

A BRIEF ON QUEBEC'S ENGLISH-SPEAKING YOUTH ON THE OCCASION OF THE YOUTH SUMMIT February 2000

We, the English-speaking youth of Quebec, come before you today to ask that our distinctive voices be heard. We share many of the concerns, problems and preoccupations of our French-speaking brothers and sisters. But we have anguishes, specific and poignant, which are ours alone, and which you will not hear about from the other participants and observers at the Youth Conference.

We do share with mainstream, French-speaking Quebec youth, the fate of early debt and part-time Mcjobs as many of us struggle to get an education. We attend colleges and universities that have been seriously wounded by their years of reduction in public funding. We approached the job market at a time when the buzz words were downsizing, freezes on hiring, a clamp on promotions, discriminatory lower salaries for those at the entry level. Those of us who did not succeed in acquiring higher education or a trade, hampered as we are by the difficulty of acquiring "experience", feel condemned to the prospect of chronic insecurity and unemployment, especially if we live in areas of Quebec where the economy was centered on fishing (as in the Lower North Shore and the Gaspé), pulp and paper (as in Chandler and Trois-Rivières) and mining (as in Rouyn-Noranda and Val d'Or), where the better-paid jobs have largely vanished, replaced by lower paid and precarious jobs in service industries such as restaurants and hotels.

For us, the words "zero deficit" heard so often in the past few years were the signal that we were to pay for the profligacy of our parents. Many of them reached adulthood at a time of expanding opportunities. Our introduction to the world meant being greeted by invitations to austerity and belt-tightening amid an ever more strenuously competitive society where the words, « mean and lean, » had become a compliment.

What English-speaking and French-speaking youth share in Quebec is vital. The same sun shines on us all. We all suffered from the devastation of the provincial health services. Our prospects are all affected by a climate of constitutional quarrels that discourages investment and the creation of jobs. But, since so many French-speaking youths will be vocal at the conference, we will concentrate our attention on what distinguishes us as English-speaking young people in Quebec.

Growing up in Quebec as an English-speaking Quebecer is, in many ways, an exhilarating experience. We live constantly at the confluence of two or more languages, two cultural networks. We share with our French-speaking neighbors a sense that life cannot be taken for granted. They feel that they are a minority within Canada and North America. We are a minority within the minority. That gives a sense of adventure, an invitation to explore, to broaden our consciousness, to cross bridges and wander in unfamiliar forests. Quebec is huge and complex and dramatic. We cannot live here as young English speakers without developing a stereoscopic vision. We know that there are two sides to every folk tale. There is a sense, here, of living on some brink.

We are challenged to acquire a double fluency, to see our surroundings simultaneously from two different angles – and then many more. According to the 1996 census, 82.5 percent of English speakers aged 15 to 24 were bilingual. In the Montreal region, it was 83 percent. Among those over 65, only 44.7 percent were bilingual – and 43.2 percent in the Montreal region. Our English fluently incorporates landmark words from the French-speaking milieu. You could call us biliterate, and in many cases multiliterate. English-speaking Quebec is not a melting pot, much less an ethnic group. We have a common medium of communication, English, but originally we come from every corner of the earth, including French Quebec.

We acquire from our family one positioning in our world. But soon we are confronted with a challenge from our neighbours, our schoolmates, our teachers, our history books, the local news media, and the great universe of entertainment conveyed to us by television and films.

Very early, we are made aware that we are not merely North Americans, Canadians and Quebecers. We are Quebecers with a difference. Our difference is communicated by our name, by our accent, by the school or church or synagogue or mosque or temple we attend or attended, sometimes by our race and our dress. We become aware that we are not merely ourselves, we are also *l'autre*.

Being *l'autre* in Quebec means that we typically walk about in our world accompanied. Behind us, above us, clinging to us like a shadow, is the tribal memory of the Ugly Anglo of the mythical past. We are made to feel that we cannot escape the collective imprint of the mythical « Damned Fat Lady of Eaton's » who sat on her stool monotonously declaiming, "Speak white!"

None of us knew the fat lady personally. We never heard her – or perhaps any one else – say « Speak White ». And yet, she is immortalized in one of the most popular poems ever published in Quebec, *Speak White*, by Michèle Lalonde. It was republished in several books and displayed publicly on posters. It accuses the English-speaking community of typically relating to French Quebec (and the Third World) by ordering arrogantly and contemptuously, "Speak white!"

How far our experience is from what Lalonde described as the quintessence of English speakers :

« Speak white [...]
 nous sommes un peuple inculte et bègue [...]
 un peu plus fort alors speak white
 haussez vos voix de contremaîtres
 nous sommes un peu durs d'oreille
 nous vivons trop près des machines
 et n'entendons que notre souffle au-dessus des outils. »

We did not see the "bosses" give orders in English. We saw English under the Charter of the French Language struck down as an official language of our province and increasingly obstructed as a common language. We have been intimidated. We usually do not dare raise our voices in English in public places. Our experience has been, rather, to speak French in any mixed situation. We bend over backwards not to arouse the nationalists by too naked a display of English signs or English sounds. We live in dread of a backlash.

We are, indeed, a new generation of English speakers, very different from all earlier generations. What is shared as an experience in our generation in almost all parts of Quebec outside of Montreal is the reality of the decline of the English-speaking community. We heard from our parents and others that so many of the single enterprise communities like Noranda, Val d'Or, Murdochville, were created by English-speaking capital and, until the 1960s, English-speaking management made English the dominant language.

But that is all gone now. The dominant language is unquestionably French. The English-speaking "bosses" have long gone. The English-speaking people who remain in these communities are now older or married to French-speaking people and discreetly almost unseen and unheard. Even the history of the origins of the community is, in most cases, effaced. Only a memory remains and a sense of loss among some of the remaining English-speakers left behind. Also, a memory and a trace of resentment remains among many of the French-speaking townspeople who recall the days when the French language was held in low esteem.

That memory of past dominance, of past English arrogance, is attached to us, even though our generation never knew either. What we experienced, rather, was the continuing reaction against that former English dominance which took form in the Quiet Revolution. Our language, English, is seen as a threat even today, and we see the present government constantly finding new ways to tighten the screws.

Many of us, even among those who never read Louis Hémon's novel *Maria Chapdelaine*, hear in our surroundings a thousand whispers of what was said there by the Voice of the Land of Quebec : « Autour de nous des étrangers sont venus qu'il nous plaît d'appeler les barbares. Ils ont pris presque tout le pouvoir, ils ont acquis presque tout l'argent. Mais au pays de Québec, rien n'a changé. Rien ne doit changer. »

That novel was published in 1912, and so much has changed since. But the resistance to English that was once expressed in novels and poetry has become a dominant thrust of Quebec government policy, whether the party in power is the Parti Québécois or the Quebec Liberal Party. We don't make a fuss about it. We have known nothing else. We are not about to join any crusade for lost rights.

On the contrary, we are of the generation that never experienced the two solitudes. French Quebec is not alien to us : it is a part of our identity. If, at one time, to be French-speaking and English-speaking were clearly distinct by language, by culture and often by religion, that is no longer true. We are bilingual. A very great number of us have both French and English as the languages of our parents.

“People often discuss the cultural tension between anglophones and francophones,” said Arielle Reid of the Federation of Anglophone CEGEP Students. “Little do most people realize that while anglo-franco relations are being discussed, a large segment of the population is left out. No one can limit my cultural identity to one or the other. This fight is not my fight.

“I call here, Quebec, home,” she said. “In everyday life, there is less cultural friction than some people make it out to be. Culture has never prevented me from doing anything, and this is something I want and will fight to preserve. I want to have a future here. I want someday to raise my family here.”

According to the 1996 census, more than one in four married English-speaking persons in Quebec was married to a French speaker. Together, they had 57,000 children under the age of 18. Of these children, 53.9 percent had French as their mother tongue, 33.4 percent had English, 12.5 percent had both French and English. Both by marriage, by dating before marriage, by extended family links after marriage, the English-speaking community is largely integrated and interwoven with Quebec’s French-speaking community.

But we are often still viewed as guilty of the sins of our fathers and mothers. And we carry the guilt for the sins of those who were not our fathers or mothers – our real parents mostly came recently from Italy, Chile, Jamaica, the United States, India, Pakistan and Hong-Kong. Those whose parents or ancestors came from the United Kingdom are barely 20 percent of the English-speaking community. And yet, we have imposed on us as parents by a kind of retroactive reverse adoption such scarecrows of history as Wolfe and Durham.

Prominent pundit Josée Legault conveyed this guilt by ancestral association in her book on the English-speaking community, *L’invention d’une minorité : Les Anglo-Québécois*.

“History has played a nasty trick on those descendants of the British, today surrounded by six million Franco-Québécois. Deprived of their prestigious status of ‘conquerors’, those who are now called the Anglo-Québécois are reduced to lamenting in the pages of *The New Yorker*.”

For Legault, now considered as the authority on Quebec’s English-speaking community, its members not only are all descendants of the conquerors – even Mordecai Richler, the one who lamented the language laws in *The New Yorker* - they even remained conquerors themselves until the Charter of the French Language was passed in 1977.

“If the anglophones say they no longer feel ‘at home’ in Quebec, that’s mostly because some of the measures advocated by Bill 101, such as the partial francization of the workplace or of commercial signs, brought an abrupt end to a state of social, cultural and economic ‘apartheid’ that had lasted more than two centuries.”

Legault’s recommendation is that the government stiffen its spine against any concession to this false minority because, at the first opportunity, the « Anglo-Québécois » would grab back their status as conquerors.

When French rights are denied in any part of Canada, our mythical shadow looms larger above us. We sometimes are made to feel that we are at least partly responsible for the deportation of the Acadians, the suppression of French schools in Manitoba and Ontario and the demographic blindness of the Kings of France who, during the entire period of New France, sent fewer than 70 immigrants a year on average, while New England received an average of 1,600. The demographic nightmare of a North America that speaks mostly English has haunted policy makers here ever since, and we are made to feel part of the English-speaking peril that threatens Quebec with becoming like Louisiana.

In a defensive response, it has become second nature for us to assure all and sundry by our good behaviour that we are not kin to the Ugly Anglos of history and myth. And yet, we know that we will never achieve full acceptance, whether as English-speakers or as members of visible minorities.

Yanick Doirin, a coordinator with the Centre Generation Emploi, told us: “Young people from the visible minorities must battle direct and indirect discriminatory practices which hold them back and even prevent them from gaining access to the job market and thereby limit their access to the rights of full citizenship.

“Unfortunately, few people including employers are aware of this barrier which is very difficult to overcome for many young people. The discrimination faced by young people from visible minorities ... leads to practices, which may exclude them from society at large. It has serious consequences, which may be dangerous in time to come.”

What we fear most, in fact, is that we might be condemned to be a lost generation – driven or drawn out of our own province by the sense of limited acceptance here and the lure of greater opportunity and acceptance elsewhere.

A conventional question addressed to youth is, what will you do when you grow up? In Quebec, there is a similar existential question : where will you be when you grow up? To stay or not to stay : that is a question that torments almost every English-speaking young person.

Outaouais Alliance's Youth Commission addressed a questionnaire to students at Hull's Heritage College within the past six months. The result? "Approximately 93 percent of our region's youth indicated no desire to stay in the province at all."

This is probably an extreme case. In the Outaouais, the federal capital is right there across the Ottawa River, and there is great opportunity on the Ontario side for bilingual English-speaking young Quebecers. But the exodus of English-speaking Quebecers, especially the young and highly educated, has been a hemorrhage in most parts of Quebec ever since the Quiet Revolution.

Darryl Levine, on the board of Alliance Quebec's Youth Commission, told us, "young English-speaking Quebecers don't fear assimilation. We fear losing our community through emigration.

"Very few of my friends are open to staying in Quebec and starting a family here," he said. "I have two brothers in Toronto along with three cousins. One friend is in Texas and another in Colorado. Among my remaining friends, one is heading for Calgary in the next year and another two friends say they will move to New York. For most of my friends, the question is not if they will leave but when."

This anecdotal report is consistent with a study done by Alliance Quebec's Youth Commission, the *Task Force Report on Job Opportunities for English-speaking Youth*, in 1992. It had this to say concerning the exodus:

"The most worrisome aspect of the trend is that it is most prevalent among young people. According to research on current trends and attitudes, Quebec will continue to suffer a major loss of young English-speaking Quebecers over the next decade. Over 60 percent of young English-speaking Quebecers expect to leave Quebec within five years and almost three-quarters within ten years. This is not the result of poor ability in French: two-thirds of young people with high French competency plan to leave".

The magnitude of the exodus is confirmed by official statistics. The flight of English-speaking Quebecers of all ages since the beginning of the Quiet Revolution is of catastrophic proportions, both for English-speaking Quebec and for the entire province. Let us quote a source who cannot be suspected of exaggerating. Jean-François Lisée, the former journalist who served two premiers, Jacques Parizeau and Lucien Bouchard, as a speech-writer and strategist, had this to say in his book published this month, *Sortie de Secours : Comment échapper au déclin du Québec* :

« Entre 1960 et 1976, c'est-à-dire avant l'élection du Parti québécois, 200 000 Québécois anglophones ont quitté le Québec. Entre 1976 et 1996, un autre contingent de 400 000 anglophones ont fait de même. Au total, 600 000 personnes, soit presque 10 pour cent de la population québécoise, parmi la plus instruite et, en moyenne, la mieux rémunérée et aux épargnes les mieux nourries, est allée faire profiter l'Ontario et l'Ouest canadien de ses avoirs et de son savoir-faire (on ne sait combien, en sus, sont partis pour les États-Unis). » (pp. 29-30)

Translation:

"Between 1960 and 1976, that is to say, before the election of the Parti québécois [in 1976], 200,000 English-speaking Quebecers left Quebec. Between 1976 and 1996, another contingent of 400,000 English-speakers did likewise. Altogether, 600,000 people, almost 10 percent of Quebec's population -- and they were among the best educated and, on average, the people with the highest salaries and with the most savings -- went off to benefit Ontario and the Canadian West with their possessions and their know-how. (We don't know how many, in addition, left for the United States.)"

Statistics Canada figures from the 1996 census show that, between 1991 and 1996, the largest exodus from Quebec to the rest of Canada was in the younger age groups of 5 to 14 (7,840 departures), 15 to 24 (7,025 departures), 25 to 34 (14,460 departures), and 35 to 44 (9,175 departures). These are the very young or the people at the peak of their productive life. Compare that with the lower rate of departures of those aged 45 to 54 (4,560), 55 to 64 (2,800) and over 65 (4,125).

Some of these departures were compensated for by English-speaking people moving to Quebec from other provinces. But, for instance, the greatest net loss was in the age groups of 25 to 34 (a net of -5,940) and 35 to 44 (a net of -4,535).

This means a serious constant drain on Quebec. Lisée calls it a « saignée économique, le handicap supplémentaire sur le chemin de la prospérité » (an economic blood-letting, an additional handicap on the road to prosperity). He notes that, without this massive exodus from 1961 to 1991, the average salary in Quebec would be 94 percent of the average Ontario salary. Instead, it was only 87 percent of the Ontario salary.

If the flight of English-speakers from Quebec impoverished all of Quebec, one can imagine what it has meant to the prosperity, the influence and the confidence of English-speaking Quebec. That 600,000 gone compares with a total 1996 English Mother Tongue population of 609,880. All our institutions have been weakened, both from the language laws and by the loss of so many who have talent and training. Our families have been dispersed. We have become as Ireland was in the 19th century in the midst of the potato famine, though for entirely different reasons. Ireland produced a song about exile, *Danny Boy*. But for us, it is not the pipes that are calling us elsewhere, but most of all a sense of rejection at home. And we cannot credibly sing, “But come ye back when summer’s in the meadow...” Those who have left return for visits. They rarely come back home to stay.

The decision to uproot is rarely motivated by just one single factor. But there clearly has to be a major underlying sense of discomfort and alienation for such a monumental population shift. Too many young people see too little future for themselves and for English-speaking institutions in Quebec. A sense of pessimism and fatalism with respect to the future is probably the single greatest problem facing the young, and hence all of English-speaking Quebecers.

One dimension of that pessimism relates to the persistence of the threat of separation. Ever since 1968, when René Lévesque left the Quebec Liberal Party to establish the Mouvement Souveraineté-Association, there has been the recurrent possibility of a severe crisis over an attempt by Quebec to secede unilaterally, without an enabling amendment to the constitution. For young people looking ahead to a career, separatism signaled a substantial risk factor in Quebec that was found to a much lesser degree in any other part of Canada. Those who wished to play it safe knew that they could find greater security for their career and for their possessions by leaving the province.

This pessimism is much related to the perception by English-speaking Quebecers that they and their language are appreciated negatively by the French-speaking majority and that the majority will progressively use its political power to further restrict the status of the English language and of English institutions. This perception was recorded by the Task Force on English Education, presided by Gretta Chambers, which reported to the Minister of Education in January 1992. It was composed of some of the most prominent members of the English-speaking community. They toured the province to hold meetings and receive briefs. Their report is perhaps the most authoritative analysis of the situation of English-speaking Quebecers ever compiled.

Here is one of the task force’s considered conclusions:

“There is widespread conviction among English-speaking Quebecers that their community is considered expendable by Quebec’s French-speaking majority.”

And this:

“Despite differences among regions, in their situations and aspirations, and despite differences among the perceptions of different groups to whom we listened - parents, students, teachers, administrators, school board members, community groups - some common themes emerged: English-speaking Quebecers do not feel welcome or wanted in Quebec.”

This sense of not being welcome or wanted is heightened by the virtual absence of English-speaking Quebecers from the provincial public service. A study published last year by the Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse indicated that only 0.76 percent of the public service was made up of English-speaking Quebecers. And the Commission reported that, during the two years that it studied the matter, only 3 or 4 percent of English-speaking job applicants in Quebec's public service actually obtained jobs.

English-speaking youth have not been the beneficiaries of Quebec government employment programs until a major program to hire minority youths in the Quebec Civil Service was announced with fanfare for the summer of 1999. But even then, of the 4218 students hired, 217 only were English-speaking, a mere 5 percent. And the Quebec government trumpeted this as a great achievement.

In fact, it is felt too often that our community remains invisible to government agencies like Emploi-Québec. The student associations at English CEGEPs and universities in the Montreal have told us these agencies are almost never on campus despite numerous invitations for Career Day activities. Many agencies appear to hold a preconceived notion that English speakers are all rich and don't need help in obtaining jobs. According to a report submitted by Alliance Quebec's Montreal Region Chapter, government resources, programs and services fail to reach English-speaking youth. The proportion of unemployed or under-employed youth of our minority community is greater than it is among French-speaking youth in similar situations.

Among adults of the English-speaking population, many feel that a non-francophone name or mother tongue is enough to bar one from many job opportunities. They are convinced language testing in French as a condition for exercising a profession is nothing short of institutionalized discrimination. The Emploi-Québec offices are seen as part of the problem. There is strong sentiment in the community that Emploi-Quebec is openly biased against those of origins other than French. So the community feels the government has specifically targeted them and their language. It would be important to have a serious test by credible researchers to verify whether these subjective perceptions are founded or misguided. The Commission des droits proposed that the government initiate an enquiry into why there are so few English-speaking civil servants, but nothing has been heard about it since.

In the Quebec region of the federal public service, the under-representation of English speakers is not as outrageous as in the Quebec public service, though it is still egregious. English-speakers occupy well under half the number of jobs that would correspond to their share of the population. And, despite years of handwringing by the Commissioner of Official Languages, no progress has been made -- on the contrary.

Last year, in his last annual report before leaving office, Commissioner Victor Goldbloom reported on the previous year: 96.5 percent of new recruits were francophones. That leaves 3.5 percent for the nearly 20 percent of Quebecers whose first official language is not French.

A report was published in December, years after it had been completed, entitled *Anglophone Participation in the Federal Public Service in Quebec*. That report gave one indication of why so few English speakers get hired: very often, the members of the panel interviewing candidates are unilingual francophones.

But the report failed to look at the most important factor of all. It examined how civil servants were hired at the moment of their recruitment. It did not look at what awaited them if they did get hired to work in Quebec.

An important causal factor for English under-representation seems to be that, in many if not most instances, the federal public service operates in French in Quebec, even in areas like Montreal and parts of the Eastern Townships, where federal law requires the public service to operate bilingually. There is no greater disincentive for joining the public service than knowing that one will have to work in French rather than in one's own language. Alliance Quebec has asked the Commissioner of Official Languages to investigate the language practices in several federal ministries and agencies, such as Canada Post Corporation. Until a serious study is carried out on the language of work imposed on the employees, there will have been no serious attempt to understand the problem. A second problem is that, even in Montreal where francophones are only 55 percent, almost all the jobs require knowledge of French, almost none requires knowledge of English.

It is not by coincidence that English-speaking Quebecers are virtually barred from Quebec's public service and crown corporations. This is a central part of *le modèle québécois*— the resolute application of the powers of the provincial government to advance the cause of the French language and of French-speaking Quebecers. It came in the form of complicity between the

Quebec government and the business world to promote French-speaking Quebecers. This was one of the central thrusts of the Quiet Revolution. The assumption was that French-speaking Quebecers were in such a position of economic and cultural inferiority that only by turning the provincial government into an ethnic state at the service of French could that inferiority be overcome.

Premier Jean Lesage expressed the new activist conception of the state in a speech to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in 1963. “The Québécois have only one single powerful institution, their government. And now they want to use that instrument to build the new era to which they could not otherwise aspire.”

René Lévesque expressed the conception of the state as champion of the francophones with this formula: “The state is one of us, it is even the one of us with the biggest muscles.”

An important part of the Quiet Revolution consisted of building up the muscles of the state, by the formation of a much larger and more activist public service, by the creation of crown corporations to operate in the forestry industry, mining, steel, asbestos and, of course, most important, hydro-electricity. La Société générale de financement was created as an investment arm. The state created the single largest pool of capital in the country by channeling the pension funds of the province and various industries into the Caisse de dépôt et placement.

No one has recently studied the operation of Quebec Inc. But an earlier study by political scientist Pierre Fournier, published in 1978, demonstrated just how effectively the crown corporations were used as instruments of the ethnic state.

Each of the 17 agencies he studied deliberately made a contribution to careers specifically for French-speaking Quebecers. For instance, he wrote this about the Société générale de financement:

“The great majority of the SGF’s affiliates are French-Canadian companies, and they are the ones that have most benefited from the technical and financial help of the SGF. Only 2 or 3 percent of the thousand or so cadres at the SGF and its affiliates are not francophones. Moreover, all new appointments among the directors are French Canadians whom the SGF went after, mostly from the private sector.”

When Hydro-Québec took over Shawinigan Water and Power Co. in 1963, only 12 percent of the engineers were francophones, Fournier reported. That soon changed. “More than 90 percent of the management personnel and of the employees are francophones and the language of work is French.”

The Caisse de dépôt, according to Fournier, used its great economic leverage to promote francophones. “For the past few years, the Caisse has favoured the appointment of francophones to the boards of large companies. In general, it is especially concerns of a nationalist order that seem to guide the Caisse with respect to being represented on boards of directors.” The Caisse, he added, also “contributed somewhat to francizing St. James Street by applying a policy of favouring in the first place local francophone financial houses, then other Montreal firms, and only then Toronto firms, “especially if they have a research branch in Montreal.”

What Fournier described in great detail was one dimension in the construction of “Québec Inc.,” which began in 1962 with the Quebec elections on nationalizing the hydroelectric power companies. It meant using public money to favour companies that were or could be controlled by francophones. Long after Fournier’s study appeared, Pierre Arbour was to document in his own book how the Caisse continued to favour French-speaking capitalists and managers in Quebec over English-speaking Canadians, whether in Quebec or outside the province. Arbour had been a senior official at the Caisse. A striking instance he documents was the Caisse’s use of its power to block the sale of Steinberg’s to a consortium led by some of its senior employees or to another consortium based in Toronto. It chose, instead, to foster the sale of Steinberg’s to Michel Gaucher, a ship owner with no experience in groceries, who soon drove that great company into insolvency at great cost to all Quebecers.

It should be obvious that what, perhaps, was justifiable in the 1960s – blatant discrimination in the use of public money to promote French-speaking Quebecers at the expense of English-speaking Quebecers – is no longer justifiable today. The power

positions have been taken up by francophones. The language-of-work constraints in the Charter of the French Language have made French the usual language of work for the immense majority of French-speaking Quebecers. The situation of economic inferiority of French-speaking Quebecers has been fully remedied. It is time to reconsider *le modèle québécois* and the systematic discrimination that has helped drive young English-speaking Quebecers out of the province in despair of being treated fairly in the society where they were born.

Moreover, English-speaking Quebecers who are the subject of discrimination because of their language in the public and the private sector cannot expect to receive protection from their own unions. In fact, the unions are for the most part accomplices of the government and management in the drive to restrict and inhibit the English language. All three of the great union federations, the Quebec Federation of Labour, the Confederation of National Trade Unions and the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec, are committed to unilingualism as well as to the secession of Quebec.

An episode revealing of how Quebec's corporatist leaders collaborate to stifle the English language – a moment of truth -- occurred in September and October of 1998, when Alliance Quebec called for demonstrations in front of Eaton stores to obtain some English on commercial signs, as the Charter of the French Language has permitted since 1993.

The managers of Eaton, The Bay, Sears and Wal-Mart informed Minister Louise Beaudoin that they were going to bow to the wishes of their English-speaking clients and put up English signs within the law in all the Greater Montreal area. Then Premier Bouchard held a press conference to warn that this would break the "équilibre linguistique" and that he would never allow it. He announced that he was convening the storekeepers to meet him the next night. So, on October 1, the premier, the deputy premier Bernard Landry and Ms. Beaudoin met for a couple of hours with the hapless merchants, and then he met the news media. "I asked them insistently to do nothing to disturb this equilibrium," he told reporters. (« Je leur demandais instamment de ne rien faire qui puisse perturber cet équilibre. »)

He noted that, that same day, the storeowners told him that "their stores had been flooded with telephone calls." (« Ils nous ont dit qu'aujourd'hui leurs magasins ont été inondés d'appels téléphoniques. ») In fact, several of the stores had been closed down for part of the day by telephoned bomb threats.

« Il est certain que nous allons faire un suivi très, très vigilant de ce qui va se passer dans ces magasins, et ce qu'on veut savoir, c'est est-ce qu'on va rompre l'équilibre linguistique dans ces magasins. »

The premier turned a boycott to obtain some English on signs within the law into what he called an attempt to "destabilize" not only his government, but Quebec society itself.

The ultra-nationalist allies then swung into action in concert with the government. On October 3, *Le Devoir* published a joint letter to George Kosich, then president of the T. Eaton Company, implicitly threatening the store with massive reprisals if he were to allow English signs to be put up. The letter was signed by the presidents of nine prominent and powerful associations : Clément Godbout, president of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, the province's largest labor federation; Gérald Larose, president of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux; Lorraine Pagé, president of the French Teachers' Federation, the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec; Monique Séguin, president of Alliance des professeures et professeurs de Montréal; Monique Vézina, a former cabinet minister in the government of Brian Mulroney and president of the Mouvement national des Québécoises et Québécois; Pierre Curzi, president of the Union des Artistes, which represents Quebec's performing artists; Louis Gauthier, president of the writers' union, the Union des écrivaines et écrivains du Québec; Laurent Pellerin, present of the farmers' union, the Union des producteurs agricoles, and Guy Bouthillier, president of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal.

That episode revealed the powerful force of anglophobia in Quebec, intent on keeping English in subordination.

The same discriminatory intention in favour of French and against English is revealed in the province's funding of university students.

Legally a Quebecer or Quebecois is a resident of Quebec who is a Canadian citizen. But the government of Quebec treats some Canadian citizens residing here while they are full-time students as second-class foreigners and treats universities elsewhere in Canada as foreign institutions. But some really foreign institutions, as long as they operate in French, are given the national status in Quebec that is denied to English-language Canadian institutions.

Canadian non-Quebec residents are paying a premium of up to 80 percent in tuition fees while fees for Quebec students remain unchanged. Prior to 1997, there was one fee for Canadian citizens and permanent residents and another level of fees for international students. The present three-category system is discriminatory.

While students from France, for example, and 49 other countries pay the same university tuition fees as students from this province, students from other Canadian provinces have to pay substantially more.

Other provinces pay loans to their students wishing to study at Quebec institutions and allow them to have access to federal government funding. But Quebec does not pay the expenses of its students outside the province, particularly at English-language institutions, and it does not allow us access to federal government assistance.

Students need all the help they can get from all levels of government. If the federal government is willing to fund Quebec students and education facilities directly, as part of a country-wide program to stimulate the production of a highly qualified work force, Quebec should not put obstacles in the way in the name of a dubious claim to have sole jurisdiction. This is not an issue of the content or the organization of education. Students should not be penalized because our provincial government feels its turf is threatened.

The discrimination against English is felt acutely in our English school system. Though we have in Quebec two publicly supported school systems based on language, the French school system is open to all, while the English school system is restricted, with few exceptions, to those who have a hereditary certificate of eligibility and – over the Quebec government's initial legislation and constant objections – to those whose parents are Canadian citizens and who studied in English in Canada.

This system is manifestly discriminatory. It violates Article III of the UNESCO Recommendation Against Discrimination in Education, which commits the member states (including Canada) to abrogate any statutory provisions and any administrative instructions and discontinue any administrative practices which involve discrimination in education. It commits member states to ensure by legislation where necessary that there is no discrimination in the admission of pupils to educational institutions. They are not to allow any differences of treatment by the public authorities between nationals, except on the basis of merit or need, in the matter of school fees and the granting of scholarships or other forms of assistance to pupils.

Moreover, the present restrictions on admission to English schools cannot be justified by the need to preserve an endangered French language. Already, more than 50 percent of English mother tongue pupils in the elementary and secondary schools are either studying in French schools or taking most of their instruction in French through immersion. Would it not be merely fair to allow French-speaking parents and all other Canadian citizens to send their children to English school?

More than 40 percent of all English schools in Quebec have fewer than 200 students. Enrolment in English schools is down by some 60 percent since Bill 22 of 1974 and Bill 101 of 1977 excluded almost all immigrants and francophones from English schools. Now English language school boards are struggling to justify holding on to half-filled buildings. Despite a temporary respite in the decline of numbers, the long-term decrease in enrolments, especially outside of Greater Montreal, means smaller budgets. Smaller budgets mean reduced services, including several grades taught by a single teacher. Reduced services mean less attractive schools, which in turn mean lower enrolments. This vicious circle can be critical in areas of low concentration of eligible students, where buses carry children over ever-greater distances. It also means the loss of school buildings, which were important community centers for English-speaking people. The English identity in many communities is thereby weakened and, in some cases, even eradicated.

Many schools survive only because as many as half their students are French-speaking, with an eligibility certificate for English schooling. If Quebec is to show some concern for the English-speaking community, especially in areas where English-speakers represent a small percentage of the population, it will widen the access to English school. The present policy is guaranteed to depopulate the heartland of English speakers because parents do not want to impose hardships and inferior education on their children. The schools close, or are unavailable, and so English-speaking families move to the Montreal area or leave the province.

Given this situation, Quebec could show an appreciation for its English-speaking minority by providing serious financing to encourage distance learning. Distance learning is important for all Quebecers living outside of the great population centers, but it is especially important for the English-speaking minority to compensate for the lack of specialized courses in the small English schools and for the absence of a CEGEP and a university dispensing courses in English throughout most regions of Quebec.

Some of our youth have also suggested that Quebec's English-language universities could establish a system of regional campuses along the lines of those belonging to the University of Quebec.

There are many ways to bridge the gaps in our community created by the divided school system. They can range from shared school buildings to programs of school and student exchanges, bilingual athletic and performing arts programs open to all and even temporary or long-term student transfers from one school system to another. The government and business can organize bilingual internships and summer job placements that could lead to full-time employment. One youth consulted, Cezar Brumeanu favours the creation of bilingual secondary schools with half the classes in English and half in French.

Meanwhile, English-speaking students denied access to English schools require additional support from the French school system in terms of special education and tutoring. A large number of children migrated to Quebec with their parents after they had already started school in English. Some are in their teens when they come to Quebec and they are thrust into the French system without ever having any means of catching up in French to their age cohort. They agonize in dead-end streams or they drop out of school. Many become delinquents, seeing themselves mistreated cruelly as children and having no hope for a productive life after school in a society that has ignored their true needs and interests. They are sacrificed on the altar of nationalism, which apparently finds it more important to prevent children from learning in English than to provide them with the education that they need. The treatment of these dislocated children – and they are often black, adding an ideologically motivated arrested education to the problems of racism – should give all Quebecers a guilty conscience and a sense of shame over their society's insensitivity.

At present, in the matter of English instruction the government is cheating all the students in the French system. Those who are French-speaking are given too few hours of English too late – not before Grade 4. Then, as Education Minister Legault discovered and confided last week to *The Gazette*, many of the teachers of English in the French schools don't actually speak English. Some months ago, a linguist wrote in *Le Devoir* that half the teachers of English in French schools are not qualified. So French-speaking children are deprived of merely adequate traditional English instruction. They are also prohibited from truly learning English by being enrolled in English immersion classes. Paradoxically, nationalist ideology inspires the government to discriminate against the majority's children.

As for all those who are English speaking and forced into French schools, they usually receive instruction in English as a second language – again, with typically incompetent teachers. With English as their first language, they are not receiving the level of instruction they need. So, many of them will leave school without the capacity to express themselves correctly in either French or English.

Incidentally, we agree with the Jamaican Association of Montreal that attempts to exclude children from legal and private English-language schools are unacceptable.

One would think, with all the laws and regulations passed to enforce French and prohibit English, that Quebec would commit itself to make quality French instruction fully and freely available to all who desire it. But this is not the case. French instruction is available without cost to immigrants, with all the funding for it provided by the federal government. But those who are merely English-speaking Quebecers without the benefit of having immigrated here do not have that option. They typically must pay for any courses in French after they have left the conventional school system.

And yet, people living in rural areas of Quebec where there is a concentration of English speakers – Pontiac County is a prime example – typically left school without a competent grasp of French and now find it a necessary condition for holding a job. Many have been laid off or have failed to be hired because their competence in French is judged inadequate. They are the victims of the social revolution which came as part of the Quiet Revolution and which displaced the utility of English in Quebec in favour of French. Our society owes them in mere justice to give them every opportunity to acquire without cost the necessary French capacity. In some cases, government-sponsored programs of retraining for the labour force will accept candidates for courses in French. But this is not generally recognized as a true condition of preparation for employment. In most cases it is left up to the traditional school system to deliver French competency. There is little sense of responsibility to remedy and compensate for the egregious failures of many schools to convey a proper grasp of French. This should be a government priority, especially to prepare younger people to find a job where French is required. Otherwise, those involved will join the exodus or be a public charge in Quebec.

Pontiac County, with its majority of English-speakers, is one of the very poorest counties in Quebec. It disproves, if disproof is needed, the old stereotype of an Anglo in a top hat with gold tooth and cigar. In fact, in most areas of Quebec, English speakers earn less than French speakers do, and they are more subject to unemployment.

Which brings us to say that we are deeply concerned about the collapse of Quebec's rural economy. Many smaller towns and cities were built around a specific industry and experienced widespread layoffs or very low levels of hiring, as that industry dealt with the cycles of the world commodities markets. Now, however, most of the jobs created in smaller communities stem from local initiatives. In an area with few jobs, there is a lack of understanding of entrepreneurial possibilities and a shortage of basic skills and experience. One result is the migration of younger people of all mother tongues away from smaller communities. They simply leave, but especially the younger English-speakers leave. Their bilingualism, perfected by growing up in a French milieu, gives them the greatest mobility amongst Quebec's youth and many will leave not only their home community but also the province if they perceive there are better opportunities in other parts of the country.

Retention of English-speaking youth is reported as low to almost non-existent in just about every area of the province outside Greater Montreal and the Outaouais region adjacent to the Ottawa River. And, once the young go, the parents tend to follow them sooner or later, many, when they retire.

A study prepared last year for the Coasters Association, for example, which represents English-speaking people from the Lower St. Lawrence North Shore, said the area "for some time has been experiencing an increased outward migration of its youth to the extreme detriment of our communities."

That report talked about the need to find ways to employ more young people on the Coast, cut back on the high cost of transportation from the region to places where post-secondary education was offered and find ways to better prepare the region's young people for the inevitable transition from life on the Lower North Shore to life in the city.

The Coasters recommended that local municipalities and businesses develop programs to meet the social needs of their communities and hire local young people to help them meet these needs. This would give them a chance for valuable work experience and an opening to job choices outside the traditional local industry. We think the provincial government has a responsibility as well.

Outaouais Alliance represents the fastest growing English-speaking community in the province, in a vast area of western Quebec. Its Youth Commission reports that many young people in their region look to Ontario for their future. They think the government should develop placement agencies for employment seekers, especially in rural areas, and build programs to encourage local youth to remain and seek work in the region.

They also suggest that Quebec provide better communication to English-speaking young people about employment opportunities in the region. Even though people can function in French, many get their basic information from the media in English.

In fact, the Outaouais illustrates a communication problem found in many parts of Quebec: there is no local English daily newspaper. People get their information from Montreal or Ottawa-based newspapers, which give only skimpy coverage to events in the Outaouais, unless they concern conflicts and crises. **The youth within the community have expressed frustration that they have no access to information about** their region, unless it centres around negative issues, like the recent visit by the Commission de la langue française to the Pontiac on the hunt for too much English on signs. However, when important information needs to be passed along to residents of the Outaouais, there is often a risk that the English-speaking community will not receive it. This leaves our youth feeling cut-off from their peers in the rest of the province. They are left feeling as though they have been outcast from the province. Yet they yearn to feel connected to their own province.

Another difficulty is that the perception of many is that the Outaouais is essentially the urban Gatineau-Hull-Aylmer corridor, when in fact the bulk of the territory lies well outside in depressed rural areas.

Similar concerns were expressed in the Mauricie, in the Upper and Lower Laurentians, in the Abitibi. Among proposals for improvement were these, submitted by Alliance Quebec's Youth Commission:

- ◆ The government of Quebec should create incentives and programs to encourage rural industries and businesses to form partnerships and links with local communities, specifically with the local schools. Lack of employment in rural areas may also mean lack of experience and understanding of the entrepreneurial possibilities in some locations. This specialized training is particularly relevant where the old-style hiring and layoff cycle of the industrial age has been replaced by no job creation unless it's locally initiated.

- ◆ There is a system called technical vocational training that has been seriously reduced because of budget cutting and some political-linguistic infighting. These courses should be re-examined with the purpose of restoring them to full capacity in needy regions and offering them across regional and linguistic barriers (i.e. one board should offer the courses to all students of that region, not just to its Board's students). In other words, offer the training regionally in both languages under the auspices of one of the school boards in the region.
- ◆ There is a need to create more careers counseling departments and services in the high schools, CEGEPs, and universities. Strong links need to be created between such career counseling offices and local businesses and industries. In addition, bilingual career fairs, career information events should be further developed and offered during the school year in urban and rural centers. Classes specifically geared towards employment skills need to be created and made mandatory as early as high school.
- ◆ The level of computer literacy should be increased in all educational institutions to help English-speaking youth obtain jobs. Programs of computer study, with strong instruction on the use of the Internet, should be mandatory and should be introduced at an early age so that youth are sufficiently computer literate before pursuing higher education. The Quebec Loans and Bursary Program should allow for this.
 - ◆ Seven years ago a study entitled *Task Force on Job Opportunities for English-speaking Youth in Quebec* found that, given the right career encouragement, most students thinking of leaving Quebec would remain. That can only be a more relevant fact today. The enlargement of career opportunities is the basis for successful youth retention schemes.
- ◆ Student debt can overwhelm even the best educated and rob youth of career opportunities. Youth must survive and study and ought not to have to choose between the two. When students are forced because of economic necessity to undertake two, even three jobs while studying, disillusionment, cynicism and hopelessness set in. Failure rates mount as a result.
- ◆ Internships should provide both the starting on-the-job knowledge and the start to further work. Too many internships are terminal band-aids, keeping young people temporarily off the jobless and welfare roles, but not giving them sufficient scope to advance. The private and public sectors need to develop creative strategic plans not just for bringing young people into the work force, but keeping them there as well.
- ◆ Educational programs should include more bilingual internships. Co-op programs should be created at all levels of education, including high school.
- ◆ The provincial government needs to hire more minority youth in the Quebec Civil Service, as there is gross under representation.
- ◆ The government needs to create the right incentives to encourage all its youth to remain in the province. English-speaking youth are frustrated with the constant political uncertainty in the province.
- ◆ More summer employment programs need to be set up for youth to get experience. Such jobs should better reflect the student's field of study.
- ◆ The government needs to convince and show through action, not just words, that the minority communities of Quebec are a welcome and integral part of the province. That the term *Quebecer* and *Québécois* belong to **all Quebec youth** and not just to those youth who share the national aspirations of the Parti Québécois. All people residing in Quebec should be made to feel welcome and a valuable part of society. The government must eliminate restrictive language legislation that makes minority youth feel like second-class citizens.

“Only actions, not words, will convince minority youth that they are a welcome and integral part of Quebec society and just as Quebecois as the next person,” said Naghma Chughtai, Alliance Quebec Youth Commission Coordinator.

The will of English-speaking youth to build a future in Quebec is there. But their skepticism about whether Quebec society welcomes them has been intensified by the absence of any concern for the English-speaking minority displayed in the organization of the Youth Summit.

Arielle Reid, of the Federation of Anglophone CEGEP Students, quipped, “The whole Summit experience has inflicted upon the FACS executive the same apathy that has plagued the students it claims to represent.”

She talked about her organization's experience with the Summit preparations as having passed beyond "being disappointed or upset." She described the Summit process as one of futility.

Her organization will be one of many attending an alternative summit conference in Quebec City planned for the same days as the official one. The Youth Commission of Alliance Quebec will do the same thing. But it also plans to send an observer, as instructed, to the official meeting.

Everyone is waiting, with a hopelessness next to despair, for that essential a signal of acceptance. Couleurs Québec put it this way: "There is an ever-increasing gap between the present generation of decision makers and the younger, emerging generation. Quebecers of ethnic diversity feel left out of a new project of society. Young people, particularly those of different ethnic origins, are looking for their identity, and the Quebec government seems detached from and unaware of the needs of its citizens."

We await an answer. But without illusions.

In conclusion, the Youth Summit could provide a starting point for an historic reconciliation between Quebec's French-speaking majority and English-speaking minority. Such a reconciliation is essential, if English-speaking youth are to be made fully at home and secure in their home province and its society. Only such a reconciliation can bring stability to the minority population and so reverse the brain drain, the people drain, the talent drain, the money drain, the social and cultural drain that have weakened and diminished Quebec for the past four decades.

But the drain will continue as long as Quebecers fail to make a commitment to their future in Canada. The drain will continue as long as the Quebec of freedom and solidarity is at war with the Quebec of anglophobic restrictions and prohibitions. Sooner or later, Quebec must cease to be in contradiction with itself. One vision or the other must finally triumph.

Meanwhile, we, the English-speaking youth of Quebec, await a decision and a reconsideration. We think that the time for the Quiet Revolution is over. It is time to rethink *le modèle québécois*.

There was a time for modernizing frozen institutions, for giving the Quebec government its proper role, for promoting the French language and French speakers. But we think that French and French speakers are now more than equal in Quebec. They are dominant, and in danger of becoming dictatorial.

It takes wisdom to know when enough is enough, and when a little more than enough is much too much. The time for constantly tightening the screws is over. The time for reconciliation and true partnership has come.

Quebec, we think, must work out a new social contract between its majority and its largest minority. It must be based on good faith, acceptance and trust, not distrust and a siege mentality.

Sometimes, a victory must be recognized as a victory. The time has come to declare that the language war is over.

For 40 years, we've had a Quiet War against English that was called a Quiet Revolution. Let us now have 40 years of a Quiet Peace. A peace with honour and solidarity will be to the benefit of all Quebecers. That is the wish of English-speaking youth.

