

Yet Another Referendum Article

by Marko Peric

It is rather difficult to write a story about an event that has not yet taken place. Since the paper comes out the day after The Referendum and we go to press the day before, the results are unavailable. So, writing this is a like having a newscast on tomorrow's events (not that meteorologists don't try this, but that's different). Even so, this writer would not feel right penning an editorial on some other topic when the very future of our country is at stake.

One can understand the desire of the Quebecois to separate. After all, the idea is terribly romantic. Many other nations have glorious stories about their wars of independence. The Quebecois have enough sense not to challenge the mighty Canadian army; the route to a free Quebec lies down the road of democracy. Not as romantic as a revolution, but it causes less collateral damage.

Thinking for a moment, one has to wonder if this process is so democratic. The question asked yesterday is not exactly the clearest wording possible. A copy of the agreement mentioned in the question was delivered to every household in Quebec, but still, the rest of the country is left wondering. What agreement? Signed when? Say what? Would it have been so terribly difficult to ask "Do you believe that Quebec should separate from Canada?" Certainly this would have saved paper.

The PQ government is starting to look like an arrogant lot. When the Cree held their own referendum (which was 96 percent in favour of remaining in Canada), the Quebec government announced that they would not recognize the results. They said Quebec's territorial integrity would not be compromised.

Wait a minute here. One region of a political entity holds a referendum to separate. This arouses the ire of their compatriots living outside this region. Where have we heard this before? Oddly, the people of Quebec did not flock to Cree territory just before the vote to hold a mass rally encouraging the Natives to stay.

Where did Quebec get the right to prevent the secession of the Cree? Assuming they do have that authority, the Canadian Federal government must have it too. Unless, of course, Ottawa stayed home when they were passing out that particular constitutional power.

Apparently the powers that be in Quebec have even more powers than this. They have set up a phone line one can call to hear reassuring messages. Dial this number and a recording will assure you that after a yes vote you will be able to keep your Canadian passport and your Canadian dollar. Is that so? Obviously Ottawa is not going to send the military to remove every last Canadian passport from la Belle Province. Even so, telling Quebecois that they can keep what amounts to Canadian citizenship after separation is a lie. The sentiment among many Canadians is "Stay in or get out!" No one living outside Quebec will be happy if Quebec "sort-of" leaves. We won't let them move out to the guest house and keep a key to the back door, so to speak.

It's sad that some people want to tear apart a wonderful country like Canada. The reasons given to separate simply do not hold water. For instance, if the French culture and language have been preserved since the 1760s, remaining in Canada will hardly threaten them. If an independent Quebec was to join the

US in the future, they would discover our neighbour to the south is not nearly so concerned with maintaining different cultures.

Those who argue about preserving the purity of the French language, well, that's plain arrogance. English has borrowed thousands of words from countless languages, and it has made our language much richer. "Savoir faire" and "cul-de-sac" are not going to threaten English. Is "le T-shirt" a dire threat to French?

Regardless of the reasons, it would be foolish to break up the country. Canada is one of the few countries in the world founded without extensive bloodshed. Our history, although not perfect, is much cleaner than most other nations can boast. Quebec has nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by leaving.

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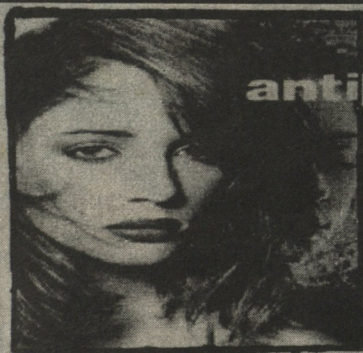
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