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Article Thirty

The Quiet Revolution: A Turning Point in Quebec History

Jacques Rouillard

In the collective imagination of Quebec francophones, the Quiet Revolution that began with the election of the Quebec Liberal party in 1960 marked a distinct break in the evolution of their society. It is seen as the end of the "great darkness" and the beginning of Quebec's modernization.[1] Francophone society, characterized until then by its conservatism, its basic rural character, and the strong influence of the Catholic Church, thus came to share the values and aspirations of North American urban, industrialized society. The Quebec francophone was thus to be brutally awakened and thrust into the twentieth century later than the surrounding anglophone world. This interpretation, much questioned but still largely dominant,[2] was put forth by a group of intellectuals who fought for the transformation of Quebec society in the 1950s. Their goals, according to them, were finally fulfilled in the 1960s.

The expression "Quiet Revolution" seems to have been used for the first time in an article in the *Montreal Star* or *The Globe and Mail* to characterize the rapid changes taking place in Quebec in the beginning of the 1960s. The political label was exaggerated, but it quickly caught on to identify the period. Led by Jean Lesage, the Liberal party that launched the Quiet Revolution in 1960 succeeded Maurice Duplessis's Union Nationale, which had governed the province since 1936 (except for the period 1939–44). The Liberal party was reelected in 1962, but defeated in 1966 by the Union Nationale.

Historians and political scientists sometimes use the expression "Quiet Revolution" to characterize the transformations of the 1970s as well the 1960s. In its literal sense, however, it applied only to the first years of the 1960s, even if the reforms continued in the same direction in later years—at a slower pace.

There is no doubt that Quebec underwent a rapid and deep evolution during these years. To understand the true meaning of this evolution, this article begins with a brief

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examination of pre-1960 Quebec. Subsequently, I identify the factors that initiated the Quiet Revolution and later on discuss the main changes that took place during these upheavals.

Quebec Society before 1960

Contrary to what the architects of the Quiet Revolution and many academics believed, Quebec before the 1960s was hardly a monolith in either ideological or social terms.[3] From the beginning of the twentieth century, Quebec's conservatism was counterbalanced by a vigorous liberal trend supported by both the French and English business communities, international labour unions, politicians, and the political press. The big Montreal dailies (*La Presse, La Patrie, Le Canada*) and the Quebec *Le Soleil*, all close to the Liberal party, took it upon themselves to spread the liberal ideology. The Liberal party, dominant both federally and provincially on the Quebec political scene from 1896 to 1936, adopted policies in Quebec that were largely similar to those of the governments in other Canadian provinces. Fully at home in the democratic system, the provincial Liberal party worked hard for industrial development and reserved a marginal role for the state.

Unlike most other Canadian provinces, Quebec had to cope with the strong influence of a Catholic Church that was quick to defend its hold on the system of public education and social services (hospitals, hospices, orphanages, and so forth). It was under Church pressure, for example, that the government abolished the Ministry of Education in 1875 and withdrew plans to restore it in 1899 and 1906. It was also to avoid a quarrel with the Church that the government failed to adopt a compulsory education law until 1943, much later than other Canadian provinces. In sum, the reluctance of the Quebec government to adopt social measures and reform the system of education before the 1930s reflected both its liberal ideology (individual responsibility and fear of state intervention) as well as the desire of the Church to safeguard its authority in these sectors.

On the other hand, the Liberal administration, directed by Adelard Godbout, that led the province from 1939 to 1944, adopted a neoliberal posture and initiated a range of measures that required a good deal of state intervention.[4] It created a Council of Economic Orientation to plan postwar reconstruction and nationalized the private electrical utilities companies in Montreal. Scorning clerical opposition, it extended the right to vote to women and ushered in compulsory education (up to fourteen years of age). As well, it agreed to participate in the unemployment insurance and family allowance programs proposed by the federal government. The Liberal government was defeated by the Union Nationale in 1944 as a result of the conscription crisis. Once in opposition, the Liberal party in the 1950s continued nevertheless to stress a neoliberal view of the role of the state.

The Catholic Church represented a considerable social force in Quebec society. In 1961, 88 percent of the Quebec population and 99 percent of francophones were Catholics—the vast majority were practising Catholics. Since the nineteenth century the Church had been able to depend on its vast number of priests, monks, and nuns to establish an imposing network of social control. Not only did it make its influence felt in the educational system and social services, but it was involved as well in the colonization and cooperative movements. To avoid "dechristianization" of the urban masses as had occurred in Europe, the Church, at the beginning of the twentieth century, set up the Catholic Action Movement. These organizations, extremely influential up to the 1950s, were directed by Catholic laity

but functioned with the assistance of a chaplain. The range of their activities was vast: students, youth, worker unions, farmers, families, women, leisure activities, among others. To complement such efforts, the Church also published daily newspapers: *L'Action catholique*, founded in Quebec City in 1907, and *Le Droit* in Ottawa/Hull in 1912. *Le Devoir* was also set up in Montreal in 1910 by Henri Bourassa with the same purpose of diffusing the clerical message.

In the publications that it supported and throughout the educational system, the Church spread a very conservative interpretation of the Christian message. We might characterize this message as clerico-conservative, a soft version of the ultramontane ideological current.[5] First, moral and religious values must closely guide the life of both individuals and groups, and the Church felt obliged to specify in detail what these values were. Influenced by French counterrevolutionary thinkers, clerico-conservatism endorsed a social vision based on authority and order. As one might suspect, ideas of individual liberty or social equality were less welcome. Moreover, as its conception of society remained strongly hierarchical, the Church distrusted political systems that made governments dependent on popular sovereignty. The masses, argued *L'Action catholique* in 1917, could not distinguish truth from error; this was the role of the elite.[6] Besides, the Church believed in its superiority over the state because it received its power directly from God; civil society's power was indirect. Its insistence of its priority role over the state in education, health, and welfare is understandable in this light. Lastly, agriculture was valued over industry because it was believed to favour the development of moral qualities. Obviously, these principles fly in the face of liberal ideological trends, which we will analyze later.

The Catholic Church saw in the Great Depression of the 1930s an opportunity to reinforce its influence over society by stressing its hold over the Quebec government.[7] The economic crisis weakened the Liberal party, in power since the end of the nineteenth century. As in many countries touched by the depression, criticisms of economic liberalism and parliamentary democracy became sharper and the population, ravaged by unemployment, was receptive to deeper changes in political direction. In 1933 the clerics and Catholic laity mapped out a program of social reconstruction fuelled by ideological conservatism. Denouncing both communism and the abuses of capitalism, it proposed reforming the social order through rural restoration, corporatism, and the adoption of some social measures by the Quebec government. These ideas inspired the program of a new party, the Union Nationale, born in 1935 and led by Maurice Duplessis. His decisive electoral victory the following year inaugurated a long regime whose policies reflected its conservative origins.

During its nineteen years in power (1936–39, 1944–60), the Union Nationale government emphasized the values of order and respect for authority and the law. Duplessis was authoritarian in his personal style and truly believed in the primordial role of elites in society as well as the importance of the leader.[8] With little regard for democratic principles, he was thus hardly troubled by the extensive practice of electoral patronage during his administration. And not much more concerned by civil liberties, he assented readily, for example, to Cardinal Villeneuve's request to pass the Padlock Law in 1937. The law forbade communist literature and permitted closure of places where communist activities were suspected.

Duplessis's relations with the Catholic bishops were much warmer than those of former Liberal premiers; he strove to live up to episcopal expectations. During his mandates, clerical authority grew at the expense of the state in the realms of health care and public education. In 1945, for example, Duplessis agreed that authority over curriculum and personnel in specialized schools (arts, crafts, engineering, and business), until then under

government jurisdiction, should be handed over to the Church. Former Liberal governments had consistently opposed this change.

The Duplessis administration also gave special attention to agriculture — the "basic industry" — which was seen as a source of economic and social stability. It introduced two important measures to help the farmer: low-interest agricultural credit and the extension of rural electrification. These policies significantly increased rural electoral support for the party. The priority given to agriculture did not mean that Duplessis scorned big business. On the contrary, particularly in the postwar era, he sought to develop industry by showing himself friendly to foreign investment. He maintained excellent relations with the francophone and anglophone business communities, who appreciated his social conservatism, his faith in private enterprise, and his desire to minimize the role of the state. Big business was delighted with Duplessis's firm commitment to balanced budgets, a commitment that kept Quebec's per capita debt the lowest of all Canadian provinces during the 1950s.

Duplessis's noninterventionist economic policy pleased businesspeople, while his passivity in education, health, and welfare earned the favour of the Catholic clergy. These two social forces joined to reinforce Duplessis's basic "laissez-faire" orientation. Consequently, Quebec lagged behind the rest of North American society in the process of political modernization. It was this backwardness that the architects of the Quiet Revolution attempted to address, counting on the Quebec government to play a mainspring role.

The Sources of the Quiet Revolution

The profound social changes arising from the Quiet Revolution were not spontaneous. Instead they were part of a long, historical process accelerated by the Second World War. Let us examine several of the factors that combined to speed up this process.

The origins of the Quiet Revolution are often explained by economic factors. Francophone Quebec had changed from a rural to an industrialized and urban society, thanks to the industrial development connected to World War II and the expansion of the 1950s. The clerical-conservative ideology that had suited a rural society became irrelevant in an industrial setting. Contradictions arose between the political and social institutions related to the conservative ideology and the forces emanating from the industrial world. The Quiet Revolution thus consisted of adapting institutions to the necessities of modern life.

However, such an analysis overemphasizes the rural character of the francophone population before the Second World War. Statistics speak for themselves. Since the beginnings of the nineteenth century, the level of urbanization of francophone Quebec has been higher than that of Canada as a whole (towns of 10 000 and over). In 1931, for example, 39 percent of Quebec francophones lived in a city (10 000 people and more), as opposed to 37 percent for other Canadians.[9] In Montreal — until the 1960s, the commercial, industrial, and financial metropolis of Canada — francophones made up more than 60 percent of the population since the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the francophone presence made itself strongly felt in the province's manufacturing industries, where they made up 70 percent of the manufacturing industries workforce in 1931.[10] Moving to the cities and joining the working class at a rapid pace, francophones, therefore, were exposed to the influences of the industrial world long before the 1940s and 1950s. Their society, far from being monolithic, was quite diversified in its social stratification and its ideological setting.

The trend of francophone urbanization accelerated with the rapid surge of industrialization beginning with the Second World War: the percentage of their population in towns of 10 000 inhabitants and over rose from 40 to 58 between 1941 and 1961.[11] The rise of industries also produced a large expansion of salaried workers among them. Socio-clerical control became more difficult in an urban milieu because of the absence of local community ties. In any case, traditional clerical thought offered only unsuitable solutions to problems coming from an urban-industrialized society: mixed marriages, pressure on married women to join the workforce, exploitation in the work place, school curriculum revision, extension of social services, and so forth.[12] Furthermore, North American influences made themselves felt with greater force through the rise of mass media—daily newspapers, movies, radio, and television. All these factors reversed a trend among religious vocations, which grew less rapidly than the Catholic population in the 1950s. As the clergy started to lack religious personnel to fulfill the needs in education and social services, more and more laypeople were hired, weakening the religious fabric. Among some Catholic intellectuals appeared also an influential trend to reduce the role of the clergy and favour the secularization of social institutions.

Moreover, rapid industrialization also altered the structure of francophone society. The rise of the service economy generated a new social category: a middle class composed of public sector employees (white-collar workers, intellectuals, and administrators) and of middle management working in private enterprises (technicians, professionals, and managers). The first group saw state expansion as a means to increase their control over society, while the second group was frustrated to find their climb to upper levels blocked by anglophones.[13] In addition, organized labour, which saw its membership more than double between 1941 and 1961, became a persistent force of opposition to the Duplessis government. During the 1950s, unions called for state intervention and agitated for reforms that were finally introduced during the Quiet Revolution.[14] The economic slowdown at the end of the 1950s also made French businessmen more receptive to a wider state role. Business associations urged reform of the education system and became receptive to the idea of state economic planning.[15] Thus, dissatisfaction with Duplessis's conservatism and openness to neoliberal reforms marked many social circles.

This brings us to a third, ideologically based, explanation for the Quiet Revolution. The Second World War, in which democratic countries triumphed over authoritarian regimes, reinvigorated Western liberalism and discredited right-wing ideologies (fascism, nazism, corporatism). It reinforced values of liberty, individualism, and materialism and put conservative groups on the defensive. It is significant that during the postwar period many Western countries and the United Nations (1948) adopted charters of individual rights. This international trend influenced a group of young and committed Catholic intellectuals who wanted to reconcile Catholicism and liberalism. Inspired by the French "left-wing Catholics," they diffused their views through the Montréal daily newspaper *Le Devoir* and other influential periodicals (*Cité Libre, L'Action nationale, Vrai, Liberté*). Among them, André Laurendeau, Maurice Lamontagne, Gérard Pelletier, Jacques Hébert, Claude Ryan, and Pierre Elliott Trudeau played important roles in politics in the 1960s and 1970s. Even if they insisted on their devout Catholicism, they rejected all forms of clericalism and stressed the role of laypeople in the Catholic faith. Proclaiming the priority of the human being in society, they hoped to enlarge the spirit of freedom and strengthen democratic values.[16] They also favoured the secularization of public institutions and viewed state intervention positively, especially in education and social services. Their ideas paved the way for the reforms initiated during the Quiet Revolution.

As we will see, a new nationalism flourished in the 1960s, focusing on Quebec's government and territory. It appealed to francophones in part because English Canadians had traditionally resisted linguistic equality outside of Quebec and federal government institutions. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, French Canadians fought for the right to use their own language in Parliament, the courts, and public schools throughout Canada. The abolition of French Catholic schools in the western provinces and in Ontario in the early twentieth century aroused vigorous protest in Quebec. As a result, in the 1920s, French-Canadian nationalism (led by Lionel Groulx) turned more toward the defence of Quebec autonomy, while remaining pan-Canadian and anxious to defend minority francophone rights outside Quebec. The neo-nationalists of the 1960s pushed the separatist cause a step further. The fate of francophone minorities became a minor concern compared with the reinforcement of Quebec government powers. The French-Canadian vision of national identity thus narrowed: Quebec was now seen as the only place where francophones could feel really at home.

Finally, the neo-nationalism of the 1960s was also influenced by international trends, in particular the Third World decolonization movement. More than 60 new countries, mostly former colonies, gained their independence and joined the United Nations between 1946 and 1965. Several Quebec intellectuals saw Quebec's situation as that of a country colonized by Canada since the conquest of New France by Britain in 1760.[17] In Quebec as in Europe, the Algerian struggle for independence at the end of the 1950s reconciled leftist intellectuals with nationalism. Thus they began to argue that it was only normal for Quebeckers to free themselves from their dependence on English Canada.

The Nature of the Quiet Revolution

The Liberal party was elected in June 1960 with a weak majority: 51 seats out of 95, and only 51 percent of the popular vote. Francophone votes were largely split between the two parties, and anglophones voted overwhelmingly Liberal. The Liberals were doubly disappointed at having failed to take further advantage of the weakness of the Union Nationale, which was handicapped by the recent deaths of two of its leaders. Maurice Duplessis died in September 1959, and his successor, Paul Sauvé, passed away three months later. The new UN leader, Antonio Barrette, lacked the charisma of Jean Lesage, a good speaker who surrounded himself with a strong political team.

The Liberal party program advocated a fundamental change in political direction and accordingly adopted the slogan "It's time for change" during the election campaign. Among the principal elements in its platform, it proposed to democratize the political regime, revise the educational system, increase the role of the state in the economy, and adopt several important social measures. The philosophy that inspired its program and the achievements that followed were linked to neoliberalism, a version of liberalism upheld by governments of Western industrialized countries after the Second World War.

This ideology is characterized first and foremost by its strong attachment to fundamental liberal values: individual liberty, the right to private property, and the democratic system of government. It embraced an optimistic and materialistic vision of the world, championing the progress of humanity, mainly through economic development. For liberals, religion was seen as a private affair; the church should refrain from intervening in public life and confine its interests purely to the religious sphere.

In its classic form, liberalism advocated a free-market economy, reserving a minimal role for the state in economic and social matters. But Western countries had revised their

belief in such "laissez-faire" postures after the economic crisis of the 1930s. Guided by the policies of the New Deal of Roosevelt in United States and by the ideas of economist John Maynard Keynes, they began to favour limited intervention by the state to stabilize economic cycles. Governments also initiated a variety of social policies, not only to provide better social security, but also to stimulate the consumer economy. Beginning with the Second World War, the Canadian government modelled its economic and social policies on these ideas.

The Liberals, under Jean Lesage, adopted several measures inspired by this neoliberal ideology that clashed sometimes with some important principles of clerical-conservative thought. On the political front, measures were aimed at democratizing political life and promoting the role of the state. The Liberals argued that the state should not be in the service of a ruling political party. Instead, the party must be at the service of the state, seen as an embodiment of the general will. As a first measure, the Liberals tried to eliminate the corruption and patronage that had flourished under the Duplessis regime. They reformed the civil service so that the hiring and promotion of civil servants reflected competence rather than political recommendations or repayment of political favours. To attract the best candidates, they improved working conditions for civil servants and agreed to their unionization in 1964. The following year saw the implementation of their right to negotiate and even to strike.

In a spirit of respect for democracy, the government began to revise electoral laws and the electoral map. To avoid profligate spending during election campaigns, a law was adopted in 1963 limiting the expenditures of political parties and foreseeing partial reimbursement of expenses by the state. As for the electoral map, which overrepresented rural areas at the expense of urban ridings, the Liberals introduced an initial modification in 1965. They increased the number of urban seats. The government also tried to abolish the Legislative Council. Quebec was the only province that had preserved this nonelected body, the equivalent to the federal Senate. It was finally abolished in 1968. Other measures favoured greater citizen participation in political life. These included: the publication of an official record of Chamber debates, the extension of the vote to young people aged eighteen and over, and the willingness to consult the public on important proposed legislation.

Finally, the government worked hard to establish a new balance in its relations with the religious powers. It sought to widen the role of the state in areas that the Church had traditionally reserved for itself. Thus, in 1964, it succeeded where the preceding Liberal governments had failed in restoring the Ministry of Education, giving it broad authority over public school institutions.[18] This department had been abolished in 1875 on the grounds that education was too important to be entrusted to the politicians. The Liberals now insisted that education was so important that authority over it must be moved to the people's elected representatives. As a public institution, the educational system should depend not on religious authority, but on the democratic institutions embodied in Parliament.

The Liberals established a similar state control in the health sector, where more than half of the hospitals remained in the hands of religious communities in 1960. The establishment of the Hospital Insurance Program in 1961 permitted the expansion of state influence. As the sole source of hospital revenues, the state moved to the foreground. In 1962, the government went so far as to reserve only a minor role for religious communities on the hospitals' administrative boards.

Surprisingly, there was little resistance by religious authorities to secularization in educational and health care institutions. They were forced to move aside as urban religiosity declined and the population distanced itself from the teachings of the Church.

Increasingly, the Church was seen as an authoritarian institution whose message was out of touch with modern society. Important signs—among others, the extensive use of the birth-control pill and the rise of civil divorce—illustrated that many Catholics were turning away from Church teachings. Religious dissatisfaction could be found even within the Church itself, as many priests and nuns abandoned their vows and the religious life itself. As we have seen, the individualism and materialism that accompanied industrial growth during and after the Second World War played a leading role in this change. In the 1960s the time had come for the withdrawal of clerical authority and the secularization of francophone society.

This second characteristic of the Quiet Revolution grew out of the changing ideological outlook, as well as nationalist motivations. The Quebec government thus prepared for an important expansion of its authority in the economic, social, and cultural realms.[19] Jean Lesage stated clearly the principles underlying his interventionist policy in a 1961 speech:

> We need powerful tools, not only to meet the inevitable challenges of the coming years, but also to put the French-Canadian people in step with the real world. And the only tool we have, is our state, the state of Quebec. We cannot afford the luxury of not using it . . . If we fail to make use of our state for ourselves, out of fear or prejudice, we will thus deprive ourselves of what is perhaps the only means remaining to us to assure our survival as an ethnic minority and to blossom as a people conscious of the requirements of the modern world in which we are hereafter called upon to live. It is in this perspective that the government of the province of Quebec undertakes all of its activities.[20]

By comparison with the Duplessis years, the economic dimension of government activities during this period took on considerable scope. Two major objectives included the stimulation of Quebec's economic development and increased francophone participation in the economy.[21] The lower level of economic development in Quebec compared with that in Ontario and the underrepresentation of francophones in Quebec big business were particularly resented. The government was ready not only to support private enterprise, but also to play a leading role in economic development. Convinced of the virtues of economic planning, it formed the Conseil d'orientation économique in 1961 to provide advice and plans for the future socioeconomic development of the province. Next, the Société générale de financement was created in 1962 to lend financial support to French-Canadian industrial and commercial enterprises. Two new state corporations were established in 1964 and 1965: Sidbec to set up a steel mill in the province and Soquem to stimulate mining development.

The most important government initiative was the nationalization of the existing private electrical utilities companies in 1963, henceforth incorporated into Hydro-Québec. In the previous year, the Liberal party had won the election mainly on this platform. The objectives of nationalization were to unify the network of electricity distribution, to secure for Quebeckers control of one of their most important resources, and to provide cheap electricity to stimulate industrial progress. Hydro-Québec enforced the use of French as the language of work. Important career openings were thus created for francophone managers and engineers within Quebec. With the construction of large dams, Hydro-Québec became a success symbol for the Québécois. Less spectacular, but still very significant, was the establishment of the Caisse de dépôt et placement in 1965 to administer the funds collected by the Quebec Pension Plan. Many of the funds accumulated went to the purchase of Quebec government and Hydro-Québec bonds; this strategy reduced government dependence on English-Canadian and American financial institutions. During the 1970s, the

Caisse played a more active role in capitalizing Quebec entreprises by purchasing large quantities of their shares.

In the field of education, the Liberal party used the creation of a provincial Ministry of Education in 1964 to undertake a vast reform of the school system. The objective of this reform was to democratize educational institutions, to guarantee access to higher education to all young people who had the necessary talent, and to adapt the education system to the needs of modern society. To expand the educational system, the government in 1961 guaranteed free education and textbooks up to grade eleven while raising mandatory schooling age to fifteen. Important reforms of the structure were also initiated to unify the school system and to facilitate access to university. These reforms continued with the creation in 1967 of a new institution, the postsecondary CEGEP, and in 1968 of a network of Quebec universities (both wholly nonconfessional). Reviews of programs and teaching were sought to ensure respect for individual learning abilities, to increase participation in social, political, and cultural life, and to prepare students more adequately for the labour market. These reforms, which relegated religious instruction to a secondary position, illustrated that public education was no longer in the hands of the Church.

The influence of the state also extended into the fields of health and welfare services. While the Union Nationale government had entrusted clerical institutions with large areas of responsibility in these fields, the Liberal government chose another route. Following the recommendations of the Boucher Commission on Public Assistance in 1961, the provincial government enlarged considerably its role in social security, participating in two important cost-sharing programs set up by the federal government: the Hospital Insurance Program in 1961 and the Canada Assistance Plan in 1966. In becoming the main source of their funding, the government took effective control of hospitals and social institutions. Finally, in 1964, Quebec initiated its own pension plan, administered independently of the Canada Pension Plan. Such actions are testimony to the government's commitment to the welfare state by establishing a social security net to protect its citizens against the risks of poverty, sickness, and old age.

Finally, state intervention spread into cultural activities. Although the Duplessis government had shown no interest in such questions, the Liberal party felt fully justified in intervening to assure the development of French culture. In 1961, a Ministry of Cultural Affairs was set up to coordinate and stimulate cultural activities. It was also at this point that Quebec grew closer to France, the source of French culture. Quebec opened a general delegation in Paris in 1961, and several agreements on cooperation led to a program of cultural exchange over the following years. With the opening of more offices in London, New York, and Milan, and the development of relations with newly independent French African countries, Quebec began to pursue an international policy that soon upset the federal government.

In the 1960s Quebeckers had come to view the state as a powerful instrument to bridge the gap which they believed separated them from other Western societies. The Quebec government's interventionism quickly surpassed that of other provinces due to its powerful mixture of nationalist and reformist agendas.

Toward a Quebec Nationalism

The Quiet Revolution was a major turning point in the definition of francophone Quebeckers' national identity. This transformation weakened Quebeckers' sense of identification with Canada. Such a development was at the source of the constitutional crisis

that has troubled relations between Quebec and Canada ever since. Before the 1960s, French Quebeckers identified themselves as French Canadians with common bonds to francophones outside of Quebec. Their nationalism had been based on French language and culture and on the Catholic religion. Their vision, essentially pan-Canadian, had revolved around the idea of complete equality between the two major linguistic groups across Canada.

The Quiet Revolution gradually changed this formulation of their identity. Nothing is more revealing of this change than the gradual shift in self-reference from "French Canadian" to "Québécois." This change illustrated the development of a new nationalism among francophones. As in the past, it expressed fidelity to French language and culture, while abandoning the Catholic religion. There were also other important transformations: nationalism lost much of its pan-Canadian dimension, centring instead on Quebec territory, and it took on a more political tone as the Quebec government was seen as the political expression of the nation. Indeed, the nationalism of this period tended toward the construction of a nation-state for Quebec francophones around the Quebec government. The growing identification of "Franco-Québécois" with their province weakened their attachment to Canada, and their goals began to diverge from those of francophone minorities outside Quebec. Moreover, this new nationalism had as a corollary the wish to strengthen Quebec government power, giving birth to a strong independence movement.

From the beginning of the 1960s, Quebec began to enunciate a new set of goals in its demands to the federal government. The Duplessis government had had a passive attitude in its relations with Ottawa. It defended provincial jurisdictions and denounced the centralization of power in Ottawa. The Lesage government took a more energetic position. It demanded not only the elimination of federal government encroachment in the fields of provincial jurisdictions but also the extension of Quebec legislative powers and the eventual granting of a "special status" for Quebec within the Canadian federation. In support of its claims, the Lesage government began to call for a new principle: Quebec constitutes the government of a "nation" distinct from the rest of Canada. To assure the full development of this "francophone nation," it must, then, have more powers than those of other provinces, more or less a special status. It is revealing that in the early 1960s Lesage began to use the term "Quebec state" instead of "province of Quebec".

According to Lesage, Canadian federalism was nevertheless flexible enough to permit a broadening of Quebec's powers. Indeed, in some domains, Quebec succeeded in securing greater autonomy from the federal government. However, from 1967, with the arrival of a new generation of Quebec politicians in Ottawa (Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Jean Marchand, Gérard Pelletier), the federal government became more rigid in protecting its powers. The Union Nationale government that succeeded the Liberals in 1966 pursued the objectives of greater autonomy for Quebec, demanding an in-depth reform of federalism and a new constitutional status for Quebec. Such reforms were justified on neo-nationalist grounds: "It is in Quebec, where they constitute the majority that French Canadians can fully develop as a nation of French culture. But, because of an antiquated and badly implemented constitution, Quebec does not currently possess all the powers and instruments necessary to function as the nation-state of French Canada."[22]

Some went a step further, demanding that all political power be concentrated in Quebec's hands, thus giving birth to separatist parties. Before the 1960s the idea of independence had appeared periodically in Quebec history, but was confined to small groups of marginal intellectuals. The desire for change stimulated by the Quiet Revolution proved to be a decisive force that launched the idea onto the political scene. Indeed, the *Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale*, born in 1960, became a political party three

years later and ran candidates in the 1966 election, where it won nearly 6 percent of the vote. But it was really with the creation of the Parti Québécois in 1968, with René Lévesque as its leader, that the idea truly caught on (23 percent of the vote in 1970). For the sovereigntists, anglophones dominated the federal government and the federal regime was paralyzing Quebec development.

The new nationalism accompanying the Quiet Revolution was strongly tied to the penetration of neoliberal values in Quebec. As noted above, neoliberalism includes a materialist dimension in which the possession of wealth becomes an important standard of both individual and collective success. As these values became more important to francophone Quebeckers at the beginning of the 1960s, they came to feel more deeply their economic inferiority. They resented the fact that the economic development of their province eluded them, that their level of income was lower than that of anglophones, and that they had achieved an inferior occupational status. This inferiority, already experienced personally by many francophones, was confirmed by a study sponsored by the Royal Commission on Bilinguism and Biculturalism in the 1960s. In a detailed analysis of 1961 census data, the study revealed that the average income of French Canadians in Quebec was 35 percent lower than that of English Canadians and that francophone salaries were almost at the bottom of the scale if classified according to ethnic origin (only First Nations and Italians were lower).[23] French Canadians were thus performing poorly according to the new values they had adopted.[24]

Determined to rectify this situation, the new political and economic elite in the 1960s found in the Quebec state (an expression that began to replace "province" from 1962) the instrument of economic reconquest. Premier Jean Lesage summed up well this aspiration: "Up to now, the Quebec people believed that its principal wealth —in fact, its only wealth —was found in the cultural values of the French-Canadian nation. But, more recently, we have come to understand that we own the ground on which we live, and that it is up to us and us alone to exploit its immense resources." He added: "All adult peoples have not only the right but the duty to control as much as possible their own economy."[25] The Quebec state, the only government fully controlled by francophones, was thus seen as the lever for their economic and social improvement. This explains the enlargement of the role of the Quebec government in the 1960s, particularly in the economic realm. The nationalization of Hydro-Québec and the creation of state entreprises followed naturally. State control reinforced francophone nationalism and gave it a purely "Quebec" tone.

It remains something of a paradox that "Québécois" nationalism came to challenge Canadian federalism while the sociopolitical values that it embraced were similar to those espoused in English Canada. The initial achievements of the Quiet Revolution were welcomed in English Canada because they were seen as a means by which Quebec could align itself with the rest of North America. English Canadians felt that this would put an end to reactionary nationalism and inaugurate an era of fruitful cooperation between the two communities. However, such was not the case. The new nationalism, born out of the Quiet Revolution, led to the expansion of the independence movement and to demands from the Quebec government to modify the Canadian Constitution and to grant new legislative powers to the province. As previously explained, the sharing of communal values generated a political nationalism that made the "state of Quebec" the instrument through which francophones could catch up with other North American societies.

The reforms undertaken by the Lesage government between 1960 and 1966 did not receive unanimous popular support, and met resistance from the most conservative elements of society. The extension of the state's role into areas traditionally served by the

Church, especially education, aroused resentment, particularly in the rural regions. As well, people worried about tax increases and the rising debt that the Lesage government's "policy of grandeur" would impose on the province. In the 1966 election, the Union Nationale capitalized on this discontent, and to everyone's surprise defeated the Liberals, despite their poorer showing in terms of the popular vote (40.9 percent for the UN versus 47.2 percent for the Liberals). The electoral map, which overrepresented the rural areas, and the presence of a third political party, the *Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale*, penalized the Liberals. Nevertheless, these results made it clear that enthusiasm for the achievements of the Quiet Revolution was not shared by the entire population. Nonetheless, the Union Nationale did not look back, but rather continued the objectives set by the Liberals. It reformed the electoral map, abolished the Legislative Council, completed the reforms in education, established a variety of social policies, created state enterprises, and adopted a stronger nationalism than the Liberals.

In other circles, the Quiet Revolution aroused expectations that the Liberals had been unable to satisfy. The affirmation of neo-nationalism gave rise to separatist groups and to the departure of René Lévesque from the Liberal party; he founded the *Mouvement souveraineté-association*, which became the Parti Québécois (PQ) in 1968. The PQ often defined its mandate as carrying the goals of the Quiet Revolution to their final term. The labour movement also underwent a transformation in the mid-1960s, mainly because the reforms of the Quiet Revolution had raised its members' expectations. Labour unions took on a radical stance, resulting in an unprecedented wave of strikes and the adoption of a radical critique of the capitalist system from a Marxist perspective. At the same time, many young intellectuals turned sharply to the left, advocating socialism and Quebec independence.

The direct influence of the Quiet Revolution, promoting both state interventionism and political autonomy for Quebec, lasted to the early 1980s. After the serious recession of 1981–82, however, Quebec began to reduce the role of the state, as did many other Western countries. At the same time, the concept of separation took an important step backwards. It required the failure of the Meech Lake Accord in 1990 to revive the idea of Quebec independence. However, whatever the ups and downs of the sovereigntist cause, francophones have increasingly tended since the Quiet Revolution to define themselves primarily as Quebeckers.[26] This is the legacy of the Quiet Revolution that presents the gravest challenge to Canadian unity.

NOTES

1. For further information on the Quiet Revolution see: Y. Belanger, R. Comeau, and C. Métivier, *La Révolution tranquille, 40 ans plus tard: un bilan* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 2000); Dale C. Thompson, *Jean Lesage and the Quiet Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1984); Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968); W.D. Coleman, *The Independence Movement in Quebec, 1945–1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec's Quiet Revolution. Liberalism versus Neo-nationalism, 1945–1960* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985); Michael D. Behiels, *Quebec since 1945. Selected Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987). In French, see Léon Dion, *La Révolution déroutée 1960–1976* (Montréal: Boréal, 1998); Jacques Rouillard, "La Révolution tranquille: Rupture ou Tournant?" *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 32, 4 (Spring 1997): 23–51.
2. The dominance of this view emerged from a survey conducted among university students. Jocelyn Létourneau, "La production historienne courante portant sur le Québec et ses rapports

avec la construction des figures identitaires d'une communauté communicationnelle," *Recherches sociographiques*, 36, 1 (1995): 30–32.

3. Among recent works questioning the monolithic nature of pre–Quiet Revolution ideology, see Fernande Roy, *Histoire des idéologies au Québec aux XIXe et XXe siècles* (Montreal: Boréal, 1993); Claude Couture, *Le mythe de la modernisation du Québec* (Montreal: Méridien, 1991); Jocelyn Létourneau, "Le 'Québec moderne', un chapitre du grand récit collectif des Québécois," *Revue française de science politique* 42, 5 (October 1992): 765–85; Jacques Rouillard, "La Révolution tranquille." This vision is reflected in the synthesis by Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, and François Ricard, *Quebec since 1930* (Toronto, 1991).
4. See Jean-Guy Genest, *Godbout* (Québec: Septentrion, 1996).
5. Nadia F. Eid describes the ideological base of ninteenth century "ultamontanism" in *Le clergé et le pouvoir politique au Québec* (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1978). The Church softened the tone of its teaching in the twentieth century, but the fundamental values remained the same. See Richard Jones, *L'idéologie de l'Action catholique (1917–1939)* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974), or the four books of *Idéologies au Canada français* directed by Fernand Dumont, Jean Hamelin, and Jean-Paul Montminy (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1973–1981).
6. Richard Jones, op. cit., p. 182.
7. This interpretation is developed in my essay "Duplessis: Le Québec vire à droite," in Alain-G. Gagnon et Michel Sarra-Bournet, *Duplessis. Entre la Grande Noirceur et la société libérale* (Montréal: Québec Amérique, [c 1997]), pp. 183–206.
8. For a brief outline of the Duplessis regime, see Richard Jones, *Duplessis and the Union Nationale Administration* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association Booklet, 1983).
9. My own calculations based on *Recensement du Canada*, 1931, vol. 3, pp. 258–308, in Jacques Rouillard, "La Révolution tranquille: Rupture ou Tournant?" *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 32, 4 (Spring 1997): 31. As the census definition of an urban area (1000 people and more) is rather low, we redefined it as 10 000 people and more.
10. *Recensement du Canada.*, vol. 7, p. 948.
11. *Recensement du Canada.*, vol. 2, p. 272; 1961, bulletin 1.3-2, table 83.
12. Jean Hamelin, *Histoire du catholicisme québécois. Le XXe siècle*, tome 2, *De 1940 à nos jours* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1984), pp. 109–89.
13. Marc Renaud, "Quebec's New Middle Class in Search of Social Hegemony: Causes and Political Consequences," in Michael D. Behiels, *Quebec since 1945*, pp. 48–79; Gilles Bourque et Nicole Frenette, "La structure nationale québécoise," *Socialisme québécois* 21–22 (avril 1971): pp. 140–46.
14. Jacques Rouillard, *Histoire du syndicalisme québécois* (Montréal: Boréal, 1989), p. 201.
15. Michel Sara-Bournet, *Entre le corporatisme et le libéralisme: Les groupes d'affaires francophones et l'organisation socio-politique du Québec de 1943 à 1969* (Ph.D. thesis, Ottawa University, 1995), pp. 282–333.
16. Jean Hamelin, *Histoire du catholicisme québécois*, p. 138; Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude of Quebec's Quiet Revolution. Liberalism versus Neo-Nationalism, 1945–1960* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1985); Léon Dion, *Québec 1945–2000. tome 2, Les intellectuels et le temps de Duplessis* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1993), pp. 374–97.
17. Léon Dion, *La révolution dérouée*, pp. 107–69; Michael D. Behiels, "Quebec Social Transformation and Ideological Renewal, 1940–1976," in Michael D. Behiels, *Quebec since 1945*, pp. 35–38.
18. The system, however, remained confessional, and the Catholic and the Protestant committees survived. Still, the power of these committees was limited to religious questions and the representation of bishops was reduced in the Catholic committee.
19. The expansion of the role of the state from 1960 to 1965 increased the number of civil servants by 53 percent as well as government expenses (by 127 percent in constant dollars). Daniel Latouche, "La vrai nature de . . . la révolution tranquille," *Revue canadienne de science politique* 7, 3 (September 1974): pp. 530, 533.
20. Speech given to the Fédération des sociétés Saint Jean-Baptiste in Ottawa in 1961. Jean Lesage, *Un Québec fort dans une nouvelle Conféderation* (Québec: Ministère des affaires fédérales provinciales, 1965), p. 18.

21. Account of Roland Parenteau in Robert Comeau, ed., *Jean Lesage et l'éveil d'une nation* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1989), p. 190.
22. *Objectifs 1966 de l'Union nationale. Un programme d'action pour une jeune nation. Quebec d'abord*: 4, in Réjean Pelletier, *Partis politiques et société québécois. De Duplessis à Bourassa, 1944–1970* (Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1989), p. 291.
23. Lysiane Gagnon, "Les conclusions du Rapport B.B.: De Durham à Laurendeau-Dunton: Variations sur le thème de la dualité canadienne," in Robert Comeau, *Économie québécoise* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1969), p. 238.
24. Charles Taylor has pointed out this francophone perception: "They are nagged by a sense of collective inferiority in those fields which they prize." "Nationalism and the Political Intelligentsia," *Queen's Quarterly* 72, 1 (Spring 1965–66): 160.
25. Réjean Pelletier, "La Révolution tranquille," in Gérard Daigle, *Le Québec en jeu. Comprendre les grands défis* (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1992), p. 617.
26. 21% in 1970, 39% in 1985, 59% in 1990, and 63% in 1997. Maurice Pinard, *The Quebec Independence Movement. A Dramatic Reemergence*, Working Papers in Social Behaviour, Department of Sociology, McGill University, 1992, p. 31; Groupe de recherche sur l'américanité (GRA), "L'assurance identitaire se conjugue avec l'ouverture sur le monde," *Le Devoir*, 15 juillet 1998, p. A7.

Article Thirty-One

Politics and the Reinforcement of the French Language in Canada and Quebec, 1960–1986

Richard Jones

It is commonplace to affirm that language has been a political issue in Canada ever since 1760, when the British completed their conquest of New France, and the colony's approximately 70 000 French-speaking inhabitants came under British domination. The new masters hoped that time would enable them to transform the French Canadians into good English-speaking members of the Church of England[1] or that British immigration would eventually swamp them. Although the English language rapidly assumed a privileged place in Quebec and in Canada, the French did not disappear; indeed they multiplied prolifically.[2] When Canada assumed Dominion status with a federal form of government in 1867, Quebec, the territory inhabited largely by francophones, became a separate province.[3]

Confederation did not open an era of linguistic harmony in Canada. Indeed, bitter language conflict burst forth frequently as French-speaking minorities outside Quebec saw their few linguistic rights, particularly in the area of education, curtailed or eradicated by English-speaking majorities.[4]

Until 1960, it could be said that the status of the French language in Canada was at best stagnating and that citizens who spoke French or were of French ethnic origin were clearly disadvantaged compared with those who spoke English or were of British ethnic origin.[5] This article seeks to show that, since 1960, the status of the French language in Canada,

Source: *Quebec since 1945: Selected Readings*, ed. Michael Behiels (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), pp. 223–40. Reprinted by permission.