

Politics

continued from page 7

name a few). Premier Lucien Bouchard is hesitant on making this policy law because he and the other Premiers are looking for more money for health care before the federal budget comes down, on Feb.28. He has come to realize that picking a fight with Chretien is akin to telling Santa to go to hell on Christmas Eve. Everyone wants their stockings full. For the PQ, it is to see support rise beyond the 30% that exists now for

outright separation and 40% that exists for some sort of partnership. Further, the PQ is trailing the Liberals by ten points. Bouchard realizes that a third referendum is his last shot and he wants to make sure the "winning conditions" are in place. However his adversary, former Premier Jaques Parizeau, managed to roll off his French vineyard long enough to pour gas on the hardcore separatists fires, when he appeared at a Bloc Q u e b e c o i s convention. He stated that a referendum must

come before their mandate expires because no party has managed to attain 3 consecutive majorities in Quebec, in the last 50 years. Bouchard blew him off but Parizeau, the grandfather of the PQ, has a special place in separatist hearts for resurrecting the dream after the Robert Bourassa haze. These same hardcores are starting to sense that Bouchard lacks the stomach for another referendum. The real showdown will be this spring when a general PQ convention occurs. There, the battlelines

will be drawn. With the sorry state of health care in Quebec, Bouchard will be vulnerable. If it goes to a vote, images of Joe Clark in 1983 come to mind. That year Clark got a less than resounding vote of confidence. He initiated another leadership race that he lost to the man he beat in 1976, Brian Mulroney. For Bouchard it could mean retirement or a battle with another man he stabbed in the back, Parizeau. Parizeau's ego and his wife could bring him back to a battle

the demographics will already have decided. By then it will be too late as a new star will have risen in Quebec, by the name of Jean Charest. Because once Charest gets in, he intends to reform the electoral law so that it better represent proportional representation (which screwed him last time when he got more votes than Bouchard but less seats because rural areas are over represented). And if he does that, whoever is left in the Saguenay can vote any way they like cause they ain't gonna see any Liberal money anyway...

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