

# **The “Quiet” and Not So “Quiet Revolution”**

**Quebec and  
Canada**

**1914 -1998**



# Quebec and Canada

## 1914 -1945



- Each of the two twentieth century world wars had brought with it domestic tension related to the issue of conscription.
- There had been passionate opposition to conscription in Quebec in 1917 and again in 1944.
- After 1945 Quebec-Canada relations appeared to be relatively calm but problems remained very close to the surface.



# The Problems of Quebec after 1945



- The population of Quebec was leaving the farms for jobs in the cities.
- Higher educational levels tended to make Quebecers more critical of their situation in Canada.
- It was increasingly apparent that the English speaking minority in Quebec controlled the economy.
- The power of Ottawa and the influence English language was growing.





# La Revolution Tranquille



- PM Maurice Duplessis, while he remained premier of Quebec, managed to control the forces of change.
- His death in 1959 opened the way for fundamental changes in Quebec.
- No longer would the citizens of Quebec be willing to accept second class status in their own province.





# “Maitres Chez Nous”

*Le chef de  
L'Union Nationale*

**Continue sa tournée  
triomphale dans toute  
la province.  
Avec enthousiasme  
le peuple l'accueille  
comme un libérateur.**

Précédents un programme de restauration agricole et ouvrière, tout en  
contre les vestiges de l'esprit de parti, démasquant les attitudes sous-  
passant de ses adversaires, pour mieux la consolidation de l'unité sur  
les enseignes publiques, Maurice Duplessis et ses vaillants troupiers de  
l'Union Nationale sont accueillis avec ferveur par toute la province de  
Québec.

Fatigué de promesses qui ne furent jamais tenues, révoqué par les  
constatés mis à jour le peuple trouve le des aux réalisations du régime  
et cela malgré tous les moyens de briser et de rompre dans les  
dispositifs anciens.

Le peuple veut sa libération et c'est à Maurice Duplessis qu'il doit en-  
dormir de conclure les destinées de la province, le 17 août prochain. Il ne  
peut en être autrement.

Duplessis a promis de redonner la personnalité à la province en sachant  
qu'il dépend de lui et de son gouvernement. Il nous a prouvé qu'il  
peut compter sur lui sans crainte d'être déçu.

-----

**VOTEZ**  
POUR  
*Maurice Duplessis*  
**Et les vaillants défenseurs  
du peuple groupés sous la bannière de  
L'Union Nationale**

©

- Duplessis' approach to politics in Quebec was conservative and paternalistic.
- People were discouraged from questioning traditional authority.
- He was, however, a Quebec nationalist and stressed to Ottawa that Quebeckers must be “masters in their own house.”





# What Were the Problems?

- Unemployment in Quebec was the highest in Canada.
- The English minority in Quebec were better paid and had better jobs than the French speaking population.
- Most top civil service positions were held by English speaking Canadians.
- The birth rate in Quebec was falling and new immigrants preferred to learn English.



# The Government of Jean Lesage



- Duplessis' Union National party had been in power for 18 of the previous 23 years.
- The Liberals under the leadership of Jean Lesage now embarked on a difficult and expensive program.
- The slogan of change continued to be "Maitres Chez Nous."



Duplessis' Funeral in 1959



# The Program of the Lesage Government Sought to



- Eliminate corruption in the Government of Quebec.
- Improve public services particularly, transportation , health care and education.
- Improve wages and pension benefits for the citizens of Quebec.
- Develop new industries and to access the natural resources of the province.







# Quebec and Ottawa



- Lesage placed new demands on the central government to allow Quebec to take over complete control of programs like health and education.
- He wanted more control over the economic development of Quebec and a greater share of tax revenues from Ottawa.
- It was also made clear to Ottawa that Quebec wished to be consulted on any matter affecting the provincial interest.



# Daniel Johnson and the Return of Union Nationale



- Lesage and his government were defeated in 1966.
- Daniel Johnson, the new Premier, did not abandon the goals of the Quiet Revolution.
- Johnson's approach was to establish closer ties with France.
- The fear in Ottawa was underscored by the visit of Charles de Gaulle and his "Vive le Quebec Libre!" speech in 1967.

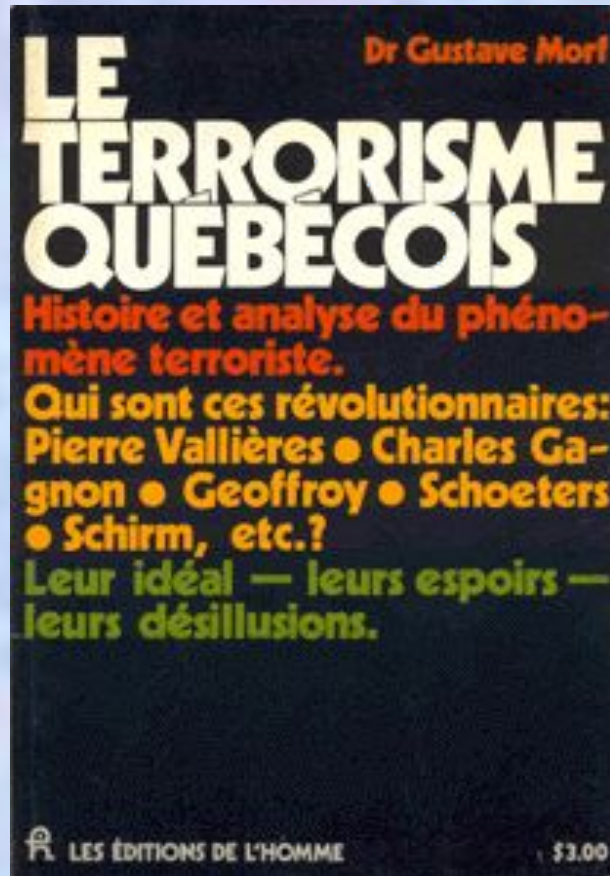


DeGaulle in Quebec





# Violence in Quebec



- By 1963 there was a growing trend among some small radical groups in Quebec to arm themselves.
- Bombs were planted and military supplies stolen.
- Most French-Canadians opposed these lawless acts but Ottawa felt that it had to respond.



# Ottawa Responds to Nationalism in Quebec



- All the provinces were granted greater autonomy and more money to run provincial programs.
- The new Canadian flag was adopted in 1965 replacing the old "Red Ensign."
- The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was established in 1963 to study French language and culture in Canada.



# The Commission Reports



- Canada was to be officially bilingual with English and French the official languages of Parliament and the federal courts.
- Government services should support minority language groups in all provinces.
- More French-Canadians should be employed in the federal civil service.
- French was to be the primary language of business and government in Quebec.





# Trudeau and Quebec



- In 1968 Pierre Trudeau became the Prime Minister of Canada.
- He was a French-Canadian federalist with strong views on Canadian unity.
- Mr. Trudeau rejected separatism and focused on bilingualism in government.
- Large sums of money were spent to achieve this goal with mixed results.





# Problems With Bilingualism

- It was difficult for older unilingual Canadians to learn a new language.
- English Canadians began to feel that the French language was being given an unfair degree of support and a backlash developed.
- Even among some French-Canadians there was opposition to the extent of the effort to encourage the use of French in English Canada.



# Robert Bourassa Takes Power in Quebec 1970



- Robert Bourassa believed that Quebec's place was in Canada.
- In the first year of his government he was forced to deal with a radical separatist group the FLQ.
- The Front de Liberation Quebecois wanted the independence of Quebec and were prepared to use violence to achieve this end.







# The October Crisis 1970

- After seven years of bombings and other acts of violence the FLQ embarked on one last desperate act of defiance.
- On October 5, 1970 they kidnapped James Cross the British Trade Commissioner to Canada.
- This was followed by a separate kidnapping of the Quebec Minister of Labour - Pierre Laporte.





# The October Crisis II



- The FLQ issued a list of demands which included the release from prison of several members of their group.
- On October 16, 1970 Prime Minister Trudeau invoked the *War Measures Act*.
- This act gave the government special powers of arrest and had been requested by both the government of Quebec and the city of Montreal.

[Click here for Trudeau's "Watch me" speech, from the CBC Archives.](#)





# The October Crisis III

- Nearly 500 Quebeckers were arrested and jailed although very few were ever brought to trial.
- The FLQ was outlawed and the Canadian Armed Forces patrolled the streets of Montreal and Quebec City.
- Pierre Laporte was murdered but James Cross was eventually released.



Laporte's body found,  
from CBC Archives.



# Rene Levesque and the Parti Quebecois



- Most Quebecois were opposed to violence and terrorism but at the same time many supported a separate Quebec.
- This gave rise to a new separatist political party - the Parti Quebecois - led by Rene Levesque.
- Levesque led his party to victory in the provincial election of 1976.





# Levesque and Bill 101

- One of the most controversial measures of the Parti Quebecois was Bill 101 - *The Charter of the French Language*.
- This bill made French the only working language in Quebec.
- English speaking Quebecers felt the bill went too far and deprived them of their rights as Canadians in a bilingual country.





# Bill 101

- 1 All business in the Quebec government and courts will be carried out in French.
- 2 French is to be the only official language in Quebec.
- 3 The people of Quebec have the right to
  - A ) speak French at work.
  - B ) be served in French in stores.
  - C ) be taught in French.





# The Quebec Referendum



- The Parti Québécois organized a referendum on sovereignty-association for May 20, 1980.
- This meant independence from Canada but the retention of close economic ties.
- Claude Ryan the Liberal leader in Quebec urged Quebeckers to vote "non."
- The campaign was very passionate and divisive.





# The Quebec Referendum II

- Federal politicians, like Pierre Trudeau, supported the “no” side in Quebec.
- The actual referendum question was complex and did not attract the support the Government of Quebec wished.
- 82% of the population turned out to vote and 59% rejected the proposal.





# The Quebec Referendum



## III

**Francophones**



**Oui 60% Non 40%**

**Anglophones**



**Oui 9% Non 91%**

**Immigrants**



**Oui 16% Non 84%**



# The Reaction of the Federal Government



- In 1969 Pierre Trudeau took many of the recommendations of the "Bi and Bi" Commission and incorporated them in the *Official Languages Act*.
- This act was given a muted response in Quebec as most Quebec nationalists didn't care about encouraging the French language across Canada.





# Multiculturalism in Canada

- Biculturalism was not supported by the "*Bi and Bi*" Commission as the multicultural nature of our country was already an overwhelming fact.
- In 1977 "*The Task Force on Canadian Unity*" was established to study and make recommendations on the state of Canadian unity for all Canadians.





# The Winds of Change



- The 1980 referendum convinced Pierre Trudeau that constitutional change was necessary.
- The Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau finally undertook the difficult task of patriating the constitution.
- This was achieved in 1982 but without the approval of Quebec.





# Robert Bourassa's Demands for Quebec - 1987

- “Distinct society” status.
- A veto for Quebec on any future constitutional amendments.
- More power over immigration to Quebec.
- The right to opt out of cost sharing programs with the federal government.
- The right to nominate Supreme Court judges.





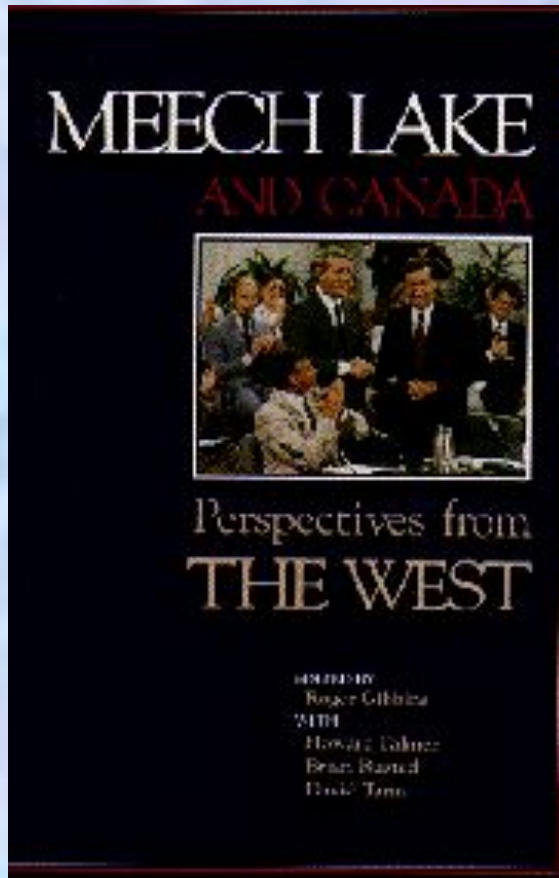
# Distinct Society

---

- What did this term mean?
- Was Quebec to be considered *different* or *special*?
- If Quebec was to be special did this mean that *additional powers* would be given to the Quebec government?



# The Meech Lake Accord 1987



- Meech Lake was an effort to complete the constitutional process and meet some of Quebec's demands. It included
  - 1. The confirmation of "distinct society" status for Quebec in order to bring the province into the constitution.
  - 2. The right to allow provinces to nominate Supreme Court judges.
- The accord was not ratified by all ten provinces and failed.



# The Failure of the Meech Lake Accord



- This accord was acceptable in Quebec but eventually failed in Manitoba.
- It was seen in Quebec as a rejection by the rest of Canada.
- The separatist movement in Quebec was revived by the emotion surrounding the failure of "Meech."







# The Bloc Quebecois

- The failure of the Meech Lake Accord resulted in the formation of a new federal political party - the "Bloc Quebecois."
- This party attracted support only in Quebec but won enough seats in 1993 to become the official opposition party in Ottawa.
- The first leader of the "Bloc" was Lucien Bouchard.



# The Charlottetown Accord

## 1992



- This was the second attempt to amend the constitution. It promised -
  - 1. “Distinct society” status for Quebec.
  - 2. Aboriginal self-government.
  - 3. Senate reform.
- It failed to pass a national referendum in October 1992 when a large majority of Canadians voted no.



# The 1995 Quebec Referendum



- In 1995 the people of Quebec voted on the question of sovereignty.
- Jacques Parizeau, the premier, led the “Yes” forces in Quebec but the question was defeated by a narrow margin.
- The “No” side won by 51 per cent to 49 percent.
- There was shock in the rest of Canada but no immediate solution.



Parizeau’s “Money & the Ethnic Vote” speech, from the CBC Archives.





# The Calgary Summit

- In September of 1997 nine provincial premiers proposed a constitutional amendment which would recognize Quebec's "*unique character*."
- This was received with considerable skepticism by the Parti Quebecois government of Lucien Bouchard.



# The Supreme Court Ruling

## 20 August 1998



The federal government asked the Supreme Court three questions in 1996.

1. Can Quebec secede unilaterally from Canada under the constitution?
2. Does it have the right to secede unilaterally under international law?
3. If there is a conflict between Canadian and international law, which takes precedence?



# The Constitutional Right to Secede (Question 1)



- “The Constitution (guarantees) order and stability, and accordingly secession of a province ‘under the Constitution’ could not be achieved unilaterally...”
- Negotiation with the other provinces within the terms of the constitution would be required for Quebec to secede.



# International Law and the Right to Secede (Question 2)



- The court decided that the right to secede exists but not at the expense of the stability and integrity of Canada.
- Only if a people were colonized or oppressed would the court consider unilateral secession acceptable.
- This, clearly, does not apply to Quebec.



# General Conclusions of the Supreme Court (Question 3)



- The court ruled that there was no conflict between Canadian and International law. The Supreme Court's ruling was open to interpretation by both sides but offered little comfort to the separatist movement in Quebec. Quebec can hold another referendum on a "clear" question and if it wins this referendum Canada and Quebec must negotiate the terms of secession.





# Problems Associated with Quebec Separation



- What happens to the large French speaking population outside of Quebec?
- What happens to the anglophone population inside of Quebec?
- How do we divide the economic resources and the national debt of the country?
- How does the rest of Canada remain united?





# Recent Changes in Quebec






- Some people think that the tide has turned against the Separatists.
- Immigration is reducing the influence of “pur laine” Quebecers – the chief supporters of separation.





# Recent Changes in Quebec

- In the 1992 Quebec election, the Parti Quebecois was rejected.
- Jean Charest's more federalist Liberals returned to power.

 PQ	 LIB	 ADQ
<b>75</b> (42.7%)	<b>48</b> (43.7%)	<b>1</b> (11.8%)





# A Nation in a Nation?



- Liberal leadership candidates and a Conservative Prime Minister both supported public statements to this effect.
- In late 2006 a number of people suggested that the circle could be squared by declaring Quebec a nation within a nation.
- In a Parliamentary motion, only 16, including North Vancouver's Don Bell, voted against the motion (21 were absent and 2 seats were vacant).
- Is anything really changed? What does this mean for Canadian nationhood?





# Summary

---

- Constitutional debate in Canada continues and the question of national unity remains an unsolved problem.
- Quebec remains outside of the Canadian Constitution.
- The PQ government in Quebec does not intend to hold another referendum until they are assured of *winning conditions*.
- At the moment these conditions do not exist.

