

Speaking of Class in the Québec Labour Movement: Interpreting the Relationship  
Between Class and Identity in the Québec Labour Movement 1850-2010

Richard Bisailon

A Thesis

In the Humanities Doctoral Program

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

December 2010

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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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By: **Richard Bisailon**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Humanities)

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Signed by the final examining committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair  
Dr. S. Betton

\_\_\_\_\_ External Examiner  
Dr. P. Graefe

\_\_\_\_\_ External to Program  
Dr. S. High

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. E. Shragge

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. G. Nielsen

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Supervisor  
Dr. D. Salée

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. C. Maillé, Graduate Program Director

December 13, 2010

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. B. Lewis, Dean  
Faculty of Arts and Science

## **Abstract**

### **Speaking of Class in the Québec Labour Movement: Interpreting the Relationship Between Class and Identity in the Québec Labour Movement 1850-2010**

Richard Bisailon, PhD  
Concordia University, 2010

An examination of the recent and contemporary Québec labour union movement and its relationship with the nationalist cause might incline the observer to conclude that this powerful synthesis of what are in fact two separate sets of collective interests is a recent phenomenon sparked by Québec's Quiet Revolution. In fact, these two aspects of collective and individual self and their expression through institutional forms have evolved together over the last two centuries. A further examination of the broader historical pattern demonstrates that aspects of shared linguistic and cultural identity have always at the very least qualified, and most often significantly muted expressions of working class interests and identity. In fact, save for a brief period from the Quiet Revolution to the first mandate of the Parti Québécois in 1976, working class collaboration with other class fractions in Québec ostensibly made in the greater interests of linguistic and cultural solidarity have generally cost the working classes a premium, while actually working to the benefit of other class partners.

This historical pattern combined with the increasing influence of a neo-liberal ideological position within the Québec "state" leads to a certain conclusion: that there is an essential incompatibility between institutions calculated to represent working-class interests and movements founded upon a struggle for cultural recognition and the assertion of national interests. While the former seek the elimination or reduction of socio-economic differences, the latter seek only a cycling of dominant elites, resulting in the same dominant class relations under a different cultural elite fraction.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to first acknowledge the steadfast forbearance, patience and enthusiastic support of my three core advisors, Dr. Daniel Salée, Dr. Eric Shragge, and Dr. Greg Nielsen whose own superior scholarship has set a standard for all of their students at every level of the academy. If I have had any success in reflecting that standard in the present work, it is due greatly to their own hard work over the last few years. I would also like to thank and acknowledge Dr. Peter Graefe of McMaster University who joined the team above as an external examiner, and whose own work has informed the present thesis. Additionally, thanks must be extended to Dr. Steven High, department of History at Concordia University for having agreed to join the committee so late in the game. To this distinguished committee I am greatly indebted, and any errors contained herein are my own, and are probably attributable to not having listened more closely to my mentors. As well, profound appreciation is expressed here to Dr. Everett Price of Concordia University for his support, advice and guidance over the years.

What follows will clearly show that the knowledge of great number of people has informed my examination of the contemporary labour movement in Québec in this thesis. From Concordia University, thanks must be extended to those who have worked together and supported one and other throughout the evolution of the union movement at Concordia. These include union Presidents, Executive Officers, Grievance Officers, and militants past and current, who labour daily in the trenches of labour advocacy. Profound thanks and respect are due to Michael Brennan, Ralph Carter, Susanne Downs, David Gobby, René Lalonde, André Legault, Lisa Montgomery, Maria Peluso, and so very many others not mentioned here. Shared struggles, losses and victories shared over the years have informed this work at every level. In addition to the above, I would like to thank so many of those dedicated militants, advisors, mobilisation councillors, and legal representatives from the CSN with whom I have worked over the years. The list includes, but in no way is limited to Maîtres Mario Evangeliste, Edward Kravitz, and Monique Lauziere, as well as many officers and militants. A profound gratitude is expressed here for the contribution of Mme. Ruth Harvey, who served many of the Concordia unions as technical advisor throughout a decade of change, struggle and active advocacy.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my family, including my own as well as that of my partner. The personal knowledge and the history of working class Canadians and Quebeckers as communicated by those around me has proven to be the greatest contribution to the work that follows. A diversity of cultural backgrounds marks this extended family, and includes the full range of old stock Francophones, immigrant Allophones from a broad eastern European tradition, including most proudly and notably Ukrainians, and Anglophones of Scottish descent. One of the things that unites them is their strong sense of social justice and fairness that comes from their roots. Amongst these hard-working individuals I have learned how the relations of power inform the intersection of culture and class.

## **Dedication**

I lovingly dedicate this work to my partner Joanne Bobby, whose precious love, unfailing support, strength and lasting patience have made it possible for me to complete this work. The demands of writing and research alone place demands upon our loved ones, add to these the long series of battles, grievances, court dates and auditions related to thirty years of labour advocacy, and the burden upon family became far greater than those born by this writer alone. Indeed, Joanne has carried far more of the burden than I. Throughout all of the above, whenever I came close to throwing aside my advocacy or my academic pursuits, Joanne was there to support and counsel me. Professionally, her personal experience of many years in the unionised public sector has produced a far more real, grounded and uncompromising sense of social justice than I can ever attain to. Would that all of us were so true to our beliefs, our love of family and our friends.

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## **Introduction**

The postmodernist assumption that there is no monolithic overarching identity that claims the undivided allegiance of an individual only begs the question as to which aspects of individual and collective identity take precedence over others and under which circumstances do some aspects displace and qualify the expression of others. In investigating the nexus where class intersects with the broader aspects of identity that include language and culture within Québec, and more specifically within the Québec labour union movement, I have come to question some of my own assumptions as well as those of others as they relate to what are often purported to be the separate interests of competing aspects of individual and collective identity. A deceptively facile analysis of the Québec labour movement and its relationship with the nationalist cause would simply assert that socio-economic status, or “class” is but a secondary aspect of shared identity, fragmented by its very nature and that it is easily subsumed within the broader cultural and linguistic definition of collective self. The fact that this tendency appears more acute when there is, or there is perceived to be, a threat to the broader national identity that begs for compromise in the expression of class interests and demands only seems to support the first argument. In examining these assumptions, I am led to pose some questions. When an appeal to the national interest demands collaborations between what in other circumstances would be competing classes, whose interests are better served through the collaboration? Is the expression of working class interest always qualified by the collective interests of culture, either oppressed culture or dominant culture? If so, under what circumstances do these combined interests arrive at what might be described as a Pareto optimum expression; that is, a condition where the collective interests of class and broader cultural identity are maximised to the benefit of both without possibility of improvement save at the expense of one or the other set of interests? Finally, under what

circumstances does such a collaborative project produce class benefits for some at the expense of others?

In answering these questions, I have taken a point of departure from within my own personal experience. In Chapter 1, I examine the second wave of unionisation that washed over employees at Concordia University in the mid-1980s. This latter phase saw the creation of approximately half a dozen unions over the span of a very few years in an institution that was comparatively lightly touched by the union experience previously. It was during this period of unionisation in an English language institution within a Francophone province that many of my initial questions concerning the relationship between the expression of working class interests and issues of language and culture first arose.

Chapter 2 takes up some of the recent and contemporary intellectual discourse over the last half-century as it applies to issues of both class and national identity here in Québec. I have found it significant that there are two coherent bodies of literature that demonstrate a preoccupation with one aspect of identity over the other, and that an earlier phase that conducted much of the discourse of the nation within the context of a socialist ideological analysis has given way to one almost exclusively focussed on aspects of language, culture and national identity. Both analytical viewpoints share issues of identity, inclusion, justice and fairness, yet address these issues from very different perspectives. The conclusions that I draw from this examination leads me towards an analytical theoretical position that I introduce and describe in Chapter 3.

This third chapter settles into an analytical methodology that is firmly rooted in class analysis. The embeddedness of institutions such as labour unions within the fabric of civil society; of their evolution being woven over time into the historic bloc that is the foundation for the reiteration of class relations demands that I examine the expression of working class interests within the context of an evolving Québec society. The nature of that evolution over

time also demands that I address the issue of dominant and minority culture as they affect the expression of working class interests.

The following three chapters examine three successive historical periods as they apply to the evolution of the labour movement in Québec. Chapter 4 takes the reader from the first embryonic forms of working class representation couched with the context of “working men’s associations,” “benevolent societies” and the like to genuine trade and labour unions after 1872 when the act of combination was decriminalised in Canada. This fourth chapter frames the evolution of the labour movement in Québec within the context of adopting or adapting existing institutional forms to better respond to the needs of shared language and identity.

Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of the influences of the international unions and the collective reactions of Québec society to the perceived external threat that these brought. Here I examine the creation of Catholic confessional unions and the revitalisation of existing national unions as a collective social response that goes beyond the simple adaptation of prior institutional forms. What could no longer be adopted or adapted to the expression of national interests must be constructed from within. Such was the nature of this phase of the evolution of the labour movement in Québec. One important difference that marks this period from the earlier one is that the tendency towards class collaboration, inherent in what is effectively a collective response by Québec society, begs the question as to which classes benefit from a collaboration that purports to place the collective interests of the nation before those of any specific class.

Chapter 6 covers the most recent historical period and examines the labour movement in Québec from the onset of the Quiet Revolution to the present day. Here I continue my examination of a series of class collaborations within the context of classes and class fractions in relative ascendancy and decline. The question is again asked of these

collaborations, collectively *cui bono*? The rapidly evolving nature of Québec society during this phase demands an increasing preoccupation with classes plural and the jockeying for position between class fractions within society, and the labour movement itself. The rise of the public sector unions, the ongoing linguistic division of labour – always a hallmark of Québec’s economy – and issues of ideology are all taken up in this chapter. I close with an examination of a series of submissions made by union groups and others before the recent Bouchard Taylor *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences* from the point of view of the class and national interests that they appear to serve.

Chapter 6 seeks to draw some conclusions as to the relationship between class, culture and hegemony. I question again the presumptions of a political coherence within linguistic communities in Québec and examine the effects of a genuine shift in dominant culture. Returning to the issue of the embeddedness of institutions of civil society, I question the degree to which they are free to challenge dominant culture. Before drawing certain conclusions as to the relationship between class based movements and those dedicated to the assertion of cultural rights and liberation, I return by way of an epilogue to the example of Concordia University, and an examination of class struggle, class unity, and the influence of language and culture upon their expression. My closing conclusions are somewhat sweeping, as they propose an essential incompatibility between institutions dedicated to the expression of working class interests and those committed to national and cultural liberation. As idiosyncratic an example as Québec may be, I hope that the conclusions drawn invite some further investigation of the nexus between class and cultural identity in other societies.

I would like to offer here a few words on my choice of methodology in producing this work. I lean heavily on the historic record as transmitted by other scholars. I am not a historian by training, and insofar as it is an interpretation of the agreed upon facts and events

that I address herein, I defer to the academic expertise of other scholars as to what happened and when. I do employ primary sources in a number of areas critical to my analysis and interpretation. Specifically, I have invoked a number of documents generated by Québec's labour unions and their organising bodies. In the chapter dedicated to the second historical period, that which saw the rise of the confessional unions, and in all subsequent discussion of the role of the Catholic Church, I have returned directly to the *Encyclicals* that informed the social policies of the Catholic church in Québec. In my examination of submissions placed before the Bouchard Taylor Commission, I have cited the submissions themselves as obtained either from the unions' or the commission's archives. In translating these and all other documents, I have tried to as accurately as possible respect both the wording and the precise meaning contained therein. Finally, all of the legal documents cited in the Epilogue as they apply to the pension suit at Concordia University are part of the public domain. Notwithstanding, and due to my own intimate involvement in the events described, I am in possession of many of the original court decisions and have verbatim copies and transcriptions of all other documents and depositions.

Having invoked my role within the events introduced herein and examined subsequent to this introduction, I wish to address what may appear to be the lack of formal interviews, personal histories and individual anecdotal content. In fact, and as suggested by acknowledgements offered preamble to the formal work, countless hours of collaborative involvement with committed union militants both within Concordia University and the CSN have informed this work. Working relationships between those dedicated to a common cause being what they are, even exchanges related to a specific case or hearing were always informed by discussions of the broader social context. Personal commitments to specific struggles in other arenas were offered by those who led them, many from advisors and legal representatives from the CSN. Issues pertaining to poverty, representation, social justice, and

yes, national struggle and cultural liberation informed almost every exchange. At least as far as this investigation touches upon Concordia University and the impact of the series of legislation tabled over the last twenty-five years as it applies to the public sector, this work is informed by a diversity of actors in a very direct way.

Finally, I let the work speak for itself. The events certainly do. In conducting an examination of the history of the Québec labour movement over a span of close to two centuries, I have had to choose to examine what I consider certain pivotal events while leaving others either minimally addressed or passed over entirely. As noted earlier, this is not intended to be a thorough historical exercise. Given the nature of the program that has given birth and voice to the work presented here, it is by its nature interdisciplinary and as such perhaps somewhat unorthodox in its form and methodology as it relates to some of the disciplines brought together here.

## Chapter 1

### Framing the Research Question

#### **The Road to Epiphany**

The intensely personal attachment and commitment one should have to any strongly held belief, here expressed as a thesis arguing for the inevitable primacy of identity over class, often has as its point of departure some moment of individual revelation or epiphany. Often, this may be some event or series of events that catch the observer by surprise; that subtly yet often radically questions their underlying assumptions as to the operations of the universe, be it cultural, social, political, or for those in the hard sciences, physical. Thus, a thesis whose central preoccupation is the struggle between the collective interests of class and those of shared collective identity should have been born from personal experience that both called into question my own assumptions concerning class interests and solidarity, and how the representation of those interests is often displaced by, or seconded into, broader issues of shared collective identity. Such a point of departure marks this present exercise.

In the first few years of the 1980s, Concordia University was undergoing a change in the nature of its relations with its employees. Previously, there had been a loose and generally ineffective representation of workers' interests by an in-house staff association. As a non-chartered association, any agreements or understanding that they might have arrived at with their employer held no force of law. That association was further rendered increasingly impotent through a series of internal cleavages between and within different employee groups. Radicalising elements, more or less identified along the lines of traditional and coherent divisions of labour such as trades and specialised technical workers increasingly sought the kind of formal and legally recognised type of representation afforded only by a duly constituted and chartered labour union. More conservative elements amongst the staff, some through a certain fear of change, others through a concern for their own privileged

personal positions, were loath to proceed down that road. Sub-groups had started to abandon the staff association and opt for affiliation with well established trade unions. Amongst the staff, these groups were demographically small but they shared tightly defined skills indispensable to the operation of the institution, and included the traditional trades: carpenters, electricians, plumbers and mechanical workers. Reactions to this increasing tendency were varied, some association officers and members showed no concern whatsoever<sup>1</sup>, others perhaps blessed with a more practical foresight, rightfully predicted that if the process went unchecked, the staff association would be destined to shrink in size, thus further reducing its effectiveness. A decision was made to strike a committee charged with investigating the relative advantages and disadvantages of opting for formal unionisation. I sat on that committee representing technical staff; one of the employee groups more inclined to choose unionisation.

The first and pivotal question placed before the committee was whether to recommend unionisation or not. Clearly, the diminishing capacity of the existing association to effectively advocate for the rights of Concordia University's employees; its informal nature lacking any recognition in law; and the influence held over the direction of the association as exercised by members whose own positions placed them closer to management than labour all made it patently obvious that unionisation was the correct path to follow.

The very process of unionisation in contemporary Québec tends to effectively separate the wheat from the chaff by excluding anyone who has line management authority over other employees. Further, a successful outcome of the unionisation process clearly establishes the union as the only legal advocate for the members thereof. This established role compels the employer to negotiate, and places powerful legal levers in the hands of

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<sup>1</sup> I recall a comment made in an assembly by a representative from the office workers group upon the departure of one of the trades to join a formal union. The opinion expressed being effectively "Let them go, why do we need plumbers and electricians in our association in any case?" While such an opinion was not generally shared by other representatives then present, their essentially passive rejection of such ultimately proved futile in preventing the decline of the association..



labour. The choice being obvious, the only question remaining to the committee was to decide as to the nature of the unionisation process and certain related choices to be made. Obviously, being a single, independently chartered labour union, free of formal ties or association with larger bodies would have provided workers with the greatest autonomy and control over their collective fortunes. However, only demographically large, ideologically coherent and committed assemblies of workers have the resources, both financial and human, to organise, mobilise, negotiate, and apply a collective agreement. Moreover, the actual defence of members is a long and costly process demanding legal expertise in making representation before a diversity of jurisdictions; an expertise usually lacking among the members of even large and well organised unions. Simply put, the group must be large enough to hire its own advisors and legal counsel, or face the contracting of same from a larger more powerful body. The committee, itself a compromise arising from a lack of consensus and solidarity, understood that a single, large independent union, while best in the long run, would be difficult or even impossible to successfully launch, the more so given that important sub-groups had already struck out on their own. The only remaining task therefore would be to investigate the divers established labour organising bodies already firmly entrenched in Québec in order to establish which amongst them would provide the greatest autonomy while providing the most effective professional support. To that end, the committee invited submissions from most of the large unions and federations of unions that remain in place in Québec today, and met with representatives from these groups in a series of meetings.

Thus far, the entire exercise described above is reflective of and analogous to the greater historical process of class awakening, rising consciousness, and collective organising for the effective representation and advocacy of shared class interests. The initial fear and ambivalence experienced by some of those in the early days of the birth of the union

movement everywhere are evident here: fear of retribution, or at the very least the covert and occasionally overt displeasure aimed at the organisers and active proponents for unionisation; fear as well of change pure and simple; and quite honestly, the perception of potentially threatened privileged positions of those employees better paid or enjoying better conditions than their brothers and sisters.<sup>2</sup> The pattern of the unionisation process itself is also reflective of the historical evolution of the movement, with skilled trades and those possessing indispensable competencies organising first and breaking away from the broader class of workers. The radicalisation of those sharing tighter and more coherent common interests is also reflective of the historical pattern.

### **Shaken and Questioned Assumptions**

My personal epiphany, and the moment that inspired the core assumption which informs this thesis came from exchanges between the representatives from Québec's big organising bodies and the unionisation committee. Further enlightenment, as well as a certain shock and surprise came from the reaction of many of the workers themselves. It was here for the first time in my personal and professional experience that the preoccupations of Québec's dominant culture were shown to be powerfully determinant of the direction and nature of the advocacy of what might otherwise be described as the simple and shared expression of class interests.

As might well be expected in contemporary Québec, both then and now, all of the union representatives appearing before the committee were militant and committed Francophones. Yet, considering that they were essentially putting a business proposition before a group of Anglophone workers – in the minds of the committee, essentially a *quid*

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<sup>2</sup> Proof of both the prevailing inequities, as well as the levelling effect of the presence of a labour union with a single collective agreement is given by the fact the among the Technical group the immediate effect of unionisation was to double the salaries of some and freeze for a number of years the salaries of others. The overall salary envelope for the group increased by approximately thirty per cent in their first Collective Agreement.

*pro quo* exchange of dues for services – none of the union representatives could communicate effectively in English. *Tant pire*, as far as it goes, but what was more remarkable was their response to the committee’s queries regarding the availability of services and advocacy in English. None, save the representative from the Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux (CSN) could give any commitment to, nor gave any concern for the workers’ desire or in fact need for, services in English. Some of the responses clearly communicated the belief that, Québec being predominantly French speaking, and the only official language of public life being established as French by *La Charte de la Langue Française*, or Law 101, the workers should be working in French, and if through the caprice of some historical cultural anomaly they were in fact working in English, then it should be recognised that their relationship with the organising body, and that body’s advocacy and defence on their behalf should be conducted in the French language.

The committee’s recommendation was that the association should unionise and, holding its own certification, affiliate with the CSN. The CSN is a confederation of independent unions, not a union itself, and as such would have afforded the greatest autonomy to the group holding its own certification. Further, and as noted above, the CSN was the only body willing to try and show some compromise on services in the English language. The committee’s recommendation was placed before the members of the association. Subsequent to a brief and contentious period of heavy lobbying on both sides of the question, the motion was defeated, and over the next decade first the technical staff, then the secretarial and office workers, and subsequently the professional employees all broke away from the in-house association and unionised independently, but holding a professional association with divers federations within the CSN. The trades continued their earlier trend and associated themselves with other bodies already demonstrating a strong record of advocacy and representation in these traditional areas of unionised employment.

The dominant role of culture and collective identity was manifestly evident by the initial attitudes of both the English speaking workers and their employer as well as from the Francophone union organisers, mobilisation and technical advisors and militants. In the case of the employees, many Anglophone workers had an almost visceral fear of being organised, mobilised, trained and represented by Francophones. The general militancy of the CSN and its history of association with the sovereigntist movement did little to allay these fears amongst the more conservative workers. From many corners, the employer's similar disapproval of what was seen as the incursion of the militantly Francophone and overtly sovereigntist CSN into an Anglophone institution was also palpable. The initial attitudes of many of the Francophone union representatives have been sketched out above. Over the following decades, and through a succession of technical advisors, mobilisation councillors, and divers other representatives from the CSN, the dominant themes of language, national autonomy and independence coloured many discussions. The quality of the representation was always professional and unstinting, but the greater issues of the dominant culture were quite obviously close to the hearts of many of our *consoeurs* and *confreres* from that organising body.

Why should such cultural antipathy colour and affect the process and outcomes of what started essentially as an effort by Concordia University's workers to advocate for their shared class interests? And why, in the pursuit of those interests did so many issues of language and culture displace or redirect choices related to the collective interests of class? These questions are asked of both sides of the exchange. Unions are always seeking to expand their numbers, and Québec's unions are no different in this respect from others. Active raiding during an established *période de maraudage* has often seen radical changes of affiliation subsequent to contentious and occasionally violent lobbying by contending unions, federations, and *centrales*. If unions are willing to go to these lengths in order to pick up new

affiliations, why the hesitancy at providing even minimal services in English in order to win over newly organised workers? On the other hand, if a conciliatory organising body is willing to afford at least minimal services in English, and this amongst a series of choices offering none at all, and this body is also one of the most emphatically militant in the defence of its members, why would potential members reject such an option because of broader issues of culture, politics and language?

### **The Rationality of Individual and Collective Choice**

Our own expectations are set in personal, family, and community experience. This intimate and immediate environment is the first crucible of socialisation. Those experiences are formed within a given class and cultural milieu, and being born into this environment, it pre-exists our own selves. It becomes the primary medium of all personal experience. The living of the events outlined above, both for myself and the broader Concordia community, were obviously weighed against expectations formed earlier. My personal and family history is culturally situated within both of Québec's "two solitudes" and has given me an insight into both sides of minority and majority culture. Given also that both of those personal and collective solitudes were, until recently for myself and my family, firmly rooted in the working classes provided a practical illustration and understanding of social divisions that cleave along economic as well as cultural lines.

Individuals and collectivities make choices based upon expected outcomes. Prior to Law 101, many Quebeckers – Anglophone, Allophone, and even some Francophones – chose to educate their children in the English language. Given the broader economic and cultural history of Canada, and even Québec at that time, this was a rational choice that anticipated an economic and cultural return. Subsequent to the "Grande Noirceur" of the Duplessis era, and the "Quiet Revolution" of the 1960s, collective choices made by Québec's Francophone

demographic majority have produced policy and laws demanding the primacy of collective interests of French-Canadian language and culture. Issues that in a liberal society would normally be classified as being related to free and individual choice became qualified and limited in their expression by the collective interests of the cultural and linguistic majority. The expression of those interests through law has had a decided influence upon the fortunes of those not of that cultural majority. The inability or limited ability to work effectively in the only official language of public life has serious implications for individual and collective social, political, and economic fortunes. The effects of being bilingual, but not of the dominant culture, can be more subtle, but just as serious. Then again, it must be admitted, that being a bilingual worker in the past gave no particular advantage. Before Law 101, bilingual Francophones gained little advantage from it, today, bilingual Anglophones and Allophones oft find themselves in a comparable situation.<sup>3</sup>

The unionisation process described above was conducted in a very different Québec than that of even a generation ago. The contemporary movement is strongly influenced by the provisions of Law 101 and other acts of legislation that are intended to protect and maintain the primacy of French language and culture in Québec. These acts have global as

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<sup>3</sup> Analysis of recent census data gives an insight into the lot of official language minorities and their economic conditions. Quebeckers generally still have lower average incomes than either the national average, or citizens in their sister province of Ontario (for 2007, average income for all Canadian families was \$66,550, for Ontario, that figure was \$69,190, for Québec, \$61,780. Source: Statistics Canada, <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/famil108a-eng.htm>. The Québec government's own statistics as recently as 1997 spoke of a declining difference between Anglophone and Francophone Quebeckers down from 16% to 3% on annual income. Yet, an analysis of unemployment levels by language shows significantly higher levels of unemployment for Anglophone Quebeckers. Further, while mean incomes appear higher for Anglophone Quebeckers, median incomes are lower, indicating that there remains a small, but very well compensated, number of Anglophones balanced against a larger, and significantly poorer demographic at the bottom of Québec's Anglophone society. See Floch, William, and Pocock, Joanne, "The Socio-economic status of English-speaking Quebec: Those who left and those who stayed," in Bourhis, Richard Y., *The Vitality of the English Speaking Communities of Quebec: From Community Decline to Revival*, Montréal, Université de Montréal (CEETUM) and Université de Moncton (CIRLM), 2008. According to Statistics Canada, and based on 1996 data, 62% of Québec Anglophones were bilingual, compared to 34% for Francophones. Interestingly, Allophones in Québec claimed levels of official language bilingualism of 47%, but 69% could speak French, and 66% could speak English, showing the tenacity of their mother tongue, and their general level of linguistic adaptability to Canada's "official" languages. See <http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/auth/english/maps/peopleandsociety/lang/officiallanguages/englishfrenchbilingualism/1> citing Statistics Canada's *The Daily*, for Tuesday, December 2, 1997.

well as local implications and effects. For Concordia University's unionised employees, it produced a strong proportion of bilingual Francophone, Anglophone and Allophone union leaders. Effective advocacy before a diversity of judicial jurisdictions in Québec demands the ability to work and communicate effectively in the French language. Changes in the "rules of the game" affect choices; choices in affiliation, in leadership and association. The cultural milieu affects all class choices.<sup>4</sup>

### **Language: The Sole Determinant, or the Sole Remaining Differentiator?**

Throughout the process summarised above and over the passage of a number of years, some of Concordia's workers and union militants fell into a comfortable and productive working relationship in the newly unionised milieu. As noted above, those who were sufficiently bilingual as to be able to bridge the solitudes were the more obvious choices for leadership. And this has worked in both directions at Concordia: bilingual Francophones have been as much part of the leadership pattern as bilingual Anglophones and Allophones. There has always been a sufficient bank of English speaking arbitrators and lawyers as to make any grievance issue that ends up at the arbitration stage easily conducted in the English language. So the daily advocacy for the rights of unilingual Anglophone workers has never been a problem. Similarly, English testimony offered in front of all other legal tribunals has never been an issue. Nevertheless, there have been occasions where the benefit of being a bilingual Anglophone has proven to be advantageous, and others where it has proven pointless. I recall one occasion where my unilingual Francophone lawyer from the CSN had to examine an unwilling and only marginally cooperative unilingual Anglophone witness. I, and opposing council, were both bilingual, but insofar as I am not a member of the bar, I

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<sup>4</sup> For the author's father, a university educated bilingual Francophone who left employment in one company in the late 1940s after being informed that francophones were never promoted beyond a certain level, the laws and acts invoked here provided a radical change in fortune as the only French speaking senior manager in a very "English" company.

could not pose the questions that my legal representative wished to ask but was incapable of phrasing. Did this in any way reflect upon the commitment of my advocate? I worked with this individual over a span of a decade or more and have rarely found a more passionate defender of working class interests. In point of fact, language issues have proven to be only an occasional impediment to representation over the years, and in reality have proven to be of little importance in advocating the class interests of Concordia's Anglophone and Allophone workers.. Then why was the issue of language so critically important at the start of the unionisation process, and in the broader arena, why does it continue to dominate the discourse within Québec? Clearly bilingual and even unilingual Anglophones and Francophones manage to navigate even the forbidding waters of the legal process without any real problems. We generally cohabit comfortably, even happily. I note that the default language of communication between strangers in Québec has become French. Only after a cautious few minutes of conversation whereupon certain clues might give evidence to the linguistic origins of the respondent would one or the other volunteer a few words of English. The same linguistic *valse hésitante* is often conducted between Anglophones, Allophones and conciliatory Francophones where the latter will switch to English, the former steadfastly remain in French, and we have a conversation conducted in both languages with the parties speaking the first language of the other. In the metropole that is Montréal, entire conversations switch back and forth according to need. Like the great European cities, our polyglot heritage makes for rich discourse often borrowing from a diversity of backgrounds. This linguistic flexibility increasingly marks the younger strata of our society, and actually has a hybridising effect on the language of the streets.<sup>5</sup> If language is really not a problem, then why do some of us make it so?

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<sup>5</sup> For a fascinating examination of the diverse and multiple linguistic sources informing the contemporary music scene in Québec, see Sarkar, Mela, Low, Bronwen, and Winer, Lise, "Pour connecter avec les 'peeps': Québécoïcité and the Quebec Hip-Hop Community," in Mantero, Miguel, ed., *Identity and Second Language Learning*, Charlotte, NC, IAP, 2007, p. 351-372.



I could make the observation that subsequent to the decline in the importance of religion, language is the sole differentiating factor between the cultures. As a society that has become one of the most overtly secular in the world, how many really profound differences can remain between individuals who dwell together in such a place? How can language be both the sole differentiating characteristic between some Quebeckers and yet remain the *sine qua non* of membership and belonging? The subsequent historical examination of the evolution of the Québec labour movement that I shall offer here might suggest the short answer to these questions: because it has always been so. However, that answer alone only gives testimony to the depth of the linguistic divide, not to its cause. Perhaps the answer lies in some of the discourse on language that I am about to examine. Growing out of an intellectual tradition that makes of language a shared speaking of culture; of the conceptual milieu that actually forms culture, some would say that those who speak the same language share an intimacy of being that includes collective values, beliefs, and worldview; language as the shared and common DNA of thought. However, this begs an important question when we look at language in societies where a significant proportion of the citizenry speak the common tongue as a second language. To us, French is the *lingua franca* into which our other linguistic roots translate the world. Do those who learn a language in this fashion ever share or experience belonging in the fullest sense?

And what of class? Liberal societies under a capitalist mode of production are stratified societies. They demonstrate economic and social inequality by their very nature. What comes of a society whose class divisions reflect cultural and linguistic divisions as well? And since many societies are so marked, what does this tell us of the relationship between minority and majority culture and class? My initial epiphany and subsequent experience have convinced me that issues of culture and identity always trump the collective interests of class. Certainly, and as I shall attempt to demonstrate, interests of culture and

identity trump the collective interests of the *working* class. For other classes, the bartering of working class interests and the translation, modification, and limiting of those interests through the lens of “national” or cultural solidarity can produce certain class benefits as well. All classes must collaborate in some fashion or another. Notwithstanding, when I examine some of the class collaborations that have marked the history and evolution of the labour movement here in Québec, and particularly those that employ an appeal to the “national” interest of French speaking Quebeckers, I find myself asking, collectively *cui bono*? Why should language determine or at the very least qualify the expression of class interests? Because it is instrumental to the purposes of competing elites. The politics of language is about dominant culture.

### **Speaking the Nation and Speaking of Class: Inclusion, Belonging and Solidarity**

We expect intellectual discourse, and most particularly discourse between intellectuals, to take up and reflect the broader social issues that mark our society at any one point in time. Some issues – economic cycles, wars, physical disaster – are thankfully transitory, and are of the moment. Other issues tend to preoccupy the collective imaginary as constant themes, reanimated and reworked throughout the evolution of a society. These include aspects of identity and inclusion as well as justice and fairness in sharing the resources available to a society at any one time. Reconciling *who belongs* with *who gets what* is a difficult process of self-examination and introspective reflection. Any correlation between shared identity and exclusion there from and the division of wealth within a society begs difficult questions as to “why” this is so. The contemporary discourse over who we are and who belongs dominates the literature in a manner that is reflective of the broader social preoccupation that marks Québec and Canadian society today. There is little contemporary discussion, intellectual or otherwise, of who gets what; of the division of wealth within

society. Nevertheless, there have been relatively recent periods where such a preoccupation has marked the intellectual discourse, and there have been periods in Québec and Canadian history where there has been a greater social preoccupation with the distribution of wealth; periods of greater class awareness and solidarity.

Both kinds of discourse are about belonging, inclusion and solidarity and make certain assumptions about justice, fairness and equality. Identity politics seems to assume that once we have defined ourselves; once belonging has been established, then all are presumed to be equal, or in a liberal society equal at least as to opportunity. That being given, the rest should take care of itself. Intellectual discourse along the lines of class analysis tends to start at the other end. Seeing differences as to the social division of wealth as evidence of the social and economic domination of the wanting and exploited many by the privileged few, this analytical position starts with a view of society as unequal from the beginning and presumes that the elimination of class exploitation and economic privilege will result in social equality. Both analytical approaches or schools of thought are often blind to socio-economic difference that cleaves as well along the lines of culture, language and identity.

A political discourse rooted in identity and belonging often tends to brush aside class differences within society, or at least make their expression secondary to the affirmation of culture, language and identity. In a very real sense from this analytical point of view class is but an aspect of the broader identity. Those who speak from this position are often stymied by observations that class divisions can reinforce along the lines of minority or “other” cultures. When speaking of new citizens, a certain state of denial can be seen here when differences in condition are explained as the socio-economic manifestation of a disinclination or refusal to buy-in to the new culture. The discourse on identity and belonging can be retrospective, introspective, forward looking and demonstrate varying degrees of each. In the Québec example, the most productive contemporary literature in this vein asks what we

should retain from the past in constructing our future. The best of the literature associated with this discourse holds out a promise of inclusion, even if the empirical evidence of the fulfilment of this promise remains wanting for many new Quebeckers and Canadians.

Given the relative affluence of contemporary Canadian and Québec society, class analysis has not been part of much of contemporary mainstream analytical discourse. Nevertheless, it enjoyed a greater popularity during the 1960s and 70s than it does today. Insofar as it starts from a position that acknowledges socio-economic difference that cleaves along the lines of social strata or classes and seeks a reduction, or in extreme positions the elimination, of these differences, by its very nature it looks at what separates us. In contrast to the former analytical approach, it starts with the presumption of difference not unity, and seeks to eliminate those differences, at least the ones that cleave along socio-economic lines. However, in explaining those differences, it is often blind to issues of culture, language and the “othering” that comes from being apart from the dominant majority culture. Where the discourse of class takes up the issue of identity, it ties class liberation to national struggle and in the classic literature places emphasis on the former as a vehicle for the latter. In the literature as it applies to Québec however, we often see the preoccupation reversed, with successful national struggle for political independence being put forth as a precondition for the creation of a more class egalitarian society.

I have chosen to address my analysis of the contemporary literature as it applies to Québec by focussing on these two ideological and analytical positions. They seem to represent a certain collective preoccupation that marked the *zeitgeist* of much of Québec’s social imaginary over the last fifty years, and they mark two distinct periods within that chronology with a preoccupation with class analysis giving way in the most contemporary discourse to the politics of identity.

The general assumption when examining the intellectual literature is that it is reflective of the broader social discourse. The process of framing the discourse by its very nature implies a certain degree of steering or forming the very imaginary one seeks to encapsulate. This is unavoidable. However, in the Québec example, many of the sociologists and political theorists that inform the literature are full, conscious and active participants in the very process they seek to synthesise and describe. They admit to as much. Insofar as I have been and continue to be personally and professionally involved in many of the events that I describe, I too must admit to being in the history that I describe, with all of the implied subjective and by extension normative expectations that that role entails. My examination of the role and mission of class oriented institutions such as labour unions begs prescription by my very involvement therein. With this *caveat* and a certain subjective candour, I acknowledge both my own subjective analytical position as well as that of the authors that I am about to examine.

Finally, a word must be offered here as to the real versus the presumed audience of the literature that I examine and of my own evaluation thereof. I suspect that the discourse that we discover within the literature is in fact almost exclusively conducted within the academic and intellectual communities that produce it. If this is even only partially true, then the greatest contribution that the literature may make is in the way it describes and contextualises the broader social discourse and summarises the positions found therein. If we acknowledge that our evaluations of the writings of others are in fact indicative of our own positions on these subjects, then we are conscious of our roles in both framing and forming the discourse.

## Chapter 2

### An Examination of the Contemporary Literature

#### **Recent and Contemporary Discourse: The Literature of Language and Identity**

The dominant preoccupation of both the workers and the organisers in my previous example was that of language. No overt issues of culture beyond that, or any issues of broader identity were introduced into the exchange other than those of the radical political culture and emphatic militancy of the CSN, and this more in relation to its sovereigntist stance than to its defence of workers' rights. On the surface, and as to the issue of language alone, this is reflective of the contemporary debate within Québec on the nature of belonging and citizenship within her "intercultural" model of citizen engagement. The model proposes that collective and individual responsibility be balanced against collective and individual rights. The dominant position on the determinants of citizenship as expressed both politically and within contemporary literature is that only two criteria determine citizenship here: residency and the ability to communicate in the French language. All Quebecers who satisfy both of these criteria are deemed "Québécois." Notwithstanding the eminent practicality of such a definition in an increasingly diverse contemporary society, it stands in direct contrast to definitions and understandings as to the nature of those assembled under this collective identity until fairly recently. Questions as to who are the Québécois, *are* increasingly different from who *were* the Québécois. Some propose that the new definition is essentially a politically motivated red herring.

“The debate on Quebec identity is comprised of two propositions: the first puts forward the idea that a Québécois is anyone who lives in Québec, the second suggests no more or less the abandonment of the notion of a pact between two founding peoples. The goal of abandoning this notion was to permit New-Quebeckers to more easily identify themselves with the independence movement and thus opt for sovereignty in the event of some hypothetical future referendum on the national question.”<sup>6</sup>

Others believe that in addition to simple residency, the idea of sharing a common language in and of itself creates an important and fundamental bond between speakers. They argue that the very nature of shared language is that it produces shared understanding and even a common world-view. Insofar as it places common values as being formed at the cognitive level, such a position instantly privileges any discussion of collective versus individual rights. If the very act of “speaking” the world demands a conceptually shared and uttered view of the universe, and all social meaning is thus obtained, then values are shared at the very level of cognition. There are in fact no values that are not shared and held in common by those who speak the same language. Such an approach is well calculated to eliminate any dissenting voices within a society, regardless of the language wherein they are expressed. Their very vocal expression becomes an act of individual sociopathy. In an examination of the dominance of collective versus individual rights, and arguing for the essential primacy of the former, Michel Seymour offers a foundation argument strongly reminiscent of the German Romantic tradition of western nationalist theory.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Paquin, Stéphane, *L’Invention D’un Mythe : Le pacte entre deux peuples fondateurs*, VLB Éditeur, Montréal, 1999, p. 11. My translation of “Le débat sur l’identité québécoise comportait deux propositions: la première mettait de l’avant l’idée qu’est québécois quiconque vit au Québec, la second suggérait ni plus ni moins l’abandon de la notion de pacte entre deux peuple fondateurs. Le but de l’abandon de cette notion était de permettre aux Néo-Québécois de s’identifier plus facilement au mouvement souverainiste et ainsi d’opter pour le souveraineté lors d’un hypothétique future référendum sur la question nationale.”

<sup>7</sup> See the works of Johann Gottfried Von Herder, 1744-1803, and Wilhelm von Humboldt, 1767-1835 on language and meaning, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 1762-1814 on the relation between the awareness of the self and the broader social context.

“In this way we obtain a definition of anti-individualism, conceived as the conjunction of three theses : the thesis that the content of thought is linguistic, the thesis that social determinations play an essential role in the individuation of the contents of thought, and the thesis concerning the impossibility of private languages.”<sup>8</sup>

The presumption is that common language produces, of itself, a shared view of all aspects of reality; that all thought is predicated upon language; that shared language implies seeing the world “in the same words.” Seymour takes this premise and argues further that the ability to communicate through language is a defining criterion for a human being.

“The socio-linguistic community plays an essential role in the individuation of a human being. In effect, this conclusion seems to inevitably follow the acknowledgement of anti-individualism. If the capacity of thought is an essential trait of a human being and the socio-linguistic community is a state of potential, then this latter is itself a state or condition of potential for the human being.

But another consequence immediately follows. The promotion and protection of the rights of the human individual must run parallel with the promotion and protection of the rights of the linguistic community to which they belong.”<sup>9</sup>

No common language, no shared expression of our humanity; so collective rights must at the very least equal, and as argued further must take precedence over individual ones as there is no individual without the socio-linguistic community that makes them human. This precedence of collective rights is equated, in Seymour’s view, with “nationalism,” and without a desire to go over the “necessary and sufficient conditions” that contribute to the definition of a nation, Seymour fully acknowledges that there must be a shared vision; a “full and total adherence thereto by all of the members.” Can that adherence be predicated solely upon a shared language, one spoken on the streets, in commerce, and at work? The assumption here is affirmative, and that alliances are transferred with membership. Yet, this

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<sup>8</sup> Seymour, Michel, “Aspects Politiques de l’anti-individualisme”, in Seymour, Michel, ed., *Une Nation Peut-Elle Se Donner La Constitution De Son Choix ?*, Bellarmin, Montréal, 1995, p. 63. My translation of “Nous obtenons de cette manière une définition de l’anti-individualisme, conçu comme la conjonction de trois thèses: la thèse que les contenus de pensée sont linguistiques, la thèse que des déterminations sociales jouent un rôle essentiel dans l’individuation des contenus de pensée, et la thèse concernant l’impossibilité des langages privés.”

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64. My translation of “La communauté socio-linguistique joue un rôle essentiel dans l’individuation d’une personne humaine. En effet, cette conclusion apparaît inévitablement découler du fait d’admettre l’anti-individualisme. Si la capacité de pensée est un trait essentiel de la personne humaine et que la communauté socio-linguistique en est une condition de possibilité, cette dernière apparaît alors elle-même comme une condition de possibilité de la personne humaine.

Mais un autre conséquence s’ensuit immédiatement. La promotion et la protection des droits de la personne humaine devrait aller de pair avec la promotion et la protection des droits de la communauté linguistique à laquelle elle appartient.”



glosses over the important difference between someone who has learned a language from birth, and those who adopt a language after the fact. Can a bilingual Anglophone or a multilingual Allophone ever share a “perfect” understanding of thought with a native Francophone?

Seymour’s view appears to constitute a one-way street in some senses. It speaks to how language creates a unity of thought and values without conceiving of how other cultures and languages inform that of the dominant majority. Bariteau expresses this idea in a way that better informs the Québec intercultural model of citizenship.

“And this culture “enriches itself by other cultures as with that of the first habitants.” It is also called to nourish itself by bringing in citizens of various ethnic origins and cultural traditions. In this sense, French becomes not only the common language and the language of citizenship, but also the language thanks to which all will converge towards the values of the Québécois people.”<sup>10</sup>

Bariteau’s approach appears to be more inclusive and dynamic. In fact, it proposes a form of citizenship that is dialectically formed on a number of levels, and all housed under the rubric of French as the common language. He takes up the meaning provided by Seymour and extends the logic in such a fashion as to propose a cultural, if not linguistic, dialectic. Yet, it remains to be seen whether theory has or will translate into practice. Such an evaluation must come later in this work.

If Seymour seeks a rationalisation for language laws founded in the philosophy of thought and meaning, some take up the issue of language and collective rights, from more empirically rooted observations on the nature of the contemporary liberal state. Pierre Coulombe sees the problem thus: “French Canada is not threatened so much by its lack of

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<sup>10</sup> Bariteau, Claude, *Québec: 18 Septembre 2001*, Montréal, Québec-Amérique, 1998, p. 128. My translation of “Et cette culture « s’est enrichie d’autres cultures comme celle des premiers habitants ». Elle est aussi appelée à se nourrir de l’apport des citoyens d’origines ethniques et de traditions culturelles variées. En ce sens, le français deviendra non seulement la langue commune et la langue de la citoyenneté, mais aussi la langue qui favorisera la convergence aux valeurs du peuple québécois.”

status within the federation, but rather by a liberal ideology that is increasingly unsympathetic to state language planning.”<sup>11</sup>

Coulombe sees the Charter (as does Alan Cairns<sup>12</sup>) as a *nation-building* tool, one intended to strengthen associations with the *Canadian* nation. He proposes that this runs counter to the federal nature of the country by strengthening attachments to the central government at the expense of provincial ones. Further, he argues that a long tradition of collective rights in Canada has been eclipsed by the rise of liberal individualism since the entrenchment of the Charter in the Constitution act of 1982.

“But however foreign the idea of a symmetrical equality between citizens and the sanctity of their individual rights is to Canada’s collectivist tradition, it has taken over public consciousness in the post Charter era. What were once considered special rights rooted in the history of French-English duality are now treated as unacceptable privileges for French Canada. Minority language rights themselves, the Charter’s centre-piece, are seen as an aberration within the logic of uniform equality, to be shed along with all the vestiges of special treatment that pose an obstacle to Canada’s liberal culture.”<sup>13</sup>

What is proposed here is that there has come to pass; that we have consciously constructed, a shift in the nature of our political culture away from a more collectivist tradition towards a pure liberal individualism. If this thesis is correct then a number of conclusions may be drawn. First, that the peril is as much for the English-speaking minority in Québec as for French-speaking minorities outside the province. Second, that legislative and institutional arrangements prior to the repatriation of the Constitution and the entrenchment of the Charter gave greater credence to the importance of collective rights, albeit those drawn along the broader lines of culture, including religion and language. Third, that a sovereign liberal state of Québec would demonstrate a similar tendency, and this notwithstanding her avowed commitment to minority rights in general, and towards a culturally inclusive “intercultural” model of citizenship. The general argument has implications for a number of groups: the

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<sup>11</sup> Coulombe, Pierre A., *Language Rights in Canada*, New York, Peter Lang Publishing, 1995, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> See Cairns, Alan, *Charter versus Federalism: The Dilemmas of Constitutional Reform*, Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992, p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Coulombe, p. 5.

working classes, visible minorities, First Peoples, and women; all may question whether the nature of the liberal state lies at the root of their problems within contemporary society.

In examining the literature, I do not assume that the average citizen, or even the run-of-the-mill union militant in Québec has read and followed the nationalist canon. Certainly some have, but its greatest value lies in the way it is supposed to be reflective of the broader social imaginary and internal discourse, as well as in observing how it seeks to drive that discourse and inform the imaginary. Seymour's assumptions mirror the attitudes expressed by some of the union militants that came forward during the initial drive towards unionisation at Concordia University in the early 1980s. Without the direct connection being made, what was being communicated was that the representation of shared interests of *class* necessitated a *shared language*; that the expression of shared class interests could only be effectively advocated when the workers and their representatives shared the same language and the same meaning. Interestingly, Seymour's *caveat* concerning the effect of assimilation rings as true for English workers as for Francophones within the broader Canadian context.

“But once an agent has through misfortune been assimilated to a new community, this argument goes just as far. The defence and promotion of their rights must be superseded by the defence and promotion of the rights of the new linguistic community of which they are now a part. The conclusion goes as well for each agent who is simultaneously integrated into a number of linguistic communities. The idea is such that these communities play a determining role on his identity.”<sup>14</sup>

The immediate and striking assumption is that somehow, even in a liberal and contemporary society such as Canada or contemporary Québec, being in the minority position is a mark of misfortune, and that it necessarily implies assimilation. Note, as well, that in the earlier citation individual rights were equal to, and must be balanced against, collective rights. While here we see that for the minority “agent” their individual rights must of necessity yield

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<sup>14</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Seymour, p. 67. My translation of “Mais une fois q’un agent est par malheur assimilé à une nouvelle communauté, cet argument vaut tout autant. La défense et la promotion de ses droits devront passer par la défense et la promotion des droits de la nouvelle communauté linguistique à lequel il appartient. La conclusion vaut aussi pour tout agent qui est simultanément intégrés à plusieurs communautés linguistiques. L’idée est alors que ces communautés jouent un rôle déterminant sur son identité.”

to the primacy of collective rights; the rights of the majority culture. And with this semantic sleight of hand, we allow the philosophical argument to segue into a political one, for majority – be it cultural or simply demographic – becomes the watchword for the political expression of the will of the *democratic* majority. And what of those who dissent from the national project and remain a minority in a new land? Or of those who see the tearing asunder of their state as something that does not necessarily have to include all residents and all territories within the old provincial borders? Is there an option to take what is yours and leave, or to remain and dwell in open opposition to the project, and retain some sense of the collective self as “other”; as a new minority within a new state?

“For example, those who so wish always have the option to leave the territory. The exercise of a collective right to self-determination must not take the form of a forced integration of individuals into the bosom of a political community to which they do not want to belong. The fair balance between individual rights and collective rights requires that individuals may, if they so desire, freely choose their membership in a political community. If the partitionists have come to think that they have the right to propose the annexation of their territory to another state it is because they have an individualistic conception of people and that they are no more or less than an assembly of individuals.”<sup>15</sup>

The most balanced contemporary literature that addresses the issue of identity and the nationalist project retains the idea of an expressed collective political will and seeks to reconcile the lack of cultural and linguistic unity against the importance of the national project for the cultural and demographic majority. Consider the words of Jacques Beauchemin:

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<sup>15</sup> Seymour, Michel, *Le Pari De La Démesure: l'intransigeance canadienne face au Québec*, L'Hexagone, Montréal, 2001, p. 245. My translation of “Par exemple, les individus qui le désirent ont toujours la possibilité de quitter le territoire. L'exercice d'un droit collectif à l'autodétermination ne doit pas prendre la forme d'une intégration forcée des individus au sein d'une communauté politique à laquelle ils ne veulent pas appartenir. Le juste équilibre entre les droits individuels et les droits collectifs requiert que les individus puissent, si ils le désirent, choisir librement leur communauté politique d'appartenance. Si les partitionistes en sont venus à penser qu'ils avaient le droit de proposer le rattachement de leur territoire à un autre État, c'est parce qu'ils ont une conception individualiste du peuple et qu'ils le considèrent comme n'étant rien de plus qu'un ensemble de individus.”

“Until societies opened themselves to pluralism, the nation could transcend the dispersion of interests and social diversity and unite them together under its eminent authority. The legitimacy of political action was founded on a unified and transcendent political subject who alone could speak in the name of the “general interest” or “common good.” This subject asserted its pre-eminence with greater assurance if it generally constituted the expression of an historically majoritarian community who “universalised” in itself a certain communitarian experience.”<sup>16</sup>

Essentially, Beauchemin is leading into a discussion of the increasingly difficult, if not impossible task of building a nationalist project in a post-modern pluralistic society. Even at the early stage of his exposition, he semantically expresses certain assumptions as to the nature of the state and the nation. Note that it is the “nation” that was previously able to transcend a diversity of interests and “unite” them. The invocation of a “unified political subject” in and of itself implies an historic consensus, if not an unanimity. The argument is that an acute and increasing pluralism has robbed the “nation” of its ability to demonstrate sufficient social and political consensus to carry off a national project. This argument rests on the assumption that earlier nations – that is to say at least those prior to the advance of “pluralism” – demonstrated a certain cultural, and by contemporary extension, linguistic coherence that is somehow lacking today. Contemporary literature in the field of nationalism would question such a culturally and linguistically monolithic understanding of the “nation” then and now. Beauchemin is not alone in leaping to a certain conclusion here. Consider the preamble statement made by Claude Bariteau in laying out his vision for a future Québec:

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<sup>16</sup> Beauchemin, Jacques, *L'Histoire en trop: La mauvaise conscience des souverainistes Québécois*, Montréal, VLB Éditeur, 2002, p. 10. My translation of “Jusqu’à ce que les sociétés s’ouvrent au pluralisme, la nation pouvait transcender la dispersion des intérêts et la diversité sociale en les ramenant sous son éminente autorité. La légitimité de l’agir politique se fondait sur ce sujet politique unitaire et transcendant puisque lui seul pouvait parler au nom de « l’intérêt général » ou du « bien commun ». Ce sujet affirmait sa prééminence avec autant plus assurance qu’il constituait généralement l’émanation d’une communauté d’histoire majoritaire qui « universalisait » en lui un certain vécu communautaire.”

“The concept “sovereign state” is the equivalent of the “nation state” as employed by English authors. It has the advantage of being more precise than the concept “État nation” to which many French authors have had recourse, this latter concept echoing the double meaning that the term “nation” can take in French.”<sup>17</sup>

Fernand Dumont, on the other hand has a far more nuanced understanding of the differences between “nation,” and “state.” And this to the point where not only does he clearly see them as different, but in fact sees no necessary correspondence between the two. The point of agreement between Dumont and others is a consideration of the role of the majority “nation” in constructing a collective social project that is conceived to actually produce a sovereign state. He clearly states that “Québec is not a nation, and one must deny any sovereignist project that has as its objective the identification of nation and state; Québec includes Anglophones and First Nations, and the francophone nation is not limited to the territory of Québec.”<sup>18</sup> Dumont, no less a sovereignist than others discussed here, will not employ an argument based on the semantic sleight of hand by equating state and nation.

“Nation and state therefore unfold from two different methods of collective cohesion. The distinction is one of principle, but it is also one of fact. Between the two there is no necessary correspondence. There exist nations without corresponding states; multi-national states are the majority in the real world. Accordingly, the nation and the state both constitute collectivities woven by history. Certainly, the nation privileges before all an identity that comes from the past, where memory plays the primary function, whereas the state is primarily a project of collective organisation designed to ensure the constant renewal of a rights-based society.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Bariteau, , p. 1. My translation of “Le concept « d’État souverain » est l’équivalent de celui de « nation state » des auteurs Anglophones. Il a l’avantage d’être plus précis que le concept « État nation » auquel recourant divers auteurs francophones, ce dernier concept faisant écho au double sens que peut prendre le terme « nation » en français.” I acknowledge the difficulty, as does Bariteau, and hence I leave the term « État nation » as is. Notwithstanding, the immediate assumption that a sovereign state is the same as a nation-state is facile at best, and in fact wrong, though it well serves Bariteau’s argument.

<sup>18</sup> Dumont, Fernand, *Raisons Communes*, Montréal, Les Éditions du Boréal, 1995. p. 57. My translation of “Le Québec n’est pas une nation. On doit y récuser un projet de souveraineté qui aurait pour objectif d’identifier nation et État; il y a ici des Anglophones et des autochtones, et la nation francophone ne se limite pas au territoire québécoise.”

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56. My translation of “Nation et État procèdent donc de deux modes différents de cohésion des collectivités. La distinction est de principe ; elle est aussi de fait. Entre les deux, il n’y a pas de coïncidence obligée. Il existe des nations sans États correspondants ; les États plurinationaux sont en majorité dans le monde actuel. Cependant, la nation et l’État constituent tous deux des rassemblements tissés par l’histoire. Certes, la nation privilégie avant tout une venue de passé, où la mémoire joue la fonction première, tandis que l’État est au premier chef un projet d’organisation collective qui vise à la constitution sans cesse reprise d’un société de droit.”

If pluralism has only recently robbed the “nation-state” of its ability to manifest a collective imaginary leading to a sovereign state, it has also had other eroding effects for majority cultures. Previously the perception in French Canada was that the French and English constituted “two founding peoples” in Canada, and this cultural and linguistic division was written across the face of the land. Now, with the French language and corresponding French Canadian culture being increasingly centred in Québec – *pace* Acadia – and French Canada claiming an ever decreasing portion of the broader Canadian demographic, ethnic pluralism has – so the argument goes – relegated French Canadians to the status of one amongst many groups of “Canadians,” not one of two culturally coherent and socially dominant partners. This is the general argument employed by many contemporary Québécois nationalists in their critique of Canadian multiculturalism, and core to their argument for a sovereign Québec state that employs an “intercultural” citizenship model; where the [*de souche* and French] Québécois would be “masters of their own house,” and constitute the clear cultural, linguistic, and demographic majority in the new state.

Beauchemin expresses the attitude with a certain candour.

“The fact that we Québécois will hereafter be defined along the lines of identity rather than that of culture gives rise then to a completely new phenomenon. In distancing itself from a definition too narrowly associated with a French-Canadian past, the new Québécois identity invites those who would inscribe themselves within and participate as part of a new and hereafter open Quebecness. Accordingly, this conversion has the effect of handing over our Québécois identity to competition with numerous collectivities vying in the identity “market.””<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Beauchemin, Jacques, “Le sujet politique Québécois : l’indicible « nous »,” in *Repères en Mutation: Identité et citoyenneté dans le Québec contemporain*, Editions Québec Amérique inc., Montréal, Québec, 2001, p. 211 My translation of “le fait que le nous québécois soit désormais redéfini sur le mode de l’identité plutôt que sur celui de la culture engendre alors un phénomène tout à fait inédit. En se distanciant d’une définition trop étroitement associée au passé canadien-français, la nouvelle identité québécoise invite ceux qui le veulent à venir s’y inscrire et à participer au grand récit d’une québécuté dorénavant ouverte. Cependant, cette conversion a pour effet de livrer l’identité du nous québécois à la concurrence que se livrent de nombreux regroupements sur le « marché » de l’identité.” Fernand Dumont traces the phenomenon to federal policy on Bilingualism in the 1960s and to the 1982 Constitution Act that entrenched the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. He puts it as follows : “Implicitly, French culture became one culture amongst others. Additionally, cultural duality was transformed into linguistic duality, in moving from biculturalism to bilingualism, one sets aside collective rights for individual ones.” My translation of “Implicitement, la culture française devenait une culture parmi d’autres. En complément, la dualité culturelle était transposée en dualité linguistique ; en passant du biculturalisme au bilinguisme, on se déplaçait des droits collectifs aux droits individuels” See *Op. Cit.*, Dumont, Fernand, *Raisons Communes*, p. 47.

Here again, we see some immediate and fundamental assumptions. First, that somehow “identity” is separate from “culture,” or at least sufficiently so as to significantly modify the position of the dominant French majority in its relation to the other cultures. Second, that this is a recent, previously unstated and new phenomenon that only now places the Québécois in the position of being just an “other” culture among many, competing in a milieu of divers – may we presume “equal”? – cultural collectivities. Third, that the invitation to subscribe to this new inclusive identity will actually provide a membership that can affect the nature and trajectory of a new “Quebecness” in a way both rewarding and meaningful to non-traditional Quebecers, and yet remain acceptable to those of a more *old stock* ancestry.

This new pluralistic society is, at least on the surface, more openly endorsed and accepted by some theorists. The inevitability of an increasingly diverse society in Québec is unavoidably acknowledged by any who have studied her demographics over the past fifty years. Bariteau offers a vision that attempts to both acknowledge the new while affirming the uniqueness of the old definition of Québécois, and nation.

“This sovereinist project, as presented by Fernand Dumont, still promotes a Québécois political community overseeing “nations” aligned around a culture of convergence. Even if it has not said so explicitly as in prior programs, the new program of the Parti Québécois leaves this door open. If the language and culture of the majority constitute a common good worth promoting, it is not at the mistake that “the multiplicity of forms of allegiance and integration of other cultures is better.” In this sense one will still be in the presence of a nationalism that distinguishes the Québécois “nation,” that constitutes the Québécois of a French origin from the “national society” of Québec according to Gilles Bourque and Jules Duchastel.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Op. Cit.* Bariteau, p. 130. My translation of “Ce projet souverainiste, comme l’a présenté Fernand Dumont, prônerait toujours une communauté politique québécoise chapeautant des « nations » alignées autour d’un culture de convergence. Même s’il ne le dit pas de façon aussi explicite que dans les programmes antérieurs, le nouveau programme du Parti québécois laisse cette porte ouverte. Si la langue et la culture de la majorité constituent un bien commun à promouvoir, c’est ne pas au mépris « de la multiplicité des formes d’allégeance et de l’intégration de ce que les autres cultures ont de meilleur. En ce sens, on serait toujours en présence d’un nationalisme qui distingue la « nation » québécoise, que constitueraient les Québécois d’origine française, de la « société nationale » du Québec selon Gilles Bourque et Jules Duchastel.”



Making an inclusive evaluation of Bariteau's broader semantic argument: first equate the sovereign state with the nation state, then subdivide the latter into a presumed or functional hierarchy of nations within, with the majority francophone nation as *primus inter pares*.. This does nothing to either create a unified and shared sense of the broader "nation" nor to reconcile the dominant effects of majority culture and language. Bariteau's "culture of convergence" finesses the position of the *old stock* majority in this community of "nations." In fact, he does not even directly address the real issue at hand. In a real sense, Beauchemin shows greater candour in acknowledging the importance of the historic conscience of the traditional Québécois.

"This book organises itself around what one may call a "strong thesis" according to which contemporary political thought must assume a subjectivity that cuts across the Franco-Québécois historical conscience. It advances that every future project for Québec must be founded on it. It seeks, in effect, to lead to a demonstration of the necessity of this subjectivity and the virtues of communitarianism, which alone is capable of inculcating an ethic of social existence built on solidarity."<sup>22</sup>

We know that Beauchemin is speaking of the nationalist project specifically, but the citation does invoke this subjectivity for all political projects. We presume that he does not literally mean for every legislative tinkering with the highway code, but the underlying principle is clear. A conscious regard for the socio-historical perspective of *old stock* Québécois must inform all future plans. This is both problematic and perfectly normal. It is problematic because it necessarily divides the public interest in two or many parts, or at the very least assumes that there will be separate interests on all political issues. Patently, aside from the nationalist project, this is a false and divisive assumption. Certainly all Quebeckers can agree on a substantial number of issues. To argue to the contrary establishes divisions where they do not exist and presumes an inability to agree on even the most basic issues of the common

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<sup>22</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Beauchemin, *l'Histoire en trop: La mauvaise conscience des souverainistes Québécois*, p. 15. My translation of "Ce livre se organise autour de ce qu'on peut appeler une « thèse forte » selon laquelle la pensée politique contemporaine doit assumer la subjectivité qui traverse la conscience historique franco-québécoise. Elle avance que tout projet d'avenir pour le Québec doit se fonder sur elle. Elle voudrait, en effet, déboucher sur la démonstration de la nécessité de cette subjectivité et des vertus du communautarisme, seul capable d'asseoir une éthique de l'existence sociale fait de solidarité."

good. Yet, such a position is also perfectly natural, given the linguistic and cultural history of Franco-Quebeckers, and their majority status within the province as well as their increasing minority status in the rest of Canada and the continent.

### **The Role of the Past in Constructing the Future**

Beauchemin is correct in arguing for the importance of history, for there is the exact place where an uncomfortable integration into a avowedly *pluralist*, and communitarian Québec lies for many non-Francophone groups. Many of those communities have a history within Québec that is marked with uncomfortable relations with the French majority. Admittedly, the roots of some ethnic communities are quite shallow and history is less of an impediment to the adoption of a new national identity. These communities will weigh their commitment against their personal experience in the now. Either way, history be it long or short, will be a great determinant of real belonging.

The historical perspective is also important to how French Quebeckers see themselves. This has sparked a discourse on not just what serves us in reflecting upon Québec's past, but that which arguably burdens us and limits our possibilities; that has us fated to ever have our reach exceed our grasp.

An historical regard for the components of Québécois culture, either predominantly defined and limited to French Québec more in the sense argued by Fernand Dumont<sup>23</sup> and others, or more broadly as proposed thus far by Beauchemin, necessarily implies a sense of history and culture as seen, recorded and interpreted by organic intellectuals. Barrington Moore has warned us about drawing conclusions about the nature of a people from the social artefacts left behind by its intellectuals, even when these records are draughted by elites amongst the working classes themselves. The importance of a regard for history in defining

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<sup>23</sup> See Dumont, Fernand, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, Montréal, Les Éditions du Boréal, 1996.

identity is often secondary to the issue of whose history? Contemporary historical and social theory on the nature of the nation makes its own assumptions about social actors. Rooting around in Québec's past for clues as to the soul and spirit of the Québécois "nation" invites an even more creative interpretation and is compounded by a record about the generally illiterate left by a literate intellectual elite class fragment. As Moore comments about research conducted on German workers prior to the first World War:

"Most, though not all of the information that is available about the inarticulate comes from the articulate. To learn what we can about the mentality of the inarticulate it is necessary to have as clear a conception as possible of the biases and predilections of the articulate."<sup>24</sup>

Why does Beauchemin insist on reconciling the Québécois with their conservative nationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Because, he argues, "a collectivity must not build a collective representation of the self upon a denial of the self, of a denial of their past."<sup>25</sup> Beauchemin sees this denial of self as rooted in the new Québec of the Quiet Revolution, and maintained today by a movement that wishes to erase all traces of this conservative history from a universalising civic nationalism. Yet what would Beauchemin retain? He repeatedly refers to a "communitarian dimension of the Franco-Québécois historical conscience" as being important to a unifying inclusiveness for a contemporary definition of the nation, one that will over-arch particularising tendencies. It seems difficult to argue for the continued presence of such a sentiment in a society that is increasingly as marked by liberal individualism as any around it. Beauchemin would argue for a unifying component that one might find in history and argue for its continued presence today, but seems increasingly absent in western society. It may well continue to mark Québec society as different from the rest of Canada and the United States, but the tendency is for Québec to become more like her neighbours, not less so.

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<sup>24</sup> Moore, Jr., Barrington, *Injustice The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, White Plains, New York, M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1978, p. 191.

<sup>25</sup> *Op. Cit*, Beauchemin, p. 17.

Some authors argue that the Québécois preoccupation with their national history has not necessarily served them well. What Beauchemin would retain, and what is necessary to the inclusive nature of his definition of the nation is a distinct sense of the collective self and its survival that has bred a communitarian spirit. But a preoccupation with the crucible of history wherein that spirit was forged through adversity has marked what Jocelyn Maclure describes as a victim mentality. Maclure offers his understanding of the two dominant discourses on identity in Québec. The first he entitles the Nationalist view that draws upon a melancholic image “sad and resigned, vehement and seditious.” The second he identifies as the Anti-nationalist view described as “rationalist and cosmopolitan.” Maclure seeks to find a way out of these two dominant paradigms; to imagine the nation free of these conflicting and exclusive visions. He proposes, in the style of Michel Foucault, “an ontological self-criticism;” to “exhume and examine that which is contingent and arbitrary in what we propose to be necessary and absolute.”<sup>26</sup>

One innovation that is offered here is the examination of generational divisions that affect young Quebecers and their participation in the social and political realms. Maclure is correct to note that the baby boomers, having constructed a different society post Quiet Revolution, are loath to examine some of the institutions they have crafted. Dumont observes as much when he questions these same institutions in *Raisons Communes*.

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<sup>26</sup> Maclure, Jocelyn, *Récits Identitaires : le Québec à l'épreuve du pluralisme*, Montréal, Éditions Québec Amérique, 2000, p. 35.

“What has become of the grand plans of the social movements, such as those of the artisans of the Quiet Revolution? Are policies and ideas almost everywhere not centred on management, corporatism, and bureaucracy?”

The State administers, it is said. Everywhere we administer. Jean-Claude Leclerc wrote in *Le Devoir*: “we seem less capable than in the past to effectively run our hospitals, our transportation systems, our schools... to say nothing of Hydro-Québec. We have never had so many administrators, and so little administration.” We no longer have any administration because the aims of the Quiet Revolution have been lost along the way or have been turned to other ends. It is possible to inflate the number of managers no matter what the institution, but administration presumes that institutions are also projects.”<sup>27</sup>

The failure of yesterday’s institutional sacred cows necessitates a generational culling of the herd. Such was the climactic shift in Québec’s social institutions during the Quiet Revolution, and in view of Dumont’s comments, what may be necessary today. These waves of crisis and institutional compromise are normal to all periods of fundamental change; what may also be dubbed a period of ideological shift. This may mark shifts in the underlying ideological approach to social analysis as well as a tectonic movement in the collective ethos. The former is marked by a shift away from an earlier class analysis approach to Québec society conducted by many of her nationalist theorists that we shall subsequently conduct. The latter concept is consistent with an understanding of ideology as employed by authors such as Marcel Rioux, and as shared by others discussed here. By way of example, consider the important “ideological” shift that marks the traditional and contemporary analyses of Québec history.

In an examination of different bodies of thought, Maclure first takes up those authors that, in demonstrating a preoccupation with the litany of Québec’s suffered affronts, argue for a national melancholy that permeates our collective soul. He lists Hubert Aquin, Pierre Vallières, Christian Dufour and Jean Larose. Similarly, he identifies the theme that runs

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<sup>27</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Dumont, *Raisons Communes*, p. 22. My translation of “Que sont devenu les grandes desseins des mouvements sociaux, de tant d’artisans de la Révolution tranquille ? Les politiques et les idées ne tournent-elles pas un peu partout autour de la gestion, du corporatisme, de la bureaucratie ? L’État administre, dit-on. Partout on administre. Jean-Claude Leclerc écrivait dans *Le Devoir* « on paraît moins capable qu’auparavant de faire fonctionner des hôpitaux, des services de transport, des écoles...pour ne rien dire d’Hydro-Québec. On n’a jamais autant d’administrateurs, et si peut d’administration. » Nous n’avons plus d’administration parce que les tentatives de la Révolution tranquille se sont perdues en cours de route ou se sont tournées vers d’autres fins. Il est possible de gonfler de gestionnaires n’importe quelle institution ; mais l’administration suppose que les institutions soient aussi des projets.”

throughout Dumont's *Genèse de la société québécoise*. Here we find the roots of an argument that goes as follows: Québec society is *abnormal*; it is incomplete; unachieved and unfulfilled. The pivotal event for some was the Conquest that set the tone of defeat and oppression. The initial proponents of this line of thought are traced to the Université de Montréal and Guy Frégault, Maurice Séguin and Michel Brunet. The period covered by Maclure's examination being from 1944-1969. This is contrasted with the argument put forward by some in Université Laval who placed responsibility not upon these events, but upon the shoulders of the French Canadians themselves. Their collective reaction to these events being what is constituted as *la survivance*. Maclure finds here the source of much of Québec's neo-nationalism: the Québécois are a vanquished people and the only remedy to two hundred years of repeated affronts and defeats is a program of *decolonisation*.

Summarising Hubert Aquin, French Canadians suffer, and have suffered for two hundred years, from an acute sense of their minority status. This led to "Francophones developing a whole series of pathological traits habitually reserved to individuals suffering from powerful inferiority complexes and weak self esteem."<sup>28</sup> This in turn, argues Aquin, produces an "atavistic cultural fatigue" that inhibits the nation in moving forward to political "normality." Aquin is extreme. He argues that the Québec nation "oscillates between a desire for revolution or collective suicide." Maclure identifies in addition to Aquin, the sometime poets Gerald Godin and Gaston Miron, as among those who await the "awakening" of Québec after a "long dogmatic sleep." These were contributors to *Parti Pris* who, along with others such as Pierre Maheu and Paul Chamberland argued for a necessary "psychoanalysis of the Québécois pathology; an expedition into the collective unconscious" before we can move forward to the "political and cultural emancipation of the Québécois collectivity."<sup>29</sup> In what to outsiders may seem an extremely paranoid fashion, what is proposed by these

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

authors is that the dominant Anglo culture actually infiltrates the Québécois collective unconscious in such a way as to turn the natural resentment at being dominated back onto the group and producing a form of guilt and self hate. There is a conscious awareness of both Marx and Fanon here: “it is not possible to move forward unless one possesses first a sense of one’s alienation.”<sup>30</sup> Of violent recourse and ties to the FLQ, Maclure notes that violence was seen as a last recourse, and that the FLQ radicalised the themes found within *Parti Pris* in resorting to violence.

Throughout this school of thought is found the concept of the colonisation of the Québécois without any consideration that, as a European people in the new world, they themselves were a colonising people. Maclure cites André D’Allemagne, one of the founders of the RIN, who argues that from colonisation through confederation and the Quiet Revolution, the Québécois remain a colonised people. The practices are embedded in Québec’s institutions, and even her elites are blind to the ongoing colonial relations with English Canada. Citing D’Allemagne: Canadian colonialism is “a never-ending genocide.”<sup>31</sup>

Maclure identifies the writers of *Parti Pris* with that ideological strain of political thought that united nationalism and socialism, “subordinating the socialist revolution to the nationalist one”. It remains so today with the same priorities demonstrated by *Québec Solidaire*. Invoking the work of Pierre Vallières, Maclure notes a shift in the *us/them* dichotomy: now it has become “we the (Québécois) proletariat and their (American) economic imperialism.” Economic exploitation and domination became tied to cultural forms of oppression. The themes of the earlier defeatist/defeated school of thought run through Vallières work as well: interminable cultural winter, the “great darkness.”

The “atavistic fatigue” of Aquin is akin to the “recurrence” of Dumont. Here the nation has never really recovered from the break with the old European roots that were

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56 and citing Fanon, Frantz, *Les damnés de la terre* p. 272.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

severed on the Plains of Abraham. However, for Dumont, the initial damage was incurred before the conquest and is traced to the nature of the colony itself under the old regime. The Québécois nation has never reached full maturity; it is in fact caught in the state of “childhood.” The profound impact of these formative events themselves has as an additional consequence the burden of the perception of the dominant “other” upon the self-image of the Québécois. The distrustful eye of the other – suspicious, conscious of difference, wary – becomes the source for “la survivance.”

“The essence of Québécois identity according to Dumont is founded on the slow but perpetual fossilisation of a discourse where the Francophone is confined to play the subordinate role.”<sup>32</sup>

Whatever is essential in the Québécois identity is also contextual and relational. If there are aspects of this identity that are argued as being consistent over the last two hundred years, it is because the discourse has remained the same, as has the relationship. This is why Maclure places Dumont with the other “melancholy authors.”

For the *old stock* Québécois, as well as the Anglophone, Allophone and the new Quebecker, some reconciliation of the nature of the nation – past, present and future – is required. Even for new citizens, there is some access to their place in the collective past, albeit for some the more recent past. The roots of some ethnic communities run deeper than others in the soil of Québec history, and the experience of these groups over recent and distant time becomes the foundation of their own understanding of their place within the greater nation. However, reconciling those histories with that of the dominant culture that more often than not has seen itself as the “othered” victim becomes a challenge. The dominant culture must throw off the burden of a history of subordination, while Anglophones within the province must adapt to a new minority position. In many ways in the new Québec, the shoe is on the “othered” foot.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71. My translation of “L’essence de l’identité québécoise, selon Dumont, est fondée sur la lente mais perpétuelle fossilisation d’un discours où le francophone est confiné à jouer le rôle du subordonné.”



Ernest Renan was right in observing that some degree of collective forgetting is as necessary as a collective remembering in building the shared identity that is the nation. The depth of collective memory is one of the reasons that contemporary Québec nationalists tend to focus their enlistment strategies on new Quebeckers rather than amongst the Anglo and deeper rooted Allophone communities. Yet such does nothing to heal rifts built up over time, and only seeks to redraw the lines of division along a new definition of Québécois. In writing that definition, the criteria of language and residency alone cannot suffice, and in light of the nuance of history, and histories, this denies the broader implications of culture in belonging. Quebeckers may increasingly share the French language, but this alone in the absence of a reconciliation of shared and separate histories will not create sufficient glue to bind us together. Much of what needs to be reconciled is of the personal and the now. Individuals assume identities, collectivities do not. Notwithstanding the importance of collective experience in determining individual affiliation, that collective experience is really no more than the sum total of shared individual histories over time.

Some brief examination of the components of collective memory may help illustrate where both the traditional and contemporary experience meet in creating the now and future nation. Jacques Mathieu provides a subtle and nuanced typology that describes four principal forms of the past; aspects or facets of the collective and individual experience. Each in its own particular fashion informs the present, and becomes the basis of Renan's daily plebiscite that constitutes the nation.

“The written or recorded past, the tangible past, experienced, real, inscribed in institutions, the landscape or archives, the folkloric past collected in oral histories, the past preserved and given value across constructed heritage, the personal, archaeological vestiges or museum pieces constituting tangible, visible, audible, readable traces of a culture, a period or a place.

The past as testament. By its preoccupations and practices it includes the learned past and the popular past that is interested in keepsakes and family papers. It covers the past as constructed by different disciplines: archivist, archaeology, ethnology, history, art history, geographic history, and the work of museums which have their respective methodologies.

The past as experience. Here culture translates the memory that dwells within each individual and from which they observe, evaluate and act. This past takes many forms of cultural expression; implicit or real, practical or functional, on the order of daily life or material culture, in discourse, intellectual works or artistic performances, and this, in institutions, organisms, collectivities or the family.

The referential past. Whether by its own nature, the past which surrounds us, lives and acts in the present, takes on many forms. Tangible trace, organic and inscribed, memory, that one would hold authentic and faithful, taking form as recollections, evocations, arrangements, of reconstructions after the fact often embellishing the past. Constantly revitalised from the sense of distancing itself from the motives and circumstances which gave it birth, memory transforms itself in cultural point of reference.”<sup>33</sup>

Mathieu’s rich and detailed definition of the past and how it informs the present on levels both collective and individual well illustrates the inevitable role of history in defining identity. And Beauchemin is correct. You cannot simply cast aside the past in constructing the future. What is required is an approach that informs the present without overly burdening it with collective and individual negative experience. Jocelyn Létourneau employs an

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<sup>33</sup> Mathieu, Jacques, ed., *La mémoire dans la culture*, Les presses de l’Université Laval, Québec, 1995, p. VIII. Note structural similarities to Dumont’s *culture savant* and related institutions and disciplines. My translation of “Le passé consigne. Le passé tangible, vécu, réel, inscrit dans les institutions, le paysage ou les archives, le passé folklorique recueilli dans les archives orales, le passé préservé et mis en valeur à travers le patrimoine bâti, les biens mobiliers, les vestiges archéologiques ou les objets de musée constituent autant des traces tangibles, visibles, audibles, lisibles de la culture d’une époque ou d’un espace. Le passé témoignage. Par ses préoccupations et ses pratiques, il comprend tant le passé savant que le passé populaire qui s’intéresse aux souvenirs et aux papiers de famille. Il couvre le passé tel que construit par différentes disciplines : l’archivistique, l’archéologie, l’ethnologie, l’histoire, l’histoire de l’art, la géographie historique et la muséologie qui se réfèrent à des processus distinct. Le passé expérience. Ici la culture traduit cette mémoire qui habite chaque personne et à partir de laquelle elle observe, évalue et agit. Ce passé se prête à plusieurs formes d’expression culturelle ; implicite ou vécu, pragmatique ou fonctionnel, de l’ordre du quotidien ou de la culture matérielle, dans le discours, l’œuvre intellectuelle ou la performance artistique, et ce, dans les institutions, les organismes, les collectivités ou les familles. Le passé référence. Si par sa nature même, le passé nous entoure, vit et agit dans le présent, il se prête également à plusieurs usages. Trace tangible, organique et consignée, la mémoire, que l’on veut portant authentique et fidèle, prend la forme de rappels, d’évocations, d’aménagements, de reconstructions *a posteriori* et souvent embellies du passé. Constanment revitalisée, réactualisée dans des sens qui s’éloignent parfois des motifs et des circonstances qui lui ont donné naissance, la mémoire se transforme en référence culturelle.”

interesting turnaround to demonstrate the degree to which the past should determine the future. He asks first the usual question “what do we owe our ancestors in recalling the past?” Then he asks the reciprocal: “What do our ancestors owe to their descendants?” The answer is two-fold: they owe a bounty of goods real and moral as a legacy to the ever improving lot of humanity, and they must not overly limit, burden or impede the present in determining the future.

“As to the responsibility of ancestors, it is twofold: it obviously consists – but it is about a powerful, arduous challenge to take account of the contingencies, uncertainties, and complexities of real life – of producing the good as well as the harmful. It is also to know how to die, that is to say to refrain from closing the history in which they are themselves inscribed and set as actors. In effect, the obligation of ancestors is let their heirs forge their own destiny.”<sup>34</sup>

The immediate difference that is striking between Beauchemin and Létourneau is that while both see the nation as constructed, the former sees the past as deterministic of the future while the latter sees it as instrumental to the purposes of charting a path to the future. Létourneau allows for greater choice. Indeed, much of the premise is about choices, sometimes difficult ones in surviving the caprices of an occasionally oppressive and always challenging past. The task that Létourneau sets is succinctly summarised: “how to construct the future without forgetting the past while refusing to become bogged down by it.”<sup>35</sup>

Ernest Renan was even more candid in his day as to the role of history in constructing the nation. Beauchemin would retain all, Létourneau would apply a certain emphasis or triage to the process. Renan is far more utilitarian.

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<sup>34</sup> Létourneau, Jocelyn, *Passer à l'avenir : histoire, mémoire, identité dans le Québec d'aujourd'hui*, Montréal, Boréal, 200, pp. 26-27, My translation of “la responsabilité des ancêtres est quant à elle double: elle consiste évidemment – mais il s’agit là d’un défi fort ardu à relever compte tenu des contingences, des incertitudes et de la complexité de la vie réelle – à produire de la bonté plutôt que de la nocivité. Elle est aussi de savoir mourir, c’est-à-dire de s’abstenir de conclure l’histoire dans laquelle ils se sont eux-mêmes inscrits et investis à titre d’acteurs. Les ancêtres ont en effet pour l’obligation de laisser les héritiers en prise sur leur destin.”

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17. My translation of “comment construire l’avenir sans oublier le passé mais en refusant de s’y embourber?” (p. 17)

“Forgetting, I would even say historical error, is essential to the creation of a nation, which is why the advance of historical study often poses a threat to nationality. Historical inquiry, in effect, brings to light the violent events that are at the source of all political formations, even those whose consequences have been beneficial.”<sup>36</sup>

One can sense the logic of Renan’s direction, more especially given the unique nature of Québec’s social history. Notwithstanding, the deliberate propagation of “historical error” has oft been indulged to the point of maintaining inaccurate and demeaning myths about the “other,” and this on many sides. Selective forgetting may be the most we can allow in constructing a shared identity in Québec. In so doing, we must choose to de-emphasise if not to discard certain historical realities.

When comparing with Beauchemin, we at once see that Létourneau feels that in respecting the past while avoiding its negative baggage there is an element of choice, and a certain responsibility to be demonstrated in its exercise. What is also immediately evident from Létourneau’s reading of the Lacoursière Report<sup>37</sup> on the teaching of history in Québec is the argument that the teaching of history must be kept separate from “nationalist preaching”: something that Beauchemin will not countenance. The second approach that Létourneau sees as preoccupying the Lacoursière task force is one that addresses the presence of cultural communities, aboriginal peoples and the Anglophone community in the teaching of Québec history. This second approach has invited heated criticism accusing the authors of relegating the Québécois to the role of just another collective identity in a post-modern sea of competing pluralist groups.

What is this bounty to be passed on without burdening the future, and what are the noxious or harmful effects that should be discarded? Létourneau, like Maclure, argues that

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<sup>36</sup> Renan, Ernest, *Qu’est qu’une Nation?*, Toronto, Tapir Press, 1996, p. 19. From the preamble to Renan’s famous 1882 lecture. Wanda Romer Taylor’s translation of “L’oubli, et je dirai même l’erreur historique, sont un facteur essentielle de la création d’une nation, et c’est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger. L’investigation historique, en effet, remet en lumière les faits de violence qui ce sont passés à l’origine de toutes les formulations politiques, même de celles dont les conséquences ont été le plus bienfaisantes.”

<sup>37</sup> Lacoursière, Jacques et al, *Learning from the Past: Report of the Task Force on the Teaching of History*, Quebec, Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l’Education, 1996.

much of the traditional view of Québec's past is one of torment and oppression, and this does not serve the present well in building a positive view of the future. He does not suggest a "forgetting" in the sense Renan intended. His is more akin to an act of emphasis or de-emphasis. There is no nation so monolithically homogeneous that some national sub-unit or cultural collectivity has no axe to grind over the centuries of living together. Renan knew that conceiving the nation requires remembering that which serves to bring it together just as it requires forgetting some of the things that would drive it apart. Létourneau argues that we need not forget; *je me souviens*.

Létourneau takes up the task of the historian in determining that which should be retained and that which should be forgotten. This is the same question that applies to the role of the organic intellectual on the grander scale. In determining that which should be transmitted they are both actor and conduit. The problem is when one's ideological position, in both of the senses outlined above, overly informs the process. This is what marks the difference between the writing of Létourneau and Beauchemin: one asks what in the historical record serves the maturation of the entire Québécois nation, the other more preoccupied with what must serve the collective interests of the *old stock* Québécois national majority. Thus, the critique of the work of Québec historian, Gérard Bouchard that each author offers is necessarily quite different.

Létourneau affords a greater length to his examination of the work of Bouchard, and employs his critique as an illustration of the role of the historian, or any other organic intellectual, in both transmitting and *interpreting* history.

“The pertinence of Bouchard’s choice would therefore be, in the present example, less in relation to what was the actual past of the habitants of Québec than as to the way which the historian, as citizen and thinker, envisioned the future of the group of which he was a part. This pertinence would be fundamental to a moral contract established between the intellectual and his society, a contract conceived as a duty to construct the best future for his own people.”<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps the critical difference between Beauchemin and Létourneau would be their separate understandings of “his own people,” “the best future,” and the purposes that that understanding serves in putting forth their argument.

There are risks in this kind of active and fully participating role where the historian is more than a vector of transmission, but a full and conscious participating actor in the making of history. Bouchard’s nation is changeable, “always in movement,” permeable, pluralist, “and outside of ideological and cultural heterogeneity.” The nation “includes New Quebeckers, neo-Francophones, members of cultural communities, aboriginal peoples and Anglo-Québécois.”

Bouchard’s conception of the Québec nation is somewhat reminiscent of the work of Louis Hartz and Gad Horowitz, as well as George Grant insofar as it rests on two conceptual pillars: the unique nature of “new societies” and their relation to the founding culture – either cut off or in continuity – and the “Americanisation” of Québec society.<sup>39</sup> Societies that break with the mother country see their development in three stages: Appropriation, Restarting, and Emancipation. Those that proceed along the line of continuity have those stages muted and are often cursed with issues of “confused identity, cultural inconsistency and an inability to align the nation along a durable orientation.” Like Hartz, Bouchard offers the United States

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<sup>38</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Létourneau, p. 47. My translation of “La pertinence du choix de Bouchard vaudrait donc, dans ce cas-ci, moins par rapport à ce que fut effectivement le passé des habitants du Québec que par rapport à la façon dont l’historien, comme citoyen et penseur, envisage l’avenir du groupe auquel il appartient. Cette pertinence serait au fond l’expression d’un contrat moral établi entre l’intellectuel et sa société, contrat échafaudé en fonction du plus belle avenir à construire pour les siens.”

<sup>39</sup> See Horowitz, Gad, “Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation,” in *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. 32, no. 2, May, 1966, pp. 143-171, as well as Grant, George, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, Ottawa, Carleton University Press, 1997 (1965). Interestingly, Grant’s immediate concern was for English Canada and the loss of her communitarian values through the liberalisation of her society in such proximity to the United States. He held a more optimistic future for Québec.

as an example of a nation that has successfully broken with the source culture and attained its own national identity. South American countries, Mexico, Canada and Québec are at the other end of the typology. Canada, afraid of being absorbed by America, only but lately broke with the mother country and sets her identity according to a certain “invented distinctiveness”. Québec was “burdened by one hundred years of false historic consciousness, fed by an authoritarian guardian that was the Church and intellectuals frightened at the spectre of assimilation.”<sup>40</sup> The path to emancipation was taken up again during the Quiet Revolution, but as the Québécois refuse to take that final step of political independence, they remain in Bouchard’s eyes “an old new society.”

This concept of a dual role for the organic intellectual informs the work of many of Québec’s historians, political theorists and sociologists. It is most particular to two of her most prestigious sociologists: Fernand Dumont and Marcel Rioux. And not coincidentally, both were ardent proponents of Québec nationalism. Both were often taken up with the idea of the act of collectively “imagining” the Québec state and nation. In fact for these authors, in a sense quite akin to that of Benedict Anderson<sup>41</sup>, and resonant with the imagery of the past as noted above by Mathieu: Québec’s history, patrimony, places, and institutions; all these inform her present, and must inform the imagined future. But is the role of the intellectual in assisting or directing the collective imaginary that much different than the selective representation of national history by other elite bourgeois fractions? And what of the broader context of the Québécois in an increasingly global perspective?

The reduction of Québécois identity to just one of many, and Beauchemin’s objection thereto, is inherent in his examination of theories that situate French Canada within the general development of North America. Consider Gérard Bouchard and Yvan Lamonde’s

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<sup>40</sup> *Op. Cit.* Letourneau, p. 51, recalling that we are speaking here of Letourneau’s view of Bouchard.

<sup>41</sup> See Andersen, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*, New York, Verso, 1993 (1983).

arguments that the dominant myth about isolation, the church, survival and Québec's institutions was propagated by elites to their own purposes. In fact, they argue, the population engaged modernity and the Americanisation of daily life in ways little different than other groups. Ron Rudin's response is that such arguments are in fact "revisionist." The argument goes forward: considering the Québécois in the broader context reduces them to one amongst many, to consider them in isolation preserves their unique development, but cuts them off from the broader developmental context.

The fragmentation of the political subject, the Québec "nation" as something divided, leads to a discourse of majorities and minorities, says Beauchemin. Citing Josée Legault, he notes that "Anglo" identity conceived itself as a victimised minority only after Bills 22 and 101. Similarly, Michel Seymour sees the Québec nation divided between the French majority, an Anglo "national minority" and an immigrant component. As a national minority, Anglophones become participating parties in the national project. Beauchemin expresses a certain ambivalence towards both the phenomenon and the discourse. There is something unsaid in all of this talk of fragmented communities: that there is a presumed unanimity that operates *within* each. All Anglos and Allophones are presumed to be unanimously anti-sovereignist, while all Francophones are assumed to be pro-sovereignty. Beauchemin bemoans the post-modernist discourse that divides the nation into pluralist identities but more often presumes a unity within each that does not apply.

"Next It matters to measure the important effect of mutating the definition of the Québécois political subject on the now shaken legitimacy of the sovereignist project that finds itself hereafter in the uncomfortable position of having to support on the one hand Franco-Québécois interests as well as a project of inclusion extended to all components of society."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Op. Cit.* Beauchemin, p. 85. My translation of "Il importe ensuite de mesurer les incidences importantes de cette mutation de la définition du sujet politique québécois sur la légitimité désormais fragilisée du projet souverainiste qui se trouve dès lors dans la position inconfortable de devoir soutenir à la fois les intérêts franco-québécois et un projet d'inclusion étendu à toutes les composantes de la société."



Beauchemin's argument necessarily presumes that those Franco-Québécois interests are monolithically sovereigntist and at odds with the "other" components of society. Notwithstanding, and in one place only within the cited works, does Beauchemin acknowledge the lack of unanimity within his political project. In a sense, when he does address the issue, it seems a passing thought, and reveals that the ambiguity has been "convenient."

"I am not ignoring, otherwise, that the Franco-Québécois community is itself divided as to its own self representation just as much as to the political objectives it would agree to pursue. It is by convenience that I have postulated its relative unity. I have not tried to show the homogeneity of the group, that in a more general manner, the sentiment of communitarian belonging that they manifest within is beyond the divisions that cut across it."<sup>43</sup>

The assumption may be convenient, but in its application Beauchemin misses much of the problem: there is sufficient lack of unanimity within the French majority itself as to stymie the project. Forty percent of Québec's Francophones rejected sovereignty in 1995.

Again, Beauchemin returns to Dumont, memory and culture, seeking the roots of the communitarian spirit that he argues informs our ethics. He is looking for the source of such values as social assistance, non-discrimination, social solidarity, and the like in a specifically French Canadian historical tradition. The evolution of many of these values and institutions is tied up with more than that. These are part of a greater western, European tradition – at least in our own culture – and they are not foreign to other cultures; they are rooted in certain communitarian traditions that transcend the French Canadian experience alone. Why appeal to them as such? In fact, as they are something that are indeed shared across several cultural communities, why not celebrate them as something to bring us together; upon which to build a new national identity, and not something presumably retained from the old majoritarian culture? Here again we invoke Horowitz out of Hartz. A distinct preoccupation

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167. My translation of "Je n'ignore pas, par ailleurs, que la communauté franco-québécoise est elle-même divisée quant à son autoreprésentation tout autant que par rapport aux objectifs politiques qu'il conviendrait de poursuivre. C'est par commodité que j'ai postulé sa relative unité. Je n'ai pas tenté de chercher à montrer l'homogénéité du groupe que, de manière plus générale, le sentiment d'appartenance communautaire qui s'affirme en lui au-delà des divisions qui le traversent."

with communitarian values marks the cultural traditions of British Tory conservatism as imprinted within Canadian, and Québec political culture by her British colonial past and by the influx of United Empire Loyalists. Furthermore, these “other” communitarian values are part of two distinct socialist traditions marking Canadian society: one in the British Utopian mould, and another carried in from a Marxist tradition by waves of European workers. All of these informed our past and continue to inform the contemporary Canadian and Québec social imaginary.

Beauchemin would have the subjectivity of the Franco-Québécois historical conscience factored into all aspects of contemporary political thought in Québec. Yet in insisting that the communitarian values of the French Québécois inform the present nation, he misses completely the fact that in a great many ways, these values have already informed the broader political culture here and in the rest of Canada. But as Grant warned us forty-five years ago, those values are at serious risk of being lost to the values of liberalism. One of the problems that comes from insisting that history, or histories, inform the present is that we often discover that that which was, is no longer.

The sobering reality is that eliciting or constructing a collective imaginary that anticipates the independent Québécois nation must of necessity balance shared and divergent pasts, a complex pluralistic present, and a future trajectory that must reconcile both in a fashion that respects the interests of majority and minority cultures. The process in and of itself must be discursive in nature. Identity cannot be imposed from above, it must be constructed from below. In fact, it may not be “constructed” at all, but a spontaneous manifestation of the collective will. The active and involved role of many of the committed intellectuals of Québec nationalism demonstrates a shared belief that the birthing process can be induced through the communication and interpretation of history, folklore and myth. If a

shared interpretation of history is difficult enough to reconcile, how are we to approach the cultural components that constitute folklore and myth?

### **The Collective Imaginary: A Spontaneous or Constructed Phenomenon?**

Before contemplating the degree to which the social imaginary is either spontaneous or constructed, I must initially provide some brief discussion as to its nature and definition. Choosing a definition close to our examination of the literature that is specific to Québec and her contemporary theorists of identity and nationalism, Guy Rocher offers the following:

“I speak here of the social imaginary in a sense more restrained – or perhaps more broadly – than the use we currently make of it. For the purposes of our examination, I mean by the social imaginary social projects, visions of the future, dreams of society, political hopes, collective aspirations, that groups or sectors of society develop and maintain. It is the social imaginary that leads to the formation of ideologies, of utopias, of social myths.”<sup>44</sup>

By this definition we may see that the social imaginary is made manifest essentially through the political process. Projects that reflect dreams, visions, and hopes only take on form when acted upon. Hence, the nationalist preoccupation with both the project and the political subject. The imaginary both includes, and affects broader issues of culture and more specifically is both limited and defined in its expression by political culture. Definition of this term is as problematic as is the broader appellation.

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<sup>44</sup> Rocher, Guy, “Le droit et imaginaire sociale,” in Dumont, Fernand, and Martin, Yves, eds., *Imaginaire social et représentations collectives. Mélanges offerts à Jean-Charles Falardeau*, Québec, Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1982, p. 69. Rocher’s definition is obviously related to his discussion of the law. Notwithstanding, it is as he proposes perhaps both narrower and broader than some understandings, and in this case quite appropriate to our examination. My translation of “Je parle ici d’imaginaire social dans un sens plus restreint - ou peut-être plus large - que l’usage qu’on en fait couramment. Pour les besoins de notre réflexion, j’entends par imaginaire social les projets de société, les visions d’avenir, les rêves sociaux, les espoirs politiques, les aspirations collectives, que des groupes ou des secteurs de la société développent et entretiennent. C’est l’imaginaire social qui va aboutir à la formation d’idéologies, d’utopies, de mythes sociaux.”

“Specialists are almost unanimous in conceiving of culture as the entire set of symbolic structures that the members of a collectivity hold in common. There have always been profound differences on how to study it. These differences are much more pronounced when applied to political culture. Works inspired by this notion appear unsatisfying to the point where some suggest that we stop using the term to the advantage of other expressions such as “political style,” “national character,” “collective beliefs,” “ethos,” “fundamental character,” “spirit of the times” (*zeitgeist*), or even “orientation.”<sup>45</sup>

Such an all inclusive set of abstract concepts and constructs is difficult enough to address where such can be applied analytically across any culturally and linguistically coherent society. Nevertheless, with this definition we now have before us issues related to collective and diverse histories and contemporary perceptions, the social and political context wherein they dwell, and the institutional forms that translate, organise and socialise their discourse. Dumont summarises this well, and adds a certain *caveat* concerning the ideological component; one well placed considering the active role adopted by many of Québec’s intellectual elite including a number of her nationalist academics. Speaking of the past and applicable to the present:

“Ideologies are not separable from events; elites derived their pretexts and the legitimacy of their words according to circumstance. Nevertheless, the ideological sphere is not just the echo of the moment. It has its own density, and that, thanks to the support of certain structures: political institutions, parties, newspapers, and public assemblies. There, one is not limited to a discussion of the immediate or momentary; that sprang forth from more or less firm representations, depending on the group, of the collective whole that surpasses the momentary perception. These representations influenced, in their turn, the social structure that makes them possible.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Dion, Léon, “Éléments d’un schéma pour l’analyse des cultures politiques,” in Dumont, Fernand, and Martin, Yves, eds., *Imaginaire social et représentations collectives. Mélanges offerts à Jean-Charles Falardeau*, Québec, Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1982, p. 317. Dion acknowledges Talcott Parsons for the last concept of “orientation,” or “value orientation.” My translation of “Les spécialistes sont à peu près unanimes à percevoir la culture comme l’ensemble des structures symboliques que les membres d’une collectivité ont en commun. Il existe toutefois de profondes divergences sur la façon d’en faire l’étude. Ces divergences sont encore bien plus prononcées quand il s’agit de culture politique. Les travaux s’inspirant de cette notion paraissent insatisfaisants au point où certains suggèrent qu’on cesse de l’utiliser au profit d’autres expressions, telles celles de « style politique », de « caractère national », de « croyances de masses », d’« éthos », de « personnalité de base », d’« esprit du temps » (*Zeitgeist*), ou encore d’« orientation ».”

<sup>46</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Dumont, *Genèse de la société québécoise*, pp. 121-122. My translation of “Les idéologies ne sont pas séparables des événements ; les élites empruntent aux circonstances les prétextes et la légitimité se leurs dires. Pourtant, le sphère idéologique n’est pas seulement l’écho de ce qui lui vient d’ailleurs Elle comporte sa densité propre, et ça, grâce à certains supports : institutions politiques, partis, journaux, assemblées publiques. Là, on ne se borne pas, à discuter des événements du proche milieu ; se font jour des représentations, plus ou moins fermes selon les groupes, d’un ensemble collectif qui déborde la perception immédiate. Ces représentations influent à leur tour la structure sociale qui les a rendue possibles.”

One would argue that Dumont must allow that the role, motivations and adaptations of the moment that he describes for Québec's elites in the past must, of necessity, apply to her elites in the present; and this including the intellectual elite that includes the theorists of the contemporary nationalist movement. Further, in conceding the above, it would appear that the spontaneity of the imaginary is, at least for Dumont, somewhat contextually determined. And for others such as Charles Taylor the context is heavily informed by the broader evolution of western values. For him, the social imaginary, at least in the western context, is firmly rooted in social contract, and commences with Grotius and Locke.

“My basic hypothesis is that central to Western modernity is a new conception of the moral order of society. This was at first just an "idea" in the minds of some influential thinkers, but it later came to shape the social imaginary of large strata, and then eventually whole societies. It has now become so self-evident to us, that we have trouble seeing it as one possible conception among others. The mutation of this view of moral order into our social imaginary is the coming to be of certain social forms which are those essentially characterizing Western modernity: the market economy, the public sphere, the self-governing people, among others.”<sup>47</sup>

Given the incredible diversity of understandings of the imaginary, culture, and particularly political culture, in any contemporary post-modern society that is rived with divisions of culture, language and class, and most particularly in our present example of Québec, the analytical challenges are well nigh insurmountable. Notwithstanding, we may at least differentiate between those “projects, hopes, dreams, and aspirations” that may fairly be said to reflect the “beliefs, ethos, character, spirit and orientations” shared by most Quebeckers across cultural divisions from those that divide them along those lines. What do we share, and what divides us?

The concept of the collective imaginary as something that is spontaneous would seem best applied to that underlying set of values, orientations and beliefs that are of the first order: those things we share. And while much of what these are is a product of a long and profound socialisation according to Taylor, they are changeable over time and to a great

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<sup>47</sup> Taylor, Charles, *On Social Imaginary*, 2004, retrieved from <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/swiss/archive/Taylor.pdf> on 12/04/10, p. 1. The essay anticipates Taylor's broader investigation in *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2004.

extent the product of the moment; a reflection of that *zeitgeist*, or the contemporary ethos. Greg Nielsen, in seeking to differentiate the imaginary from imagination, and most particularly as it applies to the Québec independence movement, underscores the idea of spontaneity.

“In the critical sense, the social imaginary differs from the social imagination of independence in that it is itself a primary, non-determined, creative force in the process of social-historical change. In contrast, the social imagination, taken as the object of empirical sociological research, is defined as an already determined and therefore measurable representation of some aspect of social-historical reality.”<sup>48</sup>

The *imaginary* is spontaneous because it is “non-determined” in a sense that it is more than simply the result of historical causation, or the affect of its transmitted interpretation. As noted as well, the social *imagination* is more “an object of empirical sociological research, and as such is demonstrated to be something that has been “already determined” because it is in fact “measurable.” This may seem a purely semantic argument to some, but to those versed in the stricter methodologies of the social sciences, the difference is clear. The empirical approach seeks to measure and explain phenomena *after the fact*. And while a series of strictly conducted observations may well invite projections and prognostication, that augury is in fact contingent upon those observations conducted in the past. The volatility of the social imaginary is such that it is subject to the caprices of unforeseen events, as well as to being driven by subtle factors unaccountable through the empirical approach. Specific to our discussion thus far, the social imaginary is what effectively determines the outcome of Renan’s “daily plebiscite” that is the nation.

Why this preoccupation with the specific autonomy of the imaginary over the imagination? Two particular points are offered here. First, the immediacy of the imaginary places a greater emphasis on the specific individual and collective experience of the moment; the actual conditions of belonging or exclusion not merely measured along the lines of the

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<sup>48</sup> Nielsen, Greg, “Reading the Quebec Imaginary: Marcel Rioux and Dialogical Form.” In *The Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, Vol. 12, no. 1/2, (spring, 1987) p. 135.

definition of inclusion, but of the actual personal and collective experience thereof. Second, and in light of our discussion of the historical, the pattern of individual and collective experience does not, and may never agree as to the interpretation and meaning of events. The recording, transmission and interpretation of events is inevitably coloured by the subjectivity of both the observer and the reader. The dynamics of the *imaginary* are by their nature discursive. The transmission and interpretation of "history" so as to consciously, or even unconsciously affect what has been measured as the social *imagination* may tend towards the dogmatic; may be reflective of the interpreter's ideological position in both of the senses employed earlier. As part of the moment in sharing the imaginary, the transmitter's locus is as part of the autonomous and transcendent. As an organic intellectual, and as situated as a member of an elite and generally bourgeois class fraction, transmission and interpretation of events are coloured by her or his analytical worldview. The speaker is situated by their own position and experience. The former discourse *within* the imaginary constitutes a form of "speaking with," while the latter can be closer to "speaking at" the other.

Such a discussion is pertinent to our present examination of the contemporary Québec literature on identity and the nation. More particularly in relation to our examination of the work of several of Québec's most prestigious sociologists and theorists of Québec nationalism: Marcel Rioux, Fernand Dumont, and Guy Rocher. The work of these eminent scholars is of such a nature as that places them both as transmitters and interpreters of history and makers of it as well. They seek by an open involvement to affect the social imaginary in ways as to stimulate a conscious and purposeful tendency towards what Cornelius Castoriadis would identify as an *autonomous* society, one whose citizens actively pursue that creative manifestation or physical crystallisation of the ephemeral into the tangible. Societies that abandon this conscious process to fate or history are deemed to be *heteronymous* societies.

In addressing the “critical sociology” of Marcel Rioux, Nielsen essentially describes the difference between these two polarities as follows:

“For Rioux, “critical sociology goes further than the individual point of view and is interested in the collective values which societies practice as well as those values which they hold to be ideal.” Distinguishing real and potential consciousness is at the core of Rioux’s defense of the emancipatory interest. It is this interest that he claims to be at the centre of the critical tradition from Kant through Hegel, Marx, and the Frankfurt School. Potential or utopian consciousness or the “will to will,” are the instituting, non-determined forms of pure praxis, the aesthetic dimensions of self-creation or self-determination. In contrast, mimetic or repetitive practices constitute the instituted or determined and hence static forms of real consciousness.”<sup>49</sup>

The kind of involvement that Rioux consciously conducts begs the question: how does one actively affect the nature of the social imaginary, which by its nature is deemed autonomous and non-determined? Further, if an involved and active role is admitted and assigned to the organic intellectual in affecting an awareness or consciousness; that the imaginary can be affected, if not determined, then how are we to account for the subjectivity of the individual? We recall here the *caveat* offered by Moore, and as cited earlier. Nielsen informs us that Rioux is aware of the issue of subjectivity: “Following Habermas, Rioux argues that any study of social-historical reality is thoroughly interest-bound.”<sup>50</sup> The active and embedded sociological practice that is conducted by Rioux, Dumont, and Rocher seeks therefore to both affect the contemporary ethos, and remain resonant with it; to influence the collective worldview while tapping the broader “ideological” foundation upon which it sits. Thus, the contemporary literature seeks to analyse, interpret, and communicate the history of the nation within the context of contemporary collective self-perception, and the dominant theme is the

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139. Nielsen cites Rioux, 1984, p. 42. Unfortunately no fewer than four works dated that year are cited in the bibliography. Therefore no more accurate citation as to the specific work is available here. Nielsen invokes Castoriadis, Cornelius, *L’institution imaginaire de la société*, Paris, Éditions de Seuil, 1975. In light of our earlier comments on the resonance of the works of Herder, Humboldt, and Fichte in relation to the analysis of the relationship between language and identity offered by Seymour, it is interesting to here note Nielsen’s comments on the philosophical roots and tradition inculcated in the works of Rioux, and this apparently as admitted by Rioux himself. Having placed Kant as the point of departure, it may be enlightening to recall that Herder, while one of Kant’s students, departed from that line of philosophical inquiry to follow Johann Georg Hamann, ironically a committed guardian of the German language against the influence of the French.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.



one that has increasingly defined the nature of social discourse throughout western societies since the end of the Second World War: the politics of identity.

An examination of the contemporary literature reveals a preoccupation with issues of language, culture and identity. Yet this ideological point of view is in direct contrast to the ideological preoccupation with issues of class that marked the broader discourse amongst Québec intellectuals as recently as the early 1980s. That this shift in the collective ethos was already in place by that time is shown in an illustrative and anecdotal fashion by our expository history of the unionisation process at Concordia University. Issues of class representation within the institutional context of a clearly “class” orientation – joining a labour union – were overshadowed by issues of language and identity. This marks a process of ideological displacement, or a shift in the collective perception that moves from a preoccupation with the oppressed “class” position of the Québécois, to one where they increasingly perceive themselves collectively as an oppressed identity. And while this division marks the literature, it would be simplistic to state that the one or other preoccupation exclusively marks the collective ethos of the day. In fact, an examination of the historical record will show that even when class interests have made themselves manifest, issues of culture, language and identity have tempered, or even displaced collective interests of class. These “ideological” watermarks that frame and inform the collective ethos are permeable to other aspects of individual and collective self-interest. Yet, and as Rioux maintains within the context of his own analyses conducted over a long academic career, there remains in place a thematic preoccupation that identifies the nature of the collective imaginary over distinct periods of time. How are we to perceive these as “ideologies?”

“In its broadest, most positive and traditional sense, Rioux defines ideology, again anthropologically, as a system of ideas and beliefs which form more or less coherent world views. In its positive sense, he argues, “an ideology may be very close to the global culture of a group and actually represent its aspirations.” On the other hand, ideology can carry a deeply negative connotation which gives it a naturalist quality in the sense that it seeks to establish its belief system as being beyond reproach, the most obvious and natural system possible. The unique feature of Rioux’s ideology critique is the insistence that both the negative and positive poles of ideological phenomena consist of an element of evaluation (action) and that therefore they belong, “as much by their cognitive as their affective aspects, to the cultural dimension of reality.”<sup>51</sup>

What we have is a view of ideology as a self-defining and self-legitimising worldview that is culturally obtained, not simply an analytical point of view conducted from outside the society being contemplated. This cannot assume that there is but one worldview, and Nielsen examines the competing imaginaries of Canada and Québec, concluding that the imaginary of each is arrived at dialogically with the “other.”

“Competing discourses come into contact and create an internal dialogism, or counterpoint, which is to say that neither discourse can continue to develop without reference to its *other*.”<sup>52</sup>

By extension, there is of necessity an internal discourse within Québec society that arrives at a conception of the whole through a relatively shared set of values, mores, hopes, expectations, – an “ideology” – yet admits the possibility of divergent and competing interests. All Québécois, of any stripe, presumably both hope for and expect a relative autonomy for their province – politically, economically, and culturally – yet they do not all share the idea that this must be made manifest in a sovereign state. That may be in the interests of some, but not necessarily all Quebecers.

In relation to the work of Rioux, there is another interesting aspect to this extension of the concept of ideology beyond the narrower analytical viewpoint, and seeing it as a manifestation of the spirit of the times. Rioux himself saw an evolution of his analytical “ideology” over his lifetime through a distinct socialist and Marxist phase to one more preoccupied with issues of culture and identity. In a sense, and consistent with this broader

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* p. 140. Nielsen cites Rioux in “Note sur la notion de l’idéologie,” in *Anthropologia*, 1, pp. 136-139.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

understanding of the term, Rioux has successfully weathered the ideological shift in self-perception and reflected it in his analyses. Yet, some aspects of this conceptual framework of dominant ideologies or worldviews that capture the collective Québécois imaginary have been fairly consistent over this evolution. Consider Rioux's observations offered during the middle period of his academic output:

“The two great ideologies that vie for the support of the Québécois today are centred definitively around the notions of catching-up and forging ahead. The ideology of catching-up, which on the political level, is particularly federalist, argues the backwardness of Québec in a number of areas. It tends to impute this backwardness onto the Québécois themselves.”<sup>53</sup>

Clearly, he employs the concept of ideology as meaning the dominant worldview or collective preoccupation, here of the “other,” or federalist view.

Subsequent to the failed first referendum on sovereignty in 1980, and ten years after Rioux offered the observation cited above, Nielsen identifies a shift in the collective preoccupation; a new dominant ideology that has captured the social imaginary of the Québécois.

“Since the Quiet Revolution, language and the discovery of a nation-state (Laurin-Frenette, 1983) now serve as institutions for the independence imaginary. In short, their lament for a culture centers the remaining thematic of the social narrative in which the independence imaginary defines itself. As in previous epochs, the dialogical form in this narrative takes the Anglo-Canadian and American presence as the primary imagined *other*, the force of domination (of the imaginary), and as the principle threat to the loss of collective memory (imagination).”<sup>54</sup>

Now, more than twenty years later, the argument for the ongoing economic exploitation of the Québécois as a colonised people can no longer hold as the centre of the Québécois imaginary. The economic basis for an argument for a sovereign Québec no longer holds the same sway, but the issues of identity and language remain. These hold fast on the Québécois imaginary. In the absence of an external “other,” much of the discourse has turned within,

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<sup>53</sup> Rioux, Marcel, *La Question du Québec*, Montréal, Parti-pris, 1977, p. 172. My translation of “Les deux grandes idéologies qui se disputent aujourd’hui l’adhésion des québécois sont centrées, en définitive, sur des notions de rattrapage et de dépassement. L’idéologie de rattrapage qui, sur la plan politique, est surtout fédéraliste, constat les retards du Québec dans biens des domaines. Elle a tendance à imputer ces retards aux Québécois eux-mêmes ;...”

<sup>54</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Nielsen, p. 142. Nielsen cites Laurin-Frenette, Nicole, “La sociologie des classes sociales au Québec de Léon Gérin à nos jours,” in Rocher, Guy, *et al.*, eds., *Continuité et rupture dans les sciences humaines au Québec*, Montréal, Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 1984, p. 531-556.

and notwithstanding the sole defining criteria for membership being reduced to those of language and residency, issues of culture have become the focus of the Québécois social imaginary.

Guy Rocher argues for three distinct phases in the history of Québec's political culture, and ties them to specific class components with clear ideological affective characteristics. The first ideological period he labels as the "political culture of the rural classes" which dominates all of Québec's history up to the Quiet Revolution. The defining ideological value and characteristic of this epoch is simply offered as "Loyalty:" a "loyalty to the past, to traditions, to language, to the Catholic religion, and to French civil law."<sup>55</sup> Essentially, he argues that the political culture of the whole is defined or driven by a particular class or class fragment. Similarly, he puts forward that the working classes subsequent to the 50s and 60s displace the political culture of the rural classes both "politically and demographically." The process of transition unfolds as follows:

"The political culture of the 60s and 70s would be inspired by the working class. The spokespersons of the working-class would spark political thought that while not necessarily of the labour unions, would take on the spirit of labour unionism. Loyalty to the past is replaced by the idea of change, of mutation, of questioning, even of revolution. A Quiet Revolution, but revolution all the same. Placing value, therefore, in other elements of collective life than loyalty. At the same time this new political culture of the 60s and 70s would be centred on egalitarianism, necessary to democratic society, and on participation."<sup>56</sup>

Rocher seems to be attempting to capture the spirit of the times and assigning that spirit to a specific class or class fragment as the driver of the collective imaginary. The simplicity of the approach is problematic, insofar as it addresses the issue of classes as collective actors and determinants of the contemporary ethos, but does not consider the class fractions driving the

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<sup>55</sup> Rocher, Guy, "La Culture Politique du Québec," in *L'Action Nationale*, Montréal, vol. 87, no. 2, February, 1997, p. 21. My translation of "fidélité au passé, aux traditions, à la langue, à la religion catholique, au droit civil français."

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22. My translation of "la culture politique des années 60 et 70 sera inspirée par la classe ouvrière. Les porte-parole de la classe ouvrière vont animer une pensée politique qui n'est pas nécessairement syndicale mais qui porte l'esprit du syndicalisme. La fidélité au passé est remplacée par l'idée du changement, de la mutation, de la contestation, de la révolution même. Révolution tranquille, mais révolution. Valorisation, donc, d'autres éléments de la vie collective que la fidélité. En même temps, cette nouvelle culture politique des années 60-70 va être axée sur l'égalitarisme, nécessaire à la société démocratique, et sur la participation."

political process, nor those that benefit from the ongoing socialisation of the dominant ideology. It does however rather well identify the class locus of the collective ethos. And reinforcing the class aspect of his model, he argues that the decline of the first two epochs was at the expense of the classes that defined them.

The third wave of political culture that Rocher offers is identified with the middle classes. Defined as the children of the rural classes, “artisans, labourers and small merchants,” now of themselves become “big businessmen, professors, teachers, professionals, bankers etc..” In many ways, and while he does not temporally situate the origins or appearance of this middle class other than to state that there had always been one, Rocher assigns an importance to this class subsequent to when authors such as Hubert Guindon, Charles Taylor, Kenneth McRoberts, and Dale Posgate identify their arrival and influence. Nevertheless, they agree on their importance to the culture of the times. The initial class identification is in the singular, but Rocher quickly addresses the issue of class diversity and interior division.

“There had always been a middle class but it had been withered and fragmented. One spoke of them in the plural; one spoke of the middle classes. For a number of years we have come to speak of the middle class. It has become the dominant class in western societies at the end of the century. In Québec, the middle class claimed a hegemonic position much more easily insofar as we had no aristocracy, no blue-bloods.”<sup>57</sup>

Rocher asks “what characterises the political culture of the middle class? It is no longer values or loyalty, nor overarching workers’ solidarity. It is a valuing of the person.”<sup>58</sup>

However, Rocher goes beyond a simple identification of the ethos of this period with liberal individualism, or even a move away from class based identity and towards other collective

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22. My translation of “Il y a toujours eu une classe moyenne, mais elle était réduite et fragmentée. On en parlait au pluriel; on parlait des classes moyennes. Depuis un certain nombre d’années, on en est venu à parler de la classe moyenne. Elle est devenue la classe dominante des sociétés occidentales de la fin de ce siècle. Au Québec, la classe moyenne a pris une place hégémonique d’autant plus facilement que nous n’avons pas d’aristocratie, pas de sang bleu.” For a discussion and sources to the above list of “middle class” proponents, see Coleman, William D., *The Independence Movement in Québec, 1945 – 1980*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984, p. 5-11.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22. My translation of “Qu’est-ce qui caractérise la culture politique de la classe moyenne? Ce n’est plus la valorisation ni des fidélités, ni des grandes solidarités ouvrières. C’est la valorisation de la personne.”

forms of identity. Rocher damns the epoch with the label of a “greedy consumerism,” beyond conspicuous consumption, and a clear consequence of neo-liberal values.

There is no linguistic or cultural differentiation within Rocher’s classes. Perhaps that is because his concept of the nation is restricted to the *old stock* component of Québec society. Thus, the rural classes are French-Canadian Habitants; the working classes and their spokespersons are identified with the big labour federations of the 60s and 70s; and the middle-classes are the inheritors of the fruits of modernity along with the values thereof. Their elites reflect the same cultural assumptions: the French Catholic clergy and a small professional class in the first period; university educated journalists, bureaucrats, and civil servants; graduates from the social sciences in the labour, community and other social movements during the second period; and finally businessmen and economists in the third and most recent period. Rocher offers us three epochs imprinted by the ethos of three classes, and led by three sets of elites. These, in turn, affect three distinct forms of the Québec state.

In the first period, the state serves the needs of the Church as the steward of Québec society. This is shown by the deference that the state gives to the Church’s role in education, health care, and social welfare. The second period is that of the building of the liberal welfare state. The latter phase is preoccupied with its retreat. Thus far, Rocher shows Québec’s recent evolution to be consistent with the rest of the western developed states.

Rocher offers us, along with these changes to the nature and role of the state, three distinct forms of democracy. The first period is marked simply by a democracy of the majority; the demographic majority. The second and third periods are dominated by what Rocher labels as a democracy driven by pressure groups. In the second period, these were labour unions and social movements that employed their “margin of manoeuvrability” to affect social change. However, the latter period is marked by pressure brought to bear upon the state by the liberal professions. Clearly, for Rocher each epoch has its class ethos, its

driving elite, its form of the state, and variations on democratic governance. From Rocher's point of view, all of these inform a contemporary Québec nationalism that is presented with an opportunity to imprint its values upon a new form of the state; a sovereign state inculcating the values of a new Québec.

In invoking the nationalist spirit, Rocher appeals to but one theorist of nationalism in legitimising the aspirations of the Québec nationalist movement: John Breuilly. It is interesting that, at a time when many Québec nationalists are moving towards a civic model of the nation, if only to bring in the growing non-traditional demographic into the imaginary possibility of a sovereign Québec state, Rocher chooses a theorist who clearly excludes from his definition of nationalism, any of the broader civic-based nations including the United States. In fact, and underscoring several of the key issues at hand both for the nationalist movement and the contemporary Québec nation, consider Breuilly's definition of a nationalist movement.

"The term "nationalism" is used to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments.

A nationalist argument is a political doctrine built upon three assertions:

- (a) There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character.
- (b) The interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values.
- (c) The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires the attainment of at least political sovereignty."<sup>59</sup>

Rocher's choice of Breuilly, and the latter's definition beg certain questions. What is the "explicit and peculiar character" of the contemporary Québec nation? Can we even speak of a Québec nation, given Dumont's argument against the existence of such? If we can allow that there does exist a nation, and in light again of Dumont, do the "interests and values" of that nation include or exclude those of sub-national minorities, and dissenting groups? And it goes without saying that by Breuilly's measure, the "interests and values of this nation take

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<sup>59</sup> Breuilly, John, *Nationalism and the State*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Manchester, Manchester UP, 1993 (1982), p. 2, cited in Smith, Anthony D., *Nationalism and Modernism*, London, Routledge, 1988, p. 84. Note that Smith cites the exact same source and work that Rocher invokes.

priority over all other interests and values” including those of classes, and most particularly, the working classes.

Rocher addresses the broader social coalition in but two places. He appeals for unanimous support for a new definition of the Québec state.

“Because, we Québécois, from whatever origin that we may be, of whatever political affiliation that we hold, need a Québécois state that is strong and vibrant Given our geopolitical situation, we cannot do without the power of a Québécois state. This is not to say that we should return everything to the hands of the state. On the contrary, this redefinition of the State must at the same time be accompanied by the ever stronger vitality of civil society.”<sup>60</sup>

Rocher, like Nielsen, sees a clash between two political cultures. For the former, it is a simple question of opting for the one that is better aligned with the contemporary reality of Québec. Rocher says that the gap is temporal in origin assigning the Canadian political culture to an earlier, bygone era, while contemporary “Québec culture is rich, and animated by a long tradition of discussions, of questioning and throughout by a long quest for identity.”<sup>61</sup> Rocher’s conclusion? “The litany of temporal and spiritual dislocations could be the object of a book... The “two founding peoples” of this country no longer dwell in the same epoch.”<sup>62</sup> Rocher’s Québec political culture is put forward as discursive by its nature, and concerned throughout with a search for identity. Yet, and exactly as Nielsen states of Rioux’s argument, there is a distinct lack of real discourse. Nielsen argues that aspects are missing from the nationalist Québec imaginary, and here I put forward that there is a certain lack of a broader internal discourse as well. The core of the nationalist imaginary is, of course, identity centred. This immediately privileges culture over other social aspects such as

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<sup>60</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rocher, p. 29. My translation of “Car, nous Québécois, de quelque origine que nous soyons, de quelque adhésion politique que nous soyons, nous avons besoin d’un État québécois assez fort et assez actif nous ne pouvons pas nous passer de la force d’un État québécois, étant donné notre situation géopolitique. Cela ne veut pas dire de tout remettre entre les mains de l’État. Au contraire, cette redéfinition de l’État devra en même temps s’accompagner d’une vitalité toujours plus grande de la société civile.”

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. My translation of “La culture québécoise est riche. Elle a été animée par une longue tradition de discussions, de remises en question et surtout par une longue quête d’identité.”

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. My translation of “La litanie des déplacements dans le temps et dans les esprits pourrait faire l’objet d’un livre... les « deux peuples fondateurs » de ce pays ne vivent pas à la même époque.” Rocher cites Morin, Rosaire, “Introduction. Québec, pays à portée de main,” in *L’Action nationale*, volume LXXXIV, number 10, December 1994, 750<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 13-14.



class that inform collective experience. “It is then the cultural more than the political or economic sense of nation that centers the dialogical form of Québec’s independence imaginary.”<sup>63</sup> Clearly, a significant number of Québec’s nationalist scholars are wrestling with the issues of the evolving nature of the Québec nation, and attempting to reconcile old and new identities. Others cannot reconcile the nationalist cause, the contemporary nation, democracy and inclusion in such a fashion as to continue to serve the *old stock* national component, and adequately address the concerns of dissenting minority identities. The problem internally is much as Nielsen identifies it on the broader perspective of Canada and Québec.

“Here the dialogical form derived from each life world is in a virtual binary opposition. English Canada cannot conceive of itself without Quebec. It has neither the political will nor the social imaginary to do so. Quebec cannot grasp the immanent diversity of English Canada, it has neither the will nor the cultural memory to do so.”<sup>64</sup>

Similarly, the Québec nationalist movement finds itself unable to grasp the increasingly immanent diversity of Québec society. This is exacerbated by the profound difference between the social diversity of the metropole and that of the rest of the province. In a sense, and by way of responding to Rocher, we see an increasing gap between the political culture and collective imaginary as personified and experienced by Montréal and her environs, and that as experienced on a daily basis by most of the rest of Québec society. And in a very real sense, that gap is illustrative of two increasingly different worlds; two separating temporal and spiritual epochs.

In more contemporary works, Rocher seems more than aware that the old ethnic nationalism of the past no longer can hold the collective imaginary and reconcile itself with contemporary social reality.

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<sup>63</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Nielsen, p. 145.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

“The independence movement has much to do to break away from the ethnic label that has always been accorded to it. It has had therefore a tendency to distance itself more and more from the “old” French Canadian nationalism, as if it had to deny its own heritage. Yet nevertheless, the lineage is quite obvious, on condition of not seeing the sovereigntism of yesterday and today as the clone of French-Canadian nationalism. In adopting Québec as a country, sovereigntism has opened up the concept of Québec as in a sense “inclusive.” The survival of French is no longer contingent upon Canadian Bilingualism, but of the Charter of the French Language.”<sup>65</sup>

Rocher is aware of the difficulties, but offers few concrete solutions to the problem of reconciling the past with the present for all collective and individual actors. This problem is shared by a number of Québec’s nationalist authors. Is it due to an overt preoccupation with the interests of their own majority culture, or due to an oblivious lack of understanding for those “other” issues of economic and political import identified by Nielsen? Where in the current literature is there any real discussion or consideration of the empirical measure of equality and inclusion; of issues traditionally identified as relating to social class?

Rocher and others employ some of the aspects of the language of class analysis in an incomplete and somewhat instrumental fashion; more by way of illustrating their nationalist argument than in any truly analytical fashion. Others such as Rioux have passed through a distinctive socialist or even Marxist evolutionary phase earlier in their theoretical development, and settled on a preoccupation with issues of language and culture. Having previously observed in passing that the contemporary literature has reflected the shift away from class analysis towards the broader context of identity politics in the western developed states denies neither the ongoing validity of such an approach, nor the pertinence of the prior body of literature solidly founded on such a theoretical framework.

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<sup>65</sup> Rocher, Guy, “Du nationalisme canadien-français au projet souverainiste: Quelle continuité?,” in, Montréal, *Le Devoir*, 16 April, 2007, p. A7. My translation of “Le mouvement indépendantiste a eu beaucoup à faire pour se dégager de l'étiquette ethnique qu'on n'a cessé de lui accoler. Il a donc eu tendance, et de plus en plus, à prendre ses distances du «vieux» nationalisme canadien-français, comme s'il lui fallait en récuser l'héritage. Et pourtant, la filiation est bien évidente, à la condition de ne pas voir dans le souverainisme d'hier et d'aujourd'hui un clone du nationalisme canadien-français. En adoptant le Québec comme pays, le souverainisme a ouvert la notion du Québécois d'une manière que l'on dit « inclusive » ; la survie du français ne passe plus par le bilinguisme canadien mais par la Charte de la langue française.”

## Salvoes from the left: The Québec Nationalist Canon and Socialist Theory

How would the theorists of the Québec nationalist movement situate their struggle within the context of a socialist or specifically Marxist theoretical framework? Why would they seek to do so? Their first and immediate preoccupation as socialists would be class liberation. Thus, the obvious connection would have to identify proletarian struggle with an oppressed national identity in the classic fashion and as seen in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Propose the Québécois working classes as a colonised and dominated people, and pose the revolution as akin to others in a post-colonial global socialist revolution.

“The claim that Quebec formed a colonized society derived from two different interpretations that, in practice, often co-existed and informed one and other. In the first version – more prevalent among radicals throughout the early 1960s – French Canadians became colonial subjects when Great Britain defeated France on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City in 1759... By the second half of the decade, however, references to the Conquest had declined dramatically, giving way to a new but related way of conceiving empire, one that would place an overwhelming emphasis [on] the grip that American imperialism held over the province.”<sup>66</sup>

Such a position, at the very least put forward in the first position, is problematic from the point of view of post-colonial literature, and of history as fact. French Canadians are, at worst, a displaced, or “colonised” colonising people. While some credence can be assigned the position from the point of view of an abandoned society; one robbed of its elites, the other problematic fact remains: post-colonial literature presumes not simply cultural or linguistic differences between colonist and colonised people, it also generally presumes a visibility related to differences of “race.” Early exponents of the literature of post-colonialism noted a certain lacuna in the extension of the conceptual literature to the struggle for Québec independence.

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<sup>66</sup> In *Passim*, Mills, Sean, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montréal*, Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010, p. 29. I am working with a draught copy of the final version. Thus, occasional lacunae such as the omission of the word “[on]” may well have been corrected in the final published version. For the purposes of accuracy in citation, this note is provided here acknowledging my insertion.

“For those who had developed their ideas in the context of French settler-colonialism in North Africa, seeing White descendents of French settlers claiming to be “colonized” immediately raised questions. Albert Memmi spoke of being a “bit frightened” by the influence that his book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, was having on those who were not “well-defined colonized people like...French Canadians. And he “looked in astonishment on all this, much as a father, with a mixture of pride and apprehension, watches his son achieve a scandalous and applauded fame.”<sup>67</sup>

Even those who fully sympathised with the national struggle, announced themselves confused as to the exact locus occupied by the French Canadians, while clearly identifying the original nature of their plight.

“Another well-known theorist who supported the struggle for autonomy and self-determination in Quebec, Islamic scholar Jacques Berque, wrote that Quebeckers, as the “colonized among the colonizers,” were so entangled in their exceptions that they were no longer understood by anyone.”<sup>68</sup>

The association is also not without its problems from the point of view of class struggle. Marx and Engels both expressed a certain ambivalence towards the “national question.” What is key to understanding the marriage of the two is that the qualified support expressed by Marx and Engels for certain “national” causes was seen as being tied to working class struggle for the same class and cultural demographic. A victory for one is a victory for both. Support for the one gives support for the other. Such an argument has often been applied to workers’ struggle in Québec.

In the eyes of some Québec socialists of the 1960s, there was a clear intersection of the two struggles. Mills cites Raoul Roy, creator of the journal *Laurentie*:

“Humanity is divided by two constant and entangled struggles: vertically between subjugated or oppressed peoples and imperialist or expansionist nations, and horizontally between exploited workers and bourgeois or directing classes.”<sup>69</sup>

Analytical approaches in a more dedicated socialist tradition often employ similar historical frameworks or analytical periods as do more contemporary models under a structure centred more on collective identity. Recall Rocher’s three historical epochs and the

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* and *In Passim*, p. 5. Mills cites Memmi, Albert, Greenfield, Howard, trans., “Preface,” in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Boston, Beacon, 1967, p. xi.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5-6. Mills cites Berque, Jacques, “Preface,” in *Les Québécois*, Paris, François Maspero, 1967, p. 12.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42. Mills cites Roy in “Manifeste politique: Propositions programmatiques de la REVUE SOCIALISTE,” *La Revue socialiste*, no. 1 (1959):13. No original French text is offered.

class inspired ethos that underpins each period. Compare these with the distinctly Marxist approach employed by Québec nationalist theorists such as Gilles Bourque and Anne Legaré in *Le Québec : la question nationale*. These authors argue that Quebec has seen an historical series of modes of production and a set of distinct social relations for each: the French colonial regime (1534-1760), the English regime (1760-1840), the forced union and confederation (1840-1867) Canadian federalism (1867-1940), the Duplessis regime (1936-1960), and from the Quiet Revolution to the drive for sovereignty.

The first regime was marked by the unequal exchange between First Nations and urban merchants that was the fur trade and underscored the nature of primitive capital accumulation. There were no relations of production in a true sense, only extraction of surplus labour through trade. Native production was essentially untouched. What trade did do was to provide improved technology to the aboriginal peoples, thus rendering their own production more efficient.

Bourque and Legaré claim that the seigneurial system had the seigneur award lands as a concession but retained ownership. More accurately, he himself held the lands for the crown. This is important because, as the authors note, the nature of feudal production in New France was reflective of that in the home country: strong state intervention in the reproduction of economic relations. This top down organisation of the colony's economic relations was reflected in a number of ways. The colony was seen as a source of raw materials and an outlet for the production of the home country. Any form of manufacturing that could compete with home production was not permitted. An interesting thesis is put forth concerning post-conquest Canada: "The French Canadian nation, deprived of its Bourgeoisie after the conquest, could not provide itself with the economic, political and cultural

mechanisms necessary to the development of capitalism.”<sup>70</sup> This theme of the “missing Bourgeoisie” repeats itself throughout the literature and even to the present intellectual debate: is there a Québec Bourgeoisie?<sup>71</sup> At the point of conquest, there seems to be little doubt that many or most of the seigneurs and big merchants left – there were no manufacturers to leave as there was no native manufacturing – and this indeed left a class vacuum at the top. The authors put forward that the seigneurial system itself had two deleterious effects: the stagnation of technology and, by blocking the exploitation of the wooded lands, the seigneurs prevented the colonists from developing a native commerce. Thus a feudal form of domination was maintained. Two key themes are stated that are taken up as part of the greater nationalist argument throughout Québec’s history:

“Capitalist and Bourgeois accumulation is not an accumulation of money. It is first and foremost a social relation that implies the exploitation of free labour and concentration of the means of production.”<sup>72</sup>

This brief statement begs the question: throughout Québec’s history, who are the exploiters; who holds control over the means of production?

Given that France and home production dictated colonial commerce, the authors question whether the colonial Bourgeoisie fully satisfied the definition. Yet, their antagonism to the home Bourgeoisie never developed to the point where they could be seen as a distinct class fraction unto themselves. This, too, goes towards the discussion of whether there is or ever was a distinct Quebec Bourgeoisie.<sup>73</sup>

Notwithstanding discussion on the nature of the pre-conquest bourgeoisie, the conquest did displace the entire French upper class and replace it with an English one. But

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<sup>70</sup> Bourque, Gilles, and Legaré, Anne, *Le Québec : la question nationale*, Paris, François Maspero, 1979, p. 21. My translation of “L’accumulation capitaliste et Bourgeoise n’est pas une accumulation d’argent. C’est d’abord et avant tout un rapport social impliquant l’exploitation du travail libre et la concentration de moyens de production.”

<sup>71</sup> I have previously offered Rocher’s observation that there was no native aristocracy; no “blue-bloods,” within Québec’s class structure. We shall further see that Rioux argues that the elimination of the French Bourgeois class with the loss of the colony to England made for a society that demonstrated a greater class autonomy for the habitants as an agrarian peasant class, and for a closer class affinity between the remaining petit bourgeois fractions of Québec society and the habitants.

<sup>72</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Bourque and Legaré, p. 21.

<sup>73</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 23.

the cycling of elites was not the most important factor in these authors' eyes, it was the confrontation with a new mode of production: English capitalism. Notwithstanding, Bourque and Legaré maintain that the old economy built on furs and the seigneurial system was maintained. Modes of production do not change like light switches, and French Canadian feudalism remained essentially in place. Though it became increasingly economically unviable, remnants of it as a social order held fast until late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Notwithstanding, by the early 1800s lumbering, milling and ship building were drawing workers into capitalist relations: the creation of salaried employees. The development of bourgeois interests also meant the commercialisation of agriculture. Increased internal demand for consumer goods pushed the process. However, the authors state that this was a slow, tenuous process and no way marked the existence of a truly autonomous bourgeoisie. Like the French elite before them, Canada's English bourgeoisie were colonial and limited by the home country's policies and greater interests. The commercialisation of agriculture was a slow process. Necessarily so due to the internal contradictions in Quebec feudalism. English techniques that rotated crops and did not use fertiliser were picked up sooner by First Nations than by the French-Canadians. Also, the only way a feudal seigneurie could be turned towards successful commercial production was by extracting surplus labour from the peasants, or by raising rents. The latter was generally only possible by opening and granting new concessions, or on the transfer of old ones.

Note here another theme consistent to latter interpretations as to the nature of Québec society. Whether under French or English bourgeois elites, Québec remained a *colonial* society; one destined for exploitation and domination. In order to make an argument for a post-colonial socialist revolution; for the throwing off of the chains of a colonised people, one must first and foremost argue for their initial status as a colonised people. Rioux actually

goes so far as to claim that there was a weak development of class consciousness due to the colonial oppression of the French-Canadians.

“It is here that we reproach the historian for seeming to forget during his socio-economic analyses the most global and determining fact: that of the domination of the Québécois nation by the British coloniser. It is this massive fact that explains the predominance of national over class consciousness.”<sup>74</sup>

And,

“In the case of Québec, colonisation prevented the appearance of class consciousness amongst the masses that might oppose itself to that of the Bourgeoisie. That the domination lasted as long as sixty years, as in 1837, or for more than two centuries, changes nothing of the fact of domination.”<sup>75</sup>

This is going towards an argument that essentially makes several key assumptions: first, that national consciousness predates and in a sense precludes the development of class consciousness here in Québec, and second, that the colonisation process and as such the British coloniser are responsible by decapitating the native bourgeoisie, maintaining the domination of the colonised people, and stifling the awareness of genuine interests of class. My subsequent examination of the historical record will show that an early and acute class consciousness arose amongst the Québec working classes, but that class choices were tempered by broader issues of identity.

Bourque, Legaré and Rioux all place a great emphasis on the effect that losing the native French bourgeoisie had on the development of subsequent class relations between the petite-bourgeoisie and the working classes. Rioux has proposed two effects that came from the colonisation

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<sup>74</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rioux, , *La Question du Québec*, p. 71. My translation of “C’est ici que nous reprochons à l’historien de sembler oublier dans ses analyses socio-économique le fait plus global et le plus déterminant ; celui de la domination de la nation québécois par le colonisateur britannique. C’est le fait massif qui explique la prédominance de la conscience nationale sur la conscience de classe.”

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72-73. My translation of “Dans le cas du Québec, le colonisation empêche même l’apparition dans la masse d’une conscience de classe qui s’oppose à celle de la bourgeoisie. Que le colonisation dure de plus de soixante ans comme en 1837, ou depuis plus de deux siècles, ne change rien non plus au fait de la domination.”



“The ceding of New France to England had two immediate effects; that of decapitating the leading class of the land and of pushing the Québécois back onto the rural parishes. This was the realisation, before the fact, of the abolition of social classes. The process, that had begun before the conquest where the habitants had become much more free and independent than the French peasants, and where many seigneurs had become little more than peasants themselves, accentuated the effect.”<sup>76</sup>

Bourque and Legaré place a highly developed degree of national sentiment onto the petite bourgeoisie during the 1837 Rebellion, claiming that the issue of national oppression was first in their minds. Yet, as a class, they had their own interests. Certainly their fervour did not extend, save for but a very few, to overturning the seigneurial system itself. The authors admit as much.<sup>77</sup> They also make much of the importance of national oppression as an issue unifying the masses and the petite bourgeoisie during the rebellion. Yet they also acknowledge that oppression was the nature of colonial life, that it was the same for the English colonists in Upper Canada, and would have been the same under a French regime. Notwithstanding, there clearly was an added disadvantage that came with differences of language and culture between, but also within classes.

Bourque and Legaré describe the rebellion as being led by the petite bourgeoisie, supported by the masses, and these together against the resident colonial bourgeoisie: defined as merchants, and administrators. They examine two views of the attitude of the petite bourgeoisie to the seigneurial system: that it should become the basis for independent small holdings in the American style, or it should be modernised towards a market exchange system, in the sense of an agricultural industry.<sup>78</sup> The authors claim that neither vision is classically capitalist but lies suspended between a feudal and a capitalist system. Without invoking the term directly, they are effectively referring to a transitional mode that is

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41. My translation of “La cession de la Nouvelle-France à l’Angleterre eut deux résultats immédiats; celui de décapiter la classe dirigeante du pays et de pousser les Québécois à se concentrer encore davantage dans les paroisses rurales. C’est la réalisation, avant le lettre, de l’abolition des classes sociales. Le processus, qui avait commencé avant la Conquête où les habitants étaient devenus beaucoup plus libres et indépendants que les paysans français et où plusieurs seigneurs étaient devenus quelque peu habitants eux-mêmes, va s’accroître.”

<sup>77</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Bourque and Legaré, p. 63.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70. The strong support between classes is further acknowledged by Greer, Allan, *The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1996, p. 120-121.

essentially mercantilist by nature. Both visions seem comfortable within capitalism because, notwithstanding scale, both are geared towards an exchange economy, and constructed as such to serve the class interests of the bourgeoisie. Notwithstanding significant economic factors<sup>79</sup> the authors claim that unlike the rebellion in Upper Canada, the Papineau rebellion was first and foremost about the national question. This is a facile and somewhat misleading general statement, and from those conducting what is essentially a Marxist analysis, tends to avoid issues of class interests, even if those interests are aligned along lines of shared national or at this stage, quasi-national identity. Shared interests as to identity do not imply the absence of class differences no more than an absent bourgeois class and shared class oppression make for a classless society.

Some theorists on the nationalist left question the tendency to either extend the language of class analysis to issues of identity, or to conflate class and identity into one, giving priority to the latter. Gilles Bourque and Nicole Laurin-Frenette identify Fernand Dumont, Marcel Rioux and Jacques Dofny as writers who essentially finesse the issue of class in seeking to argue for support for the political manifestation of a sovereign state of Québec through the Parti Québécois. Bourque and Laurin-Frenette equate support for the party with bourgeois class interests. Further, they maintain that writers of this “idealist” school deny any need for working class organisation in pursuing political sovereignty. As a consequence, the “idealist” argument is flawed:

“The theoretical foundation developed by these sociologists underlies all those political positions that favour joining the Parti Québécois and encourage tactical support to the bourgeoisie, without upholding the need for a specifically working-class political organisation. We shall try to show that the dichotomies of social class/ethnic class and social consciousness/ethnic consciousness encompass a fundamental problem in this theory, hiding reality behind a veil of idealism.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 21. Greer notes similar uprisings during harsh economic times in Europe in 1789, 1830 and 1848, as well as the important economic impact of a recession in the American markets to the south.

<sup>80</sup> Bourque, Gilles, and Laurin-Frenette, Nicole, “Social classes and nationalist ideologies in Québec, 1760-1970,” in Teeple, Gary, ed., *Capitalism and the national question in Canada*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1972, p. 186.

They go further to state, in the words of Michel Van Schendel that “the concepts of ethnic class and ethnic consciousness are ‘scientifically doubtful and politically suspect.’”<sup>81</sup> Commencing with Dumont, the authors identify his concept of the Quebecois “nation” as being a reflection of the whole society’s (French) self-image. Without invoking him, Bourque and Laurin-Frenette essentially deny the “Imagined Community” point-of-view as proposed by Benedict Anderson that is reflected in Dumont’s approach, and argue that to shift the focus from empirical structural factors such as language, ethnicity, and political cohesion is unscientific and idealistic. They place Dumont in opposition to the “theory of reflection in the study of ideologies” which sees ideology as the “distorted reflection of given objective bases.”<sup>82</sup>

From Dumont, the authors claim that Rioux and Dofny construct an artificial dichotomy between class and national identities, claiming that either one or the other claims dominance during any one particular phase during Quebec history. Ultimately, the argument appears to be that national consciousness tends to “mask” class consciousness. The authors assail this position by observing the close link between national consciousness and class interests, and the instrumental uses of the former at the hands of bourgeois class interests: radically during the 1837 rebellion and conservatively from 1840 to 1940. This observation is offered in opposition to the position of Rioux and Dofny that the unification of the identities of class and nation did not occur until the Quiet Revolution, specifically at the Federal level with the rise of the Creditistes in 1962.

From their observations, Bourque and Laurin-Frenette pose two questions: Are all nationalisms bourgeois by their nature, and can there be such a thing as a non-bourgeois nationalist ideology?

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186. They cite Van Schendel, Michel, “Pour une théorie de socialisme au Québec 11,” in *Socialisme* 69, no. 18.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187. It is interesting to note that Charles Taylor acknowledges the importance of Anderson’s work in his own examination of the evolution of the dominant themes that have driven the evolution of the social imaginary in the west.

Invoking Marx, and the famous citation that “the working men have no country”, the authors argue for the potential of a proletarian nationalism through the analysis of the larger citation of Marx: “ ‘The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to the leading class of the *nation*, it is so far, itself *national*, though not in the *Bourgeois sense of the word.*’ ”<sup>83</sup> And, hence “Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle.”<sup>84</sup>

The form of the national struggle reflects the class interests that *employ* it. Thus, all of “the national features of the social formation (territory, state, language, national symbols), although linked to the capitalist mode of production, and hence to the interests of the bourgeoisie, also *concern* the working class; they can and must belong to it and serve its class interests.”<sup>85</sup>

Bourque and Laurin-Frenette propose that Québec demonstrates a “double class structure.” Both within Canada and North America the province has suffered from and remains under the economic yoke of, first Canada and since the 1920s, the United States. This makes Québec interesting from the point of view of what they denote the “structural condensation [of] the two forms which national oppression has assumed in the development of the capitalist structures of the mode of production: internal domination resulting from the ascendancy of one nation over other nations occupying the same territory; external domination (colonialist or imperialist) resulting from the exploitation of one or several collectivities by a nation not itself interested in populating the subjected country or

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189. The italicized emphasis is the authors’ and not that of Marx. Bourque and Laurin-Frenette cite Marx, K., and Engels, F., *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, London, 1968. No publisher is given.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190. Again, note the resonance with Anderson, as well as with the components of memory listed earlier by Mathieu.

countries.”<sup>86</sup> They paint Québec in much the same way that Vallières does in “White Niggers of America.”<sup>87</sup> In this latter example, and citing imperialist tendencies to both maintain existing national structures and employ local “comprador” bourgeoisies through which economic domination is organised, they parallel Québec with African and South American colonial and post-colonial states. The obvious example here is Duplessis and the Union Nationale. Out of this local bourgeois fraction, we have seen since 1945 the rise of a new technocratic class; one that at once became the new ruling class that saw the rise of the Parti Québécois. Thus, even under this nationalist party, only one of the two economic systems of domination would be broken.

As a further critique of Rioux and Dofny, the authors state categorically that: first, “the notion of ethnic class explains no period of Quebec history, and second that [w]ithin a nation, there does not exist... class consciousness and an ethnic consciousness that can transcend the different types of class consciousness.” Further, “Nationalist ideologies can only be class ideologies. A nationalist ideology only makes sense through the class which becomes its propagandist.”<sup>88</sup> Having stated this, they identify three nationalist tendencies at play throughout Quebec’s history:

1. A conservative nationalism that marked seigniorial Quebec from 1760 to 1840 and the province under a rural petite-bourgeoisie from 1840 to 1960.
2. A dynamic nationalism that marked the province during the 1837 rebellion and now again shows itself in a new petit bourgeois fragment since the 1950s.
3. A [true] nationalist ideology that “links national liberation to the establishment of a system of socialist self-management.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190-191.

<sup>87</sup> Vallières, Pierre, *White Niggers of America*, Toronto & Montreal, McClelland and Stewart, 1971.

<sup>88</sup> *Op. Cit.* and *In Passim.*, Bourque and Laurin-Frenette, p. 192-193.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

Each nationalism reflects different class interests within Québec. “The first type insists on the juridical and cultural features (recognition and protection of cultural rights and peculiarities). The second essentially emphasises the political, seeking the transformation of political relationships in order to promote the economic and cultural interests of the nation. The third type stresses the need to transform relations of production in order to abolish all forms of domination (economic, political and cultural).”<sup>90</sup> Noting the diversity of interests, ideologies and nationalisms and the tendency for all such manifestations to both legitimise the interests and accompanying domination that nationalism brings, the authors insist on locating the phenomenon:

1. “By relating it to other elements the ideological formation into which it fits
2. By pinpointing its specific effects on the field of class struggle
3. By relating ideology to other instances in the social formation (political and economic).”<sup>91</sup>

Thus, the only example of the three not bound within the capitalist mode of production and representative of bourgeois interests (one faction thereof or another) is the third type.

Bourque and Laurin-Frenette offer an analysis of the Quiet Revolution and subsequent events as essentially a series of hegemonic shifts between competing petit bourgeois fragments: initially dominated by a traditional petit bourgeois fragment representative of that same group that had dominated since 1840 – a rural, agricultural, small-business elite – then displaced by a new, technocratic petit bourgeois fragment. The only ideological disagreement was on methodology, either the first or the second of the three proposed nationalisms. There was not, and is not any discussion on the ideological premise of capitalism underlying the foundation of either model. Interestingly enough, the authors do not identify the return of the Union nationale in 1966 as a return to power of the traditional

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, and *In Passim*, p. 193.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, and *In Passim*, p. 194.

elite generally and previously associated with that party. That petit bourgeois fragment had disappeared in their analysis. They see the electoral victory as representing an attempt at reconciling the two increasingly divergent nationalist tendencies and the interests that supported them; a reconciliation that was doomed to ultimate failure.

There appears to be a symbiotic relationship between the rise of the Quebec liberal welfare state and the new technocratic class. The latter is both a product of the former and politically beholden to it as a vehicle transporting Quebec society to its radically nationalistic goals. Here again, as with the initial discussion of potential proletarian nationalisms, the state is seen as *instrumental* to the purposes of the dominant class. Other, perhaps more nuanced Marxian theorists such as Nicos Poulantzas might argue that the form of the state is *reflective* of the particular temporally situated set of class relations, and thus in no way *instrumental* to the purposes of any one class, even if the role of the state, in any form, is to organise hegemonic interests.

The successful bartering of conservative nationalist interests under the Liberals both provincially and federally in the 1960s supported the class interests of one fragment of the new petite bourgeoisie – the one that represented a neo-liberalism within the provincial Liberal party. However, the split with the technocratic faction widened into a full split within the party; one that produced the Parti Quebecois. This party seeks growth of the monopoly capitalist state that effectively gave birth to the fragment in the first place. Thus, the neo-liberal tendencies of the Liberal party and those of the Parti Quebecois are irreconcilable. Liberal, Union nationale, or Parti Quebecois, there can be no substantive change where the underlying ideological foundation remains unquestioned. Capitalism remains the bedrock foundation for a series of different bourgeois class interests. The sole choice available to the working classes is to determine under which faction their exploitation will be conducted.

Which form of the state will reflect the particular set of dominant class relations of the moment?

The authors argue that up to the period of the Quiet Revolution, the working classes lacked a nationalism of their own. This situation is understandable, given the interlocking reinforcement that the political, ideological and economic aspects of Québec society gave to the dominance of bourgeois nationalist movements. Notwithstanding the fact that the ideology at play is that of the dominant classes, dominated class interests must come into play, if only insofar as they are required to produce elected office and access to the state. Thus, working class support for a sovereign Québec under the Parti Québécois is practically predicated on the satisfaction of class interests, or as the authors put it: “These classes may support independence as a possible, if not probable, way of improving their condition, or at least as a means of preventing it from getting any worse.”<sup>92</sup> The conclusion here is clear: there remains no proletarian nationalism in place within Québec, and were there to be it would necessarily manifest itself in a revolutionary form insofar as the class interests at play would be diametrically opposed to dominant interests, not just absorbed into current nationalist streams firmly rooted in bourgeois interests.

In examining the electoral fortunes of the Parti Québécois since 1970 the authors cynically, if accurately state that: “[T]he Parti Québécois is not the Prince Charming who has at last awakened Sleeping Beauty from her long slumber. The workers who supported the Parti Québécois in the 1970 election are not, on the whole, more ‘politicized’ and more revolutionary than those who supported the Liberal party; the Québec working class did not take a left-wing turn.”<sup>93</sup> The events surrounding the October Crisis of 1970 are perceived here as the opportunistic riposte of the neo-liberal fragment, along with their allies at the federal level against a disorganised and essentially fragmented political left; one that was as

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.



much a victim of the events. The result was a shattering of the immediate potential for the founding of a genuine proletarian nationalism of the third type described above. Those organisations such as the FRAP and local PACs<sup>94</sup> were essentially crushed by the backlash, while the Parti Québécois may well have benefited from the transparent attempt by the neo-liberal faction to associate the party with the FLQ. Notwithstanding, the authors close with the observation that “The new circumstances of the revolutionary struggle in Quebec – repression, censorship, and organized violence within the system – are currently forcing the Quebec left to launch itself into a struggle for socialism, a struggle which will be as hard and as radical as that of the revolutionary forces which, all over the world, are uniting in their assault against imperialism under its various ‘national’ masks.”<sup>95</sup> This marks the authors as better analysts than prophets. And perhaps this is consistent with the nationalist left and its intellectuals, for unlike many more contemporary nationalist discourses, those on the left have not had their nationalist vision as effectively clouded by their pursuit of the goal. In fact, the best amongst them have consistently argued for a certain theoretical and methodological rigour; a preoccupation with what can be shown empirically. Consider the words of Anne Legaré in her introduction to *Les classes sociales au Québec*.

“The empiricist current, more prudent and more refined, tries hard to construct a sort of theorisation of its observations. An accumulation of “evidence,” here or there, *of common descriptive criteria*, that leads to a laying out of the borders of class. Nevertheless, there is rarely any reference to relations of capitalist production, which leads these analyses to neglect a fundamental aspect of social division.”<sup>96</sup>

Beyond proposing a certain analytical and methodological consistency of approach, consider as well the breadth of Legaré’s conceptual arena: beyond a static class analysis to a wider and more dynamic consideration of the shifting economic context of class relations. Legaré’s

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<sup>94</sup> Fronte d’ Action Politique (FRAP) and Political Action Committees (PACs) or des *Comité d’action politique* (CAP).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>96</sup> Legaré, Anne, *Les classes sociales au Québec*, Québec, Les Presses de l’Université du Québec, 1977, p. 6. My translation of “Le courant empiriste, plus prudent et plus raffiné, s’efforce de construire une sorte de théorisation de ses observations. Une accumulation d’«évidences», ici ou là, *de critères descriptifs communs*, conduit à poser les frontières de classe. Pourtant, il y a rarement de référence aux rapports de production capitalistes, ce qui amène ces analyses à négliger des aspects fondamentaux de la division sociale.”

classes and class relations are changeable over time, most particularly, and as we have seen as well in the work of Bourque and Laurin-Frenette, as to changes in the mode of production – capitalist relations – over the history of Québec. Contrast the richness and nuance of such an approach with the facile premise that – in the absence of a native bourgeois class – the foundations for a classless society were laid in Québec with the events of the conquest. Even Legaré’s classes are nuanced; rived within along the lines of social division of labour, be it skilled versus unskilled labour, or the gendered division of labour. Notwithstanding, and in relation to the proletariat alone, she gives no consideration for divisions within the working class that cleave along the lines of culture and language. It is as if the working classes, internally divided along a number of important lines that clearly ally – gender and unskilled labour – do not see those same divisions as being affected by differences in culture and language. The absence of such a consideration is even more apparent in light of the detailed consideration that Legaré gives to “ethnic” divisions within the bourgeoisie. She argues that the hegemonic fraction of the bourgeois classes is to be found amongst the Canadian monopoly capitalists, and that while the non-monopoly – we presume “competitive” capitalist fraction – of Canadian capital is allied with the hegemonic fraction and participates in the process of class domination, the French-Canadian non-monopoly capitalist fraction does not enjoy either the fruits of full inclusion or an autonomy of their own. Their association with the bourgeois classes, and the pursuit of their own distinct class interests is conducted through their own organisations at the provincial level. A sophisticated analysis in comparison with many of the contemporary theorists that we have examined thus far. However, the real difference lies in how Legaré’s analysis denies any facile or instrumental support for the national clause as personified by the Parti Québécois. First, and generally, consider her evaluation of the class nature of the movement at the time of publication in 1977.

“The question of the political independence of Québec, defined up to now by the bourgeoisie, is a cover for the struggle of the non-monopoly French-Canadian capitalist fraction against the hegemony of monopoly capital in the English-Canadian form. The obverse of this position is that the *recognition* of the national question on the electoral stage by bourgeois monopoly capital is nothing but an ideological concession concealing the confrontations and real alliances.”<sup>97</sup>

The most insightful analyses on the ideological left remain true to their Marxist form: a bourgeois revolution in any form is no revolution at all. Compare this position with the previously cited work of Bourque and Laurin-Frenette. All previous forms of conservative nationalism in Québec, and now the radical and autonomist manifestation post-Quiet Revolution, are bourgeois in form, differing only in the interests of the bourgeois fragment that they serve. The only genuine, and liberating form of national struggle for the working classes is the third form put forward by Bourque and Laurin-Frenette: a truly proletarian nationalism that would examine the broader picture including the political and the economic. In denying the contemporary political manifestation of the nationalist movement, and this seemingly continues to apply both then and now, Legaré essentially comes to the same conclusion.

“The national question in this context therefore becomes one of the faces of imperialism on the internal level. The national question is a *concrete* form that assumes the principal contradiction. We cannot forget it in the organisation of the struggle. As a secondary contradiction, it represents for the Québécois people a tactical means to draw out the real interests of the nationalist bourgeoisie, interests that look only to political hegemony. Conversely, the struggle against bourgeois nationalism permits the people to reclaim the national question on their own terms, and, by their exercise of the right to self-determination, to reveal the class nature of their program.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* p. 189. The preceding summary follows Legaré’s preamble argument on the same page as the citation. My translation of “La question de l’indépendance politique du Québec, définie jusqu’à maintenant par la bourgeoisie, est une couverture pour la lutte de la fraction canadienne-française non monopoliste contre l’hégémonie du capital monopoliste en l’occurrence canadien-anglais. L’envers de cette position est que la *reconnaissance* de la question nationale sur la scène électorale par la bourgeoisie monopoliste n’est qu’une concession idéologique déguisant les affrontements et les alliances réels.”

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* p. 195. My translation of “La question nationale dans ce contexte devient alors une des faces de l’impérialisme sur la plan interne. La question nationale est une forme *concret* que prend la contradiction principale. On ne saurait l’oublier dans l’organisation de la lutte. En tant que contradiction secondaire, elle représente pour le peuple québécois un moyen tactique pour faire ressortir les intérêts réels de la bourgeoisie nationaliste, intérêts qui ne visent qu’à l’hégémonie politique. Inversement, la lutte contre la nationalisme bourgeois permet au peuple de récupérer dans ses propres termes la question nationale, et, par l’exercice de son droit à l’autodétermination, de mettre au grand jour la nature de classe de son programme.”

Of course, insofar as no internal contradictions as to culture, language or identity have been addressed, one may make the assumption that the proletarian national project will be to the advantage of all members of the working classes. Internal class contradictions as to the hierarchical value of labour; skilled versus unskilled labour, and the gendering of labour will all be addressed by the socialist basis of what must first be a class based movement, and second, a movement for national liberation. From the point of view of Marxist ideology, Legaré and others have their priorities correctly set. Let us not put the nationalist cart before the proletarian horse, even if many in the nationalist camp would harness the energies of that horse toward nationalist goals first. Yet in many ways, that tendency becomes the basis of much of our critique of class oriented institutions in Québec such as the trade union movement. Structures conceived towards the advocacy and defence of class interests seem to have increasingly become seconded into the national question. And Legaré's critique remains firmly in place. The real interests behind the movement remain to be found in the interests other than those of the working classes.

Notwithstanding Legaré's argument for the bourgeois nature of the Québec nationalist movement and the personification of those interests in the Parti Québécois, other analysts on the left take a variety of stances on the class nature of the PQ. Jorge Niosi, after acknowledging the work of Bourque and Laurin-Frenette, argues that the nature of the party is representative of a specific petit bourgeois fraction.

“It appears that the Parti Québécois represents a portion of the traditional petite-bourgeoisie comprised of the liberal professions and thus a majority of teachers and government administrators. However, its program can only attract but the most backward sectors of agriculture and local industry, those that need protection in the face of pan-Canadian competition .”<sup>99</sup>

Bourgeois, bourgeois fraction, petit bourgeois, petit bourgeois fraction, notwithstanding the interpretation of the class nature of the PQ, essentially all were clear that this was not, never had been, nor was likely to become a proletarian party. Yet, many on the nationalist left openly chose to support the party as being the most likely to produce a sovereign state, and well, perhaps a better set of class relations at the same time. And class interests became secondary to nationalist ones, if only because many felt that the socialist cart would remain immobile unless hitched to the horse of sovereignty.

Why would the working classes, or the organic intellectuals of the nationalist left that were driving the ideological foundation of many of the working class institutions of the period – including the labour union movement and divers social movements – opt for a political party that clearly did not fit the class interests of the proletariat? The answer as provided by Legaré is insightful both for the period of time concerned, and for most of the history of the working classes in Québec.

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<sup>99</sup> Niosi, Jorge, “La nouvelle bourgeoisie canadienne-française,” in *Les Cahiers du Socialisme* 2, St. Lambert, Les Cahiers du Socialisme, Spring, 1978, p. 35. My translation of “Il appert que le Parti Québécois représente une partie de la petite-bourgeoisie traditionnelle des professions libérales ainsi qu’une majorité des enseignants et fonctionnaires. Mais son programme ne peut attirer que les secteurs les plus retardataires de l’agriculture et de l’industrie locales, ceux qui ont besoin de protection face à la concurrence pancandienne.” Bourque’s subsequent response was that a facile association with one class fragment or another provides an insufficient understanding of the nature of the party. He also denied the exclusively petit bourgeois nature of the PQ as proposed by Niosi, arguing for a nuanced understanding of how the party sought to integrate a number of class interests, even proletarian ones, even if only for certain practical reasons. See Bourque, Gilles, “Petite Bourgeoisie envahissant et bourgeoisie ténébreuse,” in *Cahiers du Socialisme* no. 3, St. Lambert, Cahiers du Socialisme, Spring 1979, p. 120 – 161.

“The level of development of the dominated classes’ struggle in Québec is first reflected by the absence of political organisation of the working classes. The New Democratic Party, at the federal level, and the Parti Québécois at the provincial level are organisations of the non-monopoly bourgeoisie serving a working class and petit bourgeois clientele.. These are bourgeois parties. As for the Montreal Citizens’ Movement, to the Democratic Alliance, these are petit bourgeois reformist parties. There does not exist at the present time mass political organisation of the working classes. If certain groups of the political left take the name of parties, such as the Canadian Communist Party, the Québec Marxist-Leninist Communist Party, the Labour Party of Canada, etc., they are no more than atomised cells of ideological struggle. If other formations are working towards the creation of a party, the working class and its allies are still not organised through a class party.”<sup>100</sup>

Our subsequent examination of the historical evolution of the Québec labour union movement will give proof to the fact that the condition described by Legaré in the 1970s has its roots in the very beginnings of working class consciousness in the 1800s. Further, and notwithstanding the presence of an avowedly working class party in the present moment under the guise of Québec Solidaire, the tangible manifestation of the political left remains “no more than atomised cells of ideological struggle.” Further, the problematic conflation of the nationalist cause with working class interests continues to plague, limit and confine the advocacy of the latter. And this whilst, more than twenty-five years after the aegis of the influence of socialist ideology within the institutions of the working classes, the attraction of this ideological position has lost almost all resonance with Québécois of all classes. Notwithstanding, its pertinence remains firmly in place both as an analytical position and as an egalitarian ideology whose values continue to confront an increasingly neo-liberal Québec society.

If the nationalist movement of the 1960s and 1970s was fired by post-colonial socialism, why did it not take root as it had in any number of states after the Second World

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<sup>100</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Legaré, p. 194. My translation of “Le niveau de développement de la lutte des classes dominées au Québec se reflète d’abord par l’absence d’organisation politique de la classes ouvrière. Le Nouveau Parti démocratique, au niveau fédéral, le Parti Québécois au niveau provincial sont des organisations de la bourgeoisie non monopoliste à la clientèle ouvrière et petite-bourgeoisie. Ce sont des parties bourgeois. Quant au Rassemblement des citoyens de Montréal, à l’Alliance démocratique, ce sont des partie réformistes petits-bourgeois. Il n’existe pas, à l’heure actuelle, d’organisation politique de masses de la classe ouvrière. Si certains groupes politiques de gauche portent le nom de parti, tels le Parti communiste canadien, le Parti communiste québécois marxiste-leniniste, le Parti du travail du Canada, etc., il n’en sont pas moins que des groupuscules de lutte idéologique. Si d’autres formations œuvrent à l’édification du parti, la classe ouvrière et ses alliés ne sont pas encore organisés en parti de class.”

War? Perhaps the answer lies equally in what makes Québec different from other societies, as well as what makes her the same. Léon Dion notes that “In the first place, and contrary to Québec Anglophones, Francophones up to now have had no appetite for pan-Canadian social democracy like that of the C.C.F., or with that of the N.D.P. who took it up.”<sup>101</sup> Mills notes that prominent Québécois nationalists did actively engage the political process from within those parties, and argues for internal cleavages as the reason for their failure to engage the electorate. Mills does acknowledge the split along linguistic lines.

“The politics of people like Thérèse Casgrain had roots that stretched deep into Montreal’s past. Although Canada’s main social democratic party, the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation, traditionally appealed more to Anglophones than to francophones, throughout the 1950s many French Canadians played important roles in the Quebec wing of the party. Poet Gaston Miron and labour organizer Michel Chartrand ran as CCF candidates. Yet, when the New Democratic Party was founded as the CCF’s successor in 1961, it did not take long for factional lines among the party’s Quebec wing to split the party in two, creating the Parti socialiste du Québec, which had a short and marginal existence.”<sup>102</sup>

However, Dion ascribes the real reason as to the identification of those parties with English Canada. Notwithstanding this failure, and given her conservative past so dominated by the visceral anti-socialist stance of the Catholic church, we can see that Québec’s collective values provided infertile ground for the development of the ideology. As well, however, is the fact that many of the values of socialism in any form are shared with the liberal variants, which Dion notes had already started the process of eroding the traditional values associated with an earlier conservative nationalism. And those values that we continued, and continue to share are increasingly liberal in orientation. As Dion notes:

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<sup>101</sup> Dion, Léon, *Nationalismes et politique au Québec*, Montréal, Editions Hurtubise HMH Ltée, 1975, p. 85-86. My translation of “En premier lieu, contrairement aux anglophones du Québec, les francophones ont jusqu’ici toujours boudé la social-démocratie pan-canadienne, tant que de la C.C.F., que celle de N.P.D. qui en a pris la relève.”

<sup>102</sup> *Op. Cit.* Mills, p. 48-49.

“It is at the level of cited values that the structural unity of socialist nationalism best manifests itself. There are affirmed, above all others, the values of justice, equality and dignity. Doubtless these are also part of the stock of liberal values as given evidence by the slogan “the Just Society” as put forward by Pierre Elliot Trudeau during the federal general election of 1968.”<sup>103</sup>

Socialism, even in its mildest form could only strike a chord with a small number of Quebeckers, and then it was divided along lines of culture and language. The former assumption seems to remain true. The latter remains true because of the degree to which all socialist political manifestations remain increasingly tied to the nationalist movement. In the microcosmic Anglophone socialist political community that remains, there exists a significant degree of cognitive dissonance between the commitment to a socialist society and the loss of cultural identity. The socialist goal becomes subsumed within the dominant Francophone cultural milieu because it is seconded to the nationalist cause. What remains of the socialist current is dissipated within the nationalist movement itself, which takes on the ideological form most appealing to the current social imaginary. In fact, it is the integrative nature of the phenomenon that both denies class yet seeks to integrate class-based movements; that seeks to rally all those within by proposing an all-encompassing and overriding identity based upon something shared, or presumed to be shared.

“Nationalism, as an ideology, seeks to encompass within a totalising perspective divers specific ideological forms – those of social classes and broad secondary collectivities, such as employer’s associations and unions, churches, ideological camps, partisan organisations, etc., which serve as vehicles for the collective culture.”<sup>104</sup>

It is nationalism as an ideology that seeks to second class-based movements to its purposes as well as forge a shared identity serving to unite the cause. This does not necessarily imply that shared culture and language displace or even trump class identity or solidarity. The two may

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<sup>103</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Dion, p. 101. My translation of “C’est au niveau des valeurs invoquées que l’unité de la structure du nationalisme socialiste se manifeste le mieux. Y sont affirmées, par-dessus toutes les autres, les valeurs libérales, comme en fait foi le slogan de la « société juste » mis de l’avant par Pierre Elliott Trudeau lors de l’élection générale fédérale de 1968.”

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17. My translation of “Le nationalisme, en tant qu’idéologie, vise à rassembler dans une perspective totalisante divers schémas idéologiques particuliers – ceux des classes sociales et des grandes collectivités secondaires, tels les associations patronales et syndicales, les Eglises, les regroupements idéologiques, les organisations partisans, etc., qui servent de véhicules à la culture d’une collectivité d’hommes.”



comfortably coexist and self-reinforce until drawn into the purposes of a nationalist movement. The purpose of a nationalist movement is to further the cause. It takes on whatever ideological form that best serves this purpose, and when there has been a shift in the underlying ethos of contemporary society, nationalist movements will adjust their ideological positions. Thus, Québec can be a post-colonial society seeking both national and class liberation on the one hand, and a classless society affirming its right to self-determination on the other. The locus in time; the nature of individual and collective self-perception, and the dominant ideological position of the day amongst the intelligentsia: all these dictate how position and perception enable the marriage of collective interests along the lines of class and culture. Thus, in the 1960s: “The conflation of class and ethnicity echoed the way many people understood the power relations that shaped their lives.”<sup>105</sup>

Nationalism is the ideology, and conceiving the nation as a coherent and unified whole is the first requirement to mobilising it to produce the goal: an independent nation-state. Guy Rocher did better by invoking the theories of John Breuilly than he might have imagined. For Breuilly sees nationalism as first a political movement, based on certain assumptions about the nation and its goals. To summarise Breuilly, and as cited earlier: “there is a nation with an explicit and peculiar character,” “the interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values,” and “the nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires the attainment of at least political sovereignty.”<sup>106</sup> There is no ideological content aside from these assumptions.

Dion also clearly identifies the political focus of nationalism, as well as a number of its characteristics. The whole defines the ideology.

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<sup>105</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Mills, p. 22.

<sup>106</sup> *Op. Cit.* Breuilly, John, *Nationalism and the State*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Manchester, Manchester UP, 1993 (1982), p. 2, cited in Smith, Anthony D., *Nationalism and Modernism*, London, Routledge, 1988, p. 84. Again, note that Smith cites the exact same source and work that Rocher invokes.

“By nationalist ideology, I mean the entire set of representations made by reference to a particular and specific collectivity, called a nation or people, defined by an amalgam of traits including, amongst others but without any one of them in particular being necessary and sufficient causes, an origin, an history, a territory, a culture, institutions and a language common to the members of this collectivity, exhibiting a sense of a solidarity of belonging and destiny often in face of other collectivities judged foreign or enemies and by projects concerning the organisation of cultural, economic, and political life judged agreeable to this collectivity.”<sup>107</sup>

All of the same defining characteristics remain, and Dion is correct in maintaining that no one of them are “necessary or sufficient causes,” even unto language. The Swiss are assembled from four distinct linguistic communities. Do they not all consider themselves to be part of the Swiss nation? Belgium may well be cleaved between two linguistic groups, but do not the majority clearly understand themselves to be Belgians? Shared language is not *sine qua non* of national identity. There are other strong ties that bind. Nevertheless, where a society is cleaved by class distinctions that are reinforced by parallel aspects of language, culture and identity, language will be employed along with other cultural characteristics, to maintain the class advantage of the dominant culture, as well as give rise to potential nationalist movements within the minority culture if there is sufficient demographic, economic and political weight to maintain the momentum of such a movement. The initial goal of such movements is the protection and survival of the minority community, not an independent nation state. Such was the nature of conservative French-Canadian nationalism as described by Dion and others up to the Quiet Revolution, and this notwithstanding occasions of liberal nationalism arising during the Rebellions of 1837-38. Therefore, if such a movement produces a condition where class disadvantages no longer cleave along the lines of cultural and linguistic identity, then the natural synthesis of the two goes into a decline.

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<sup>107</sup> *Op. Cit.* Dion, p. 16. My translation of “Par idéologie nationaliste, j’entends l’ensemble des représentations faites par référence à une collectivité spécifique particulière, appelée peuple ou nation, définie par un amalgame de traits incluant, entre autres mais sans qu’aucun d’entre eux en particulier ne soit suffisant ne nécessaire, une origine, une histoire, un territoire, une culture, des institutions et une langue communs aux membres de cette collectivité, témoignant du sens d’une solidarité d’appartenance et de destin souvent en face d’autres collectivités jugées étrangères ou ennemies ainsi que par des projets concernant l’organisation de la vie culturelle, économique et politique jugés convenir à cette collectivité.” Dion further invokes the repeated emphasis placed on the political aspect of the ideology as argued by David Easton, citing Easton, David, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, New York, John Wiley, 1965.

This condition may or may not arrive before the creation of a new sovereign state. I argue that such a condition has been the fruit of the nationalist movement in Québec since the Quiet Revolution; *que nous sommes vraiment maîtres chez nous*.

If the satisfaction of certain collective interests of class and identity form the driving force of nationalist movements, then in their pursuit, and after their satisfaction, certain other class interests must be considered. Masses are the motor, elites are the conductor.

“Product of the intelligentsia, nationalism can never satisfy its political function if it remains a simple commodity for consumption amongst the closed circles of intellectuals. It is necessary that systems of communications are established reducing the distance that separates elites and the masses.”<sup>108</sup>

The degree to which nationalist proponents have been successful in transmitting their messages to either the masses or even specific and interested militants has been previously questioned in passing. Further question has been put forward as to the degree to which these intellectuals can and do affect the collective social imaginary of some, all, or most Quebeckers. What I trust has been clear thus far in my examination of the literature has been the degree to which nationalism, as an ideology promoting the political expression of the collective interests of the “nation,” can adopt a certain ideological relativism in putting forth that argument. Further, amongst the more contemporary apologists, the sole purpose in adopting an ideologically reasoned position is to strike a sufficient chord amongst the masses, presumed masses, or more likely the militants, politicians, and organisers of the contemporary nationalist cause as to demonstrate the “logic” of their argument. Finally, the most recent analytical approach that does not simply seek to adopt whatever reasoned position is most likely to affect the social imaginary and promote the nationalist cause; that also struggles to reconcile nationalism with a core ideology not solely centred on the nationalist goal is found within the Marxist or socialist tradition. As flawed as some of the analysis from this point of view may be, I submit that it remains the only ideological position

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

sufficiently objective as to retain any analytical validity. And as the only analytical position to seriously question the relationship between national struggle and class interests, this approach alone, I submit, retains methodological credibility. This does not imply that there is no coherent response to the problematic outside of a purely leftist discourse. A critique of the increasingly neo-liberal ideological tendency specifically in Québec, and generally elsewhere, has marked the literature, and some of these sources will be taken up later in my examination of the final historical period leading to the present day.

### **False Interests of Class and Incomplete Definitions of the Nation**

How can we deduce the genuine interests of the working classes from arguments put forward by apologists whose first, and often exclusive interests are those of the nationalist project? We cannot. Moreover, can we assume that nationalist movements in general, or specifically those made manifest throughout the history of Québec, which have on occasion sought, and continue to seek, the political expression of self-determination in a sovereign state are devoid of class interests? Again, we cannot. What we can allow is that specifically here in Québec, the awakening, awareness and expression of working class interests, and the evolution of a genuine national identity are both related to the advent of modernity, and that both movements have evolved together. That evolution has been subject to the buffeting and manipulation of the expression of both working class interests and those of French Canada writ large by bourgeois and petit bourgeois class interests; interests that occasionally ally with, or oppose those of the working classes.

An analysis of class interests and class struggle alone would also provide an incomplete understanding of the parallel evolution proposed above. The more so given the span of years over which this evolution has taken place. Québec society itself has seen massive change from an essentially conservative feudal colonial society to a neo-liberal

global proto-state. Classes have arisen, disappeared, shifted and morphed through a number of modes of production.

“ “[Actually,] class interests offer only a limited explanation of long-run movements in society. The fate of classes is more frequently determined by the needs of society than the fate of society is determined by the needs of classes. Given a definite structure of society, the class theory works; but what if that structure itself undergoes a change? A class that has become functionless can be displaced and be supplanted overnight by a new class or classes. Also, the chances of classes in a struggle will depend upon their ability to win support from outside their own membership, which again will depend upon their fulfilment of tasks set by interests wider than their own.”<sup>109</sup>

Clearly, class analysis alone in a strict Marxist tradition, while having the advantage of a strongly empirical methodology in practice and a healthy suspicion of nationalist movements in general, is effectively blind to issues of culture and of collective identity beyond that of social class; and it remains somewhat reductionist in its preoccupation with economic relations. And yet, the examination of class-based institutions, such as labour unions, must certainly privilege class analysis, if only to beg the initial research question: “why should cultural antipathy colour and affect the process and outcomes of what started essentially as an effort by Concordia University’s workers to advocate for their shared class interests? And why, in the pursuit of those interests did so many issues of language and culture displace or redirect choices related to the collective interests of class?” My examination thus far should have exposed the broader application of the question to the whole of Québec society. Part of the answer comes from our examination of the literature: issues of culture - collective identity beyond that of social class alone – and including language, shared history, and shifting identity seem to almost displace any consideration of class analysis beyond the instrumental use of same for the purposes preserving the core identity and of phrasing the nationalist argument. Yet, as proposed above, class and national identity have seen a parallel, complementary, and occasionally opposing evolution over Québec’s history. These are competing, yet complementary aspects of identity, and notwithstanding the occasionally

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<sup>109</sup> Polanyi, Karl, *The Great Transformation: The political and economic origins of our time*, Boston, Beacon, 1957 (1944), p. 159.

assumed and argued primacy of one over the other, they are both indispensable aspects of social identity as a whole.

“At any time two or more sources of identity, loyalty, obligation, or interest may compete to determine the individual’s behaviour. A person cross-pressured in this way attempts to reconcile these competing claims in order to avoid painful choices or cognitive dissonance. Ethnicity is not, however, normally only one of several equal choices. The more politicized ethnicity becomes, the more it dominates other expressions of identity, eclipsing class, occupational and ideological solidarities.”<sup>110</sup>

Are the answers to our questions to be found in the politicisation of Québec’s national identity, individually and collectively? If so, then the dominance of cultural identity over that of social class should be evident throughout Québec’s history, with but one important caveat: such dominance is never to the exclusion of an active sense of social class. Certainly Milton Esman’s proposition addresses how ideological considerations can be seconded into issues related to the pursuit of the national project. What the citation does miss is the way that aspects of identity, rather than competing for ascendancy, can ally and through a synthesis of combined interests to produce a far more powerful social force than that shown through the manifestation of one set of collective interests alone.

This harmony of interests rather than some presumed competition between them is easier to understand if we expand our understanding of class beyond the narrow and reductionist limits of economic status alone.

“[T]here is the equally mistaken doctrine of the essentially economic nature of class interests. Though human society is naturally conditioned by economic factors, the motives of human individuals are only exceptionally determined by the needs of material want-satisfaction... Purely economic factors such as affect want-satisfaction are incomparably less relevant to class behaviour than questions of social recognition. Want-satisfaction may be, of course, the result of recognition, especially as to its outward sign or prize. But the interests of a class most directly refer to standing and rank, to status and security, that is they are primarily not economic, but social.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Esman, Milton J., *Ethnic Politics*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1994. p. 15.

<sup>111</sup> *Op. Cit.*, and *In Passim*, Polanyi, p. 160. While a detailed examination of workers’ demands consistently reveals a preoccupation with socio-economic interests, there are often telling examples of the workers’ broader preoccupation with their social position writ large. Barrington Moore Jr. informs us that, along with the expected demands related to pay, hours and benefits, German workers in 1848 demanded that they be addressed in the respectful second-person plural (*sie* rather than *du*). See *Op. Cit.* Moore, Jr., Barrington, *The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, p. 160 and p. 267.

However, an economic consideration remains pertinent on a number of levels. First, because the most empirical measurement of social “value” in contemporary liberal societies is often simply that of economic status. The distribution of scarce resources is still determined by class. And this notwithstanding promises of better equality in liberal societies. Second, because establishing one’s individual and collective “standing and rank” is generally conducted by comparing one’s lot with one’s neighbour. In keeping with Polanyi, it must be admitted that this comparison is not conducted on economic lines alone. What does remain true is that the empirical measure of “standing and rank” is easiest to establish along the lines of economic advantage or disadvantage. However, since economic disadvantage often cleaves along the lines of other social characteristics – language, culture, religion, gender, etc. – a strong correlation exists between disadvantaged identity writ large and economic measures of class. One’s state of deprivation is “relative” to the condition of the “other.”

“The concept of relative deprivation refers to the gap between a group’s current status and prospects and what appear to be reasonable and legitimate expectations, or to a gap between what comparable groups are believed to enjoy and what is available in material, cultural, and political satisfaction to the collectivity and its members. Mobilization may be prompted by a shift in the group’s collective expectations or in the “reference group”, the significant other, with which they compare their own situation.”<sup>112</sup>

French-Canadians have traditionally made this referential comparison with English-Canadians, Anglo-Quebeckers, and Americans. And this has served to maintain historical grievances by an “othered” French-Canadian culture up to the Quiet Revolution. However, and as proposed earlier, subsequent to profound social changes in Québec as a result of that revolution, it has become increasingly difficult to empirically establish disadvantage for Francophone Quebeckers from the traditional culture along any of the broader levels proposed by Esman above. Yet, in contemporary Québec, economic disadvantage continues to cleave along the lines of minority culture; no longer the minority culture of French Canada versus English Canada or the United States, but cleaved within, along the lines of cultural

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<sup>112</sup> *Op. Cit.* Esman, p. 30.

minority, gender and the *old stock*, traditional French speaking Québécois majority. And so, the synthesis and resonance of class and identity that informed the nationalist movement, as well as the collective image of self as the French Canadian, now Québécois nation, has now changed, and no longer demonstrates a perfect harmony.

We can no longer conceive of the nation in the same way as in the past and expect the automatic reinforcement of that collective identity by a parallel set of collective interests along the lines of class, either narrowly conceived along the traditional economic lines, or even along the broader lines as offered above by Polanyi and Esman. The fact is that for many contemporary Quebecers socio-economic disadvantage cleaves along other lines of identity: gender, First Nations, recent immigrants, and visible minority.<sup>113</sup> Thus, the synthesis of disadvantaged French-Canadian, or Québécois identity and class that reinforced the nationalist movement in the past sees a declining real but never presumed resonance in contemporary Québec. Quebecers whose broader identity, and this including their collective class experience, cleaves along lines different than traditional *old stock* Québécois most often do not buy in to either the proposed new national identity, or the nationalist cause. Yet some analysts refuse to see the connection.

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<sup>113</sup> The broader disadvantage as it applies across Canada was the focus of *Equality in Employment: A Royal Commission Report*. Government of Canada. Ottawa: 1984. The report was conducted under the direction of Rosalie Abella, now a Justice on the Supreme Court of Canada. From that report, a number of groups were identified as being at a consistent disadvantage in the workplace, including women, visible minorities, First Peoples, and the handicapped. Québec's own employment equity legislation addresses women, visible minorities, ethnic minorities (those whose first language is neither English nor French), and First Peoples. The Handicapped have their own legislative focus. A number of authors have addressed the issue of immigrants and economic disadvantage, including Alboim, Naomi, Finnie, Ross, and Meng, Michael, "The Discounting of Immigrants' Skills in Canada: Evidence and Policy Recommendations," in *Choices*, Montréal, IRPP, vol. 11, no. 2, February, 2005, see also Galabuzi, Grace-Edward, *Canada's Creeping Economic Apartheid*, Toronto, CSJ Foundation, 2001, and Kazemipur, A. and Halli, S. S., "The Changing Colour of Poverty in Canada" in *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*, 38: 2001, 217-238, also Kunz, J.L., A. Milan, & S. Schetagne, *Unequal Access: A Canadian Profile of Racial Differences in Education, Employment and Income*. A Report Prepared for the Canadian Race Relations Foundation by the Canadian Council on Social Development. Ottawa: Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2000 and Pendakur, Krishna and Pendakur, Ravi, "Colour My World: Has the Minority-Majority Earnings Gaps Changed Over Time?" in *Canadian Public Policy*, Montréal, December 2002.



“When grappling with this question, students of ethnocultural relations and the politics of citizenship in Quebec rarely link the socioeconomic circumstances of minority groups and their unease with, if not the outright rejection of, Quebec’s sense of nation and citizenship. Calls for strengthened cultural convergence and more open intercultural dialogue are usually proffered instead as antidotes to the tenuous allegiance of minorities.”<sup>114</sup>

It is precisely because the promise of material and social equality contained within Québec’s “intercultural” model of citizenship has proven false for so many members of the aforementioned groups that there is no buy in by most members of these groups. In seeking to comprehend why there is such a disconnect between the promise and the fact, we need to again look at the broader understanding of class. The socioeconomic indicators may be the most empirical measures we can reference, but the fact remains that these other aspects of identity cleave along side of traditional indicators of class. Social position is also strongly correlated to dominant culture. We have already alluded to the unique reversal of positions that has historically placed French Canadians in the minority role within the broader Canadian context while holding majority status within Québec. Clearly, the goal of the nationalist movement is to cement that position within a new sovereign state. But this does not change the essential nature of the state itself.

“The modern state in its assorted incarnations is best understood, then, as a *racial* state, set to preserve and regulate a key social boundary shaped by the very human tendency to locate outside the purview of one’s own identity those (enemies, competitors vying for the same resources) who must be identified as different, as potentially harmful to one’s own existence or survival.”<sup>115</sup>

So does this seeming paradox of promised inclusion denied by collective experience beg a response of cognitive dissonance on the part of Québécois nationalists and their theorists? To a great extent not. The increasing tendency at many levels of Québec society is to place the blame upon the shoulders of the victims themselves by accusing them of not enthusiastically adhering to Québec’s social values; values that we do not in any substantive way try to

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<sup>114</sup> Salée, Daniel, “The Quebec State and Management of Ethnocultural Diversity: Perspectives on an Ambiguous Record,” in Banting, Keith, Courchene, Tom, and Seidle, Leslie, eds., *The Art of the State – III: Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, Montreal, Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2007, p. 122. Recall my prior citation of Paquin on the new definition of Québécois.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p. 126.

communicate, other than our insistence on speaking French. This refusal to adapt; to integrate – may we say assimilate? – must be at the heart of both their sense of exclusion and their material experience of this “othering.” And the whispered and ambivalent voice of cognitive dissonance is lost in the din of shouted accusations that new Quebecers refuse to buy into our values, and thus separate themselves willingly from the “nation.” We are simply incapable of conceiving of the real reasons for both their refusal to buy in, and our refusal to genuinely integrate them.

“It is important to comprehend the fundamental nature of the state as racial in order to understand why socioeconomic differentials between Eurodescendants and racialized minorities persist in Quebec: like that of any modern state, the defining logic of the Quebec state is simply not geared to address this disparity genuinely; it is driven instead by a much stronger compulsion to maintain the social boundary that is essential to the survival of the primarily Eurocentric universe upon which Quebec society is founded.”<sup>116</sup>

In defence of *old stock* Québécois, the shoe has, as has been pointed out throughout this exercise, often been on the “othered” foot, but this does not deny the essential nature of the state. It only gives proof to the observations made by Polanyi, and cited earlier as to the needs of society dictating the fate of classes, as opposed to the reverse. The French Canadian working classes have always been painfully aware of their collective place within Canadian society and ascribed their condition as much to their Culture as their class. Working classes from “othered” cultures remain as aware of this coincidence of condition.

“The premise of dialectical materialism is, we recall: “It is not men’s consciousness that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness.” ...Only when the core of existence stands revealed as a social process can existence be seen as the product, albeit the hitherto unconscious product, of human activity. This activity will be seen in its turn as the element crucial for the transformation of existence. Man finds himself confronted by purely natural relations or social forms mystified into natural relations. They appear to be fixed, complete and immutable entities which can be manipulated and even comprehended, but never overthrown.”<sup>117</sup>

It is because they see their overall plight as being comprised of both social and economic disadvantage that they do not express their awareness in terms purely related to what the Marxists would call “genuine class consciousness.” Notwithstanding, their economic class

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* p. 127.

<sup>117</sup> *In Passim*, Lukacs, Georg, Livingstone, Rodney, trans., *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT press, 1997 (1968), pp. 18-19.

condition is a function of their broader identity, and if all other social forms are but superstructure to the mode of production, then can we honestly impute that their social position, related to their cultural difference, is as a *result* of their position in the mode of production? It would seem that Marxists *and* nationalists have but half the picture.

Where the collective interests of the working classes are proposed to be inextricably tied to the nationalist cause, then these are false interests of class. Where the definition of the nation and the proof of membership therein is made instrumental to the purposes of the dominant cultural majority, then the definition of the nation is incomplete. The truth of both of these statements can be demonstrated through an examination of the evolution of both class awakening and national identity in Québec. Both aspects of a broader social identity have arisen together over the last two centuries. On occasion, class-based movements and institutions have employed aspects of shared culture and identity to rally what were essentially class interests. Certainly, there have been repeated occasions where what were and are identity-based movements founded on culture and language employed class interests to their own instrumental purposes. The presence of one in no way denies the existence or development of the other.

### Chapter 3

#### Theoretical Framework: The Language and Methodology of Analysis

##### **Some Theoretical Considerations: Civil Society, Cultural Hegemony, and the Role of the State.**

While trade unions are essentially institutions conceived to represent the collective interests of the working classes, they are in fact institutions embedded within the fabric of civil society as understood by theorists such as Antonio Gramsci. They are not, and can never be, independent of the greater process that maintains hegemony, again as put forward by that author. In fact, the entirety of integrated institutional relations within society, including the form, development and role of the trade union movement itself, constitutes what Gramsci would define as the “Historic Bloc” of social arrangements that organise consent within society; consent to the current social order under a specific mode of production. In the broadest social sense, this “Historic Bloc” informs the contemporary social imaginary. I put forward here the argument that contemporary labour unions in what is inevitably a class collaborative mould are in fact part of that historic bloc that maintains contemporary hegemony, and not seminal institutions conceived as being potentially part of an alternative, or revolutionary bloc, even if they theoretically could form part of the *potential* for a non-bourgeois revolution. In a more classically Marxist sense, the socialising mechanisms that bind them are actually imbued within the relations of production themselves that are contemporary to a particular mode of production. What is key to explaining the role of the state in how the socialising process is maintained is an understanding of how that state controls the political and ideological arenas: political in the sense of the institutions related to governing the state itself, and ideological in how the state interprets and communicates the very broader sense of the collective imaginary; the ethos or spirit of the times.

“It is precisely because politico-ideological relations are already present in the actual constitution of the relations of production that they play such an essential role in their reproduction; that is also why the process of production and exploitation involves reproduction of the relations of politico-ideological domination and subordination. This elementary datum is at the root of the state’s presence in the constitution and reproduction of the relations of production, as the factor which concentrates, condenses, materialises and incarnates politico-ideological relations in a form specific to the given mode of production.

It is on the basis of this same datum that the State is first inserted in the constitution and reproduction of social classes – in short, in the class struggle. Insofar as they are bound up with the relations of politico-ideological domination and subordination, the relations of production delineate objective positions (social classes) which are themselves *only distinctions in the social division of labour as a whole* (relations of production – which play the dominant role – political relations, ideological relations).”<sup>118</sup>

Within the present study, I argue that Québec’s labour unions have become finally and firmly entrenched within that hegemonic formation, and this notwithstanding a brief period in their recent history when a radical Marxist orientation influenced the movement during the 1970s and as has been reflected in my examination of the general academic literature. This shall be demonstrated in analytical detail specific to the unions during our subsequent historical examination of that period

What we see generally in the period immediately after the Quiet Revolution is a necessary set of institutional compromises that are required within a rapidly changing Quebec society. Broad demands made by Québec’s unified labour movement for acknowledgement and redress of social inequality were met with a firm response from the State when the potential effect of those compromises threatened to go beyond a rebalancing of economic class discrepancies, and actively threatened hegemonic interests. The real effect of the Quiet Revolution was a shift in cultural elites, not a displacement of the elites *per se* by the proletariat, organised or otherwise. Gramsci is clear on the true role of the trade union movement, and its structural inability to produce real change.

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<sup>118</sup> Poulantzas, Nicos, *State, Power, Socialism*, New York, Verso, 2000, (1978), p. 27-28. Poulantzas, while focussing on the economic aspect of class domination through relations of production, acknowledges Gramsci’s broader understanding of the socialising process and the role of the state. “The underlying Gramscian conception may have the merit that it both extends the space of the State to the ideological institutions and emphasises the State’s presence within the relations of production through its role in ideological relations.” *Ibid.* p. 29.

“In all capitalist countries the trade union movement has developed in a particular way, giving rise to the birth and development of a particular kind of large organisation, which has grown out of the history, tradition, habits and ways of thought of the great majority of the proletarian masses. Every attempt that has been made to organise revolutionary syndicalist elements has failed in itself and has only served to reinforce the hegemonic positions of the reformists within the great trade-union organisation.”<sup>119</sup>

Briefly here we turn to the pivotal difference between revolutionary and collaborationist trends in the trade union movement. Clearly, the latter will seek to cement the hegemony of contemporary union leadership within the ongoing social and cultural milieu wherein the movement dwells. In so doing, and in active partnership with other social elites, the normal collaborationist tendency is to reiterate and reinforce existing class relations. A radicalising trend within the movement itself would only succeed in displacing its own elite fraction and replacing it with new leadership. However, in an institutional illustration of Robert Michels’ *Iron Law of Oligarchy*<sup>120</sup>, the “new” leadership rapidly entrenches itself and seeks to assure its own continuance within the hierarchy by forming a bureaucratic oligarchy. The application of Michels’ model here to labour unions is appropriate insofar as labour unions demonstrate political structures in many ways comparable to political parties, and is completely reflective of Michels’ own thoughts on the nature of the labour union movement and its leadership.<sup>121</sup> It is in fact because social relations and their maintenance constitutes a closed system, that any radical change to the system as a whole cannot come from within that system. Lukacs, in addressing the issue of a genuine class consciousness, cites Lenin in

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<sup>119</sup> Gramsci, Antonio, “Our Union Policy,” in *Pre-Prison Writings*, New York, Cambridge UP, 1994, pp. 249-250. We take Gramsci’s understanding of “reformists” here as those who believe that incremental change, or “reform” within the existing political system, can produce a real change in the relations between the classes and eliminate class differences. These are to be differentiated from revolutionaries. Ironically enough, Gramsci at one point openly stated that Communists are not enemies of the state, but that anarchistic trade unionists were! “In this sense communism is not ‘against the state’. On the contrary, it is implacably opposed to the enemies of the state – anarchists and trade-union anarchists. It condemns their propaganda as utopian and dangerous to the proletarian revolution.” See *Ibid.* p. 103.

<sup>120</sup> Michels, Robert, *Political Parties*, New York, The Free Press, 1962.

<sup>121</sup> Michels states of the oligarchic tendencies of union leadership that “[T]here develops everywhere in the leaders, alike in democratic political parties and in the trade unions, the same habit of thought. They demand that the masses should not merely render obedience, but that they should blindly and without murmuring carry out the orders which they, the leaders, issue deliberately and with full understanding of the circumstances.” See *Ibid.*, p. 217.

demonstrating the differences between a genuine class consciousness and one false to the real interests of the working classes, and contributing only to the maintenance of the existing order.

“My intention, then, was to chart the correct class consciousness of the proletariat, distinguishing it from ‘public opinion surveys’ (a term not yet in currency) and to confer upon it an indisputably practical objectivity. I was unable, however, to progress beyond the notion of an ‘imputed’ [zugerechnet] class consciousness. By this I meant the same thing as Lenin in *What is to be done?* When he maintained that socialist class consciousness would differ from the spontaneously emerging trade-union consciousness in that in that it would be implanted in the workers “from outside’, i.e. “from outside the economic struggle and the sphere of relations between workers and employers.”<sup>122</sup>

Where institutions of civil society approach a broader understanding of genuine class consciousness, one that expands beyond the immediate economic issues of wage relations, there is bound to be a broader response from the state *and* bourgeois interests. Yet it is only when that more inclusive and complete analysis enters into an evaluation of the role and locus of the working classes that a true understanding of their condition and its causes can be obtained. Individuals and collectivities conduct this kind of integrated evaluation on a very personal and basic level. Institutions geared towards class advocacy should conduct this process formally, and they have in Québec’s past.

Lukacs insists that correct and empirical analysis must be founded on the whole of society. And this illustrates part of the problem in trying to maintain a separation between institutional missions. The more so when the demographics overlap. Individuals and collectivities both evaluate their lot according to the same totality put forward by Lukacs.

“Concrete analysis means then: the relation to society *as a whole*. For only when this relation is established does the consciousness of their existence that men have at any given time emerge in all its essential characteristics. It appears, on the one hand, as something which is *subjectively* justified in the social and historical situation, as something that can and should be understood, i.e. as ‘right’. At the same time, *objectively*, it by-passes the essence of the evolution of society and fails to pinpoint it and express it adequately. That is to say, objectively, it appears as a ‘false consciousness’. On the other hand, we may see the same consciousness as something which fails *subjectively* to reach its self-appointed goals, while furthering and realising the *objective* aims of society of which it is ignorant and which it did not choose.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Lukacs, , pp. xviii-xix, Lukacs cites Lenin in: Lenin, *Werke*, Wien-Berlin, IV, II, pp. 216 ff. Note that Lukacs shows a full understanding of the “imputed” nature of class consciousness as encountered in the works of several intellectuals examined thus far.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, p. 50.

The secondment of the trade-union movement into the political process regardless of whether it is in support of national struggle and political autonomy or not, necessarily implies its cooperation in maintaining the current social structure. Yet, and as Lukacs has pointed out, you cannot remove these institutional structures and their related class struggle from the larger social context, nor would you want to do so. It is interesting that *History and Class Consciousness* should have been written and published at the same time as Gramsci's pre-prison journalistic output. Both Lukacs and Gramsci arrive at an understanding of the totalising effect of socialisation. The latter sees a way of subverting the socialisation process to proletarian needs. The Former is aware of situational opportunities as well for the creation of genuine consciousness.

“By relating consciousness to the whole of society it becomes possible to infer the thought and feeling which men would have in a particular situation if they were *able* to assess both it and the interests arising from it in their impact on immediate action and on the whole structure of society. That is to say, it would be possible to infer the thoughts and feelings appropriate to their objective situation. The number of such situations is not unlimited in any society.”<sup>124</sup>

Summarised further: “Regarded abstractly and formally, then, class-consciousness implies a class-conditioned *unconsciousness* of one's own socio-historical and economic condition.”<sup>125</sup>

Yet, how do we reconcile the above with the trade-union movement's quite evident preoccupation with both the Québec working classes' historical and economic position of subjugation? Perhaps it is because the lens through which that view is taken is less one of class than one of culture. For Lukacs, and this may be regardless of how that consciousness has been obtained, a class that is aware of its position; conscious of reality, and fails to seize the opportunity, is lost.

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52



“For if from the vantage point of a particular class the totality of existing society is not visible; if a class thinks the thoughts imputable to it and which bear upon its interests right through to their logical conclusions and yet fails to strike at the heart of that totality, then such a class is doomed to play only a subordinate role. It can never influence the course of history in either a conservative or progressive direction. Such classes are normally condemned to passivity, to an unstable oscillation between the ruling and revolutionary classes, and if perchance they do erupt then such explosions are purely elemental and aimless. They may win a few battles but they are doomed to ultimate defeat.”<sup>126</sup>

And reminiscent of Gramsci:

“For a class to be ripe for hegemony means that its interests and consciousness enable it to organise the whole of society in accordance with those interests. The crucial question in every class struggle is this: which class possesses this capacity and this consciousness at the decisive moment?”<sup>127</sup>

How is that consciousness to be obtained? Gramsci would have the proletariat create, second, or subvert new and existing institutions of civil society towards proletarian ends; to produce a condition through *position*, that creates a potential for *manoeuvre*. None of our chosen theorists look in any way to the contemporary state as either a support of, or a vehicle for proletarian interests. Consider Lukacs in light of Poulantzas, when he states that “the state is not a *mediation* of the economic control of society: it is that *unmediated dominance itself*.”<sup>128</sup> This makes the state less an instrument to the purposes of the bourgeoisie, than a self-reinforcing reflection of current economic relations. Therefore, in order to change the *form* of the state, one would have to modify the underlying economic relations in a fundamental fashion. This does not mean that the creation of a sovereign state through secession would in any way change the economic foundation of the new state.

The period from the beginning of the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s to the first Parti Québécois victory in 1976 marks the high water mark of the social and political pertinence and influence of Québec’s labour unions. The movement’s ability to unite issues of class and identity constituted a kind of institutional resonance that synthesised two allied sets of collective interests and made for a whole that was vastly greater than its component parts.

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, p. 56.

This synthesis was underscored by the fact that, coming out of the *Grande noirceur* that marked Québec society under the political leadership of Maurice Duplessis, the labour union movement itself was relieved of the burden of overt political oppression under the Duplessis regime, and has since increasingly become portrayed as a corporate partner in the building of Québec society itself. This in and of itself is an illustration of the trade union movement's changing role as an institution of an evolving civil society and its broader and integrated role in cementing hegemony through organising consent. Hegemony here being understood in a far broader sense than simply rule by the dominant fraction of the bourgeois classes in an economic sense. Here again, we return to the sense of "class" as inclusive of other collective interests as alluded to earlier by Polanyi, and usually aligning both dominant economic interests with those of the dominant culture. Polanyi, Poulantzas, Lukacs, Lenin and Gramsci all understood that the totality of socialisation includes all social forms – the complete superstructure – that constitute an integrated mechanism for the maintenance of hegemony. As Lukacs summarises the sometimes seemingly contradictory *forms* of society with the underlying causes:

“Only in this context which sees the isolated facts of social life as aspects of the historical process and integrates them in a *totality*, can knowledge of the facts hope to become knowledge of *reality*.”<sup>129</sup>

Québec's contemporary intercultural model of citizenship *proposes* a partnership of interests. Partnership implies cooperation, not revolution. Whatever potential working class institutions such as trade unions may have had as institutional instruments working towards what Gramsci would describe as a “war of position” – the gradual morphing over of the institutional foundations of civil society in preparation for a “war of manoeuvre,” movement or revolution – they remain within the contemporary example simply one part of the greater socialising mechanism that maintains a broad economic and cultural hegemony under a collaborationist model. Notwithstanding, the unified and unprecedented strength and

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8. The italics are in the original text.

resonance of these allied collective interests came in the past from a powerfully perceived cognitive resonance resulting from a clear alignment between the trade union movement's words and actions in representing both sets of interests. The movement appeared to be challenging hegemony, not maintaining it, though given the interests it was seeking to combine, it could do little other than promote a cycling of elites; a closer correspondence between bourgeois economic interests and majority, now dominant culture.

Such a unity of interests might well be seen as both “natural” and consciously planned. A presumed natural unity of interests along social, economic and cultural lines arose early in Québec's labour history and peaked during the Quiet Revolution. The then slogan of the Liberal party machine under Jean Lesage – “Maîtres Chez Nous!” – as well as that later offered by the Union nationale under Daniel Johnson – “Égalité ou Indépendance!” – both spoke to issues of social, economic and cultural autonomy. Thus, any social institution capable of bringing together these shared interests would have enjoyed a stronger voice within Québec society at that time. The joining of these interests obviously served the collective interests of a significant portion of Québec society, and went beyond the simple satisfaction of traditional class interests conceived along the pure lines of economic concessions to the working classes.

“Ultimately, therefore, it is the relation of the class to society as a whole which maps out its part in the drama; and its success is determined by the breadth and variety of the interests, other than its own, which it is able to serve. Indeed, no policy of narrow class interest can safeguard even that interest well – a rule which allows of but few exceptions. Unless the alternative to the social setup is a plunge into utter destruction, no crudely selfish class can maintain itself in the lead.”<sup>130</sup>

The movement would not have been so dynamically successful; have so held a portion of the collective imaginary, the ethos of the time, were it not to some broader degree serving the interests of a significant proportion of Québec society; reflecting a broader set of interests than those purely associated with the working classes. As to the political motivation of the

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<sup>130</sup> Op. Cit. Polanyi, p. 163. See also Motyl, Alexander, *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: conceptual limits and theoretical possibilities*, New York, Columbia UP, 1999. Motyl questions as well the real and lasting effects of revolution versus incremental change.

Liberal party during these years, it should be borne in mind however that Lesage's invocation of the slogan "Maîtres Chez Nous" during the 1962 provincial election campaign was initially over the province's right to exercise control over her *economic* interests through the nationalisation of eleven privately owned electric companies. This is illustrative of the realignment of political and economic elites that marked the Quiet Revolution; effectively a shifting of elites, not a displacement of one "class" for another. The social and political realignment that came subsequent to the Quiet Revolution simply assured that majority culture became the truly dominant culture within Québec. The beneficiaries were bourgeois and petit bourgeois Francophones, and to some lesser extent the Francophone members of the working classes. Nevertheless, the broader resonance of the trade union movement under the original Common Front came partially from its challenge to the Liberal government under Robert Bourassa in the early 1970s to answer the call for greater *social* justice. The reaction of the State voiced and orchestrated by that Liberal government showed that the primary interests of this shifting hegemony were increasingly threatened by the institutional compromises demanded by the Common Front. Given what has been proposed immediately above concerning the ultimate legitimacy of the synthesised movement of class and identity, the Liberal - read "liberal" - response constituted to a great degree a denial of this legitimacy, and the assertion of other - bourgeois - class interests conceived as contrary and hostile to the ones expressed by the combined working class movements. Notwithstanding, this must be held in contrast with the overtly collaborationist partnership that marked the relationship between organised labour, the traditional and new middle classes, capital, and the Liberal Party of Quebec under the leadership of Jean Lesage barely ten years previously. Later in the 1970s, under the avowedly social democratic and "sovereignist" government of the Parti Québécois led by René Lévesque, the trade union movement became informal partners in asserting the collective *cultural* interests of Québec's Francophone majority. This

constituted, at least politically, and for what are to be demonstrated as purely practical reasons, an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the expressed and combined interests of class and identity manifest in the union movement.

How are we to interpret the clash between State institutions under the Liberals – those institutions again identified by Gramsci as belonging to “Political Society” and associated with the coercive side of hegemony – and the allied institutions of Civil Society? And how do we reconcile this with the subsequent informal partnership between the Parti Québécois and the trade union movement immediately thereafter? Further consider the work of Nicos Poulantzas, and the issue of elite competition during times of flux: the courting of allies from other classes.

“[A]ccording to the nature of the contradictions with the popular masses, the various fractions of the power bloc often seek to enlist their support against the other fractions of the bloc. In other words, they seek to utilise the popular masses in their relationship of forces with the other fractions of the bloc – in order either to impose solutions more to their advantage, or to put up more effective resistance to solutions which favour other fractions over and above themselves.”<sup>131</sup>

Shifting class alliances often mark times of great social change.<sup>132</sup> What I am offering here for further argument is that shifting elite interests – be they those of a burgeoning bourgeois Quebec business class associated with the Liberal party, or petit bourgeois interests associated with the Parti Québécois and the rising sovereignist movement – either clashed or allied with the increasing political power of Québec’s trade union movement, and this as part of a struggle to reconcile elite interests by either challenging or bartering the collective interests of Québec’s working classes. This does not imply that the goals of the trade union movement are irrelevant to their class mission during this period of time. On the one hand, they clearly challenged contemporary issues of social and economic inequality. On the other the only viable provincial party offering some semblance of a social democratic platform was

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<sup>131</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Poulantzas, p. 144.

<sup>132</sup> See Barrington Moore Jr. and his seminal work on differing class alignments during periods of social upheaval and transformation in England, France and the United States amongst other examples, entitled *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1966.

the Parti Québécois. The issue is whether, in mixing class interests with the interests of the nationalist movement, there can be any *real* change in class relations either in the existing state, or in a newly conceived state formed through secession? The question is more about real and false interests of class, than the short-term outcome of the political alliance conceived. Consider Georg Lukacs on the issue of trade unions and their goals.

“Every momentary interest may have either of two functions: either it will be a step towards the ultimate goal or else it will conceal it. Which of the two it will be depends *entirely upon the class consciousness of the proletariat and not on victory or defeat in isolated skirmishes*. Marx drew attention very early on to this danger, which is particularly acute on the economic ‘trade union’ front: “At the same time, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate consequences of these struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, ... that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady.”<sup>133</sup>

Ultimately, the Québec trade union movement’s inability to reconcile its initial and ongoing obligations as a representative of class interests with those of Québécois culture and identity has resulted in an internal crisis of priorities and positions. I argue here that the prior condition of cognitive resonance between policies, positions and actions in the movement has gradually eroded over the last quarter-century to arrive at what can now be seen as a condition of cognitive dissonance. Essentially, there is no longer a consistent alignment between many of the movement’s avowed collective and social values, as they continue to be expressed through its external and internal communications, and its cultural position expressed through policies and positions communicated through those same vehicles.

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<sup>133</sup>*Op. Cit.*, Lukacs, p. 73. Lukacs cites Marx, Karl, & Engels, Friedrich, “Wages, Price, and Profit,” in *Selected Works, Vol. I*, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1951, pp. 404-405. The fuller citation reads: “At the same time, and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wages system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the *material conditions* and the *social forms* necessary for an economical reconstruction of society.” A more concise illustration of Marx’ attitude here is given in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* where remarking upon workers’ struggle through trade unions he says that: “Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers.” See Tucker, Robert C. ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, New York, London, W. W. Norton & co., 1978 (1972), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p. 481.

The argued de-alignment that has occurred since approximately the early 1980s is predicated upon a number of empirically demonstrable factors. The initial ideological antithesis between Québec's organised labour and the provincial Liberal party under Robert Bourassa masked an underlying, and globally endemic economic paradigm shift in the developed world that also affected relations between the Parti Québécois and the unions later in the decade: a movement away from the interventionist Keynesian state towards a neo-liberal model.

From a partnership with the Liberal Party early in the Quiet Revolution, to an adversarial relationship with same, and thence to an informal yet significant alliance with the Parti Québécois, labour's shifting political alliances reflected shifting class alliances as well. Notwithstanding, their compensating movements, significant as they are, were often internal compromises to external events. As Polanyi reminds us:

“[T]he various sections in society will stand for different methods of adjustment (including forcible ones) and adjust their interests in a different way from those of other groups to whom they may seek to give a lead; hence only when one can point to the group or groups that effected a change is it explained *how* the change has taken place. Yet the ultimate cause is set by external forces, and it is only *for the mechanism of the change only* that society relies on internal forces. The “challenge” is to society as a whole; the “response” comes through groups, sections and classes.”<sup>134</sup>

The initial de-alignment between labour and the political partnership with the PQ came subsequent to the first Parti Québécois mandate in 1976, and was linked to events surrounding the first sovereignty referendum in 1980, as well as the global recession of 1982. This latter event accelerated a movement away from the Keynesian interventionist state initiated early in the 1970s with the first Arab oil embargo and the removal of the gold standard that led to free-floating currencies in 1978. As an avowedly social democratic political party, the Parti Québécois found it politically and ideologically expedient to court the forces of organised labour in the 1970s. This, as with the events that produced the

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<sup>134</sup> *Op. Cit.* Polanyi, p. 159-160. Note the agreement as to the source of genuine change between Lenin and Polanyi: external to the class and society and its internal economic relations, and thus broader in its impact.

synthesis of class and identity movements in the first instance, is also a factor both seemingly natural and also genuinely contrived. The experience of the Common Front with the Liberal party in 1972 made for a natural alliance between the political opposition in the form of the PQ and disaffected labour. This and the shared preoccupation with asserting Québécois culture and the French language made for an occasionally uneasy alliance between the interests of class and identity.

With the approach of the first Sovereignty referendum in 1980, the Parti Québécois under René Lévesque negotiated significant salary increases with Québec's public sector unions in 1979, immediately prior to the referendum. That the first referendum was defeated is actually of secondary importance at this point of the analysis.<sup>135</sup> Rather, the fact that the same government, faced with an economy in serious recession due to a global economic downturn in 1982, imposed salary rollbacks of 20% across the board on that same unionised public sector is illustrative of an important key conflict of interest between the labour movement's support for sovereignty in partnership with the PQ and its role as a representative of state employees' class interests in confronting the same government as an employer.

This kind of conflict with the state in its persona as employer is certainly not unique to any one party in power. As noted above, the Liberals had clashed with the unions over similar and broader issues in 1972. In 1964, when confronted by an increasingly militant and growing public sector, Jean Lesage stated that "The Queen does not negotiate with her

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<sup>135</sup> A facile analysis would put forward the argument that Lévesque, incensed at organised labour's unwillingness or inability to mobilise their members in favour of sovereignty in that first referendum, was simply "paying them back" by rolling back public sector salaries two years later. While Lévesque's relationship with the unions ran occasionally hot and cold, such an action would likely not have been precipitated had the PQ government not been faced with an economic recession and a massive deficit that would have swollen by a further +/- \$275 million had the original public sector salary settlements been honoured. However, this did not stop the government from giving *themselves* a 6% raise as Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). See Martin, Lawrence, *The Antagonist: Lucien Bouchard and the Politics of Delusion*, Toronto, Viking (Penguin), 1997, pp. 89 - 92.



subjects.”<sup>136</sup> For the PQ, a global movement to the political right during the 1980s combined with the need to demonstrate an ability to govern meant moving to the political right as well.<sup>137</sup> A failed second referendum in 1995 led to an even stronger right-wing move by the PQ and an approach to governance that sought to produce economic “winning conditions” for the sovereigntist argument down the road. This move only further conspired to force the PQ into a tightening of the public purse strings. Indeed, on at least three occasions over the twenty-five years after the 1982 rollback, the political party in power has found itself compelled to freeze salary negotiations with public sector employees, or roll them back by decree (Liberals, 1992, Law 102 with a 1% rollback and 2 year freeze; PQ, 1996, Law 104, 6% reduction in *masse salariale*, and again Law 142 under the Liberals in 2005, with a retroactive freeze of 33 months and an imposed duration of contract of seven years).<sup>138</sup> This illustrates that the neoliberal shift remains firmly in place and is a condition under which all governments operate. It also gives evidence to what Poulantzas has described as the essentially repressive function of the state itself. A political party may seek class alliances in making a government, but once in place, roles change. The state, through the persona of the government, acts to limit and contain any class manifestation that seeks to threaten hegemony. The spin of the prevailing public perception; of the *zeitgeist*; the ideological foundation of the social imaginary, may change from party to party, from time to time, but we should not lose sight of the essential nature and role of the state.

“The State’s role in the constitution of the relations of production and in the delimitation-reproduction of social classes derives from the fact that it does not confine itself to the exercise of organised physical repression. The State plays an equally specific role in organising ideological relations and the dominant ideology.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> See Morris, Desmond, *Working People: An illustrated history of the Canadian labour movement*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal, Kingston, 1998, p. 255.

<sup>137</sup> Here again, we are called to reflect upon Michels’ *Iron Law of Oligarchy*.

<sup>138</sup> *Nota Bene*, the percentages and application of these laws may have in certain cases varied from what has been summarised here. In particular, the 1996 Law 104 left the reduction in the *masse salariale* up to each individual sector, thus specific applications showed different methods of achieving the ends demanded by law.

<sup>139</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Poulantzas, p. 28.

And,

“However, the distinction between repressive and ideological apparatuses has quite clear limits. Before coming to these, I should mention the repressive role of the State, which is so self-evident that it is hardly ever discussed. Only too often does emphasis on the State’s role in ideological relations lead to underestimation of its repressive functions.”<sup>140</sup>

Interpreting the social imaginary and seeking to coherently communicate it in such a fashion as to cement hegemony is the underlying mechanism that drives socialisation in the modern state. Nevertheless, when push literally comes to shove, the state employs its repressive function to those same ends. The balancing act that places one party’s interpretation of the *zeitgeist* in political power and removes that party from power over its too often or too severe recourse to repressive actions constitutes the delicate navigation between political legitimacy and the needs of hegemony. Society’s reaction to the repressive actions of the state through the institutions of civil society – labour unions included – are the brakes within the system. Where missions related to class and broader identity muddy the political waters, the balancing process can become confused and contradictory.

What does place the unionised public sector into a state of cognitive dissonance is when the government of the state imposes economic sanctions in its role as employer while expecting labour to act in a partnership pursuing a program leading to political sovereignty. This dilemma, so far, only applies when the overtly sovereignist Parti Québécois is in power.

The above serves as an excellent example of what Marxists would consider in a broader context as the conundrum of the “National Question,” and lies at the core of my thesis. Can what is essentially a class movement second, or enter into partnership with, a nationalist movement where both seek to mobilise the same demographic for what are ultimately very different reasons? On the one hand, socialists such as Proudhon considered nationalist causes to be of little or no importance to the larger issue of class struggle, in fact

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29. Poulantzas directs us to Anderson, Perry, “The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci,” in *New Left Review*, No. 100, November 1976 – January 1977.

denying its very existence out of hand at the time of the First International. On the other hand, Marx and Engels themselves clearly supported national struggles in a number of specific examples: Poland, Italy, and Ireland to name but three. However, their support for these nationalist struggles for political independence was always secondary to the greater issue of class struggle itself, and was to a great extent based on an understanding that in these examples, both class and national struggles sought to liberate the same demographic from class and cultural oppression. It is the nature of the consciousness of the working classes, here as expressed through the labour movement, that determines the ultimate compatibility of the two goals. The political expression of these combined movements would also have to be conducted through a party that was founded first on class interests, not nationalist ones.

Lukacs cites Marx:

““The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties *by this only*: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the *entire* proletariat, independent of nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of *the movement as a whole*.””<sup>141</sup>

Within the Québec example, even if a viable “socialist” party existed, the unity of class and identity is far stronger than any external and transnational proletarian solidarity that has ever existed within the labour movement here. Thus the second condition has never been satisfied. And now that the strong coincidence of class and culture no longer apply in the same way as in the past, organised labour – while aware of the economic plight of women and new Quebeckers amongst others – cannot transcend majority issues of language and culture to give primacy to the united interests of class. The strength of the interests of majority culture will never give way to shared interests of class “independent of nationality,” and can only see economic differences that cleave along the lines of other cultures within Québec as a result of their denial of freely chosen membership in Québec’s national identity.

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<sup>141</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Lukacs p. 24. does not footnote his citation, but acknowledges its source in text.

Thus, the brief flame of socialist ideological undercurrents within the movement were destined to failure. Class solidarity, at one time significant in its manifestation, has been in decline internally for most of the last century. Externally, it never developed, and certain exogenous events that we shall subsequently examine almost precluded its development. Franco Québécois working class identity and cultural identity have always stood united. And the class collaborationist nature of the movement writ large binds it to a role destined to cement hegemony, and never challenge it beyond the cycling of elites.

What is being put forward here extends the argument to state that ultimately there is an incompatibility between these types of social movements, and where they are united, the only collective interests that can be served are those of culture and identity over those of class.

Later theorists in the Marxist vein have noted that regardless of shifting class alliances and the bartering of short-term false interests of class through bread and circuses by elite fragments at any one time, the ultimate result is to see the State consistently organise those elite interests to maintain hegemony. Consider again the work of Poulantzas:

“With regard to the dominant classes and particularly the bourgeoisie, the State’s principal role is one of *organisation*. It represents and organises the dominant class or classes; or more precisely, it represents and organises the long-term political interest of a *power bloc*, which is composed of several bourgeois class fractions (for the bourgeoisie is divided into class fractions), and which sometimes embraces dominant classes issuing from other modes of production that are present in the capitalist social formation. ...By means of the State are organised the conflictual unity of the alliance in power and the unstable equilibrium of compromise among its components. This is done under the bloc hegemony and leadership of one class or fraction: the hegemonic class or fraction.”<sup>142</sup>

Thus, much of the problematic associated with the National Question is centred on the fact that while political organisation and alliance may *appear* to offer an opportunity for class *and/or* national liberation, the ultimate role of the state under whatever elite fragment is in political control is to maintain hegemony. Indeed, what I argue here is that a successful national struggle to obtain political control of an existing state, or the creation of a new one

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<sup>142</sup> *Op. Cit.*, and *In Passim*, Poulantzas, p. 127. See also, Mills, C. *The Power Elite*, New York, Oxford UP, 1956.

through secession, may result in a shift of *Cultural* hegemony<sup>143</sup>, however, it will never result in a state form free of class oppression. It simply rearranges the position of the collective actors.

From the point of view of our present example, that of the Québec trade union movement and its active support for the sovereigntist cause, the same ideological ambivalence noted previously and demonstrated amongst many Marxists marked the internal discourse in the movement throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. Certainly, many Québécois nationalists on the left were under no illusion that the new Parti Québécois held any real promise of a proletarian revolution. Gilles Bourque and Nicole Laurin-Frenette argued in the early 1970s for the *possibility* of a genuine proletarian revolution, while clearly identifying the PQ as just another petit bourgeois variant. They put forth that while all prior nationalist movements have been linked to and were directed by bourgeois class interests, there is a theoretical possibility of non-bourgeois, or proletarian nationalist movements. As of 1973, nationalist alternatives represented by the Parti Quebecois, were identified as solidly petit bourgeois, simply representing a new, technocratic petit bourgeois fraction that had arisen post Quiet Revolution.<sup>144</sup>

A clear socialist ideological component had been in the ascendancy since the secularisation of large parts of the trade union movement just prior to the Quiet Revolution.<sup>145</sup> The uncomfortable ideological conscience that the socialist faction brought to

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<sup>143</sup> “*Cultural*” here implying dominant culture – Québécois and French, Canadian and English, British and Colonial – and not cultural hegemony in the sense of capitalist culture. In fact, what is being put forward is that these incremental struggles on the part of the working classes will not produce a shift in the mode of production, but at best a cycling of cultural elites.

<sup>144</sup> See *Op. Cit.* Bourque, Gilles, and Laurin-Frenette, Nicole, “Social Classes and nationalist ideologies in Quebec, 1760 1970,” in Teeple, Gary ed., *Capitalism and the national question in Canada*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1973.

<sup>145</sup> The CSN changed its name from the *Confédération des Travailleurs Catholiques du Canada* and removed priests from their role of chaplain holding veto over union affairs in 1960. By 1972, the influence of Marxist ideology and the preoccupation with larger class struggle had so alienated some sectors of the CSN as to have them split and create the *Confédération des Syndicats Démocratique* or the CSD in that year. In the larger Marxist context, it should be noted that there was a clear trade union presence in the socialist movement as early as the Second International of 1889.

the movement's alliance with the nationalist cause became necessarily quieter as the influence of that group waned after the 1970s.<sup>146</sup> However, the core argument here is not intended to be purely rooted in Marxism *per se*. It simply takes up the dilemma of class struggle and the national question to offer a simple and basic position; a hypothetical extension of the general thesis: institutions founded upon class representation are essentially incompatible with providing active support for nationalist movements *that look to employ the democratic political process to achieve their ends*. A nationalist movement that seeks political autonomy for a cultural majority through the democratic process necessarily does so by winning power, making a government and leading that nation to control their own destiny in either a new or existing state. For organised labour to fall into partnership with a nationalist movement and provide even tacit support for a political party that seeks national autonomy means that as soon as that party attains power and forms a government the original partners find themselves in an adversarial situation – the proletariat and the state – which, given the role of the state, places them in direct conflict of economic interests of *class*. And where, as in our present example, the most vocal and active support for the nationalist cause within the trade union movement itself is expressed by a highly politicised vanguard of public sector employees, the greatest potential for a clear conflict of interests arises. Add to this the evolving nature of the division of labour in the public sector itself to include more and more professionals, or “organic intellectuals”, and the issues become even more complex. These unionised public sector workers; professionals by all measures of the intellectual nature of their work, constitute part of the actual mechanism that the state employs to cement hegemony. Poulantzas in noting that the process of intellectualisation of labour tends to relegate physical labour to the masses and intellectual labour to the state

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<sup>146</sup> The decline of this ideological influence is intimately related to a conservative backlash that so decimated the number of unions affiliated with the CSN in 1972 as to reduce their numbers by tens of thousands. The CSN did not recover numerically until a decade later, and the Marxist ideological influence has never really returned to the movement since. Extensive discussion of these events will be taken up in later chapters.

apparatus, invokes Gramsci in support of this argument. Note however that the nature of labour in advanced capitalist countries is changing in and of itself. Given Poulantzas's observations, one would naturally assume that trade unions would find themselves solidly rooted on the civil society side of this new division of labour. Yet, in the Québec example, and while the labour union movement remains solid in the trades, it is also very active and most nationalistically militant in the areas of the state administration and bureaucracy; within the institutional forms and mechanisms of what Gramsci identifies as separate from civil society and in the realm of "political society." We have Poulantzas' position summarised here:

"[I]ntellectual labour (knowledge power) is materialised in state apparatuses, while at the other pole, manual labour tends to be concentrated in the popular masses, who are separated and excluded from these organisational functions. It is equally clear that a number of institutions of so-called indirect, representative democracy (political parties, parliament, etc.) in which the relationship between State and masses is expressed, themselves depend on the same mechanism. Gramsci had a presentiment of this when he saw in the general organisational role of the capitalist State the supreme realisation of intellectual labour separated in characteristic fashion from manual labour."<sup>147</sup>

Poulantzas' argument may be more pertinent to the united activism of the 1970s than to the integrated and domesticated union/state relationship that seems to prevail in the first decade of the new millennium. Yet, that very embeddedness that he speaks of is perhaps far more evident today than in the past.

"Today, less than ever is the State an ivory tower isolated from the popular masses. Their struggles constantly traverse the State, even when they are not physically present in its apparatuses. Dual power, in which frontal struggle is concentrated in a precise moment, is not the only situation that allows the popular masses to carry out an action in the sphere of the State. The democratic road to socialism is a long process, in which the struggle of the popular masses does not seek to create an effective dual power parallel and external to the State, but brings to bear on the internal contradictions of the State. ...To take or capture State power is not simply to lay hands on part of the state machinery in order to replace it with a second power. Power is not a quantifiable substance held by the State that must be taken out of its hands, but rather a series of relations among the various social classes."<sup>148</sup>

While the trade union movement in Québec rarely challenges the State by way of a "frontal struggle" as it did in the 1970s, the mass unionisation of state employees has produced more

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<sup>147</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Poulantzas, p. 56. Poulantzas cites "Gli intellettuali e l'organizzazione della Cultura", from the *Prison Notebooks*.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, and *In Passim*, p.257.

of a “war of position” than a “war of movement.” However, this war of position is increasingly waged in the interests of the cultural majority. And given the demographic profile of the Québec civil service, this contributes to the cementing of ongoing cultural hegemony. Are the positioned interests vested here those of class or dominant culture?

Many nationalist authors make much of the greater trend towards social-democracy in Québec, and the labour unions and their public sector branches are staunch proponents of such a platform. That does not necessarily imply that class interests trump those of culture. So while in many ways, Poulantzas’ “democratic road to socialism” is marked by the same embeddedness of the labour union movement into the state’s machinery, socialism increasingly becomes “the road not taken” as cultural hegemony seeks the reproduction of current advantageous conditions.

“In the democratic road to socialism, the long process of taking power essentially consists in the spreading, development, reinforcement, coordination and direction of those diffuse centres of resistance which the masses always possess within the state networks, in such a way that they become the real centres of power on the strategic terrain of the State. It is therefore not a question of straight choice between frontal war of movement and war of position, because in Gramsci’s use of the term, the latter always comprises encirclement of a fortress State.”<sup>149</sup>

Perhaps it is the totality of the socialisation process that Poulantzas captures better than Gramsci. Well, to be sure, Poulantzas has the heritage of Marx, Lukacs, and Gramsci to draw upon, though there is no mention of Lukacs in *State, Power, Socialism*. Two rather specific citations have reference to the particular situation in contemporary Québec:

“The capitalist State regiments the production of science in such a way that it becomes, in its innermost texture, a *state science* locked into the mechanisms of power; and as we know, this is not just true of the so-called human sciences. More generally, this State structures intellectual labour through a whole series of circuits and networks thanks to which it has taken the place of the Church...Intellectuals have been constituted as a specialised professional corps through their reduction to functionaries or mercenaries of the modern state. In the universities, institutes, academies and societies of learning, these bearers of knowledge-science have become state functionaries through the same mechanism that made intellectuals of this State’s functionaries.”<sup>150</sup>

And

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, p. 258.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, and *In Passim*. p. 57.



“Thus, the capitalist State instals (sic) a uniform *national language* and eliminates all other languages. This national language is necessary not only for the creation of a national economy and market, but still more for the exercise of the State’s political role. It is therefore the mission of the *national state* to organise the processes of thought by forging the materiality of the people-nation, and to create a language which, while doubtless situated within ideological formations, is by no means reducible to an ideological operation.”<sup>151</sup>

Increasing state control in the areas of language and education has marked the policies of all Québec governments, but none more than the policies and laws instituted by the overtly nationalist Parti Québécois. Notwithstanding, the covert nationalism of all other parties here and the ideological jockeying for position in representing what is put forward as the collective imaginary, has driven all Québec governments of the last fifty years towards closer control in these areas. Language and intellectual discourse: both are integral to an organised and coordinated reproduction of dominant social relations. Those dominant relations privilege culture as well as class. Again, Poulantzas speaks of the totality of the reproduction of the division of labour through socialisation.

“[T]he State is not the mere result of the division between intellectual and manual labour rooted in the relations of production. It actively enters into the reproduction of that division at the very heart of the production process and in society as a whole – both through apparatuses specialised in the qualification and training of labour power (the school, the family, various occupational training structures) and through the totality of its apparatuses (bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political parties, the parliamentary system, cultural apparatuses, the press and media).”<sup>152</sup>

Poulantzas notes of the current capitalist state, and of the hegemonic function of the bourgeoisie that “this class is the first one in history to need a corps of *organic intellectuals* in order to establish itself as the dominant class.”<sup>153</sup> Authors such as Moore speak of how different class alliances produce outcomes that can promote or reduce the fortunes of any one class. Gramsci informs us that every class has its intellectuals

“Every social group coming into existence on the primal basis of an essential function in the world of economic production creates together with itself, organically, a rank or several ranks of intellectuals who give it homogeneity and a consciousness of its own function in the economic sphere: the capitalist entrepreneur creates along with himself, the economist, the scientist of political economy.”<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>154</sup> Gramsci, Antonio, *Prison Notebooks: Volume II*, New York, Columbia UP, 1975, p. 199.

Gramsci prefaces the above by asking whether the intellectuals constitute an autonomous group or whether they are in fact, a category of existing groups (classes). Poulantzas seems to assign them a class position somewhat of their own, yet still in symbiotic relationship with the dominant elite; here the bourgeoisie. Gramsci also notes that, notwithstanding the emergence of groups and an intellectual sub-category within, there have always been “pre-existing categories of intellectuals.”

“But every group emerging into history out of the economic structure finds or has found – at least in all of past history – pre-existing categories of intellectuals that moreover seemed to represent a historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated changes in social and political forms. The most typical of these categories of intellectuals is that of the ecclesiastics, who for a long time monopolised a number of important services (religious ideology, schools and education, and “theory” in general with regard to science, philosophy, morals, justice, etc. as well as charity and good works, etc.).”<sup>155</sup>

Québec here is certainly no exception, save that that role has been displaced by a new secular petite bourgeoisie comprised of academics, bureaucrats, and interestingly enough, trade union leaders. Notwithstanding the contemporary weakness of the Church and her intellectuals, our subsequent investigation shall give proof to the words of Gramsci. Not only did the Church essentially serve the role of an absent bourgeoisie after the Conquest, but she in many ways built the Québec petite bourgeoisie “in her image” thus informing the creation and rise of both the traditional and new middle classes that arose after the Quiet Revolution.

How does Poulantzas conceive the nation? As with relations of production, Poulantzas sees the nation as somewhat a function of the current mode of production. So that while he fully understands that the contemporary concept of the nation is a product of the needs of the capitalist state, he can conceive earlier, prior nations as functions of those earlier modes.

“From Marxist reflection about the nation and from the debate in the workers movement, the following initial point would seem to emerge: the nation is not identical with the modern nation and the national state, such as they appeared with the rise of capitalism in the west. The term designates ‘something else’ – a specific unit of the overall production of social relations that existed long before capitalism.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, p. 199.

<sup>156</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Poulantzas, p. 93.

Neither purely ‘modern’, ‘primordial’ nor ‘constructed’ in any conscious way. And conveniently, a definition and understanding that permits an easy application to Québec across the series of modes of production that have marked her history since the Conquest. Interestingly, Poulantzas’ definition admits Rioux’s understanding of the pre-modern existence of the Québécois nation, but that nation, however temporally situated, retains dominant class relations. In many ways Poulantzas’ nation seems much like his state: a function and product of the contemporary relations of production. He does make an interesting point about the right of nations to secede, and working class interests.

“[O]nce the *right* of a nation to ‘divorce’ its encompassing State does not designate an ‘obligation to divorce’, the struggle for secession becomes necessary only when it is in accord with the interests of the working class and the ‘international proletariat’.”<sup>157</sup>

Therefore, any good class representative seeking to rationalise participation in a national struggle that is not empirically and demonstrably in the interests of the nation, will simply put forward that the same revolutionary action is in the best interests of the class. Similarly, any nationalist seeking to enlist the support of the working classes will put forth that the nationalist struggle is the only solution for the interests of the working classes. But if the *form* of the state remains the same, there can be no change in the nature of class relations, so who alone can collectively benefit from such a change? The only outcome can be a shifting of elites, not a displacement of them as a class.

In fact, the political partnership between organised labour, the nationalist cause and the political party that espouses the interests of both is in fact no partnership at all. Even in a democratic state, there is no real division or sharing of power, only an immediate repositioning of the collective actors. Here again we invoke Poulantzas:

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, p. 94.

“[T]he internal contradictions of the State do not express a ‘contradictory nature’ such that a real situation of *dual power* already exists *at the heart of the state*: on the one hand, the dominant power of the bourgeoisie and, on the other, the power of the popular masses. The popular masses cannot hold such power within the State because of the unity of the state power of the dominant classes, who shift the centre of real power from one apparatus to another as soon as the relationship of forces within any given one seems to be swinging to the side of the popular masses. But such power is also impossible because of the very material structure of the State, comprising as it does internal mechanisms of reproduction of the domination-subordination relationship: this structure does indeed retain the dominated classes within itself, but it retains them precisely as *dominated* classes.”<sup>158</sup>

Does the shift away from a focussed manifestation of united working class interests as made manifest in the early 1970s through such groups as the Common Front towards a discourse preoccupied with language and identity constitute what Poulantzas describes as a shift of “the centre of real power from one apparatus to another” in the face of a swing “to the side of the popular masses?” Or has the shift been more related to the state’s reaction to the threat of her own public sector’s growing strength and militancy since the Quiet Revolution? In fact, the reaction of the Québec “state” can be seen as accomplishing two goals: limiting the expression of working class power, while cementing and buttressing now hegemonic culture.

A *liberal* and *capitalist* state with the massive investment in the type of state bureaucracy associated with the modern welfare state, and consequently as the largest employer of unionised labour, necessarily finds itself in an adversarial position when negotiating working conditions and monetary compensation with labour’s representatives. If the *persona* of the state is a government whose ultimate political goal is to demonstrate to the electorate *as a whole* that both the need and capacity for the cultural majority to assert its political autonomy is manifest, then that government must demonstrate its ability to effectively rule in the interests of what must be put forward as “the whole of society.” In fact, the first set of collective interests that must be satisfied are those of the dominant, generally bourgeois fractions that constitute the current hegemonic elite. The moment that organised labour’s active support for political sovereignty, and its informal but effective support for the

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

political party that would produce such a state, results in that party taking power, they are in a position of conflict of interest when confronting that same government as the employer in a situation of collective bargaining. When, as a result of the decline of the Keynesian model for state intervention and state enterprise, the neoliberal state finds itself in a position of deconstructing the services, jobs and bureaucracy associated with the liberal welfare state, and the most emphatic support for political sovereignty is to be found amongst the unionised workers in that same public sector, the conflict of interest is most clearly evident and acute. In seeking to rationalise such a position, it is there that the beginnings of cognitive dissonance must necessarily arise.

Thus far, it can be seen that the potential for allied collective interests in our present example – even if those interests may ultimately be incompatible in alliance – was initially very high. An empirically solid argument can be made that prior to the Quiet Revolution, French Canadians can be seen, and subsequently saw themselves, as an economically disadvantaged class within Québec and Canadian society, and this in spite of their demographic majority within the province. Average incomes for French speaking Quebeckers were significantly below the national average.<sup>159</sup> Similarly, it was and remains argued by many that a demand that French Canadians become masters of their own economic destiny is intimately and inextricably tied to the idea of political, social and cultural autonomy.<sup>160</sup> Collective interests assembled under economic, social and cultural institutional headings all demonstrated essentially the same demographic membership in the past, or so it was consistently seen to be by Québec's nationalists. However, the Quiet Revolution and the

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<sup>159</sup> For an historical examination of the phenomenon showing the roots of the problem founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with Québec as a “low-skills, low-wage” society, see Noël, Alain, “Politics in a High-Unemployment Society,” in Gagnon, Alain-G., ed., *Quebec State and Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Toronto, Nelson, 1993, pp. 422-449.

<sup>160</sup> I have previously noted that such a struggle becomes portrayed as essentially an anti-colonial movement by authors such as Pierre Vallières in *Nègres blancs d'Amérique: Autobiographie précoce d'un "terroriste" québécois*, The schism between Vallières and Charles Gagnon, along with the events surrounding the October Crisis of 1970, mark the beginnings of the split between ideological and pragmatic wings of the socialist component in the sovereignist movement and the ultimate decline of the former.

following half-century of social and political struggle have produced radical change in the socio-economic condition of these demographically concentric collective interests. It is difficult to put forth the argument that contemporary Québécois constitute an economically or socially oppressed “class.” By every measure – economically, socially, politically – the members of this majority cultural demographic are indeed “masters of their own house.” Yet, two things cannot be denied: that support for political independence is still strong, and there remains a need for the institutional representation of workers’ collective interests in Québec. Québec remains a *liberal* society, and while significantly more egalitarian than some by social inclination and manifest condition, this means that there remains inequality of condition for some. In arguing for a decline in resonance between the institutionally united interests of class and identity it must be demonstrated that there is no longer a close demographic alignment between those whose greatest interest is for economic equality, and those who seek recognition and autonomy along the lines of what has been argued to be an oppressed cultural identity.

The last citation of Poulantzas above marks an important theoretical nexus that joins the work of Poulantzas, Gramsci, and Michels: the socialisation process inherent in the institutions of Civil Society tend to make it nigh impossible to employ these institutions in a genuinely revolutionary manner.<sup>161</sup>

“[T]he state really does exhibit a peculiar material framework that can by no means be reduced to mere political domination. The state apparatus – that special and hence formidable something – is not exhausted in state power. Rather political domination itself is inscribed in the institutional materiality of the state. Although the state is not created *ex nihilo* by the ruling classes, nor is it simply taken over by them: state power (that of the bourgeoisie, in the case of the capitalist State) is written into this materiality. Thus, while all the State’s actions are not reducible to political domination, their composition is nevertheless marked by it.”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Briefly, and in resonance with the work of Gramsci cited previously, Michels observes that “The proletariat has not been able to emancipate itself from the social environment in which it lives.” See *Op. Cit.*, Michels, p. 271.

<sup>162</sup> *Op. Cit.* Poulantzas, p. 14.

It is the interconnectivity of the institutional structures of both civil and political society that render it so difficult for institutions associated with the former to in any substantive way affect the underlying process of socialising hegemony. Gramsci however, like Bourque and Frenette-Laurin, would admit the *possibility* of producing the conditions of proletarian revolutionary change. For Gramsci, this may be done through the creation and appropriation of the key institutions of Civil Society and reorienting them towards working-class interests by effectively rerouting the socialisation mechanism to proletarian ends. This establishes a *war of position* that may successfully lead to a *war of movement*: Gramsci's method of establishing "winning conditions" for the ultimate success of *class* struggle.

Economic disadvantage in contemporary Québec is manifest along very different lines than when the trade union movement enjoyed its apex of social and political power in the 1970s. Some groups were as disadvantaged then as now, but have since found their voice. Others have seen a decline of their economic condition. There remains a link between identity and class, but this connection cleaves along lines different than that of a common monolithic French Canadian class and identity. Women, First Nations, and recent immigrants now count amongst the collective actors struggling for economic equality. It cannot be denied that the vast majority of the economically disadvantaged in the province remain French Quebecers. It is only put forth here that there no longer remains an exact or necessary alignment between collective working class interests and French Canadian identity. Lacking this, there is a corresponding decline in resonance between the two sets of collective interests, and less of a reason to try, even artificially, to unite them within a single form of institutional representation, or for any contemporary institution to try to unite them at all. Yet, within the context of the larger project it will be amply demonstrated that the labour union movement in Québec continues to assume a necessary and sufficient alignment between these very different collective interests as to presume their ultimate and shared

satisfaction in a sovereign state of Québec; one predicated upon the “intercultural” model of citizenship that we have introduced and briefly examined previously. Why might this be so? Perhaps, as Gramsci, Lukacs and Poulantzas remind us, trade unions and other institutions of civil society are integrally tied up with maintaining the conditions of hegemony. The state is inextricably involved in the ongoing organising of hegemonic interests, and in a contemporary Québec state that demonstrates the clear dominance of her traditional French speaking cultural majority, this means that the state organises the interests of the dominant culture as well as the hegemonic class.

The above implies a significant interconnectedness between institutions – those of both civil and political society – the state, and the “nation” within an increasingly global context. Those connections and the give-and-take that marks the dynamic relationship between capital, labour, the state and the market are an elastic grid that both reinforces ongoing social relationships and adapts to changes demanded over time; changes in economic conditions, economic relations, the social division of labour and this across a series of modes of production. In order to account for the ebb-and-flow of these forces, some further expansion of my theoretical analytical model is called for. To this end, I turn to a brief introduction of the *Régulation* school of thought.

### **Analytical Structure: *Régulation* Theory, Social, Economic and Political Context**

Marking the birth of a social institution as a “moment in time” is difficult at best. New institutions tend to erect their structures on pre-existing models and foundations, just as classes look to prior models for their intellectual leaders. Thus, labour unions, *per se*, arose out of earlier forms and, as new institutions tending to challenge the dominance of capital within the mode of production at that time, cloaked themselves in forms acceptable to society at the time of their arrival. Clearly, socially embedded institutions cannot be examined



outside of their contemporary social, economic and political context. Those contexts themselves change over time, and the institutions within evolve, shift and adapt to change in a dynamic and dialectic manner. Understanding the circumstances that prompt the arrival of a new institution, the reaction of other institutional forms to that arrival, and how these forms struggle, contend and reconcile collective interests within an integrated social universe demands an analytical approach that is as dynamic and adaptable as the institutions it seeks to explain. By way of introducing an ordered and complete analysis, an integrated theoretical framework that considers all of the important institutional forms contained within and including the state itself is required as part of our investigation of labour unions and the union movement in Québec.

Given the dialectic nature of the labour union movement's relations with the other institutional and collective actors contained within society, and in keeping with the general class analysis orientation of the theoretical framework introduced thus far, an analytical approach consistent with a Marxian, if not rigidly Marxist, methodology seems appropriate. Contemporary *Régulation* theory contains a dynamic model that seeks to explain the nature of the social division of labour and the role of specific institutional forms in maintaining capital accumulation through an accumulation regime, or *régime d'accumulation* for any given period of time. The foremost theorists in the style have defined *Régulation* as “the study of the transformation of social relations that creates new economic and non-economic forms, organised in structures and reproducing a determining structure, the mode of production.”<sup>163</sup> The advantage given by the model provided here is that it sketches a broader underlying *mode de régulation*, or set of relational rules and constructs at the institutional level that is relatively stable over time frames, yet permits that analysis to respond to significant institutional changes over longer periods of time. The model is flexible, and

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<sup>163</sup> Boyer, Robert, and Saillard, Yves, eds., *Régulation Theory: The state of the art*, New York, Routledge, 2002 (1995), p. 343, citing Aglietta, Michel (1986).

adaptable to individual analytical approaches, yet has a certain structural consistency. It proposes a nesting of structural arrangements – from a local accumulation regime governing daily relations, within a regulation mode that oversees the general application of same, all dwelling under a broad mode of production in the Marxist sense.

“The strict definition of regulation may vary according to the author, not only due to semantic reasons but, more fundamentally because the designation of objects is not identical. That being said, one generally speaks (Boyer, 1986, Lepietz, 1984) of a mode of regulation as designating the whole of the procedures, institutional forms and norms that permit the reproduction of fundamental social relations within the framework of an accumulation regime and assuring the accountability of individual and collective expectations and behaviours with the principles of adjustment of the entire system.”<sup>164</sup>

The active, ongoing, yet limited and defined interplay of five key institutional forms constitutes a stable model for understanding economic, social and political relations for any temporally defined period. Major changes in the relationships between some of these institutional forms can result from a crisis in a specific system of capital accumulation that operates at any one specific time; in the *régime d'accumulation*. Crisis involving most or all of the institutional forms can threaten the greater underlying *mode de régulation*, or the “rules of the game” that permit ongoing capital accumulation. Short term crisis that demonstrates the inability of one or two key institutional forms to adapt and respond to the crisis constitutes a crisis in the *mode d'accumulation*. This can spill over into the process of orderly capital accumulation to the point that the whole set of institutions are unable to compensate through institutional compromise and threatens the ongoing viability of the *mode de régulation*. Finally, and as in all Marxian models, a full-blown crisis that cannot be reconciled through institutional adjustment and compromise leading to a new *mode de régulation*, and a productive *mode d'accumulation* can lead to a downfall of the mode of

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<sup>164</sup> Boismenu, Gérard, and Drache, Daniel in Boismenu, Gérard, and Drache, Daniel, eds., *Politique et Régulation: Modèle de Développement et Trajectoire Canadienne*, Montréal, Québec, Méridien, 1990, p. 29. My translation of “La définition stricte de la régulation peut varier selon les auteurs, non seulement pour des raisons sémantiques mais, plus fondamentalement, parce que la désignation des objets n’est pas identique. Cela dit, on parlera généralement (Boyer, 1986, Lepietz, 1984) de mode de régulation pour désigner l’ensemble des procédures, des formes institutionnelles et des normes permettant le reproduction des rapports sociaux fondamentaux dans le cadre d’un régime d’accumulation et assurant la comptabilité des anticipations et des comportements individuels et collectifs avec les principes d’ajustement de l’ensemble du system.”

production itself: the ultimate and inevitable collapse of capitalism. The five institutional forms of *Régulation* theory are:

1. The forms of monetary constraint, or Monetary Regime: “the specific form of the fundamental social relation (of a given country and era) that establishes the merchant subjects...money...is not a particular type of commodity, but a means of establishing relations between the centre of accumulation, wage earners and other merchant subjects.”<sup>165</sup> Money as a “social institution,” and its “defining features (its forms, the modality of its issue, the dynamic of its circulation, the basis of its valuation).”<sup>166</sup>
2. The configuration of what is described as the “wage-labour nexus” or the organisation of work, including the “type of means of production; the social and technical division of labour; the ways in which workers are attracted and retained by the firm; the direct and indirect determinants of wage income; and, lastly, the workers’ way of life, which is more or less closely linked with the acquisition of commodities and the use of collective services outside the market.”<sup>167</sup>
3. The Forms of Competition, or the differences between competitive and monopoly capitalism, and in our present example, initially forms arising out of a feudal mode of production and its transition through a mercantilist phase to full-blown capitalism.
4. The methods of insertion into the international regime, described as the nature of the economic relationship between a state, or sub-state regional economy into the broader national, regional, continental, and now global, economy. During our initial examination, we consider the relationship between Québec, or Lower Canada, and the rest of the colony, thence the Dominion, and again with the United States of America, thence again in our later chapters to a global economic regime.

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<sup>165</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Boyer and Saillard, p. 341, citing *in passim* Boyer (1986).

<sup>166</sup> Guttman, Robert, “Money and Credit in *Régulation* Theory,” in *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>167</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Boyer & Saillard, in *Ibid.* p. 345, citing Boyer (1986).

5. The Forms of the State, described as the “group of institutionalised compromises...[that,]...once they are made, create rules and patterns in the evolution of public spending and revenue, as well as the orientation of regulations.”<sup>168</sup> Initially, Québec and her administrative and government institutions as a colony amongst others held by Great Britain, then as a partner in an evolving federal state, now as one member of a broader partnership that is moving towards a decentralised, potentially asymmetrical federal arrangement.

At first glance, this rather amorphous assembly of broad institutional social building blocks seems unequal to the task of providing a tight analysis of the economy of a specific place and time. However, given that our initial inquiry must first consider the rise of a new institutional form – the labour union – within the constellation of civil society at a time prior to Canadian confederation, follow that institutional form through pre-industrial to industrial economies under competitive capitalism, towards Taylorian and Fordist models of production into a monopoly capital economy, and on to the present post-Fordist economy, it can readily be seen that a broadly flexible model is required.

There are other ideological as well as methodological reasons for permitting such a model to inform our analysis. First and foremost is the fact that examining two apparently diverse sets of collective interests such as those traditionally associated with class and the more broadly inclusive interests of culture or identity demands that we employ terms of reference and understanding familiar to our base set of interests as represented by the union movement. Second, and again related to the reconciling of two very different sets of collective interests, the adoption of such a model should not overly privilege or inform our examination of the two so as to disadvantage an understanding of issues of culture in light of a methodology bound to issues of class. Further, the nature of Marxist theory, and this

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339, citing Boyer, 1986.

extends to the broader canon of Marxian and Neo-Marxian variants, has shown itself to be, or tends to be in the hands of many of its adherents, dogmatic and inflexible, and essentially ignorant or blind to the broader and socially inclusive definition of class that we have been working with thus far. The analytical intent of this work is to avoid being restrictively bound by theory, while the scope of the thing demands an analytical flexibility capable of transcending almost two hundred years of history.

Proponents of *Régulation* have noted the Marxist tendency towards dogmatism, and respond that their model seeks to free itself from such theoretical and analytical constraints.

“Within this context, *régulation* theory succeeded in freeing itself from a dogmatic relationship with Marxism while developing a research programme that is clearly linked with the Marxian project. This intellectual emancipation had a profound impact on methodology and still influences the work of *régulation* today.”<sup>169</sup>

Nadel proceeds to explain that “*régulation* theory has dealt with three key moments in Marx’s programme: the questions of value and money; accumulation and crisis; institutions and the state.”<sup>170</sup> While all three are pertinent to our examination, the latter preoccupation is key to our examination of the rise and evolution of a new institution within civil society; an institution that juxtaposes the interests of the working classes between those of capital, the market – initially local, national, and now global – and the regulatory processes of the state. The *Régulation* model has proven itself equal to the task of explaining the relationship between markets, capital, labour, the state and society in both contemporary and historical frameworks. In particular, Christine André has employed the model to provide an understanding of the different evolutionary paths of the liberal welfare state in France, Germany and Great Britain from the first institutional manifestations of such early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>171</sup> Her examination shows that individual states initiate a series of very different institutional responses to challenges from society in order to preserve and cement political

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<sup>169</sup> Nadel, Henri, “*Régulation* and Marx,” in *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>171</sup> André, Christine, “The Welfare State and Institutional Compromises: From Origins to Contemporary Crisis,” in *Ibid.*, pp. 94 - 100.

legitimacy. Thus, and as illustrated in the following section, changes to the common law making the “combination” of workers actions in support of their collective interests no longer illegal in 1872 constitute an institutional response and compromise by the state affecting a compromise in the *mode de régulation*, or the rules of the game that underwrite ongoing accumulation, and also a concession calculated to maintain and preserve state legitimacy. Similarly, and directly related to our Québec example, the intervention of the Catholic Church into the ongoing organisation of the Québec labour movement early in the last century, as well as the institution in the 1930s of legislation binding together collective agreements in certain sectors and governing their settlement by decree both constitute what *Régulation* would describe as institutional compromises calculated to ensure the orderly progression of capital accumulation as well as the preservation of political legitimacy.

Notwithstanding the centre of our focus on the state and the institutions of civil society as manifest through the labour union movement, there are certain theoretical shortcomings inherent in the *Régulation* approach that are consistent with criticisms of the Marxist Tradition. While the state itself is perhaps *primus inter pares* amongst the five key institutional forms, the greater body of work only recently has tended to cohere around a general theory of the state. Notwithstanding, it is to the role of the state and the context wherein it acts – historical, economic, political and social – that *Régulation* gives an analytical advantage. Further, given that we are examining the evolution of an institution under initially a colonial, then federal arrangement, and that throughout history the relation between French Canada, the coloniser, and with the rest of the federal partnership has been questioned, the shifting role of the state becomes pivotal to our analysis. This becomes even more important when the consistent alternative is the creation of yet another state.

“It is clear that regulationists have up to recently proposed but a provisional and embryonic theory of the state, the latter being described as the totality of a series of institutional compromises concerning certainly wage relations, but also citizen/economy relations, forms of competition, their articulation with the international arena, not forgetting the management of monetary restraint. In the tradition of Nicos Poulantzas, this conception opposes the Monopoly Capitalism theory of the State, in that state forms are submitted to contradictory forces, that do not solely emanate from tensions related to competition between capitalists. In the same way, the State is an active participant in compromises with classes other than those constitutive of capitalism, and it has emerged well before the birth of capitalism.”<sup>172</sup>

Notwithstanding the *caveat* concerning a general theory of the state put forward by the theorists of *Régulation*, the above citation well illustrates how the application of the approach is merited by the historical span that we wish to examine. Clearly, we are interested in examining the rise of a new institutional form and its relationship with the state from a time prior to capitalism, and up unto the present day. The recognition by *Régulation* of the pre-existing role of the state prior to the contemporary mode of production is also consistent with Polanyi’s analytical approach.

A similar harmony of approach with Polanyi as well as other theorists who have contributed to our, hopefully, more complete and nuanced definition of class resides in the fact that *Régulation* ties the wage relationship to the broader social, political and economic contexts.

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<sup>172</sup> *Op. Cit.* Boyer and Drache, p. 18. My translation of “Il est claire que les régulationistes n’ont à ce jour proposé qu’une théorie de l’État, provisoire et embryonnaire : fondamentalement, ce dernier serait la totalisation d’une série de compromis institutionnalisés concernant certes le rapport salariale mais aussi les relations citoyens/économie, les formes de la concurrence, l’articulation avec l’espace international, sans oublier la gestion de la contrainte monétaire. Dans le lignée de Nicos Poulantzas, cette conception s’oppose a la théorie des Capitalismes monopolistes d’État, en ce que les formes étatiques sont soumises à des forces contradictoires, qui n’émanent pas seulement des tensions liées à la concurrence entre capitalistes. De la même façon, l’État et partie prenante dans les compromis avec autres classes que celles constitutive du capitalisme, et il émergé bien antérieurement à la naissance du capitalisme.”

“The originality of these institutional forms resides in the fact that they act as principles of permanent re-socialisation of the economy. They place themselves at the intersection of socio-economic structures and the routines of daily life or, in other terms, at the articulation of the constraining imperatives of the system and of the sphere of norms, roles and incorporated movements that rule over individual and collective behaviours; thus facilitating the regularities that organise the dynamic adjustment of social demand and production.”<sup>173</sup>

Without recourse to further illustration outside of the specific historical context of our examination, the nature of these institutional forms, their connectedness, and the social, political and economic forces that drive compromise within the system shall be more fully introduced and explored within the following introductory historical examination.

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<sup>173</sup> Breton, Gilles, and Levasseur, Carol in *Ibid.* p. 73. My translation of “L’originalité de ces formes institutionnelles réside dans le fait qu’elles agissent comme principe de resocialisation permanente de l’économie. Elles se situent à l’intersection des structures socio-économique et des routines de la vie quotidienne or, en d’autres termes, à l’articulation des impératifs contraignants de la reproduction du système et de la sphère des normes, des rôles et mobiles incorporés venant régir les pratiques individuelles et collectives ; de la sorte, elles façonnent les régularités qui organisent l’ajustement dynamique de la production et de la demande sociale.”



## **Chapter 4**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Historical Period: Institutional Genesis, Evolution and Trajectory**

#### **Embryonic Forms, Rising Class Consciousness, and Early Divisions**

There is a fundamental assumption operative within the contemporary labour union movement in Québec that the collective interests of the working classes would be best served in an independent sovereign state. Notwithstanding a brief period after the Quiet Revolution when a Marxist ideological tendency within the labour union movement called this assumption somewhat into question, and even then the theoretical incompatibility of nationalist and class movements was hardly a dominant theme across the entire movement, there has been a deep and consistent tendency to see the collective needs of the Québec nation and her working classes as essentially, mutually, and symbiotically connected. The roots of these assumptions run deep.

The developmental nature of the Québec economy after the Conquest and throughout the early nineteenth century tended to reinforce the division of labour along cultural and linguistic lines. Bearing in mind that New France had been managed as a resource centre for the extraction of raw materials and that any form of genuine industry beyond that role was discouraged or directly prohibited, it still must be admitted that sufficient artisanal manufacturing required to maintain the needs of the colony was in place by 1760, and that agriculture served the role of feeding the population often otherwise engaged in resource extraction. Pentland warns us of making the easy assumption that Québec was a purely agrarian society when she became an English colony, but notes that her development afterwards drove her French speaking citizens into increasingly agrarian pursuits. What is being described below is the effect of an evolving economic system moving from one mode of production to another at the same time as Lower Canada was shifting from a

monolithically French speaking Catholic society to one divided along linguistic, religious, and cultural lines. These divisions were reinforced somewhat by the division of labour.

“If New France neglected agriculture, French society after 1760 was driven back upon the land. Commerce fell into the hands of newcomers, the fur trade declined, and the artisans and labourers of Lower Canada were drawn in the nineteenth century from British immigrants. The canals and railways of the province were built and operated by others, and the French won only a marginal position in the timber industry...[A] very large proportion of the French population – perhaps 80 per cent – was in agriculture throughout the nineteenth century.”<sup>174</sup>

The shift placed an additional burden upon the already overtaxed seigneurial system; a system already unequal to the task of either developing or sub-dividing new plots in the face of an expanding population. Add to this tendency the fact that the seigneurial system itself was in full blown *economic* collapse by the time of the 1837 rebellion<sup>175</sup>, and the potential for crisis within the underlying *mode d’accumulation* and even within the broader *mode de régulation* becomes significant. Further, the impact becomes greater for the rural French Canadian. The British found the seigneurial system at best confusing, and at worst, incompatible with British legal concepts of unfettered ownership of land. This did not prevent some of them from exploiting the system towards their own interests. English landlords, French  *censitaires*, and a system of inheritance which under the *Coutumes de Paris* gave equal shares of the estate to every legitimate heir in a family, all contributed to the crisis. However, the real problem was the declining economic viability of the system itself.

“The seigneurial system under the British was fraught with trouble on all sides. It had reached a point where it was apparently impossible to satisfy either the seigneurs or the censitaires. Both imagined themselves persecuted, and both were equally misunderstood. The one could not get justice, while the other, if he wished to do so, could not commute his land, and a general dissatisfaction was apparent throughout the Province, which, though not directly, did materially contribute to the general unrest which culminated in the Rebellion of 1837.”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> *In Passim*, Pentland, H. Clare, *Labour and Capital in Canada 1650-1860*, Toronto, James Lorimer & Company, 1981, p. 63. Pentland further informs us that the French population as a per cent of the whole of both Québec City and Montréal actually declined in the early to mid-nineteenth century, and cites Langlois, Georges, *Histoire de la population canadienne-française* (Montréal, 1931), and Goldberg, Simon, “The French-Canadians and the Industrialization of Quebec” (McGill MA thesis, 1940, unpublished) to support his conclusions.

<sup>175</sup> The legal basis of the system was to be definitively eradicated with the passing of the Seigniorial Act of 1854.

<sup>176</sup> Guerin, Thomas, *Feudal Canada : The Story of the Seigneuries of New France*, Montréal, no publisher indicated, 1927, p. 141. Col. Thomas Guerin, OBE, MPP for Montreal-St. Ann’s.

As well as the economic collapse of the seigneurial system, we must also consider how the continued encumbrances of that system tended to keep the *censitaires* tied to the land, and afforded little or no opportunity to engage in the developing home market for any of those held within the system. Ryerson outlines the way the system tended to limit the choices available to those who dwelt within a feudal system under an economy moving slowly but implacably towards a market society.

“The seigneurial concession deeds generally prohibited the *censitaire* from selling marketable timber, sawing deals, or creating any industrial establishment. The effects of these restrictions were two-fold: on the one hand, the *habitant* was kept tethered to the soil, confined to a backward agriculture; on the other, this agriculture itself, based on the primitive self-sufficiency of a natural economy, created a serious obstacle to the creation of a *market* for such industry as was able to develop.”<sup>177</sup>

The above gives nuance to the observations made by Pentland concerning the marginal position held by French Canadians in the lumber trade, and gives a certain proof to their traditional description as “hewers of wood, and drawers of water.” It is one thing to own the mill, quite another to be relegated to cutting and hauling the timber that feeds it as a *journalier*.

Empirical evidence of the impact of the system’s *economic* decline upon rural French Canada is given by Greer, who informs us that “The average moveable wealth (i.e., excluding land that was not assigned a monetary value) recorded in habitant inventories from the parish of Sorel fell from 1,358 livres in the 1790s to 403 livres in the 1830s.”<sup>178</sup> More important to our argument that the division of labour often cleaved along linguistic lines, which in turn affected the evolving nature of Québec’s prototypical labour unions, was the impact that came from the inability of the seigneurial system to provide land for an exploding population. Greer further informs us that the result was a growing population of landless peasants, whose only recourse was to unskilled day labour. “Families of journaliers can be

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<sup>177</sup> Ryerson, Stanley B., *French Canada*, Toronto, Progress Books, 1944, p. 120. The italics are part of the original text.

<sup>178</sup> Greer, Allan, *The Patriots and the People : The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower5 Canada*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1996, p. 38.

found in substantial numbers in the 1831 census of Lower Canada, ranging from 12 per cent of household heads in the District of Québec to 24 per cent of household heads in the Lower Richelieu near Montreal.”<sup>179</sup>

Given the nature of her economic development, and the linguistic division inherent therein, the nature of the labour union movement demonstrated an early tendency to break along linguistic, and thus religious and cultural lines. Two factors stand out upon examining the literature: first, the aforementioned increasingly rural nature of French Québec culture during the first half of the nineteenth century, and second, the corresponding domination of her urban centres by English commerce during the early period of industrial development. Insofar as labour unions tend to first arise around centres of production where labour is both intensively focussed and sufficiently skilled as to hold certain levers against the interests of capital, the above indicates that many of the areas of intense production and corresponding labour union development were dominated by English-speaking workers and English capital. The very nature of economic development in Québec versus Ontario in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century tends to further emphasise the linguistic division of labour. Rouillard, in comparing the number of unions in Québec and Ontario cautions us however that the numbers alone are deceptive, insofar as the size and location of the unions were different in each province.

“[On] average, the number of members for each union in Québec had always been largely greater than those for Ontario. The industrialisation of Québec established itself out of two large cities while in Ontario it came out of many small industrial centres, which had the effect of inflating the number of unions, but with smaller memberships.”<sup>180</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that the demographics indicate that Pentland’s distribution and occupation of the majority of French Canada’s population was correct and thus

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>180</sup> Rouillard, Jacques, *Les Syndicats Nationaux Au Québec de 1900 à 1930*, Québec, Les Presses de l’Université Laval. 1979, p. 19. My translation of “[En] moyenne les effectifs pour chaque syndicat au Québec ont toujours été largement supérieurs à ceux de l’Ontario. L’industrialisation du Québec s’est faite à partir de deux grandes villes alors qu’en Ontario elle venait de nombreux petits centres industriels, ce qui a eu pour effet de gonfler le nombre de syndicats ayant des effectifs restreints.”

predominantly rural in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and tempered by the fact that the beginnings of an urban shift had commenced by the end of that period, early roots and development of both industry and labour unionism appear to have been set in a milieu heavily influenced by English capital and labour. In measuring this argument, some of the literature can be somewhat misleading. Lipton informs us that the Canadian Typographical Union was “Organized at least as far back as 1836, [and that] it grouped both English-speaking and French-Canadian printers.”<sup>181</sup> Other authors offer perhaps a deeper insight into the nature of some of the relations between English and French workers. Rouillard notes that the docks in Québec City were dominated by well organised Irish workers under the umbrella of the Ship Labourers’ Benevolent Society founded in 1857. The relative strength and influence of the Society in advocating for members’ rights and interests is readily demonstrated by two facts: first, that organised capital sought to have the Society’s charter revoked in 1869 because they were a *de facto* union during a time when the same were still technically illegal<sup>182</sup>, and second, that the government refused to act on their request. Cooper dates the pivotal events as occurring subsequent to the granting of incorporation in 1862, and dates the key strike giving rise to capital’s actions as occurring in 1866.<sup>183</sup> Further nuance is given both to the events, and to the underlying issues of division of labour along linguistic lines. Essentially, Cooper informs us that the nature of Québec City’s economy was that there were very few employment opportunities for the kind of unskilled labour given over in ready

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<sup>181</sup> Lipton, Charles, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827 – 1959*, Montréal, Canadian Social Publications Ltd., 1967, p. 21.

<sup>182</sup> Changes to the prevailing laws that saw unions as a form of illegal “combination” or conspiracy only came in 1872. While addressed only in passing here, it has been previously noted that this constitutes an important institutional compromise by the state, and one under *Régulation* theory calculated to modify the *mode de régulation* underpinning ongoing capital accumulation. Such a concession to labour would not have been made unless both accumulation and political legitimacy were not threatened by the application of prevailing laws.

<sup>183</sup> Cooper, J. I., “The Québec Ship Labourer’s Society,” in the *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. XXX, December 1949, p. 340.

supply by the immigrant Irish.<sup>184</sup> We are further informed that the loading of ships was the only kind of labour available to the Irish, being dangerous and given that the work was unpopular with the French Canadians, who had control over the one area of skilled employment: shipbuilding. It was the decline of shipbuilding and the move towards alternative employment by the French Canadians that saw the roots of the conflict described here. The real threat to this early and effective manifestation of organised labour apparently came from within.

“The most serious threat to the union came neither from the government nor from the employers, but from French-Canadian longshoremen who coveted their paid employment. In 1865, the latter founded their own association, the French Ship Labourers’ Society. Soon after, they came to blows with the Irish, but yielded to their numbers. Reassembled under a new association, The Canadian Union of Longshoremen, they offered their services, in 1879, at a dollar less per day than the members of the SLBS and accepted a work day two hours longer.”<sup>185</sup>

Rouillard further informs us that the situation led to bloodshed, marked by thirty injured workers and two deaths subsequent to a clash between the two groups, and that peace was only restored when the SLBS put into place regulations stating that teams of dockworkers would be comprised of equal numbers of French and English-speaking workers.<sup>186</sup> Both the vigour of the Association and its ability to adapt to change are demonstrated by the fact that by the turn of the century it had spawned no less than five branches, and was active well into the 1940s.<sup>187</sup>

Even when economic conflicts of interests leading to clashes of culture could be reconciled by arrangements such as those set out above, equality of treatment, or even

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<sup>184</sup> Note that Greer has previously shown that the number of journalier householders in Québec City was at the low end of the range at 12% in the 1831 census. This was a tight market for unskilled labour.

<sup>185</sup> Rouillard, Jacques, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, Montréal, Les Éditions du Boréal, 1989, p. 19-20. My translation of “La menace la plus sérieuse pour le syndicat ne vient pas du gouvernement ni du patronat, mais des débardeurs canadiens-français qui convoitent leurs emplois rémunérateurs. En 1865, ces derniers fondent leur propre association, la French Ship Labourers’ Society. Peu après, ils en viennent aux coups avec les Irlandais, mais cèdent sous le nombre. Réunis dans une nouvelle association, l’Union canadienne des débardeurs, ils offrent leurs services, en 1879, à un dollar moins par jour que les membres de la SLBS et acceptent de travailler deux heures de plus.”

<sup>186</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Cooper, p. 342-3, he describes the clash in detail, noting that the Irish were sufficiently organised as to barricade themselves into Champlain Street and defend themselves with the aid of cannon.

<sup>187</sup> See Forsey, Eugene, *Trade Unions in Canada: 1812-1902*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1982, p. 16.

representation, could not always satisfy workers in the same trade who spoke different languages. Rouillard offers another example, comparable to the one offered by Lipton, that of typesetters in Montréal who were initially organised under Local 97 of the National Typographical Union, the third “international” union to organise in Québec.

“The Francophones, who seemed ill at ease in this union composed mostly of Anglophones, organised another in 1870, the Jacques-Cartier Typographer’s Union, and secured a charter from the International Union, local 145. In 1877, the executive of the International Union changed its mind: it revoked the charter of the Francophone group and encouraged its members to rejoin the local 97. In exchange, they promised that all documents would be bilingual, that the vice-presidency would be mandated to a Francophone and that the Steering Committee would be comprised of equal representation from the two linguistic groups. Put in place for a period of four years, this arrangement did not satisfy the Francophones who demanded the reinstatement of their old local.”<sup>188</sup>

In theory, issues of identity need not trump shared interests of class, yet consistently in the Québec example they so do. That the above example involved an international union is symptomatic of a broader pattern of preference for autonomous representation exhibited by French Canadian workers. Perhaps this mistrust of external forces and agencies can be traced back to an underlying belief that, notwithstanding the original idea of a partnership between two founding peoples at the heart of French Canada’s conception of confederation, Québec’s workers, her citizens, and the province itself saw themselves from early on to be at a serious disadvantage compared with the other provinces within Confederation. In an examination of a document directly generated by organised labour itself, Rouillard well illustrates the preoccupations of both class and nation marking a statement of principles put forward by the Ville Marie Assembly of the Chevaliers du Travail in November of 1885.

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<sup>188</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, pp. 22-23. My translation of “Les francophones, qui se sentent peu à l’aise dans ce syndicat composé majoritairement d’anglophones, en organisent un autre en 1870, l’Union typographique Jacques-Cartier, et obtiennent une charte de l’Union internationale, section locale 145. En 1877, l’exécutif international se ravise : il révoque la charte du groupe francophone et enjoint ses membres de réintégrer le local 97. En échange, il promet que tous les documents seront bilingue, que le vice-président sera obligatoirement francophone et que le conseil de direction comptera une égale représentation des deux groupes linguistiques. Mise en place pendant quatre ans, cette formule ne satisfait pas les francophones qui réclament le rétablissement de leur ancien syndicat.”

“In the half-century since Canada won her political freedom, the men called to power to guide and direct our country by popular assent, have done nothing to improve the moral and material condition of the working class.

The laws that govern us today, we the workers, the strength of the nation, are almost the same as existed during the regime of royal privilege. They hold us as regards the other provinces of Canada in a state of inferiority that does more to ruin our race than all the crimes that one could commit against us.”<sup>189</sup>

Rouillard states that “This program represents the first synthesis of workers demands.”<sup>190</sup> As important as this document is in showing the early presumed unity of collective interests between Québec’s working classes and the “race” or nation as a whole, it must be noted that the broader political context must have coloured the document at the time of its adoption. Louis Riel was hardly cold in his grave, having lain there for a scant nineteen days since his execution on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, when *La Presse* printed the Assembly’s statement of principles. Indeed, given how conservative an organ as *La Presse* itself was at that time, Felteau acknowledges the degree to which both the paper and Québec society as a whole were caught up in the turmoil of the times.

“During the following weeks, *La Presse* rang with all of the repercussive echoes in the province and the country of the thunderbolt of the 16<sup>th</sup> of November. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of November, only a few days after the assembly of November 22<sup>nd</sup> that brought onto the Champ-de-Mars a crowd of 50,000 persons, *La Presse* published under the heading “Independence” a long editorial that one could mistake, on first glance, with a separatist manifesto.”<sup>191</sup>

What the principles cited above illustrate, along with their timing and the broader socio-political context, is more than the initial assertion of working class demands. These principles and surrounding events mark a response, in the specific example an institutional

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54. Rouillard cites *La Presse* for the date December 5, 1885. My translation of “Depuis un demi-siècle que le Canada a conquis ses libertés politiques, les hommes portés au pouvoir par le suffrage populaire pour guider et diriger notre pays, n’ont rien fait pour améliorer les conditions morales et matérielles de la class des travailleurs. Les lois qui nous régissent aujourd’hui, nous les travailleurs, la force même de la nation, sont à peu près les mêmes qui existaient sous le régime du bon plaisir. Elles nous tiennent vis-à-vis des autres provinces du Canada dans un état d’infériorité qui fait plus pour ruiner notre race que tous les crimes que l’on peut commettre contre elle.”

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54, my translation of “Ce programme représente la première synthèse des réclamations des travailleurs.”

<sup>191</sup> Felteau, Cyrille, *Histoire de La Presse Tome I Le Livre du Peuple 1884-1916*, Montréal, Les Éditions La Presse Ltée 1984, p. 164. My translation of “Pendent des semaines encore, *La Presse* résonne de tous les échos répercutés dans la province et le pays par le coup de tonnerre du 16 novembre. Le 27 novembre, soit quelques jours seulement après l’assemblée du 22 novembre qui réunit sur le Champ-de-Mars une foule de 50 000 personnes, *La Presse* publie, sous le titre « L’indépendance », un long éditorial que l’on pourrait confondre, à première vue, avec un manifeste séparatiste.”



response, to the perceived belief that French Canada, and her workers, suffer at the hands of the dominant culture; English Canadian culture. To fully comprehend the immediate and presumed synthesis of the combined interests of class and nation that marks the Québec example from the beginning: historical, cultural, linguistic; the entire social, economic and political context must be considered. The whole is inextricably bound up in the institutions of Québec and Canadian society, both civil and political, and it is to the relationship between those institutions that *Régulation* theory turns our attention. The labour union movement in Québec did not evolve in isolation of any of these important factors. Indeed, the broader understanding of the labour union movement as an institution embedded within civil society, with all of the constraints and limitations incumbent upon such, demands that all of these factors be considered.

By way of further example, the inextricable connectedness of each and every one of these factors within the broader cultural milieu may be well illustrated by returning to the specific cases offered above, those of the Chevaliers du travail, the Union typographique Jacques-Cartier, and the Ship Labourers' Benevolent Society. All were at one time or another criticised by the Catholic Church. The Typographers earned the ire of Bishop Bourget in 1873 who aimed at its members "the blow of interdiction for "unjust and reprehensible actions" such as going out on strike and demanding a closed union shop with mandatory subscription."<sup>192</sup> The Chevaliers du travail and the Knights of St. Crispin (lodges of shoemakers and cobblers that separated early on from the Knights of Labour) were both suspicious in the eyes of the Catholic Church for their foreign origins, and a distinctly Masonic tendency towards secrecy and the swearing of oaths. The attitude of the Catholic Church in Québec towards trade unions was only to change direction subsequent to the penning of *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII early in 1891, which under the rubric of its

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<sup>192</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, p. 23, my translation of "le frappe d'interdiction pour avoir posé « des gestes injustes et répréhensibles », comme de se mettre en grève et d'exiger l'atelier syndical, c'est-à-dire l'obligation pour les travailleurs de faire partie du syndicat."

sub-title “Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour” and related content constituted a response by the Church to the rise of socialism, and the very real excesses of industrial capitalism. The inclination to collaborate with rather than criticise Québec’s unions was further driven by the Church’s increasing suspicion of the so-called “international” unions, and their influence on Québec society and her workers. While Rouillard and Forsey<sup>193</sup> both remind us that the first international unions to arrive on Québec soil in 1853 were of British origin, it was very soon after that international unions in the American mould made entry into Canada. Their ideological tendencies, their fiercely competitive and intolerant relationship with local, independent and unaffiliated unions already in place on Canadian and Québec soil, and their seeming insensitivity towards French Canadian workers’ need for a certain political and linguistic autonomy all contributed to a backlash amongst the workers, the Catholic Church, and even some representatives of local capital. As we shall see, this subsequently did much to influence the nature of the Québec union movement, providing it with a greater autonomy and political latitude than is usually afforded to international unions.

### **The Broad Relationship Between the Economy and Québec’s Working Classes**

Issues related to the nature of the developing Québec economy and how that evolution affected the division of labour are only part of the broader economic patterns themselves. Lipton reminds us that “As capitalist industry grew, the wage-earning class, or working class emerged. The process was slow.”<sup>194</sup> The fortunes and collective force of the new working classes was and is directly related to economic cycles and the nature of capitalist production. As a consequence, the nature and rate of “unionisation” has a tendency to reflect economic cycles, with expansion of membership in a hot economy and a slowed rate of growth, or even decline, during difficult economic times. Economic downturns signal

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<sup>193</sup> See Forsey, Eugene, *The Canadian Labour Movement, 1812 – 1902*, Ottawa, The Canadian Historical Association, 1974, p. 4.

<sup>194</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Lipton, p. 1.

a crisis in the *mode d'accumulation*, and beg institutional responses and compromises in order to restore stable capital accumulation.

Divisions along linguistic lines between Lower Canada's French dominated Administrative Assembly and her English dominated Administrative Council gave rise to some degree to the Rebellion of 1837, the subsequent unification of the Canada's constituted an institutional response by the state. Behind these events, there was the compounding factor of a major economic crisis in the United States that had a profound impact on the economies of Upper and Lower Canada.<sup>195</sup> Other institutional accommodations within the wage-labour nexus can and did include reduced salaries, as labour, notwithstanding its status as a "false commodity" as illustrated by Polanyi, sees a reduction in demand. Yet even in difficult times, the skilled and organised workers fared better than the rest. These general statements illustrate the affect of the economic cycle on both Québec's labour union movement and her two linguistic groups. If English workers and capital were initially more urban centred and preoccupied with the growth of manufacturing and industrial capitalism while Québec's French speaking workers remained, at least in the earlier period, essentially rural and "unskilled" in the trades, crafts and abilities that made skilled workers more competitive, and thus harder to replace, then difficult economic times would affect each group differently. As a consequence, trade or craft unions, organising around strictly defined competencies were generally to the advantage of the former group, while a broader industrial type union organising both skilled and unskilled in a specific industry or manufacturing concern worked to the advantage of the latter group. This cultural and linguistic division of labour was not and is not unique to Québec. Michels notes a similar trend observed by a contemporaneous European source.

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<sup>195</sup> See *Op. Cit.* Greer, p. 21.

“The kind of work, the rate of wages, differences of race and climate, produce numerous shades of difference alike in the mode of life and in the tastes of the workers. As early as 1860 it was said: “Among the workers there are many categories and an aristocratic stratification. Printers take the lead; ragpickers, scavengers, and sewer-men close the line.” Between the compositor and the casual laborer in the same country there exist differences in respect of culture and of social and economic status more pronounced than those between the compositor in one country and the small manufacturer in another. The discrepancy between the different categories of workers is plainly displayed even in the trade-union movement.”<sup>196</sup>

Moreover, the evolving nature of capitalist production itself during this phase had a direct affect upon the labour market, and the working classes’ ability to leverage their skills in exchange for better wages. Consider that the earliest period showed a transition from essentially a feudal economy<sup>197</sup> after the Conquest through a mercantilist phase and to a slowly, but intractably evolving economy built on competitive capitalism. Skills identified with the earlier period are less saleable in the latter, and the skills that are increasingly in demand in the latter period are more competitively saleable in an environment of *competitive* capitalism than under the *monopoly* capitalistic mode of production marking Québec’s economy one hundred years later. We are speaking initially of a wholesale change in the mode of production, and between the middle and latter periods of our broader examination, an entirely separate form of capitalist relations. These changes go directly to what *Régulation* describes as the wage-labour nexus, containing forms of production, the actual organising of work, the way workers are engaged, paid, and the social and technical division of labour. Simple issues that we take for granted such as monetary compensation in specie for labour

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<sup>196</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Michels, p. 272. Michels cites and translates from About, Edmond, *Le Progrès*, Paris, Hachette, 1864, pp. 51-2, as well as inviting the reader to compare his observations with those of Hermann Herkner delivered to the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* held in Nuremberg in 1911 (*Protokoll*, pp. 12 et. Seq.).

<sup>197</sup> Lipton has already cautioned that the transition and resulting emergence of the new working classes was a slow process. Both the nature of Québec’s economy entering the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the enduring nature of some of the trappings of the old economy can be illustrated by examining the demands annexed to the Statement of Principles authored by the Chevaliers du travail as late as 1885, and cited above. Under the fourth and final table of demands entitled “Political Rights” can be found under item 2., the abolition of “La Corvée,” or debt/obligation of manual labour addenda to rents or other contracts. See *op. cit.*, Rouillard, p. 55. See also Harris, Richard Colebrook, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada: A Geographical Study*, Québec, Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1968, p. 69. Harris shows that the application of La Corvée in Québec hearkened to practices discontinued in France, and in the form used here, abandoned hundreds of years before. On the other hand, Guerin says that by 1845 “the ‘Corvée’... had not existed for years.” See *Op. Cit.* Guerin, p. 152. The confusion goes towards explaining how the *social* forms of the seigneurial system in many ways prevailed well into the century even if the *economic* foundations were eliminated in law by mid-century.

were very different in these earlier periods. Some employers paid their workers in script, and the workers could then exchange script for goods, all at the employers rate of exchange. If they wanted currency, they often had to travel to the employer's office to make the exchange, thus incurring costs and loss of time.

By way of illustration of the relative strength and fortunes of skilled and unskilled labour, consider the outcome of the 1876 railroad strike as put forward again by Rouillard. The decade of the 1870s saw an economic recession in both Europe and North America. The Grand Trunk Railway decided to cut wages by 10% subsequent to the economic crisis of 1873, and tried to break the monopoly that the engineers held over their work by introducing a new category of worker. Notwithstanding the potential impact of these changes, the strength of the Brotherhood of Railway Engineers (Local 89) was sufficiently great as to force the Railway to back down. The effect:

“The final agreement constituted a victory for the unionised workers. The new contract eliminated the new category of mechanics, re-established the salary echelons of 1875, allowed a reduction of personnel but only by taking into account years of service, set a procedure for promotions and grievances, and forced the company to withdraw arrest warrants against certain strikers. The non-unionised employees of the business saw salary reductions and job cuts...The success of a work-stoppage during this period is proportional to the difficulty of the employers to recruit scabs.”<sup>198</sup>

We are witnessing the birth of a new institutional form – the labour union – as both an *effect* of the change to a new mode of production - competitive industrial capitalism – and as a *cause* of a widening economic gap between skilled and unskilled labour. As Michels describes it:

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<sup>198</sup> *Op. Cit.*, and *In Passim*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, pp. 36-7. My translation of “L’entente finale constitue une victoire complète pour les syndiqués. Le nouveau contrat élimine la nouvelle catégorie de mécaniciens, rétablit le niveau de salaire de 1875, permet une réduction du personnel mais en tenant compte des années de service, fixe une procédure de promotion et de grief, et force la compagnie à retirer les mandats d’arrêt contre certains grévistes. Les employés non syndiqués de l’entreprise connaissent, eux, réductions de salaire et mises à pied...Le succès d’un arrêt de travail à cette époque est proportionnel à la difficulté pour les patrons de recruter des briseurs de grève. ”

“The difference between skilled and unskilled workers is primarily and predominantly economic, and always displays itself in a difference of working conditions. As time passes, this difference becomes transformed into a veritable class distinction. The skilled and better paid workers hold aloof from the unskilled and worse paid workers. The former are always organized, while the latter remain “free” laborers; and the fierce economic and social struggles which occur between the two groups constitute one of the most interesting phenomena of modern social history.”<sup>199</sup>

This same economic crisis hit Canada in 1874, a full year after it broke out in the United States. Bettina Bradbury informs us that in good times skilled metal workers could easily earn double the rate of pay of a day labourer, but that even skilled workers could be placed in economic peril depending on the depth of the crisis and the nature of their employment.

“Even within trades the pattern of seasonal unemployment varied. Among moulders, those working in the fabrication of machines, metal work for bridges, or type founding lost only a few days a year, while those making stoves worked generally for only nine months.”<sup>200</sup>

The evolving nature of industrial production valorised some skills over others, and changes in the economic cycle made for precarious employment even amongst those blessed with saleable skills. These factors in and of themselves tended to affect both the social division of labour along linguistic lines, and the different nature of labour union development between the two linguistic groups in Québec.

This is not to imply that the phenomenon of the Québec labour union is purely a function of the full-blown presence of industrial monopoly capitalism, nor that this phenomenon was purely, exclusively, or even predominantly driven by English capital and English speaking workers. If we examine the form and nature of some of the earliest “trade unions” in this Québec example, we can see two interesting characteristics: first, that they couch their forms, as in some of the examples already offered, as “benevolent societies,” “lodges,” or “mutual aid associations,” and second that they tend to arise around what were

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<sup>199</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Michels, p. 273.

<sup>200</sup> Bradbury, Bettina, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1993, p. 88.

under the earlier mode of production, guild or artisanal labour and production.<sup>201</sup> If we consider, Pentland notwithstanding, that these forms of production already existed when New France became Lower Canada, and thence Québec, and that the population remained predominantly French, then we must assume that these early institutional forms demonstrated a strong or even majority membership of Francophones. Consider that the population of New France was 70,000 souls in 1760, while the reported population of all of Canada was reported as 90,000 fifteen years later in 1775. While the population of all of Nova Scotia, P.E.I., and New Brunswick was reported as 78,880 in 1763, that figure includes all the French speaking population of Acadia, still substantial notwithstanding the effects of the Great Expulsion of 1755-63. The population reported for Nova Scotia alone, and aside from this broader territory was reported as 12,998 in 1764, and the entire population of Upper and Lower Canada was reported as 430,000 by 1814.<sup>202</sup> Clearly, both linguistic groups saw a tremendous surge in population by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The implications of the demographics, the evolving nature of the economy and the corresponding trends in the division of labour between Québec's French and English speaking workers had influenced, and in many ways continues to affect, the nature and distribution of union affiliation and composition. There is a corresponding difference in the nature of the evolution and form of Québec's unions that is quite different from the evolution of the movement in the rest of Canada and the United States. These differences mark the Québec labour union movement from its very beginnings and are the foundation for the movement in its contemporary forms. Similarly, and as introduced earlier and throughout this

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<sup>201</sup> We refer here to proto-institutional forms such as the *Tailor's Benevolent Society* formed in 1823 in Montreal, the *Assemblée des compagnons imprimeurs* founded in Montreal on July 28, 1824, the *Association des compagnons typographes* founded in Québec City in 1827, and the *Loge de tailleurs de vêtements* founded in Montreal in 1830. See *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, CSN-CEQ, Beauceville, Québec, 1979.

<sup>202</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, downloaded from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/98-187-x/4151287-eng.htm>, on 28/5/2009. Greer states that "The province's population rose from 161,000 in 1790 to over 500,000 by 1831; only a small portion of this growth took place in the cities." See *Op. Cit.*, Greer, p. 25. He does not cite his sources for these figures, nor for the comment on distribution.

examination of the earliest of periods, the nature of the movement is, and always has been heavily marked by the combined interests of class and identity.

### **Early Tendencies: “International” Unions, Trades, and Industrial Unions**

The powerful autonomy that Québec’s unions demonstrate today in their active support for political sovereignty results directly from the early development of the movement. A series of events, choices, and social responses to tendencies in the early movement effectively created conditions that gave Québec’s central organising bodies that were either national and autonomous by their nature, or if organisationally tied to other “international” bodies, they retained sufficient political autonomy as to keep them free to support such a radical political program as sovereignty for Québec. There are a number of factors related to this early developmental phase that conspired to produce the contemporary form of the movement in Québec. Among these we can count a distinct tendency or preference for institutions that afforded them greater autonomy, and this often under an industrial model rather than the trade union orientation preferred by “international” unions. Add to this the reaction of the Catholic Church to the influence of international unions, and a certain fear of the growing influence of external forces on Québec society; the above all leading to the rise of strong national unions, *centrales* or confederations early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The organisation of labour into watertight associations identified with a specific set of skills, such as carpenters, plumbers, typographers, or mechanics, can be seen as a natural consequence of earlier guild forms of organisation that included skill sets valued under that earlier mode of production: cobblers, tailors, silver and goldsmiths, stonecutters and masons, shipwrights and the like. Institutional forms do not spring forth fully formed as from the brow of Zeus, but rather tend to adopt and adapt pre-existing models. Trade unions under the



mode of production that we identify as competitive industrial capitalism are in many ways contemporaneous manifestations of similar but earlier models. Where skills are in high demand, and the supply of that labour strictly controlled through guilds or trade unions, a significant lever is placed in the hands of those who control the supply. Key to the success of trade unions is that they must have total effective control over the supply of that particular form of labour. While a trade union controls only those with a specific set of skills, where those skills are indispensable to ongoing general production, the withdrawal of those specific skills will ultimately close all production that is dependent upon them. Thus, mechanics are indispensable to the running of railroads, typographers are indispensable to the printing of newspapers, and carpenters are indispensable to all forms of construction. Note that in our contemporary mode of production, the latter two examples may no longer be operative. Recall as well, the declining fortunes of Québec City's skilled shipwrights and carpenters as offered by Cooper. This is illustrative of what was earlier alluded to: changing modes of production, or even changes within a specific *mode d'accumulation* can rapidly valorise some skills while devaluing others previously indispensable to production. This in turn produces a change in the wage-labour nexus; an institutional compromise calculated to restore effective capital accumulation.

International unions, in the American mould, demonstrated early on a preference for organising workers into closely associated trade unions, and showed a disdain for the kind of industrial union structure that sought to organise all workers in a specific area of production, be it across an entire industry, or a specific manufacturing concern. Yet we can see that Québec's working classes early on demonstrated a realisation that by factory or by industry they shared a language and a culture even if they did not always share a trade. And where they did share a trade, they still sought to organise themselves so as to share language.

In pursuing the combined interests of the working class and French-Canadian culture, Québec's workers have always sought to retain a certain control over their institutions. In so doing, they tend to gravitate to those institutions and institutional forms that grant them the greatest autonomy. It has previously been noted in passing that by the 1870s the third international union had made inroads onto Québec soil. In fact, Eugene Forsey informs us that by 1890, there were 30 international unions in the province.<sup>203</sup> These numbers were to soar to 74 in 1901.<sup>204</sup> Yet this growth came partially from the decline of another union group that also had an international origin, in the sense that the Chevaliers du travail originated in the United States as the Knights of Labour, as did almost all of the other self-titled international unions. Unlike the international unions associated with the American Federation of Labour (AFL), the Chevaliers tended to organise along an industrial model but on occasion would organise within a trade or across a community. Their very approach and presence was anathema to the trade union approach employed by the AFL, partially because it eroded their monopoly control of certain trades. The Chevaliers had a marked success in Québec, and even after their general decline elsewhere, maintained a presence here. Rouillard tells us why.

“The Knights initiated an assembly in the district of Montréal in 1885 and in Québec City in 1890. Francophones obtained in 1889 the sub-division of the Montréal body into two parts, according to the language spoken by the members. As this division shows, the Knights made marked progress in the French-Canadian milieu...Although in theory the Order had a very centralised structure, each assembly actually enjoyed a great degree of autonomy, That is why, according to one leader of the Knights, The Québécois felt quite at ease within the Order, even if the movement had foreign roots.”<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Forsey, Eugene, *Trade Unions in Canada: 1812-1902*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1982, p. 508.

<sup>204</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, p. 88. Rouillard cites as his source *La Gazette du Travail*, Sept. 1901 to March 1902.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* and *In Passim*, p. 41. My translation of “Les Chevaliers mettent sur pied une assemblée de district à Montréal en 1885 et à Québec en 1890. Les francophones obtiennent en 1889 qu'on subdivise celle de Montréal en deux sections, selon la langue utilisée par les membres. Comme cette division l'atteste, les Chevaliers font des progrès marqués en milieu canadien-français... Bien qu'en théorie l'Ordre ait une structure très centralisée, chaque assemblée jouit en réalité d'une large autonomie. C'est pourquoi, selon un dirigeant des Chevaliers, les Québécois se sentent très à l'aise à l'intérieur de l'Ordre, même si le mouvement est d'origine étrangère ” Rouillard identifies the spokesperson for the Chevaliers in Quebec as Alfred Marois as communicated to Alfred Charpentier in a letter dated April 1917. See Rouillard, Jacques, *Les Syndicats Nationaux Au Québec de 1900 à 1930*, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval. 1979, p. 16.

Clearly, where autonomy could be maintained while representation and organisation of workers' interests was effective, Québec's French-speaking workers chose the institutional form that most readily gave them both. That autonomy was probably even greater than it might have been, given that the Knights were under full-blown attack by the AFL in their home country and had little time or resources left over to keep a tight rein on local assemblies in Canada. Rouillard notes that there was a very centralised orientation to the Knights of Labour. Notwithstanding the relative autonomy left to the Québec Assemblies, there was a certain ambivalence expressed towards the French-Canadians by T. V. Powderly, the fraternity's leader and founder. Lipton notes this and cites Powderly directly:

“There are so many anarchists in Canada, they have reason to be suspicious. The French are much harder to manage than other people. We have some anarchists in the United States, but not of the dangerous class. The French are of a very different temperament. We can take our people and pack them in a solid mass from one end of Market Street to the other and there will be no horror. But take an equal number of Frenchmen, and the result will be serious.”<sup>206</sup>

A similar misunderstanding of both the needs and nature of Québec's French speaking workers may readily be found amongst the international unions. Yet, cultural rhetoric aside, and looking at the preferences of Québec's Francophone workers in choosing organising bodies, the issue is less attitude or structure than autonomy, freely given or otherwise obtained. The numbers show the preferences of Québec's workers. Rouillard informs us that in 1887 there were 45 assemblies of the Chevaliers du Travail in Québec, 29 in Montréal, and even after their rapid decline, precipitated by the actions of the international unions organised under the AFL, there remained 30 assemblies in the province until 1895.

In addition to affording a superior autonomy to Québec's workers, there was a certain ideological chord within the movement that resonates with the social projects of the CSN in the 1960s and the unity of interests that made the Front Commun of the early 1970s.

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<sup>206</sup> Lipton cites a communication from T. V. Powderly, and offers as his source Chan, Victor O., *The Canadian Knights of Labour, with special reference to the 1880s*, M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1949, in *Op. Cit.*, Lipton, p. 69.

“Unlike the international unions, the Knights of Labour did not have as their main objective an improvement of the material condition of the workers through the negotiation of collective labour agreements. Their project, more ambitious, counted on the solidarity of all workers to accomplish the total reform of industrial society. This reform, this “revolution” one must say, included no less than the abolition of salaried employment and the creation of a new society founded on cooperative principles and property ownership limited to smallholding.”<sup>207</sup>

This marks the first attempt to link unionism with a broader social project in Québec. That such should have struck a resonance with Québec’s workers then as more recently is no coincidence. Both identity and class are socially constructed. Where there is perception that both sets of collective interests are threatened from without, the reaction is to seize and affirm collective autonomy from within. The goal of preserving both united sets of interests becomes a formal social project.

The principles put forward by the Chevaliers du travail is reminiscent of an earlier Utopian socialist tradition arising in the early 1800s in Great Britain, and as notably put forward by Robert Owen. While not born of such a revolutionary tradition as Marxism, it does attack some of the underlying assumptions of capitalist property relations and when put forward by the Chevaliers du travail, it was also perceived as a radical external threat by the Catholic Church. Rouillard also addresses certain theories on why, beyond the autonomy afforded by the Chevaliers du travail, the platform of the group should strike such a resonant chord in Québec. Again, we are directed to the different nature of the Québec economy in comparison with that of Ontario.

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<sup>207</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, pp. 41-2. My translation of “Contrairement aux syndicats internationaux, les Chevaliers du travail n’ont pas comme objectif prioritaire l’amélioration des conditions matérielles des travailleurs par la négociation de contrats collectifs de travail. Leur projet, plus ambitieux, compte sur la solidarité de tous les travailleurs pour accomplir une réforme complète de la société industrielle. Cette réforme, cette « révolution » devrait-on dire, comprend rien de moins que l’abolition du salariat et l’établissement d’une société nouvelle fondée sur coopération et la petite propriété.”

“Briefly recall that the lesser degree of industrialisation and the differences in industrial structure between Ontario and Québec (industrial manufacturing based on the production of consumer goods) were other important explanatory elements. The Knights character of global reform and their conservatism on the level of tactics well illustrate the ideology of workers organisations when they first begin to feel the effects of industrialisation.”<sup>208</sup>

There are more factors at play here than just those, may they be ideological or structural, that attracted Québec workers to the Chevaliers du travail. There are those that disinclined Québec workers, and even its employers from engaging the international unions. First off, and consistent with the desire for both autonomy and freedom of expression within a French-speaking milieu, was the inability or lack of inclination of the international unions to initially comprehend the importance of the French language to Québec’s workers. Second, is the nature of Québec’s economy. Being more geared to the production of consumer goods than heavy industry, and seeing much of her production and consumption contained within local markets, the economic ties to American trade were less than in Ontario, where the nature of production, the potential mobility of skilled tradespersons holding a union card, and a dependency on the American market made international unions a more logical choice. A third point might well be tied to the observations made by Rouillard earlier. Québec may have had fewer unions than Ontario, but they were larger and more geographically centralised in her two largest cities. Further, and this is a truism that operates even today. Small isolated groups of workers opt for the protection and resources afforded by larger organising bodies, often in the form of international unions. The group becomes but a “local”

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<sup>208</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec, 1900-1930*, p. 17. My translation of “Rappelons brièvement que le degré moindre d’industrialisation et la différence de structure industrielle entre Ontario et le Québec (industrie manufacturière axe sur la production de biens de consommation) sont d’autres éléments valable d’explication. Le caractère de réformisme global des Chevaliers et leur conservatisme au niveau des moyens d’action illustrent bien l’idéologie des organisations ouvrières lorsqu’elles commencent à subir les effets d’industrialisation.” Rouillard alludes to Grob, Gerald N., *Workers and Utopia: A Study of Ideological Conflict in the American Labour Movement: 1865-1900*, Evanston Il., Northwestern University Press, 1961. Rouillard, reading Grob, notes that utopian movements were often retrospective, seeking to re-establish earlier social relations and divisions of labour. This theory affords greater interest here as much of the contemporary literature examines the benefits and shortcomings of a view of Québec history that remains focussed on her past. Further, retrospective movements such as Church sponsored ‘return to the land’ policies right up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century mark Québec’s history.

of the larger body, and has far more limited influence as a result, ergo: less autonomy. Larger groups of workers can possess the resources, both financial and human, to stand alone. The advantages are obvious where you are a major force in a local market: you retain your political autonomy and restrict your struggles to the issues at hand; issues that often are of local origin and are best reconciled at that level.

### **The Foundation is Set: Class, Identity, National Perception and Preservation**

A series of fundamental conclusions arise from this initial examination of the roots of the Québec union movement. Clearly, the presumed natural unity of collective interests of class and identity is not a recent manifestation. It is not a function or product of the increasingly radical project of separatist nationalism that broke out of the Quiet Revolution. Indeed, and as we shall see in the next section examining the rise of the national and Catholic unions in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Québec union movement demonstrated a distinct nationalist orientation from rather early on. Yet this was a conservative pan-Canadian nationalism in the style of proponents such as Henri Bourassa. One calculated to protect the interests of French Canada as one half of a national partnership. And this model would hold as long as the parties adhered to, or purported to adhere to a “two nations” concept where Québec, or more broadly French Canada, felt that she was one half of the partnership. Broad demographic trends, and the development of the rest of Canada produced conditions that, outside of Québec, increasingly called that model into question. In some ways, these changes – exogenous to the province of Québec, yet endogenous to Canada as a whole – prompted an internal shift in the nature of French Canadian nationalism, most particularly within Québec, but also to some degree in other areas where French Canadian demographics retained a sufficient critical mass so as to preserve a viable ongoing cultural community, such as in Acadian New Brunswick.

What also seems to come out of an examination of the history of struggles throughout this early developmental period is an understanding that the process of organising the collective interests of class and identity by its very nature tends to build class and national consciousness in a symbiotic fashion. There is no evidence that the needs of the latter preclude the rise of the former. This symbiosis produces a sum that is greater than its component parts. Forging the interests of class and identity tends to drive organisation and collective goals into broader social projects than the simple leveraging of labour's power for a better sharing of the wealth. The latter approach summarises the ideological position of the international unions as conceived by leaders such as Samuel Gompers, and was clearly differentiated from the ideological position of groups like the Chevaliers du travail.<sup>209</sup>

The roots of the collective self-perception of the French Canadians predates the conquest, the rise of capitalism, labour unionism, and Canadian confederation. This statement is not made to spark a primordialist argument for the rise of Québécois nationalism, nor for the conception of a Québécois "nation." What the invocation of those four events does do is remind us that the process of "othering" that has built what Hugh McLennan dubbed the "two solitudes" both predates, and is inextricably bound up with, the building of a sense of collective self that is perceived as being oppressed along the lines of both class and identity. Key events that mark the collective perception of a threat to identity and material interests tend to act as a crucible wherein the two meld into one. Reflect upon the wording of the statement of principles put forward by the Ville Marie Assembly of the Chevaliers du travail cited earlier in light of the larger political context of the day.

Where the collective perception is that the threat is from without, then the natural reaction is to seize whatever control and autonomy may be obtained from within. That may include accessing existing institutions that respond to the collective needs, or building new

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<sup>209</sup> Gramsci says of the collaborationist approach of the international unions under the leadership of Samuel Gompers that "No other organization has ever stooped to the level of abjection and counter-revolutionary servility reached by Gompers organization." See *Op. Cit.*, Gramsci, p. 251.

ones along the lines of existing models, but more responsive to broader priorities. This early examination shows that, where available and accessible, Québec's working classes would adopt, and adapt institutional forms that were more responsive to the combined interests of class and identity. The next period illustrates another developmental phase. That which could not be adopted or adapted, must be constructed, and the building of Québec's national and Catholic unions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century constitutes a collective social, cultural and economic response that heavily influenced the contemporary union movement, and ultimately endowed it with a far greater political autonomy than might have been obtained under a purely "international" model. In examining the evolution of those institutional forms, issues related to dominant culture must be examined, as well as those of elite response to the burgeoning union movement. Imbued throughout subsequent periods is the issue of competing ideologies: rising socialism, Catholic social policy, entrenched social and political conservatism, and advancing liberalism. Unions born of working class struggle were to encounter and address elite responses be they social, cultural, or political. Having survived their birth and early development, unions become one new bright star in the broad constellation of embedded social institutions within Québec's civil society. From creation in the first phase we now must consider integration in the second phase.



## Chapter 5

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Historical Period: A Dialectic Between Society, Class and External Forces

#### **From the Adoption and Adaptation of Institutional forms to their Construction**

As noted previously, Québec's working classes initially adopted institutional forms of class representation that had models analogous to existing local social institutions. As such, these prototypical class institutions had roots and forms consistent with the contemporary and historical context of Québec society. Their division along lines of language was *ad hoc* and these conditions were locally constructed not externally imposed, even if the shift in mode of production and demographics were exogenous to the society. The necessity of such a linguistic division was a natural consequence of the change in Québec's colonial status post 1760, and was compounded by the cultural and linguistic division of labour discussed earlier.

Later incursions into Québec society by international unions seeking to compete with local and national institutional structures already in place necessitated a further adaptation by Québec's organised working classes to institutional forms externally conceived without any of the linguistic considerations incumbent upon local institutions.<sup>210</sup> To take a Gramscian perspective, the institutional forms adopted and adapted were solidly constructed on the historical bloc upon which Québec society was founded. Obviously, issues of language were non-existent for Québec's Anglophone workers who, as shown, were more heavily concentrated in the skilled and organised trades. Nevertheless, the broader organisational foundations and superior resources that the international unions brought to Québec were

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<sup>210</sup> Recall that Rouillard and Forsey agree on the date of the first international union, one of British origin in 1853. This is expanded upon by Logan, H. A. *Trade Unions in Canada*, New York, The MacMillan Company, 1948, p. 29. Rouillard further informs us that the first international union of American origin arrived in 1861. "The first union to establish ties to an "American" federation was composed of patternmakers from the city of Montréal who, in 1861, decided to join the ranks of the National Union of Patternmakers and became, by affiliation with a Canadian union, the International Union of Patternmakers." My translation of: "Le premier syndicat à établir des liens avec une fédération « américain » se composait de mouleurs de la ville de Montréal qui, en 1861, décidaient de joindre le rangs de l'Union nationale des mouleurs qui devenait, de par l'affiliation d'un syndicat canadien, l'Union internationale des mouleurs." See *op. cit.*, Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec, 1900-1931*, p. 18. Rouillard offers as subsequent examples the typographers, shoemakers, and railway engineers who joined international – read American – unions in 1867.

certainly attractive to the collective interests of all of her working classes regardless of language. For Québec's francophone workers however, these class interests were powerfully qualified by cultural and linguistic issues; the important collective interests of shared identity that demand recognition within the context of class representation. Towards the satisfaction and reconciliation of those combined sets of interests, Québec's francophone workers made collective choices that gave them what they believed to be the better, if not the best, of both worlds. Yet, and in light of the discussion thus far, it should be clear that these active choices were made to a passive condition. Until very late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the international unions were either insensitive or, at best oblivious to the importance of language to Québec's francophone working classes. The success of the Knights of Labour within Québec had been made in spite of the overtly suspicious and "racist" position of that movement's founder and leader concerning the representation of francophones, and was more attributable to the directional vacuum that came from the Knights' losing battle with the AFL for labour supremacy in the United States. The ascendancy of the AFL subsequent to the erosion and ultimate disappearance of the Knights of Labour led to a tremendous growth in the number of international unions within Canada and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in Québec. Yet, their initial and ongoing insensitivity to the importance of language within the province's labour market muted the expansion of the AFL's "international" unions here.

"Differences of language and culture rendered the Québécois less permeable to North-American influences... The linguistic barrier had, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, constituted a certain hindrance to the expansion of the international federations. Their organisers being for the most part unilingual Anglophones, they rarely ventured anywhere in the province outside of Montréal."<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, and *In Passim*, p. 20. My translation of "[L]a différence de langue et de culture rendait les Québécois moins perméables aux influences nord-américaines... [L]a barrière linguistique a, au début du XX<sup>e</sup>, constitué une entrave certaine à l'expansion des fédérations internationales. Leurs organisateurs étant pour la plupart unilingues anglais, ils se sont rarement aventurés en province à l'extérieur de Montréal." Rouillard readily admits the impediment, but also acknowledges the degree to which it is difficult to evaluate the impact: "The obstacle created by language and culture is a factor difficult to evaluate, but it certainly represents a less than negligible explanatory element." My translation of "L'obstacle créé par la langue et la culture est un facteur difficile à évaluer, mais il représente certes un élément d'explication non négligeable." P. 20.

Still, this relative explosion of growth nationally, and to a more limited fashion in Québec, combined with their foreign origin sparked an institutional response from Québec's working classes, the Catholic church, and to a certain extent Québec capital.

We cannot conceive that the dynamics of expression of class interests in response to a diversity of institutional forms and choices as a kind of dialectic at this point in time. As stated above, active class choices were made to the essentially passive condition of international structures conceived without any consideration for the importance of language in the local Québec context. A genuine and complete dialectic demands more than a simple tension between two conditions or positions. It requires an active response from both polarities that reconciles itself into a change state that then becomes the new foundation position. Akin to sonata form in music, dialectic requires a theme and counter-theme that are reconciled and synthesised into a new thematic statement. This, in turn may well become the foundation for further development. To extend the analogy to Québec's working classes and the international unions, only one side is whistling the tune. The other side is neither listening, nor of consequence responding, at this point in the process. The result is that Québec's workers turned elsewhere, inwards, for an institutional solution that addresses and preserves both sets of interests; those of class and identity.

If the expanding incursion of the international unions affiliated with the AFL had any real effect upon the representation of labour in Québec, and as a consequence upon the allied representation of collective cultural and linguistic interests, then the absence of any consideration for the second set of interests from the AFL's broader program implies that the effect was precipitated by other concerns. And yet, ignorance is not always necessarily bliss, as the initial oblivion of the international unions to linguistic concerns actually precipitated a response at the institutional level sparking a renaissance amongst the national unions and giving birth to the phenomenon of Catholic confessional unions. In a very real sense, the

renewal of the former combined with the construction of the latter became the foundation of a class-based social project that was broader than simply what may be regarded as a home-grown class movement. In a real sense, the phenomenon of confessional unions is a product of an interclass collaboration between Québec's working classes and her religious elites, though as further examination will show, that collaboration came at a price for the working classes. The conservatism of the Catholic church and her elites muted the militancy and weakened the strength of labour's advocacy for better working conditions. Not all of the factors that contributed towards Québec's being what has been described as a low-wage region in a high wage continent are related to the linguistic and cultural division of labour or her uniquely "low-skilled" type of economy that was more geared to the production of consumer goods than heavy industry.<sup>212</sup> The Catholic church and her elites had their own agenda dictated by an historically predetermined set of attitudes towards the organisation of Québec society. In intervening into the area of labour relations, the Church may well have established a certain social stability by limiting the more militant manifestations of labour advocacy, but in so doing, they arguably produced a lesser benefit for labour than might have otherwise been obtained, and they entered into a form of elite accommodation towards the needs and interests of Québec capital.

The social revolution that was sparked by the Catholic church through the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 came relatively late to Québec. Previously, the church in Québec regarded the labour movement generally, and certain manifestations thereof quite specifically, with a suspicious and overtly hostile eye. Much of the reason for the Québec Catholic church's initial resistance to the directions of the encyclical are to be traced to the feudal attitudes that continued to prevail here. These attitudes reflected an earlier ultra-conservative notion of an inegalitarian social universe that by its very nature was a reflection

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<sup>212</sup> See Noël, Alain, "Politics in a High-Unemployment Society," in Gagnon, Alain-G., ed., *Québec State and Society*, Toronto, Nelson, 1993, pp. 422-449.

of god's will. The simple act of questioning any authority – be it the employer or the church – constituted an act of defiance against a divine order that demanded that the working classes bend to the will of authority.

“Imbued by these principles, the Québécois Bishops of this period therefore demonstrated the greatest opposition, if not an open hostility towards union organisations. Monsignor Bourget, Monsignor Baillargeon, and above all Monsignor Taschereau used their authority to dissuade the Catholics from joining”<sup>213</sup>

The church's censure of particular groups and associations during the earlier period have been examined previously. Clearly, there were certain local circumstances that framed the church's specific response to the labour union movement in Québec.

Subsequent to the power vacuum left amongst Québec elites after the conquest, and reinforced after the 1837-39 rebellions, the Catholic church in Québec enjoyed a broad dominance of all aspects of Québec society. In the absence of a genuine Québec bourgeoisie, and in interfacing with the English colonial administration, the Church took on many of the roles of a bourgeois class. Their power was even greater here than what might have been manifest in other predominantly Catholic countries. Any social movement that threatened to erode or qualify the power of the Church was bound to be opposed by the hegemonic fraction that constituted Québec's social and religious elites in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the Church in Québec looked upon the direction for social cooperation and collaboration between capital and labour laid out in *Rerum Novarum* with a certain ambivalence. Clearly, the encyclical lauded the effects of institutions, be they those of labour or of a cooperative endeavour between labour and capital, that relieved the wants and supplied the needs of the oppressed classes. The encyclical speaks specifically of:

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<sup>213</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930*, p. 158. My translation of: “Imbus de ces principes, les évêques québécois de cette époque ont donc manifesté la plus grande opposition, sinon même de l'hostilité envers les organisations syndicales, Mgr Bourget, Mgr Baillargeon, et surtout Mgr Taschereau ont usé leur autorité pour dissuader les catholiques d'en faire partie.”

“such associations and organizations as afford opportune aid to those who are in distress, and which draw the two classes more closely together. Among these may be enumerated societies for mutual help; various benevolent foundations established by private persons to provide for the workman, and for his widow or his orphans, in case of sudden calamity, in sickness, and in the event of death; and institutions for the welfare of boys and girls, young people, and those more advanced in years.”<sup>214</sup>

The description is apt of those early prototypical forms that constituted the first manifestation of labour unionism in Québec, and elsewhere. The encyclical also directly addresses the legitimacy of working class institutions themselves:

“The most important of all are workingmen's unions, for these virtually include all the rest. History attests what excellent results were brought about by the artificers' guilds of olden times. They were the means of affording not only many advantages to the workmen, but in no small degree of promoting the advancement of art, as numerous monuments remain to bear witness. Such unions should be suited to the requirements of this our age - an age of wider education, of different habits, and of far more numerous requirements in daily life. It is gratifying to know that there are actually in existence not a few associations of this nature, consisting either of workmen alone, or of workmen and employers together, but it were greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient. We have spoken of them more than once, yet it will be well to explain here how notably they are needed, to show that they exist of their own right, and what should be their organization and their mode of action.”<sup>215</sup>

There is no avoiding, even to the most contrary of readers within the Church, that the right and benefit of the working classes to assemble and advocate in their own collective interests is more than simply permissible. It is in fact deemed to be beneficial to all in a sense reminiscent of the utopian socialism of Robert Owen. The encyclical here and throughout argues for a fairer distribution of the wealth derived from social production, and that such would benefit both classes. Perhaps some comfort could have been taken by the unconvinced within the Québec Catholic hierarchy by the implied role for the Church and her representatives in the organisation of these institutions.

“It is indisputable that on grounds of reason alone such associations, being perfectly blameless in their objects, possess the sanction of the law of nature. In their religious aspect they claim rightly to be responsible to the Church alone. The rulers of the State accordingly have no rights over them, nor can they claim any share in their control; on the contrary, it is the duty of the State to respect and cherish them, and, if need be, to defend them from attack.”<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Pope Leo XXIII, *Rerum Novarum: Encyclical of Leo XXIII on Capital and Labor*, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1891, ([http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_1-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_1-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html)), download date 03/02/2010. par. 48.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 49, in its entirety.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 53. Note that the second sentence contains the logic and reasoning that maintained the presence and role of aumoniers, or chaplains within the CSN until the Quiet Revolution.

Note clearly the assignment of responsibility for the organisation and direction of these institutions to the Church, and the also clear position that it is not for the state to interfere. At this stage of historical development, and in light of those associations that, in the eyes of the Church, tend to corrupt Christian values, the working classes have a choice.

“Christian working men must do one of two things: either join associations in which their religion will be exposed to peril, or form associations among themselves and unite their forces so as to shake off courageously the yoke of so unrighteous and intolerable an oppression.”<sup>217</sup>

In Québec during these times, where goes one’s religion also goes one’s language. In the face of the growing strength of labour unions generally, and more specifically that of the rapidly expanding foreign and “international” unions, the Catholic church in Québec was faced with what might ultimately have been seen as a certain serendipity of circumstances by the directions of the encyclical. Notwithstanding the state of cognitive dissonance caused by a clash between the directions of the encyclical and the Québec Catholic church’s longstanding position towards social organisation, by her direct involvement with the labour movement in Québec and through the sponsorship of Catholic confessional unions, the Church could reassert her dominant role in the organisation of Québec society. Such an action would respond to both the direction of the encyclical and to the perceived external threat posed by the incursion of the international unions. And if, in the interpretation and application of the encyclical, the Church in Québec were to lean towards her more conservative view of the organisation of society, *tant mieux*. The eminent pragmatism of such a self-interested engagement has not been lost to those recording the history of the labour movement from the point of view of the unions themselves. Consider the contemporary analysis exhibited by the CSN and FTQ, in their history of the Québec labour movement.

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<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 54.

“At the beginning of the 1900s, the Québec clergy belatedly adopted the line that is described as social Catholicism, as defined by Pope Leo XIII in his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. It ceased to reject unionism and attempted rather to flank or structure it, towards the avowed end of combating all forms of class struggle and of socialism and to substitute in their place a state of harmony between capital and labour.

The clergy also sought the best means to protect the French-Canadian bosses. L'École Sociale Populaire, founded in Montréal in 1911 by the Jesuits exercised in this regard a great influence over the workers' movement until 1945. It disseminated the social doctrine of the Church and the ideas of the Catholic petite bourgeoisie into the core of the unions.”<sup>218</sup>

Notwithstanding, and of perhaps greater importance in the long run, would be the degree to which those liberal and Catholic social values embedded in the encyclical and transmitted as stated above later informed the broader construction of a social project in Québec that marks the labour movement to the present day. The powerful synthesis of collective interests of class and identity further reinforced by the inculcation of shared cultural values within a broader social project in many ways became the springboard for labour's evolution and social militancy subsequent to the Quiet Revolution.<sup>219</sup>

Notwithstanding the broader social benefits that came from the Catholic church's engagement of the labour union movement after the inevitable impact of *Rerum Novarum* was felt here, we must again ask from the point of view of our class analysis approach: collectively, *cui bono*? In initially adopting prototypical institutional forms and adapting them towards the purpose of representing working class interests, Québec's workers had clearly been both the authors of the movement and beneficiaries of its struggle. Throughout that process Québec's francophone workers had clearly tempered class choices with the

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<sup>218</sup> *Op. Cit.*, CSN/CEQ, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, CSN/CEQ, Beauceville, Québec, 1979, p. 67. My translation of “Au début des années 1900, le clergé du Québec adopte tardivement la ligne du catholicisme dit social, définie par le pape Léon XIII dans son encyclique **Rerum Novarum**, en 1891. Il cesse de rejeter le syndicalisme et tente plutôt de l'encadrer, dans le but avoué de combattre toute forme de lutte des classes et de socialisme et pour substituer l'harmonie du capital et du travail. Le clergé cherche aussi le meilleur moyen de protéger les patrons canadiens-français. **L'École Sociale Populaire**, fondée à Montréal, en 1911, par les Jésuites, exercera à cette égard une grande influence sur le mouvement ouvrier, jusqu'en 1945. Elle diffusera la doctrine sociale de l'Eglise et les idées de la petite-bourgeoisie catholique au sein des syndicats.”

<sup>219</sup> The degree to which encyclicae such as *Rerum Novarum*, along with the latter encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* penned by Pope Pius XI as a follow-up forty years later, and even unto *Mater et Magistra* issued by Pope John XXIII in 1961 tempered and directed the social project that we may identify as modern Québec has been underestimated by many authors. Not so by William D. Coleman in *The Independence Movement in Quebec, 1945-1980*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984.



broader interests of language and culture, and managed to secure a fair, if less than perfect representation of both sets of interests. Now that those collective interests of shared identity were greatly to be addressed within the context of *Catholic confessional* labour unions, and were to take a fully equal and arguably ascendant role over the shared interests of class, we can only admit a successful synthesis of both if the outcome of the marriage produces class benefits equal or superior to what would have been provided by a continued separation of those collective interests. Subsequent examination will show that this was not the case, albeit for a number of reasons.

In actively responding to shifts in those institutional arrangements geared towards the representation of labour, and still seeking to guard their collective interests of language and identity, Québec's francophone labour leaders were forced to add a little water to their wine. In abdicating much of their control over working class advocacy to the guidance and direction of the Catholic church, we shall see the real effects of adding a significant tot of sacrificial wine to their water. Before conducting such an examination, we must first turn to that transitional period where the increasing influence of the international unions brought pressure to bear upon the institutional compromises that Québec's francophone workers had made to assure the protection of their collective interests of language and culture. The ascendancy of the international unions threatened to erode the balance between interests of class and identity that French Canadian workers in Québec had managed to eke out over the previous half-century. In responding to this shift in institutional choices and to the direction of the Catholic church to make choices in their collective associations that would not imperil their Catholic values and risk fiery damnation, we might well ask whether they have been invited to leap from the fire of hell's damnation back into the frying pan of class domination.

## **Perception and Reality in a Shifting Institutional Landscape**

It has been put forward here that in engaging the challenge of the international unions, Québec's francophone workers actively made a set of institutional choices that in and of themselves were not conceived to respond to their collective concerns of language and culture. Thus, their choices were made in response to preordained forms, and the settling out of group representation was not, at this stage of the evolution of the Québec labour movement, a dynamic or dialectic process. Notwithstanding some small concessions to the importance of language made by the international unions during the last decade of the 1800s, and this only in the area of recruitment, the collective cultural needs of francophone workers were not effectively addressed. What is far closer to an active and dynamic response to the importance of these issues was the growing concern and involvement of the Catholic church, and Québec's social and economic elites. Here, even if it is to be argued that the benefit was a qualified one for labour, we do find a genuine dialectical process engaging class relations and interests. Issues of language and culture were clearly the focus of much of this dialectic, though as must be expected this was as but part of the broader issues of competing class interests. Yet, the collective issues of shared identity crossed all class lines, and informed the broader class alliance. In so doing, the effective representation of working class interests paid the price demanded of class collaboration over the protection and advocacy of shared interests of culture: religion and language. All of these collaborative class actions were taken in the face of an institutional shift that was on the one hand oblivious at best to the importance of language and culture for the Québécois, and hostile to the existing institutional arrangements that had served in adapted form thus far.

The clash of ideological approaches to class representation marking the differences between the international unions and the Chevaliers du travail have been briefly addressed in the introductory passages. Here we must return to the issue by way of explaining the impetus

for the actions of the international unions here in Canada in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From the point of view of the international unions, there was a basic incompatibility of approach that marked the trade union orientation of the AFL, and the broader industrial approach as manifest within the Chevaliers de travail. The former were steadfastly against any form of dual-representation that would erode or break the monopoly of representation that a trade union may have in a specific enterprise or across an industry. Their reasoning was simple: control the representation – and thus the supply – of all workers in a specific trade, and the union has greater leverage with a single employer, or better still, with all employers in that area of production. Thus, any competition from either industrial unions that cut across areas of trade representation or from local and national unions competing for representation in the same area of production was seen as a threat to the monopoly control that the trade unions required. Further, in such a situation, the tendency of employers to play one group off against another in a divided shop, or between specific manufacturing concerns becomes far more difficult when all workers are affiliated with the same body. Worker solidarity and leverage is eroded where there is competition between unions.

“In effect, their philosophy fundamentally rested upon the pursuit of control over the supply of workers across a given trade; once this control had been obtained, they hoped to sell the strength of their labour to the employer at the best possible rate. It is to the extent that they held a more or less absolute monopoly of the workers in a given trade in a town or given region that they bolstered their bargaining power amongst the employers.”<sup>220</sup>

Solid logic, as far as it goes, but this fundamental approach is of itself based upon certain assumptions. These include the important coherence of the division of labour along lines that are in and of themselves indispensable to the production process, thus privileging skilled over unskilled labour. Further, the approach conceives of class struggle, if it conceives of it at all,

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<sup>220</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930*, p. 45. My translation of “En effet, leur philosophie repose fondamentalement sur la recherche d’un contrôle de l’offre de travailleurs au niveau d’un même métier ; un fois ce contrôle obtenu, ils espèrent vendre au patronat leur force de travail au meilleur prix possible. C’est dans la mesure où ils détiennent un monopole plus ou moins absolu sur les travailleurs d’un même métier dans une ville ou une région donnée qu’ils renforcent leur pouvoir de marchandage auprès des employeurs.”

as a process that is fragmented and conducted by individual cohorts. Such an approach is intuitively contrary to a corporate view of the organisation of society as increasingly marks the Québec example. Collective class gains are really no better than the sum total of the victories won by coherent vanguard groups. The approach tends to create classes or categories of workers within the broader working class, and does little to reduce the income gap between the most and least skilled workers. Michels has noted the tendency in writings published exactly in the middle of the period considered here: “[I]t may be affirmed that in the contemporary working class there is already manifest a horizontal stratification.”<sup>221</sup> Further, and critical in our Québec example, it differentiates between workers based on “class” without any concern for the importance of collective interests that break along lines of identity. And in an economic environment where the division of labour along the general lines of skilled and unskilled is reinforced by parallel divisions along the lines of language and culture, it tends to disadvantage the collectivity that shares both poorly valued labour, and a minority or “othered” identity.

In light of the above, two observations are made and certain conclusions drawn there from. First, that the increased incursion of the international unions into Canadian markets was predicated upon competition for representation and the elimination of competition that could fragment and erode the power of individual trades in securing the best working conditions for their members. This was made without any consideration or much conscious awareness of how this might impinge upon issues of language and culture as regards French-Canadian, and more specifically Québécois identity. Second, because of the effect of this incursion and the particular nature of Québec’s economy, both the perception and the reality

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<sup>221</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Michels, *Political Parties*, p. 276. Recall as well that in previous citations invoked herein, Michels has put forward the idea not only that cultural differences may mark these stratifications, but that those in elite trades have more in common with their fellows in other countries than they have in common with the unskilled labourers in their own state. If, in addition to shared class interests and identity, English-speaking workers find a greater mobility due to both trade and language, then they benefit further. Even when French-Canadian workers emigrated to the United States to find jobs, they generally gravitated towards low-skilled employment in the area of textiles.

of the specific phenomenon were bound to influence francophone workers, and francophone elites, in a unique and special way. The reality was that the international unions were to see a rapid and profound expansion into both the broader Canadian and Québec markets. The perception, amongst Québec workers, elites and even to some extent among employers, was that this incursion was increasingly seen as a foreign invasion that had detrimental effects for labour, society, and the culture and autonomy of all.

### **The Ascendancy of the International Unions: National and Local Effects**

The issue of dual-unionism and competition from national and industrial unions is one that concerned the international unions across all of Canada. The fundamental clash of approaches that effectively demanded the elimination of competition however, was to have greater impact on a variety of levels upon the Québec labour movement writ large. It is interesting to note that the specific events that sparked the actual change in relations between the international unions and the others also found its roots here, and these were related to issues of representation by union as opposed to by the size of the memberships thereof within the Montreal Central council (*Conseil des Métiers et du Travail du Montréal*) of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress (*Congres des Métiers et du Travail du Canada*). Essentially, the international unions generally situated within the trades found that representation by union was unfair to larger bodies – as predominated within the international unions – and gave unfair advantage to smaller unions and associations, such as the Chevaliers du travail. The result was a split in the Montreal Central Council that gave birth to the Construction and Building Trades Central Council (*Conseil centrale des metiers de construction de bâtisse*). This group was made up entirely of international unions, save for one, the Plasterer's Union, and all situated in the construction industry.

The constitution of the Montreal Central Council effectively gave three representatives to each member association, and this acted greatly to the advantage of the Chevaliers du travail. The construction unions petitioned the council to change the constitution, but of course, as the council was dominated by member groups who benefited from the arrangement, their request was denied. Rouillard summarises the international unions' point of view

“The argument of the construction unions looked particularly to the Knights of Labour, certain assemblies of whom had few members. As many amongst them were mixed groups, that is to say that they brought together workers from a number of different trades, and they also opened their doors to non-workers, it was easy for them to form an assembly and send three delegates to the council.”<sup>222</sup>

A few observations should be noted here. First, and as to the issue of class collaboration, one of the criticisms levelled by the international unions against the Chevaliers du travail was that they admitted into their ranks non-workers and even professionals. In that sense, the Chevaliers du travail as a movement sought to build a class collaborative approach from within the labour movement itself. Here, it reflects its presumably Masonic roots insofar as criteria for admission is not class-based, and lodges of both groups may contain a broad social and economic diversity of members. Second, and this in direct contrast to the international unions, the Chevaliers du travail generally sought recourse to strike action as a last choice failing a negotiated agreement. In this, they were closer to the approach put forward by the Catholic church in Québec, even before the advent of the confessional unions. Yet, when looking at the social project of the Chevaliers du travail and contrasting it with the international unions, the latter were far more conservative in their views of the existing capitalist system.

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<sup>222</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930*, p. 47. My translation of “L’argumentation des syndicats de la construction visait particulièrement les Chevaliers du travail dont certaines assemblées groupaient très peu membres. Comme plusieurs d’entre elles étaient mixtes, c’est-à-dire qu’elles réunissent des travailleurs de métiers différents et qu’elles ouvraient même leurs portes aux non-travailleurs, il leur était facile de former une assemblée et d’envoyer trois délégués au Conseil.” Note the issue of dual unionism at the heart of an argument focused on representation, notwithstanding the ultimate validity of the primary argument. Rouillard acknowledges the core argument as being focused on dual-unionism.

“Conservatives on the level of objectives, the international unions had always held recourse to active pressure tactics. Far from thinking that the strike was an antiquated method of resolving labour conflicts, much to the contrary, they figured it to be essential to the improvement of the workers’ lot. From their point of view it was a fundamental right of workers to collectively withhold their labour when confronted with a recalcitrant employer. This right remained risky if the union did not have a certain control over manpower. And this control, the unions were quick to realise was much easier to establish amongst specialised workers.”<sup>223</sup>

The one thing that the Chevaliers and the international unions did have in common in the eyes of Québec elites was their foreign nature. For very different reasons, the Catholic church in Québec was severely critical and increasingly wary of both groups. Social stability was the watch word of Québec’s religious and social elites. A move to fragment and subsequently disenfranchise locally organised workers in Montréal and the rest of the province by a newly formed *centrale* consisting almost exclusively of international unions would have been seen as empirical proof of the destabilising potential that these externally conceived and organised labour unions threatened for Québec society. Combine this with their ready recourse to strike action and the potential for institutional and class reaction was easily sparked.

The break within the Montréal Central Council that occurred in 1893 was followed by a brief reconciliation between the construction unions and the rest of the members of the association in 1895. However, in 1897 the divisions reappeared and manifested themselves in the creation of a rival body, the Federated Trades and Labour Council (*Conseil des métiers*

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50. My translation of “Conservateurs au niveau des objectifs, les syndicats internationaux ont recours toutefois à des moyens de pression énergiques. Loin de penser que la grève est un moyen dépassé de résoudre les conflits de travail, ils l’estiment au contraire essentielle à l’amélioration du sort des travailleurs. C’est à leurs yeux un droit fondamental des travailleurs de pouvoir cesser collectivement de travailler pour un employeur récalcitrant. Ce droit reste bien aléatoire cependant si le syndicat n’a pas un certain contrôle de la main-d’œuvre. Et ce contrôle, les syndicats se sont vite aperçu qu’il est beaucoup plus facile à établir parmi les ouvriers spécialisés.”

*fédérés et du travail de Montréal*, also given simply as the *Conseil des métiers fédérés*).<sup>224</sup>

This second schism was led by five international unions and was not finalised until the secessionist groups were assured of a charter by the AFL. Once granted, the charter compelled all international unions in Montréal to affiliate on threat of expulsion from the home body.

As proposed in the exposition of this chapter, the break between the Montréal unions held a far greater potential threat for the Canadian movement writ large, even if the more profound effects of the wider split were to be felt here. On the national level, the local schism was to be repeated by a split in the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress in 1902, which we shall momentarily examine. However, the local events were to be compounded by actions taken by the international unions during an important conflict within one of the most important employment sectors in the Québec economy: the shoe industry.

In the first manifestation of a genuinely home-grown federal association of trade unions, Québec's shoemaker's unions had created a tightly assembled federation composed of unions from Montréal, Québec City, and St. Hyacinthe. By basis of comparison, Rouillard notes that the Québec industry numbered over 10,000 workers in 114 establishments, while the entire subscription of the workers affiliated with the AFL in the United States was 10,000 workers.<sup>225</sup> Conflicts in the shoe industry during this period are illustrative of the pressures brought upon Québec workers caught between the international unions and the burgeoning influence of the Catholic church. On the one hand, an unresolved conflict between unionised

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<sup>224</sup> A brief note on the translation of appellations and acronyms is offered here. Reconciling the exact appellation of divers groups as employed by Lipton, Forsey, Rouillard and others can be a confusing and somewhat futile exercise. Even Rouillard, whom this author trusts for the precise appellation of labour unions and associations in French, employs different labels and translations in different works. Specifically, the Federated Trades and Labour Council, as described in *Op. Cit. Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 1812-1902*, p. 387, is translated by Rouillard as either *Le Conseil des Métiers Fédérés* in *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930*, p. 50, or *le Conseil des Métiers Fédérés et du Travail de Montréal* in *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, p. 78. Consequently, and to avoid further confusion, acronyms in this work are limited to those groups whose appellations are clearly agreed upon by all parties (CSN, FTQ etc.), and a consistent use of the full name as employed here will be applied throughout the balance of this work.

<sup>225</sup> See *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, p. 81.



workers and employers resulting in a two-month shutdown of production had begged the intervention of the Bishop of Québec City, Monsignor Bégin, in 1900. The Bishop agreed to act as a mediator on the condition that the employers lift their lock-out and resume production. This was done, and the Bishop's decision offered six weeks later acknowledged the right of the workers to organise, but questioned their methods and some of the provisions of their constitution.

“In exchange for the recognition of their unions by the manufacturers and a preference for union members in the hiring process, they finally submitted their constitutions to an ecclesiastic commission which concluded that they demonstrated a “socialist” and “Masonic” inspiration. It further suggested the modification of certain passages judged too radical, the commission also suggested the creation of the position of chaplains for the unions. Further, all future modification of the constitutions would require the agreement of the Bishop.”<sup>226</sup>

It should be noted that these actions actually anticipate the creation of formal confessional unions by several years, and foreshadow much of what the workers could expect to receive at the hands of the clergy.

On the other hand, and subsequent to an unresolved six-month conflict in 1901 at the Ames-Holden Boot and Shoe Company, international unions sought to wean a number of local and national shoe unions affiliated with the federation noted above by offering the endorsement of a “union-made” stamp on the manufacturer's products. The international unions won over a number of unions but impatient with the hesitancy of the union working at Ames-Holden to switch allegiance, the international union representative sent by Samuel Gompers offered the union endorsement directly to the company. Rouillard expresses a certain understatement when he notes that “the reaction of the Union of Shoe Fitters was immediate and most emphatic.”<sup>227</sup> They complained to the recently formed Federated Trades

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95. My translation of “En échange de la reconnaissance de leurs syndicats par les manufacturiers et de la préférence syndicale dans l'embauche, ils soumettent finalement leurs constitutions à une commission ecclésiastique qui conclut à leur inspiration « socialiste » et « maçonnique ». La commission propose également la présence d'aumôniers aux réunions des syndicats. Tout modification ultérieure des constitutions doit recevoir l'assentiment de l'archevêque.” Rouillard goes on to claim this as the seminal moment for the creation of the confessional unions.

<sup>227</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930*. p. 63. My translation of “La réaction de l'Union des monteurs fut immédiate et des plus vives.”

and Labour Council of which they were a member, notwithstanding the fact that they did not hold an international affiliation. The council struck a committee dominated by the international unions which unanimously condemned the local Council of Shoe Workers, of which the union was a member. Caught between the restrictions of their own religious elites and the external threat of the international unions, the definitive proof of their untenable position before the latter was soon to be demonstrated.

### **Labour Cleaved Asunder: The 1902 Canadian Trades and Labour Congress**

The program of the international unions had a two-fold effect at the national and provincial levels. First off, competitive recruitment had radically increased the number of international unions in Canada generally, and as well, though to a lesser degree, in Québec. As a consequence, this placed the national unions in a difficult situation. As noted previously, international unions sought to gain a monopoly on trades representation. In so doing, not only were they in open competition with national unions, but they also sought to exclude them from the representative bodies on which all of the unions sat. I have noted the contested issue of representation earlier in this exercise. The ultimate result of the disagreement was to see the international unions exclude the Canadian and Québec national unions at the Trades and Labour Congress of 1902 held in what was then Berlin Ontario. The process was shocking to the national unions and effective in shutting out any union not affiliated with an international – read American – union. At that assembly, whilst comprised of a cross-section of international and national unions, including Lodges of the Knights of Labour (in Québec the Chevaliers du travail), the former group held the majority representation. Essentially, Lipton informs us that “The Convention refused to seat delegates from the Montreal Trades and Labour Council, lifted that council’s charter, and seated

instead delegates from the Gompers-approved council.”<sup>228</sup> The stage was set to invert the balance of representation that had so plagued the attempts of the international unions in their goal to infiltrate and control the Canadian and Québec representative bodies. The finesse followed immediately upon the expulsion of the Montreal Trades and Labour Council’s members.

“Then came the debate on the key issue – to adopt or not adopt an amendment to the constitution that “no national union be recognised where an international union exists”. Against the advice of leading Congress figures like P. M. Draper and D. J. O’Donaghue, the delegates adopted this amendment by a majority of 89 to 35. International union power was stamped further into the congress by the election to its presidency of John Flett, a paid officer of an international union.”<sup>229</sup>

If the action was an affront to Canadian labour generally, it was a double slap at the Québec Council and her now excluded affiliate groups. Inevitably, it drove a number of these national and provincial bodies into the waiting arms of the international unions, further expanding the influence of the international unions here and across all of Canada. Notwithstanding, the effect was proportionately lesser here and produced a certain cultural backlash. In a sense, the events were inevitable, given the prior expansion of the international unions in Canada generally, and here in Québec. Given as well that the real thorn in the side of Samuel Gompers in his attempt to gain control was the continued presence, most particularly and prominently here in Québec, of the Knights of Labour, or Chevaliers du travail, along with the province’s stubbornly independent national unions as seen in the boot, shoe and textiles industries.

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<sup>228</sup> *Op. Cit.* Lipton, p. 132.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.* p. 132.

“Do not forget, from 1898 to 1902, the number of unions affiliated with international federations had tripled in Canada growing from 320 to 1,042. During the same period, the number of internationals doubled in Québec. This expansion consequently solidified the dominance of the internationals at every level of the Canadian workers’ movement. Moreover, this process rapidly degenerated into conflicts in Québec because it conflicted with a nationalist current that had already provoked the formation of national unions. This nationalism found its roots in powerful feelings of resentment due to the foreign character of the international unions and, consequently, in the need for the Canadians to determine for themselves the orientation of their own unions.”<sup>230</sup>

The strategy resulted in short-term gains for the international unions, but also fed the expansion of the national, and ultimately the confessional unions in Québec.

These events constitute an example of what Polanyi, *Régulation* theorists and others identify as socially exogenous forces begging collective endogenous responses and institutional compromise. The actions of the international unions were clearly not overtly calculated as an attack on Canadian or French Canadian cultural autonomy. The international unions were at best oblivious of these issues and at worst dismissive of their importance. Nevertheless, the perception in Québec was that these actions and these foreign institutions were a real threat to the cultural, linguistic and social autonomy of Canadian, and most particularly French Canadian society. This prompted a class collaboration that ultimately was not necessarily in the best interests of the French Canadian working classes in Québec. Nevertheless, and again as noted by Polanyi, the fate of classes is more often determined by the needs of society, than the fate of society determined by the needs of classes. As to the question posed earlier as to which class benefited the most from the collaboration of Church elites and the working classes – *cui bono?* – again we recall the words of Polanyi “no policy of narrow class interest can safeguard even that interest well.” Some benefit must accrue to

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<sup>230</sup> *Op. Cit.* Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930*. p. 82. My translation of “Ne l’oublions pas, de 1898 à 1902, le nombre de syndicats affiliés aux fédérations internationales tripla au Canada, passant de 320 à 1,042. Pendant la même période, le Québec doubla ses effectifs internationaux. Cette croissance eut comme conséquence de raffermir la prépondérance des internationaux à tous les niveaux du mouvement ouvrier canadien. Plus qu’ailleurs, ce progrès rapide dégénéra en conflits au Québec parce qu’il heurtait un courant nationaliste qui avait déjà provoqué la formation de syndicats nationaux. Ce nationalisme puisait ses racines dans le sentiment vivement ressenti du caractère étranger des syndicats internationaux et, par conséquent, de la nécessité pour les Canadiens de déterminer eux-mêmes l’orientation de leurs propres syndicats.” Rouillard cites Forsey, Eugene, *History of Canadian Trade Unionism 1812-1902*, Manuscript, Chapter VIII, folio 6.

all of the classes in the collaboration, but clearly the benefits are not equal for all partners. Culturally, all class partners shared in the real and perceived protection of French Canadian religion, language and cultural values. Economically, the limited economic gains that accrued to the working classes made the collaboration appear in a classically Marxist sense as an example of elite accommodation between the Church and typically bourgeois economic interests. Yet, a purely Marxist analysis is clearly incomplete in its ability to explain the nature of the collaboration from both the point of view of class and the broader interests of cultural identity. In this and other examples we shall see that both sets of collective interests demanded recognition and redress, but those that were broadly shared across the whole of French Canadian society – those of shared religion, language, and cultural values – claimed ascendancy; were shared *across* class divisions.

The reaction of the Church was almost immediate, and while it actually preceded the formation of confessional unions by a number of years, it demonstrated the Church's motivation, in addition to the clear message contained within *Rerum Novarum*, in seeking to involve itself directly into the organisation and direction of Québec's labour movement.

“The Archbishop of Montréal directed special attention towards labour unionism in 1903 following important strikes led by the international unions amongst the dock workers and tramway conductors. On the occasion of the visit of Samuel Gompers to Montréal, he made public a pastoral letter that underscored the peril, for Catholic workers, of belonging to international unions. He recognised the right of workers to form unions, but preferred that they be Canadian.”<sup>231</sup>

The recognition of the workers' rights are there, just as directed by *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, as is the concern over the socially disruptive tactics employed by the international unions. One year later Monsignor Bruchési, suggested to the Montreal Trades and Labour Council that Labour Day be given a religious aspect through the public celebration of a mass.

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<sup>231</sup> *Op. Cit.* Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*. p.96. My translation of “ L’archevêque de Montréal porte une attention spéciale au syndicalisme en 1903 à la suite de grèves importantes des syndicats internationaux de débardeurs et de conducteurs de tramways. À l’occasion de la visite de Samuel Gompers à Montréal, il rend publique une lettre pastorale qui souligne le péril, pour les ouvriers catholiques, d’appartenir à des syndicats internationaux. Il reconnaît aux travailleurs le droit de former des syndicats, mais préfère qu’ils soient canadiens.” The Archbishop that Rouillard refers to was Monsignor Bruchési.

Subsequently, the Church's concern over the international unions was again aroused when they demanded free and mandatory elementary education which the Church felt would have constituted an inappropriate intervention by the state into the social jurisdiction of the Church. This latter example is illustrative of the complex class relationships that are working here. On the one hand, literally "domesticating" and taming the labour union movement is an example of both class collaboration over the protection of shared collective values, on the other an example of elite accommodation. Yet the accommodation is of the interests of economic elites that were and remained for many years Anglo-Quebecker, Anglo-Canadian, and increasingly American as well. How does one sort the wheat from the chaff in conducting a class analysis that is complicated by shared cultural issues of national identity when the cultural interests of the collaboration serves the broader collectivity while the more specific economic interests served – always primarily bourgeois, and occasionally petit bourgeois – are in fact often, though by no means exclusively, those of the "other" cultural elite? And how are we to consider the motivating concerns of the Church when reacting against an international union policy of free and compulsory education when that policy threatened the *status quo* of power distribution between religious and political elites; between the Church and the State, where the demographic cultural majority in each elite fragment are French? In addition to these factors, we must add the increasing concern that the Church had for the rising influence of socialist *ideology* within the labour movement; a concern that this ideology would erode the social and moral foundation of the nation exactly as anticipated and addressed in *Rerum Novarum*. Again, specific events contemporaneous with the actions of the international unions reinforced the Church's motivation. "[T]here had existed in Montréal

since 1899 in Montréal a workers' party that had elected its first candidate at the federal level in 1906, also a socialist party the same year organised a very noisy May Day parade."<sup>232</sup>

The series of motivating factors for Québec's religious elite were quite obviously many and complex. For the working classes, they remained somewhat similar to those identified previously: seeking the greatest linguistic and cultural autonomy while attempting to obtain the best class representation possible within the existing institutional structure. Modifying that structure through a class collaborative effort to construct confessional unions or by bolstering existing national unions are two types of institutional response to exogenously imposed conditions that threatened the broader social and cultural identity.

### **Prototypical Models of the National and Confessional Unions**

Rouillard informs us that there were five federations of Catholic confessional unions founded before the First World War. The nature of those unions contrasted powerfully with that of the international unions, and was consistent with the conditions imposed *ad hoc* during the few examples where workers, or employers, had previously sought the intervention of the Church to solve issues of intractable strikes and lock-outs. The nature of those differences immediately illustrate the price Québec's French Catholic workers paid in the bartering of traditional class interests for an institutional form guaranteeing cultural and linguistic solidarity. Contrary to the strong "trade" orientation of the international unions, "these first Catholic unions did not feel the need to regroup workers by trade, nor to anticipate the need for organised collective bargaining and, this for a powerful reason, they did not envision recourse to strikes."<sup>233</sup> No recourse to strike tactics? Again, we must pose

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<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.* p. 97. My translation of "il existe à Montréal, depuis 1899, un parti ouvrier, qui fait élire un premier candidat aux élections fédérales en 1906, ainsi qu'un parti socialiste qui fait beaucoup de bruit, la même année, en organisant un défile le premier mai."

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101. My translation of "Ces premiers syndicats catholiques ne sentent pas le besoin de regrouper les travailleurs par métier, ni de prévoir les mécanismes d'une négociation collective et, à plus forte raison, ils n'envisagent pas le recours à la grève."

the question *cui bono*? What potential leverage can the working class have in driving home their demands if they do not have the ability to collectively withdraw their labour?

Contemporary labour unions and their *centrales* regard the collaboration with a certain ambivalence, as well as a clear understanding of who the class beneficiaries of the project were. While on the one hand the CSN and the FTQ have subsequently acknowledged the inevitable relationship between class and cultural solidarity that operated then as now, they also understand the nature of elite accommodation in protecting both cultural and class interests.

“Solidarity of class and the national community are often confounded, and this explains, to a great degree, the collaboration of classes that was established between workers, the clergy and the French Canadian petite-bourgeoisie.”<sup>234</sup>

and

“The clergy sought as well the best means to protect the French-Canadian employers. The **École sociale populaire**, founded in Montréal in 1911 by the Jesuits, exercised a great deal of control over the workers’ movement in this regard until 1945. They diffused the social doctrine of the Church and the ideas of the Catholic petit-bourgeoisie at the heart of the unions. It would be the same with Action sociale catholique, launched in Québec by the episcopate in 1907, and of the daily **Le Devoir** founded by Henri Bourassa in 1910.”<sup>235</sup>

Notwithstanding the admitted preoccupation with the class interests of the French Canadian petite-bourgeoisie, it cannot be denied that the ideological orientation of the confessional unions was beneficial to all of capital. Nor can it be denied that such an approach to the advocacy of working class demands cannot but yield a lesser benefit for those classes than a more militant and adversarial approach such as that employed by both the international unions and the new radical unions such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) or the One Big Union (OBU). The latter had the additional attraction of unionising workers across

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<sup>234</sup> *Op. Cit.* CSN, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, Beauceville, Québec, CSN-CEQ, 1979, p. 67. My translation of “Solidarité de classe et solidarité de communauté nationale y sont souvent confondues, ce qui explique, pour une bonne part, la collaboration de classes qui va s’établir entre les travailleurs, le clergé et la petite-bourgeoisie canadienne-française.”

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.* p. 67. My translation of “Le clergé cherche aussi le meilleur moyen de protéger les patrons canadiens-français. **L’École sociale populaire**, fondée à Montréal, en 1911, par les Jésuites, exercera à cet égard une grande influence sur le mouvement ouvrier, jusqu’en 1945. Elle diffusera la doctrine sociale de l’Eglise et les idées de la petite-bourgeoisie catholique au sein des syndicats. Il en sera même de l’Action sociale catholique, lancée à Québec par l’épiscopat en 1907, et du quotidien **Le Devoir** fondé par Henri Bourassa en 1910.”



specialisations, but both their radicalism, their socialism, and their “foreign” nature made them unattractive to French Canadian workers here, and were perceived as a threat to Québec society by the Church. Yet, compare the institutional options open to the French Canadian working classes during this period and during the prior. In the late 1800s, the Chevaliers du travail were a popular institutional option, they were foreign in origin, and their broader social policy would have been far more threatening to the *status quo* and the prevailing mode of production, and they were unpopular with the Church<sup>236</sup>. The apparent difference, then, is that we have a clear adjustment of the Church as an elite quasi-bourgeois fraction to reassert its role, and define and limit the parameters of working class demands.

The success of the national and confessional unions was not solely predicated upon social as opposed to economic factors. The very nature of Québec’s economic production left a vacuum of representation in areas unattractive, or unexploited, by the international unions.

“Until 1905 the nationals manifested a certain dynamism in their organisational campaign. They were assisted by a favourable economic conjuncture that led to an increase of manpower and, as a consequence, a growth in the number of unionisable workers. They succeeded in recruiting new members throughout sectors lightly touched by the international unions: clothing, textiles, municipal employees, hotel and restaurant workers.”<sup>237</sup>

The nature of Québec’s labour organisation and advocacy has always been dictated by a conjunction of collective interests: those of class – not limited to the working classes themselves – as well as those of culture, language, and until the Quiet Revolution, those of religion. The qualifying effect that the latter set of collective interests have always held over the simple expression of working class economic interests, combined with the initial and continuing “national” characteristics of the organising bodies themselves, has given

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<sup>236</sup> Rouillard informs us that the first socialist cell was founded in Montréal by two ex-directors of the Chevaliers du travail. R. J. Kerrigan and William Darlington were ex-patriot English workers. We are further informed that the impact of the socialists upon French Canadians was negligible in *Op. Cit.* Rouillard *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois* p. 108.

<sup>237</sup> *Op. Cit.* Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930*. p. 89. My translation of “Jusqu’en 1905, les nationaux manifestent un certain dynamisme dans leur campagne d’organisation. Ils sont aidés par une conjuncture économique favorable qui entraîne une augmentation de la main-d’œuvre et, par conséquent, un accroissement du nombre de travailleurs syndiqués. Ils réussissent à recruter de nouveaux membres surtout dans les secteurs peu touchés par les syndicats internationaux : vêtement, textile, fonctionnaires municipaux, employés d’hôtels et de restaurants.”

organised labour here a powerful political autonomy in asserting national interests along with those normal to working class advocacy. Québec's national unions were always amongst the most fiercely nationalistic, albeit that nationalism was one of French *Canadian* nationalism up to the Quiet Revolution. In many ways, the nationalist fervour of Québec's unions has never changed. What has changed is the nature and the target of that nationalism.

The initial manifestation of that nationalism came quickly after the events of 1902 in Berlin Ontario. The expelled national unions along with the few remaining lodges of the Chevaliers du travail formed the National Trades and Labour Congress in 1903. Notwithstanding the intended pan-national characteristic of the organisation, it rapidly became associated predominantly with Québec. But then, the region that paid the highest cost for the expulsion of the national unions from the Trades and Labour Congress was in fact Québec. The numbers speak for themselves. From an initial membership in 1903 of forty-five unions, including twenty-six national unions, participation dropped rapidly. "At the 1911 convention only 17 unions were represented – 13 from the province of Quebec."<sup>238</sup> Lipton identifies four key reasons why the organisation failed. Rather than compete, as some national unions did, in areas unexplored by the international unions such as amongst unskilled labour or across specialisations in the industrial mould, they sought to go toe-to-toe with the internationals and lost. Competition from the AFL, the reluctance of existing unions to break their ties and align themselves with the new national body, and the disinclination or inability to exploit their own niche is added to a telling factor identified by Lipton:

"Doctrinairism was closely connected with a tendency to *class collaboration*. This was the fourth reason for the NTLC's decline. An example was the fear of strikes. In 1905 the NTLC said strikes could be avoided or reduced through meetings with the Canadian Manufacturer's Association. In 1912 CFL (NTLC) president Moffat condemned "industrial ferment" in the west – meaning the great Vancouver Island coal strike of 1912-1914. The CFL leaders were duped also by the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act of 1907. They believed that the Act rendered strikes less important. In 1909 they proposed that the Act be applied to all industrial disputes."<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> *Op. Cit.* Lipton, p. 147.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.* p. 147.

The impact of this tendency towards collaboration rather than confrontation is empirically demonstrated by an examination of the number and distribution of strikes. The tendency is greatest amongst the confessional unions. Consider here as well the duration of that tendency throughout the entire first half of the previous century.

“Contrary to the majority of the international unions, the Catholic unions had no strike funds before 1951. Besides, they were firmly opposed to all strikes in the public service and did not accept strikes as well in the private sector, save for under certain tightly constrained circumstances. This to such a degree that during the 20 years between 1915 and 1936 only nine strikes out of 507 in Québec were launched by Catholic unions.”<sup>240</sup>

Compare this with the militancy of the CSN, inheritor of the Confédération des travailleurs catholique du Canada (C.T.C.C.) as manifest throughout the 1970s and even in a more subdued fashion to the present day.

Outside of Québec, the concept of class collaboration to the extent of limiting recourse to strike tactics flew in the face of the increasingly combative nature of labour organisation. Whether the tendency reflects a genuinely socio-cultural characteristic of French Canada or it came about as the result of an elite accommodation between bourgeois, petit bourgeois and Church interests, is secondary to the fact that it is inconsistent with the labour culture of the rest of Canada at that time. In addition, there was the perception in the movement outside of Québec that the NTLC was not open to participation by Anglophones.

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<sup>240</sup> *Op. Cit.* CSN, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, Beauceville, Québec, CSN-CEQ, 1979, p. 69. My translation of “Contrairement à la plupart des unions internationales, les syndicats catholiques n’auront pas de fonds de grève avant 1951. En outre, ils sont fermement opposés à toute grève dans les services publics et n’acceptent la grève, dans le secteur privé, qu’à certaines conditions fort contraignantes. De telle sorte que durant 20 ans, de 1915 à 1936, neuf grèves sur 507, au Québec, ont été déclenchées par des syndicats catholiques.”

*“The impression is abroad that the National Trades Organization of Canada is purely French organization, and that the English speaking population is not wanted. I personally know this to be not true...)* One must recall that this period is marked by the assertion in French Canada, under the guidance of Henri Bourassa, of a Canadian nationalism opposed to “Britainism” that was propagated in English Canada. Undoubtedly no stranger to the national unions in Québec, this nationalism perhaps led English Canada to associate a certain type of unionism exclusively with the French speaking milieu. The National Congress therefore had to combat the image that it had outside of the province.”<sup>241</sup>

Perception is as important as reality when addressing collective concepts of the intentions and inclinations of the “other.” I have noted the individual and collective evaluations of the French Canadian working classes in the previous historical chapter. From T. V. Powderly’s deprecating comments on the collective character of French Canadian workers, Gompers’ and the international unions’ general dismissal of the cultural and linguistic needs of French Canadian workers, to this misunderstanding of the nature of the NTLC, and even unto the present as recorded in my introduction, the individual and collective perception of the collective cultural and linguistic “other” has marked, and continues to mark, Québec’s labour culture.

On the other side of the cultural divide, amongst the French Canadian workers themselves, there was as well a disinclination to integrate English speaking workers into existing institutional structures. Previous examples have examined the tendency of French Canadian workers to seek their own locals, establish alternative institutions, or second existing institutions to their own purposes, even if, as with the example of the Chevaliers, the external foundation of the institution was foreign and their leaders were less than open to the organisation of French speaking workers. Rouillard, however, informs us that in a rare

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<sup>241</sup>*Op. Cit.* Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930*, p. 97. The text in italic is as found in the original and is Rouillard’s citation of the original English text written by an organizer from New Brunswick, and as recorded in the *Proceedings of the NTLC*, 1906, p. 17. The balance of the citation is my translation of “Il faut se rappeler que cette époque est marquée par l’affirmation au Canada français, sous la conduite d’Henri Bourassa, d’un nationalisme canadien opposé au « britannisme » qui se propageait alors au Canada anglais. Sans doute pas étranger à l’apparition de syndicats nationaux au Québec, ce nationalisme a peut-être conduit le Canada anglais à associer un tel type de syndicalisme au seul milieu francophone. Le Congrès national a donc eu à combattre l’image qu’on avait de lui à l’extérieur de la province.”

example of a group affiliating with an international breaking away to join a national union it was the arrival of English speaking workers that seemed to have prompted the move.

“In effect, the French Canadian brick makers of Montréal had quit the International Union the year before. Many causes were at the foundation of their decision: the arrival of English speaking brick makers in the union prompted a profound malaise amongst the Francophones...Moreover, for a long time, they had gathered many grievances against the international executive who in their eyes had become “too centralising, autocratic and Americanising”.”<sup>242</sup>

On both sides, and continuing to the present day, there seems to be a shared dislike of employing class institutions founded by, led or in any way dominated by the linguistic and cultural “other.” This is made manifest not just through the language shared by the members of the unions but is reflected as well in the different ideological approaches to maintaining and expressing advocacy for the working classes. The two are connected in a way best understood by the broader definition of “class” that our examination of Polanyi, Gramsci and Poulantzas has invited. Rouillard notes it as well.

“Nationalism, which represents a profound attachment to a community of belonging, situates itself at the emotional level; ideology, on the contrary, takes itself from reason: it is a specific definition of social organisation in light of the action to be pursued. These two realities are in fact closely bound together and are ordinarily self reinforcing. But we believe it essential to distinguish between these two notions on the analytical level.”<sup>243</sup>

Well we may separate them for analytical purposes, they are in fact intimately tied to our values, which are culturally obtained and transmitted. Sacrificing effective class advocacy through collaboration in order to secure better protection for shared interests of culture, language and religion may well be a finesse of working class interests through elite accommodation, but the value of social stability and cultural continuity remains a valid

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<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.* and *In Passim*, pp. 116-117. My translation of “En effet, les briqueteurs canadiens-français de Montréal avaient quitté l’année précédente l’Union internationale. Plusieurs causes sont à l’origine de leur décision : l’arrivée de briqueteurs anglophones dans le syndicat avait suscité un profond malaise parmi les membres francophones...Depuis longtemps d’ailleurs, ils avaient accumulé plusieurs griefs contre l’exécutif international qui à leurs yeux était devenu « trop centralisateurs, autocratique, et américanisant. »”

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.* p. 121. My translation of “Le nationalisme, qui représente un attachement profond à une communauté d’appartenance, se situe au niveau de l’émotion ; l’idéologie, au contraire, relève de la raison : elle est une définition explicite de l’organisation sociale en vue d’une action à poursuivre. Ces deux réalités sont dans les faits étroitement imbriquées et elles se renforcent d’ordinaire mutuellement. Mais nous croyons essentiel de distinguer ces deux notions au niveau de l’analyse.” Rouillard refers us to Dumont, Fernand, « Structure d’une idéologie religieuse, » *Recherches sociographiques*, vol. I, n°2 (avril-juin 1960), pp. 168 s.

motivator, and has been a mark of French Canadian culture throughout history. As a fundamental social value, stability has marked the preoccupation of many influential Québécois to the present. Consider, for example the title of Claude Ryan's 1978 work, entitled *A Stable Society: Québec after the PQ*.<sup>244</sup> Social stability cementing cultural continuity demands a close class collaboration, even if the inegalitarian hallmarks of class relations continue to mark society. For the working classes part of this cultural community, weaker class advocacy can be put forth as the price to be paid for bolstering the culture. Of course, if those most affected by class differences are not deemed to reside at the bosom of the nation, then their exclusion may be explained as being a function of their own refusal to "belong;" and no such comfort as the protection of their culture may be applied as a salve to their class condition.

In seeking an institutional resonance between class advocacy and the larger social project, French Canadian workers at the turn of the last century saw distinct ideological differences between the international and national unions on a number of important issues, not all of them centred on issues of class advocacy. One important point of difference was over conscription. Gompers, the AFL and the international unions were in favour, many of Canada's national unions were opposed, and across Canada, at best a certain ambivalence was expressed by labour who perceived the European war as an opportunity for capital to reap huge profits at the expense of the working classes sacrifice. Lipton offers some examples illustrating the importance of the issue in the public eye.

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<sup>244</sup> No coincidence in the fact that Ryan was one of the last overtly Catholic public figures on Québec's political stage. His morality and values marked his political career throughout his life.

“On July 13, 15,000 Montrealers gathered in the east end, corner Logan and Champlain Streets. Mayor Mederic Martin – present by invitation of the Montreal Trades and Labour Council, told the crowd he was going to appeal to the Imperial authority against conscription. Alphonse Verville spoke of plans for a general strike...Three days later, 16,000 gathered at Jacques Cartier Square in Quebec City. Armand Lavergne, nationalist M.P., called for a general strike...On July 17, there was another demonstration at Montreal’s Lafontaine Park. The speakers compared Quebec’s lot in 1917 with Ireland’s in 1916 (a reference to the Easter Rebellion). One proposed that Liberal members resign en masse from the House of Commons. From the crowd came cries: “Up Cartier and Macdonald! Up Chenier! Hurrah for Nelson and Riel!””<sup>245</sup>

From the point of view of the rest of Canada, conscription, while a volatile issue, lacked the particular cultural resonance that it had in Québec. Combine the perception of the international unions here with the fact that “just when Canada’s unions were contemplating a general strike against conscription, the AFL was committing itself to a policy of no opposition to conscription,”<sup>246</sup> and the ideological rift between the two institutional options available to the French Canadian working classes was considerably deepened.

Some of the ideological differences between the international unions and their national counterparts were clearly related to traditional economic interests of the working classes. One particular difference was in the area of tariff protection of domestic industry. The Québec economy had always been marked by a tendency towards light manufacturing and the production of consumer goods. As opposed to Ontario where highly skilled trades were focussed in areas of industrial production, and closely tied to the American market, Québec tended towards moderately skilled and unskilled labour, or what Alain Noël has described as being “a low wage region in a high-wage continent.”<sup>247</sup> The area of consumer goods has always been one that has necessarily enjoyed high tariff protection. Rouillard suggests that this may partly account for the initial success of the national unions.

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<sup>245</sup> *Op. Cit.* and *In Passim*, Lipton, p. 171. Verville was a worker’s candidate elected in the federal election of 1906.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.* p. 173.

<sup>247</sup> See *Op. Cit.* Noël, Alain, “Politics in a High-Unemployment Society,” in Gagnon, Alain-G., ed., *Quebec State and Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Toronto, Nelson, 1993.

“The national unions were comprised of workers in strongly protected industrial sectors, it was normal that they wanted to protect their livelihood. Perhaps it was not by chance that the national unions above all recruited their members in the industrial sectors exposed to competition from the United States. It may be that this was another reason that sparked the birth of the national unions in Québec, a province that, as we know, turned its development on the production of consumer goods such as textiles, clothing, shoes and foodstuffs. These industries required high tariffs that the national unions wanted to defend in order to survive against foreign competition, in particular against that from the United States.”<sup>248</sup>

The above also gives an indication as to why local capital also preferred the national to the international – read American – unions. The owners of Québec manufacturing concerns mistrusted the motivations of the American unions in arguing for lower tariffs in the somewhat justifiable belief that they were seeking to protect and expand American production and thus focus first on the working conditions of American workers.

The national unions offered French Canadian workers the protection of that combination of interests of class and culture. The institutional choices available previously had been to adopt or adapt existing institutional forms of class representation. In the national unions French Canadian workers were able to construct their own class institutions where the collective interests of culture, language and identity could qualify the expression of working class interests.

There can be no denying that the international unions continued to dominate the area of labour representation in Canada and as well in Quebec. Notwithstanding, the trend was muted in Quebec by the issues introduced here. The national unions consistently held around a third of the numbers for the province. In a sense, while the program of the international unions was a success, it sparked a backlash that rejuvenated the national unions and gave

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<sup>248</sup> *Op. Cit.* Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930*. p. 125. My translation of “Les syndicats nationaux regroupant des travailleurs de secteurs industriels fortement protégés, il était normal qu’ils se soucient de défendre leur gagne-pain. Ce n’est peut-être pas un hasard si les syndicats nationaux ont surtout recruté leurs membres dans des secteurs en butte à la concurrence des Etats-Unis. Il se peut que ce soit là une autre des raisons qui aient provoqué la naissance de syndicats nationaux au Québec, province qui, comme on le sait, avait son développement sur la production de biens de consommation, comme le textile, le vêtement, la chaussure et l’alimentation. Ces industries commandaient pour survivre un tarif élevé que les syndicats nationaux ont voulu défendre contre la concurrence étrangère, en particulier contre celle des Etats-Unis.”



birth to the confessional unions. National unions may well have been the most effective institutional response to the combined interests of class and identity. However, when considering the broader social project that was at the centre of the class collaboration that created the confessional unions we witness the strongest union of class and identity, one that admittedly came at a price for the working classes, but one that permitted the closest alliance of identity and class.

### **Confessional Unions, Catholic Social Doctrine, and Québec as a Social Project**

I have briefly alluded to the role of the Jesuit order in sparking the creation of the Catholic confessional unions early in the last century. Coleman informs us that the specific mechanism unfolded as follows:

“In 1912, the Jesuits, following an interdiocesan congress organized by the Fédération générale des Ligues du Sacré Coeur, created the École sociale populaire (ESP). The congress had concluded that workers in French Canada needed to be organized into Catholic unions or ‘professional associations’ and that Catholic social doctrine needed to be popularized.”<sup>249</sup>

We need to briefly examine here the socialising mechanisms that underpin the creation and integration of new institutional forms. Notwithstanding the fact that inculcating Catholic social doctrine into Québec society was not the same as introducing something as ideologically foreign as socialist theory, the Church was aware that the precepts of *Rerum Novarum* required a certain social iteration in order to be made not just in harmony with existing social values here in Québec, but actually a part of those values. Recall that the encyclical was initially shocking to the Québec episcopate and introduced the concept of certain rights for the working classes that were rather foreign to Québec society cast in the roots of a more feudal mode. What we are speaking of here is a conscious attempt to modify the foundation of Québec’s institutional and social values; to modify what Gramsci would

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<sup>249</sup> *Op. Cit.* Coleman, William D., *The Independence Movement in Québec, 1945 – 1980*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984, p.47.

identify as Québec's "Historic Bloc" of institutional forms and values. Thus, Coleman further informs us that in addition to events like the congress noted above, and yearly workshops or "semaines sociales" started in 1921, the same year as the founding of the C.T.C.C., were added journals and publications such as *L'ordre nouveau* (1936), and *Relations* (1941).<sup>250</sup>

Union histories identify a series of goals fundamental to the founding of the C.T.C.C., presumably applicable to all of the Catholic confessional unions. They include:

- "defend the interests of unionised workers within the context of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church;
- fight against the domination of the international unions deemed amoral and "socialist;"
- defend the national values of the French Canadian people: language, culture, religion;
- struggle vigorously against socialism and communism."<sup>251</sup>

Here within the context of the founding values of the Catholic confessional unions we see both the preoccupation with the broader issues of identity – language, culture, religion – combined with the specific values that inform that identity: those as inculcated in the social doctrine of the Catholic Church. And if those values are modified from the seminal ones pre-existing within Québec's historic bloc, then the socialising mechanisms outlined above should weave them into the fuller fabric of Québec society.

Once conceived, the growth of the Catholic unions was rapid, taking a considerable edge off the expansion of the international unions in Québec. Rouillard informs us that there were twenty-three Catholic unions in 1916, and that this number increased to one hundred

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<sup>250</sup> See *Ibid.* p. 47.

<sup>251</sup> *Op. Cit.* CSN, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, Beauceville, Québec, CSN-CEQ, 1979, p. 68. My translation of "défendre les intérêts syndicaux des travailleurs dans le cadre de la doctrine sociale de l'Eglise catholique ; combattre la domination des unions internationales neutres et considérées comme "socialistes"; défendre les valeurs nationales du peuple canadien-français : langue, culture, religion ; lutter vigoureusement contre le socialisme et le communisme." My translation of "neutres" here as "amoral" seeks to communicate the perceived moral ambivalence the international unions demonstrated in contrast to the first point that highlights the social doctrine of the Church. The bullets are part of the original text.

and twenty, five years later when the C.T.C.C. was founded. He also notes that while the national and confessional unions shared a nationalist preoccupation, that this remained relatively weak amongst the “Canadiens.”<sup>252</sup> Given the degree to which French Canadian workers engaged the Catholic unions and their related social doctrine, we can assume that the collective interests of culture, language and religion were not necessarily expressed through an overt nationalism, but remained vested within institutions internal to Québec society, and this notwithstanding the expressed desire to expand the nationalist foundation of Canadian labour unionism outside of Québec.

Given the essential, fundamental and irreconcilable ideological differences between the international , national and most specifically the Catholic unions, I propose that the struggle between these ideological positions is made most manifest through their different visions of society. In the international context, elite fragments of labour, organised around skilled trades, saw labour’s struggle as one where those best placed to negotiate their optimum material conditions push their demands for themselves. The rest may follow as, and if, they can. It is an individualistic, liberal, and pluralistic vision of society. The Catholic unions in Québec had a social vision that sought to reconcile the Church’s broader concern over class divisions between labour and capital, as well as the ideological threat inherent in liberal individualism, materialism, and on the other ideological side, the threat of socialism. The model of society chosen to knit the cleavages that capitalism and liberalism had produced was in many ways one that hearkened back to a more organic small “c” conservative vision of Québec society; one consistent with both the Catholic approach in Europe, and with the historic bloc of Québec’s history, values and institutions. The project was for the corporate organisation of society. The vision was communicated most effectively by first, one Père Joseph-Papin Archambault SJ, founder of the École Sociale Populaire and

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<sup>252</sup> *Op. Cit.* Rouillard, *Les Syndicats Nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930*. See table on p. 119, and comments on p. 131.

editor of *L'Ordre Nouveau*, and *Relations*; then Père Richard Arès SJ who took up the former editor's duties later in life, as well as Esdras Minville, and Marcel Clément. These argued that contemporary materialistic society had lost sight of its fundamental values; that the perceived division of society into a competition between working and capitalist classes was artificial and wrong, as neither could exist or succeed without the other. Coleman informs us that:

“Following the teachings of Pope Pius XI, Clément and Arès proposed a corporatist reorganization of capitalism in Quebec as a solution to this problem. Professional associations would be set up for each class. These would co-operate, first, in managing the individual enterprise, second in managing the affairs of their respective industry or economic section in a ‘corporation,’ and third, in a ‘Chamber of Corporations’ that would direct the economic life of the whole society.”<sup>253</sup>

And where was the role of the Church in all of this? Historically, the Church had organised the creation, training and orientation of Québec's petite-bourgeoisie that constituted her professional middle classes. Their values were already informed by the Church. The working classes, now organised into labour unions would be directed in their class advocacy by the Church as well. Essentially, we have the Catholic church, as an elite “class”, organising the interests of herself, and what she saw as the broader interests of Québec society. As noted in citation above, the approach would be one of collaboration between classes, and given the breadth of the collaboration, would not necessarily constitute superior advocacy for any one. The process was not so different than that of the international unions, but the goals were predicated upon vastly different ideological visions of society.

In a real sense, there are no “new” classes conceived out of the reorganisation of Québec society. Thus far, what we are witnessing is a struggle between elite class fractions in seeking ascendancy under an evolving mode of production. Perhaps the CSN and CEQ stated it best in their 1979 publication on the history of labour in Québec.

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<sup>253</sup> *Op. Cit.* Coleman, William D., *The Independence Movement in Québec, 1945 – 1980*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984, p.51.

“Definitively, one might think that, just as the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress had been “taken in hand” by the American AFL and the international unions in 1902, the CTCC had been, in a certain way, “taken in hand” by the clergy and the nationalist petite-bourgeoisie of Québec.”<sup>254</sup>

I ask again, under either vision and organisation of the interests of Québec’s working classes, *cui bono*? Both approaches are class collaborationist, and both favour class interests other than those purely of the working classes. In the case of the international unions, and at least initially in our historical examination, the interests served were those of an elite fraction of highly-skilled workers, who because of the division of labour here were often English speaking. There was no general concern expressed for the working classes as a whole, nor particularly for the majority of unskilled or marginally skilled workers in the Québec economy, who were for the most part Francophones. In the case of the Catholic unions, the class benefits to the workers were clearly less than those afforded by the different collaborationist approach of the international unions who, regardless of the incomplete nature of their class struggle, at least employed tactics like the strike to win important concessions from capital. The expression of workers’ demands in Québec were significantly muted by their advocacy being conducted through the Catholic church, and these in many ways were qualified by the petit bourgeois and quasi-bourgeois class interests of the province’s small capital and the Church herself. And as posed above, “where was the role of the Church in all of this?” What was her “class interest?”

“Arès wrote that the church had a juridical or governing power in the sense that it was the final arbiter over what was good and what was evil in society. Again, therefore, this power was not restricted to spiritual matters. The questions of good and evil cut squarely across the whole plane of social life – politics, labour relations, appropriate recreational activity, literature, the arts, the curriculum in the schools, the content of the news media, and so on. The church in Quebec had reserved for itself the right to intervene in all these areas and did so often, when it perceived a need to decide on what was right and what was wrong.”<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> *Op. Cit.* CSN, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, Beauceville, Québec, CSN-CEQ, 1979, p. 69. My translation of “En définitive, on peut penser que, tout comme le Congrès des métiers et du travail du Canada (CMTC) avait été, d’une certaine façon, “pris en main” par l’AFL américaine et ses unions internationales, en 1902, la CTCC a été, d’une certaine façon, “pris en main” par le clergé et la petite-bourgeoisie nationaliste du Québec.”

<sup>255</sup> *Op. Cit.* Coleman, William D., *The Independence Movement in Québec, 1945 – 1980*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984, p.50.

Rioux and Rocher argue for the absence of a Québec bourgeoisie. Yet, given the historical, and at this stage of her history, ongoing role of the Church elite, did it not act as a *de facto* bourgeois class, organising the ongoing dominant class relations that mark the historic bloc of Québec society? In organising those interests, and with an eye towards what Polanyi reminds us of both the wider definition of class, class interests, and how they must serve other class interests as well, can we not see the Church's involvement with the unions as one of an elite collaboration with a specific fragment of labour leadership in Québec; one that is French, Catholic and aligned with the broader social project both by initial orientation, and the expression of collective self-interest? I submit that the answer to these questions is yes. The Church addressed itself to the French Canadian workers as a whole, and to their leaders in particular. The goal was the preservation of a French, Catholic society in North America, and the preservation and maintenance of that society demanded a close collaboration between social classes. That the greater benefit of that collaboration accrued to Québec's elite classes is the answer to my repeated question: collectively, *cui bono*? Nevertheless, the exercise was clearly in support of a shared vision of Québec society; a society presumed to be under siege. Such an attack demanded a collective response expressed on a number of fronts: social, economic and political.

**Corporatism Manifest: The *Act respecting Collective Agreement Decrees of 1934*:**

How would the political expression of this view of society manifest itself? Evidently, the empirical measure would be through policy that by its nature would reflect the ideological position of a united and corporate Québec society. In marked contrast to the liberal, pluralistic competition for resources such an expression would reflect a collective and socially stabilising approach to labour relations and collective bargaining.

“Since 1934, the Québec *Act respecting Collective Agreement Decrees* has allowed the Minister of Labour of that Canadian province to issue a decree extending the application of a collective agreement to all firms – be they unionized or non-unionized – that belong to a broader occupational and geographical sector. This Act, which articulates the framework of a special labour relations system borrowed from European tradition, is unique in North America.”<sup>256</sup>

A number of things make this policy initiative unique. It applies across both economic and geographic sectors, and applies to unionised and non-unionised workers. It was conceived to produce a certain social and economic stability through the corporate organisation of collective interests and the state’s intervention directly in the collective bargaining process. And as a model for state intervention into that process, it remains the template for ongoing state intervention to the present day, albeit increasingly within the context of the public sector, and in retreat from the advance of the increasingly neo-liberal ideology in the private sector. Both of these latter tendencies are important for our understanding of the legitimacy of state intervention in the Québec economy in the present. Nevertheless, and under the rubric of my current examination, it bears a certain scrutiny as an example of the unique and evolving nature of Québec society. More specifically, it gives evidence to the preference of the Québec state and society at that time for a corporate model of society, and this in opposition to the preferences of the international unions representing the larger part of labour. Valée and Charest inform us that:

“In the 1930s, the Catholic unions supported the Act and the corporatist model of society, while the American or ‘international’ unions, which were in majority at that time in Quebec, were opposed to it because they feared that it would lead to the stranglehold of industrial relations.”<sup>257</sup>

Notwithstanding, and this contrary to the ongoing position of influential leaders in the Church, they further put forward that:

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<sup>256</sup> Vallée, Guylaine, and Charest, Jean, “Globalisation and the Transformation of State Regulation of Labour: The Case of Recent Amendments to the *Quebec Collective Agreements Act*,” in the *International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2001, p. 79.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.* p. 82.

“In the late 1930s, the Catholic unions abandoned their corporatist project and quickly distanced themselves from the decree system. For a long time, the union movement maintained that the *Act respecting Collective Agreement Decrees* provided no incentive to unionize, thus halting the expansion of the union movement.”<sup>258</sup>

The initial engagement by the Catholic unions and its rejection by the international unions is quite understandable and reducible to their specific views of the role of the state. The classic liberal view of the international unions was that the state had no role to play in the self-regulating market; a market driven by control of the supply-and-demand of precious resources, resources that include skilled labour. From the corporatist point of view, the state is not, indeed cannot be, excluded as it is an integral corporate partner. The legislative corporate initiative started well before the *Act* noted above, and was contemporaneous with the rise of the Catholic unions generally. As Rouillard puts it:

“Born of different reasons and circumstances than the international unions, the Catholic ‘centrale’ did not share their fears as regards the State. The legislature had always appeared as an ally that would allow them to oust the internationals and put in their place the legislative framework needed to establish the corporations...It is from this viewpoint that one must understand the Law respecting Professional Incorporation, which was accepted in 1924 (Professional Syndicates Act) in spite of the opposition of the internationals who feared becoming subject to civil action.”<sup>259</sup>

The actual legal status of labour unions as incorporated bodies was a bone of contention between the international and Catholic unions, yet for the latter it was their corporate and not necessarily incorporated status that was key. It granted them formal legal recognition, even if the organisation and direction of that corporate entity was dominated by Church elites.

Notwithstanding the observations of Valée and Charest cited above, Coleman argues that the corporatist agenda marked the C.T.C.C., and even the early C.S.N. right up until the late 1950s, and even acknowledges the ongoing influence of Catholic social policy as inculcated within the new C.S.N. constitution when the federation broke away from the

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<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.* p. 82. The authors acknowledge that the position is contested, and cite Hébert, G., Morin, Gaston, ed., *Traité de négociation collective*, Montréal, 1992, ch. 28.

<sup>259</sup> *Op. Cit.* and *In Passim*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*. p.169. My translation of “Née dans des circonstances et pour raisons différentes des internationaux, la centrale catholique ne partage pas leurs crainte à l’égard l’État. Le législateur lui est toujours apparu comme un allié qui pouvait lui permettre d’évincer les internationaux et mettre en place le cadre législatif requis pour l’établissement de corporations... C’est dans cette optique qu’il faut comprendre sa demande d’une loi d’incorporation professionnelle, qui est acceptée en 1924 (loi des syndicats professionnels) malgré l’opposition des internationaux qui craignent d’être passibles de poursuites judiciaires.”



Church and changed its name. Specifically regarding an economic planning commission proposed by the C.T.C.C. in 1958:

“The corporatist planning mechanism proposed by the CTCC was also not foreign to the thinking of more liberal elements of the church hierarchy in the late 1950s. In 1959 Cardinal Léger, archbishop of Montréal, and in 1960 the Canadian episcopate had called for the creation of similar bodies in order to fight unemployment. The idea of collaboration among major social groups was very much in the air.”<sup>260</sup>

Coleman traces remnants of the corporatist tradition politically to as late as the late 1950s with the conservative Alliance laurentienne calling for an independent Catholic corporate state. Economically, he argues for the influence of corporatist ideology amongst small capital right up to the creation of the Conseil du Patronat du Québec in 1966.<sup>261</sup>

Vallée and Charest argue that the *Act respecting Collective Agreement Decrees* was seen by the unions as an impediment to the drive to unionise workers, presumably because they could have their cake and eat it too. Do recall however that the application was geographic as well as by sector, and provided the unions with access to a role determining working conditions in areas and sectors where they had not constructed complete inroads.

Further, and as to the specific advantage for the corporatist vision, Rouillard argues that:

“The most important advantage of the law was to assure the same advantages for non-unionised workers as obtained by those who were unionised. The decree fixed the minimum working conditions that the union was always at liberty to extend through a particular collective agreement with an employer. The application of the decree was the responsibility of a parity committee formed by the unions and employers concerned. For the CTCC, these committees constituted the embryo of the corporation, the basic cell of corporate society that they dreamed of since their foundation.”<sup>262</sup>

I belabour the point because it is key to the thesis offered here that we carry an understanding of the consistent integration of a broader social mission into our analysis of class behaviours throughout Québec’s labour history. In my examination of the first historical period, I made

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<sup>260</sup> *Op. Cit.* Coleman, William D., *The Independence Movement in Québec, 1945 – 1980*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984, p.99.

<sup>261</sup> See *Ibid.* p. 217, and 119 respectively.

<sup>262</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*. p.171. My translation of “L’avantage le plus important de la loi est d’assurer aux travailleurs non syndiqués les avantages obtenus par les syndiqués. Le décret fixe des conditions minimales de travail qu’il est toujours loisible pour un syndicat de dépasser en signant une convention collective particulière avec un employeur. L’application du décret relève d’un comité paritaire formé par les syndiqués et les employeurs concernés. Pour le CTCC, ces comités constituent les embryons de la corporation, cellule de base de la société corporatiste dont elle rêve depuis sa fondation.”

the observation that the attraction of groups like the Chevaliers du travail was not simply the degree of autonomy allowed to local organisers, nor simply their ability to unite workers across trades and skills to include minimally skilled and unskilled labour, but that they united workers, and occasionally employers and intellectuals whilst proposing a broader social project, one reflective of the values of Québec's historic bloc, and this in spite of the profound mistrust of these bodies by the Catholic church. I made allusions to the application of that vision right up until the 1960s and the social projects of the C.S.N. and others allied under the Common Front. Such a temporally extended connection can only be supported if we are able to establish a certain thematic and ideological continuity throughout. Some institutional fragment or trace of both the corporate tradition and the social policy of the Catholic church must remain evident up until our final period of historical examination running from the Quiet Revolution to the present. Then, and only then, can we argue for an unbroken preoccupation with the kind of social project that unites language, culture and broader identity, and seconds class interests into that larger social arena; the ongoing and present fixation on a socially, culturally and linguistically unified and coherent Québec within the consciousness of the social imaginary.

Rouillard demands two conditions in applying and supporting this corporate model: “the requirement of labour unionism, and the role of the State.”<sup>263</sup> The role of the state, the corporate partners, and the classes that comprised them in collaboration and in conflict mark the analytical undercurrent of this exercise.

Why the ascendancy of a corporate model at this time? Two fundamental reasons are offered here, one a general observation related to the capitalist mode of production and its

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<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.* p. 171. My translation of the conclusion of the larger phrase; “Comme on peut imaginer, ce modèle d'organisation du travail rencontre plusieurs problèmes d'application. Nous en retenons deux : la nécessité du syndicalisme et le rôle de l'État.” Given the tendency in French towards employing lower case for many proper nouns, I note the consistent use of the upper case for “État” employed by Rouillard and Poulantzas. Consistent with the position of the state as *primus inter pares* in most corporate models, as well as in the five institutional forms of *Regulation*, this marks both the unity and primacy of the state as an institution.

liberal ideological foundation, and one specific to Québec. The Great Depression constituted the single most socially destructive manifestation of the failure of liberalism and capitalism since the excesses of industrial capitalism early in the 1800s. Its effects were felt as powerfully in Québec as elsewhere. And in Québec, such a model promised a unity of collective interests that hearkened back to an organic past, and denied the atomising materialistic individualism of liberal ideology. As Rouillard states: “In the thirties, the failure of liberalism as an economic system and as a political regime sparked new interest amongst intellectuals for social corporatism.”<sup>264</sup> The roots of this corporatism was drawn from a European tradition fed through the social doctrine of the Catholic church there before here. Thus, the tradition in application was foreign to the ideological soil of the rest of Canada specifically, and all of North America generally.

Having invoked the role of the state as pivotal to the successful application of the model, we need to momentarily consider the effects of an ideological response from the liberal position. Vallée and Charest have noted the unique nature of the *Act respecting Collective Agreement Decrees*. They cite Bernier in contrasting the ideological nature of the *Act* with more main-stream liberal legislation in the area of labour barely a decade later in 1944.

“[T]he adoption of the *Labour Relations Act* in 1944, that was based on the American *Wagner Act*, led to a focus on decentralized bargaining at the establishment level. In so doing, Bernier argues, Quebec chose to make decentralized collective bargaining the dominant system in Quebec. From that point onwards, the essence of the decree system had been continuously undermined. This resulted in a permanent tension lasting nearly sixty years linked to the coexistence of two very different systems, ultimately favouring the dominant Wagner model.”<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.* p. 171. My translation of “Dans les années trente, la faillite du libéralisme comme système économique et comme régime politique suscite un intérêt nouveau chez les intellectuels pour le corporatisme social.”

<sup>265</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Vallée, Guylaine, and Charest, Jean, p. 82. The authors cite Bernier, J. “Juridical Extension in Quebec: A New Challenge Unique in North America,” in *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, 1993, 48, 4, pp. 745-761, and Bernier, J., “L’extension juridique des conventions collectives au Québec, une approche comparative,” in *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*, 1983, 38, pp. 532-544.

As important as illustrating the inevitable liberal tendency, here we note the support that it lends to the argument for a lingering corporate tendency within Québec society during this historical period, and even up to the present. Whether anything remains of the corporatist tradition, or for a genuinely shared vision of Québec as a social project, remains to be seen in my final historical examination.

What was the nature of these early Catholic unions, and what areas did they initially cover? Some examination must be conducted as to the evolving nature of labour organisation over this and the final historical period. I have alluded to the role of the state's unionised professionals earlier in the chapters on the theoretical basis for this exercise. The absence of that class fraction in early labour organisations, and their ascendancy over the next half-century are key to understanding the changing nature of class relations, and the rise and fall of specific class fractions themselves. Clearly, the collaboration I am examining here involves a working class whose composition is quite different from that of the present. More strikingly, it is patently obvious that the pivotal role of the Catholic church elite is no longer pertinent to either the organisation of labour, nor particularly to Québec society as a whole.

Employing statistics from the federal Ministry of Labour, Rouillard has made the following observations. He counts 23 Catholic unions in Québec as of 1916 compared to 236 international unions, 70 out of the total of 329 are affiliated with neither group and constitute independent and national unions. These unions are distributed across categories including mining, construction, metallurgy, wood, pulp and paper, printing, clothing, textiles, foodstuffs, leather, transportation, and services, with a very small number not specifically accounted for under "other." Conspicuous by their absence in comparison with the present are state and municipal employees, as a group or class. By 1921, the founding year of the C.T.C.C., the number of Catholic unions had increased almost six-fold from 23 to 120. International unions increased by not quite a third in the same period of time, numbering 334

up 98 from 236. Notwithstanding a brief decline for all unions during the mid-twenties, the total number of unions remained virtually unchanged between 1921 and 1931. Catholic unions held their number, increasing their total by only one during this period, but international unions saw a decline in total numbers from 334 to 286. Clearly, once Catholic unions had found their niche, they kept it, and the decline of the internationals was at the hands of independent and national unions.<sup>266</sup> The international unions continued their decline after 1931 when they held 58.2% of all unions in Québec, stabilising at around 45.1% by 1961. Catholic unions saw an increase from 24.6% of all unions in 1931 to around a third of the total for the next twenty years. They peaked at 39% of the total number of unions in Québec by 1951, then dropping to around 29.2% a decade later in 1961.<sup>267</sup>

The numbers cited above beg and inform a series of observations. First, the expansion and influence of the Catholic unions was immediate, and continued its growth, peaking but a decade before the Quiet Revolution, and holding not quite a third of the total number of unions by the early 1960s. Second, that their *raison d'être* – their combination of cultural and class advocacy as practiced and as communicated by their social policy – held a constant resonance throughout this second historical period that held its place in the collective social imaginary of Québec's working classes. I have noted the preoccupation with the larger social milieu earlier, and drawn attention to it just previously by way of putting forth an important key part of the general argument: the unique conjunction of social class and the broader aspects of identity – culture, language, and religion – have been and remain inextricably connected in Québec. Clearly, Québec's social imaginary has always held a vision of her society as different from the rest of Canada. This ongoing social project has always sought an integrative totality where class and identity are united within the whole, but the core of that identity has always been predicated on an unity centred in language and culture; French

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<sup>266</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*. See tables 2.6 and 2.7 on p. 131.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.* p. 210. See tables 4.2 and 4.3.

Canadian, now Québécois culture. Those interests have traditionally been allied because of a shared perception that French Canadians have been oppressed as a class and as an identity. I argue that such may well have been, and is empirically supportable, but that this no longer applies, at least within Québec. Thus, what we are examining here is the continuity of a social project conceived as a collective response to oppression and meant to guarantee the preservation and unity of the whole set of collective interests centred on a broader identity that includes class: economic, social, political and cultural. The social project is one of inclusion, but founded on a shared identity that today is theoretically predicated solely on shared language. As we shall see, this becomes problematic both for those not of the now dominant traditional Québécois culture, and for the social project itself.

The form within which this social project cloaks itself has been changeable over time, but many of the fundamental aspects of it remain, most particularly the idea that Québec society is more socially democratic by its natural inclination. Thus, when as a result of the Second World War, the entire concept of the corporate organisation of society was dismissed as fascism, the *form* of project changes. The C.T.C.C. and other unions rapidly distanced themselves from any identification with corporatism, *per se*, but transmuted much of the core preoccupation with an integrative society by moving towards another collaborative model, one again borrowed from an evolving Catholic social policy, that centred itself around the idea of reforming the capitalist system at the level of individual enterprise. A closer partnership between labour and capital is what was envisioned. This theme has cycled in and out of fashion since the end of the war and has remained in place even to the present day. Rouillard describes the movement away from corporatism towards this new ideological position as follows:

“It was replaced for a time by the idea of business reform, a theory elaborated by French Catholic thinkers who sought to transform the economic system by reforming the basic unit of capitalism, the firm. Coming out of the principle that these possess a social character, one then deduces that the employer’s exclusive right to control his property is not absolute. Since production, profits and the growth of the firm results from the contributions of both labour and capital, they thought that the workers had the right to a share of the benefits, even to the management and ownership of the business.”<sup>268</sup>

One can imagine the reaction of capital to such proposals, yet they have marked a series of similar proposals and real initiatives right up to the present day, and any participation in such experiments by capital has been false-hearted at best, and usually results in little or no benefit to the working classes in Québec. Class collaboration, at least in the sense as practiced and promoted by the Catholic unions, Church elites and capital have proven less than profitable for the working classes.

### **Ongoing and New Class Cleavages Within the Shared Identity**

In the previous section, I drew a certain attention to the demographic profile of the organised labour movement in Québec early in the last century. This was done in order to prepare the reader for the introduction of two subsequent developments that have significantly influenced the nature of the present movement: the unionisation of intellectual labour, and the growing role of the state and political elites in first accommodating, then displacing Church elites in the management of social institutions related to education, health and welfare.

We have seen that the responsibility for organisation and direction of the union movement early in the last century was firmly set within the purview of the Church. The same Catholic Church enjoyed effectively unlimited control over all forms of French language education within the Catholic confessional divisions as set out by the British North

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<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.* p. 219. My translation of “Elle le remplace pour un temps par l’idée de réforme de l’entreprise, théorie élaborée par des penseurs catholiques français qui vise à transformer le système économique en réformant la cellule de base du capitalisme, l’entreprise. Partant du principe que celle-ci possède un caractère sociale, on en déduit que le droit de propriété de l’employeur sur son entreprise n’est pas absolu. Puisque la production, les profits et la croissance de l’entreprise résultent de l’apport du capital et du travail, ils estiment que les travailleurs ont un droit à la participation aux bénéfices, à la gestion et à la propriété de l’entreprise.”

America Act. Thus, the Church was in a rather delicate class position as regards the earliest forms of organised intellectual labour, that being the professional organisation of Catholic school teachers. Traditionally, the Catholic Church has always recruited, trained, and directed the formation of Québec's professional classes. We acknowledge this in the area of the usual professions – law, medicine, and of course the Church's own directing elite – but should also acknowledge their parallel role in the area of education. In many ways, the Church was in the same position as regards their double role as employers and labour organisers, as the contemporary state is as regards the large civil service sector. The State, and the Church inform, and subsequently are informed by, the petit bourgeois classes, and as such, the socialisation of these classes to their roles is critical to maintaining hegemonic relations over time; relations that stabilise the historic bloc that makes for the institutional, cultural and social foundations of Québec society. Similar conflicts of interests and serendipities of class collaboration marked both relationships.

Because the nature of the Church's involvement in the relationship between capital and labour, the legitimacy of labour's demands, as recognised by the Church and through the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* were based on an acknowledgement that capital was not redistributing a fair share of the profits of production, and this to the greater detriment of society as a whole. The support of the Church for the grievances of labour were thus predicated on an attempt to rebalance the scales of distribution so as to produce a more stable society. No such calculation entered into the Church's relationship with her own employees, for in a society where the Church holds the responsibility for education as well as a diversity of other social institutions, the Church acts in fact as an employer. Notwithstanding the position taken on the differences between the relationship between labour and capital versus that between the Church and her dominated classes, the relationship is comparable if for only one key reason: those who work for the Church are as beholden for their economic



conditions as labour is to capital. Rouillard cites the writing of the Archbishop of Montréal, Monsignor Bruchési, as directed to the Catholic teachers who sought to organise beyond a simple professional body charged with conducting pedagogical discussion in 1919.

“But I demand this evening of the teachers of Montréal to put aside for now any idea of forming a union or syndicate. Rest assured that I am not against unions or syndicates, but for those who enrich their employers. The protectors of the teachers are the school commissioners, the directors, inspectors, Bishops, and Superintendent, who make up the Council of Public Instruction; they are taken with the question. If it is not enough to have made the complaint, the Bishops, the Council of Public Instruction, the Superintendent, and the Government know how to find the best solution. But let there be no union like those of the workers.”<sup>269</sup>

An interesting observation is offered here on the relationship between “productive” and “unproductive” labour. Note the Bishop’s comments on the legitimacy of unionisation so long it is applied to employees who “enrich their employers.” The Church demonstrates a paternalistic attitude towards her own workers consistent with her attitude towards the working classes while claiming to be different from capital. Yet, the economic condition of the teachers were below those for comparable skilled workers in the trade unions. The legitimacy of their representations were denied because the Church was not “profiting” by their exploitation of the teachers, and that the teachers were not of the working classes. Yet they exchanged their labour for a wage. Their class position was described by one of the professional journals of the time as being “half of the people and half bourgeois.”<sup>270</sup> So long as their advocacy extended no further than the discussion of pedagogical issues and stayed

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<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.* p. 227. From a letter by the Archbishop as printed in *Le Devoir*, December 23, 1919, p. 6. My translation of “Mais je demande ce soir aux instituteurs et institutrices de Montréal de mettre de côté pour le moment, toute idée d’union ou de syndicat. Soyez certains que je ne suis pas contre l’union ou le syndicat, mais pour ceux qui enrichissent leurs patrons. Les protecteurs des instituteurs et des institutrices, ce sont les commissaires d’école, les directeurs, les inspecteurs, les évêques et le surintendant constituent le Conseil de l’instruction publique ; ils s’occupent de la question. Si ce n’est pas assez que l’on fasse une plainte, les évêques, les Conseil de l’instruction publique ; le surintendant, le gouvernement sauront bien trouver une solution. Mais qu’il n’y ait point d’union formée comme chez les ouvriers.”

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* p. 227-8. Rouillard cites the director of the journal *L’Enseignement* in the edition for March of 1952. Interestingly, I recall the opposition voiced by the Director of a small unit dedicated to the presentation of classic cinema at Concordia University towards the attempt of his one and only projectionist’s joining an in-house union of technicians affiliated with the CSN. His opposition was predicated on the argument that the projectionist was in fact management (chef d’une équipe, un cadre), and it was hinted at that by so acting to represent himself as a “worker”, he was betraying his employer. Such, then and now, are the rationalisations of the elite.

firmly away from a genuine class representation of their collective interests, all was fine. Once they started advocating for their real class interests, they became the target of organised and coordinated oppression by the State and the Church; a form of elite accommodation and cooperation calculated to buttress hegemony.

Notwithstanding the founding of mutual-welfare and quasi-professional associations dating back to the early mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by teachers, the first initiative at a genuine form of class representation was the subject of Bruchési's letter cited above. The reaction of the School Commission was to refuse to rehire sixty-eight of the supporters of the union. The only concession granted to those who lost their jobs was that they could be rehired on the condition that they sign an agreement promising never to join a union. Twenty of the sixty-eight signed, and the Association dissolved soon after.<sup>271</sup> No further attempts were made to organise for the purposes of true class advocacy until the mid-1940s. Initiatives in rural and urban areas between 1939 and 1942 produced the creation of the Corporation Général des instituteurs et institutrices catholiques de la province du Québec (CIC), in 1945. In 1946, the corporation was sanctioned in law, and subscription was made mandatory for all Catholic teachers.<sup>272</sup> Ultimately, the CIC formed the foundation for the creation of the Corporation de l'enseignement du Québec in 1967, thence the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ) in 1972 which was part of the powerful Front Commun in the 1970s. It has subsequently become the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ) as its mandates have now extended beyond the area of instruction and teaching alone.

The pattern I describe here as follows is consistent with the response of the state to any attempt to advocate for the class interests of intellectual workers. The Alliance des professeurs de Montréal, broke with the CIC in 1949 after rejecting an arbitral decision on

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<sup>271</sup> See *Ibid.* p. 229. Rouillard identifies the Corporation as the Corporation general des instituteurs et institutrices de la province. The fuller appellation used subsequent to this citation is more complete and correct. Abbreviated to simply the Corporation des Instituteurs/Institutrices Catholic, or CIC.

<sup>272</sup> An interesting fact at a time when the "closed shop" was being strenuously resisted by capital and the State.

their new contracts, and launched a one week strike to press their demands. The Alliance was decertified and a rival organisation immediately came forward to replace them. Rouillard states that “the new union gave itself the task of rebuilding union solidarity “in charity and peace, in respect for authority and the laws, and with faith in the instructions of our Pastors.”<sup>273</sup> Quite clearly, both the Church and the State were unwilling to suffer any manifestation of genuine class advocacy, and were willing to deconstruct any attempt at effective organising by decertification of the institutional initiative, and replacing it with a domesticated “house” union.

Elite accommodation can work in both directions. The muting of class struggle through seconding its manifestation into a movement ostensibly to protect shared collective interests of identity, language and culture gave the Church social control while capital gained a tamer economic arena than might have otherwise been seen, certainly under the leadership of the international unions. Both capital and the Church enjoyed a condition of social stability as a result.<sup>274</sup> Political elites were capable of contributing to the accommodation as well. For example, in the mid-1930s, when the Département de l’instruction publique recommended increasing the salaries of teachers to \$300 a year, the Duplessis government rolled that back to \$250. The greater beneficiary was the Church, who would have ended picking up the bill for all Catholic instruction in the province.<sup>275</sup> It should be recalled that the initial corporate recognition of the teaching profession was part of the 1934 Act.

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<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.* p. 230. My translation of “Le nouveau syndicat se propose de refaire l’unité syndicale « dans la charité et la paix, dans le respect de l’autorité et des lois comme dans la fidélité aux directives de nos pasteurs ».” Rouillard cites *L’Enseignement*, for March 1954, p. 6.

<sup>274</sup> Capitalism abhors social instability and yet is ambivalent as to the political means used to obtain it. Capital will seek a global economic and geographic sector that gives it the greatest advantage – stability, low wages, conciliatory government – and seek to locate production wherever these conditions can be best supplied. See Hymer, Stephen. H., *The International Operations of National Firms: A Study of Direct Foreign Investment*. PhD Dissertation. Published posthumously. Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 1976 (1970), and Cohen R.B. et al., eds, *The Multinational Corporation: A Radical Approach. Papers by Stephen Herbert Hymer*, Cambridge, Mass., Cambridge University Press, 1979.

<sup>275</sup> See *Op. Cit.* CSN, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, Beauceville, Québec, CSN-CEQ, 1979, p. 101.

Notwithstanding, recognition brought no obligation for employers to negotiate a collective agreement. Recognition without recourse to redress pressing home your rights is an empty form of acknowledgement. To have title to corporate recognition as a professional while being paid as a pauper is of little solace when paying the bills.

The elite response to the class demands of these budding groups of organic intellectuals is rather telling on a number of fronts. First off, and clearly in contrast to the begrudging recognition of the rights of traditionally defined “workers” to organise – and even this was externally precipitated – neither the State nor the Church were willing to acknowledge or address the class demands of the very class fraction that was charged with the most important mission of Québec society: the socialisation of her children into the language, values, beliefs and practices that maintain the *status quo*, and reinforce the historic bloc. Perhaps the size, specificity, and majority gender of the class fraction invited an attempt to crush rather than even minimally respond to collective demands that were quite obviously legitimate in comparison with other workers. Certainly, if we examine the State attitude towards other growing classes of intellectual workers within the structures of the Québec state herself, we see a similar draconian reaction. Admittedly, at this early time, most of those arranged under the appellation “public servants” were workers in traditional trades, including transportation with all that implies from bus drivers, conductors and mechanics, to those employed in the construction of physical infrastructure. The group that we might ultimately include in a list of bureaucrats, professionals and related organic intellectuals in the sense understood by Gramsci or Poulantzas was small, but destined for significant growth after the Quiet Revolution. Still, all were held under the general rubric of “Public Servants,” and were addressed as a group under the laws. The expansion of state enterprise during the war years, and the subsequent growth in the number and strength of unionised workers had set the stage for a new Labour Code in 1944, the *Loi des relations ouvriers*.

“In the public service – the definition of which is very broad – the law was more ferocious still: strikes were squarely forbidden notably following a wave of work stoppages in Montréal’s municipal services in 1943. The Law Regarding Disagreements between Public Servants and their Employers was voted into power in February 1944 by the Godbout government. It prohibited any recourse to strike in government services, amongst the teachers, employees of the school commissions, hospitals, municipalities and other public bodies, amongst workers in public transport, electricity and gas, telephone and telegraph, Moreover, state employees and the police – they too were deprived of the right to strike – not afforded the right to affiliate to a central union body nor even to an organisation that brought together other categories of salaried employees.”<sup>276</sup>

It is important to note that, notwithstanding the perennial adversarial relationship between the conservative Duplessis regime and organised labour in Québec, the Liberal Party, here cited under the leadership of Adélard Godbout, has never balked at passing litigation limiting class advocacy and action amongst the State’s employees. The jockeying and posing of political elites for working class support may mark momentary differences between party choices, but in the end, political elites only respond to the withdrawal of electoral legitimacy by the working classes in a purely pragmatic fashion: offer whatever promises are required to make the alternative look worse than your own party in order to gain, or regain office. Electoral choices are offered within the range of elite alternatives, which overlap and produce a range of ideological positions all firmly set within the parameters of the ideological foundation of the historic bloc. Recalling the citation of Poulantzas earlier in my theoretical chapters, there is no question of “dual power” in the democratic state, where the masses hold any real leverage against hegemony. The dominated classes are retained within the state as precisely that: dominated classes who may only choose from amongst a range of political alternatives that may at one time or another give them what is apparently more than other choices.

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<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.* p. 105. My translation of “Dans les services publics – dont la définition est très large –, la loi est encore plus féroce : la grève est carrément interdite à la suite notamment de la vague de débrayage dans les services municipaux de Montréal, en 1943. La “Loi des différends entre les services publics et leurs salariés” est votée en février 1944 par le gouvernement Godbout. Elle prohibe tout recours à la grève dans les services du gouvernement, chez les enseignants, les employés des commissions scolaires, des hôpitaux, des municipalités et des autres corps publics, chez les travailleurs de transports publics, de l’électricité et du gaz, du téléphone et du télégraphe. En outre, les fonctionnaires et les policiers – eux aussi privés du droit de grève – n’ont pas le droit de s’affilier à une centrale syndicale ni même d’appartenir à une organisation qui regroupe d’autres catégories de salariés.”

In addition to the above, recall as well that elite fractions seek to enlist the support of other classes in their quest for hegemonic power. Thus, Duplessis and the Union Nationale relied heavily on the agrarian working classes for electoral support, while the Liberals were more successful in urban areas. Shifts in class position – the rise and fall of class positions and classes themselves in the sense put forward earlier by Polanyi – are related to changes in both the nature of class alliances as well as the relative fortunes of the classes in alliance themselves. The decline of the Union nationale certainly was marked by the death of Duplessis, but the decline was inevitable with the demographic shift from rural to urban that accelerated with the second World War. Similarly, the decline of the Church precipitated a rearrangement and new synthesis of the petit bourgeois alliance with Church elites. The vacuum was filled in many ways by the evolving nationalist movement. Religion declines, but the greater part of culture – language and the social values inculcated in the historic bloc – remain, demanding new proposals, and new alliances.

### **Labour and Political Parties: Choice in the Absence of a Real Workers' Party**

I have offered little on the relationship between organised labour and the political process and in particular the relationship to specific party choices. That is because, unlike European societies, Canadian labour has always entertained an ambivalent relationship with the political process itself, and party affiliation in particular. During almost the entire first historical period examined here, the extent of organised labour's political activities were limited to petitioning the existing governments at the federal and provincial levels. Even the idea of supporting specific candidates within the traditional parties only became part of labour's strategy in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rouillard says that during this time "And, for the first time, workers explicitly formulated demands in the name of their class

affiliation.”<sup>277</sup> Political awareness trailed class consciousness due to a number of factors. First, the policy of the international unions was one of non-affiliation with specific parties. Workers were expected to support those who had shown themselves to be sensitive to working class issues, but no formal involvement beyond individual action was part of the international position. As Samuel Gompers stated: “Vote for your friends and against your enemies, but as unionists, mistrust all political parties.”<sup>278</sup> Canadian and Québec unions affiliated with the CTLC and MTLC specifically, opted for a more direct involvement, but this was initially limited to the overt support for “workers’ candidates” generally from the traditional parties. This position was reflective of that of the Chevaliers du travail who were more politically proactive than the international unions. We have examined the fortunes of the Chevaliers du travail at the hands of the international unions, and thus it is not surprising that the political ambivalence of the latter should have won out in the end. Notwithstanding, some early examples of successful “labour” candidates may be offered here.

In the 1872 federal election, Louis-Amable Jetté defeated Georges-Etienne Cartier in the riding of Montréal-Est. Some labour sources identify him as a “Liberal Worker” candidate, but it must be acknowledged that this young lawyer, who had recently defended a priest from the Montreal congregation of Notre-Dame in Québec Superior Court for his refusal to bury someone in hallowed ground because of his civil associations, was in fact a petit bourgeois with certain attractions for both his position on labour and his acceptability to the Church. He ran again in the 1874 election under the straight Liberal ticket and was re-

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<sup>277</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, p. 53.

<sup>278</sup> Gompers is cited in *Op. Cit.* CSN, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, Beauceville, Québec, CSN-CEQ, 1979, p. 75. My translation of “Votez pour vos amis et contre vos ennemis, mais, en tant que syndiqués, méfiez-vous de tout parti politique!” No source for the citation is offered, but it is consistent with Gompers attitudes as expressed elsewhere. In 1908, Henry White in an article for the *North American Review* stated that ““Stand by your friends; defeat your enemies” is Mr. Gompers’ parting slogan in every message.” See White, Henry, “The Labor Unions in the Presidential Campaign,” in *The North American Review*, vol. 188, no. 634, September, 1908, p. 372-382.

elected<sup>279</sup>. Perhaps a clearer example of a genuine “workers’ candidate” would be Alphonse-Télesphore Lepine who was elected in the federal by-election of 1888. Lepine was a “typesetter and member of the Chevaliers du travail, was the first-secretary of the Montreal Trades and Labour Central Council, founded in 1886 by the Chevaliers and the international unions.”<sup>280</sup> Lepine was elected again in 1891 and 1896, and the parliamentary biography identifies him as an “Independent Conservative.” Lepine was initially elected in Montréal-Est, as had been Jetté in 1872. He was elected in Ste. Marie in 1896, following in the footsteps of Joseph Béland, a stonemason who was President of the Montreal Trades and Labour Council, and enjoyed their first formal endorsement of a political candidate. Béland was identified with Honoré Mercier’s Parti national.

Perhaps the best illustration of the nature of labour’s interventions in the political arena during this second historical period is offered by the creation of the Worker’s Party in 1899, and the subsequent electoral victories of Alphonse Verville. Verville, originally a plumber, was elected President of the CMTC in 1904, and was the successful workers’ candidate for the Maisonneuve riding in the federal by-election of 1906. He sat for fifteen years. However, and notwithstanding both his political roots and the working-class nature of Maisonneuve riding,<sup>281</sup> he represented himself as a “Liberal-Workers” candidate from the election of 1911 onwards.

The identification of workers’ candidates with the mainstream parties became an ultimately practical and essentially inevitable reaction to the criticism generally levelled against all labour candidates by the mainstream parties and the Church during this period. All were labelled socialists or anarchists. Thus, any attempt at creating a genuine workers’ party

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<sup>279</sup> For a complete biography of Jetté see <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-f.php?BioId=41596>, downloaded June 29, 2010.

<sup>280</sup> *Op. Cit.* CSN, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, Beauceville, Québec, CSN-CEQ, 1979, p. 48.

<sup>281</sup> Rouillard calculates that the riding was made up of approximately 80% salaried workers, and it remains a working class neighbourhood to this day. See *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, p. 103.



in the European vein was crushed because of the ideological identification of organised labour's political expression with socialism. This was less the case in English Canada, or even in English Québec. But any potential synthesis of class interests that crossed linguistic and cultural boundaries was pre-empted by French Canada's antithetical reaction to any socialist thought. In fact, and while the schism was inevitable, the more radical elements within the socialist circles precipitated the split between the political expression of organised labour and socialist ideology.

“The Workers' Party wanted to avoid any association with the new socialist current. In 1907, following a demonstration on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May organised by the Socialists – which became violent – the Workers' Party forbade its members from campaigning for any organisation with a program differing from their own. It was thus that party secretary Albert Saint-Martin, one of the organisers of the demonstration, was ejected from the party. He became the leader of Francophone socialists in Montréal.”<sup>282</sup>

Saint-Martin had run unsuccessfully for the party in the 1905 provincial election against Premier Lomer Gouin. Thus, we can see that the ideological association with socialism, potentially very powerful for working class interests and the political expression of organised labour, became the kiss of death for any candidate running in French Québec. I have offered in my examination of the first historical period some examples of how issues of language and culture trumped any potential expression of class interests that had the potential to cross linguistic and cultural lines. Here, again, we see that any ideological alternative to the prevailing world view that threatened to transcend linguistic and cultural lines, and thus unite workers by class in stead of dividing them by language, culture and religion, saw a rapid and decisive social response. This response was not calculated purely along the lines of collective interests of identity. What cultural threat could come from the working classes united by an ideological foundation calculated to awaken them to their shared interests of class? The

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<sup>282</sup> *Op. Cit.* CSN, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, Beauceville, Québec, CSN-CEQ, 1979, p. 77. My translation of “Le Parti Ouvrier veut éviter qu'on le relie au jeune courant socialiste. En 1907, à la suite de la manifestation du 1<sup>er</sup> mai organisée par les socialistes – et qui tourne à la violence – le Parti Ouvrier interdit à ses membres de militer dans les organisations qui ont un programme différent du sein. C'est ainsi que le sténographe Albert Saint-Martin, un des organisateurs de la manifestation, est expulsé du parti. Il deviendra le leader des socialistes francophones à Montréal.”

answer lay in how this alternative ideological position threatened established elite class interests; interests that had found an accommodation that transcended linguistic and cultural lines. Another example would be the initial alignment of positions between organised labour in French and English Canada over the issue of conscription and the class nature of the First World War. It was the international unions whose position on the war was one of class collaboration, this was not initially the position of the Canadian and national unions. Nevertheless, the invocation of issues related to patriotism, like those invoked over culture, language and religion in other situations, soon eroded the initial position that reflected an insightful analysis of class interests. The working classes were only too aware that the beneficiaries of war are capital whilst the greatest costs are always paid by the working classes. This analysis was shared by the socialists, and this will not be the last time that we see a split within organised labour along the lines of class interests and specifically those of socialist thought, nor the last time that we shall see a potential ideological synthesis transcending lines of identity displaced and dissolved by issues of language and culture.

Lacking effective political parties dedicated to the advocacy of their class interests, and seeing their own working class institutions seconded into the protection and expression of the broader interests of identity, be they cultural, linguistic or religious, the Francophone working classes in Québec have been destined to become the collective pawns of other class interests. On the political level, they are destined to become as Poulantzas has described, and as has been cited previously: class pawns to the political purposes of contending elite fractions. Again:

“[A]ccording to the nature of the contradictions with the popular masses, the various fractions of the power bloc often seek to enlist their support against the other fractions of the bloc. In other words, they seek to utilise the popular masses in their relationship of forces with the other fractions of the bloc – in order either to impose solutions more to their advantage, or to put up more effective resistance to solutions which favour other fractions over and above themselves.”<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Poulantzas, p. 144.

Their demographic weight in a democratic society combined with the absence of political institutions of class advocacy produces a situation where working class interests become part of a brokerage competition between the traditional parties. The party that seems most likely to broker working class interests generally enjoys the support of the working classes. Organised labour, given its general ambivalence concerning the role of active political advocacy in the first place, tends to lend informal, though occasionally formal, support to whatever political party seems least hostile towards working class demands. And the satisfaction of those demands is always just one part of the elite fraction's own political agenda. Rouillard argues for a more comfortable relationship between the Liberal Party under Adelard Godbout and organised labour.

“The years of the Godbout administration (1939-1944) were marked by cordial relations with the unions. Many laws that displeased the union movement were modified: Laws 19 and 20 (1938), which notably forbade a closed union shop, and Law 88, which rendered non-incorporated unions open to litigation. Amendments to the satisfaction of the *Centrales* were equally applied to the law on collective agreements and that on reasonable salaries.”<sup>284</sup>

The mandate of the Godbout administration covered the war years, a period where the strength of organised labour was growing, and an accelerating urban demographic shift was happening throughout the continent, as well as markedly here in Québec. The Liberal Party response was calculated to win electoral support amongst this rapidly growing demographic. In many ways it anticipated the socio-demographic conditions that applied in Québec *after* 1960. Thus, the return to power of Duplessis and the Union nationale was carried by agrarian working class support – a traditional class collaboration between the political elite that was the UN – that was already in decline by the end of the war. Duplessis openly waged war on

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<sup>284</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, p. 259. My translation of “Les années du gouvernement Godbout (1939-1944) sont empreintes de relations cordiales avec les syndicats. Plusieurs lois qui déplaisent au mouvement syndical sont abrogées : les lois 19 et 20 (1938), qui interdisaient notamment l’atelier syndical, et la loi 88, qui rendait les syndicats non incorporés passibles de poursuites. Des amendements sont apportés également à la loi des conventions collectives et à celle des salaires raisonnables à la satisfaction des centrales.”

the union movement itself, and the rapidly expanding area of organised intellectual labour within Québec's social institutions and her own state infrastructure.

“Duplessis launched a legal attack against the union movement. Many laws came to restrain the field of activity and the negotiating power of the unions. Thus, the government worked to restrain the public and para-public sectors in their rights to unionisation (state employees in 1938, rural municipal employees in 1949) and from their right to recourse to strike (employees of charitable institutions, 1939, employees of the towns, 1949), their right to arbitration (rural teachers, 1946) or their right to accreditation if they did strike (Law 20, 1954).”<sup>285</sup>

Examine the specific areas and conflicts, as well as the beneficiaries of the state interventions. Why the focus on rural institutions, charitable institutions, and public and para-public employees? What we are witnessing here is the last cry of an elite accommodation between the UN and the Catholic Church. Why not legislate similar constraints in the larger urban areas? The UN was confronted by a double-edged sword: the growing power of organised labour and public employees meant that to wade into those waters would seriously erode whatever waning electoral strength remained to the UN outside of the rural areas. Urban shift, changes in the mode of production, and the rise of the liberal welfare state meant that there were necessarily changes at the institutional level, and within the governing structures of the state itself. The result was an elite shift, with the accelerating decline of the fortunes of some classes – the Church and her elites, as well as the traditional political elites that had allied themselves – and the rise of other classes: burgeoning middle-classes of organised intellectual labour and public and para-public employees. And in some ways, the UN and Duplessis accelerated the decline of both the collaboration and the strength of the Church herself. The Church in the *persona* of Monsignor Charbonneau, Archbishop of Montréal, had sought to intercede on behalf of organised labour during the asbestos strike of 1949, supporting collections of monies and divers support for the strikers. Monsignor

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<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.* p. 259. My translation of “Duplessis lance une attaque en règle contre le mouvement syndical. Plusieurs lois viennent restreindre le champ d’activité et le pouvoir de négociation des syndicats. Ainsi, le gouvernement s’emploie à soustraire le secteur public et parapublic du droit à la syndicalisation (fonctionnaires, en 1938, employés de municipalités rurales, 1949), et à leur enlever le droit de grève (employés d’institutions charitables, 1939 ; employés des villes, 1949), le droit d’arbitrage (institutrices rurales, 1946) ou leur accréditation s’ils font grève (loi 20, 1954).”

Charbonneau withdrew from his duties the following year and, notwithstanding protestations by the Church and her representatives to the contrary, it has been argued that direct intervention by representatives of the Duplessis' government were the real cause of the Archbishop's recall. Without examining the specifics of this example, some general conclusions are offered here. The increasing support of the Church for organised labour – labour often organised and directed by the Church herself – increasingly flew in the face of Duplessis' anti-union position, and led to the dissolution of the class alliance that had operated since the mid-thirties between the UN and the Church. In a real sense, fortunes of both collective partners fell into decline subsequent to the events of the asbestos strike and the refusal of the UN to accommodate the evolution of Québec society.

Clearly, and given the absence of *political* institutions dedicated to working class advocacy, Québec's working classes, and organised labour specifically, were destined to engage in some form of collaborative relationship with other classes in order to have their collective interests addressed. Because of the historical evolution of the labour movement throughout its history, and most specifically in this second historical period, issues of collective identity were inevitably and unavoidably tied up with the expression of class interests, and their political expression meant that class interests would always be tied with contending agendas of competing elite political factions. Political ambivalence, shifting demographics and class fortunes, and class interests qualified by issues of competition for cultural dominance: all of these factors mark the evolution of the organised labour movement in the last historical period to be examined.

## Chapter 6

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Historical Period: From Quiet Revolution to Hegemonic Affirmation

#### **The Discourse on the Nature of Québec's Class Structure**

No real doubt has been expressed by any significant academic source as to the rapidly evolving nature of Québec's class structure at the beginning of the Quiet Revolution. Some disagreement however does arise when we examine the different positions on the nature of Québec's new and traditional middle classes, as well as to the nature of the Québec bourgeoisie, and her related petit bourgeois business and professional classes. There is also a lack of nuanced analysis on the evolving nature of the labour movement, particularly as to issues of language, culture, and the social division of labour within the evolving Québec state. Perhaps the best summary of the discourse is offered by William Coleman. While his preoccupation is somewhat narrower than the broader investigation that I am conducting here, it will serve to identify the collective actors. Coleman identifies three distinct threads of interpretation as to the class components driving the Quiet Revolution and the rise of the sovereigntist movement. As might be expected when examining three well formed schools of thought, Coleman finds something of value in each interpretation, and something wanting in all.

Coleman first engages what he describes as “the more widely accepted explanation,” that of a “new middle class” as the motor of the Quiet Revolution, or more generally what he describes as “the series of changes that have occurred in Québec since 1945.” He identifies this school of thought with authors such as Hubert Guindon, Charles Taylor, Kenneth McRoberts, and Dale Postgate.<sup>286</sup> Coleman essentially comes to the reasonable conclusion that the argument for a new middle class as a motor of the Quiet Revolution actually anticipates the arrival of this class. It is in fact a product of the revolution, not a motor

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<sup>286</sup> See *Op. Cit.* Coleman, p. 5.

thereof. A reasonable conclusion if one is regarding the explosion of intellectual labour related to the expansion of the Québec civil service and the secularisation of education and health care *after* the Quiet Revolution, but one that does a certain disservice to the nuanced analysis of Guindon, who argues that the creation of this class had its roots in an earlier growth accelerating in the 1950s.

“The emergence of what is commonly called the new middle class is not something specific to French Canada; quite on the contrary, the growth of such a class was rather belated, in fact, essentially as a post-war phenomenon. With the growth and the increased size of large-scale formal organizations of business and government, the middle class was overwhelmingly transformed into a bureaucratically employed white-collar group with professional and semi-professional status, displacing the dominant ‘entrepreneurial’ self-employed character of the middle class in the last century. The new middle class is a product of the bureaucratic expansion of organisations.”<sup>287</sup>

Both Coleman and Guindon accurately describe the characteristics and the circumstances that beg the rise of any new class: unity of interests, a coherent sense of self-awareness, and this formed in opposition to that of other classes. I suggest that they are essentially two waves of the same general phenomenon. The problem, *vis-à-vis* the motor of revolution and the roots of the sovereignty movement is the differing ideological orientation of the two waves, with the former being more conservative and the latter being more radical. Yet, and to again acknowledge Coleman here, the nature of the latter wave was indeed a product of the revolution itself, and its association with the massive secularisation of Québec’s social institutions meant that it rapidly became the intellectual apparatus of what was already a “new” Québec state, and thus it becomes inextricably involved in expanding and embedding

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<sup>287</sup> Guindon, Hubert, *Quebec Society: Tradition, Modernity, and Nationhood*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1988, p. 29.

the role of that state, and its elites.<sup>288</sup> Thus and subsequently, the most stridently vocal and politically radical proponents of Québec's independence are now to be found amongst the unionised professionals of the Québec civil service. Their position over the last half-century has reflected the ideological position of the Parti Québécois, most emphatically when that party has been in power. Consider further Guindon's description of the new middle class:

"The French-Canadian new middle class, I have said, is somewhat different in some of its social psychological characteristics from other new middle classes. First of all, its emergence was more dramatic and sudden than in many cases. Secondly, the ethnic cultural conditions from which it came provided no models for the broad spectrum of the new occupational roles. Thirdly, French-Canadian bureaucracies are to be found overwhelmingly in the public and semi-public sectors as against the area of private enterprise. Finally, the bureaucratic revolution, in French Canada, has not changed the power elite of French-Canadian society; it has not displaced, but rather rejuvenated traditional elites. Much of the unrest, in my opinion, in the French-Canadian new middle class can be related to these social characteristics."<sup>289</sup>

Guindon's conclusion is somewhat consistent with my own, though arrived at specifically within the context of the Quiet Revolution itself. Class struggle within the context of even a "Quiet" revolution did not, indeed cannot change the essential nature of class relations, it can only result in a cycling of elites, and a renegotiation of class alliances and collaborations. Guindon sees a refreshing of the traditional elites, I see a competition between elite fragments that increasingly centres around the sovereignty issue, with collective interests of the working classes being essentially a secondary, but unavoidable and pragmatically considered addendum to the real agenda interests of the sovereigntist elite fragment. To again acknowledge Coleman, there is a distinct spark of class awareness that marks the difference between the first and second waves of this "new" middle class. And insofar as the class is

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<sup>288</sup> Alan Cairns has somewhat cynically, but quite accurately described the bureaucratic competition that arises in federal states between provincial and federal bureaucracies to capture and maintain as large a portion of the divided jurisdictions as possible. On its most basic level, this means that bureaucrats, like any workers, tend to do the utmost to protect their jobs. Intellectual workers in the state bureaucracy are no different than manual workers in this sense. The convoluted rationalization that intellectual workers will employ in order to protect their rice bowl will be taken up later in this exercise when we examine some of the documents presented to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission on Reasonable Accommodation. See Cairns, Alan C., "The Government and Societies of Canadian Federalism," in *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 10:4, 1977, p. 695-725. Return here as well to the words of Poulantzas, who stated that "[I]ntellectual labour (knowledge power) is materialised in state apparatuses," in *Op. Cit.*, Poulantzas, p. 56, he cites "Gli intellettuali e l'organizzazione della Cultura", from the *Prison Notebooks* of Gramsci.

<sup>289</sup> *Op. Cit.* Guindon, p. 30.



comprised of a significant proportion of state employed intellectual labourers, I cannot as regards this class fraction argue that their sovereignist interests are necessarily false to their class interests. After all, the presumption is that a sovereign Québec state would have to expand its bureaucratic structure to include those areas now under the federal jurisdiction. An expanding bureaucracy constitutes a firm foundation of job security for public and para-public workers at every level.

Coleman rapidly disposes of what he describes as the second school of thought, or second hypothesis that the Quiet Revolution was driven by a “Bourgeoisie Autochtone,” as put forward by Dorval Brunelle. Coleman describes Brunelle’s argument that:

“[T]he central problem that gave rise to the Quiet Revolution was not the rising expectations of a new middle class but economic conditions that threatened the existence of a mainly francophone employer class owning mainly small and medium-sized enterprises.”<sup>290</sup>

Coleman accurately observes that this class “has been a consistent and staunch supporter of federalism,”<sup>291</sup> which is accurate enough, but disassociates the actions of the class from the sovereignist movement far better than it does as one of the causal factors in the Quiet Revolution itself. In fact, we must take great care to keep the phenomena separate as to causes, if not as to effects.

Coleman moves quickly to what he describes as the third hypothesis, that generally associated with the work of authors Gilles Bourque and Anne Legaré as previously examined here and described as an issue of elite competition between a “non-monopoly, Quebec-based bourgeoisie,” a “monopolistic Canadian bourgeoisie,” and a “monopoly, imperialist bourgeoisie.”<sup>292</sup> Again, we can see ample argument for any and all of these elite fractions as potential motors of the Quiet Revolution, but none as drivers of the sovereignty movement.

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<sup>290</sup> *Op. Cit.* Coleman, p. 12.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>292</sup> Coleman cites *Op. Cit.* Bourque, Gilles, and Legaré, Anne, *Le Québec : la question nationale*, Paris, François Maspero, 1979. Coleman also acknowledges the proximity of Bourque and Legaré’s second class exemplar to that proposed immediately above by Brunelle. See Brunelle, Dorval, *La Désillusion Tranquille*, Montréal, Les Éditions Hurtubise HMH ltée., 1978.

This does open the door to an extension of my discussion of class collaboration and alliances that has marked this work thus far. Coleman summarises Bourque and Legaré’s argument as follows:

“The Quiet Revolution was not ushered in by a new middle class but by the establishment of a dominant position on the part of a Canada-based monopoly bourgeoisie. Power was transformed in 1960 not from a traditional middle class to a new middle class, but from a Quebec-based non-monopoly bourgeoisie to this large Canada-based bourgeoisie. The independence movement was the inspiration not of a new middle class but of a coalition between the middle classes and the Quebec-based bourgeoisie.”<sup>293</sup>

I would add to that coalition, as does Coleman, certain self-interested working class fractions – professionals and intellectual workers employed by the Québec state – and a significant number of broader working class fractions that have been seconded into the movement with a certain unfulfilled promise, and this ultimately contrary to their real class interests. Bourgeois and petit bourgeois classes seeking a cycling of elites in a new sovereign Québec state may well be working in their own genuine fractional class interests. I will even allow that intellectual workers employed by the Québec state, or through the direct support and sponsorship by the Québec state, may well be acting in their own collective self-interests, as I identify them with the petit bourgeois fractions in alliance with bourgeois interests, notwithstanding their status as “organised labour.” The class not benefiting from the alliance, and generally seconded into the sovereigntist movement by the historic association held between working class interests and those of collective French Canadian, now Québécois identity, are the genuine working classes, organised or not. Their class position cannot benefit from being reborn within a sovereign Québec state, nor can the broader social and economic position of many of those sub-groups occupying these classes – women, new Quebeckers, First Peoples – benefit from such a change as well.

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<sup>293</sup> *Op. Cit.* Coleman, p. 15.

## Disappearing Classes, Shifting Alliances and Collaborations

Recalling Polanyi, “The fate of classes is more frequently determined by the needs of society than the fate of society is determined by the needs of classes.”<sup>294</sup> What are we to make of the decline of the agricultural working classes and of the Church elites during this time? For the former class fraction, simply stating the importance of an accelerating urban demographic shift earlier in the century is insufficient. There are two important aspects to that shift that together eroded the size and importance of the class. First, and most obviously, the attraction of urban employment and advancing modernity. But the attraction must be considered also as the reciprocal of the loosening of the glue that held these classes in place previously. My earlier examination of the first historical period illustrated how the *economic* failure of the seigneurial system itself, combined with the impact of inheritance rights under civil law, tended to produce large numbers of rootless “journaliers,” or day labourers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That tendency was accelerated by a trend seen everywhere in North America: the decrease in the number of family farms, a corresponding increase in the size of the remaining farms, and this combined with a general decline in the demand for simple manual labour as technology improved the efficiency of agriculture. The class was in general demographic decline by the middle of the 20th century, and yet even previously their political power had been seconded by other classes, Duplessis and the Union nationale being only the most recent exemplar. Guindon cites the words of Isadore Gauthier, a farmer, in 1862:

“We are a simple folk, we habitants, and seeing our ignorance, we are constrained in placing at the head of our municipalities and our administrations educated citizens, who ultimately exploit us.”<sup>295</sup>

Habitant or urban labourer, both saw forms of class representation through labour unions. Both were co-opted into confessional unions that served allied interests of class and identity,

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<sup>294</sup> *Op. Cit.* Polanyi, p. 159.

<sup>295</sup> *Op.Cit.* Guindon, p. 34. Guindon cites as his source: Gérin, Léon, *Le Type économique et social des Canadiens*, Montréal. 1938, p. 54.

and both suffered a certain cost to class interests due to the nature of the collaboration. Similarly, both working class fractions were destined to find political expression through spokespersons either from other classes, or if from their own, they were often abandoned by those representatives who themselves sought a certain upward class mobility. In both situations, it was petit bourgeois fractions, educated and directed by the Catholic Church, that ensured that working class political expression would be sublimated into the ongoing process of socialisation.

As to the second question posed immediately above, what are we to make of the decline of Church elites and the general importance of religion during the Quiet Revolution, we could again fall back on observations on the general decline of religion in the advent of a secularising modernity. And again, we would be providing an incomplete explanation for the specific phenomenon here in Québec. On the one hand, individual authors from within the Church herself became increasingly strident critics of the Duplessis political regime right up to the end of the 1950s.<sup>296</sup> Such behaviours certainly continued to erode much of the elite accommodation and class alliance that bulwarked the Duplessis regime, but do not in and of themselves explain the decline of the Church and the influence of her elites. Coleman indirectly addresses the process if not the effect. Sparked by the inevitable rise of the interventionist state as Québec modernised and engaged capitalism as a mode of production, the old guard – be it religious or political – could not accept the inevitable. He notes of the Church and the Duplessis regime that “Both the church and Duplessis saw a move to create a more interventionist state as a move towards socialism.”<sup>297</sup> He further states that, in seeking an explanation for the rise of the sovereignist movement subsequent to the Quiet Revolution,

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<sup>296</sup> See texts such as Dion, Gerard, and O’Neill, Louis, *L’immoralité politique dans la province du Québec*, Montréal, Comité de moralité publique de Montréal, 1956. Father’s Dion and O’Neill specifically addressed the complicity of some church representative, even unto the parish level, in maintaining what they argue to be a politically immoral regime.

<sup>297</sup> *Op. Cit.* Coleman, p. 63.

class analysis is insufficient, the more so given the lacunae incumbent within the three general schools of analysis outlined above.

“I prefer to begin more ambiguously and to treat the existence of classes as an empirical question. Social classes, in the sense of conscious social actors, are formed through conflict and mobilization that take place not only in the economy but also in the political arena and the realm of ideas.”<sup>298</sup>

Coleman’s understanding of class and the crucible wherein it is formed reflects the broader definition put forward by Polanyi and accommodates the importance of identity as expressed by Esman. Coleman argues that the missing component in the analysis is that of ideology. Certainly as to the underlying theme of an ongoing social project, and the values, beliefs and behaviours calculated to affect such a goal, ideology has, and shall again play a pivotal role in determining the trajectory of Québec’s social imaginary and the actions of her class leaders in collaborating on such an utopian end. Still, when considering the criteria offered above, one finds that all the indicators remained in place for the continued influence, albeit in a modified role, of Church elites, and by extension of the Church’s social ideology. The decline of the elite accommodation between the Church elites and the elite political fraction arranged beneath the leadership of Duplessis and the UN illustrates the necessary component of class conflict. There can be no doubt, given the nature of the Church hierarchy and its self-reinforcing recruitment through its control of the schools that it was “self aware” as an elite class fraction. And it had mobilised itself and the rest of Québec’s French-speaking classes under a clear ideological direction for the better part of two centuries. Perhaps the role and function of the Church elites had become irrelevant to the needs of Québec society?

Returning again to Polanyi,

“A class that has become functionless can be displaced and be supplanted overnight by a new class or classes. Also, the chances of classes in a struggle will depend upon their ability to win support from outside their own membership, which again will depend upon their fulfilment of tasks set by interests wider than their own.”<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>299</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Polanyi, p. 159.

In many ways, this accurately describes the position of Church elites at the time of the Quiet Revolution. At the very least, it does both qualify and contextualise it. The successful creation, guided nurturing and directed evolution of Québec's petit bourgeois and native bourgeois classes over two centuries may well have made Church elites the authors of their own demise. As a class, the Quiet Revolution and the ascendancy of traditional, and new middle classes, combined with a renewed and assertive Québec bourgeoisie may have rendered the Church elites socially and politically redundant. In any case, the secularisation of Québec's social institutions excised the Church from its dominant role, and left the direction of these institutions to the state, and by increasing extension to the state's extended bureaucracy staffed with intellectual labour trained by institutions previously directed by the Church. Their influence amongst the working classes declined with their control of these social institutions and even in rural areas where these institutions went into a slower decline, the demographic importance of those areas itself was falling. How profound was the impact of such an institutional accommodation upon Québec society and her economic profile?

“The growing intervention of the state in the economy saw an accelerating change in the composition of the work force. Thus, the service sector in general (tertiary) and public services in particular became widely predominant. In 1966, we find there more than 60% of all workers, compared to 38% 25 years earlier. This was due in great part to the expansion of the school and hospital sectors. During these times, the number of workers in manufacturing and construction fell to 30% and to barely 8% in the agricultural, forestry and mining sectors (primary).”<sup>300</sup>

Linteau *et al* cite service sector totals of 52.0% for 1961, 54.3% for 1971 and 62.8% for 1981.<sup>301</sup> Discrepancies notwithstanding, it is obvious that the Quiet Revolution marks a significant period of institutional adjustment and compromise with powerful demographic

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<sup>300</sup> *Op. Cit.* CSN, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier au Québec (1825 – 1976)*, Beauceville, Québec, CSN-CEQ, 1979, p. 147. My translation of “L’intervention accrue de l’État dans l’économie va accélérer les changements dans la composition de la main-d’œuvre. Ainsi, le secteur des services en général (la tertiaire) et des services publics en particulier devient largement prédominant. En 1966, on y retrouve plus de 60% des travailleurs, comparativement à 38%, 25 ans plus tôt. Cela est dû en bonne partie à l’expansion des réseaux scolaire et hospitalier. Pendant ce temps, le nombre des travailleurs tombe à 30% dans le secteur des manufactures et de la construction (secondaire) et à un peu plus de 8% dans le secteur de l’agriculteur, des forêts et des mines (primaire).”

<sup>301</sup> Linteau, Paul-André, Durocher, René, Robert, Jean-Claude, et Ricard, François; Chodos, Robert & Garmaise, Ellen, trans., *Quebec Since 1930*, Toronto, James Lorimer and Company, 1991. p. 367. The authors cite Canadian Census data.

changes for the proletariat. The changing nature of the Québec economy also indicates a significant shift in the *mode d'accumulation* calculated to restore ongoing profitability to the economy and to bolster capital accumulation; to render the Québec “state” more regionally, and now globally competitive. Certainly, the move towards the secularisation of Québec society with its wholesale change in the relation between many workers and their new employer in the persona of the state constitutes a profound change in the *wage-labour nexus* as identified by *Régulation*. The state no longer simply stewards the economy, but becomes its greatest employer, and thus is an inextricable part of the economy. The roles and positions of all of Québec’s social classes, and class fractions was under significant review during the Quiet Revolution. Rural classes in decline, urban middle classes in ascendancy, the working classes increasingly vocal, militant and organised, Church elites in decline, and a jockeying for position amongst Québec’s bourgeois fractions, all of these factors were in active exchange subsequent to the Quiet Revolution.

The foregoing discussion is calculated to reinforce my argument that there was a significant change to the demographic makeup and social division of labour within Québec’s working classes, which in turn becomes formalised and personified in the profile of the labour movement itself. Thus far, we have examined the literature vis-à-vis the roles and fortunes of the bourgeois and petit bourgeois classes. Even Coleman, who admittedly is initially dealing with the work of other theorists as do I, in one place only dwells on the impact of the Quiet Revolution on the *demographics* of the working classes themselves, even if “organised labour” writ large does figure in his core thesis on the causal factors related to the rise of the independence movement.

“The movement for political independence that gradually coalesced contained organized labour, the traditional middle class, and a new middle class spawned by the expansion of the provincial government into social and educational policy and by an expansion in the communications industries in the 1960s.”<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> *Op. Cit.* Coleman, p. 92.

Coleman's analysis of the demographic makeup of the working classes *prior* to the Quiet Revolution shows a nuanced understanding of the shifting demographics between rural and urban employment, and between the essential ideological foundations of those divisions. His description of the nature of the rural classes and their general decline after the end of the 1950s gives a certain evidence to the argument for an increasingly divided working class where the rural fractions were in a declining alliance with traditional political elites identified with Duplessis and the Union nationale.

“Nevertheless, between 1945 and 1955 there remained a significant group of individuals earning their living from the soil and the forest whose lives were influenced by a series of traditional institutions, largely controlled and operated by the church. The church linked this economic group to a traditional intelligentsia of clerics, lawyers, and doctors, who had ties to both urban industrial society, and this rural society. These elites were mainly anti-capitalist in ideology and devoted to the institutions still operating in the rural communities.”<sup>303</sup>

He further describes a fragmented working class, with urban fractions increasingly removed from the influence of traditional institutions. The entire working class is plagued by high unemployment, while increasingly drawn into North American consumer culture. I note however, that when considering class roles in the sovereigntist movement, organised labour is generally addressed as a coherent and monolithically defined super class, and that little is made of the organisational and ideological divisions historically inherent within organised labour in Québec or as subsequent to the Quiet Revolution. Nor is any consideration given to the impact of the institutional and economic changes in Québec that transpire during this time *as they affect the nature of the labour movement itself*. Further, my earlier examination should have demonstrated that there were, and remain, profound *ideological* differences within the movement itself, and that these differences manifest themselves in a diversity of ways: class collaborations, political attitudes, division of labour, forms of representation etc..

Rouillard gives a better analysis of the *ideological* divisions within the working classes just prior to the Quiet Revolution and just after. The trade or craft union orientation

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<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44.



that the international unions had demonstrated early on, and which made them somewhat less attractive to French Canadians who were often relegated to unskilled and minimally skilled labour, yet were unified by language and culture across an industry or enterprise, was ideologically problematic on the broader scale as well. The steadfast refusal to organise along an industrial model had prompted a split within the AFL in the 1930s that produced the CIO family of industrial unions. This cleavage along the lines of the social division of labour also often cleaved along the lines of general ideological conservatism, with the collaborative practices of the AFL being often called into question by the more radical elements in the labour movement writ large, and more specifically from within the ranks of their own member unions as well. A similar division cleaved Québec labour movement in 1939 after the AFL demanded the expulsion of all Canadian unions affiliated with the CIO. The ideological division had its effects here on a number of fronts. The international unions split here too with the creation of the Fédération des unions industrielles du Québec (FUIQ) in 1952 after breaking away from the international unions associated with the Fédération provinciale des travailleurs du Québec (FPTQ). The division was only healed five years later with the creation of the Fédération des travailleurs du Québec (FTQ) in 1957. These actions robbed the international unions of a certain energy during this phase. Rouillard notes of the slowing of the advance of the internationals here that:

The inertia of international trade unionism in Québec came as a consequence of the division that struck the movement in the United States. The conflict that provoked the expulsion of a dozen important AFL international unions and the formation in 1938 of a rival body, the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO)...opposed two concepts of labour organisation. Traditionally, the international unions had built their structures on the profession of their members: each trade union negotiated a separate contract with their employer. This system, which sought to monopolise the supply of skilled workers, was suitable to certain types of industries, but was poorly adapted to vast mass production enterprises that developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>304</sup>

We are further informed that the impact was less here than in Ontario, as one would expect due to the differing nature of the two economies and related division of labour, and that the cleavage further strengthened the confessional union movement. On the broader Canadian labour front, the split resulted in the creation of the Canadian Congress of Labour in 1940 by disaffected and expelled unions. Notwithstanding the ideological division that prompted the schism, Rouillard informs us that the AFL affiliated internationals managed to rebound in the 40s and 50s by adapting to the industrial model.<sup>305</sup> On the Québec front, this branching-off of the expelled industrial unions was further fragmented when an important group, the *Fraternité canadienne des cheminots* split away to become independent in 1946. Tellingly, the three reasons given for the split by the then director of the Montréal Union of Bus Drivers and Tramway Employees were:

“the decision of the CCL to support the CCF, the rarity of the use of French amongst the directors of the CCL in Québec, and the degree to which they have allowed him to affiliate CIO international unions that he had contributed towards organising in Québec.”<sup>306</sup>

Here we see the same issues of a fear of socialism, a lack of consideration for issues of language and culture, and an impinged sense of organisational freedom and autonomy that

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<sup>304</sup> *Op. Cit.*, and *In Passim*, Rouillard, *Histoire de Syndicalisme Québécois*, p. 158. My translation of “L’inertie du syndicalisme international au Québec est aussi conséquence de la division qui frappe le mouvement aux Etats-Unis. Le conflit qui provoque l’expulsion de douze importantes unions internationales de la FAT et la formation, en 1938, d’une centrale rivale, le Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO)...oppose deux conceptions de l’organisation des travailleurs. Traditionnellement, les unions internationales ont bâti leurs structures sur la profession de leurs adhérents : chaque syndicat de métier négociait avec l’employeur un contrat séparé. Ce système, qui vise à monopoliser l’offre d’ouvriers qualifiés, convient bien à certains types d’industries, mais il s’adapte mal aux vastes entreprises de production de masse qui se sont développés au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle.”

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.* p. 209.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.* p. 211. My translation of “la décision du CCT d’appuyer le CCF, le peu de cas que font les dirigeants du CCT de l’utilisation du français au Québec et l’ordre qu’ils lui ont donné d’affilier aux unions internationales (COI) les syndicats qu’il a contribué à organiser au Québec.”

play throughout this historical examination. However, these preoccupations tended to fragment the labour movement as to its class solidarity, even while asserting important issues and interests of broader identity.

In light of the above, let me summarise the multiple cleavages that tend to rend the solidarity of the labour movement in Québec then, and to an extent now. We see a movement that is politically ambivalent, and at best disorganised as to the political advocacy of its class goals. We find the movement ideologically divided, and given Québec's history, this ideological division is perhaps more acute whenever the movement approaches too closely the socialist camp. We also continue to see a movement that remains cleaved along the lines of culture and language, or more particularly, we continue to see the linguistic division of labour on a number of key fronts. First off, we continue to reinforce the "two solitudes" through two isolated socialisation paths, and this focuses intellectual labour into linguistically isolated academic communities. Second, and of as great importance, the state's organised intellectual workers – the professionals and quasi-professionals that populate the state's bureaucracy – are almost monolithically drawn from the traditional French speaking culture. This absence of diversity has plagued the civil service for many years and has become the occasional target of active recruitment amongst minorities. Is it any wonder therefore that the most vocal proponents of a sovereign state of Québec, a sovereign state that would have to double up its bureaucratic structures due to the absence of federal ones, are to be found amongst the unionised workers of the state? Somehow, we readily acknowledge the existence and importance of the linguistic division of labour early in Québec's history, yet often fail to recognise its contemporary importance. An acutely *old stock* state bureaucracy, has to be considered in contrast to the degree to which certain areas of labour show a high concentration of minorities, or of women, and occasionally of both. We often speak of Québec's working classes, or organised labour in the collective sense without assigning

sufficient importance to the class fractions that populate the broader appellation. Without an understanding of all of the cleavages that rend Québec's working classes and her labour movement, we cannot arrive at answer to our research question as posed regarding the specific events at the beginning of this exercise: "Why should such cultural antipathy colour and affect the process and outcomes of what started essentially as an effort by Concordia University's workers to advocate for their shared class interests? And why, in the pursuit of those interests did so many issues of language and culture displace or redirect choices related to the collective interests of class?" Classes divided against themselves through internal cleavages along the lines of language, culture and broader identity, demonstrate a certain difficulty in uniting to advocate for shared class interests. These cleavages do not preclude such united advocacy, nor do they imply that the need for class advocacy cannot overcome such factors, only that the strength of these cleavages has a mitigating effect upon the process itself. The broader needs of dominant culture has a filtering effect upon the interpretation and communication of class interests. The degree to which class interests are successfully bartered within a movement that seeks to unify shared interests of class and broader identity is to a great degree dependent upon the ideological orientation of the labour movement. I have sought to demonstrate in my examination of the broader academic literature that there has been a shift away from a class oriented ideological discourse towards one more preoccupied with language, culture and identity. Subsequent examination of labour union deposits in front of the recent Bouchard Taylor Commission should show how that preoccupation has been combined with the expression of class interests. Nevertheless, at this juncture, I shall return to the issue of ideology and the events of the Quiet Revolution.

## **Ideology, Class Awareness and the Social Project that is Québec**

In many ways, Coleman's missing component is key to understanding the trajectory of the labour movement and its relationship with the contemporary nationalist movement. Ideology has been the driving force behind the labour movement's class advocacy, and ironically it has also led to the muting of that advocacy by continuing to fragment the coherence of organised labour. Coleman's essential thesis outlines the fruits of yet another attempt at a class collaboration. He proposes that this round saw a general collaboration between three groups around an economic project to refashion Québec and herald her into a full engagement of modernity while establishing the Québécois as "masters of their own house."

"The proposals for economic change that served as the basis for policy during the Quiet Revolution did not emerge from a new middle-class. They cannot be said to have emerged solely from the ranks of the francophone business class. Rather, the resultant economic policies were the joint product of the political activity of three social groups: the organised working class, the francophone business class, and elements from the traditional middle-class intelligentsia"<sup>307</sup>

Coleman essentially argues that the collaboration was short-lived, and eventually satisfied only the interests of capital. The traditional middle class saw the continuing decline of French Canadian culture as they knew it, and labour did not see the opening up of the secondary economy nor the new employment that it would have produced. The initial goal of competing with external capital gave way to a certain "complementarity" of interests between foreign and native capital. The result? A state of Québec increasingly, and inextricably integrated into a global neo-liberal capitalism. The effect for organised labour? Again, they are caught on the horns of a dilemma that splits them ideologically into two general camps.

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<sup>307</sup> *Op. Cit.* Coleman, p. 92.

“To the extent that such a policy is successful, to the extent that firms are developed that are more and more integrated into the existing corporate structure, the basis for nationalism in the indigenous capitalist class becomes weaker and weaker. What is more... an important means for rallying working-class support to nationalism is also attenuated. Hence the economic policy of the various governments was creating the basis for divisions within the working class based on whether the individual worker was in the private or the public sector.”<sup>308</sup>

Coleman notes the division that I have described above as being related to a new social, and increasingly linguistic and cultural division of labour. We have here the potential for class division along ideological lines. The obvious ones as described by Coleman are cleaved along lines of support for a radical nationalism. That thesis is somewhat incomplete, for at that time, and increasingly over the next decade, the underlying ideological rationalisation employed by much of organised labour in supporting an independent Québec was founded on a socialist argument. That radical socialism, and socialist rhetoric, perhaps far more than an overt nationalism, became much of the basis of further divisions within organised labour. And they did tend to cleave along the lines of public and private sector employment as well. Coleman describes the conditions leading to the subsequent breaking away of the new nationalist coalition as follows:

“Differences, muted in 1960, became accentuated and much sharper as the working class in particular saw the government adopt the emphasis of the business class and saw its economic problems remain unresolved. A variety of factors brought organised labour and the patronat into conflict after 1965. The differences over economic policy also became a part of the struggle between classes and thus were a force in the process of class formation and the development of articulated class ideologies. The middle classes tended to be caught in the cross-fire of these struggles, now leaning one way, now the other.”<sup>309</sup>

The last sentence begs the question: which middle classes, and towards which ideological pole? It is difficult to argue that the nature of the middle class here is of an “either/or” nature, that is predominantly occupied by Guindon’s earlier wave versus those who were the product of the expansion of the state bureaucracy subsequent to the Quiet Revolution itself. Perhaps what can be agreed upon by some authors, including Guindon, would be that they were to a great degree a wave of well-educated, young, self-aware, and socially motivated workers and

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<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.* p. 110.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.* p. 116.

intellectual labourers with an increasing preoccupation with their shared national identity. They were the children of *old stock* Québécois, but a single generation away from a vastly different Québec. As noted previously, there was a more radical element in the second wave of the new middle class that was associated with its roots in the expanding public sector. That this *petit bourgeois* class fraction had vested interests in the expanding state is obvious, and will be illustrated further as I approach the most contemporary period. However, it is an extension of this manifest interest that begs support for the greatest expansion of state bureaucracy possible for the Québec public sector, that of a sovereign state, with a full blown state bureaucracy of its own. Socialist ideology served some ends, nationalist ideology serves others.

Subsequent to the Quiet Revolution, and continuing for about a decade into the 1970s, a distinctly socialist ideological foundation combined with an increasing preoccupation with issues of culture and language produced a powerful synthesis of collective interests in Québec. There was a sense of a close alignment between the words and actions of organised labour that gave it a certain cognitive resonance: a consistent agreement between expressed positions and direct actions as related to the class interests of organised labour. Insofar as these class interests seemed to demographically coincide with those of a broader French Canadian, now Québécois identity, the combined synthesis of interests became more than simply the sum of the parts. Yet, the initial resonance was distinctly class based, and illustrated a class awareness of the broader issues of class interest beyond simply the kind of “best deal” collaborative approach employed by the international unions.

Resonance, in the present application implies both that words align with actions, but also that combined and related actions are often the cognitive foundation of subsequent policy or position stated in words. Thus, and in our present example, when in 1962 a CSN salaried employee and *militante* such as Andre Laurin is sent to Shawinigan to organise

workers in a struggle against chronic debt embedded in the institutional structures of “company towns”, and that and subsequent related actions in the area of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean lead to formal CSN position statement such as illustrated by Marcel Pepin’s *Le deuxième front* in 1968, we have the kind of close alignment that gives to the movement a state of cognitive resonance. Pepin’s words are consistent with prior action, and become the springboard for later coordinated initiatives of a similar nature. The rhetorical vehicle for the expression of these ideas is more and more socialist in tone throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. the CSN’s Jean Marchand spoke to the issue, as did Marcel Pepin as noted above, both placed a growing emphasis on class conflict, not collaboration, throughout this period. This can be seen as the CSN publishes *Il n’y a plus d’avenir pour Québec dans le système économique* followed by *Ne comptons que sur notre propre moyens* in 1971. Yet, as early as the CTCC’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in 1951, Alfred Charpentier had expressed the movement’s reservations concerning the capitalist system. Consider some of the themes highlighted in *Il n’y a plus d’avenir pour Québec dans le système économique*:

“We have to open our eyes. There is no future for Québec within the current economic system. So we look for something else.  
 We tried to make the system economically sustainable.  
 Had to learn English to work: we learned it and that did not work.  
 Had to educate yourself to flourish: we taught ourselves and are still poor...  
 The new capitalist mode of production, even if it embellishes a higher level of unemployment benefits and retraining courses, remains still a system as inhumane as before.”<sup>310</sup>

Here we find Socialism and linguistic preoccupation combined in an expression of frustration with the entire social system. Here we find as well the synthesis of class interests and those of cultural identity. Consider how these words resonate with those of Marcel Pepin as expressed in the *Deuxième front*:

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<sup>310</sup> *In Passim*, CSN, *Portrait d’un mouvement*, Montréal, CSN, 2000, p. 173-174. My translation of “Il faut s’ouvrir ses yeux. Il n’y a plus d’avenir pour le Québec dans le système économique actuel. Alors cherchons autre chose. On a tout essayé pour rendre le système économique supportable. Fallait apprendre l’anglais pour travailler : on l’a appris, et ça n’a pas marché. Fallait s’instruire pour s’enrichir : on s’est instruits mais on est toujours aussi pauvres...le nouveau mode de production capitaliste, même enjolivé d’une hausse de prestations de chômage et de cours de recyclage, demeure toujours un système aussi inhumain qu’autrefois.” I have taken a certain liberty with person and syntax here to facilitate the meaning of the translation rather than the word.



“you cannot just leave things the way they are and be content to just talk about them. You have to mobilize misery to combat misery, poverty to combat poverty, the indebted to combat indebtedness, the betrayed to combat treason, the exploited to combat exploitation. And first we have to mobilize ourselves.”<sup>311</sup>

Note here the reference to “treason” or “betrayal.” All other references are clear in their application to *class* interests. Perhaps the treason *is* one of class; of a betrayal of obligations between French workers and the “foreign” owners of the means of production. Or is Pepin referring to the type of betrayal by a petit bourgeois intellectual class such as in Julian Benda’s *La trahison des clercs*? Much of the contemporary nationalist discourse demonstrates a certain ambivalence at best towards the historical role of Québec’s own intellectual classes in maintaining what is portrayed as the subjugation of the Québec nation within Canada. Certainly, the term “trahison” implies betrayal by one’s own. Culturally, we assume that the “other” has different and conflicting interests from our own. Betrayal, or treason happens between brothers. If that betrayal is from within, then the divisions are not linguistic or cultural here, they must cleave along the lines of class interests.

The CSN, as a federation of trade unions, has as its core mission and obligation the representation of worker’s interests. In the narrowest of sense, we can interpret that as being preoccupied first with the collective interests of unionised workers in Québec affiliated with that organising body. These interests include the negotiation of Collective Agreements, and the legal representation of members. The broader mission includes *all* workers’ interests, and given the strong undercurrent of socialist ideology present in the movement at the time of Pepin’s writing, there was a unifying harmony between the initial and allied social and economic interests of the core group and the larger class within Québec society. Pepin’s statement of policy, based on prior action, then led to prescription and further action in the

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<sup>311</sup> Pepin, Marcel, *La deuxième front*, cited in *Ibid.* p. 116. My translation of “Il ne faut pas laisser les choses comme elles sont et nous contenter d’en parler. Il faut mobiliser la misère pour combattre la misère, la pauvreté pour combattre la pauvreté, les endettés pour combattre l’endettement, les trahis pour éliminer la trahison, les exploités pour vaincre l’exploitation. Et il nous faut d’abord nous mobiliser nous-mêmes.”

creation of the *Association coopérative d'économie familiale*, or ACEF that seeks to ensure the economic freedom of wage-earners.<sup>312</sup>

Words, in the form of policy, may in fact anticipate action by way of prescription. And this may be as much founded on perception or belief as on objective experience. Thus, when in 1967 the CSN, FTQ, and UCC (*Union catholique des cultivateurs* now the UPA, or *Union des producteurs agricoles*) jointly made a policy statement on the inalienable right of the French Canadian nation to self determination, they anticipate the *de jure* creation and recognition of a sovereign Québec state. Insofar as this statement comes almost a decade before the first Parti Québécois mandate, there is no real or apparent conflict between the united interests of class and identity. No present or *real* conflict because the partners in that position statement did not have to reconcile a conflict of interests of class and identity by confronting their political partner in achieving the cultural goals of one set of collective interests as an adversary in satisfying collective economic and social interests in a different context, that of negotiating with the PQ in power as the government, and as such the “Employer” of the state’s unionised workers. And there is no *apparent* conflict in spite of what I argue as the ultimate incompatibility of the two sets of interests because at that time there remained a strong demographic alignment between both sets of interests. The “membership” of the two collectivities showed effectively the same list. In light of the above, the argument that I present here is that the decline in resonance between these apparent shared collective interests did not manifest itself until after the first PQ victory in 1976, and this notwithstanding significant *ideological* cleavages that had rend the labour movement as early as 1972. The presumed compatibility of the combined interests could not be genuinely

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<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116. At date of publication the text informs us that the ACEF remains active in its mission. Groups founded as early as 1973 continue their work today (ACEF Rive-Sud) and others have been founded as recently as 1997 (ACEF de l’île Jesus). Partnerships have been initiated between specific ACEF groups and the Desjardins Group. See <http://www.lavalnews.ca/articles/TLN1620/desjardins162007.html>  
Downloaded 23 July, 2010.

tested before the time of the first PQ victory. Yet, the trade union movement was aware by the mid-1980s that there was a distinct demographic shift in the profile of its own members. The CSN in 1986 struck a Confederal Committee to examine issues related to immigration and labour. A contemporary document by the CSN entitled *DES MILIEUX DE TRAVAIL DE TOUTES LES COULEURS : Apprendre à travailler ensemble* dedicates itself to “the integration and continued employment of immigrants, members of cultural communities, and ethnic minorities.” The document makes certain evidence to the sensitivity and concern the movement has for these Quebecers. The implications for the movement itself are clearly stated as well:

“As to the face of Québec society, the composition of many of the unions affiliated with the CSN has been transformed throughout the last few years and we see there a growing number of workers from other cultural communities. In the Montréal region, many of these unions include majorities made up of these members, many of whom are recent immigrants to Québec.”<sup>313</sup>

The parallel preoccupation of class advocacy with national identity continues throughout this period running from the Quiet Revolution to around the first PQ victory in 1976. Yet, towards the end of this period, the socialist ideological foundation of the class argument became a point of contention and division within the movement itself. The best evidence of this is the splitting away from the CSN of 70,000 members in 1972 to form the *Centrale des syndicats démocratique* (CSD), and this subsequent to the social uprising led by the Common Front unions in 1971. The nature of the schism is succinctly and accurately identified by Rouillard:

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<sup>313</sup> CSN, *Des Milieux de Travail de toutes les Couleurs : Apprendre à Travailler Ensemble*, Montréal, CSN, 2005, p. 1. My translation of “À l’image de la société québécoise, la composition de plusieurs syndicats affiliés à la CSN s’est transformée au cours des dernières années et on y trouve un nombre croissant de travailleuses et de travailleurs issus des communautés culturelles. Dans la région de Montréal, un bon nombre de nos syndicats regroupent une majorité de ces membres, dont plusieurs immigrantes et immigrants récemment arrivés au Québec.”

“The creation of the new organising body, as we shall see, was the outcome of a malaise born of the massive arrival of public and para-public employees, and the ideological change of direction which followed it.”<sup>314</sup>

Marcel Pepin had attempted to heal the ideological rift in 1971, appealing for class solidarity across ideological lines, but to no avail. The division was also strongly manifest across rural/urban lines with the most radical factions to be found amongst the members of the *Montréal Conseil Central*, these including future leaders of the movement such as Michel Chartrand. Beyond the coarse division of public/parapublic and private sector, we see the longstanding division along the lines of trades. Rouillard informs us that 91% of the CSD’s member unions were in the areas of industry and trades, and that few of the unions in the services sector abandoned the CSN. The traditional conservatism of the trades as identified previously with the international unions marked the internal relations of the CSN, just as it had driven a wedge between the more radical elements identified previously with the FUIQ and the more conservative FPTQ housing the bulk of the original international affiliations here in Québec. That rift was only healed with the reunification of the two under the FTQ in 1957, and as discussed previously.

The increasing militancy of the public sector unions and the engagement of an openly socialist ideological position in many of their own writings coincided with political events that tended to further divide the movement. The FLQ had adopted an openly Marxist rhetoric of national liberation that could not be ignored subsequent to the events of the October Crisis in 1970. A comparison between the FLQ manifesto of 1963 and that issued during the October Crisis shows a far greater preoccupation with workers’ liberation in the latter document. In fact, but two direct references to the workers exist in the 1963 document. The observation therein made is that “the workers’ eyes are daily becoming more attuned to

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<sup>314</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Rouillard, *Histoire de Syndicalisme Québécois*, p. 332. My translation of “La création de la nouvelle centrale, comme nous le verrons, est l’aboutissement d’un malaise né avec l’arrivée massive des employés du secteur public et parapublic, et avec le changement d’orientation idéologique qui s’en est suivi.”

reality: Quebec is a colony!”<sup>315</sup> The solution is to “Wrench off the yoke, get rid of the imperialists who live off the toil of our Quebec workers.”<sup>316</sup> This earlier manifesto ends with a call for *national* liberation. The greater preoccupation with Québec’s workers evident in the latter manifesto comes after an increasingly Marxist ideological position marked the post-colonial national liberation rhetoric found throughout the FLQ’s literature, and as can be found in Vallières *White Niggers of America* first published in 1968.

The unions played a complex role in the period of radicalisation that led up to the October crisis. On one front, the three big labour groups – the CSN, CEQ, FTQ – were active sponsors and co-creators in 1969 of *Québec-Press* an independent publication that is described by Marc Raboy as “a coalition of three types of groups represented in more or less equal proportions: the workers movement and popular and union organizations; the nationalist movement; and the student and university sector.”<sup>317</sup> Raboy further informs us that “*Québec Presse* was the only paper in Quebec to publish the manifesto of the Front de la Libération du Québec (FLQ) several months before the outbreak of the October Crisis, in June of 1970.”<sup>318</sup> The paper was openly supportive of the cause of national liberation if not of the methods that the FLQ chose in trying to obtain that end. Similar sympathies were expressed by the Front d’action politique de salariés or FRAP, a fledgling municipal political party in Montréal. The FRAP had grown out of the CSN’s *deuxième front* penned by Marcel Pepin in 1968, and the creation of a series of Political Action Committees, (CAP or PAC) in working class neighbourhoods. The dominant municipal party under Jean Drapeau took quick advantage of the expressed position of the FRAP to label the group as tied to the FLQ. Drapeau won the election held barely three weeks after the onset of the October Crisis.

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<sup>315</sup> *FLQ Manifesto* from the 1963 version contained within Savoie, Claude, *Le Véritable Histoire du FLQ*, Les Édition du Jour, Montréal, 1963, and contained within *Op. Cit.* Scott, Frank, and Oliver, Michel, eds., *Quebec states her case*, p. 83.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.* p. 86.

<sup>317</sup> Raboy, Marc, *Movements and Messages: Media and Radical Politics in Quebec*, Toronto, Between The Lines, 1984, p. 58.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.* p. 60.

Divisions within, or at least a significant variety of positions, can be shown by the words and actions of union and former union leaders during the October Crisis. Former CSN president Jean Marchand who held that mandate from 1961 to 1964 and was Federal Minister for Regional Economic Expansion from 1969 to 1972 was amongst the most alarmist in stating that “The FLQ has thousands of guns, rifles, machines guns, and bombs, which could blow up Montreal and about 2000 pounds of dynamite, of which the latter is sufficient to blow up the centre of Montreal.”<sup>319</sup> In defending his position on the maintenance of law and order in the face of the perceived threat, he noted that:

*“The worst accusations can be hurled at the leaders of civil society. But if the latter have the misfortune to reply, this immediately becomes violence, provocation, and “insult to the people.” We can be called “traitors” but if one of us has the misfortune to say of certain groups that they are playing the FLQ game, he immediately becomes a reactionary.”*<sup>320</sup>

Though not directly referencing the relationship between support for the cause, if not the methods, and the position taken by many of the Québec unions, the implication is there. Contrast Marchand’s words with those of Michel Chartrand. Two direct citations have consistently been ascribed to Chartrand during the Crisis. First, he is reputed to have said of his regard for the family of kidnapped British Commissioner James Cross that “I have no more sympathy for Mrs. Cross than for the wives of thousands of men without jobs in Quebec at the present time.” Harsh words, but these pale in light of other quotes assigned to him such as “we are going to win because there are more boys ready to shoot members of Parliament than there are policeman.” Finally, and here identified as to the exact source of the citation, “*And Michel Chartrand, become for the evening Minister of Labour, stopped from time to time to make a statement: “We won’t win by killing two or three of them; there*

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<sup>319</sup> Marchand, Jean, Debates of the House of Commons, 16 October 1970 at p. 224.

<sup>320</sup> Marchand, Jean, Speech presented at the forum of the Quebec section of the Liberal Party of Canada in Quebec, February 7, 1971, and cited in Pelletier, Gérard, *The October Crisis*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1971, p. 34.

*must be a complete revolution.*”<sup>321</sup> Chartrand was always extravagant and occasionally extreme in his comments. Nevertheless, the polarisation of positions during these events is clear. Throughout all of this, Claude Ryan, then in his capacity as editor of *Le Devoir*, had assembled a number of prominent Québec leaders to try and convince the provincial government to negotiate with the FLQ in order to secure the release of the prisoners.

“The group, which became known as “Quebec’s wise men” and included René Lévesque, Marcel Pépin of the CSN, Louis Laberge of the FTQ and Yvon Charbonneau of the CEQ, issued a public declaration urging the Quebec government to negotiate.”<sup>322</sup>

Here we find the same “three wise men” that would lead the Common Front of 1972 and be imprisoned for their roles therein. The same goal of broadening of fields of activity that led Pierre Vadeboncoeur to demand that the union movement go beyond the simple negotiation of collective agreements, sparking the *deuxième front* invited the perception that Québec’s unions were engaging in a project of wholesale social revolution. Add to this the inevitable association of any form of national struggle with the violent tactics of the FLQ, and we can see that the same ideological foundation for a broad unity of class and national struggle would also tend to alienate certain traditional conservative elements within the labour movement.

Notwithstanding the increasing ideological divisions within the movement writ large, the socialist ideological foundation provided a solid springboard for a class based interpretation of the broader social project that was to underpin the new, potentially sovereign, Québec. The manifest expression of that project by organised labour was the Common Front movement of 1972. The same events directly precipitated the secession of the CSD unions from the CSN in the same year. The Common Front was essentially an

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<sup>321</sup> Chartrand, Michel, (ascribed), in *Ibid.* p. 32. Pelletier cites as his source *La Presse*, p. A2, February 25, 1971, and gives the accompanying annotation (Account of a demonstration organized in Montreal by *le Mouvement pour la libération des prisonniers politiques québécois*. The article bore the following title: “The provisional government of Québec sat for almost four hours.”) The previous two quotes are to be found in a broad diversity of sources, many of which I have examined thoroughly for precise citation as to when they were uttered to no avail.

<sup>322</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Raboy, p. 68.

expression of the power and class demands by the public and parapublic unions whose strength was numbered around 210.000 according to the records of the movement itself.

I have previously discussed the events of the Common Front of 1972 within the context of a challenge to the state and state elites. Under this section I would like to address the importance of the events as they relate to ideology, class awareness, and the working class expression of the social project that is Québec; as a vision of the social imaginary from the bottom up. Notwithstanding the fundamental antithesis between the Church's attempts at a class rapprochement between capital and labour, and the irreconcilability of class interests as proposed by the Marxist ideological position, many of the actual goals of the social project that is Québec and as guided by these ideological positions are the same. And rhetoric aside, the practice, or praxis, of these positions shared certain trajectories. On the broadest level, both ideological positions share a preoccupation with collective over individual rights and interests. This is not to propose that there is any similarity between their ultimate vision of Québec society. There can be no reconciling a Catholic social utopia with a socialist classless society. In real terms, neither eventuality is ever likely to come about. What I am saying here is that there are certain value themes that run throughout the historical development of Québec's social imaginary that are compatible with both ideological positions.<sup>323</sup>

Coleman has noted the continued influence of Catholic social doctrine well into the Quiet Revolution.

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<sup>323</sup> Carla Lipsig-Mummé has noted this continuity and how it has informed the transition from confessional unions to ones centred on a socialist ideological foundation. See Lipsig-Mummé, Carla, "Future Conditional: Wars of Position in the Quebec Labour Movement," in *Studies in Political Economy* 36 (1991), p. 78. She ultimately argues that of the characteristic trappings of the C.T.C.C. carried forward to the CSN, the corporatist tendency was lost. Notwithstanding, we shall see that there remains a corporatist tendency in more recent labour/capital collaborations. Interestingly, Larry Savage describes the PQ platform in 1977 as "corporatist." See Savage, Larry, "Quebec Labour and the Referendums," in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique*, 41:4 (December/décembre 2008), p. 868.



“Virtually all discussions of the change in ideology by intellectuals and political elites in Quebec in the early 1960s have ignored the impact of Pope John XXIII’s encyclical of 1961, *Mater et Magistra*. This encyclical. Published on the seventieth anniversary of *De Rerum Novarum* by Leo XIII and the thirtieth anniversary of *Quadragesimo Anno* by Pius XI, broke new ground in its depiction of society and the state. In doing so, it gave an added legitimacy to direct state intervention in society. It caused a stir in intellectual circles in the province, particularly among traditional thinkers who had viewed any state intervention as socialistic and hence atheistic.”<sup>324</sup>

He notes as well the range of individuals and institutions touched by the encyclical: “from Jean Marchand’s moral report to the special 1961 convention of the CNTU to a series of tortured articles by former Tremblay commissioner Père Arès in 1961 and 1962.”<sup>325</sup> I do not want to place undue emphasis on the impact of the encyclical itself. Rather, I want to illustrate that the value set embedded in Québec’s social imaginary does not switch ideological positions like a light switch. The need for a certain values continuity demands that here is, there must of necessity be, a certain continuity of values and beliefs even if the ideological milieus in which they are expressed are radically different and even antithetical by their natures. Only a limited excursion from the values of the historic bloc can be entertained, ideological re-orientation notwithstanding. This continuity of values and beliefs informs the present and constitutes one of the most important socialising factors in reiterating class positions and limiting and directing the expression of class interests through the institutions of civil society.

Events subsequent to the Quiet Revolution such as the Common Front of 1972 are illustrative of the reformation of a strong sense of class awareness and solidarity. I say *reformation* because a strong sense of working class identity and solidarity had clearly expressed itself in the latter half of the 1800s. That Labour Day in Québec is celebrated on the first Monday in September, and not on May 1, is due to the fact that organised labour had succeeded in marking the event a full five years before International Workers Day was formally recognised at the Second International of 1891. Rouillard recognises the event as

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<sup>324</sup> *Op. Cit.* Coleman, p. 101.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101.

proof of class consciousness and collective self-awareness, and notes that by the 1904 celebration, 20,000 workers marched on the streets of Montréal. Events such as these give empirical proof to the existence of a strong sense of class awareness and solidarity and denies arguments that maintain that the needs of national or cultural identity prevented or displaced the rise of class consciousness.

The rise and expression of class awareness and solidarity has not been prevented, delayed or displaced by the rise and expression of national consciousness. It has on occasion been overshadowed and qualified by national self-interest, and this almost always in a fashion instrumental to the purposes of elite class interests. Every class collaboration ostensibly struck as an expression of national interest has demanded a compromise from Québec's working classes. Consider the position of Québec's working classes at the point of the Quiet Revolution:

“Linguistic division of labour made Québec francophones one of the poorest ethnic groups in the province. In 1961 they earned about 66 percent of the average income obtained by Quebecers of British origins. At the time, personal bilingualism did not correct the disparities. On average, a bilingual francophone earned less than a bilingual Anglophone, and they both had lower incomes than a unilingual anglophone.”<sup>326</sup>

This condition is most often attributed to oppression by the collective “other”: Anglo-Canadian capital, American Imperialist capital, or other “other” bourgeois interests. Little consideration has been given to the economic cost of class collaborations in the interests of the Québec “nation.” Clearly, the most recent collaboration that marked the Quiet Revolution and as described by Coleman and others was a failure to working class interests. What was unique to the expression of working class interests in the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s was that for the first time in almost a century, a strong sense of class awareness and solidarity had grown, and this along side of a rising sense of national identity. This expression of what might be called and was probably proposed and seen as “genuine” class interests was very much a function of the socialist ideological position that informed the

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<sup>326</sup> *Op. Cit.* Noël, p. 34.

movement at the time. And as noted previously, this same ideological position also tended to cleave the movement from within, along lines that had historically been carved into the movement by institutional divisions established either through external events and forces or through the internal institutional responses to those events. Institutional responses from within were conceived as a collective attempt to secure the broader interests of the nation, but were conceived along the lines of class collaborations that worked against the economic interests of the working classes. During the late 1960s and 1970s, we have a period where organised labour was working with an ideological orientation that by its nature denied any form of class collaboration as fundamentally contrary to the genuine interests of the working classes. Yet, two factors made it inevitable that such an ideological position could not hold. First, and as noted previously, a powerful antithesis to socialist thought had been inculcated into Québec's value set over the previous century. Second, and as noted by Polanyi, class for class mobilisation. I invoke the words of Polanyi here again:

“Ultimately, therefore, it is the relation of the class to society as a whole which maps out its part in the drama; and its success is determined by the breadth and variety of the interests, other than its own, which it is able to serve. Indeed, no policy of narrow class interest can safeguard even that interest well – a rule which allows of but few exceptions. Unless the alternative to the social setup is a plunge into utter destruction, no crudely selfish class can maintain itself in the lead.”<sup>327</sup>

Some form of class collaboration is an inevitable reality for the working classes. The only question to be answered is with whom, and to what ends.

I have sketched out a number of different models in my historical examination. That employed by the international unions might be described as not so much class for class, as working class elites for their own interests. Other members of the working classes are left free to negotiate their own best conditions. This is a piecemeal approach to the general advocacy for the conditions and interests of the working classes. It has but a single focus, and is by its historical orientation essentially apolitical. Notwithstanding, it tends to focus on the

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<sup>327</sup> Op. Cit. Polanyi, p. 163. See also Motyl, Alexander, *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: conceptual limits and theoretical possibilities*, New York, Columbia UP, 1999. Motyl questions as well the real and lasting effects of revolution versus incremental change.

interests of labour, even if its beneficiaries are the skilled elite. Who are the “skilled elite” of today’s labour force? Intellectual and knowledge based workers. And where are many of these employed? Within the state bureaucracy.

The other model that has seen extensive examination is that of class collaboration calculated to secure more than simple economic class interests for the working classes, but to include as well broader shared interests of national identity. By its historical orientation, this too has been essentially apolitical in its expression. And while it has demonstrably helped to secure the linguistic and cultural interests of French Canadians here in Québec, there has been an economic cost for the working classes. The worldview of Church elites did not change radically with the evolving social policy that grew out of Europe, it simply adapted to a new form of expression. The social position of the working classes remained unchanged in the social order envisioned by the Québec Catholic church, and as such, labour’s advocacy was dulled. The model promoted an active collaboration with capital, not a demand for a larger slice of the pie of production. In taking this position, I differ from authors such as Noël and others who see the relative disadvantage of Québec workers from the point of view of Québec’s relative economic position in a more continental setting.

“Quebec society is not poor simply because it has self-serving elites, and it will not change by some miraculous conversion of those in power. Poverty and unemployment are complex social and political problems rooted in history, institutions, and public policies.”<sup>328</sup>

I have touched upon the economic context throughout here, and agree with Noël on that front. Nevertheless, the class analysis approach that I have adopted here has me ask of every collaboration, collectively *cui bono*?

There are other collaborative models available to organised labour. Many European countries have powerful workers’ parties that advocate for working class interests in a variety of collaborative environments ranging from neo-corporatist to neo-liberal and quasi-socialist.

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<sup>328</sup> *Op. Cit.* Noël, p. 423.

Yet, we are not simply burdened by the historically apolitical nature of Québec's organised labour here in choosing such a vehicle for the expression of working class interests, we are stymied by the electoral system itself that by its very nature discourages the creation and electoral success of what are deemed "special interest" parties. First-past-the-post simple majority systems tend to stifle the rise and success of new and special issue parties. The milieu in which those European workers' parties has arisen has often been within proportional representation electoral systems that by their very nature tend to create and reward "special interest" parties, be they dedicated to labour, other organised and expressed interests or even regional preoccupations.

The above goes towards a brief discussion of the third and final topic of this section that seeks to locate the role of the working classes in creating the social project that is Québec. Structurally, Noël sees three potential models for a future Québec:

1. A move towards a social-democratic model as in Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and Austria.
2. A position somewhat in between the above, dubbed neo-Corporate, and in the style as practiced by Germany.
3. A continuing path along the lines of Neo-liberalism as in the rest of Canada and the United States.<sup>329</sup>

Any option other than the third would require a conscious change of direction and require a formal political recognition of labour in a sense unheard of here.

The series of Common Front alliances of the 1960s and 70s did produce a general improvement in the economic condition of Québec's working classes, thus making a real change in her society. Noël admits as much:

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<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.* p. 423.

“Between 1971 and 1983, the Common Front substantially reduced wage differences in the public sector (by about 15 to 20 percent) and it significantly improved the real wages of its members...By the beginning of the 1980s, Québec public and private sector workers had reached wage parity with those of Ontario. In low-wage manufacturing industries such as clothing and textiles, Québec wages even surpassed those of Ontario, and proportionally there were more low-wage workers in Ontario than in Québec.”<sup>330</sup>

Labour’s actions can and do change the class nature of the project. Previously these actions in collaboration with other classes had produced less of a benefit for Québec’s working classes, during the 1960s and 70s the nature of labour’s advocacy better served her class interests. Notwithstanding, the working classes – then and now – have no dedicated political expression, and as such remain destined to enter into collaborations not to their own greater benefit. The decline of a socialist ideological orientation returned organised labour to the practice of seeking the best deal available, and given that the social democratic orientation of the sovereignist Parti Québécois was more welcoming than that of the Liberal party, labour was destined to enter into another collaboration; one that only placed the movement into a position of cognitive dissonance once the PQ took power in 1976.

### **Cognitive Dissonance: The Clash of Class and National Interests Post 1976**

I have previously alluded to the real and presumed natural synthesis of collective interests of class and identity up to the first electoral victory of the Parti Québécois in 1976. Given my recent discussion on the internal cleavages that resulted from the socialist radicalisation of organised labour in the 1970s, it must be shown that subsequent political support for the PQ – be it overt or informal – placed certain class fractions associated with organised labour into different ideological positions vis-à-vis the national question and class interests. On the one hand, and as noted previously, the unionised public sector, then as now the vanguard of both the most militant supporters of political sovereignty and class advocacy, were quickly placed into a conflict of interest situation when the PQ took power and became

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<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.* and *In Passim*, p. 431-432.

in every sense of the word, the “Employer.” Other fractions of the organised working classes were not placed in such an overtly conflictual position. This latter group had no necessary association between their support, or lack thereof, for political sovereignty, and their relation to the party in power.

The expression of political support for the Parti Québécois by organised labour demonstrates a certain ambivalence consistent with the historical pattern that I have sketched out thus far. Interestingly enough, active support of the party was more directly expressed by the FTQ during this period, whose greater strength was in the private sector, and focussed in the trades. This *Centrale* and its antecedents in the international unions had previously remained steadfastly opposed to direct political involvement by organised labour. The CSN, who was better represented in the public and parapublic sectors, and within the state bureaucracy itself, maintained a position of political non-involvement, though many of its most militant leaders and members were active in individual riding campaigns, and even went on to run for political office themselves.

An examination of institutional support for the PQ, be it formal or informal would be incomplete without some investigation of the degree to which individual labour militants associated with the formal institutional structure of the movement itself informed the political process at the party level. One of those who repeatedly sought elective office throughout his long career was Michel Chartrand. Coming out of the youth movement of the Catholic church, Chartrand’s first political association was with the *Action libérale nationale* in the early 1940s. He ran unsuccessfully for the *Bloc populaire* in the 1945 federal election. Subsequently, he joined the CCF in the mid-1950s, and ran for office in the 1956 federal election for the Québec wing of that party, which he was instrumental in building,. He ran again for the party in 1958, and was again defeated. He ran again, in a provincial by-election in 1959, and was again defeated. Chartrand was a founder and president of the *Parti*

*socialiste du Québec* in the 1960s. He only ran for public office once more, in 1998 as a candidate for the *Rassemblement pour l'alternative progressiste*, again unsuccessfully though understandably so as he ran against then Premier Lucien Bouchard. Chartrand's pursuit of elective office within the union movement was itself marked by a certain lack of success. Notwithstanding the very high profile that he held as president of the Montréal Central Council of the CSN during the events of the October Crisis, an office that he held from 1968 to 1978, he was unsuccessful in his pursuit of a number of key positions in the CSN leadership from the early 1950s on. Associated with the Executive Committee of the CTCC at that time, and retained as a paid employee of the Confederation, he was fired from his position and only reinstated by the decision of an arbitral tribunal headed by Pierre Trudeau. He ran for the office of Secretary General in that organisation in 1954, only to be defeated by Jean Marchand.<sup>331</sup> Chartrand's activism clearly informed his political aspirations, but his distinct lack of success therein cannot suggest that in this capacity he affected party policy. Further, his steadfast refusal to associate himself with the PQ meant that his political activism did not inform that party in any direct way.

A more concrete example of how union militants and even their salaried workers have influenced party politics related to the nationalist cause is provided by Gilles Duceppe. The current and perennial leader of the BQ, or *Bloc Québécois*, had initially been associated with the Maoist *Workers Communist Party of Canada*, or WCP, which must have affected his early ideological foundation. Employed as a union organiser for the CSN as of 1981, in the English hospital sector, then moving on to the role of negotiator in 1986, he left the movement when first elected to federal public office as an independent candidate in 1990. Duceppe has served as leader of the BQ since 1997. Notwithstanding his early roots in the

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<sup>331</sup> See, amongst others, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=F1ARTF0001536>. As might be expected, the most complete and diverse set of resources on Chartrand is contained within the archives of the CSN, an on-line list of links to which is provided by <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=F1ARTF0001536>.



WCP and experience as an advocate for labour, Duceppe has strongly influenced the political leadership of the nationalist cause. Notwithstanding his protestations to the contrary, an argument could be made that his background has made him more open to working class issues than he might have otherwise been. Certainly a “workers” orientation still marks the policy face of the BQ, with the most recent list of issues contained on the party’s web site including a communiqué claiming “the Conservatives and the Liberals have abandoned workers.”<sup>332</sup>

On the municipal level, political leadership and the creation of parties has been informed by union militants and workers. The failed experiment of the FRAP has already been examined in passing. The subsequent creation of the *Montreal Citizens Movement*, or MCM, and its leadership by Jean Doré bears some examination. Doré was a founding member of the party, serving first as Treasurer, and then as President. He ran for mayor in 1982 and was defeated, ran in a by-election and won the seat of city councillor, and then successfully dethroned Mayor Jean Drapeau in the 1985 Montréal municipal election. Doré had worked as a press attaché to René Lévesque from 1972 to 1975, and was employed as a lawyer for the CSN prior to his election as mayor.<sup>333</sup> An examination of Doré’s series of mandates as mayor gives little or no clue as to whether his earlier union associations contributed towards a sympathy towards working class issues. Certainly, his period as Director of the *Fédération des associations d’économie familiale* should have given proof to a genuine working class preoccupation.

One of the three union leaders associated with the 1972 Common Front held elected public office at both the provincial and federal levels. Yvon Charbonneau sat in the provincial assembly for the Liberal Party of Québec from 1994 to 1997. He sat for the

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<sup>332</sup> See <http://www.blocquebécois.org/Bloc.aspx?bloc=a6dd3d8a-540e-4a8d-b480-caa2f7fee628>. The BQ is protesting a refusal by the Conservatives and Liberals to improve Unemployment Insurance benefits. Download date 11/10/2010.

<sup>333</sup> See *Op. Cit.*, Raboy, p. 109-110.

Federal Liberals from 1997 to 2004. Charbonneau held the presidency of the CEQ from 1970 to 1978, and again between 1982 and 1986.<sup>334</sup>

As noted in my previous examination of workers' candidates found in the closing section of Chapter 5, and notwithstanding the importance of individual contributions made to political parties and the policies issued there from by the individuals considered immediately above, I question the real effects of occasional, *ad hoc*, participation by union militants in the political process in the absence of a genuine workers' party. Those most likely to produce a real influence for working class interests, such as Michel Chartrand, were quite evidently the least likely to win public office. The choice of party affiliation most probably contributed heavily to the lack of electoral success. Those who sought office through mainstream parties, suffer from the same fate as the earlier examples. Worker Liberals, or should the occasion ever arise again, worker Conservatives, become Liberals and Conservatives first. Just as the electoral system in Canada tends to discourage the rise of "special interest" parties, the political socialisation process itself tends to marginalise voices that strongly challenge the *status quo*. Thus, labour's involvement in the political process tends to become one of calculated pragmatic involvement, or it risks becoming seconded into the real agendas of the particular parties concerned. Where, as in the PQ or the BQ, that agenda is dedicated first and foremost to what is seen to be a goal of national liberation through the political process, the class agenda of organised labour gets lost in process.

As regards formal participation in the political process at the party level, the CEQ maintained a position similar to that of the CSN, and as noted above they also contributed to the ranks of those seeking elective office. Notwithstanding the historical tradition of remaining politically unaligned, Larry Savage has noted that:

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<sup>334</sup> See <http://bilan.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/pages/evenements/2216.html>, as well as *Op. Cit.* Rouillard, *Histoire du syndicalisme québécois*, p. 363 to 367.

“Whereas the FTQ could afford to foster close relations with a provincial government run by the PQ, both the CSN and CEQ had to be careful not to align themselves too closely with the péquistes for fear of falling into the dilemma of having to defend, or worse praise, the employer of the vast majority of their members.”<sup>335</sup>

I put forward here that such an observation strikes a direct resonance with much of my own argument. The effect goes beyond the simple withholding of overt political support however, and goes towards illustrating the inherent conflict of interests between class and identity. It is here that we find a *de facto* example of the cognitive dissonance that I propose. Behind every exchange between the party and the labour movement in a class situation such as collective bargaining lies the unspoken issue of support for sovereignty; the proverbial “elephant in the room.” Interestingly enough, Lipsig-Mummé describes a similar internal conflict exhibited by Québec’s organised labour in relation to the “social project” that formed the collaboration during the Quiet Revolution. She describes the situation as follows:

“[Thus,] We may speak about a process of union modernization during the Quiet Revolution, effected within the context of an embracing national project. Yet the union centrals, and in particular the CEQ and the CSN, could not fail to recognize that the expansion of the state made the politicization of union industrial policy unavoidable. As strike after strike pitted the centrals against the Liberal government, the unions found themselves torn between collaboration in the national project and rejection of its implications for the new working class.”<sup>336</sup>

Of course, the “national project” here is not one for a sovereign state of Québec, but this does illustrate what I have described here as the recurrent theme informed by the social imaginary of a social project that *is* Québec throughout this historical examination. And the theme of an ambivalent class collaboration that forms the basis of that project at different times and under a variety of incarnations is consistent as well.

The FTQ actively supported the PQ in the 1976 and 1981 provincial elections.<sup>337</sup> As regards the earlier election, Carla Lipsig-Mummé suggests that the actions of the FTQ were

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<sup>335</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Savage, p. 868.

<sup>336</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Lipsig-Mummé, p. 85-86. She goes on to suggest that “the national question paralyzed the unions’ political intervention during the Quiet Revolution,” on p. 86.

<sup>337</sup> That formal endorsement of the PQ would be withheld in 1985 after the events subsequent to the 1981 recession that included the imposition of a 20% cut back to the public sector and the breaking of the Common Front through legislative initiatives, but it would continue in 1989, and 1994 at the provincial level, and be expressed federally in the 1993 election with their support of the Bloc Québécois.

calculated as a “macro-corporatist” attempt at reasserting the dominance of the political arena over the economy. This approach was one employed in states such as “Austria, Australia, and the Scandinavian countries” with the FTQ taking a local spin on the idea.

“La Federation des travailleurs et travailleuses du Quebec (FTQ) represented an odd variant of this response in the 1970s, as it sought to create a preferential relationship with the Parti Quebecois just before its election in 1976 and during its first term in office. Strategically it tried to pursue its double objective - of ensuring its lead over the Confederation des syndicats nationaux (CSN), and of influencing social and industrial policy – without moving into a traditional labourist relationship to the Parti Quebecois.”<sup>338</sup>

What Lipsig-Mummé describes is essentially an eminently practical political collaboration based on *class* interests, combined with those of the specific organisation itself in competition with the CSN. This was not a calculated buy-in to the PQ position on sovereignty, and supports the argument that labour’s support for the PQ was as often, perhaps more often, calculated on the basis of that party’s greater openness to the needs of the working classes. Whether that openness was as a result of the party’s avowedly social-democratic ideological position or simply a policy compromise for electoral purposes need not be discussed here. From the actions of the FTQ at least, their support of the PQ was based on what they believed was the best political deal available in the interests of the class. This is also clearly demonstrated by the words of the FTQ themselves expressed at the time of their lending active support to the PQ in 1976.

“The FTQ explained the nature of their support in this way “One has to be fully aware that the PQ is not a real workers’ party. Many interests other than our own converge therein. The workers will not be any further ahead if they find themselves faced with a new national bourgeoisie governing for themselves, and who are in reality nothing but a puppet government working to the profit of foreign capital.””<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Lipsig-Mummé, p. 74.

<sup>339</sup> *Op. Cit.*, CSN, *Portrait d’un mouvement*, Montréal, CSN, 2000, p. 207. My translation of “La FTQ explique ainsi la nature de cet appui : “Il faut être bien conscient que le PQ n’est pas un véritable parti des travailleurs. Biens d’autres intérêts que les nôtres y convergent. Les travailleurs ne seraient pas plus avancés de se trouver en face d’une nouvelle bourgeoisie nationale gouvernant pour elle-même qu’ils ne le sont, actuellement, alors que des valets gouvernement au profit du capitalisme étranger.””

Larry Savage cites Harold Jansen and Lisa Young in describing the FTQ/PQ collaborations as being a “utility maximising exchange between rational actors.”<sup>340</sup> The degree to which collective actors such as labour unions can be described as “rational” actors is debatable. Nevertheless, Jansen and Young underscore the practical as opposed to ideological nature of the collaboration.

How can we tie the “class utility” of organised labour’s support for the sovereigntist cause to their genuine class interests? By re-stating the presumed, and ideologically necessary connection between oppressed class and oppressed identity. Thus, four years after the FTQ’s “rational” choice, they rationalised the *centrale’s* support for a “yes” vote in the first sovereignty referendum by doing just that. Larry Savage summarises the events of an FTQ special convention held one month before the May 20<sup>th</sup> referendum as follows:

“In his inaugural address to delegates FTQ president Louis Laberge argued that to ignore the national question would be to ignore the labour movement’s responsibility to represent the interests of its members. In that spirit, Laberge linked the deficiencies of the federal system to the oppression felt by Quebec’s workers by suggesting that unilingual francophone workers earned the weakest wages, received the worst jobs and were the most likely to be unemployed.”<sup>341</sup>

If the criteria of weakest wages, worst jobs, and likelihood of being unemployed were applied today, would they still reflect a monolithically French, if not necessarily francophone, demographic? And given the observations made by Noël and cited previously as to the parity obtained with Ontario’s workers by the beginning of the 1980s; a parity obtained through the class militancy of the public sector unions themselves, were Laberge’s assumptions accurate? Even if they remained accurate, would this make class condition a necessary and sufficient cause for class support for the nationalist movement? Many of Québec’s labour leaders presumed so. Some authors go further still. Beyond the presumption that they should support the nationalist cause, Carla Lipsig-Mummé actually faults the

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<sup>340</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Savage, p. 868. Savage cites Jansen, Harold, and Young, Lisa, “Solidarity Forever? The NDP, Organized Labour and the Changing Face of Party Finance in Canada,” a paper presented to the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, London, Ontario, 2005, p. 2.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.* p. 870.

movement for not seizing the moment of opportunity to actively take a leadership role in the political manifestation of the sovereignty movement itself.<sup>342</sup> When she describes the state of “strategic paralysis” that gripped the labour movement at this time, she accurately identifies their inability to respond to changes in Québec society, and she well summarises many of the external economic factors incumbent upon the state and social actors at that time. It is the prescriptive conclusion that I am questioning here, as well as the assumption – put forward without a substantiating argument – that there is no apparent nor fundamental conflict of interests between the open engagement of a leadership role in the area of national liberation by institutions dedicated to the representation of working class interests. I put forward here that much of that “strategic paralysis” resulted more from the union movement’s inability to respond to profound economic changes and the increasing shift towards a neo-liberal foundation of the state.

Peter Graefe acknowledges the work of Lipsig-Mummé, and without offering comment on the prescriptive evaluation of whether the unions *should* have engaged a leadership role in the nationalist movement, he clearly identifies their ready, if unquestioned, acceptance of the sovereignist project along with their traditional class interests.

“In terms of the national question, in turn, the various union federations had generally acted as what I would term “nationalism takers,” supporting the dominant nationalist project without articulating a specifically working class nationalist agenda.”<sup>343</sup>

Savage, in an essay specifically dedicated to the unions and the referenda, notes simply that:

“Divided between strategies of capitulation, on the one hand , and confrontation on the other, the Quebec labour movement was unable to articulate, despite its rhetoric, a united and strong position in favour of sovereignty.”<sup>344</sup>

The conclusion is the same: through either an historical disinclination or present inability, Québec’s trade unions defaulted to other class representations and leadership in determining

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<sup>342</sup> I am speaking here of the position taken in the works cited and at the time of their writing, and this by way of contextualising the discourse, and not to permanently situate the position of the author cited.

<sup>343</sup> Graefe, Peter, “State Restructuring and the Failure of Competitive Nationalism,” in Murphy, Michael, ed., *Quebec and Canada in the New Century: New Dynamics, New Opportunities*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen’s UP, and the Institute of Government Relations, 2007, p. 155.

<sup>344</sup> *Op. Cit.* Savage, p. 873.

the direction, and beneficiaries, of the broader identity movement. Both within the context of the nationalist movement, and in the face of changing economic factors, the union movement was to a great extent frozen in its inclination or ability to respond.

I have previously alluded to the global economic shift that was taking place in the 1970s, and the adversarial position that this placed the “state” of Québec and organised labour. This “first wave” of global economic restructuring drove labour into a series of collaborations that, like the one described by Coleman, Guindon and others during the Quiet Revolution and examined previously, served other class interests better than their own. And these collaborations were calculated to produce benefits in the best “national” interest as well as for the classes that entered into the collaboration.

The PQ launched a number of initiatives for collaborative projects in a nationalist vein with the state as convenor starting with *Bâtir le Québec* in 1979, and the *Table nationale de l'emploi*, initiated by Robert Dean, Minister for Employment between 1984 and the end of the second PQ mandate in 1985. Opportunities for a collaborative national project did not return until the next PQ electoral victory of 1994. Notwithstanding, significant ideological changes in the movement were taking place well before the return of the PQ to power. For some *centrales* these changes prompted further internal divisions.

Savage picks up on Graefe, and as well reflects the observations put forward by Lipsig-Mummé when he observes that during the post-referendum 1980s, “economic difficulties prompted individual trade union centrals to build closer alliances with employers in order to save jobs and consolidate workplace gains in an increasingly neoliberal political environment.”<sup>345</sup> As the movement entered the 1990s, Graefe observes a continuing trend, from some surprising corners.

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<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 874.

“In the early 1990s, the labour movement started to develop a new strategic project, although, as we will see, the relationship to politics and the national question remained problematic. An important step in this direction came from the CSN, as it cast off a militant, conflict-based unionism in search of positive-sum partnerships with employers.”<sup>346</sup>

Here again we find the roots of internal division between public and private sector workers affiliated with the CSN. The difficult economic conditions of the 1980s precipitated the “second wave” of structural changes within developed nations. This drove private sector unions into what Lipsig-Mummé clearly identifies as another round of “class collaboration.” Yet, by the time of the 1989 round of public sector negotiations, the largest CSN federation – The FAS (Fédération des affaires sociales, today the FSSS, or Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux) – had developed “a tradition of rejecting as collaborationism any settlement that CSN negotiators gain for it in negotiation with the state.”<sup>347</sup> Note that the private sector tendency towards class collaboration here transcends historic institutional divisions. The C.T.C.C. may well have been the product of a class collaboration calculated to better secure *national* interests, but it was the international unions that tended towards *class* collaborations to better secure the economic class interests of their members. The effect was to reproduce divisions that had previously marked the different positions of the institutions of Québec labour writ large within the structures of the CSN itself.

It would appear that Québec’s labour *centrales* held no illusions about the class nature of the Parti Québécois, and either entered into collaboration as a rational choice, or forewent formal ties and overt support by way of a tradition of non-involvement, or a strategic avoidance calculated to evade a conflict of interest between their class role as representative of the public sector employees and their partnership in the nationalist cause. But what of the potential conflict between their class roles writ large and their support for the nationalist cause itself?

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<sup>346</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Graefe, , “State Restructuring and the Failure of Competitive Nationalism,” p. 156.

<sup>347</sup> *Op. Cit.* Lipsig-Mummé, p. 101.



Post 1976, there could be no avoiding the empirical reality of the adversarial nature of relations between the state and the organised working classes. Both the events of 1982-83 and the policy tendencies that they spawned gave repeated proof to Québec labour that when in power the PQ were as administratively ruthless as the Liberals in their way. I have previously taken up the events that precipitated the rollbacks in the public sector in 1982. I shall return briefly to them here by way of reinforcing the profundity of the impact upon Québec labour. Rouillard summarises the initial, and somewhat awkward, round of public sector negotiations that began in 1979. There were some brief strikes after an initial rather hard line taken by the state under the Ministry led by Jacques Parizeau. But the atmosphere vis-à-vis *class* conflict was somewhat unique. As Rouillard describes it, “one could not present the PQ as the instrument of the grand international bourgeoisie,”<sup>348</sup> at least at this stage of the game. During the initial round, some normative concessions were made by the state, but Rouillard awards the first round to the PQ government.

“The second round began in 1982, one year before the expiry of the collective agreement: in an unprecedented gesture, the government set, by law and decree, and without any real negotiation, working conditions for 320,000 of its employees for the next three years (1983-1985). This decision came about at the peak of the economic recession, at a time when the unemployment rate hit its highest level since the great depression (15.9%).”<sup>349</sup>

Adding insult to injury, the government cut public sector wages by 20% between January and March of 1983.<sup>350</sup> There could be no avoiding the reality of the PQ’s true nature, notwithstanding their purported, and regularly expressed, “favourable prejudice” towards labour. As important in the long run as the cuts themselves was the institutionalisation of the extraordinary use of back-to-work legislation that in its modern application started with the

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<sup>348</sup> *Op. Cit.* Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme Québécois*, p. 386.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.* p. 388. My translation of “La deuxième manche commence en 1982, un an avant l’échéance de la convention collective : dans un geste sans précédent, le gouvernement fixe, par loi et décrets, sans qu’il n’y ait véritablement négociation, les conditions de travail de ses 320,000 employés pour les trois prochaines années (1983-1985). Cette décision survient au plus fort de la récession économique, au moment où le taux de chômage atteint un record depuis la grande dépression (15.9%).”

<sup>350</sup> As with earlier disclaimers on the specific percentages involved, I offer the same qualification here. The generally accepted figure is 20%, Lipsig-Mummé claims 19.6% and Rouillard gives 21%. Citing *CSN Nouvelles* for the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1982, the figure is arrived at by adding a direct reduction of 18.8% to a return to the earlier salary scales which further reduced wages by another 2.8%. The discrepancies may simply result from calculating the compound effect in different ways.

first Common Front strikes of the early 1970s. From this point on, “negotiation” by decree became the norm, rather than the exception in public sector relations with the state.

I have already described the nature of organised labour’s support for the nationalist cause in occasional and ambivalent partnership with the PQ, and given the piecemeal, or *étapiste*, plan for “sovereignty association:” too much for some, too little for many, and questioned to a degree as to its real value for labour. Did subsequent events illustrating the nature of the PQ as a class partner and representative in any way affect the nature of support for the nationalist cause? Was there a greater questioning or qualification of support for the nationalist cause given that the party that promised to lead Quebeckers to this promised land was clearly no friend to labour?

There appears to be a general consensus that independence was moved to the back burner throughout the 1980s. With the unions in strategic disarray in the face of sweeping changes in the global economy and in the ideological foundations of most western political systems, including Canada and specifically Québec. Lipsig-Mummé argues that it was the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord that sparked a renewal of the independence movement in Québec and amongst the unions.<sup>351</sup> Her conclusion was that when the unions gave support to the newly formed Bloc Québécois, they committed the same errors and missed the same opportunities as they had before with the PQ, further exacerbating the class alienation between party and labour due to the essentially conservative orientation of the new federal party, and this notwithstanding the fact that the new leader, Gilles Duceppe was a former CSN employee. Graefe simply notes that the creation of a program of “competitive nationalism” – another broad collaborative project involving labour, capital and the state – enabled a rapprochement between organised labour and the PQ on the national question by

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<sup>351</sup> See *Op.Cit.* Lipsig-Mummé, p. 103-104. Savage notes the same effect of the failure of Meech Lake in *Op. Cit.* Savage, p. 874, and in support, he cites Güntzel, Ralph P., *Rapprocher les lieux de pouvoir: The Quebec Labour Movement and Quebec Sovereignism, 1960-2000,* in *Labour/Le Travail* 46, Fall 2000), p. 369-395.

the time of the 1994 election. Not only had the events of 1982 not held any lasting lesson for labour vis-à-vis the PQ, there had not been any questioning of the assumption of a necessary and sufficient relationship between the successful advocacy of working class interests and the nationalist cause. Graefe observes that “in the lead up to the 1995 referendum, the CSN stated that its support was without preconditions on the grounds that sovereignty provides the political framework most favourable to attaining its societal project.”<sup>352</sup> This after the fact carrot and stick attitude is also reflected in the attitude of then CSN president Gerald Larose, as cited by Lipsig-Mummé who notes that:

“Within the union movement, there are those, like Gerald Larose, who argue that a labour party is necessary, but it will only be possible to found one after independence.”<sup>353</sup>

We have here a clear statement that the collective interests of class must of necessity be put off until those of national identity are secured in a sovereign, and presumably neo-liberal, state of Québec. Language and culture trump the economic interests of class.

Do such positions produce a state of cognitive dissonance when those that utter them not only see no conflict between the interests of the working classes and those of dominant culture, and in fact see a necessary and sufficient connection between the interests of that now dominant culture and those of Québec’s working classes? Have Québec’s institutions dedicated to the advocacy of working class interests completely abandoned any form of class advocacy not directly tied to the nationalist cause through some form of class collaboration?

Sparked by comments by Gérald Tremblay, Liberal Minister Industry, Commerce and Technology, capital, through the *Conseil du patronat*, called for a “Rendez-vous économique” to include business and labour.<sup>354</sup> A Liberal/capital initiative, it was not likely to be tied to the nationalist cause, and was an invitation to another class collaboration. Some

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<sup>352</sup> *Op. Cit.* Graefe, , “State Restructuring and the Failure of Competitive Nationalism,” p. 163. Graefe cites CSN, *Nos choix stratégiques dans la conjoncture actuelle* (Montréal: CSN, 1995), 9-10.

<sup>353</sup> *Op. Cit.* Lipsig-Mummé, p. 104.

<sup>354</sup> See *Op. Cit.* Noël, p. 437-438. Noël cites Cauchon, P. “Le CPQ juge ‘intolérable’ la situation de l’emploi,” in *Le Devoir*, 1991, August 28, p. 5.

alliances at the time seemed class based but tied to the sovereignty movement by their very purpose. *Partenaires pour le souveraineté* was conceived early in 1995, and was a loose coalition of community groups, unions and fractional identity movements. The CSN and the CSQ abandoned ship by 1998, due to its close association with the PQ. The distancing was not due to the PQ and its support for the nationalist cause, but because of the failure, in labour's eyes, of the collaboration that arose out of the Economic Summits of 1996, where the party, newly invigorated by the election of Lucien Bouchard to the helm and recovering after the failure of the second referendum, invited capital and labour into a new partnership.

Peter Graefe informs us that:

“The government called upon its socio-economic partners to help it reinvent the social pact at the basis of society, and, more concretely, to help form a national consensus around a strategy of deficit reduction and employment creation. This was booby-trapped ground for the unions since the employers' organizations made it clear from the start that their bottom line was deficit reduction without tax increases. A lack of fiscal rectitude or increased taxes would hurt their already fragile competitive position. Moreover, the background documents for both summits emphasized deregulation as the main motor of private sector job creation, and opposed even relatively minor measures for reducing working time on the basis of hurting the competitiveness of Quebec firms.”<sup>355</sup>

And yet, the unions joined the partnership. None of the goals of the partnership in any way directly touched upon the broader interests of the working classes. The entire exercise was touted as a collaboration calculated to improve the socio-economic position of the *nation*. Or as summarised by Graefe:

“In rather classic fashion, competitiveness went from a shared objective that allowed for a renewal of the labour agenda around themes of democratization and participation, to a binding and overriding constraint that had the federations signing off on a national consensus that attacked the interests of their members.”<sup>356</sup>

Some schools of thought might describe these initiatives as evidence of an attempt to morph Québec's economy into a more socio-democratic model along what the “varieties of capitalism” school would describe as a Coordinated Market Economy, or CME. This would give evidence to a conscious collaborative social project, if indeed it can be shown that it is

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<sup>355</sup> *Op. Cit.* Graefe, , “State Restructuring and the Failure of Competitive Nationalism,” p. 168.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.* p. 168.

not simply another example of a class collaboration calculated to enhance some class positions over others.

Peter Graefe engages arguments put forward by the CRISES group (*Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales*) that Québec capital has moved towards a “modernist” model and away from a neo-liberal model. The Modernist position is summarised as:

“The peak employer associations have moved from a radical neo-liberal position that left them outside the mainstream towards a more nuanced position that allows for compromises (if not necessarily consensus) with the state and other social actors, and for collective solutions to common problems... They argue that contemporary capitalism has opened a series of spaces for positive sum co-operation between labour and capital, and for increased employee participation and democracy in the workplace.”<sup>357</sup>

The test of the argument from the point of view of class analysis would be whether there were any genuine “compromises” contributing to a “positive sum” where the benefit is equally distributed between the class partners.

I have previously laid out the difficulties that the labour movement experienced in attempting to engage the series of economic changes precipitated in the 1980s. Many of these challenges were of a purely practical and organisational nature. These included increases in precarious employment – part-time, contract, seasonal and contingent labour – often concentrated in areas notoriously difficult to organise such as the service sector. This was combined with a general decline in those areas of production upon which the movement had built its foundations: resource extraction, light manufacturing and consumer goods. Add to this attempts by the state to “rationalise” its own public sector, what has become known as the retreat of the state, and the crisis for organised labour in Québec becomes clear. Labour, confronted by these difficulties, and in an attempt to save jobs in traditional sectors, searches for new and productive initiatives. It is conceded as well that capital, seeking to compete in an increasingly competitive global market, might well be inclined to seek innovative approaches to increased productivity and lower costs. Thus:

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<sup>357</sup> *In Passim*, Graefe, Peter, “The Quebec Patronat: Proposing a Neo-Liberal Political Economy After All,” in the *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2004, p. 174.

“*Modernism*, therefore involves a break with neo-liberalism in order to adopt more advanced forms of production that require more democratic relations between employers and workers, as well as between firms and other stakeholders. This result is contingent on the co-operations of social actors, and thus relies on the *patronat*’s recognition that an alternative to neo-liberalism serves its interests (for instance, by ensuring the production of extra-economic goods like trust and learning.”<sup>358</sup>

Proponents of the argument cite examples such as that offered above of the *Conseil du patronat* seeking a “*rendez-vous économique*” between labour and the state in 1991, and attempts by the then Liberal government to better organise the Québec economy into sectors, or industrial “clusters.” Modernists state of the position of capital expressed through the *Conseil du patronat* that:

“Whereas in the early 1980s these associations refused the state’s invitation to build partnerships and hid behind a neo-liberal strategy based solely on the criteria of the market and competition, by the early 1990s they involved themselves in concertation, particularly with respect to the jobs issue.”<sup>359</sup>

Graefe would agree with the picture up to the early 1990s. However, he does not see a genuine turn towards what the CRISES school calls a “modernist” position. He sees in fact a continuing neo-liberal trend that seeks the reduction of the state in every potential area that touches the private sector.

“Post-1994... greater prominence [is] given to the claim that the CPQ has always supported strong and efficient systems in health, education, and child care... Despite this softening of the language, the policy correlate remained that of reducing spending by creating a complementary, structured, and state recognised private sector alternative to public services. Indeed, the late 1990s saw an intensification of calls to review public programs so as to open them up to public-private partnerships, and to loosen regulations limiting sub-contracting.”<sup>360</sup>

Bear in mind that the PQ returned to power in 1994, and that there was another call for collaboration between all of Québec’s socio-economic “partners” convened through the initiatives of the Bouchard government. Again, the rallying cry was for a class collaboration in the “national” interest, but one with benefits proposed for all parties. Compound the effects of capital’s neo-liberal demands for a return to the minimal state with the vanguard role of Québec’s public sector unions in supporting the nationalist cause, and you can see the

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<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.* p. 174.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.* p. 176.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.* and *In Passim*. P. 184.

potential for a certain cognitive dissonance within both movements. Labour is pinched by a partnership that produces few, if any real class benefits, yet continues to be called into collaborations supporting the “national” interest. The price is highest for those in labour who are the most ardent supporters of the nationalist cause. The general ideological trend of the nationalist movement, and the party that openly promotes it is increasingly neo-liberal in tone. Any concern for the collective interests of Québec’s working classes has been dropped from the discourse – intellectual, academic, or political – and yet labour continues to buy in to collaborations that benefit other class positions better than their own. Graefe summarises the immediate future as follows:

“University economists close to the business community have started to moot the outlines of a “New Quiet Revolution” or a “Modernised Social Democracy” that share most of the particulars put forward by the CPQ. The decision to frame these projects in terms generally associated with social democratic achievements suggests that a new hegemonic project is under construction dressing up a neo-liberal strategy in the symbolic garb of post-1960 nationalism and social democracy.”<sup>361</sup>

Graefe’s opening critique of the CRISES group interpretation of the ideological trajectory of Québec capital is telling on a number of fronts. Not only does he unmask the genuinely neo-liberal trend that continues to inform both capital and the state’s worldview for the social project that is Québec, but he identifies the role of a significant number of Québec’s organic intellectuals in organising, rationalising and in fact concealing the neo-liberal agenda.

I would like to briefly return to a certain sub-theme that has run through my examination of the literature, as well as in my examination of the importance of ideology in situating both what a more orthodox Marxist approach would identify as genuine and false interests of class. Let me offer here a concise summary of the Gramscian concept of the class membership and role of the *Intellectual* in society.

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<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.* p. 186.

“Those intellectuals who contribute to the hegemony of bourgeois ideology comprise the intellectual stream of the bourgeois class; those intellectuals who combat bourgeois ideology and contribute to the counter-hegemony of the proletariat are part of the working class; and those intellectuals who embody backward looking precapitalist culture reflecting the worldview of the feudal aristocracy, constitute the traditional stratum of intellectuals. In the course of capitalist development, this latter category tends to be absorbed into the capitalist stream as organic intellectuals of the bourgeoisie, and thus there is a general tendency for intellectuals to become polarized into two camps.”<sup>362</sup>

If the class association of organic intellectuals is determined not solely by whether they exchange their intellectual labour for a living wage, and thus placing them amongst the working class, then given my examination thus far, only some very few of the writings and actions examined and produced by this intellectual class fraction in Québec can be attributable to expressions of the working class, and working class interests. Most importantly, only during that period in the 1960s and 1970s when the labour movement was guided and informed by socialist intellectuals can we argue that working class interests were organised and directed by an ideological position and leadership genuinely committed to the broader interests of the working class. All other periods previously or subsequently have seen the labour movement’s choices determined by class interests other than their own. And this save for a brief period prior to the rise of the confessional unions, where labour essentially demonstrated a class-for-class consciousness. Even this expression was tempered by issues of cultural and linguistic identity; by a clearly expressed concern for “national” interests. That these other class interests have been couched in language calculated to enlist working class support for the broader “national” project and interest only goes to show that competing bourgeois and petit bourgeois factions can and do enlist the working classes into alliances to gain advantage over other bourgeois and petit bourgeois fractions in seeking a hegemonic class position. Finally, the perception and expression of feelings of cognitive dissonance between interests of class and those of identity will be silenced or muted when their interpretation is communicated by intellectuals with bourgeois class associations employing a

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<sup>362</sup> Wright, Erk Olin, “Intellectuals and the Class Structure of Capitalist Society,” in Walker, Pat, ed., *Between Labor and Capital*, Montréal, Black Rose, 1978, p. 194-195.



nationalist argument for what are ultimately the class interests of particular bourgeois and petit bourgeois fractions.

All political parties in Québec employ some variation of nationalist rhetoric in their platforms. The tone may range from overtly sovereignist to a traditionally conservative nationalism, but a staunch defence of Québec's traditional French culture remains at the heart of every party's core ideology. This essentially translates into a shared preoccupation with preserving the dominant culture as *sine qua non* of all platforms, policies and positions. The real scrum is between competing bourgeois and petit bourgeois fractions. Have I purposefully left out any reference to the sole significant leftist party in Québec, *Québec Solidaire*? Yes and no. While the party has had some limited electoral success, and is strongly leftist in its ideological orientation, it is also solidly sovereignist. In fact, there appears to be no place therein for a leftist who is not in fact a sovereignist. This reflects the attitude examined here throughout that political sovereignty is a necessary and sufficient criterion for the liberation of the working classes. The counter-thesis repeatedly offered here is that the two are in fact incompatible and can only lead to a cycling of bourgeois elites. Marginal parties of the left that place the nationalist cause as a prerequisite for class liberation cannot change this conclusion.

If the first preoccupation of all the institutions of Québec, be they assembled under either of Gramsci's divisions of political society or of civil society, is the "national" interest; that is the interests of the dominant culture, then it is no wonder that broader linguistic and cultural identity consistently trumps the interests of the working classes. Now that French Québec can categorically state that they are masters in their own house, in fact masters over the entire "house" including the political, economic, and cultural aspects of society, we must presume that the first preoccupation for all of Québec's institutions will be to cement and maintain that position. The most contemporary social discourse reflects that preoccupation.

By the same token, institutions geared towards class representation continue to reflect some clear aspects of class interest whatever their position on maintaining the dominant culture.

The most recent collective discussion here in Québec on identity, belonging and inclusion has been conducted under the auspices of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, or more accurately, *La Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles* (CCPARDC), which closed its mandate as of June 2008. The theme and discussion of cognitive dissonance within the labour movement that has been the preoccupation of this section of the thesis has a certain extension into the wider arena of collective identity as well. I suggest that there is a certain cognitive dissonance evident within this broader discussion as well; one that includes the labour movement. It is to an examination of this public discourse that I now shall turn.

### **Dominant Culture: Inclusion and Absorption as Aspects of Belonging**

In the fall of 2007, the *Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliée aux différence culturelles*, known hereafter as the Bouchard-Taylor Commission began hearing submissions from a diversity of representatives – individual and collective – from across Québec. One significant demand placed before that commission was for the need for a “Secular Charter” for Québec entrenched in law in the fashion that Law 101 entrenched the primacy of the French language. This demand was made and supported by a diversity of institutions, including several representatives from the Québec trade union movement. The demand, at its most extreme would remove any and all manifestations of a cultural nature from the public service. The specific focus of many of those institutional submissions was upon religious expression. This is perhaps due to the unfavourable memories that the Québécois have of the dominance of the Catholic Church in Québec society and her institutions up until the Quiet Revolution. Certainly that position has been put

forward in a number of the submissions made to the commission. On the other hand, the greatest focus seems to be upon the manifestation and demands related to non-traditional religions; that is those not part of the historical Judeo-Christian tradition here in Québec. Consider how the *Mouvement laïque Québécois*, after noting that the original intention of reasonable accommodation laws was to make up for the “unintended discriminatory effect of a variety of regulations or standards on an extremely varied clientele (the handicapped, women, seniors, etc.) to the end of maximising their participation in community institutions,”<sup>363</sup> focuses on the what they argue to be the non-demonstrable needs for accommodation along the lines of religion.

“In reality, what is controversial are accommodations of a religious nature that demand dispensation founded on faith in certain religious dogmas, that are, by definition non-demonstrable.”<sup>364</sup>

Based in faith alone, there can be no demonstrable need to accommodate. And this applies more specifically to “certain religious dogmas.” This theme is repeated to demonstrate the “unmanageable” nature of religious accommodation. First, as above, the “well founded and demonstrable” nature of physical accommodation is again noted, followed by the assumption that accommodations for religious reasons are impossible to substantiate using similar criteria as would be demanded of physical accommodation.

“On the contrary, dispensations founded on religious beliefs are practically impossible to satisfy, seeing that the essentially intangible and indemonstrable character of religious beliefs are of a sort that would be practically impossible to obtain the usual proofs and expertise required by the law on accommodations.”<sup>365</sup>

It seems somewhat difficult to understand that the same difficulty does not seem to apply to those religious holidays and accommodations entrenched by the dominant old stock French

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<sup>363</sup> Mouvement laïque Québécois, *Mémoire du Mouvement Laïque Québécois à la Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles*, September 2007, p. 4.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4. My Translation of “En réalité, ce qui fait controverse ce sont les accommodements en matière de religion qui exigent des dérogations fondées sur la foi en certaines dogmes religieux, qui sont, par définition, non démontrables.”

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6. My translation of “Par contre, les demandes de dérogation fondées sur des croyances religieuses sont pratiquement impossibles à satisfaire, puisque le caractère essentiellement intangible et indémontrable des croyances religieuses fera en sorte qu’il sera pratiquement impossible d’obtenir les preuves et les expertises habituellement requises par la loi pour accorder des accommodements.”

culture. If one is genuinely ignorant as to the date of Christmas, one need but look at a calendar. Similarly, both the timing and the related obligations for such religious holidays as Diwali, Yom Kippur, and Ramadan are easily discovered. Public sector employers have long managed to deal with these types of accommodation, and many employers include inter-faith calendars on their respective web sites. *Mouvement laïque Québécois* expresses the view that such accommodations generate bad feelings amongst workers who are part of the mainstream – again, read dominant – culture. What is not mentioned is that standard practice grants leave for these non-statutory religious holidays in exchange for the equivalent in vacation time or banked overtime. In a manner reminiscent of the writings of such extreme right wing liberal theorists such as Friedrich Hayek<sup>366</sup>, *Mouvement laïque Québécois* puts forward the argument that to treat anyone as different is effectively to discriminate, and thus becomes a violation of the rights of all. Hayek acknowledges that the only equality that can be guaranteed is equality before the law:

“The great aim of the struggle for liberty has been equality before the law. ...[The] extension of the principle of equality to the rules of moral and social conduct is the chief expression of what is commonly called the democratic spirit. ... Equality of the general rules of law and conduct, however, is the only kind of equality conducive to liberty and the only equality which we can secure without destroying liberty.”

Consider how the *Mouvement laïque Québécois* employs what is essentially a semantic argument to deny the right to freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

“In the spirit of our two charters of rights which forbid discrimination, a law or rule must apply to those persons concerned without distinction founded notably on religious beliefs or convictions. “Reasonable Accommodation” for religious motives implies an obligation to discriminate on the basis of religion.”<sup>367</sup>

Pointedly absent in the submission is any mention of the second half of the *Equality Rights* section in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* that reads as follows:

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<sup>366</sup> See Hayek, Friedrich A., “Equality, Value, and Merit,” in Sandel, Michael, ed., *Liberalism and its Critics*, New York, New York UP, 1984, pp. 80-89.

<sup>367</sup> *Op. Cit.*, *Mouvement laïque Québécois* p. 7. My translation of “Selon l’esprit de nos deux chartes des droits qui interdisent la discrimination, un loi ou un règlement doit s’appliquer aux personnes concernées sans distinction fondée notamment, sur les croyances ou convictions religieuses. L’« accommodation raisonnable » pour motif religieux implique l’obligation de discriminer sur la base de la religion.”

“(2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.”<sup>368</sup>

Hayek would at least allow for a *legal* equality, if only by way of constructing an argument that denies any form of economic redistribution by the state. Such, states Hayek, would constitute a violation of liberty. Still, if we cannot allow for the free and open expression of cultural and linguistic difference – of social differentiation between citizens – could we even expect any equal and fair distribution of economic benefits? Notwithstanding the extreme position of the *Mouvement laïque Québécois*, has the endorsement of such a policy by several major organising bodies in the Québec trade union movement been complete or unqualified? In fact, a little ideological water has been added to such heady wine.

“In deconfessionalising its education system, Québec has taken a major step in the affirmation of secularism. It is time, we believe, to go further still in openly proclaiming the secular character of the State by fixing its character in a Secular Charter, but we opt for an open secularism that guarantees to individuals their right to express their opinions and beliefs in daily life and in the public space.”<sup>369</sup>

The above indicates a looser, if somewhat unclear and undefined, measure of secularism. The tone of the general article demands first a “neutrality” of treatment for all those accessing the public service. Such a neutrality would demand the elimination of all but the most quietly stated marks of religious conviction amongst those serving the public.

The recommendations of the Federation within the CSN that is charged with representing those teaching in the education sector seem to fall somewhere between the position expressed by the CSN’s president and the more extreme position of the *Mouvement laïque Québécois*.

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<sup>368</sup> Canadian *Constitution Act, 1982*, Section 15 (2).

<sup>369</sup> Carbonneau, Claudette, president of the CSN, cited in Rodrigue, Jacqueline, “*Charte de laïcité Intégration et respect*,” in *Perspectives*, Montreal, CSN, December 2007, p. 15. My translation of “En déconfessionnalisant son système d’éducation, le Québec a fait un pas majeure dans l’affirmation de la laïcité. Il est temps, croyons nous, d’aller plus loin en proclamant ouvertement le caractère laïque de l’État en fixant sons sens dans une Charte de laïcité, mais nous optons pour une laïcité ouverte qui assure aux individus le droit d’exprimer leurs opinions et leurs croyances dans la vie quotidienne et dans l’espace public.”

“That the Federal Council invite the unions, over the course of the next several months, to reflect upon the following elements of education, which could be included in such a secular charter:

- The completely secular exercise of the teaching role, teaching must exclude all forms of proselytising;
- Total respect for the secular nature of the physical space;
- The clear message that the refusal of any accommodation in religious matters, if for acceptable motives, does not constitute a limiting of freedom of religion;
- Within the limits of public order, general welfare and the rules of the institution (those that prevail for both the users and the teaching personnel):
  - Tolerance in the face of individual choice to express religious belonging;
  - Tolerance around consensual accommodations on religious expression, save for proselytising;

That the next Federal Council carry these points of reflection to their Report to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, and to advance the debate between the unions and within Québec society.”<sup>370</sup>

A *more* radical position from the state’s own unionised employees charged with the most important socialising mechanism – education – might well be expected when considering that it is in this sector that the dominant French culture is firmly embedded within the fabric of the state bureaucracy writ large, and this to the ongoing exclusion and participation of minority cultural representation in any significant way. A preoccupation with shared values, and collective rights marks the presentation ultimately made by the CSN to the Bouchard Taylor Commission. Notwithstanding many of the same observations made in other reports about how media has fuelled the fire of public opinion, the CSN goes directly to the issue of Charter rights and the decisions of the courts.

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<sup>370</sup> Fédération Nationale des Enseignantes et des Enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ-CSN), Recommendations adopted by the Federal Council on December 6 & 7, 2007. My translation of “Que le conseil fédéral invite les syndicats, aux cours des prochains mois, à mener une réflexion sur les éléments suivants concernant l’éducation, qui pourraient être inclus dans une telle charte de la laïcité :

- Un exercice entièrement laïque de la fonction enseignant, l’enseignement devant exclure toute forme de prosélytisme ;
- Un respect complet de la laïcité des lieux ;
- Le message clair que le refus, pour motifs acceptables, d’ajustements en matière religieuse ne peut constituer une entrave à la liberté religieuse ;
- Dans les limites de l’ordre public, du bien-être général et des règles d’une institution (celles qui prévalent pour les usagers et celles pour le personnel enseignant) :
  - La tolérance face au choix individuel d’exprimer une appartenance religieuse ;
  - La tolérance envers des ajustements concertés concernant des manifestations religieuses exemptes de prosélytisme ;

Que le prochain conseil fédéral fasse le point sur cette réflexion à la rapport de la commission Bouchard-Taylor et de l’avancement du débat dans les syndicats et dans la société québécoise.”

“Up to now, the decisions rendered by virtue of the Charters have ignored social and political problems tied to the integration of immigrants and the place of religion in society and are only interested in the rights of individuals. We are of the opinion that political powers must re-appropriate a good part of the territory abandoned to judges and define, with all of the components of civil society, the boundaries by which individual rights may be exercised, and this not to fly in the face of the law and of the Charters. These boundaries must be informed by the shared values of Québec society, including equality of rights, democracy, secularism, French as the official language, the peaceful resolution of conflict, respect for our cultural heritage and equality between men and women.”<sup>371</sup>

A far greater preoccupation with “national” values, language, and political determination of society is shown here than we might find in the presentations of unions whose proximity to the nationalism movement is less tied to their direct relation to the state and the state bureaucracies. As noted here and throughout, the most vocal and militant support for political sovereignty in the Québec trade union movement is to be found in the public and parapublic sectors, where the CSN is strongest. In light of this fact, and in consideration of our argument that the collective interests of class and identity have been sewn together in a fashion that has previously demonstrated a powerful synthesis that is now in broader decline, we must now examine this sector where that synthesis remains strong because the original facilitating factor of a common demographic foundation remains in place. Consider here an example from the unionised sector of the state bureaucracy itself in the persona of the *Syndicat de la fonction publique du Québec*, or SFPQ. This organising body represents approximately 40,000 Québec government employees. They too have made a submission before the Bouchard-Taylor commission that supports the idea of a secular charter. The general theme that runs throughout their submission touches upon issues of a lack of clear guidelines for public employees in dealing with issues of accommodation, as well as the type of concern

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<sup>371</sup> Confédération des syndicats nationaux, *Mémoire présenté par la Confédération des syndicats nationaux à la Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d’accommodements reliées aux différences culturelles*, Montréal, CSN, 30 October, 2007, p. 6. My translation of “Jusqu’à présent, les jugements qui ont été rendus en vertu des chartes ont ignoré les problèmes sociaux et politiques liés à l’intégration des immigrants et à la place de la religion dans la société et ne se sont intéressés qu’aux droits des individus. Nous sommes d’avis que le pouvoir politique doit se réapproprier une bonne partie du terrain abandonné aux juges et définir, avec l’ensemble des composantes de la société civile, les balises sur lesquelles les droits individuels pourront s’exercer car il ne s’agit surtout pas non plus de faire fi du droit et des chartes. Ces balises doivent s’inspirer des valeurs communes dans la société québécoise, soit, l’égalité des droits, la démocratie, la laïcité, le français comme langue officielle, la résolution pacifique des conflits, le respect du patrimoine culturel et l’égalité entre les hommes et les femmes.”

over issues of culture and backlash found in the *Mouvement Laïque Québécois* submission. The tenor of the submission might well be expected given the fact that the Québec state bureaucracy remains almost monolithically populated and defined by the dominant “old stock” French culture. Yet it must be remembered that the SFPQ is first an institution conceived to protect and further the socio-economic rights and advantages of its members. It is in fact a union, and as such must weave the combined interests of its members into a strong fabric. As has been noted of the movement away from Keynesian models of the state and towards a neoliberal model, Québec, as with many states, has sought to rationalise the size of its bureaucracy through outsourcing. The resulting downsizing of the state’s bureaucracy works against the class interests of the members of the SFPQ. Consider how interests of class and cultural identity have been knit together in the submission placed in front of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission. What is the basis of the SFPQ criticism of state outsourcing of job placement services directly into minority cultural institutions?

“We have been able to estimate at present for the year 2005-6, and for the Montréal region alone, that more than 3.5 million dollars of sub-contracting has been ceded to these groups who present themselves as being of a religious nature or target cultural minorities.

We believe that this way of working has the effect of keeping persons from cultural communities within their immigrant ghettos rather than contributing to their integration into Québec society. Moreover, once ceded to these organisms devoted to the service of the clientele of cultural communities, the State no longer is guaranteed of the secular nature of the distribution of these services, neither to the French character, nor of the treatment of men and women on equal footing.”<sup>372</sup>

That the cultural preoccupation is strongest amongst the public sector unions has been illustrated by the examples cited above, as well as throughout previous chapters.. However, the reciprocal can demonstrate this further. The *Fédération des Travailleurs du Québec*

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<sup>372</sup> Syndicat de la Fonction Publique du Québec, *Une fonction publique laissée à elle-même*, submission to the *Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d’accommodement reliée aux différences culturelles* (Bouchard-Taylor Commission), December 2007. My translation of “Nous avons pu évaluer jusqu’à maintenant pour l’année 2005-2006, et pour la région de Montréal seulement, à plus de 3,5 millions de dollars de ces contrats de sous-traitance cédés à des groupes qui se présentent comme étant de natures religieuses ou s’adressant à des clientèles de minorités culturelles.

Nous croyons que cette façon de faire a pour effet de maintenir les personnes provenant des communautés culturelles dans leur ghetto d’immigrants plutôt que de contribuer à les intégrer à la société québécoise. Mais plus, une fois cédé à ces organismes voués à desservir des clientèles de communautés culturelles, l’État n’a plus l’assurance du caractère laïque de la prestation de ses services, ni du caractère français, ni que les femmes et les hommes sont traités sur un pied d’égalité.”



(FTQ) in its submission before the Bouchard-Taylor Commission has declared that a secular charter entrenched in law might be overly restrictive at this time. However, their preoccupation remains clearly shared with other organised groups.

“Religion is a personal affair that one lives privately, we refuse to let religion return to the schools through the back door. We cannot permit fundamentalist minorities, no matter what their religion, to impose their standards, or what to them seems best, either in the schools or in the workplace.”<sup>373</sup>

The FTQ is less involved in the pure public sector than either the CSN or the SFPQ and as such has backed away from a demand for a formal secular charter founded in law. Notwithstanding the tenor of the quote by René Roy offered above, the general preoccupation, while still somewhat in common with the other big union groups, is more centred. The most recent documentation available from the FTQ on secularisation of the school system is dated 1999, and makes no mention of the need to protect the French language, and after an extensive examination of the role of the Catholic church in Québec society, admits that there is in fact a role for religious instruction in the education system.

What of the position expressed by the CSD, the “black sheep” of the Québec union movement? Their presentation in November of 2007 gave a self portrait describing a *centrale* of 65,000 members, 95% in the private sector and with none in the federal or provincial public or parapublic sectors. They too note the roots of the reasonable accommodation debate in the workplace. In appealing for the state to go beyond the reasonable accommodation of religious beliefs; to engage a commitment to actively integrate new Quebeckers into society, they absolve the immigrant of much of the blame for not choosing to integrate.

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<sup>373</sup> Secretary-General René Roy cited in “La FTQ dépose son mémoire devant la Commission Bouchard-Taylor,” December 10, 2007, downloaded from <http://www.ftq.qc.ca/modules/communiques/communiquer.php?id=918&langue=fr&menu=2&sousmenu=34> on February 4, 2008. My translation of “*La religion est une affaire personnelle qui se vit en privé, nous refusons que la religion revienne dans les écoles par la porte d’en arrière. Nous ne pouvons permettre à des minorités fondamentalistes, peu importe leur religion, d’imposer leurs normes où bon leur semble, que ce soit dans les écoles ou dans les lieux de travail.*” The italics are in the original text.

“All that to say that the welcoming society also has a role to play to assure the integration of immigrants, that one cannot clear them through customs and pretend that the newcomers are fully and solely responsible for their integration, that they have but to live like the majority for all to be well. In other words, the management of ethno-religious diversity must not be limited to reasonable accommodation, it must also include linguistic support, policies for access to employment and access to housing among others.”<sup>374</sup>

The CSD argues that much of the public outcry over the issue of reasonable accommodation has been blown out of proportion by the media, noting that of all of the complaints filed before the *Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse* between 2000 and 2005 only 2% or 85 were over issues of religion, and that the majority of these were filed by Protestants. Only a third (35.3%) of all of these were over issues of religious accommodation.<sup>375</sup> The presentation also notes Québec’s failure on certain occasions to seize opportunities to integrate immigrants, citing specifically the waves of Italian and Greek immigrants in the 1950s and 60s *denied* access to French schools. The presentation further cites Guy Rocher, who was a member of the Parent Committee on Education between 1961 and 1966, making the observation that the refusal to accept French speaking Jews into the French education system was an example of “failed accommodation.”<sup>376</sup> Compare the candour of this self-examination with the position noted above in the presentation by the SFPQ and that expressed by the CSN.

Proximity to the nationalist cause seems to determine the degree and nature of expression of class position within these institutions of civil society. Even the most overtly nationalist of the labour unions retained some preoccupation with class issues, but by and large, the general preoccupation has been with secular values, language, culture, collective

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<sup>374</sup> Centrale des syndicats démocratiques, *Pour un débat serein sur les accommodements raisonnables*, Mémoire présenté par la CSD à la Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d’accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles, Montréal, December, 2007, p. 7. My translation of “Tout ça pour dire que la société d’accueil a aussi un rôle à jouer pour assurer l’intégration des immigrants, qu’on ne peut se dédouaner en prétendant que les nouveaux venus sont pleinement et seuls responsables de leur intégration, qu’ils n’ont qu’à vivre comme la majorité pour que tout se passe bien. En d’autres mots, la gestion de la diversité ethno religieuse ne doit pas se limiter à l’accommodement raisonnable, elle doit aussi comprendre l’accompagnement linguistique et des politiques d’accès à l’emploi et d’accès au logement, entre autres.”

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6. See also the footnotes to this page that cite Rocher speaking in the Radio-Canada radio broadcast “Les Grandes Accommodments,” hosted by Michel Lacombe on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

versus individual rights, and the political expression of collective self-determination. While the nature of the reasonable accommodation debate is at its very heart cultural, the expressed positions of many of Québec's institutions dedicated to working class advocacy are almost exclusively concerned with issues of collective identity. This speaks to the intensely cultural nature of the crucible in which the institutions of civil society are formed, and begs the question whether these institutions can ever be free from the determining factors of dominant culture and the socialising process that reinforces it.

## Chapter 7

### Some Conclusions as to Class, Culture, and Hegemony

#### **Dominant Culture and the Reversal of Fortunes**

To any student of Québec's labour history, a certain irony is manifest in the recounting of the history and events outlined above. First, and quite obviously, the experience and attitudes of Anglophone and Allophone workers in contemporary Québec is actually reflective of the situation of many of their Francophone brothers and sisters as experienced during the earliest phases of labour union birth and evolution here. Issues of language and culture were powerfully determinant of the choices and preferences exhibited by French Canadian workers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and remain so today. During these periods, an attitude of oppressed minority was palpable amongst Québec's workers and French Canadians in general. The powerful effects of the Quiet Revolution and subsequent radical changes in the nature of Québec's social, political and economic autonomy notwithstanding, vestiges of such an attitude remain embedded within the labour union and nationalist movements today. The definitive cultural primacy of Québec's French language and contemporary culture now being firmly in place, an attitude of linguistic and cultural minority has become increasingly palpable amongst Anglophone and Allophone Quebecers of all classes. Culturally, socially, politically, and for some Quebecers economically, the shoe is clearly now on the other foot, at least for non-Francophones, and even for many bilingual citizens within Québec. Second, now as then, issues of shared collective identity, language and culture at the very least temper, and at worst displace issues of shared class interests.

What is different today, and marks what is lacking from the contemporary union movement generally is a powerfully shared sense of common class identity that became the soul and driving force of the union movement after its birth and throughout its growth and

development in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The primacy of shared identity, language and culture remains firmly in place, while the glue that cemented a common sense of working class solidarity and interests has dissolved slowly over time.

Certainly, the thinning of that glue has much to do with the apparent paradigmatic global dominance of neo-liberalism, and its presumptions of the pluralistic, classless nature of society. The dominance of an ideology that denies class cannot help but weaken any alternative ideological points of view, and the increasing and ongoing denial of class conflict in favour of a proposed pluralistic model of shifting individual and collective competition is socialised into the very fabric of liberal societies. Québec society is no different than other western societies in this regard, no matter what assertions are made about her social democratic nature, or an argued but less than evident shift towards a Coordinated Market Economy. This liberal tendency is reinforced by a genuine yet quite relative improvement in the quality of life for the working classes themselves. And in a very real sense, the hard-won gains of the past that came through a strong sense of class solidarity and produced those improvements have to a great extent contributed to the loosening of the bond of shared class identity. Affluence, relative or not, would seem to breed apathy.

However, an exploration of that process as it applies to Québec's working classes would give us only a partial understanding of the dialectic that both unifies and divides Québec's collective movements of class and identity. By far, the greater part of the story lies in an understanding of the role of dominant culture and how it seeks to reinforce class divisions that often cleave along cultural lines, for the lines remain culturally and not just linguistically defined. The ironic cultural and linguistic inversion outlined above is in fact the product of real changes in the nature of Québec's dominant culture that have arrived after the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. In a number of ways, the full and unqualified dominance of

French Canadian, or more accurately Québécois culture, within Québec has only completely arrived subsequent to this revolution.

The rise of one culture coincides with the decline of another. Garth Stevenson describes a loose but effective policy of elite accommodation that existed between Québec's "two solitudes" up until the Quiet Revolution. The policy of cultural and linguistic isolation suited both cultures, or more specifically their elites. The Church was satisfied that it held complete stewardship over French Québec, and Anglo elites were content to build and maintain their own institutions. This was destined to change with the Quiet Revolution, and in fact comprised one of its most socially profound effects. Stevenson describes the end of a deal where Anglophones collectively are no longer economically nor socially pertinent within the province.

"Within Quebec, many francophones were beginning to resent the economic power and wealth of an anglophone business elite whose privileges no longer seemed to be justified by their performance, now that Quebec, under their leadership, was visibly deteriorating in relation to Ontario. The same could be said of the privileges of the Catholic Church, whose schools, hospitals, and other institutions were increasingly dependent on government subsidies."<sup>377</sup>

I have examined the decline of the influence of the Church, and of her elites as a class. Here let us consider the decline of Anglophone elites in the same way. As a class, they are no longer as pertinent to Québec society as they were. In a real sense, they are, and act in many ways like, Russian cultural elites in Soviet satellite states after the fall of Soviet Russia.<sup>378</sup> The ethno-cultural shoe is now on the "othered" foot, and having lost their dominant economic position and been rendered politically and socially moot to the broader context of Québec society as a result of their declining demographic weight, they resent their collective lot. In reflecting on the process, I again invoke the work of Karl Polanyi: the fate of classes is more often determined by the needs of society, than the fate of society determined by the

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<sup>377</sup> Stevenson, Garth, "English-Speaking Quebec: A History," in Gagnon, Alain-G., ed., *Quebec State and Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Peterborough, Broadview Press, 2004, p. 334.

<sup>378</sup> See Brubaker, Rogers, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*, New York, Cambridge UP, 1996.

needs of classes. Anglophone business elites are as disposable to the needs of contemporary Québec society as Church elites were after the Quiet Revolution. Only the continental and global importance of English as the language of business guarantees the ongoing viability of the Anglophone community here.

It would be facile to make the assumption that cultural continuity cleaves cleanly along linguistic lines. The more so in the example of contemporary Québec. Stevenson has noted the internal diversity that marks Québec's Anglophone communities.

“Unlike some other minorities, for example the Acadians of the Maritime provinces, Quebec anglophones are not a separate ethnic group sharing common origins and a distinct culture. Over the years anglophone Quebec, like the anglophone population of the rest of Canada, has grown increasingly diverse. Even in 1867 it included English, Scottish, and Irish elements that were quite distinct”<sup>379</sup>

Association with one linguistic community or another tends to blur the internal cultural differentiation within component groups. Assuming a cultural continuity also tends towards the presumption that the community – now conceived as culturally monolithic – unanimously shares values, interests and political positions on sovereignty. Québec's cultural milieu is as fractured in a post-modern sense as any developed state. I have alluded to questionable assumptions of cultural coherence previously, and would like to briefly expand upon this further here. Permit me to address the example of an ethnic community previously associated with Québec's Anglophone minority, that due to the changing nature of Québec's immigration patterns finds itself less than linguistically coherent today. Québec has long had a Jewish community with European or Ashkenazi roots. Notwithstanding a certain small component of French speaking Jews that had previously entered the province, the Jewish community has previously seen itself, and has been identified by most of French Québec as anglophile by their nature.<sup>380</sup> Subsequent to Québec having obtained *de facto* and now *de jure* control over source country immigration, and her increasing preoccupation with the

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<sup>379</sup> *Op. Cit.* Stevenson, p. 329.

<sup>380</sup> See my reference and citation of Guy Rocher in my examination of the CSD submission to the Bouchard Taylor Commission on p. 282.

ability to communicate in French as a selection criterion, a significant number of French speaking North African Sephardic Jews have become new Quebeckers. As a result, we find a community previously identified as anglophile significantly marked by internal linguistic divisions that due to historic factors also tend to cleave along lines of culture and religious practice. Thus, it would be a facile overstatement and in all probability statistically incorrect to make a sweeping statement that “all members of Québec’s Jewish community (which should read “communities” as with my division of class into classes) are anti-sovereignist.” Yet, many nationalist theorists make two automatic assumptions: that all French speaking Quebeckers are by their nature and language, sovereignists, and that being Francophones, they are automatically acknowledged as full and equal members of Québec society. And for any resident of Québec who is not of a *old stock* heritage, bilingual or not, to overtly question the nationalist project is to invite rejection as one who will not “buy in” to either a Québécois identity, or the values associated with that identity. In addition, any *old stock* Québécois who denies the nationalist project is blessed with the epithet of being either *vendu* or *perdu*.

Québec has established her *de facto* if not completely *de jure* social, economic and to a very great extent political autonomy over the last half-century. Contemporary Québec constitutes a social project that is the product of profound change and social evolution. Québec’s unions have been active and committed proponents of that social revolution and through the melding of combined and shared interests of class and collective identity have produced a synthesis that has well served both sets of interests. Notwithstanding, the alignment of shared collective interests that unified class and identity no longer serves some Quebeckers as well as it might. New Quebeckers, Anglophones, Allophones, First Nations, indeed many who do not fit the “new” dominant culture in ways broader than by the



definition of language alone by their own experience find little positive synthesis in the marriage of class interests and Québécois identity.

It has been proposed and repeatedly put forward in Québec since at least the mid-1990s that the ability to speak and work in the French language, combined with Québec residency are sufficient criteria alone for inclusion under the definitive appellation “Québécois.” It has also been put forward, and it is in many ways true that the hallmarks of Québécois identity are no longer heavily influenced by distinct and traditional cultural characteristics such as the Roman Catholic religion. In many ways, Québec is amongst the most secular of societies. In fact, that secularism has recently been offered as a distinguishing cultural characteristic in and of itself as noted in a number of submissions before the Bouchard Taylor Commission.. Notwithstanding, and in the seeming absence of other, traditional cultural identifiers, for many Québécois language alone has proven an insufficient criterion for inclusion.

An understanding that language alone cannot define French Canadians remained firmly in place well into the Quiet Revolution. Consider both the continued belief that French Canadian culture is at a disadvantage as well as the conviction that French Canadian culture is more than language alone found in the words of then Premier Jean Lesage early in that revolution.

“French-Canadian culture must have the means to assert itself and develop, because as a result of the circumstances and of the neglect of the deeper meaning of Confederation, this culture finds itself at a disadvantage. Now, French-Canadian culture is not just the spoken language, it is also the over-all mentality and behaviour of a whole group.”<sup>381</sup>

Culture cannot be defined by language alone, and to suggest such is to veil and deny the values, mores, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that underpin the broader dominant culture.

Belonging implies a sharing of, and participation in, the greater culture in ways that

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<sup>381</sup> Lesage, Jean, speech delivered at Charlottetown, February 2, 1963 on the dedication of the Fathers of Confederation Memorial Building. In Scott, Frank and Oliver, Michael eds., *Quebec states her case*, Toronto, Macmillan, 1964, p. 16. See also the reasoning of Marcel Chaput offered in 1961 and cited in *Ibid.* p. 48 who states that of England, English Canada, the United States and Québec, the latter has the greatest right to autonomy because it is the only one of the four with a distinct culture.

communicate to the group and to the individual that the parts are inseparable from the whole, just as the whole is genuinely more than just the sum of its parts.

The manifestation of collective interests of class that are represented by institutions such as labour unions or assemblies thereof is inextricably embedded in a social milieu that is firmly set in a cultural context. This context is pre-existing to the rise and evolution of these new institutions. It constitutes in fact the medium wherein they are conceived and born. The cultural context of Lower Canada in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was distinctly different than that of Québec within Canada today. The conditions that made for a natural unity of collective interests of class and identity then are different than today. Traditional Anglophone elites may have been rendered moot by recent history, but the ethno-cultural diversity of *la Francophonie*, globally and here in Québec, challenges the previously monolithic set of combined interests of class and identity. Class divides Quebeckers along ethno-linguistic lines. It always has, but today it divides them differently, and so as to shake the automatically presumed unity of an oppressed French Canadian identity that also cleaves along the lines of class.

### **The Embeddedness of Institutions**

The institutions of civil society that we associate with the working classes are inextricably bound up with the process of the ongoing socialisation of class relations. Notwithstanding their specific roles in serving the interests of the working classes, they remain but a single constellation within an integrated social universe, and operate within the laws of that system. Those that through the strength of their advocacy for working class interests are seen to threaten the underlying system of class relations find themselves opposed by dominant bourgeois interests, often violently so. As such, the coming into being

of these institutions was conceived through the inevitable necessities of working class conflict with the hegemonic fraction of the bourgeois classes.

The bourgeois classes are themselves a reflection of the social universe wherein they dwell. Thus, in a contemporary democratic society the nature of the dominant classes most often reflects the dominant or more accurately majority, culture. Such is the nature of Québec society today. Yet, there is no necessary correlation between demographic majority and dominant culture. An examination of the historical record of European imperialism will readily demonstrate that the hegemonic fraction of any society need not reflect the majority culture.<sup>382</sup> Notwithstanding, colonial regimes and those few historical examples demonstrating hegemonic elites culturally different from the demographic majority are anomalous societies. The cultural differences that mark their class divisions are held in place by lines of force under constant strain. Only the exercise of power through the whole of society's institutions – economic, cultural, and political – can maintain the *status quo* where class divisions are not reflective of majority culture. As a colonised colonising people, those lines of power were drawn differently for French-Canadians in Québec in the past than they are today. They were radically different prior to confederation. The presumption of a bi-national confederal arrangement held out a promise to French Canada. The dissolution of that myth has profoundly changed the nature of Québec's nationalism, and helped to maintain the perception that the collective interests of her working classes and the Québécois "nation" as a whole are inextricably connected.

The rise of labour unions in Québec ran a course parallel to the struggle for responsible government. The first examples of trade unions in Québec actually predate any

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<sup>382</sup> Russian, Polish and Austro-Hungarian hegemony over the Ukraine constitutes an excellent example. An extension of this would be German speaking elites incapable of speaking or understanding Hungarian in what is historically dubbed the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In France, repression of regional languages such as Breton only ended with the Fourth Republic in the 1950s. On the other side of the English Channel, the dominance of English as spoken by social and political elites in Great Britain has displaced most Celtic languages.

form of truly democratic government in the sense that we would acknowledge it today. As such, the demographic weight of the population of French Canada in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was no counter-balance to the effects of dominant English capital, culture, and political power. This was destined to change slowly with the introduction of an imperfect but developing democracy. Even limited franchise shifts power to the hands of those who possess it.

The spread of democracy, in form if not always in perfect fact, tends to make the issue of majority culture pivotal to determining the locus of political power and thus becomes a potent force in aligning dominant culture and class. In the struggle for hegemonic ascendancy, competing elites in democratic societies are keenly aware that issues of dominant culture are the touchstone to accessing political power. The will of the people; the will of the majority, is reflective of what is; what is perceived as being; what is proposed to be; the collective values, mores, and interests of the cultural majority. Thus, in a democratic society where there is, where there is perceived to be, where there is proposed to be an anomalous difference between the majority and elite culture, competing elites propose alternate world views that readily demonstrate that states make nations as well as nations make states.

In light of the above, the social universe wherein the institutions of civil society must reconcile competing interests of class is powerfully dominated by hegemonic culture. Where the hegemonic fraction of society is marked by cultural difference from that of the demographic majority, and where those differences are further marked by strong cleavages along class lines, there exists an explosive potential for a unified synthesis of the interests of collective identity and class. Working class interests are rarely monolithically conceived exclusively along the lines of traditional class differences alone, and they regularly ally with other collective interests that cleave along different lines of identity. Where a significant

demographic shares both sets of collective interests, this may unite struggles of class and identity. Consequently, social institutions that, through whatever serendipity or misfortune of circumstance, manage to unite and synthesise multiple allied interests often demonstrate a broader social resonance than their initial mission alone might have provided. Where such a resonance has been obtained, it only remains in place so long as the trajectory of those allied interests remains socially and politically co-terminus. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and up until recently, such a synthesis has existed between the collective interests of the working classes and the nation that constitutes French Canada within Québec. The strength and vigour of social institutions that comes from the synthesis of those allied collective interests is dependent upon the degree to which the institution satisfies its initial mission, and reconciles and satisfies both initial and allied interests.

As my examination of the history of the Québec labour union movement has shown, there was an early and constant perception that the collective interests of Québec's working classes were and are inextricably tied to the collective cultural interests of the French Canadian nation. That both the class and "national" interests of French Canada could be satisfied within the framework of Canadian Confederation remained an operative assumption at least until the time of Henri Bourassa. However, the nationalism of Québec's labour unions during those years was ambivalent at best, and qualified by issues of the compatibility of class struggle and political involvement. By the time of the Quiet Revolution, even so committed a federalist as Jean Lesage was expressing a certain dissatisfaction with the confederal arrangement, deeming it "incomplete" or unfinished.<sup>383</sup> Ties between the nationalist and labour union movements in subsequent years grew ever stronger, and much of the ambivalence of the earlier labour movement fell to the wayside. What has not changed in many ways is the political manifestation of that support directly at the party level. A formal

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<sup>383</sup> Lesage, Jean in *Ibid.*, Scott and Oliver, eds., p. 14: "the federal experiment has not been completed, and it never really will be until we have mixed in all the ingredients." Compare with the position of Dumont and others examined here that Québec is an incomplete or unfinished nation.

policy of non-involvement has marked the official stance of the CSN, while qualified support for the PQ and the Bloc Québécois has usually been the policy of the FTQ in the past. Throughout the last two centuries, either in light of the conservative nationalism of Bourassa or the radical pursuit of full political autonomy that has marked the Québec nationalist and labour union movements subsequent to the Quiet Revolution, there has remained the automatic presumption that the interests and goals of Québec's working classes and initially the French Canadian, and now the Québécois nation are effectively one in the same. And why not? For much of Québec's history, they were inextricably tied together. This assumption no longer applies, and to continue to hold onto it does an increasing disservice to many in Québec's working classes.

### **Can the Institutions of Civil Society ever be truly free of the influence of Hegemonic Culture?**

The focus of my examination has been the trade union movement in the province of Québec. The earliest proto-institutional forms of the trade union movement in Québec arose during the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and took on structures that were acceptable to her society at that time. These were often built upon existing models, and described as “sociétés amicales et bienveillantes” so as to avoid any accusation of combination and conspiracy. Latter institutional forms have often been allied – sometimes in co-opted form, sometimes willingly – with other social and cultural institutions associated with civil society. Consider here my examination of the leadership and ideological dominance of the Catholic Church in large sectors of Québec's trade union movement from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the “Quiet Revolution” of the 1960s, as well as the powerful alliance amongst trade unions themselves assembled under different federations, confederations, and *Centrales* that marked the “Common Front” of 1972. The former example illustrates the kind of elite redirection or manipulation of working class institutions that mute or stifle the full advocacy of class

interests. It is, in fact an example of elite accommodation as well, insofar as the Catholic Church exchanged their control over working class economic demands for a broader socio-cultural role in Québec society: bartering the accommodation of the *economic* interests of capital for *cultural* and *social* control. The latter example of the Québec Common Front of 1972 is far closer to the manifestation of a genuine collaboration between working class institutions, centred firmly on working class interests. Elite response to that manifestation of class power was to crush the Front by legislating an end to the strikes and jailing the union leaders. The reaction of the Québec government at that time was consistent with the province's own history, and the larger Canadian state's historical relationship with organised labour generally, and most particularly to the manifestation of general strikes going back at least to the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919. The actions of the Common Front of 1972 were portrayed as an act of civil rebellion that threatened social stability, potentially leading to the overthrow of the state. In fact, this alliance saw a synthesis that brought together a diversity of collective social actors including anti-poverty groups, and community associations. All of the institutions in this grand alliance were situated collectively in the socio-economic arena identified with what has been labelled as "civil society" and separate from the formal politico-legal institutions of the state proper. The Québec trade union movement's strongest resonance at that time was obtained by its ability to unite collective *social* and *economic* interests – those traditional interests of class – with those of a demographic majority and a now dominant *culture* in the rise of a collective demand for political autonomy: through the proposed creation of a sovereign Québec state, a society ostensibly predicated upon common language, but subtly implying a broader cultural definition of the nation than that demanded by language alone. As powerful a synthesis as this has proven to be, it is the broader thesis of this work that such a union of class and identity is ultimately incompatible, and must of necessity result in the displacement of class interests by those of dominant and majority

culture and identity. In the contemporary example, the synthesis between the two movements is reflective of the broader historical pattern of presuming a common purpose to Québec's class and identity movements. At its most acute and effective manifestation, being the period between the Quiet Revolution and the second Parti Québécois victory of 1981, this powerfully presumed synthesis was unique to the circumstances of that time. They mark a shift in the institutional arrangements of Civil Society leading to a compromise within, but not a displacement of, Cultural Hegemony.

### **Epilogue: Concordia University's Unions, Internal Cleavages and Class Struggle**

By the early 1990s, most of Concordia University's employees had formed themselves into a series of recognised unions. Their initial preoccupation was with the creation and organisation of the individual bodies, and this focus on individual and local group formation marked the evolution of the movement internally until the mid-1990s. Certain institutional alliances inclined a significant number of these unions towards mutual cooperation. Several were affiliated with the CSN, and a number of these were resident within the same Federation, the *Fédération des employées et employés des services publics*, or FEESP.<sup>384</sup> This organisational affinity, combined with an increasing sense of shared collective interests, inclined the majority of Concordia Unions towards the formation of an Inter-Union Council in 1994. As I have alluded to earlier, the evolution of Concordia's

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<sup>384</sup> These included the office workers under the Concordia University Union of Support Staff (CUSSU), the technical staff under the Concordia University Union of Support Staff – Technical Sector (CUSS-TS), and the library workers under the National Union of Sir George Williams University Employees (NUSGWUE). The latter eventually merged with another library union, the Vanier Library Association of Non-Professional Employees (VLANPE) to create the Concordia University Library Employees Union in 2007 (CULEU). Other CSN affiliates are the professional and administrative employees affiliated with the Concordia University Professional Employees Union (CUPEU), and those teaching in Continuing Education under the Concordia University Continuing Education Part-Time Faculty Union (CUCEPTFU). These are assembled under other Federations within the CSN. The traditional trades remained with the FTQ affiliated “Marine Marchande” or Merchant Marine groups that housed workers in Concordia's heating plants, mechanical workers, carpenters, plumbers and electricians, and this save for a brief sojourn under the CSN. Interestingly enough, there are only two non-affiliated unions in Concordia University: the full-time faculty organized under the Concordia University Faculty Association (CUFA), and the part-time faculty associated with the Concordia University Part-time Faculty Association (CUPFA).



unions in many ways paralleled the evolution of organised labour as a whole. The coming together of individual groups into a coherent and allied whole marked the beginning of an awareness of broader issues, at least those issues shared and broader than the normal concerns of a specific collective agreement or negotiating phase.

Certain external events prompted the Inter Union Council, or IUC, to examine issues related to pension and benefits. Specifically, and as alluded to previously in this work, the government, in an attempt to rationalise the costs of a growing public sector and consistent with similar actions at the federal level in Canada, had passed Law 104 demanding a 6% rollback of the *masse salariale* or salary envelope for the public and parapublic sectors. The government left the precise application of that rollback to the individual sectors concerned. Some chose a policy of extreme attrition by not replacing departing staff, others considered across the board cuts in salary. A diversity of approaches marked different institutional responses to the demands of the law. Concordia University chose to employ the substantial surplus in its pension fund to finance a program of early retirement incentives, and this was combined with a policy of rather strict attrition in the replacement of vacated positions.. The impact at the institutional level was first sensed by the unions in realising that their individual numbers would shrink while the workload would be redistributed amongst the surviving employees. Yet, more importantly, the unions argued that in choosing to use the pension surplus to fund the early retirement scheme, their employer was in fact using monies dedicated to very specific purposes – the funding, financing and maintenance of the pension plan for the exclusive benefit of the members thereof – to effectively rationalise their business plan and respond to the demands of the law.

Once the attention of the unions was directed towards an examination of the plan generally, a number of other changes that had been made to the pension plan over the years caught their attention, and this subsequent to having the plan and changes thereto examined

by an actuarial firm. Specifically, the actuarial report noted three areas of alleged irregularity. First, through a series of non-contributory “pension holidays” taken by the employer, the fund had been deprived of \$41,626,800. Second, that by changing the plan so as to have the plan itself and not the employer pay the administrative costs of the plan, the employer had deprived the plan of approximately \$15,000,000. Finally, and as had caught the attention of the unions in the first place, the employer had used monies from the pension surplus to effect the necessary downsizing plan demanded by Law 104. The first two issues had been the object of changes to the plan over a number of years, and well into the past. A past that predated the wave of unionisation that washed over Concordia University in the mid to late 1980s. Further, and has been noted previously, the first and most pressing preoccupation of those newly formed unions was the negotiation and application of their first collective agreements. Their individual eyes were turned inwards during much of this period, and it was only the serendipity of budding collective representation of the groups as a whole combined with the specific application of a controversial piece of legislation that had drawn their attention to the broader issues related to the pension plan itself.

Beyond the natural affinity that came from several unions being in the same CSN federation, came the necessary sharing of representation where all employees were afforded only one or two representatives on university decision making bodies. Thus, the two committees charged with maintaining and administering the pension plan had two representatives, while the number of unions during this period of time had peaked at well over ten<sup>385</sup>. The unions were placed in a position of having to choose the most effective representation notwithstanding from which union that representative hailed. Before the ascendancy of the unions in the late 1980s, these positions were usually filled by individuals

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<sup>385</sup> One merger that reduced the number of unions has been noted previously. A significant number of small locals amongst the trades also merged further reducing the number of unions. My recollection is that the number peaked at sixteen unions and associations, a consequence of the piecemeal like process that came from groups abandoning the staff association, or supposed “house union,” one at a time over the previous decade.

from middle-management. Both their orientation as well as their own highly developed sense of self-preservation inclined these individuals towards a more sympathetic position towards the wishes of the employer vis-à-vis potential changes to the plan. Nevertheless, it was due to the vigilance of the two unionised members that sat on these key committees and decision-making bodies in the mid-1990s that brought the attention of the unions to the employer's actions. This led to actuarial evaluations and a legal opinion that prompted some unions into more concerted action<sup>386</sup>. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1997, the three FEESP unions met in common assembly and, notwithstanding attempts to dissuade them from further action made by some members of the university community from outside those bargaining units,<sup>387</sup> they passed motions to pursue the issue of disbursement of funds and changes to the pension plan. Additional assemblies over the next several months brought a number of Concordia unions into the fold, and by the end of the year most of the unions had come forward with a formal mandate to pursue legal action, or had at least communicated informal support to the coordinating group. By year's end eight unions had banded together in order to address problems related to the pension plan.

The fact that amongst the eight collective agreements for those unions, few directly addressed issues related to the administration of the plan in any way as to invite grievance, led the unions to the conclusion, aided by legal opinion, that a class-action suit would be the most appropriate way of proceeding. Legal recourse of this type requires a single petitioner who is in as many ways possible truly representative of the interests of the class as a whole,

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<sup>386</sup> A 40 page legal opinion supplied by the *Service Juridique CSN*, and dated 7 May, 1997 along with a later actuarial report from *Les actuaires-conseils-Bergeron et associes inc.* dated 18 December, 1997 became the foundation for the ultimate decision to proceed to legal action. The latter document as included in the request to file a class action suit was dated in the documents addenda to the application as the same date as the deposit. In fact, the contents of this actuarial report were in the possession of the unions much earlier in the year.

<sup>387</sup> It was decided in at least one of those assemblies, and this *ad hoc*, that in the interests of openness and transparency the unions would grant speaking privileges to members of other bargaining units and interested parties. Amongst those recognized were individuals from full-time faculty (CUFA) and the retirees (CUPA, or the Concordia University Pensioner's Association). The actual motions proposed were modified so as to respect certain concerns expressed by members of CUPA.

and possesses the personal and professional capacity to lead such a legal struggle. For divers reasons – years of seniority, years of leadership, contributory status within the pension plan, bilingualism, experience in front of a variety of legal jurisdictions and tribunals – I was selected from amongst the membership and leadership of the eight unions to act as petitioner.

On December 18, 1997 leave to file a class action was placed before the Superior Court of Québec. This body has sole jurisdiction over class action suits in the province. The response of the employer and two dissenting groups was almost immediate. The full-time faculty union, CUFA had in fact previously struck a separate agreement with the employer over some of the issues raised in law by the other unions. They and the Pensioners' Association sought intervenor status to block the class action. Within the institution itself, the same divisions of working classes, bourgeois and petit bourgeois classes began to cohere around the different positions on the changes made to the pension plan, as well as over the use of monies from the pension surplus. As in my earlier examination of divisions within the Québec labour movement writ large, similar cleavages along the lines of bourgeois and proletarian classes exist within Concordia University's unions. Being a member of a labour union does not mean that you are part of the "working class" nor does it imply a necessary commonality of interests between different union bodies. The proximity of the full-time faculty union to the employer on many fronts has permitted them to broker agreements that elude other bargaining units. Indeed, CUFA's leadership has informed the ranks of the university senior administration over many decades and these same individuals have afterwards returned to leadership roles in that union. The proof of my claim for the privileged position of CUFA is further illustrated by the fact that the eight other unions repeatedly tried to negotiate with the employer on these same issues during the period outlined here, and to no avail.

How did the employer respond to the nature of our advocacy and the unions' choice of leadership and representation? In July of 1999, I ran for and was elected to the position of staff representative on the University's Pension and Benefits Committees. One committee is a sub-committee of the University's own Board of Governors, the other is a separately constituted committee of the pension plan itself, presumably administered at arm's length from the University's own interests, the plan being a separate entity unto itself. The employer refused to accept my election and admit me to participation in those committees. Recourse through law was sought on December 3, 1999 through a demand for an interlocutory injunction to force the recognition of my elected representation. The parties arrived at an agreement that I should sit on the pension committee, but that the nature of my role as petitioner for the class action suit precluded my sitting on a sub-committee of the University's Board of Governors due to potential conflict of interest. My inevitable acceptance on the other committee was predicated on the simple fact that, in theory at least, the pension plan, its administration and very existence is separate from the University and it supposedly enjoys complete autonomy in its operations. This is balanced by the fact that actual changes to the nature of the plan are entertained and passed by the other committee, a sub-committee of the Board of Governors. Other reactions were more subtle, or at least less formal. On one occasion in a meeting with members of the senior administration, it was intimated that the entire legal action was initiated, sponsored, directed, and funded, by the CSN. As I have noted previously, the reaction against the CSN's presence within the university was at times visceral, and this on all sides. The preoccupation by the employer

with the role of the CSN in this process is given further evidence by the cross-examination of my capacity before the courts as a fit and proper representative of the class.<sup>388</sup>

Certainly the role of the CSN did not constitute some kind of nationalist plot against an Anglophone institution. However, it was clear that the FEESP unions had been the vanguard, and that they all shared the same technical advisor, Mme. Ruth Harvey, who coordinated the entire process. As a perfectly bilingual Francophone, she acted as the perfect intermediary between the CSN and the Concordia unions. This is not to imply that her role was to translate, filter or otherwise spin communications between the central body and the unions. In fact, a significant number of the key documents and exchanges were draughted in English. A particularly striking example is a written communication between Mme. Harvey and her contact within the CSN's *Comité de coordination générale des négociations (CCGN)*, Denis Gagnon,<sup>389</sup> who was helping to coordinate legal, actuarial, and admittedly financial support for the action. The ten page document outlines the initial basis for the class action in that it arrives at similar conclusions as both the legal opinion and the actuarial report well in advance of the release of these documents. The letter is draughted exclusively in English by M. Gagnon himself. It is palpably obvious that the author is a Francophone, yet he has chosen to communicate in English, to another Francophone, albeit a bilingual Francophone, fully recognising that Mme. Harvey would be placing the document into the hands of

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<sup>388</sup> See *Contre-interrogatoire sur affidavit témoignage de M. Richard Bisailon*, Cour Supérieure, District de Montréal, Province de Québec, Canada, dossier N°: 500-06-000057-972. The role of the CSN, the number of unions in the proposed collective action affiliated with the CSN, and even issues of costs to legal representatives formed the underlying theme of much of the cross-examination. Interestingly, the transcript shows the legal councils and myself posing questions in English, clarifying them in French, and myself responding in English to questions posed at the end of long exchanges in French between the whole of the parties. It was to an ability to switch between languages that my own candidacy for the position of petitioner was preferred. Similar abilities marked the leaders of most of Concordia's unions. Notwithstanding the fact that examination and cross-examination is conducted in the preferred language of the individual witnesses, all other exchanges between the parties are conducted in French. One can imagine the disadvantage of an individual who is asked questions in one language, whilst he or she is completely oblivious of the procedural fencing conducted between opposing councils in another language.

<sup>389</sup> See written communication dated May 2, 1997 between Denis Gagnon, *Comité de coordination générale des négociations (CCGN)* and Ruth Harvey, Technical Advisor for the FEESP unions at Concordia.

Concordia's unions. This kind of linguistic sensitivity marked the history of exchanges throughout this process and my own longer history of working with the CSN. Clearly, and in this empirical example, issues of language and culture in no way impeded the CSN's advocacy for the class interests of Concordia's labour unions, including those not affiliated with that body, and in alliance with the rest. Yet, linguistic preoccupation to the extent of overt suspicion, innuendo and distrust did mark the process from other sides.

The University's response to the class action suit is understandable. The unions certainly did not expect the employer to simply hand over close to \$72 million dollars to be deposited back into the plan. In fact, issues of representation, collective bargaining and control over the fuller issue of compensation that included pension and benefits as well as salary were really at the heart of the issue. Had the unions better control over these key areas of their working conditions, one may presume that changes allegedly made to the detriment of the plan and the collective class interests of the employees might never have been passed. The response from both the retirees and the full-time faculty is more difficult to understand. On the one hand, and as has been noted above, CUFA had arrived at an understanding of some sort with the employer over the use of at least some of monies claimed in the suit.<sup>390</sup> Yet what of the merits of the rest of the claims? An examination of the decision at the level of the Québec Superior Court to reject the request for intervenor status for both CUFA and two individuals from CUPA contains the submissions of CUFA. They include the following preoccupations:

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<sup>390</sup> Said fact is acknowledged within the ultimate decision of the Supreme Court of Canada which denied the Class Action as inappropriate as to jurisdiction. The decision notes that "9. Before the application for authorization to institute a class action was filed, CUFA had, following negotiations with Concordia, agreed to the measures now contested by Mr. Bisailon." See *CITATION: Bisailon v. Concordia University*, [2006] 1 S.C.R. 666, 2006 SCC 19, Supreme Court of Canada. Retrieved 26/9/2010 from <http://www.canlii.org/en/ca/scc/doc/2006/2006scc19/2006scc19.html>.

“9. In fact, the Intervenor and the Respondent have already negotiated terms and conditions of employment for members of the bargaining unit whom the Intervenor represents relating to the Plan, the whole as appears more fully from a copy of an extract of their collective agreement attached hereto as Exhibit I-2;

...

12. The Concordia University Inter-Union Council, of which the trade union presided by the Petitioner is a member, but which excludes the Intervenor, is currently attempting to negotiate improvements to the Plan for the members of the bargaining units represented by the trade unions which are members of the council;

...

16. The Request for Authorisation to institute a Class Action is unfounded in fact and in law.”<sup>391</sup>

The petition, hearing and decision to deny the request for Intervenor status were all conducted throughout April of 1998, by May the potential Intervenors were appealing the decision. Similar claims were put forward on behalf of two retirees associated with CUPA.

“3. The Intervenors do not recognise the Petitioner’s right or authority to represent the non-active members;

...

5. The Intervenors wish to contest the Petitioner’s Request for Authorisation to file a Class Action suit;

...

8. The Petitioner’s Request for Authorisation to file a Class Action suit is poorly founded in fact and in law, even if the alleged facts were true;”<sup>392</sup>

While ultimately, CUFA’s denial of representation based upon the provisions of the Labour Code would prove pivotal to rejecting the legitimacy of the Class Action based on jurisdiction, it should be noted that the denial of representation put forward by the two retirees associated with CUPA was never tested and rests on shaky ground. In fact, Québec’s labour unions retain the right of representation for their retirees. This came subsequent to changes in law just before the events examined here. In fact, and as time goes by, the blanket claim for “in house” associations of retirees to represent all retired workers is being constantly eroded as unions claim jurisdiction over the representation of their retired

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<sup>391</sup> *In Passim, Intervention*, Cour Supérieure, District de Montréal, Province de Québec, Canada, dossier N°: 500-06-000057-972, p. 2-3. Regarding Article 12, CUFA had repeatedly been invited to sit on the IUC with the other member unions but had refused. The closing statement in Article 16 effectively denies the merits of the suit, while the other claims argue that the suit is simply a negotiating tactic.

<sup>392</sup> *In Passim, Requête en intervention et en irrecevabilité*, Cour Supérieure, District de Montréal, Province de Québec, Canada, dossier N°: 500-06-000057-972, p. 1. Note the potential hedging of bets that is reflected in the wording of the last claim. My translation of “3. Les Intervenants ne reconnaissent pas au demandeur le droit ou l’autorité de représenter les membres non-actifs ;...5. Les Intervenants désirent contester la requête pour autorisation d’exercer un recours collectif du demandeur ;...La requête pour autorisation d’exercer un recours collectif du demandeur est mal fondée en faits et en droit, même que les faits y allégués soient vrais ;”



members. Only those previously associated with non-unionisable administrative and management positions will legitimately fill the membership of these organisations in the future.

The above begs additional comment on the class nature of both CUFA and CUPA. The former, as I have noted, has a long history of close proximity to the employer, and has in fact informed the senior administration of the university by having its own leadership cross the aisle into upper management and administration, and then even to return to leadership positions within the “union.” CUPA’s leadership has always consisted of former managers, administrators and full-time faculty members.<sup>393</sup> The petitions of both these groups deny the merits of the suit out of hand and ascribes the intent of the action to either a negotiating tactic or in other venues, as part of a hidden CSN agenda.<sup>394</sup> The proximity of the leadership of both CUFA and CUPA to the senior administration of the university identifies them as bourgeois in orientation. Here as elsewhere, in examining the position of the groups I ask, collectively, *cui bono?*

Issues of Intervenor status for these groups aside, the important fact remains that the decision of the Superior Court of Quebec was to deny the Request to file a Class Action suit

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<sup>393</sup> Of the two individuals seeking Intervenor status on behalf of CUPA, one was a recently retired full-time faculty member, while the other was a former Director of Human Resources. Other past officers have included former Vice-Rectors (now known under the more corporate appellation of “Vice-Presidents) as well as divers former members of middle and senior management.

<sup>394</sup> A communication to its members by then President of CUPA dated the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 1998, immediately before the petition for Intervenor status submitted before the Superior Court of Québec by both CUFA and two members of CUPA, expresses “full support for the enclosed letter, that sets forth clearly the significance of the lawsuit which may be brought against the University relating to the administration of the Pension Fund.” Said letter, “Re: The CSN Class-Action Suit,” and signed by the two individuals seeking Intervenor status on behalf of CUPA contains the following qualifying statements regarding the nature of the suit. The suit has been filed by myself “on behalf of members of Concordia’s CSN unions and (without our consultation)... The CSN alleges that... We are concerned that the CSN action... since the CSN’s winning of this Action.” Clearly, the bogeyman here is the CSN. Notes taken by union a representative at a committee meeting for the Board of Governors discussing the parallel negotiations conducted between the university and members of the Inter Union Council claims that members of the Board Committee suggested retaining the “meanest s.o.b.” as a negotiator. The author of these notes claims that a senior administrator mentioned that “the university was under-insured,” and that it was “implied that there was or seemed to be an agenda from the csn (sic) concerning Pension Plans in Quebec.” See *Aide Memoire*, between members of the CUSSU Pension and Benefits Committee and the staff member on the Pension Committee.

on April 25, 2003.<sup>395</sup> The pivotal issues in the decision were related to jurisdiction and the exclusive rights to representation assigned to labour unions under the Québec Labour Code. Subsequent leave to appeal the decision was granted and the Québec Court of Appeal reversed the decision of the Superior Court on March 31, 2004.<sup>396</sup> CUFA, along with the University and CUPA sought leave to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada, which was granted. Subsequent to an audition held in December 2005, the Supreme Court rendered a decision on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2006. The decision essentially agreed with the original Superior Court decision that denied the Request to file a Class Action suit based upon issues of incompatible jurisdiction. The residual jurisdiction of the Superior Court could not over-ride the specific jurisdictional domain of a labour arbitrator as defined in the Québec Labour Code. Insofar as the protracted length of the proceedings had far outstripped the delays for grievance in the collective agreements of Concordia University's unions, further action fell to the way side and no examination of the merits of the proposed action have ever been heard.

Notwithstanding, in examining the final decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, what conclusions may we draw as to what was lost and what was won for labour? It should be kept in mind that the decision in no way addressed the merits of the suit, and rendered decision on the issue of appropriate jurisdiction only. Yet, a full examination of the text of the decision is warranted, as it addresses some of the key issues that were at the centre of the concerted actions taken by the majority of Concordia University's unions.

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<sup>395</sup> See *Jugement*, Cour Supérieure, District de Montréal, Province de Québec, Canada, dossier N°: 500-06-000057-972, April 25, 2003, retrieved 26/9/2010, from <http://www.jugements.qc.ca/php/decision.php?liste=48111703&doc=4CF8CE283048FA97A6B2A2DE0FE0F6B65C592CC95A6AD0ABB7B5645D756229A2&page=1>.

<sup>396</sup> See *Arrêt*, Cour D'Appel, District de Montréal, Province de Québec, Canada, dossier N°: 500-09-013403-035, March 31, 2004, retrieved 26/9/2010 from <http://www.jugements.qc.ca/php/decision.php?liste=48111703&doc=AD3D771884BAA903DE071F9CBA67ECD04A8928DDD856C923B9125DAF9608C096&page=1>.

As I have described earlier, much of the issue centred around representation and the lack of control over the broader problems of pension, benefits and compensation writ large. Attempts to address the problem through the collective agreements resulted in a response that essentially maintained that in the absence of specific provisions within the existing collective agreements, issues related to the administration of pension and benefits were outside the purview of the unions; forbidden territory for some unions, but given the success of CUFA in this area, not to all. In fact, little came from the series of encounters between the unions and the employer that sought to address issues of pension and benefits at an *ad hoc* and informal common table approach with the employer. Thus, any decision that even peripherally sought to define the rights of labour vis-à-vis these marginally addressed areas would have been welcome.

In the majority decision – for there was a dissenting minority on the issue of jurisdiction in this complex affair – the Honourable Judge LeBel addressed not simply the issue of jurisdiction, but of the conditions that clearly placed the dispute before the appropriate jurisdiction of a labour arbitrator.

“With regard to the subject-matter aspect of the dispute, each of the collective agreements in force at the time the motion was filed refers expressly to the pension plan. In the relevant provisions, the university made a commitment to the unions to offer the pension plan to the employees covered by the agreements in accordance with the conditions of the plan. The unions thus obtained certain assurances with respect to the maintenance of the plan and the eligibility of the employees they represented. In short, the parties decided to incorporate the conditions for applying the pension plan into the collective agreement. In this context, the employer appeared to retain effective control over the administration of the pension plan while committing itself, at least implicitly, to respect and fulfil various rights and obligations provided for in the plan or arising out of the legislation applicable to it.”<sup>397</sup>

Consider the closing words of the passage. The employer’s control over the plan is acknowledged, but insofar as the parties by mutual agreement sought to entrench the plan, or some mention thereof, within the wording of the collective agreements, there were, and are, certain responsibilities incumbent upon the employer to “to respect and fulfil various rights

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<sup>397</sup> *Op. Cit. CITATION:* Bisailon v. Concordia University, [2006] 1 S.C.R. 666, 2006 SCC 19, Supreme Court of Canada, the citation is taken from the preamble and synopsis of the decision proper.

and obligations provided for in the plan or arising out of the legislation applicable to it.”

Further, this places certain obligations upon the employer.

“27 Finally, the collective representation system in labour law has a significant impact on the employer. It requires the employer to recognize the certified union and to enter into good-faith collective bargaining exclusively with it.”<sup>398</sup>

The obligation incumbent upon the employer to negotiate is clearly stated. This is an obligation that applies to all unionised bodies, not just some chosen few. The obligation extends beyond the narrow confines of the issues taken up directly by collective agreements.

“It is worth noting that the monopoly on collective representation is not limited to the context of the collective agreement but extends to all aspects of employee-employer relations.”<sup>399</sup>

Thus, the employer’s protestations that the specific issues related to representation and administration, not addressed within the wording of the collective agreement, are outside the purview of negotiations is patently false. Judge LeBel expands upon the issue of jurisdiction and the rights of the union.

“The union’s monopoly with respect to collective bargaining is based not only on the existence of a collective agreement, but also on the certification of the union (*Isidore*, at para. 38; *CAIMAW v. Paccar of Canada Ltd.*, [1989 CanLII 49 \(S.C.C.\)](#), [1989] 2 S.C.R. 983, at pp. 1007-8). For this reason, any negotiations regarding conditions of employment that are not mentioned in the current collective agreement must be conducted by the certified union.”<sup>400</sup>

Again citing legal precedent as the basis of his decision and interpretation, Judge LeBel cites the decision in *Regina Police Assn. Inc. v. Regina (City) Board of Police Commissioners*, 2000 SCC 14 as it applies both to the jurisdiction of the arbitrator and the subject matter that he or she may consider:

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<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, section 27 of the decision.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, section 28 of the decision. The Honourable Judge LeBel cites as precedent decisions *Isidore Garon ltée v. Tremblay*, [2006 SCC 2](#), at para. 41; *Noël*, at para. 57, full case citation contained within the preamble to the decision proper.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

“Simply, the decision-maker must determine whether, having examined the factual context of the dispute, its essential character concerns a subject matter that is covered by the collective agreement. Upon determining the essential character of the dispute, the decision-maker must examine the provisions of the collective agreement to determine whether it contemplates such factual situations. It is clear that the collective agreement need not provide for the subject matter of the dispute explicitly. If the essential character of the dispute arises either explicitly, or implicitly, from the interpretation, application, administration or violation of the collective agreement, the dispute is within the sole jurisdiction of an arbitrator to decide . . . [para. 25]”<sup>401</sup>

Again, the resolution of a dispute need not address solely the specific terms of the collective agreement, but may apply to the broader working conditions including all of compensation, as those are subjects taken up by the employment contract at its most basic level. More specifically:

“This Court has considered the subject-matter jurisdiction of grievance arbitrators on several occasions, and it has clearly adopted a liberal position according to which grievance arbitrators have a broad exclusive jurisdiction over issues relating to conditions of employment, provided that those conditions can be shown to have an express or implicit connection to the collective agreement.”<sup>402</sup>

Most particularly addressing jurisprudence as it would apply to one of the three claims of the Class Action suit, Judge LeBel notes of prior decisions as they apply to the jurisdiction of labour arbitrators and the area of pension:

“Subsequently, in *Union internationale des employés professionnels et de bureau, local 480 v. Albright & Wilson Amérique ltée* (2000), 28 C.C.P.B. 306, the Quebec Court of Appeal held that a grievance arbitrator had jurisdiction to decide whether a contribution holiday the employer had granted itself was valid. The collective agreement provided that the employer was to continue contributing to the pension plan throughout the term of the collective agreement and that no changes could be made to the plan without the union’s consent (para. 24).”<sup>403</sup>

As to the specific inclusion of a pension plan in a collective agreement, Judge LeBel offers the following:

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<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.* section 32.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.* section 33, citing *Regina Police; New Brunswick v. O’Leary*, [1995 CanLII 109 \(S.C.C.\)](#), [1995] 2 S.C.R. 967; *Parry Sound (District) Social Services Administration Board v. O.P.S.E.U., Local 324*, [2003 SCC 42 \(CanLII\)](#), [2003] 2 S.C.R. 157, 2003 SCC 42; *St. Anne Nackawic Pulp & Paper Co. v. Canadian Paper Workers Union, Local 219*, [1986 CanLII 71 \(S.C.C.\)](#), [1986] 1 S.C.R. 704; *Allen v. Alberta*, [2003 SCC 13 \(CanLII\)](#), [2003] 1 S.C.R. 128, 2003 SCC 13.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.* section 36.

“Lastly, in *Emerson Electric Canada ltée v. Foisy* [2006 QCCA 12 \(CanLII\)](#), (2006), 50 C.C.P.B. 287, 2006 QCCA 12, the Court of Appeal accepted the prevailing line of authority, according to which issues relating to a pension plan that has been incorporated into a collective agreement arise, at least implicitly, out of the collective agreement (para. 4). In that case, as in the cases I mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, the collective agreement provided, *inter alia*, that the employer was to continue offering the pension plan for a specified term. A provision or reference of this nature in a collective agreement is sufficient to establish the arbitrator’s jurisdiction over a dispute respecting the interpretation or application of a pension plan.”<sup>404</sup>

And finally,

“Another approach, one even more favourable to finding that a grievance arbitrator has jurisdiction, appears to be being developed in decisions of the Quebec Court of Appeal. For example, in *Hydro-Québec v. Corbeil* [2005 QCCA 610 \(CanLII\)](#), (2005), 47 C.C.P.B. 200, 2005 QCCA 610, the Court of Appeal held that an arbitrator had jurisdiction without relying on the existence in the collective agreement of any reference to the pension plan. In that case, the Court found the pension plan to form part of the employees’ remuneration and conditions of employment and, on that basis, to be an integral part of the collective agreement. (See also *Association provinciale des retraités d’Hydro-Québec v. Hydro-Québec*, [2005 QCCA 304 \(CanLII\)](#), [2005] R.J.Q. 927, 2005 QCCA 304.) Since practically all collective agreements address employee remuneration, grievance arbitrators would, under this approach, almost automatically have jurisdiction in such cases. Similarly, M. Savard and A. Violette have expressed the view that the inclusion in a collective agreement of very general clauses, such as the classic clause recognizing the employer’s management rights, could confer jurisdiction over issues regarding the application and implementation of benefits plans, including pension plans. A grievance arbitrator would thus have jurisdiction over such issues even in the absence of an express reference to the pension plan in the collective agreement (“Les affaires *Weber, O’Leary, et Canadien Pacifique Ltée*: que reste-t-il pour les cours de justice?”, in *Développements récents en droit du travail* (1997), 49, at pp. 72-73). In the case at bar, however, there is no need to rule on the validity of this approach, since, as I will explain, the collective agreements in question make express reference to the Pension Plan.”

Essentially, in rendering a reasoned decision denying the jurisdiction of the Superior Court, and thus the appropriateness of the Class Action as a vehicle for addressing the issues, Judge LeBel has recognised all of the demands of the unions that compel the employer to negotiate the terms of the pension plan and any changes thereto with all of the unions. However, there are other effects of the decision that relate to the nature of an arbitrators potential jurisdiction.

There were eight unions associated with the Class Action suit. Had each chosen to pursue their rights under the collective agreement through grievance, then there would have been potentially eight separate rulings. Insofar as the Concordia Pension Plan constitutes a

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<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.* section 37.

trust patrimony, or *patrimoine d'affectation*, it is indivisible.<sup>405</sup> The implications are profound for the arbitral route. Essentially, had only one of the eight unions obtained a decision in their favour, the entirety of the missing funds would have to be returned to the pension plan. By denying the jurisdiction of the Superior Court, and thus the appropriateness of the Class Action suit, the employer, CUFA and CUPA had invited eight kicks at the can, where the Class Action suit would have constituted but a single opportunity for redress. Either approach would presumably produce decisions that would be open to question under judicial review, and given the size of the claim, one would presume that the losing party or parties would seek recourse again to the level of the Supreme Court of Canada.<sup>406</sup>

The unions won a clearly expressed and well reasoned interpretation of their right to negotiate any part of their working conditions whether expressly addressed through their existing collective agreements or not. The employer's obligation to negotiate these conditions in good faith is also clearly communicated in the decision. Yet, in denying the jurisdiction of the Superior Court, and thus the Class Action as an appropriate vehicle for redress, it would appear that the majority of Concordia's unions lost the battle but won the

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<sup>405</sup> Indivisible, as in an integral whole. The translation of the original term into English is courtesy of the English translation of the Supreme Court decision, I would invert it to read "patrimonial trust." A favourable decision as regards say a single bargaining unit occupying but 10% of the plan's liabilities would not result in 10% of the claim being returned to the plan, but 100% of the claim being returned to the fund. This is because there is but one single plan for all Concordia employees. The realization of this prompted CUFA to seek a division of the plan into two separate plans: one for CUFA's members, and one for the rest of Concordia's employees. Such would have required agreement amongst the members of the plan, something that was not forthcoming.

<sup>406</sup> An interesting and somewhat ironic sidebar is offered here. Concordia University had lost an arbitral decision over the rate of monetary compensation for a part-time course in a grievance filed by the Concordia University Part-Time Faculty Association (CUPFA), one of the unions associated with the pension suit. The arbitral decision of Me. Léonce Roy dated the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2005 was submitted to the Superior Court for judicial review by Concordia University. The Superior Court found for the petitioner and overturned the arbitral decision. CUPFA subsequently sought leave to appeal the Superior Court decision and won a decision in the Cour D'Appel de Québec overturning the Superior Court decision and restoring the arbitral decision on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, 2007. Concordia University sought leave to appeal the appellate court decision in front of the Supreme Court of Canada. Leave for appeal was denied. How ironic that the same party that but a year previously correctly argued that the only venue appropriate to adjudicating a disagreement between unionised employees and their employer was in front of an arbitrator should seek leave to appear in front of the Supreme Court for the purpose of overturning the decision of an arbitrator. See Cour Superieur, Canada, Province de Québec, Greffe de Montréal, N° : 500-17-024799-051, March 14, 2006, and Cour D'Appel, Canada, Province de Québec, Greffe de Montréal, N°.: 500-09-016555-062 (500-17-024799-051) June 18, 1997.

war. A direct frontal assault failed in its goals for monetary redress. In a Gramscian sense this was no time for a “war of movement” or of manoeuvre. Yet, what was gained should well prove in the long run to be an important victory in the sense of waging a Gramscian “war of position.” The class collaborations examined here – proletarian and proletarian/petit bourgeois on the one side, bourgeois and bourgeois/petit bourgeois on the other – have parallels in the broader labour movement, and like the broader movement, positions and potential collaborations change over time. Recent developments in Concordia University have seen CUPA and CUFA seeking closer relations with the rest of Concordia’s unions, and this over the potential erosion of benefits in the area of health insurance. The inevitable ideological shift towards a neo-liberal societal model that has marked Québec and all western societies has analogues at the institutional level as well. And why not? The socialisation of values is conducted at the institutional level, and universities are important institutions dedicated to the highest levels of the most important socialisation process in society: the education of individuals and their training as citizens.

This does not presume that all institutions respond in the same way to challenges from the bottom up. Rouillard sketches out almost the same issues within the context of the Université de Montréal during the same time period as the events recounted here. The same downsizing and rationalisation fervour that washed across both federal and provincial governments in the mid-1990s trickled down to all public and parapublic institutions. How the individual institutions addressed the issues mark differences in the established power relationships at play. In the Université de Montréal example, Rouillard describes the employer’s attempts and the unions’ response to the proposed downsizing plan first at the public level, then at the university level.



“Towards the goal of reducing its costs, it was proposed to reduce the work week from 35 to 32 hours and even to compensate for the loss of salary by drawing from the pension surplus. The fund had accumulated an actuarial surplus thanks to a high rate of return on its investments. Initially, the Unions’ Common Front rejected the proposal, but they engaged in discussions that led to an agreement in 1996. The agreement included a program aimed at encouraging retirement with facilitated departures through recourse to the surplus held in the government retirement plan. Inspired by this strategy, the University of Montréal, as we shall see, proposed to the professors its own program of voluntary retirement in 1996 and won from the SPGUM and other university unions a three year contribution holiday to the pension plan in 1998.”<sup>407</sup>

Different institutions demonstrate problem solving approaches reflective of the power relations between the groups. In a sense, and applying Poulantzas’ theory of the state at the institutional level, the form and structure of the institution is reflective of the class relations within. A number of historical factors account for the differences. First, and as I have shown earlier, Concordia’s unions had only blossomed and expanded as of the end of the 1980s. They were a young and untested alliance. Second, the nature of class collaboration within the Université de Montréal was historically broader and extended beyond collaboration between organised intellectual and manual labour to include alliances with the student population. Rouillard informs us that during the same period that saw profound divisions between the majority of Concordia’s unions and the full-time faculty union; divisions that left internal groups to work out solutions to externally imposed problems, the Université de Montréal’s particular political culture approached the same problem by demonstrating a solidarity within in the face of a threat from without the institution.

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<sup>407</sup> Rouillard, Jacques, *Apprivoiser le syndicalisme en milieu universitaire: Histoire de Syndicat général des professeurs et professeures de l’Université de Montréal*, Montréal, Les Éditions du Boréal, 2006, p. 169. My translation of “Dans le but de réduire ses dépenses, il propose de diminuer la semaine de travail de 35 à 32 et de compenser les pertes de salaires en puisent à même les surplus du régime de retraite. Le régime accumule un surplus actuariel à la faveur des taux de rendement élevés sur les placements. Dans un premier temps, le Front commun des syndicats rejette la proposition, mais il engage des discussions qui débouchent sur une entente en 1996. L’accord comprend un programme destiné à favoriser les mises à la retraite et des départs assistés par le recours aux surplus de la caisse du régime gouvernemental de retraite. S’inspirant de cette stratégie, l’Université de Montréal, comme nous le verrons, proposera aux professeurs son propre programme de départs volontaires en 1996 et obtiendra du SGPUM et des autres syndicats de l’université un congé de cotisation au Régime des rentes de trois ans à partir de 1998.”

“Before the resulting unrest, the SGPUM united with other unions and student groups from the university to release a declaration denouncing the government cutbacks and pressing the administration to defend university teaching.”<sup>408</sup>

Two institutions, with two distinct patterns of response to conditions essentially externally imposed. The one demonstrated unity in the face of adversity, the other divisions in the ranks. Would part of the explanation for the differences between these two institutions be that issues of language and culture coloured the representation of the CSN unions at Concordia, and subsequently called into question the real source of the challenge to the employer’s actions, at least as far as they apply to the early-retirement plan, while at the Université de Montréal, no such underlying issues were present?

The foregoing epilogue is offered for a number of reasons. First to illustrate in an empirical sense that class advocacy need not conflict with issues of language and culture. Some of the most militant advocates for the class interests of Concordia’s employees in this struggle were unilingual Francophones from the CSN. Notwithstanding a presumed solidarity of class interests in the labour movement, no institution is marked by a single monolithic ideological preoccupation. Institutions are made up of individuals, and amongst those that I came to know within the CSN I found committed nationalists and militant trade unionists, sometimes in the same skin. Generally, I found that the areas of mobilisation and organisation were more markedly touched by a nationalist preoccupation. Those who laboured in the trenches of daily advocacy – the technical advisors and legal representatives – seemed to be more preoccupied with shared interests of class. The leadership of labour unions and confederations of same set the course for the institutions as a whole, and determine how the public face of these bodies is put forth in society. Shifting ideological

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<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.* p. 175. My translation of “Devant l’inquiétude engendrée, le SGPUM s’unit aux autres syndicats et associations étudiantes de l’université pour émettre une déclaration dénonçant les compressions gouvernementales et pressant le direction de défendre l’enseignement universitaire.” The issue of cutbacks to education was the subject of student protest at Concordia as well, with students here joining others across Québec regardless of language of education, in addressing cutbacks made under then Minister Lloyd Axworthy. Federal cuts subsequently trickled down to the provincial level. While those at Université de Montréal rallied around a common threat, Concordia’s groups descended into infighting.

preoccupations, or even divided ones, will colour the image put forth. Those who draught policy present the public persona of the institution, and this is shown in position papers, policy statements, and as we have seen, in submissions to commissions of inquiry struck by the state. However, for most workers, what the institution says is less of a concern than what the institution and its representatives do where the rubber meets the road. Cognitive dissonance can arise where there appears to be a disconnect between words and action.

### **The Incompatibility of Mission between Institutions of Class and Institutions of Culture**

Aspects of individual and collective identity cannot be separated from each other so as to conveniently place the interests of one aspect cleanly in one place while placing the balance elsewhere. Where different aspects of individual and collective interests align, they can reinforce, or at the very least not impede one and other. Such was the case in the example of the Université de Montréal offered previously. However, where there is a collision, or qualification, of the expression of one set of individual or collective interests – say class goals – with other, broader aspects of identity – the advocacy and expression of those class interests in an arena affected by issues of culture and language, then the expression of class will suffer from the needs of broader identity.

There can be moments, nexus points of great synthesis, that permit a superior expression of the combined interests of class and identity. There can also be times where, notwithstanding an alignment between these aspects, when one will be muted by the expression of the other, and this always to the detriment of the working classes. Finally, there are times when the collective preoccupations of identity will clearly impede a cooperative project that transcends issues of language and identity and seeks to express the collective interests of class. History, both recent and since the inception of the social project that is modern Québec, has provided examples for our consideration.

The broader needs of collective identity displace and qualify the expression of class interests. This is to be expected. How could class interests be successfully bartered in a situation where the language and culture of the majority demographic of the working classes is deemed the voice of the cultural and linguistic “other?” The expression of class and identity must align themselves so as to be successful in their expression. What does this imply for the class expression of minority cultures? The conclusion that I draw is that majority culture seeks to affirm and maintain its hegemonic position. The socio-economic interests of the working classes, indeed of all classes, are but secondary considerations to the needs of culture and identity.

“The deeper we trace the political influences in history, the more we are convinced that the “will to power” has up to now been one of the strongest motives in the development of human social forms. The idea that all political and social events are but the result of given economic conditions and can be explained by them cannot endure careful consideration.”<sup>409</sup>

In Québec, the political expression of working class needs has always been muted by issues of culture, language and identity. Some paths to expression have been found through informing political leadership by individuals associated with the labour movement, through *ad hoc* support of particular parties by bodies of labour, and through the bartering of class needs in exchange for electoral support. All of these expressions have been coloured by issues of language, culture and identity.

We can summarise the larger thesis as follows:

1. The initial synthesis of interests of class and identity in Québec was historically idiosyncratic, unique and extraordinary. The conditions that produced its most powerful manifestation were specific to a moment in time that marks the decade after the Quiet Revolution, and increasingly they cannot apply to the contemporary movement, nor to contemporary Québec society.

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<sup>409</sup> Rocker, Rudolph, *Nationalism and Culture*, Montréal, Black Rose, 1998, p. 23.

2. There is an essential and fundamental incompatibility between any movement that seeks the elimination or effective reduction of differences of condition based on socio-economic class and any movement that seeks to assert the primacy of rights and collective interests as defined by culture. The former seek to eliminate or transcend difference, or at least the external trappings thereof, while the latter ultimately seek to displace it, and in so doing only produce a cycling of elites and of corresponding dominant or hegemonic culture.
3. Only where a demographic cultural majority suffers a disadvantage from the point of view of social and economic class that is reinforced by having that same demographic essentially disadvantaged from the point of view of hegemonic culture can a synthesis of these collective interests arise in the form of shared struggle.
4. The argued incompatibility between class movements and those predicated upon asserting the rights of a dominated or minority culture does not deny that these factors may occasionally and momentarily ally. Most particularly, a successful movement asserting the rights of an oppressed cultural and demographic *majority* should, if successful, eliminate inequalities of social and economic condition for this same demographic. However, having done so, the original reasons for the alliance and synthesis decline in resonance and inequalities of social and economic condition – class differences – will remain, now cleaved along other *minority* lines of identity.

It should be clear to the reader thus far that my discussion arguing the essential incompatibility of class based movements and those dedicated to asserting the collective interests of shared identity and culture has of necessity had to adopt an ideological position that employs the language and normative assumptions of one or the other point of view. And the language employed thus far should have also informed the reader that my position is firmly rooted in the theory and language of class analysis. Yet this exercise was in no way

intended to found itself purely or even predominantly within a Marxian tradition in the analytical or normative sense. Neither a purely Marxist nor a liberal analytical point of view is adequate to the task at hand. As has been noted previously, traditional Marxist discourse has had an ambivalent relationship with issues of collective identity as expressed by the “national question.” On the other hand, liberalism both denies the validity of class analysis, and perhaps more importantly here, is confounded by issues of shared collective identity and collective versus individual rights. We are confronted here by a complex dialectic between issues and positions of shared and competing collective interests within a liberal society founded upon a capitalist mode of production. A synoptic Marxist prescription that follows an analysis of the role of labour unions within civil society and offering the conclusion that in the absence of revolution all gains are simply an example of false interests of class and thus futile serves no purpose here. Contemporary class struggle *is* conducted within the context of a liberal civil society. This will not change soon, easily or perhaps at all.

As to the validity of my own approach to class analysis from an orthodox Marxist perspective, I feel that a few words are called for here, after the fact. Were I a more orthodox Marxist, I would have cleanly divided Québec society into but two clearly defined classes: bourgeois capital and the proletariat. I might have indulged the class division of society somewhat further by allowing for an analysis of the non-productive petit bourgeois classes, and their historic and present role here in Québec. I have chosen however to speak of the “working classes” plural, of competing bourgeois fractions, and to consider the substantial output of Québec’s organic intellectuals from the point of view of the class interests that they serve.. Some of these same intellectuals have themselves struggled with the problem of ideological orthodoxy and class unity. Even Marxian approaches in the peak years of the 1960s and 70s were forced into a cultural filtering of the classes: there are two working classes, one English, one French. And in some senses how can we avoid such distinctions?

The cultural and linguistic division of labour has always marked Québec society since the conquest. It continues to distinguish important divisions within her classes today. Additional anomalies due to the nature of contemporary capitalism also invite what might be put forward as a “fragmented” or hybridised approach to class analysis. Along with the ever increasing proletarianisation of society, where even traditional petit bourgeois fractions exchange their labour for a wage comes the other side of the capitalist coin. If the “middle classes” can claim to be proletarians due to the nature of the wage-labour nexus that has them exchange their labour for a living wage, then they can also almost all claim to be capitalists. They own their own homes and condominiums, and their retirement plans are rife with stocks held in mutual funds. By the very nature of investing in their own retirement they become aspiring capitalists. That means as well that to protect their “capital,” preserve ongoing accumulation and their capitalist interests, they must eschew all collective manifestations that threaten the very mode of production that exploits their labour. They must not bite the hand that feeds them. Only some very few can today qualify as proletarian organic intellectuals. Notwithstanding these observations, my approach requires that classes be seen in light of the internal cleavages that often keep them divided against themselves. These divisions can be due to the technical division of labour, based on ideological differences, or cultural differences, and the whole cleaved along linguistic lines. Here in Québec, all of these factors have been, and continue to be, present and at play. I have also not chosen to engage in a discussion of “productive” versus “non-productive” classes vis-à-vis my analysis of the role of Québec’s organic intellectuals. Such a discussion, traditional to a more orthodox Marxist approach, ill serves an analysis of a class fraction whose main contribution has been to conduct a discourse on aspects of identity, rather than those of class. In this sense, they are a productive class, aiding in the reproduction and affirmation of now dominant *culture*. Further, the ideological milieu in which they work is increasingly a neo-liberal one; one that

denies almost any opportunity for the rise of a non-bourgeois, or proletarian stream of intellectual thought. However, there are and there must always be some few who labour in that field.

Liberalism may well attempt to reconcile the demands of class based movements such as labour unions by seeing and treating them as simply one of many competing pluralistic interests. Yet liberalism is blind to issues of collective versus individual rights, and when an oppressed cultural majority demographically aligns with oppressed classes, liberalism is doubly confounded by issues of class and collective identity. And even if the scrum of pluralistic competition produces a marginally improved division of the benefits of social production so as to seemingly respond to the interests of an oppressed working class or classes while the political process addresses the issue of oppressed cultural majority, the outcome changes little. Class divisions remain, perhaps muted by better quality of life, but socially they will simply cleave along different lines of identity.

If only for the advantage granted by a consistent analytical position, the theory and language employed by my analysis has remained firmly situated well to the left of liberalism. Marxist and subsequent Marxian conclusions and prescriptions may be less than productive here, but at the very least this ideological point of view clearly acknowledges the problematic at hand: the inevitability of class struggle, and its difficult and complex relationship with issues of oppressed culture and identity.

The answer to our research question must be that these cultural and linguistic divisions have always marked our society, and are as manifest in the labour movement as in the rest of society. This need not be so. The committed and successful working relationships between Anglophone, Allophone and Francophone union militants that I have only briefly sketched in my introduction and epilogue gives proof to this conclusion. True class



consciousness demands that we always remain aware of the pull and demands of culture – majority and minority – while continuing the struggle for class equality.

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