

The impact of quebec nationalism essay sample



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Introduction

The quiet revolution signified the period in the history of Quebec from 1960 to 1966. This period corresponded with the office tenure of Liberal party under John Lesage. The term was coined by Toronto journalist. After observing what was happening in the country, the journalist concluded that this was nothing than a revolution that was taking place despite the quietness that marked this period (Bothwell, 1984).

Before the rise of the revolution, Quebec was under Maurice Duplessis, a period which was marked by traditionalism and conservatism. The rejection of contemporary way and modern values had made Quebec to remain behind. It was marked by negative characteristic and lived through what was described as Quebec dark period. However, the election of Jean Lesage brought a new period that was marked by changes and various activities that at the end amounted to a revolution (Gagnon, 2003).

There were several changes that were taking place with the coming of the revolution. One of the major changes that took place at this time was rejection of the past way of life and values. These changes enacted in the form of change of French Canadian thoughts. There was a change in French Canadian thought of agriculturalist, anti-statism and messianic (Dickinson and Young, 2003). The revolution was mainly based on the differences that existed between Quebec and the rest of the Canada. With the French roots, the revolution took the form of nationalism in the change of cultural, economic and political status by taking over of the traditional institutions of nationalism and replacing them with deliberate policy. The Quiet Revolution

transformed Francophone Quebec to a modern state. It also affected the relationship between Quebec and Canada. The impact that the revolution had on the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada is evident up to date.

The revolution

Quebec revolution served as a significant turning point as it helped to define francophone Quebec's national identity. It was a major revolution that helped to shape the nationalism of Quebec and also had an effect in its relationship with Canada. Quebec revolution was also a source of constitution crisis that led to troubled relations with Canada (Young, 1998).

Before the start of the Quebec revolution the relations between Quebec and Canada was troubled ever since. This was due to the difference that existed between the two sides. The nationalism and the rise of Quebec revolution was based on the need for delineation from the French land and French culture and the influence of catholic religion. The vision of this revolution was led by pan-Canadian and revolved on the idea of equality between major groups in the country.

As the revolution continued, there was a change in formulation of the identity. There was gradual movement from the French Canadian to Quebec's with a sense of self reliance. This was the main characteristic of nationalism among the francophone of Quebec.

The difference between Canada and Quebec widened with the transformation taking place which led to loss of pan-Canadianism. The

increased identification of franco-Quebec with their province in line with the spirit of nationalism further weakened the relationship of Quebec with Canada. At the same time, their goals continued to diverge from those of the francophone minority who were living outside Quebec.

According to Ager (2000) the rise of nationalism also called for the implementation of a strong state of Quebec government with full powers. This led to the rise of a strong independence movement that wanted Quebec to be granted powers to government itself as a sovereign state. This further widened the gap between Quebec and Canada.

The approach that the rising movement took towards the federal government further widened the gap between Quebec and Canada. From 1960, Quebec gave a set of goals and demands from the federal government. Earlier, Duplessis government had maintained a passive relationship with Ottawa as it opposed the centralization of power in Ottawa. However when the Lesage government took office, it demanded for the stopping of encroachment of the fields of provincial jurisdictions by the federal government and also called for the extension of Quebec power in making laws. This demand would eventually result to the granting of a special status to Quebec within the Canadian Federation

These were some of the factors of the nationalisms movement which lead to the widening of the gap between Quebec and Canada. Quebec called to be granted special powers that would make it equal to the rest of Canada. The Lesage government expressed for the adoption of a new principle in which Quebec would constitute the government of a nation which would be

distinct from Canada. In this case it called to be given more powers than those of the rest of the provinces in Canada. There was continued use of the term Quebec State rather than Province of Quebec's (Bernard, 1978).

There was a growing noise between Quebec government and Ottawa. However Lesage ministry stood firm on a path that had been used by the proceeding government. In 1961, a ministry that was headed by the prime minister scrutinized aspects of their relationship with Ottawa. But there were few who recognized what had been happening in the earlier noisy revolution and therefore they did not understand that Quebec was a province that was speaking not on its behalf but on behalf of the whole nation. It based its demand on the demand of the nation. In a way French Canada then became Quebec and the provincial government could be held responsible for the administration of both. But this responsibility came with more money, more power but with less status. Quebec was just an expensive and insatiable price.

But Lesage understood that there had to be an equitable distribution of resources between Ottawa and Quebec. This widened the gap between the two sides. In 1966, Quebec had even asked the electorate to be given a clear mandate as a base for negotiations for such. Lesage used all the available means in order to get increased federal funding which he agreed that they were meant to suit the spending in Quebec. What was needed was equal access to grants, transfer of funds which were noticed to conditions from Ottawa. The call for redistribution of resource widened the gap between the two sides and the gap widened between Ottawa and Quebec. By 1964, Lesage was able to convince and impress the other provinces and Ottawa

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such that they agreed to almost all the demands that were made (Clement, 2006).

The wave of independence was insatiable. Lesage moved quickly in order to organize Quebec social and economic life in its own conformity. Quebec government therefore tabled a pension scheme apart from the jointly owned one with Ottawa but which was in a way compatible to that of Ottawa. Quebec worked fast to establish its own scheme and even Ottawa's scheme had to incorporate some of the details of the Quebec scheme (Rouillard, n. d.).

While the politicians were drunk in debates on the messiness of the different plans, the civil service interpreted their calculations simply. Quebec wanted to be granted jurisdiction over most of the areas that were previously under the control of Ottawa and which it had presumed to finance directly. This call for the extension of jurisdiction over areas controlled by Ottawa widened the gap between the two sides. The subsequent Quebec government sang the same song in manner which showed the French Canadian had at last learnt the exercise of power (Rouillard, n. d.).

The providence of nationalism and autonomy was in the air and it just demanded to be confirmed. Quebec was treated with a special status which set a completely different Quebec from how it was before. It was claimed that the relationship of Quebec with other provinces needed to be adjusted accordingly in order to suit the new status. The French Canadians seemed complexly new people who wanted more autonomy and institution to govern them as per their newly acquired status (Coleman, 1984). There were

different formulas that were aired in dealing with the newly acquired status of Quebec as far as its relationship with Ottawa was concerned. There were calls for a special status, particular status, co-operative federalism, and others which could help to determine the new status of Quebec. It was felt that although Canada was taken as a country, it was not a country of ten provinces in which Quebec was one of the provinces but it was two nations with Quebec treated as an equal nation. In this case Quebec counted itself more than provinces and considered Canada less than a nation.

With the separate workers pension plan put in place, there was a room for rivalry between unions in the two regions. There was intense inter-union rivalry between FTO and CSN which accused each other of seeking government favor while dealing with some workers. Therefore the factor for proximity to the government proved to be a bit awkward. The continuing economical problems in Quebec forced some union leaders to shift to the ideological left and they envisaged socialist solutions to these problems.

By 1960s, most of the groups were restless and doubted resolution of any national or social question in peaceful manner. The youths who were faced by massive unemployment took to the movement used by Asian and African nations to seek independence from the colonialist and applied the same to the Quebec situation. They took it that Quebec was supposed to be an independent nation that has been colonized by Canada. Therefore they formed the FLO (Front de liberation due Quebec) with an imaged of fighting for Quebec to be set free (Rouillard, n. d.).

The group was serious about liberty their nation and their activities showed a growing difference between the two sides. For example, their first home made bombs were directed towards a military target in 1963. The bomb struck a depot and a recruiting center for the Canadian military (Trofimekoff, n. d.). They also targeted homes of loyal mail which were in the upper class and occupied by English Montreal Suburb. They took to terrorist activities and attacked working classes. They bombed shoe factory and a textile mill. The activities of the terror group turned worse when they kidnapped a British diplomat, James Cross and later kidnapped government official including a provincial ministry of labor. Their activities worried Quebecois.

All these activities had one aim in common. They were a long struggle for creation of an independent state of Quebec. The working class, the intellectual for the land, the terrorist groups like FLO, and the politician felt that Quebec must be taken as an independent state in a way that recognized its past. The social life of Quebec seemed very different from the life of the rest of Canada (Lemco, 1994). They wanted a state formed on the bases of their past and present which could preserve their distinctive identity created by French roots, Catholicism and French language which made it appear very different from the rest of the country. French Canadian wanted to be granted independence to enable them to participate effectively in the economic sun of North America. They felt that although Lesage had taken the right step towards that direction, the way he accommodated with Ottawa was a waste of time and there was need to have more autonomy granted through independence (Trofimekoff, n. d.).

Conclusion

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The social changes that led to other Quebec revolution cannot be taken as spontaneous but they were long historical process that had been overlooked by many people. There were also economic factors that set Quebec from the rest of Canada and which made them feel different from the rest. Therefore the revolution can be explained as a turning point that led to the self realization of the francophone Quebec to a modern society.

Although Quebec was not granted full independent as per the revolution, there were major development in the relationship between Quebec and Canada. The French Canadian were incorporated in the mainstream of the Canadian society and were not longer treated as before.

But this has had a lasting effect on the relationship between the two sides. Up to date there is still a battle of supremacy between Quebec and Canada. One of such area where they have been confliction is the flag which is manifested in the battle of symbols. There has been an unending war of symbols between the Quebec and Canadian nationalist since the end of the revolution (MacRae, 2008).

Though Quebec has remained to be a province of Canada, the Canadian nationalism has for a long time remained politically-incorrect in the province. The mapple leaf has turned to be a symbol of conflict between the two sides.

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