

In the provincial election in Quebec on Monday, September the 12th the Partii Quebecois won an overwhelming majority.

Even before the votes had all been counted, English Canada's media was interesting the elections to serve its ends. This was accomplished by concentrating not on the actual political power given to the PQ by the people of Quebec, but rather through a stream of rhetoric about the "popular vote"?

Why such an interest in the "popular vote"? The obvious answer is simple: to obscure the truth! The truth being the PQ won, and they won BIG!!

Since then the debate rages on! And that a lively "debate", with anger and passion from all those invited to participate. However, in the "debate" as it has been presented to me by the media there seems to be a concentration of concern with what are obviously the chosen questions.

The chosen questions, or dare I say opinions, being (a) Does Quebec have the "right" to leave Canada? Most often expressed as: Quebec does not have the right to separate! and (b) When should Quebec's referendum be held? Or, as it has usually appeared: Quebec must hold the referendum now; because, the rest of Canada is sick of waiting, and, believes that because of the all important "popular vote" we think they will vote no, which gives us a reason to shut them up!

On the first point I disagree with those who feel, as they say, that 10% of the Canadian population should not be allowed (by whom?) to decide for the rest of us what they can do with "our" land! I tend to see it in terms of 100% of the Quebecois deciding what they want to do with *their* province.

Let's face it, we wouldn't want anyone from the other provinces coming here to P.E.I. and telling us what to do with our province, would we? This being so why should 0% of Quebec be allowed to dictate what they can or cannot do?

On the whole idea of being "allowed" or "having the right" to separate, under the constitution and laws of Canada there is no procedure stated on secession. This means that Quebec (or anybody else) is neither "allowed" nor "forbidden" by law to leave.

Actually on the whole idea of the "right" to separate under the constitution perhaps here is where the rest of Canada should act. Why don't we hold a referendum to amend the constitution making it illegal for a province to leave Canada?

However there are several reasons why we won't do this. The first reason being that this would likely be the encouragement Quebec would need to decide to leave now, before our referendum. Secondly and perhaps more importantly is that a referendum denying provinces the right to secede would never pass.

Why wouldn't such a referendum pass? Well it wouldn't pass because while the rest of Canada is now willing to deny Quebec the right to leave, the rest of Canada would want to keep their options open!

I for one would vote no in such a referendum. I feel that the best thing for Canadians

would be a Canada without Quebec, in fact I think the maritimes should also separate, as should Ontario, B.C., and every other province.

Why? Because big countries require big governments, and big governments unfortunately serve the interests of big multi-national corporations better than the interests of less powerful groups such as the public. Why? Because the public has less effective lobbying groups, political clout etc.

With smaller countries and smaller governments it is easier for the people to control their own affairs. Which is exactly what the PQ, and according to the recent election, the Quebec people want to be able to do.

-- Alex Keaveny

QUEBEC  
to  
separate  
or not to  
separate,  
that is  
the  
question

Last Monday, something happened to the face of Canada. An old government fell, and a new one rose. A government that has a single purpose -- to rip a piece out of the country. Jacques Parizeau and his Parti Quebecois want to make Quebec into a separate country from the rest of Canada. I can see disaster waiting in the wings.

At a glance, Quebec would make a decent country. It has established industry, a solid population, and ample resources. But when you look below the surface, Quebec has a massive debt, and would have to take responsibility for a portion of Canada's debt as well.

All this debt would ruin their credit rating, and a new country must spend lots of money to establish itself; therefore, an independent Quebec would be penniless, and the quality of life would suffer drastically. Ironically, much of their debt would be owed to Canada.

Not only would Quebec be broke, there is a large portion of Quebec's population that is more than content to remain Canadian. It remains to be seen which way a vote on sovereignty would go. But assuming the separatists win, many English-speaking business people from Montreal would pack up and move to Toronto. This would wreak havoc on Quebec's economy.

Another possible controversy is the conflict between natives and the government. Quebec wants to preserve only one culture, as evidenced by many language laws that push the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to the limits. Not only are non-French signs restricted, but in some schools children are punished for using other languages on the playground.

It's hard to say how this government would react to another Oka crisis. In the North, the Inuit worry that they will be ignored by Quebec City, and their fears are justified. When money gets tight, it's not hard to guess who'll get the short end of the stick.

Stop for a moment and look at the rest of Canada. The Atlantic provinces will be isolated, and that will do little to alleviate the quiet resentment of Ontario many Maritimers already have. In the West, BC and Alberta could opt out of Canada as well, and they'd do much better than Quebec.

They could join the United States as another option, and be sure Uncle Sam would welcome two of Canada's richest provinces with open arms. This would leave central Canada doling out money to the North and East. Somehow, I doubt that Ontario would like the benevolent rich uncle idea.

Maybe they would join the States as well. This would leave a fine Canada, especially if the Prairie Provinces convinced the US to let them in as well. Imagine a Canada consisting of Atlantic Canada, the Yukon, and the North West Territories. Whether or not the States would take the Atlantic Provinces remains to be seen. Maybe we could join Trinidad, or Ireland, or some other country.

I know this is not a likely hypothesis, (or a sane one, for that matter) but it's hard to tell what will happen if Quebec separates. What I know is that all of Canada will be in for a rough ride if it does. To end, I quote Alberta's Premier, Ralph Klein: "It's not a bad country, Mr. Parizeau, you should stick with us."

-- Marko Peric

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