

QUEBEC ANGLOPHONES AND SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION

This paper aims to set out a strategy for winning the greatest possible sympathy among Anglophone Quebecers toward the sovereignty option in the upcoming referendum. It includes a rationale for such a strategy, as well as setting out the basic organizational and tactical elements in its possible realization. The bulk of the paper concentrates on only one aspect of strategy because of its primordial nature, i.e. the identification of the minority of Anglophones potentially sympathetic at this time.

Quebec Anglophones are defined for the purpose of this proposal simply as those residents who operate in their daily lives more in English than in any other language. This is not a theoretical criterion but a practical one, it means that there is an important element of the Quebec population whose sources of information, both formal and informal, both institutional and personal, are those in the English language. It is precisely because they operate in this special context that any attempt to communicate with this population or a part of it must be considered and planned in a separate, and English-speaking, context. While it is impossible to know the exact size of this group, a reasonable estimate sets the total Anglophone population at perhaps just under one million persons, of which at least 80% reside in the Montreal region, thus comprising at least 15% of the Quebec population and one-third of the population of the Montreal region.

WHY NOT "BENIGN NEGLECT"?

It is sometimes said that the Anglophones are all set against Quebec sovereignty and that any <sup>effort</sup> expended upon them in the campaign would be simply wasted, that effectively ignoring them would save on a certain number of resources and a certain amount of energy which, in theory, might be put to better use among the Francophone population.

The disadvantages of this strategy, however, much outweigh the advantages. There can be no question that essentially ignoring English-speaking Quebecers during the referendum and thereby letting others solely define the content and context of the issues - "Look what they, the separatists are trying to do to us" - will play right into the hands of those extremists seeking to generate hysteria among Anglophones under the emotionally-charged atmosphere of the campaign: these in turn would generate powerful counter sentiments among extreme nationalist Francophones, and the effects would be as follows:

- 1) That small proportion of Anglophones potentially and actually sympathetic would, in great part, be lost;
- 2) that larger, though still minoritarian, group of Anglophones who might support the independence movement further along the road - and the road is likely to be

a long one - are likely to be lost in great part in this kind of process;

- 3) English Canadians outside of Quebec, potentially able to be open to Quebec and Quebec Independence in terms of their rational interests, might be won over to an emotional defense of English Quebecers;
- 4) the majority of Anglophones that remain opposed to Independence on mainly rational grounds would become far more emotional in their opposition;
- 5) because of the above, especially 3 and 4, many moderate Francophone Quebecers might be "turned off" by the whole irrational turn of events with the result that they might turn against Quebec Independence.

#### ANGLOPHONE ATTITUDES: HISTORICAL FACTORS

Given the inherent value of such a project, what exactly is it up against? Insofar as political attitudes are concerned, Quebec Anglophones have traditionally supported the Liberal Party both provincially and federally since the 1920's. This is partly due to the more pluralist orientation of these parties vis-a-vis their competitors, and to the general urban nature of their appeal, corresponding to the urban nature of the Anglophone population. Nevertheless, the particularly strong support the Quebec Anglophones, the majority of whom are (or, at least, were) English Protestants, have shown toward the Liberal Party at the Federal level - quite in contradiction with the tendency of English-speaking Protestants to vote Conservative outside of Quebec - indicates one important political characteristic. This characteristic is that politically Anglophone Quebecers tend to operate in a Quebec context rather than in a Canadian context, that their support of the Federal Liberals is due to the importance of the Federal Liberals in the Quebec political arena. Other instances and examples can be found to support our general contention that Anglophone Quebecers have tended historically to operate politically in a Quebec context and are somewhat remote from Anglophone Canadians outside of Quebec.

The above is not to imply a traditional sympathy with Quebec nationalism. Anglophone Quebecers have tended to be suspicious of and negative toward various manifestations of Quebec nationalism in the past, and, in general, were uninterested in and unsympathetic to the lives, interests, and aspirations of the Francophone majority in Quebec until the late 1950's at the earliest. It was only with manifestations of an undeniable change in consciousness in Quebec beginning with the Quiet Revolution that Quebec Anglophones had to begin somehow to come to terms with the reality of the majority. Operating passively in the Quebec context was no longer comfortable. The old tokenism would not do. The self assertion of the Quebec collectivity now impinged upon various aspects

of existence and began to challenge the self-conception of Anglophone Quebecers. During this period they have remained loyal to the provincial and federal Liberals on the assumption that whatever changes of a minor nature might be necessary, the Liberals would still best protect their fundamental interests as they have done in the past.

One important factor that should be added to the above, is the fact that by now, in 1978, the majority of the adult Anglophone population was either under 18 years old in 1961, or came to Quebec after that point. The remarkable geographical mobility of the Anglophones makes this latter category quite significant. The result is that the majority of the present Quebec Anglophone population interprets the context of the Quebec reality in which it operates as one in which the assertion of Quebec national identity is natural and normal, even if regrettable.

One important element that should also be noted is the existence of a relatively cohesive progressive element therein. One can point to the strength of the N.D.P. in N.D.G. and elsewhere in the mid-60's, to certain community and citizens' group organizing that went on in Anglophone sectors in the late 60's and early 70's, the best example being perhaps the Milton Park Citizen's Committee, and finally to the strength of the Montreal Citizen's Movement among English-speaking Montrealers as examples of this progressivism. While there are some links between these elements and the forces working for Quebec independence much remains to be done in this area. It should conversely be remembered in this context, that never having previously had to conceive of itself as a minority, the Anglophone community lacks the kind of easily identifiable structures of social leadership of other ethnic communities making it more a population than a community.

#### THE PARTI QUEBECOIS AND THE ANGLOPHONES

The relationship between the forces for Quebec independence led since 1968 by the Parti Québécois and the Anglophone Community may generally be described as one of mutual suspicion tinged sometimes with a bit of mutual respect. Generally, it goes both ways: neither has been terribly interested in coming to understand, to emphasize with or even discuss thoroughly and openly the feelings, desires, and goals of the other. There has been a tendency to dismiss, to treat the other as a monolithic unit, rather than attempting to understand the richness and differences within both, i.e. within the independence movement on the one hand and the Anglophone community on the other. Such initial attitudes inevitably feed suspicion and mere vague sentiments of good will, which exist among certain Anglophones, and certainly exist among



a large number of important figures within the Parti Québécois and the government, are by no means sufficient to dissipate these suspicions and hostilities. The past record is on the whole not encouraging. The rebuff felt in 1970 left wounds among Péquistes and in 1973 the attitude toward Anglophones was one of not always benign neglect. In 1976 a token effort in that direction was taken, but little more.

The N.D.G. by-election in July of this year demonstrated that a bit of good-will is insufficient. Although specific factors are important here (such as the failure of the P.Q. to find a suitable Anglophone Candidate, the presence (danger) of a highly articulate freedom of choice candidate, and the new arrival of Claude Ryan to the scene) the total failure of the P.Q. to penetrate the Anglophone electorate resulted basically from the absence of any concerted STRATEGY in the campaign as part of the party's (lack of) orientation toward the Anglophones.

Yet the failure to produce a strategy of winning Anglophones to Quebec sovereignty is not simply the result of tactical decisions inside the P.Q. Any real strategy in this direction requires the collaboration and to a great extent initiative of a number of Anglophones, individuals who support Quebec sovereignty yet understand the world of the Anglophone population and are able to see it from their eyes. Such a group remains to be founded.

#### ELEMENTS OF THE ANGLOPHONE POSITION ON QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY

It is hardly surprising that the dominant sentiment at this time remains a negative one. But rather than we ourselves be subject to the myth of a monolithic position, let us attempt to separate the elements that constitute that sentiment and how they might generally be responded to. We may conceive of four distinct attitudes or positions:

- 1) This might be termed the "Sun Life position". It is a position articulated by a small economic elite and some of its spokesmen in the press. This elite sees its interests threatened by the present government, though often more so by its economic and social reforms than its sovereignty commitment. To generate opposition to the present government it uses the means available to it to portray that government as anti-English and anti-minorities. It thereby attempts to hold the Anglophone population hostage to its own interests by confusing that population's legitimate concern over human rights with the specific interests of a small elite. The way to counter such a position is to challenge it head on and expose it publicly for what it is.
- 2) This second element might be termed the "refugee position". This is especially characteristic of certain groups within the Anglophone population who harbour historical

memories of national repression and chauvinist hostility directed against themselves. While objectively unjustifiable in the present context, it is nevertheless quite understandable on a subjective basis, especially where ignorance prevails. Such fears could be relatively easily put to rest if there were determined and regular efforts on the part of the government (and the Parti Québécois) to demonstrate to these groups in ways they could understand its open and tolerant nature and that of its project for an independent Quebec.

- 3) A third sentiment might be described as "individual resentment". This is particularly in evidence among ordinary working class Anglophones. For them it is not a theoretical or intellectual question. What they see, or think they see, are concrete instances of favouritism toward individuals who are Francophones and yet who are no less privileged than they are. This makes them angry, frustrated, bitter and, finally, unsympathetic. The response to this feeling is also quite simple in principle: the government must demonstrate that it does not in any sense treat as favourites certain individuals over others, that a sovereign French Quebec will vigilantly ensure that all willing to abide by the new rules will be treated equally. It must demonstrate this in very clear public terms, for example by its hiring policy in the public service, and by responding immediately to accusations of such favouritism by openly investigating all complaints and publicly taking the necessary steps to correct abuses. If this were done, the government would be in a far better position to speak to this element of the population to make the vital point that on an individual dollars and cents basis, the average Anglophone worker has nothing to lose and in fact stands to gain just as much from Quebec sovereignty as does his Francophone counterpart.
- 4) The fourth element and the most diffused concerns a group's reluctance to lose status to go from majority - as English Canadians, to minority - as English Quebecers. This is a perfectly rational response for most English speaking Quebecers; only an "enlightened" minority can be expected easily to overcome to this sentiment and seek to be part of the new Quebec as it develops through its early stages. The most important thing about this sentiment, however, is that it is neither very powerful nor very emotional. We have already seen that Anglo-Quebecers here always operated politically in a Quebec context. This sentiment is related to an assessment of present-day Quebec reality. Most English Quebecers will attempt to be part of the English-Canadian majority as long as that is realistically possible, but upon seeing the inevitability of a new political association, most English Quebecers should be quite capable of accommodating themselves to a new minority position. The strong

support for Claude Ryan among English Quebecers at this point is an attempt to find a half-way measure, an acceptance of a certain element of Quebec national self-determination, but simultaneously an attempt to hold it within the limits of the old usually reliable Liberal Party. But it is also a measure of political realism; and that same realism will increase as the independence movement continue to expand and mature. The best response to be taken to this attitude should thus be seen the maintenance of a quiet and assured confidence in the future of Quebec for all, even if the process is a long one, to be taken by the leaders of the independence movement.

The above analysis though very much initial already indicates a number of paths to be followed in the debate, and clearly the attitude of the government and the P.Q. is a fundamental factor. These are the objective facts not to be ignored. But more important still is the communication of these objective facts to the Anglophone population through their channels and in their language. This is where the challenge for a group such as CASA lies. How can we facilitate this communication? Obviously this is the question at the base of all our concerns. Preliminary to it is a clearer delimitation of our potential constituency.

#### A PRELIMINARY PROFILE OF THE ANGLOPHONE VOTE

With the above options in mind, let us look slightly more in detail at the Anglophone community in Quebec to see how these general attitudes might break down within the population. There is good reason to see the estimate herein as, at least, reasonably reflecting reality. If we look at Anglophone sentiments putting on one pole those sympathetic to independence, and on the other those most strongly against it, we find a breakdown somewhat as follows:

Let us consider a hypothetical breakdown of the Anglophone population today:

GROUP "A": - 10% - favour sovereignty association

GROUP "B": - 15% - open but undecided on independence

GROUP "C": - 10% - oppose independence at this time but are not unsympathetic to Quebec aspirations generally, and are ready and willing to discuss the issue

GROUP "D": - The remaining 65% are not about to seriously and consider supporting Quebec sovereignty. Nevertheless, they divide into two groups as yet indeterminate in size. The first (Group D) operates essentially on rational grounds and are likely to accommodate themselves relatively well to its reality once confirmed. The second, Group E are emotionally opposed, some are in the

process of leaving, some will leave: those that stay might, in the long term, come to live with the new reality, but will remain ghetto-ised.

To put it crudely, the first strategy will lose all but the 10% that compose Group A, and perhaps even a good part of those. On the other hand, if successfully implemented, the second strategy, should be able to win A, most of group B, and even a part of group C.

The above estimates are based mainly on recent public opinion polls in which non-Francophone respondents are for certain purposes treated separately. (The polls are: CROP - Selection August, 1977, IQDP Dimanche-Matin, September, 1978, and CROP La Presse, November, 1978). The figures are as follows for the non-Francophones: (in percentages)

	<u>Aug/77</u>	<u>Sept./78</u>	<u>Nov./78</u>
Support Sovereignty-Association	12	10	12
Support Mandate for Sovereignty Association	21	13	25
Satisfied with Quebec Government			35
Support Quebec position vis-a-vis Ottawa			22
See Levesque rather than Trudeau as representing Quebec's aspirations			28
Ready to vote PQ			7

Several things should be noted in the above. The first is the fact that roughly 10% gave no opinion or refused to answer. If one considers the proportion of only those expressing an opinion, the figure in each case should be raised by that proportion (e.g. 22% → 24.2%). The pattern seems to be a clear one with the glaring exception of the disparity between the 35% satisfied with the government and the 7% prepared to vote for it. This latter disparity seems to show that support among Anglophones for the P.Q. is passive - not surprising given the failure of the party to provide and seek credible Anglo spokesmen. (One hopes the party will bear this in mind in its future recruiting. One hopes also that such figures will put an end to talk of a monolithic unapproachable Anglophone population.) A not insignificant number is indeed approachable. Who are they?

Unfortunately, the above polls did no sociological profile of Anglophones per se. We may presume - other things being equal - that the Anglophone profile was like that for all of Quebec, that is youth, education and income, as well as urbanization, union membership and public sector employment, being positively related. But more reliable statistics are needed here.

TOWARD A STRATEGY OF IDENTIFICATION

Personal contact with potentially sympathetic Anglophones is possible only when we have identified the various institution and group networks to which they are likely to belong. Here the process is a dynamic or dialectical one. Once individuals are located, they provide information and potential access to institutional groupings around which further personal contacts may be made. Hence such a group must begin with its own contacts and those of individuals attracted to it when its existence is made public. We should be able to bring together the resources to accomplish this reasonably well if we use those resources fully and inventively.