb cois told us: Vote for us and if you don't agree with independence you can vote No in the referendum. Now, in a few months from the referendum, they're telling us: Now that we're here, vote Yes in the referendum to get things moving, to give us bargaining power. If you don't agree with us as a government, you can vote against us in the next election. And that's the story of the Parti Qu eb cois: never clear and always wanting to put things off till tomorrow.

Robert Lamontagne
(Liberal - Roberval)

C.

The government has quite obviously chosen a strategic question over a question with substance. That is its right and I recognize it; but I have the right, as Member for Pr evost and as a Quebecer, perhaps even longer than some of you, to say that I am going to examine the tone of the question carefully. It was chosen without consulting the Members of this House or considering the simple courtesy that should exist between us. Why not associate all of us with something that springs from one of the highest forms of human dignity, namely the right to choose, in full knowledge of the facts, our collective political destiny?

Solange Chaput-Rolland
(Liberal - Pr evost)

D.

Through this strategic conditioning the population has gradually been led to finally accept something it would never have accepted if they'd been asked openly and directly ... In fact, if the question can be interpreted in two or three or even five different ways, as the Leader of the Official Opposition has said, it follows that the results could also be interpreted in two or three or five ways.

Rodrigue Tremblay
(Independent - Guoin)

Parti Québécois:

A.

For those who out of all sorts of interests and all sorts of habits are attached to the status quo and to the old system, for those who have been so aptly called "dependentists," no question we might ask is acceptable so long as it has the effect of putting the old constitutional system into question: no question could be valid -- by definition, one might say: no question would ever seem legitimate or opportune. No matter what form we give the question, it would invariably, inevitably be described as false, hypocritical and I don't know what else.

Jacques-Yvan Morin
(Minister of Education)

B.

The question is honest, Mr. Chairman, because it offers Quebecers the option that has been studied and ultimately expressed in its final form for the democratic councils of the party that forms this government. If the leader of the Negatives, who finds it so easy to accuse others of dishonesty, would only take the trouble to reread the book An Option for Quebec, published in 1967, he would note -- because he is so honest -- that the option presented to Quebecers by the question we are now studying, is true to the basic contents presented at that time and has not since then undergone any essential modification

Besides being honest as far as its contents and process are concerned, this question is Québécois. The question is Québécois in the sense that it corresponds to the will of Quebecers. Quebecers are, as is well known, a peaceful people, but they don't like being pushed around, especially not in their political behaviour. They

don't let themselves be directed into extremist positions such as resignation, submission or -- sooner or later -- to disappearance as offered by the Beige Paper, which Lord Durham would undoubtedly have been proud to sign

This question is Québécois too in that it marks the natural outcome of our history. It responds to the desires buried away in the depths of the Québécois soul since 1760, repressed since that time but constantly evolving, moving towards a concrete expression which can only be accession to national sovereignty as has been given to more than a hundred other nations since the end of the Second World War.

Hubert Desbiens
(P.Q. - Dubuc)

C.

It is false to maintain that the question asks Quebecers to choose between separatism and federalism. What it asks them to do is to come to a decision on a true confederal system in which only the member States have the status of State, the confederal authority being an instrument for coordination that is at their service.

In a word, to exorcise the terms once and for all, the question allows Quebecers to opt, at last, for a true association between equals.

Guy Tardif
(Minister of Municipal Affairs)

III. The Merits - and Demerits - of Federalism

The Parti Québécois government used the televised debate in the National Assembly to deliver a sustained and systematic attack on the federal system. Much of the debate on the "Question", thus became a "pro" and "con" rebuttal on the merits of federalism. Each PQ cabinet minister, in turn, criticized the effects of the system on their policies and, while outnumbered, were answered in part by the opposition members. The excerpts printed in this section cover eight of the more prominent issues in the debate on the effects of the federal system:

- 1) the general strength of the Quebec economy
- 2) Confederation and the francophone minority: protection or a straight-jacket?
- 3) the "balance sheet" arguments of what Quebec gets out of the system,
- 4) intrusions by Ottawa into provincial affairs,
- 5) industrialization,
- 6) transportation,
- 7) agriculture, and
- 8) energy and resources

1. The strength of the Quebec economy

Parti Québécois:

A.

At the beginning of this debate it is time for us, along with the Opposition and even with those from all points of view who support the No, to clarify a fundamental question on which we must, honestly, call for the agreement of all Quebecers, because it is an objective truth: this objective truth is that the economy of Quebec is at this time one of the strongest in the western world, despite the federal handicap. Its possibilities are practically unlimited.

The model of how economies will perform in the future has been drawn up without naming Quebec, but anyone could have recognized it in the words of a 1976 Nobel Prize winner who said that the countries with the brightest economic picture are those with young, educated populations, with natural resources, that specialize in international trade. And that's Quebec!

Bernard Landry
(Minister of State for Economic
Development)

B.

Quebecers had decided to be masters in their own house and despite the flood of prophets of doom -- and the Premier could certainly speak more eloquently about them -- today we can see, with the unbelievable success of Hydro-Québec, just what we Quebecers can do. It's true for Hydro-Québec and it's also true when you look at the remarkable success of the cooperative movement.

We are an ingenious people, competent, we can do a lot with a little -- at least as much as anyone else; we are a people that translates its ideas into small industrial projects to create permanent jobs. In the past two years nearly 400 small businesses have been born thanks to the Quebec local employment programme alone. In every part of Quebec, people on social assistance, the unemployed and other groups of citizens have gone back to work and are now contributing to building their own local, regional corner of the country.

Yes, we can do it.

Pierre Marois
(Minister of State for Social Development)

C.

Successive Quebec governments have nationalized the power companies, created the Quebec Deposit and Investment Corporation, SIDBEC, REXFOR for forest development, SOQUIA for food and agriculture development, the Society for Industrial Development, the National Asbestos Corporation -- to name the most important. This first stage has given us several instruments for economic development that we will keep improving and which have already been very successful.

For several years, though, a far more important change has been taking place. Quebecers are no longer afraid to launch themselves in business or make investments in order to transform their resources right here. Individuals and small groups, each in their own milieu, are daring to be innovative and start firms. I could give several examples: Les Caisses d'entraide économique (industrial credit unions), Provigo, the Cabano cardboard factory, Bombardier. More than ever, we have the ability. In short, it's easy to note that two things are going on at once: the growth of our will to control our economic development and the growth of our will to become a country whose overall development we can assume. We note, however, that there are still some serious hindrances to our economic development.

Alan Marcoux
(P.Q. - Rimouski)

Federalists:

A.

I listened with interest to the speaker before me when he referred to the wealth Quebecers have accumulated. I'm glad he gave us these examples, because this wealth was accumulated within the framework of Canadian federalism. It was accumulated because there is an existing economic association that has benefitted Quebecers, an association that the Parti Québécois wants to continue or that it still advocates, i.e. the free circulation of goods and persons; but this economic association existed in the past only because it existed within the framework of a political association.

John Ciaccia
(Liberal - Mont-Royal)

B.

We also hear about standard of living ... We must recall that if we have this standard of living at this time, it has been within the present federal system. It hasn't been as harmful as we are led to believe. We hear about productivity ... Whether we are independent or within the present system, absolutely nothing can prove that the people of Quebec will be even more productive than they are. If our present rate of productivity is at the level stated by the Minister of State for Economic Development, I don't see how we could improve it by being sovereign or independent. ... We've even heard about the education of Quebecers . . . I don't see how the independence of Quebec would change such things . . .

We hear about Hydro-Québec, the caisses populaires, the Caisses d'entraide économique, SIDBEC, SGF, Provigo, IPL, of all the companies we know at present, either Crown corporations or private ones that have done something out of the ordinary, that have been launched by Quebecers, by French Canadians, but we seem to forget that if these companies have reached the level of productivity they now enjoy, I don't see how the federal system has harmed them all that much. These companies already exist, whether as Crown corporations or as private companies. I don't see why this process can't go on and I don't see how the independence of Quebec would change the productivity or make any improvements in these companies....

These things we're hearing about aren't something from the future; we're hearing about the past, about concrete achievements that exist now and I don't see what the independence of Quebec is going to do about them. We already have our standard of living and all those fine things in the present system.

Bertrand Goulet
(Union Nationale - Bellechasse)

2. Confederation and the francophone minority:
protection or straitjacket?

Parti Québécois

A.

It's true, Mr. Chairman, that Quebecers have perhaps believed quite legitimately and sincerely, and perhaps they've wanted to become full-fledged Canadians. After all, we were among the first people to discover this continent

But that's where those who were opposed to Confederation began to be right. The other possibility, becoming a minority, the absence of economic levers which we had just ceded to a government we didn't control, would henceforth act against us. We realized very early that if Confederation had given us a territory, a province and a regional government, the dynamics of Confederation -- first as one among four, then five, six and finally one among ten, were going to confine us to that territory. The francophones of Quebec discovered very soon -- as those opposed to Confederation had predicted to them -- and understood what it is to find yourself in Toronto with a Québécois name.

And that, Mr. Chairman, is how Confederation wedged us in between the Maritimes and Ontario. And of Ontario, of the West -- so full of promise -- we know that if we were to have access to them our people would either have to give up their language and culture or wage a savage fight to maintain them; our people, who were told they were full-fledged Canadians, to whom this mirage had been emphasized so they'd join Confederation, understood very quickly that once they'd crossed the Ouatuais River or the Baie des Chaleurs, they were placing themselves in danger The lower incomes we have noted, the unemployment rate that is always higher than in the neighboring province, the problems of controlling urban life in Quebec, all these were not phenomena from the beginning, the middle or the end of Confederation, they were a permanent state of affairs. The gross domestic product for 1978, our collective wealth in the sense of the total value per inhabitant, the basis for evaluating not only the potential but also a people's capability for achievement was, for Ontario -- after 113 years of Confederation -- 19% higher than for Quebec: \$10,650 for Ontario, \$8,948 for Quebec. The Canadian average is higher than the average for Quebec. Why must Quebecers always have the smallest share of economic development or the smallest share they can hope for?

Claude Charron
(House Leader, Parti Québécois)

B.

The worst thing is that we have moved from the numerical majority we had until the middle of the last century -- a majority whose will was broken by force when it was judged necessary -- we have gone slowly but surely -- despite our high birth rate, which is now only a memory -- to the state of a decreasing minority within Canada. I fear that if we don't accept the question as presented by the government, we will remain forever in the state of a decreasing minority.

Jacques-Yvan Morin
(Minister of Education)

Federalists:

A.

The central question today is the same as it has been since 1760: Is it in the interests of the French people, the French society of America, to go it alone or is it better to build our future as we've built our past, within a federal Canadian system? Does this system pose a threat of assimilation? Are we constantly victims of discrimination as others would have us believe? Let us ask the question openly: Does our minority status in Canada reduce us to impotence or insignificance?

Let us first examine this question of our minority status and recognize at the outset that in a federal system we have, first of all, a government in Quebec within which we have a strong majority. The argument about colonized minorities that's tossed off like a slap in the face in every speech is, to begin with, a half-truth. The government in Quebec has a certain importance, we must admit that. It is 100% sovereign in all internal policies, in those areas, in other words, that don't go beyond our boundaries or do so only very slightly. This is the case for the exploitation of natural resources, planning of the territory, labor relations, the family, education, justice, health, income support policies and more. To discharge these responsibilities, the provinces have access to all sources of taxes except for customs tax. They have the full and complete freedom to borrow anywhere in the world, without restriction. In addition, the federal government carries out transfer payments in favor of the government of Quebec, payments that account for nearly 30% of Quebec's fiscal revenues. Since 1977, at least 90% of these intergovernmental transfers have been unconditional. In these cases, the taxes are collected by Ottawa and spent by Quebec, at its discretion.

The federal government, for its part, is responsible, essentially, for those areas outside the territory of a province and, in a manner of speaking looks after the external relations of the provinces, which are that much more important as economic and political interdependence grow every day, in Canada and the world. As the immediate interests of the provinces are often in conflict, the federal government is constantly called upon to act as arbitrator, necessarily displeasing one side or the other.

André Raynauld
(Liberal-Outremont)

B.

Finally, in concluding, Mr. Chairman, allow me once again to tell you how much affection I feel for Canada, which has allowed the cultural and economic flowering of present-day Quebec. Canada is a free country, a great country, a country of enormous resources, a country where it is so good to live, that has allowed and still allows all its children, French Canadians as well as English Canadians, to grow up in peace. Such a country must not disappear. Such a country still has more to give. Such a country deserves to be allowed to continue its life with the dynamism and understanding of the ethnic and religious communities of which it is composed. Such a country deserves to continue its life with Quebec as an integral component of its strength.

Georges Vaillancourt
(Liberal-Orford)

C.

Where will your one-to-one equality be? It's a myth, a false invention that does not correspond at all to the reality of Canada. If you want to define Canada realistically and truthfully, you must say that there are two great linguistic communities in this country, which have been joined by other cultural communities and which are grouped in four or five large regions, each with its own personality, none of which wants to dissolve into any totality, either one invented by the federal government in Ottawa or the Parti Québécois in Quebec.

This is the basis of the proposal we on our side have conceived. We try to respect reality. As for you, you're trying to make Quebecers

believe that everything comes down to a nation, a nation. The Canadian problem is much more complex than that, and with the base you're suggesting, you're heading straight for failure and confusion.

Everytime you relate whatever is synonymous with federal institutions to foreign realities, you falsify reality, you sow prejudice in people's minds and you reduce the horizons of our own people to frontiers that don't correspond with true reality

In both cases we have been elected by the same sovereign, free voters, in democratic elections. When a decision is made by the federal Parliament, it is taken for us as much as the others. When you try to make us believe and try to make the Quebec public believe that in Ottawa it always comes down to one nation, the other nation, that is absolutely false.

Claude Ryan
(Leader of the Opposition)

D.

Must we recall, Madame Chairman, that for 100 years, 113 to be more correct, Quebecers have never been as influential and important as they are today in the political life of the country and at the federal level? At the present time, out of 146 Liberal MPs in power in Ottawa, 73 are Quebecers. 73 to 73, Madame Chairman -- how more equal can you be? And they tell me it will soon be 74.

Georges Lalonde
(Liberal-Maisonneuve)

E.

As I have said in French, Madam President - I think it is particularly important for me to repeat this in English - in spite of the fact that this Government tries in every way to suggest that Quebec is a French province, it most certainly is not. There is a full fifth of this province's population that is non francophone, and I might say this fifth is strongly federalist. But if all efforts fail to reach the accommodation we need between our communities and a majority of French speaking Quebecers insist on establishing an independent state, Quebec will be partitioned. Those of us who choose to remain

part of Canada will insist that during the negotiations that would lead to the establishment of this new country, those of us who want to remain in Canada, our territory, will be recognized.

William Shaw
(Independent, Pointe-Claire)

3. The "balance sheet" arguments of what Quebec gets out of the system.

Parti Québécois

A.

From 1961 when the first calculations were made, until 1973 inclusive, the picture, as I have often had the opportunity to emphasize in the House, is very clear: Quebec pays more to Ottawa than it receives. Beginning in 1974, two phenomena occur that change the picture. First, Ottawa decides temporarily to keep the price of oil in Canada below the world price; for the first time we can say that Quebecers draw a clear profit from belonging to the federal system, but it's a very brief profit.

Jacques Parizeau
(Minister of Finance)

B.

What happened when we looked after our own economic affairs? What happened was that with Hydro-Québec, one of the most powerful companies in the world, 16,000 permanent jobs and 12,000 construction jobs were created. Atomic Energy of Canada and Petrocan together -- where our taxes go for energy purposes -- created 4,600 jobs in Ontario, 230 in Quebec. The Quebec Investment Corporation, which belongs to us, which we are responsible for along with SIDBEC, created 13,500 jobs in Quebec. The Canada Development Corporation -- it's federal, paid for with our taxes -- 14,000 jobs in all, 1,000 in Quebec, one-fourteenth. That's negotiation.

Bernard Landry
(Minister of State for Economic
Development)

- C. In fact, Madame Chairman, the true picture is as follows: of the federal expenditures that are job-creating in the whole of Canada, only 17% of these expenditures that would allow us to decrease our level of unemployment are distributed in Quebec, while we represent 27% of the population.

Denis De Belleval
(Minister of Transport)

- D. But it's not just in the area of the federal government's job-creating expenditures that our region is left out in the cold. It's the same and even worse for job-creating policies. DREE is, in fact, a mirage. In the nine years from 1969 to 1978, the Department of Regional Economic Expansion in Ottawa spent \$190 per person in Prince Edward Island, \$97 per person in New Brunswick, \$91 per person in Newfoundland, \$49 per person in Nova Scotia and in Quebec, \$17 per person. One-twelfth what was spent in Prince Edward Island.

Alain Marcoux
(P.Q. - Rimouski)

- E. In scientific research, for a specific year -- the figures come from the Ministry of State for Science and Technology in Ottawa -- Ontario, \$378 million, Quebec, \$36.3 million -- when it's a small figure you have to put in the decimal point -- i.e. 64% for Ontario, 6% for Quebec, or ten times more in Ontario than Quebec. Federalism is profitable.

We've also seen what's happened in the automobile industry. Everybody knows that 90% of the industry is concentrated in Ontario. In the iron and steel industry, 80% is concentrated in Ontario. There are only half as many railways in Quebec.

Gilles Michaud
(P.Q. - Laprairie)

Federalists:

A.

I am going to tell you, and I know I won't be contradicted, that this year we will receive \$3,300,000,000 more from the federal government than we pay out in taxes. In fact, the federal government must be happy to let us take back our taxes and benefits because for each Quebec family it means a loss of \$2500; at the present time we receive \$2500 more per family from the federal government than we pay out in taxes.

Reed Scowen
(Liberal - Notre-Dame-de-Grace)

B.

The Minister of State for Economic Development has cited the case of a federal corporation with 1000 employees in Quebec and 14,000 overall. I would reply that in M. Bonin's study, a study ordered by the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, the number of Quebec employees within federal corporations was fixed at 29%. The small number of employees of the Canadian Development Corporation is, in fact, more than made up for by the presence in Quebec of other corporations like Canadian National or Air Canada. I would say, Mr. Chairman, that this is a childish and often a deceitful game.

What counts, Mr. Chairman, is the total. Does Quebec pay more in taxes to the federal government than the latter spends in Quebec, yes or no? Overall, does our money go somewhere else or does it come back to us? This response was given and even accepted as correct by the Minister of Finance. From 1972 until 1978, Quebec received \$11 billion more from the federal government than it paid. In 1978 alone, it received \$3,600,000,000 more than it paid out in taxes and in 1977, the gain was \$2,700,000,000.

If, then, Quebec had declared its independence in 1978, reclaimed all its taxes and all federal bonds, it would have found itself with a bill for an additional \$3 billion.

André Raynauld
(Liberal-Outrement)

C.

I also know -- and there's never the slightest allusion to it in the language or the speeches of the members of the Parti Québécois -- that there have been successes in the area of Quebec-Ottawa relations and in the area of federal relations. How can our friends opposite hold forth on the excessive centralization of the federal system when more than 60% of Canadian government expenditures go the provinces? How can the Péquistes hold forth on the negligible attempts at redistributing resources among the various regions of Canada when in 1976 alone, Quebec received more than \$1 billion in equalization payments, \$841 million for regional development, to which must be added \$708 million for agreements already underway in 1978? (...)

You should admit that the federal government has a role, a presence that is far from being a negative one for the men and women who live here in Quebec.

In the same vein, Mr. Chairman, how can our friends opposite completely deny the decisive role of the federal government as far as the French language and culture in Canada are concerned? Very few artists and researchers in Quebec are unaware of the important role played by such bodies as Radio Canada, the National Film Board and the Canada Council. These are concrete factual realities.

J. - C. Rivest
(Liberal - Jean-Talon)

4. Intrusions by Ottawa into Provincial Affairs.

Parti Québécois

A.

We really can't afford to go on wasting time and money because of two overlapping levels of government. Do the No-sayers in this House know that according to a study published in 1978 by the Ecole nationale d'administration publique, 72% of government programmes are duplicated? Does the opposition know that we must pay for two Departments of Finance, two Departments of Revenue, two Departments of Agriculture, two Departments of Labour, two Departments of Health, two Departments of Immigration, two Departments of Industry and Commerce, two Departments of Communications? This duplication of services leads me to believe that we are now living in a separatist system.

Jacques Beauséjour
(P.Q. - Iberville)

B.

Don't you think it's ridiculous that a country like Canada has two Departments of Immigration? That candidates for immigration to Quebec must meet two immigration officers, from two different governments, in two offices, go through two interviews, fill out two questionnaires -- which makes our system unique in the world? There isn't a country in the world that does this. What is the social and economic rationale for it?

Jacques Couture
(Minister of Immigration)

C.

Mr. Chairman, we're up against a fundamental problem. On the one hand the central government doesn't have the constitutional authority to intervene in the area of housing, but it's been doing so since 1935 anyway, because the taxes levied in Quebec give it that spending power. On the other hand, the government of Quebec is legally authorized to intervene in this area, but the necessary funds are paid to Ottawa in the form of taxes.

Jean-Marc Lacoste
(P.Q. - Sainte-Anne)

Federalists

A.

It's true that there is, today, a duplication of certain federal-provincial departments: unemployment insurance, Manpower centers, pensions, the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, family allowances, etc. We must remember that the federal government has taken over these areas because of a lack of initiative by the provinces, and for the greater good of everyone: we know that very well. Today there's nothing to prevent negotiating a new sharing of some of these powers, as described in the Beige Paper.

John O'Gallagher
(Liberal-Robert Baldwin)

5. Industrialization

Parti Québécois

A.

On the other hand, Madame Chairman, federal policies do not always correspond to the type of industries appropriate for Quebec: textiles, shoes, pulp and paper, furniture, building materials. In these areas, Quebec has too often been the disadvantaged region. In fact a study by the OPDQ a few years ago shows that the federal stabilization policy has had disastrous effects on the Quebec economy. The circumstances of Canada and Quebec don't always correspond and they're sometimes even diametrically opposed. Besides -- and this is far more serious -- this study proves that the federal government systematically reduced its job-creating expenditures in Quebec as unemployment rose, which is completely contrary to an administrative logic.

Charles Lefebvre
(P.Q. - Viau)

B.

A few examples, Madame Chairman. In shipbuilding, federal contracts come flooding into the other provinces, but there's almost nothing in Quebec. I listened to the Member for Lévis this morning. He was absolutely right. In spite of all the promises made from one generation to the next and from one election to the next, federal investments are for Halifax, for St. John's, Newfoundland, for Vancouver: dry docks, ships, boats, ferries. In 1979, out of \$150 million in federal investments just \$11 million went to Quebec.

In the automobile manufacturing sector, with the Canada-U.S. auto pact, 210,000 jobs were concentrated in Ontario, 90% of Canadian car and truck production capacity, 95% of parts production capacity. Quebec consumes 28% but has barely 5% of the production capacity. We've lost at least 50,000 jobs and several hundred million in investments.

In addition, subsidies -- \$40 million last year, just a few months ago -- made it possible for Ford to invest in Windsor, a poor, underdeveloped city, \$40 million in federal government subsidies.

What worries me more is that in the last federal election campaign, Mr. Trudeau stated right in Windsor, in Windsor, Ontario, that he was prepared to subsidize Chrysler of Canada for an investment, presumably, in Ontario, which is following tradition.

Yves Duhaime
(Minister of Industry, Commerce
and Tourism)

C.

If Ontario profited from the Canada-U.S. auto pact, it's because, as they said at the time, they had the steelworks to supply the steel used in making cars and trucks. Now that the material used for making automobile motors is aluminum, how can we explain that Ford is set up in Windsor, Ontario, instead of Shawinigan, Beauharnois or Arvida? Isn't Quebec one of the world's biggest producers of aluminum? This situation is quite simply the fact that the federal system, in which elections are decided in Ontario, not Quebec, where the Liberals consider this territory as their private preserve.

Jean-Pierre Jolivet
(P.Q. - LaViolette)

Federalists

A.

The reason we are favored in some industries and at a disadvantage in others is, quite simply, due to specialization, which is normal and even desirable in a common market. It's the very essence of a common market. It's the advantage of Canada, of the common market in which we live.

They argue that Quebec has reached a remarkable level of economic maturity and prosperity and yet they fail to explain that it has all taken place within a federal system. They say that we have less than our share of Canada's auto industry and nuclear industry, and they fail to note that we have more than our share of the aviation industry and the chemical industry. They claim that we have to import

beef, yet they fail to mention that we export pork and milk. They say that we should reclaim all our taxes from Ottawa, yet they do not mention that Ottawa is going to spend \$3,300,000,000 more here than they take in taxes. They say that the unemployment rate is higher in Quebec than in Ontario, yet they fail to show how sovereignty-association could solve this problem.

However, he did not say that in many Quebec industries we have a share of the market far greater than our share of the population. We have 25% or 27% of the population of Canada here in Quebec. We have 52% of the airplane industry, a technologically very advanced industry. (...) We have 35% of the Canadian pulp and paper industry, 34% of the chemical industry, 50% of the textile industry, 60% of the tobacco industry, 38% of the dairy industry and 33% of the pork industry. In all these areas and many other, the other Canadian provinces are at a disadvantage in relation to Quebec.

Reed Scowen
(Liberal-Notre-Dame-de-Grace)

6. Transportation

Parti Québécois

A.

Turning to railways, 12% of the railway network is located in Quebec. I hear the Opposition saying: Yes, but that's for geographical reasons. In that case, why is it that 9% of the railway network in Canada is in the Atlantic provinces? Why is it that 23% of the railway network in Canada is in the province of Ontario? Is it for geographical reasons, when you compare the size of these provinces with the size of the inhabited territory of Quebec? Why is it that we have so small a share of the railways when millions of dollars in Quebec taxes have been used to finance these investments in other provinces?

We must pay an average of \$20 more per ton per mile to transport our paper from Quebec between Quebec and the United States, compared to the same ton of paper transported across the same distance between Ontario and the United States. All these disadvantages, of course, are very expensive for us not only in terms of profits for our businesses, but also in terms of the development of this sector of the economy in general.

These few figures, I believe, give a good illustration -- and I could go on for the airplane industry. The fact is still the same: i.e., the federal government's systematic under-investment in the transportation infrastructure of Quebec compared with the other provinces in Canada. In fact, our taxes in general, in the area of transportation, have been used to enrich the infrastructure in the rest of Canada.

Denis De Belleval
(Minister of Transport)

B.

Let's talk now about the Port of Montreal, a body under exclusively federal jurisdiction. Over the past 20 years the Port of Montreal was the only Canadian port that showed a surplus of \$47 million, an amount the Port management kept wanting to reinvest there to improve the installations, but Ottawa didn't want it that way. Ottawa preferred to favor other ports elsewhere. In 20 years, then, the Port of Montreal still has exactly the same volume of activities, but it has dropped from the 40% of Canadian maritime traffic it had in 1958 to 6.4% in 1978, or one-seventh as much. This means one-seventh as many jobs, one-seventh the income for Quebecers.

Charles Lefebvre
(P.Q. - Viau)

Federalists

A.

Do we really need 27% of the Canadian railways? In addition I want to point out that we have exactly 12% of all the roads in Canada as well. I'm sure we don't have a pressing need for more railways or more roads. We're very well served with railways here in Quebec, with a few exceptions perhaps, and the same for roads. The number of railways lines in a province doesn't have anything at all to do with the population. It's related to geographic needs.

Reed Scowen
(Liberal-Notre-Dame-de-Grace)

- B. The same Minister of Transports forgets to mention, however, that in the area of transportation, Quebec has 100%, not 27% but 100%, of the head offices and shops of the largest national transportation and communications companies, such as CN, CP, Air Canada, Bell Canada and 52% of the harbor installations in Canada.

John O'Gallagher
(Liberal-Robert Baldwin)

7. Agriculture

Parti Québécois

A.

Mr. Chairman, all the farmers I've met have told me that if they'd formulated the question they would have formulated it the same way. They've told me it represents exactly what they want. They want sovereignty in the area of agriculture because sovereignty goes with a form of self-sufficiency, and there can be advantages to economic association because you can negotiate agriculture in a specific sector of negotiations as the White Paper mentions. Just as in every country in the world, agriculture has been treated in a special way in the European Common Market. Why? Because every farmer in the world, in Quebec and elsewhere, and fisherman too, want to feed the population of their country, of their homeland. (...)

Unfortunately, we have to live in the present federal system where politics have always been better adapted to other people's needs. If you look at the federal government's own figures you realize that Quebec is on the average only 60% self-sufficient in food. But from 1965 to 1976, Quebec's self-sufficiency dropped from 65% to 51%, a considerable drop. Since 1976, since the new government has been adopting policies that take Quebecers' needs into account, the rate of self-sufficiency in food went up to 58% in 1978. These figures come from the federal government.

Mr. Chairman, the federal government has \$105 million for agricultural research. And how is that divided? \$42 million in the West, \$42 million in Ontario, \$21 million for the Quebec and the Maritimes together.

I'd like to give the example that seems to me the worst: that of food aid to underdeveloped countries. From 1963 to 1979 the federal government gave, with our taxes and the taxes of the people in the other provinces, \$1,750,000,000 in food aid to underdeveloped countries; not all sorts of aid, just food. It's normal to do that; just as you help your neighbours, countries have to help out the ones that are underprivileged. And for that Quebec had to pay almost \$425 million in taxes, almost a quarter, in those years between 1963 and 1979. And out of the \$1,750,000,000 tax dollars that were spent on food aid to foreign countries, do you know how many products were bought in Quebec? A little more than \$75 million. That means that if we'd had the same sums we could have spent the same amount and had \$350 million left.

The federal government said: I'm going to take the money from Quebecers' pockets, I'm going to use it for food aid to foreign countries and at the same time, I'm going to help the West. And we're the ones who paid. That's the way things would change if all our taxes were paid to Quebec.

Even the number of civil servants in Ottawa, in agriculture, there are 11,590; in Quebec there are 1568. If we'd paid with our proportion of taxes we'd have had between 2800 and 2900, which means we could have had 1300 more for nothing: We could have had 1300 more civil servants working in agriculture in Quebec and it wouldn't have cost us a cent. We pay taxes to Ottawa, but they hire people from the West and Ontario.

What will economic association let us do? ... We'll be in a position to negotiate all our products together instead of one at a time.

I tell you that when we come to the negotiating table we're going to give the fellow from Alberta a bit of a nudge and tell him: think about us, think about your western beef when you vote, because 70% of the beef that leaves Alberta comes into the province of Quebec: That'll give you something to think about before you vote, the way the markets are shared. Western grain. In Confederation as it is now we have to buy all our grain from the West, we have no choice.

We've got tremendous negotiating power in the area of food and agriculture and I'm sure, like most people who have studied the question, that if there's one area where people are going to benefit from sovereignty-association it's food and agriculture, it's agriculture.

Jean Garon
(Minister of Agriculture)

B.

Why do we, in Quebec, produce 133% of our milk consumption? Very simple. Ottawa would rather see us produce milk than beef or grain. The Western market has to be protected, you see: The federalists will tell you: Yes, but we give subsidies of \$2.66 per 100 pounds of milk. That's true, but what they don't say is that for Ottawa to pay \$2.66 per 100 pounds of milk, for three months before they pay they hold back \$1.24 per 100 pounds of milk from the producers for export and warehouse costs.

Figure it out. There's \$1.42 left. Of that \$1.42, take away the 25% we're going to pay in taxes and you'll see it ends up pretty close to just one buck. You see how well it pays?

Jacques Baril
(P.Q. - Arthabaska)

Federalists

A.

May I be allowed, Madame Chairman, to state that, in general, federal agricultural policies are not conceived so as to favor one province or region rather than another. They aim at developing agriculture in every part of the country, according to their potential and their contribution to the Canadian economy.

Before evaluating the impact of federal farm policies, we must first take into account the importance of agriculture in the economic activity of the different Canadian provinces. If the Prairies play a predominant role in the overall volume of agricultural production in Canada, it's because they have 79% of farmland, whereas Quebec has only 5% of the good farm land in Canada. Quebec has only 6 million acres of cultivated land, compared with 89 million acres in the Canadian West.

I will speak now, Madame Chairman, of federal government farm programmes that have had beneficial consequences in Quebec and which must be put in the credit column on the balance sheet of federalism.

Let me point out first our own crop insurance programme. This programme is administered in Quebec and it may be useful to recall that it was instituted following an agreement with the federal Department of Agriculture, as a result of which federalism -- that wicked federalism as the people opposite say -- has made possible a financial contribution of nearly \$10 million for the period from 1973 to 1978. This participation is something the people opposite don't talk about much.

Madame Chairman, if we in Quebec have an Agricultural Credit Bureau, which plays a predominant role in satisfying a whole range of diversified credits in modern agriculture, let's not forget that Quebec farmers also have access to agricultural credit from the federal government. In fact, for the fiscal year 1975-76, the federal agriculture department approved 1116 farm loans in Quebec, representing a sum of \$85 million.

For the year 1977-78, the total direct subsidies for all milk producers was \$263 million, of which \$128 million were paid to Quebec. This sum represented an average of \$5123 per milk-processing producer. According to the latest statistics, 48% of the milk destined for processing was produced on Quebec farms.

Julien Giasson
(Liberal-Montmagny-L'Islet)

B.

Mr. Chairman, I would like at this time to come back to the terribly partisan remarks by the Minister of Agriculture, who took pleasure in recalling a reply by the Premier of Quebec, a promise that as far as I'm concerned is worth only \$2.66 for the milk producers; but in his intellectual dishonesty he pointed out that our federal system brings in around \$125 million annually to Quebec's producers of milk for processing. He did not cite the \$125 million figure and for that reason I call him dishonest. Naturally he also talked about the Maritime Freight Act, but of course he omitted to mention the annual federal subsidies, forgetting also, at the same time, another form of assistance for transporting feed grains to outlying regions of Quebec, which is worth around \$4 million annually to Quebec producers.

Mr. Chairman, what a lie by the Minister when he said that we pay more for Western grain than the Russians: It's exactly the opposite, Mr. Chairman.

Claude Dubois
(Union Nationale-Huntingdon)

8. Energy and Resources

Parti Québécois

A.

But independently of us, because of historical circumstances, our physical heritage, it has been our lot among the peoples of the earth to have at our disposal, for our development, the fantastic territory of Quebec, with all its resources which are unequalled either by our competitors or our trading partners. First of all, an incomparable mineral endowment: iron, 21 million tons exported over the last period, one of the world's great exporters; gold, three new gold mines in Abitibi last season, probably eight or ten in the coming season -- when you know what's happening on the world metal markets, because in other countries they're being exhausted -- copper, asbestos mines that pollutes the grey hills, that pollutes the landscape of the Eastern Townships, the equivalent of the world's magnesium reserves has been found. If that isn't having resources coming out your ears I don't know what it is!

Quebec forests. We are already the largest producers of newsprint in the world: 12, 500,000 cunits in 1979. There wasn't one tree less in the forest after the harvest than at the beginning, because trees grow back. They grow back when the forests are administered well and they're administered well now by our forest works. The forest, then, is a renewable resource that is supplying pulp and paper and sawmills, with no danger of breaking off.

Bernard Landry
(Minister of State for Economic
Development)

B.

What have we had by way of federal government investments in the area of energy? We have had Gentilly 1, a nuclear power station that never operated. We have had Gentilly 2. For all other power stations -- the first power stations in Canada, in New Brunswick, in Ontario -- the federal government paid half the costs. For us, they paid 15%. Bécancour, La Prade, with its large, unused, unusable towers, all we got was \$150 million out of \$2, 500,000,000 in federal investments over five years. No, we did not get our share. It is time to renegotiate an agreement.

We know we are extraordinarily rich in electricity. The Minister of State for Economic Development emphasized that. The Albertans tell us: When there isn't a drop of oil left in the Alberta subsoil, your rivers will still be flowing. Do you know what that represents?

If we wanted to put all the electricity that is going to be produced in Quebec -- when we've finished, in 1995, harnessing our rivers, as Ontario does, as the Maritimes and the U.S. do -- into thermal power stations, three times as much energy will be needed, 1,500,000 barrels of oil per day. That's more than Alberta produces now. It's an extraordinary resource.

Yves Bérubé
(Minister of Energy and Resources)

C.

Our plan to stimulate pulp and paper was so successful, the Yes of the companies and workers and everybody else was so massive that goes beyond our wildest hopes. The paper companies decided to invest \$2,500,000,000 over the next five years. If you take away from that the \$700,000,000 that will go for the upkeep of plants, it's an increase of \$600,000,000 more investments than we hoped for in this area. Which means that the government of Quebec has decided to do its share too in order to recover the maximum economic spin-off and increase its share from \$150,000,000 to \$250,000,000. But now the pilgrimage must begin again because we aren't at all sure, we're less than sure that the federal government will agree to do its share as well.

Marcel Gagnon
(P.Q. - Champlain)

D.

The miners from around Asbestos aren't too crazy about the fact that 6000 Quebecers from that region create 200,000 jobs outside Quebec, in processing. Those people, Mr. Chairman, are convinced that Quebecers can process their ore at home, using our people, thereby creating jobs instead of counting on unemployment insurance. I think that every worker in Quebec knows we can process our natural resources here at home, with our own money, with our people. Mr. Chairman, we've been told so often that we're too small, that there aren't enough of us, that we couldn't do it, we've almost developed complexes.

Guy Chevrette
(P.Q. - Joliette-Montcalm)

Federalists

A.

I say No because I am not prepared to sacrifice the energy security need so badly in today's world, with the international disturbances and problems we all know. (...)

I would just like to bring to your attention some figures from the government's White Paper on energy. Today, the balance sheet for Quebec energy is 26% for Hydro-Quebec, which includes imports from Newfoundland. In other words, on Quebec soil we produce less than 26% of our energy needs. Even the best forecasts in the White Paper for 1990 show that Hydro-Québec can count for 41% of Quebec's energy total. That means that today 74% of our needs are supplied from outside Quebec and in the years to come, even with the best forecasts, we are going to depend for more than 50%, for 60% of our energy needs from outside Quebec. I wonder how that can justify to you putting aside the energy resources of the rest of Canada. Even according to the government's White Paper, from 1990 to 2000 we will still need 300,000 barrels of oil for daily consumption.

It is something from which we will be able to benefit as Canadians. Canada is self-sufficient for 85% of its energy resources. We import only 15%. Compare that with the United States, which imports 50% and we have the possibility of being completely self-sufficient.

Without Quebec, mind you, Canada is self-sufficient in energy material. Ask yourself this question and see the considerable advantages we have by staying in the Canadian federation.

John Ciaccia
(Liberal-Mont Royal)

IV The Meaning of the Referendum

As many commentators of the referendum debate suggested throughout the campaign, whichever side succeeded in having Quebecers interpret the meaning of the referendum from their perspective, would likely go on to win the vote. The next two large sections summarize the meaning of decision from the two camps of "yes" and "no". Unlike the previous chapter, it was not as easy to juxtapose point-by-point rebuttals - the concepts and perspectives are fundamentally different on both sides. To the Parti Québécois the referendum was an historic decision to affirm the "equality" of the Quebecois, to gain "bargaining power" for the Quebec government, and to end the constitutional impasse between Ottawa and Quebec City. To the federalists, the referendum was, rather, a critical choice for Quebecers between renewed federalism and independence. The excerpts below illustrate the various shadings of each of these two large arguments.

THE MEANING OF THE REFERENDUM

The Parti Québécois

1. as an affirmation of equality

A.

Madame Chairman, it is stated in the question that the aim or the principle is, precisely, the equality of nations. We are one of these two nations; we are the descendants of the 65,000 French settlers who stayed on the shores of the St. Lawrence after 1760 and who, from that moment, were known as "Canadiens"; as a matter of fact they were the only ones to bear that name. We decided in 1760 to begin a journey towards our collective destiny.

The collective experience of our people continued in space and time as we sought our destiny. For 220 years we have been seeking our path through a thousand obstacles. This path has its starting and stopping points, halts and retreats and fresh starts, but never during those 220 years have we had the chance either to be consulted or to make our own decisions. On the contrary, before 1760, it was London;

after 1867, Ottawa. I say that a Yes in 1980 will make it possible for decisions to be made in Quebec, by Quebecers, for Quebecers.

If the majority of Quebecers votes Yes we will arrive, necessarily, at a change of system. That's what we want: a system that suits us. But this system will be the fifth one we've experienced in the 220 years of our history. The difference is that we're the ones who will decide on this system by negotiating, between equals, with our partner. The other four times we have changed system it was imposed on us from outside.

Marcel Leger
(Minister of the Environment)

B.

We seek equality of nations, Mr. Chairman, Yes, because we are more than a region, more than a linguistic community. We are a people, a nation.

Jean-Pierre Charbonneau
(P.Q.-Verchères)

C.

At the very heart of the present debate, Mr. Chairman, is the search for equality. This is the goal for which we have fought for twelve years, which the government wanted to clarify in the question tabled last December. All the rest, aside from the fundamental principle, the search for equality, is only a question of means. Whether through federalism or sovereignty-association, the goal we are seeking is equality.

Jean-François Bertrand
(P.Q.-Vanier)

D.

Mr. Chairman, perhaps the debate that has been occupying us for several hours would not have been necessary if 115 years ago, in 1865, Quebecers had been able to express their opinion on a question like the one being proposed to this Assembly, which contains a clear, straightforward, precise option, that of sovereignty-association. But unfortunately in 1865 our ancestors were not consulted.

I will take some time to show that our ancestors were against the Act of Confederation and that if they had been consulted, if they had had to choose between the system of Confederation and sovereignty-association, they would certainly have opted for sovereignty-association.

Jules Boucher
(P.Q.- Rivière du Loup)

E.

To be master in one's own house while showing the greatest respect for others: is this not an ideal both great and legitimate? Would the children growing up now and those who will follow them understand if, collectively, we said No to Quebec? Would they understand that in 1980 we, their parents, their grandparents, had said No to their prosperity, No to their future? How would history interpret it if in 1980, at the moment of the outcome of the most vital struggle not only for our survival as a nation, but in particular for our development and our flowering, we lacked self-confidence, we lacked solidarity, and that just when all we had to do was stand up and say Yes, we had, in a way, resigned?

Pierre Marois
(Minister of State for Social
Development)

F.

Quebec cannot obtain this equality in a federal system where it is and will be, increasingly, a minority. One province out of ten, one-quarter of the representation in the federal parliament, around one-sixth of senior federal civil servants.

In order for renewed federalism to satisfy Quebecers' fundamental need for equality, it must give them 50% representation in federal institutions, which is as impossible as it is absurd. The only other way for Quebecers to attain and live this equality is through sovereignty-association. As master in its own house, Quebec will at last be able to negotiate with English Canada, between equals, on all questions of common interest. It is this new deal -- in which the two elements, sovereignty and association, will be negotiated at the same time, contrary to what the Member for Charlevoix has just said -- based on the equality, which is the object of the government's question.

Quebec will vote Yes, Madame Chairman, for it prefers equality to subordination, dignity to being ground down, liberty to trusteeship, a forward leap to a backward step, pride to humiliation, majority status to minority status, flourishing to the exhausting conflicts that reduce its productivity, prosperity to the federal government's pittance, a place among the leaders of free nations to the ghetto where it has been confined by the federal system for a century.

Voting Yes, Madame Chairman, means directing ourselves towards the future, a future worthy of our tremendous human and natural resources, a future worthy of the strong and adult state we have become, a future worthy of what is best in ourselves, to which the creative vigor of our collective life already bears witness.

The federalist camp, led in Quebec by the leader of the No, is opposed to this desire for the equality of Quebecers which would have them see themselves as a people, a country and a nation. The leader of the No praises the federal system far more than he insists on a renewal of it that could not, in fact, be more slight or minor. The essence of federalism is the domination of the provinces, especially Quebec, by a strong central power which has kept all the important powers for itself, which seeks to take hold of those it does not yet possess and which is manoeuvred, to its advantage, by Anglo-Saxon economic power.

Camille Laurin
(Minister of State for Cultural
Development)

2. As "bargaining power"

G.

The question is clear: a Yes is not a blank cheque for the government. A Yes is not a vote for a separation no one wants. A Yes is a means, the only truly effective means to break up the constitutional logjam that has been marking time and dragging on since 1887.

A Yes is a mandate to undertake a real negotiation, and an obligation for the government which presents the question to come back and have the results of negotiation ratified before any change comes into effect. A Yes is a vote for a new deal with the other nation in Canada, but between equals. A Yes is an affirmation that sovereignty-

association is a political formula to be sought, if not utilized, in order to obtain real changes springing directly from our traditional demands for equality and autonomy.

Jean-Pierre Charbonneau
(P.Q.-Verchères)

H.

If we really want to get things moving, if we really want to change -- the first thing to do is say Yes to change, Yes to modifications.

I don't know why the members of the official Opposition are so worried about a possible negotiation with the federal government, because they themselves have emphasized that for the first time in our entire history, 50% of the members of the federal government are Quebecers. What is the other side of this House afraid of if Quebecers are going to negotiate with Quebecers? This may be the first time there have been 50% Quebecers in Ottawa; let's take advantage of it and say Yes to negotiation.

Guy Bisailon
(P.Q. - Sainte-Marie)

I.

Because a Yes bears witness to the firm will of the people of Quebec to negotiate a new deal with English Canada, it is a force for negotiation without which no government of Quebec would succeed in obtaining anything whatever. If we want English Canada to respect the partner we want to be under a new deal, we must first respect ourselves, and you don't respect yourself by voting No to a question that asks if we want to be masters in our own house.

Richard Guay
(P.Q.- Taschereau)

J.

The question asked by the Premier aims at having the people of Quebec intervene in a blocked negotiation that has been destructive for the two nations. The people of Quebec alone can resolve the matter, but by intervening they will demand a new deal because the people are sovereign. This is why the spiders of the old system who have found their happiness in the dust of the old deal are rising up and striking back. They can catch all politicians of all colours in their webs, but they recognize that the weight of the people is a determining factor.

If the government of Quebec obtains this mandate, if the weight of the people henceforth has a role to play in this negotiation for the future of Quebec, what can we hope for? What will have changed the morning after? Nothing, Mr. Chairman. The morning after the referendum we will all go on working, we will go on paying taxes to Ottawa, we will all go on getting unemployment insurance or old-age pensions the morning after the referendum. None of that will be changed -- but at another level everything will be changed, because the government of Quebec can now negotiate with the support of the population; henceforth it can assume, when it sits down at the table, that its mandate comes from the population of Quebec. If the government of Quebec gets a Yes it will be authorized to negotiate a new deal which cannot be attained unless equality, in the manner of sovereign nations grouped together, is applied here.

If we are given the mandate this new deal will be negotiated, of course, openly and publicly before the citizens who gave the government the mandate, but this new deal, I might remind you, will come into effect only if the citizens endorse it during a second referendum.

Claude Charron
(House Leader of the Parti Québécois)

K.

Why a second referendum? A second referendum because it is normal, when people decide to work together collectively, when you decide to work along with the population, to ask its opinion about the mandate it has given us. It is just as normal and even essential for it to be consulted again on the result of the steps that have been taken. -- to break the constitutional log-jam.

Guy Bisailon
(P.Q.-Sainte-Marie)

L.

For dozens of years the governments of Quebec have been asked by the rest of Canada: What does Quebec want? What do Quebecers want? It is because none of the governments has been able to answer these questions, using a special mandate from the population, that they have always been in a position of weakness, and because they were in this position of weakness, they obtained nothing. In order to negotiate effectively you need a solid base and precise positions. This is what we find in the wording of the question and so the referendum will make it possible to clarify the position of Quebecers with respect to the rest of Canada. Such a clarification has been needed for a long time .

Mr. Chairman, the question submitted by the Premier is not only clear, legal, legitimate and responsible, it is also absolutely frank and honest. In this respect I must deplore the attitude of the leader of the No when he says that the question is dishonest. When the leader of the No says that the question is dishonest he is incorrect: when he says that, the Leader of the Opposition is letting himself get carried away by partisan considerations. The question may appear long to some people, but I think it is more honest and responsible to ask a clear, complete question than a short, simplistic one. The national question of Quebec cannot be summed up in three words. It isn't by counting words that we should decide how we will better serve our fellow citizens. What the government means and what the government wants to do -- and this is stated clearly in the question -- is a new deal based on the equality and sovereignty of the two nations with, at the same time, an economic association.

Marc-André Bédard
(Minister of Justice)

M.

At the time we only knew how to say No because the only political power in a position to ask questions did not belong to us. It belonged to others, even when we were the majority. That was how we said No to conscription and more recently to the Fulton-Favreau formula, that trap that was held out to us, and No again to the Victoria Charter.

Always No! We were constantly reduced to the negative. Why? For the simple reason that institutions were not made so that we could ask the questions. They were even made to prevent us from asking questions that were fundamental for our own future.

Jacques-Yvan Morin
(Minister of Education)

N.

Here, Mr. Chairman, in summary, are some of the conclusions I have come to over the years. First, English Canadians -- you must understand them -- are attached to a strong central government that generally dominated the provinces. According to them that is, to a large measure, what federalism is. Their true government is first of all the one in Ottawa. Second, however, Quebecers have, overall believed that the federal system resulted from a sort of pact between the two nations and that, as a result, it consisted of strong guarantees of political autonomy. This guarantee has not been respected.

Third, most of the Quebec- Ottawa conflicts since 1867 have stemmed from this misunderstanding between the rest of Canada and Quebec and also from the fact that the government in Ottawa was both judge and judged. Fourth, under the present system these conflicts can only disappear if one of the two concepts yields to the other, i.e. if the rest of Canada adapts federalism to the Quebec concept, which it obviously will never accept, or if Quebec quite simply submits to the system, which in fact seems to be the sort of behaviour envisaged by the Liberals' Beige Paper.

Fifth, the central government, no matter which one is in power in Ottawa, operates according to the English-Canadian concept of federalism, according to which the federal government must be given all the economic, social and cultural levers. Sixth, when one or the other of the provinces states that it is prepared to improve the federal system, it would be a mistake to deduce that, like Quebec, it was in favor of sweeping, major reforms. At the very most it envisages limited corrections in precise areas.

Seventh, the rest of Canada sees in Quebec not the homeland of a nation but one of the provinces. According to it, Quebec like the other provinces should submit to the rules of the federal-provincial game and have only one vote out of eleven. Eighth, for English Canadians there is, of course, a large ethnic minority in Quebec, but not a nation that, in the present system, could be accorded political equality.

Ninth, English Canadians are still, naturally, tempted to look for evidence that the Quebec problem will sort itself out in time. And finally, tenth, English Canadians, even if they themselves do not form a monolithic block, simply do not envisage changing the balance of the present system to give more political weight to the Quebec nation. Of all the reports of federal enquiries, whether it is the Laurendeau-Dunton report or, more recently, the Pépin-Robarts, they have tended to keep only those recommendations that did not affect this balance. In fact there is probably only one historically important report that from the outset was given the consent of English Canada, and that was the Durham Report.

What can we say, Madame Chairman, about a No? A No is quite simply the refusal to go and see. It is withdrawal, a log-jam. Why? Because you must see things as they are. English Canada, whatever you have to say about it, will interpret a No as proof that Quebec's aspirations for equality or even for a revision in depth of present system, were only the wish of a noisy minority.

How many more years, how many more dozens of federal-provincial conferences will it take to arrive at a solution which, through the force of events and given Quebec's position of weakness, can only resemble the solution we have already seen at the Victoria Conference of 1971?

In short, the real risk for us would be to answer No because that No, whatever one may say about it, and no matter what slogan it is wrapped in, would weaken us.

Claude Morin
(Minister of Intergovernmental
Affairs)

The Meaning of the Referendum

To the Federalists:

A.

Whatever the outcome of the referendum, at least it will dissipate any doubt about what Quebec wants: renewed federalism or independence. If federalism is chosen, a real and persistent obstacle to meaningful negotiations will have been lifted; negotiations will take place not just because Quebec wants them and will be able to participate in them constructively, but because other provinces want them too. We must remember that Quebec by itself cannot change the Canadian constitution, even by threatening to leave.

Claude Forget
(Liberal-Saint-Laurent)

- B. Every man needs a country and a home. My country is Canada and my home is Quebec. The Parti Québécois is asking me to renounce one without even having the decency to tell me what form the other will take. It's a little as though they cut off one of my arms and mutilated a leg and then asked me to lead a normal life. I can't accept that my country, the country of every Quebecer, be divided up and diminished.

John Ciaccia
(Liberal-Mont-Royal)

- C. This is how this historic referendum they are telling us about becomes, in fact, only a simple electoral test that the Parti Québécois absolutely must win so as to try to stay in power. What, basically, is the Premier telling us? To the independentists, to the members of his party, he says: Don't pay any attention to the question: it's intended to reassure as many people as possible. But if you want to bring about independence some day, you must vote Yes on the referendum. And what does he tell the others? No problem, it's a great historic moment. Leave you partisan feelings aside. Really, all we're asking from you is a little bargaining power for the Quebec government. You can vote Yes; it doesn't commit you to anything irreversible.

Michel Gratton
(Liberal-Gatineau)

- D. Today once again they feel the need to falsify their question with an obscure preamble whose goal is to convince us that there will be a second consultation before any change in political status is brought about.

I would like very much, Mr. Chairman, if they would show me how we could force the government to hold a second referendum.

Claude Dubois
(Union Nationale-Huntingdon)

E.

If, Madame Chairman, the French Canadians of Quebec decide to vote Yes in reply to the elitists who are suggesting that No is a form of capitulation, we must point out that a Yes will never give the Quebec government the right to make constitutional changes of any kind.

No party can decide unilaterally to stop participating in the Canadian federation. This decision can only be taken with the support of all of Canada.

Imagine, Madame Chairman, if next year the province of Ontario decided to hold a referendum on whether it would continue to participate in equalization payments. Could that be accepted? No, a unilateral decision by any region or province in Canada is not acceptable.

William Shaw
(Independent-Pointe-Claire)

F.

If the Parti Québécois were to win the referendum, it commits Quebec to a confrontation, not to negotiation with our neighbours. The government thesis in itself absolutely does not lend itself to negotiation. Independence is something to take or leave. A country can't be more or less independent. Either it is or it isn't. Besides, because of the polarization of a debate that irreversibly opposes federalists and independentists, a Yes in the referendum would mean a categorical rejection of any federalist solution. Consequently, the Péquiste government would have no room to manoeuvre in its negotiations if it happened to win the referendum. The choice it has made of its option and the polarization that stems from it would absolutely tie its hands. It would not have the right to consent to a federalist solution even if it were very advantageous for Quebec. The government of Quebec would be condemned to repeat, idiotically, the refrain we've been hearing for so long: sovereignty, sovereignty, sovereignty. By polarizing opinion, far from reinforcing its mandate the government is weakening it. A vote for the Yes puts Quebec in the following dilemma: independentist confrontation or the status quo. There's no room for a middle ground, and whatever is not independence implies a violation of the referendum mandate the government is looking for. (...)

For the Parti Québécois, negotiation strategy is summarized as follows: To force Canada to negotiate independence, you threaten to bring about independence. In this scenario, Quebec behaves like the thief who asks his victim for his money and his life. If the poor fellow agrees, he's dead and robbed. If he refuses, it's the same thing.

After so many strategic refinements, Claude Morin claims to be surprised when the provincial premiers warn him they'd prefer not to negotiate. Since they've got nothing to lose in this context, they'd be quite mistaken to be the midwives of the independence of Quebec.

In short, Madame Chairman, the Péquiste government is inviting us, with an ambiguous question and in a context of polarization that exaggerates what divides us, to commit ourselves to a strategy of confrontation towards our partners in Canada. They are asking us to authorize negotiating an option that consists of juxtaposing a non-negotiable objective and other highly hypothetical elements.

Claude Forget
(Liberal-Saint-Laurent)

G.

Why have they watered down the question so much? They're travelling around the province and my riding now, Madame Chairman, talking about bargaining power. I've heard two people from the Parti Québécois say: Even if you aren't for independence or sovereignty, say Yes anyway. That will give us a bargaining tool. That will give us a certain bargaining power. Who among the Members opposite will be honest enough, the morning after the referendum if the Yes should bring in 65% of the vote, what Member will be honest enough to get up on a platform and say: Of that 65%, 30% are for independence and 35% against, but they've given us a bargaining tool to go just to the side of the fence.

Bertrand Goulet
(Union Nationale-Bellechasse)

H.

The conclusion should be clear enough for everyone: That famous "mandate to negotiate" leads nowhere. It is not and cannot be anything but a political and electoral marketing gimmick, and that's how we should treat it.

Rodrigue Tremblay
(Independent-Gouin)

I.

We have often heard, in this House and outside, that a Yes in the referendum meant bargaining power, giving ourselves a mandate, that it meant telling the government of Quebec: "You've got it, now go and negotiate," that it meant telling the other provinces, warning them, a warning bell. We know the terminology used by these people. A No in the referendum isn't a backward step because the will for constitutional change exists everywhere in Canada; but Quebecers and Canadians want to improve the federal system, not destroy it as you want to do. A Yes doesn't mean bargaining power at all, it means quite simply breaking the federal link.

Michel Page
(Liberal-Portneuf)

J.

A mandate to negotiate, that's what they want to sell us now, until the time of the referendum strictly speaking. They talk about a mandate to negotiate and getting things moving again. But negotiate what? That's the question. What do you want to negotiate? Who do you want to negotiate with? How do you want to negotiate? Why a referendum to negotiate? You could have been negotiating over the four years, or almost, that you've been in power. You haven't negotiated.

Gérard-D. Levesque
(Liberal-Bonaventure)

K.

The question, Mr. Chairman, is not to establish whether or not we're Québécois by voting one way or another. Every citizen of Quebec is a full-fledged Québécois and to claim otherwise would mean appealing to the contemptible tactic of intimidation, a tactic that has led to such disastrous results in other countries.

The real question is to know whether the constitutional decentralization we want will be carried out in economic and monetary stability inside the Canadian Confederation or, rather, through, the bluff of political secession. For every Quebecer, economic and monetary stability are fundamental.

It has been established in this debate that for the government, economic association and a common currency were much less a matter of conviction and an objective than a vote-getting tactic. They don't believe in economic association. They are offering us a political bluff that in all probability will lead to economic disintegration and monetary disturbances, besides leading us to a political dead-end.

Rodrigue Tremblay
(Independent-Gouin)

L.

Mr. Chairman, when they say they're going to negotiate, they forget one important point: no one on earth is going to agree to negotiate his own disappearance. They tell us: It's a mandate to get things moving, and they try to make people believe . . . I've talked with people recently and they tell us: It's just a mandate to get things moving. For once, we'll have proof if there are real negotiations. You'll see that the federal government will be afraid of a massive Yes in Quebec. For once, the federal government will bow down; for once les Anglais are going to be afraid of the French Canadians and they're going to rush off to get together and say: Hurry, before Quebec separates, we're going to rush off to try to concede everything to them, we're going to try to give them everything. A lot of people get taken in by this little game. The federal government can't bend to that sort of trick; that would be self-destructive.

Michel Le Moignan
(Leader of the Union Nationale)

M.

Tell me, Madame Chairman, why I should say Yes to a demolition plan that hasn't even produced any drawings for the future building with which it wants to replace today's monument? There are a lot of people in Quebec who come from somewhere else. Many of them have left their countries because of pronounced tensions. Their freedom has been shackled, they've had problems, they've had to confront separatist movements and they don't understand why the government wants to throw us into a venture that risks disturbing the progress of our society. They think that in Quebec we are the privileged people of this earth and they can't bring themselves to accept the division of our communities, the division of our families, the division of our country.

John Ciaccia
(Liberal-Mont-Royal)

V The Arguments on Sovereignty-Association: Pro and Con

While the Parti Quebecois government did not place as much stress on the details of their own option - compared with criticisms of the federal regime and their concept of the meaning of the referendum - a significant portion of the debate in the National Assembly focused on sovereignty-association as such. P.Q. ministers lined up to rehearse the importance of sovereignty and the virtues of association, they placed emphasis on at least three themes: Quebecers can go it alone, English Canada will have no choice but to enter an economic association with us, and, think of all the things we can do with our repatriated taxes.

FEDERAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION

A.

What strikes me so far is that the government never defends its option; they never explain to us or the population of Quebec how sovereignty-association would settle the problems they identify, the problems they constantly attribute to the federal government. They never give any answer to questions people are entitled to know; they would like to know what is the alternative suggested by this government, rather than being satisfied with making noble appeals to the pride and dignity of Quebecers, but without ever answering a single question on what they would do in the circumstances to correct situations they consider to be unfavorable.

To come back to the solution proposed by the other side, the important question is: "What would an independent Quebec do to correct these situations? What would it do, in the case of sovereignty-association, to attract GM or Ford to Quebec? That's the real question, the one you should answer. What would you do to bring that about? Would you make another SIDBEC, by any chance? Maybe that's your solution, to make another SIDBEC, for automobiles.

Mr. Chairman, there are other questions that I think must be asked. One of the first is this: In 1978 Quebecers paid \$3,600,000,000 less in federal taxes than they received in public services. How would an independent Quebec have compensated for this loss by the citizens, except by increasing its own deficit? By increasing taxes? By cutting down on services to the population? That too is an important question.

Second question. We know that Quebec's tax yield is lower than the national average. This fact, at the present time, is made up for by equalization payments to the government of Quebec by the other provinces. In equalization alone there was \$1,700,000,000 in 1979-80. Where would an independent Quebec find such a sum except by taxing the tax-payers even more, or by cutting down on services once again?

Third question. For what reasons would the other provinces of Canada continue, if independence came about, to subsidize Quebec's manufacturing industry through customs tariffs to a limit of around \$200 million a year? For what reasons would they continue to subsidize Quebec's manufacturing industry? For what reasons would they go on buying, for one billion dollars more, manufactured goods that they don't sell in Quebec? If these reasons do not exist how would Quebec maintain the existing jobs linked to these exports? More generally, what tariff policy does the Parti Québécois propose with respect to the rest of the world? Does it want more protection or less?

Fourth question. If the independence of Quebec comes about, why would Alberta agree to sell us at a preferential price 60% of the oil we consume, which saved us \$1 billion in 1979, not counting import subsidies?

How would Quebec increase its self-sufficiency if it were independent, compared with the present situation where it is part of Canada? How could Quebecers, in 1979, finance the billion dollars they saved except by reducing their standard of living and reducing their consumption?

Fifth. How many Quebecers would leave Quebec if independence came about? You can judge by 1977 and 1978: 40,000 clear-cut departures from Quebec. How many would there be? Why not answer this question, even if it hurts! Even if it hurts! If Quebec loses part of its population, is it not true that we would then have to compensate with even higher taxes on those who were left?

Sixth question. What reason would nation-wide companies have for keeping their head offices in Quebec if Quebec acquired its sovereignty? How many jobs would be lost? The Minister of State for Economic Development has carried out studies on the question. He knows there are tens of thousands of jobs linked to head offices of nation-wide companies. If the independence of Quebec came about they would have no economic interest in remaining in Quebec and you know it.

Seventh. Let's try and figure out what's in the proposed system of association. What's in it? For instance, does the Parti Québécois want to keep the present federal corporations? Yes or no? Does it want to keep Radio Canada, the National Film Board, Air Canada, Canadian National, Téléglobe, Petro-Canada, the Federal Development Bank? Do we keep the, yes or no? What's the position of Quebec on the matter? If it doesn't want to keep them it's going to dismantle them. And if it dismantles these corporations, their services to Quebec will have to be replaced by equivalent corporations, to maintain the level of services, or else it will reduce the level of services. We've never had an answer from the government to that.

André Raynauld
(Liberal-Outrement)

B.

As we are quite lucid we will answer No to this unworthy machination. None of the Péquistes has been able to tell me yet what an independent Quebec would be in five, ten or twenty years. Those people who have been preaching independence for a long time haven't been able to indicate yet what the cost of it would be. They're only adventurers, then, whom I can't respect or support. They've never been able to establish through any study what the standard of living would be after separation or the basis for an absolute guarantee that our rights, our privileges, our goods and our liberties would be preserved.

Claude Dubois
(Union Nationale-Huntingdon)

C.

The government often tells us that we must leave Canada because the rate of unemployment is higher in Quebec than in Ontario and that's true. But may we be allowed to believe that in an independent Quebec, perhaps associated with Canada, the rate of unemployment might be even worse?

In the plan for sovereignty-association is there any indication that inflation would be lower, that there would be fewer strikes?

You must accept that the morning after a declaration of independence we would no longer be receiving from the federal government family allowances, old age pensions, unemployment insurance, equalization payments -- \$1,600,000,000 last year -- industrial subsidies from the Minister of Economic Expansion, Mr. Pierre de Bané, oil subsidies -- we could expect an immediate increase in the price of oil up to 50 cents a litre, without question -- no more reduced mortgages for the CMHC and no other federal government expenditures. Very well, no more taxes, no more federal benefits. Do we come out winners or losers?

Reed Scowen
(Liberal-Notre-Dame-de Grace)

D.

Sovereignty-association could never work and if it did, it would work badly. Let's examine some of the legal and economic impossibilities proposed by the White Paper on sovereignty-association. First, the White Paper proposed monetary union -- that is, a single currency for the two countries, Quebec and Canada -- and a monetary authority to look after this area. This monetary authority would not operate between equals. We've already seen that. Basically that means that an independent Quebec would turn its monetary policy over to a majority that escapes it. Today, at least, there are MPs from Quebec in Ottawa to defend our rights and our interests.

Second, the White Paper proposes a common market, the free circulation of people, goods and capital. However, exceptions are proposed for Quebec. What would happen if the other provinces asked for exceptions? If there are more exceptions, there's no common market.

Besides, a common market between an independent Quebec and Canada would be more restricting for Quebec than the common market that now exists. You just have to look at the problems faced by the countries in the European Common Market. It's the civil servants who are ahead in the European Common Market. It seems to me that it's far better if the powers remain with elected representatives, as is the case in Canada now. It's obvious that Quebec exercises more powers in present-day Canada than it would exercise in an association that would take in Canada and an independent Quebec.

Third, in the White Paper we're told that Quebec will sign a treaty with Canada. In law that is impossible, because one part of a country can't sign a treaty with the country of which it is part. You can't be at the same time inside Canada and outside it. If we want to negotiate with Canada -- I see that the people opposite are taking notes -- without bringing about independence, you must negotiate as a province that is part of Canada, following the rules of our federal system.

Herbert Marx
(Liberal-D'Arcy-McGee)

E.

As the immediate interests of the provinces are often in conflict, the federal government is constantly performing arbitrations that necessarily displease some of them. The finest example of federal arbitration at the present time is the Canadian price for oil, which is lower than Alberta wants and higher than consumers want to pay. If it is undeniable that Quebec, like every province in Canada, is a minority in the federal government, the real question is how these relations with its neighbours would be established and administered if Quebec were to become independent. Do you think for a moment that Quebec could impose its preferences and priorities on everybody else? Who would decide on monetary policy? Who would decide on customs tariffs? Would we be free to export whatever volume we wanted of dairy products, pork, chicken or eggs, or would the other provinces also want to protect their own agriculture?

The reply to that question is the following: An independent Quebec, associated or not, would be up against the interests and economic power of the other provinces rather than federal arbitration; instead of having to intervene in federal-provincial conferences, we would have to intervene in international conferences. The words would change, the reality would remain the same.

At the present time we participate in federal decisions on the same level, we have our say on policies of the other provinces that affect us, while if we were independent we would be outside.

The sovereignty solution is an economic power solution only; the federal solution recognizes economic power, but it tempers it by bringing into play political power and, most of all, solidarity and sharing among compatriots.

André Raynauld
(Liberal-Outrement)

F.

He wanted to prove that if a country as small as Switzerland in terms of geography and population could live so richly, even with no natural resources, why should it be otherwise for Quebec? He forgot to mention, however, that the Swiss have, from an industrial and financial point of view, a tradition going back several centuries, whereas we Quebecers are barely beginning. He also forgot, and this is unforgivable, that in Switzerland there are four official languages and that all these people live within a federal system of government of the same kind as the one they want to destroy. He forgot to say that the Swiss, enjoying one of the highest standards of living in the world, have for a long time had the financial means to divide themselves into German, French, Italian and Romansch-language states and have never deemed it appropriate to do so. One might wonder whether a Switzerland divided into so many states would have been so prosperous, so free, with such a high standard of living and degree of civilization.

Noel Saint-Germain
(Liberal-Jacques-Cartier)

G.

For several days we have been hearing those whom we call our friends opposite discrediting Canada. We heard it in a somewhat more violent fashion from the mouth of the good doctor just now. His verdict is completely contradictory. I defy the good doctor to get out of this contradiction. On the one hand we are oppressed, subjugated, martyred, ground down by the Anglais, the oppressor, and in the same breath and without a blush we are a strong, capable, adult people, sufficiently capable and adult to share our resources and our energy to make a greater country.

The other contradiction is that this oppressor, the wicked Anglais, "the Canadian" as the Member for Lac-Saint-Jean said yesterday, suddenly becomes a partner, a very pleasant partner. Oh, how nice he is, he's going to agree to negotiate, like a brother or a cousin, side by side, as the Minister of the Environment said. But Mr. Chairman, I defy the Parti Québécois to get out of this contradiction, and the only way to do that is for Quebecers to vote No in the referendum.

Fernand Lalonde
(Liberal- Marguerite-Bourgeois)

H.

I listened attentively as the Premier told us that sovereignty is a normal outcome for any developed nation. He should have added, to get to the bottom of things, that for many nations this sovereignty is acquired at the price of tremendous sacrifices and that, unfortunately, it often comes about and is maintained to the detriment of the citizens' most sacred individual rights, who had thought that the nation's independence was synonymous with individual freedom and rights. Among the multitude of nations that have acceded to sovereignty since the last war, very few have an enviable record as far as rights and liberties are concerned and none has attained the high respect for the citizen that we have here in Canada. (...)

Any person who has sat in this House has been able to measure, in certain circumstances, how fragile our democratic institutions could be, yet they are the fruit of a long tradition. Destroying at one stroke Canadian institutions, our courts, an army -- that entails many risks that any responsible public man owes it to himself to judge for what they are worth.

Noel-Saint-Germain
(Liberal-Jacques-Cartier)

PQ ARGUMENTS FOR SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION

1. "We can do it alone . . ."

A.

. . . the evolution of the modern world shows us every day that dozens of nations have sought equality precisely through solutions like the one the government is proposing, through sovereignty based on the legal equality of nations. Of course there will always be a balance of power, there will always be some powerful States and others that are less so, but it is thanks to sovereignty that small nations with four or six million inhabitants -- some of which are among the most prosperous in the modern world -- can stand up to States that are ten or a hundred times more populous.

Sovereignty and association as discussed in the question are the two great complementary trends that characterize the modern world. The government has not invented anything in its question. All we have done is adapt to our own situation remedies that others have invented to put an end to situations of inequality in which they found themselves. Negotiation with English Canada will allow us to act in such a way that the new balance I spoke about, the new deal, will correspond both to our political aspirations and to socio-economic realities.

Jacques-Yvan Morin
(Minister of Education)

B.

. . . We have succeeded in Canada in throwing our own affairs into astonishing disarray. Canada has become increasingly difficult to administer. Governments are made to govern, not to fight among themselves and cancel out one another's actions. Quebec is largely responsible for this state of affairs. In a quarter of a century successive governments here have done almost everything to prevent Canadian federalism from operating properly.

Jacques Parizeau
(Minister of Finance)

C.

Quebec is not that small or that poor. Sixteenth country in the world in area, fourteenth in gross national revenue; rich in natural resources; situated geographically, at the crossroads of Europe and the United States; if it had all its own economic and political tools it could only improve its situation and pay for the oil and oranges it doesn't have with newsprint and the mining and metallurgic products of which it will have a surplus.

Camille Laurin
(Minister of State for Cultural
Developments)

D.

Mr. Chairman, we have learned that such a vast and wealthy territory, with a young, educated population, abundant natural and financial resources, we, too, could exploit our natural resources to the full and develop them for our own needs. After all, five of the richest countries in the world, on a per capita basis, have 10 million inhabitants or less. Six of the seven richest countries in the world don't have the surface area of Quebec. Let's put an end to these complexes, Mr. Chairman.

Guy Chevrette
(P.Q.- Jolliette-Montcalm)

E.

When you look at the map of the world, and in particular at the four small countries with populations scarcely larger than Quebec's . . . that are at the top of the list of countries from the point of view of standard of living at the present time . . . you find at the peak, at the top of the pyramid, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark and now, Norway. Four countries scarcely more populous than Quebec, three of them with smaller populations, whose territories are often smaller . . . Perhaps we've been told for too long that we were poor, beggars, hewers of wood and drawers of water -- all those clichés that have absolutely nothing to do with the reality of present-day Quebec. I would like to take a rapid inventory of the financial wealth that is the property, at the moment we're speaking -- not theoretically, but practically -- that is Quebecers' present wealth.

I simply want to talk about a part of our wealth, but you will see that it is considerable, this part which is deposited in essentially three types of financial institutions. The first category, the largest, is the savings that Quebecers have deposited in such institutions as chartered banks, caisses populaires, savings and loan associations, in trust companies that take deposits The approximate amount of this mass -- which belongs to Quebecers -- at the moment we are speaking, is \$40 billion.

A second category of savings is that held by insurance companies, life insurance essentially The mass of money held by insurance companies in the name of and for Quebecers, at the moment we are speaking, is a little more than \$10 billion.

Finally, the third category is all the money contributed-half from the employees' pockets, half from the employer -- to the pension plan. (...) At the moment we are speaking there is a little more than \$10 billion in the Quebec Deposit and Investment Corporation.

That brings us immediately -- and once again I repeat that this is only part of the iceberg -- to a total of \$60 billion. \$60 billion in a country with only six million inhabitants That's a total savings of \$40,000 per Quebec family.

Guy Joron
(Minister of Consumers, Cooperatives
and Financial Institutions)

F.

The European Community has existed for a quarter of a century now. There is no supranational authority over Europe and the European economic space has been preserved completely, contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition thinks and is peddling.

In addition, Madame Chairman, the member nations of the European Community are, increasingly, aligning their fiscal and monetary policies and there is no European government. Federal Europe does not exist. What we want to propose to English Canada, what we want to negotiate, is a Canadian economic community.

Yves Duhaime
(Minister of Industry, Commerce
and Tourism)

2. "They have no choice but to associate . . .

G.

Do you think that just because it was in a bad mood Ontario, by refusing to negotiate with us, would want to lose the possibility of selling 30% of its automobile market to Quebec? That Ontario would refuse to sell us stoves, refrigerators, coffeepots, all sorts of other electrical appliances? Just look inside our houses -- almost everything is made in Ontario. Our market, the Quebec market, represents 200,000 jobs for them. Ontario would sacrifice that by saying No to negotiation?

Jacques Baril
(P.Q. - Arthabaska)

H.

In fact there is a real will to associate in English Canada, and I would cite on that subject an inquiry carried out by York University in Toronto where, aside from other higher statistics, 59% of the population of English Canada states that Canada should be prepared to negotiate an economic agreement if Quebec decides to become sovereign.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, let's be realistic: Canada and Quebec both have markets and jobs to preserve, resources to share. 75% of the beef we eat comes from the Prairies; Ontario ships us nearly \$5 billion worth of products, which means 200,000 jobs; we export to the rest of Canada and we, like the Canadians, want this trade to continue.

Jacques Leonard
(Minister of State for Planning)

3. "We need to repatriate our taxes . . ."

I.

Any convoluted form of equality, shackled by a federal system, inevitably leads our people towards an equality where others will always be more equal than us because we will be a minority in a central government charged with deciding on half of our laws and half of our taxes.

Equality would enable us at the same time to resolve happily the strange forced concubinage of the present federation. Under real equality we would have, on the one hand, Quebec as master of its own laws and taxes and, on the other hand, Canada as master of its. At last we would be able, through an economic association negotiated between equals, to get down to the development of our respective economies rather than pulling against one another in the ridiculous game of tug-of-war the present federal system has become. Let's put an end to this wasting of our taxes. Let's be done with these quarrels over contradictory federal and Quebec laws, programmes and regulations. Let us negotiate the new deal between Quebec and Canada that our past as well as our present calls on us to bring about.

There are two or three very simple reasons for asking for control over our taxes. First, it is the only government that we Quebecers control unquestionably. Second, it is the one that best knows the needs of Quebecers and finally, we all know that the power to make laws means nothing if we do not control our taxes.

Have you considered how powerful is the instrument the Leader of the Opposition suggests leaving in the hands of the government in Ottawa, where Quebec has only 75 members out of 207? Do you know what is represented by the sum of nearly \$9 billion in taxes paid for by our own work, Quebecers' work, into the hands of a government in which we are a minority? Nearly \$9 billion: that's the money we paid last year, we Quebecers, to the government of trustees that is the federal government in the present system.

Our government could, in terms of Quebecers' own interests and for our development, use the formidable lever of the some \$20 billion in taxes that we pay by the sweat of our brows.

We have our Parliament, we have our laws, our institutions, our Ministries; all we need now is to obtain control over all our laws, all our taxes, by negotiating a new deal, a new association. A massive Yes to the referendum question is not only the best but the only way to ensure that we, Quebecers, control the taxes we pay out of our own salaries and the goods we buy.

Michel Clair
(Minister of Revenue)

J.

Equality also means the power to control all our taxes to ensure our economic development and, together, determine our priorities. Do we, as Quebecers, want to relive the humiliation we were subjected to during what we could call the sales tax affair, when Quebec had to resign itself to losing \$300 million because it wanted to choose its priorities and respond to the essential needs of the citizens of Quebec instead of Ontario's? We could always live through that again with Mr. Ryan's Beige Paper, because it is a background step from what we've always asked for in the past.

Lucien Lessard
(Minister of Sports, Hunting
and Fishing)

K.

What distinguishes an authentic Québécois, like the Member for Lotbinière, from the others? (...)

Is there a test? Yes, there is. How much of the \$10 billion do you want to bring back to Quebec? If everything, then you're authentically Québécois. If you leave them some, you aren't. You can claim to be, you can bring tears to the eyes of Margot or Jean-Pierre, but you aren't.

Gerald Godin
(P.Q. -Mercier)

L.

In the name of the government of Quebec, I want to say here, solemnly, that we commit ourselves officially to see to it that if the Yes comes about, old people to whom, collectively, we owe some catching up, if we have any sense of humanity at all, will not only continue to receive their old-age pension cheques, not only will those who are entitled to it continue to receive their pension supplement cheques, not only will they continue to receive their veterans' allowances but, in addition, we commit ourselves to use all our implements and all our taxes to get moving on the prospect of a guaranteed minimum income policy that will make it possible to give the neediest something that might begin to resemble a decent standard of living.

Pierre Marois
(Minister of State for Social
Development)

M.

It is up to the State, it is up to the government, to ensure the common good, to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth among the citizens. To do this there must be a unified political will. There must be coherent institutions allowing us to do so serenely, in a determined manner, and to be fully responsible for it. This is what the government of Quebec is asking for. This is what it has always asked for on the subject of social security. Our Liberal friends -- I'm sincerely sorry about this -- this time are retreating through the Beige Paper, in the face of this traditional Quebec demand, namely that Quebec should have complete mastery over social security. I agree that they may continue to be federalists, but to resign in the face of a demand that has been maintained by every Quebec government up to the present in the name of dignity and the complete exercise of the responsibility we feel we should exercise in the name of the citizens of Quebec, we of the government of Quebec find that this is evidence of political irresponsibility.

Gerard Gosselin
(P.Q.-Sherbrooke)

N.

The day when, through the new deal foreseen in the question, we have repatriated 100% of our taxes, it is clear that the government of Quebec will be able to elaborate coherent social policies. By putting an end to waste there is no doubt that we will be able to ensure for old people and those who obtain an allowance from the federal government, a pension that will be at least equal to if not larger than the one they now receive. When it is a matter of services to old people, in particular, this government has shown for three years that it has no lessons to learn from anyone.

Denis Lazure
(Minister of Social Affairs)

VI - Comments on the Quebec Liberal Party's "Beige Paper"

Finally, these last two excerpts demonstrate the tenor of the few comments in the debate on the main alternative to the PQ option of sovereignty-association. The Péquistes were, in the actual debate, made numerous criticisms of the Beige Paper seeing it as a retreat from the traditional positions of Quebec. Liberals, for the most part did not take the opportunity to reply, lest they fuel the debate into one on the Liberals' proposals as such, and not on the question at hand - the government's referendum question and its consequences for Quebec.

COMMENTS ON THE BEIGE PAPER

A.

In our proposals there are a number of measures that aim at reinforcing the powers of the provinces, for example in the area of manpower, labor relations, the family, communications, the administration of justice.

We also have proposals that aim at giving the Supreme Court its true role as an arbitrator between the central power and the provinces, an arbitrator that does not depend on the will of only one party and which includes, in constitutional cases, a role of parity for judges from Quebec.

We also have proposals that aim at constraining the use of the central government's unilateral powers and thereby changing the entire mechanism of the federal-provincial interaction. Spending powers, declaratory powers that, until now and even today, can significantly influence provincial authorities, could no longer be exercised unilaterally by the central power, which would do so only on condition that it had the support of a qualified majority: not a majority of 50% plus one, but a majority of 60% of the provinces. As for provinces that would be opposed -- Quebec, hypothetically -- they could have the power to withdraw from these programmes in return for full financial compensation. This would be a matter not of concessions but of rights established by the constitution itself.

Claude Forget
(Liberal-Saint-Laurent)

B.

What we find in the Beige Paper is not a project for the future. It is a hypothesis for collective suicide.

This document breaks with the historical continuity of Quebec and also, in certain aspects, with the past of the Liberal Party. What is being proposed to Quebecers is supreme detachment, self-negation. In the face of English Canadians' incapacity to give any evidence of imagination and good will in constitutional matters, the Beige Paper takes over and tries to do the job in their place. Quebec would become a province like the others. Its minority status would be inscribed in texts and consecrated in such institutions as the Federal Council. Our future would no longer be in doubt. No more uncertainty. We would be an official minority, waiting to become a vanished minority. But we would have one consolation, that of having -- in the words of the Member for Maisonneuve -- "contributed to the greater glory of Canada."

Louis O'Neill
(P.Q.-Chauveau)

POSTSCRIPT

Readers may well have asked themselves, as they saw the arguments go back and forth, "How would I vote?" By now we know how the Quebec people answered the question: The NO's won 59 per cent, the YES's 41 per cent. The momentum the PQ had generated in the debate on the question faded, especially as the NO side drove home the arguments that sovereignty-association would not work, that a NO was not a vote for the status quo, but rather for real and imminent constitutional change, that a YES would be a step towards outright independence, and that economic insecurity would be one inevitable result. Perhaps most important, the NO side was able to convince many voters that one could be a loyal Quebecer and a patriotic Canadian too: the identities are not in conflict, but rather can be mutually supportive. The emotional fire that the PQ had generated began to be visible in the NO camp too.

In the end, however citizens voted, the referendum became an exercise in collective expression and democratic participation, perhaps unique in Canadian history. The pre-election surveys showed just how serious, and how difficult the choice was for many voters. They demonstrate clearly that Quebecers were ambivalent: the vast majority of NO voters cast their ballots for change; many of the YES voters did so too, without necessarily opting for independence. Thus, the real result is a massive commitment to change - and considerable uncertainty about how to achieve it. The PQ slogan, "d'égal à égal", equal to equal, reflects the deep popular will: the challenge of how to reflect that in our constitution and political life remains.

The other lesson of the result is that french-speaking Quebecers divided almost equally between YES and NO. No one reading these debates - or who witnessed the drama of René Lévesque's appearance at the Paul Sauvé arena on the evening of May 20th - can believe that the movement towards independence is dead, or that the debate we summarize here will not be debated again and again in the years to come.

Richard Simeon



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