The people speak

Book answers what Quebec wants

Book review

by Shirley Whittington

Quebec: The People Speak is a formidable book both in size and scope, but it is required reading for any Canadian who has asked that stopworn question: "What does Quebec want anyway?"

The key to the puzzle is that Quebec comprises a wide variety of people, and this book presents almost as many points of view as there are people.

In 1977, Rick Butler, an Ottawa professor, writer and filmmaker travelled seven thousand miles through Quebec with his tape recorder and interviewed people from every walk of life—farmers, cab drivers, housewives, factory workers, pilots and businessmen. You may recognize some of the contributors—Laurier Lapierre, Michel Roi, Pauline Julien and Yvon Deschamps are included, but the majority of the contributors are the sort that one seldom hears from—except in tightly edited man-in-the-street interviews.

The Sun Life dilemma is echoed in miniature by a Jewish Montrealer who runs a small business.

"If I have to change my invoices, if I have to communicate with the government in French, that creates a problem.. and if I'm forced to put a francophone in an executive position because he's a francophone and I've other people who are more qualified, then I'm out. I just leave here."

Teacher Kevin Lane has lived in Canada 14 years, and considers himself a Quebecois.

"I thought the election was fantastic! I would prefer to go back to New Jersey than to go to Ontario. I have found some english speaking people have been terribly obnoxious...I have found this more on the part of English speaking people than French speaking people."

A Montreal ecomomist thinks that if Premier Rene Levesque loses the referendum (or the next election) and the Liberals are back in power, "Canada is in for a terrible shock. The Liberals will want a new constitution..there's a very good chance that the Quebec Liberals will declare independence and not the PQ."

He favours political independence and sees Quebec as a new country "in the form of the Ukraine, say within the new Canadian community...so we could get two countries in the United Nations and this would be a great benefit because we would have two votes."

Alain Corre is a teacher in Hull, who emigrated from France in 1972.

"I chose Canada over Australia because of the large francophone population. His comment on De Gaulles' 'Vive le Quebec libre' speech? I think he did that on purpose, he wanted to push the Quebecois a little bit, and to stir up the anglophones at the same time. He liked to shock people, he says.

Corre can't see Canada without Quebec.

"There are ways for the two communities to live close to each other without melting into one uniform mass."

An Aylmer housewife who favours independence refuses to speak English when she's shopping.

"If I want to live in French, I won't do it by speaking English...the other day I saw a sign 'Bilingual Waitress Wanted.' They have a nerve, to advertise for a bilingual waitress in English only!" she says.

Butler has included appendixes to his book which are valuable reference materials. Bill 101 is re-printed, and there is a chronology of Quebec-Canada relations, as well as a run down of the critical 76 elections, and an account of provincial second language programs.

Butler's conclusion is that the BNA Act is not inscribed in stone, and is in need of amendment today. His research for the book showed him how culturally isolated and threatened the French people on this continent feel.

"If we lose our bicultural character, we lose ourselves...there will always be some space between Canadians and Canadiens, but with understanding and compromise, that space need not become a wall."

Quebec: The People Speak is the kind of book that will improve understanding, and perhaps inspire a desire for compromise.

Quebec: The People Speak, by Rick Butler. 333 pages. Doubleday pub. $12.95.

String of car thefts

Midland OPP were kept busy this past weekend investigating a string of auto thefts.

The first auto theft incident they received report of occurred between midnight and 2:30 a.m., on April 1. Cyril Charlebois of Viel Street in Penetanguishene reported that he had abandonned his red and white 1973 Oldsmobile on Concession 16 of Tiny Township after it had a flat tire. He told police that he returned to the vehicle at midnight, and made sure that it was still secure.

Returning two and a half hours later, however, Mr. Charlebois discovered that it had been stolen.

Police say that the ignition keys had been left in the car.

On April 2, an OPP cruiser stopped a vehicle on Highway 69 on suspicion that it was an auto reported stolen from the Highwayman Inn in Orillia.

Police subsequently charged two adults and a juvenile with possession of stolen goods valued at over $200.

Police say that the three subsequently admitted under questioning to the theft of a citizen's band radio and a vehicle from the Bracebridge OPP area, and another auto from the Hamilton-Wentworth OPP area.

The two adults have been remanded to Barrie provincial court.

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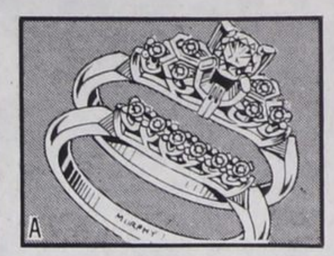

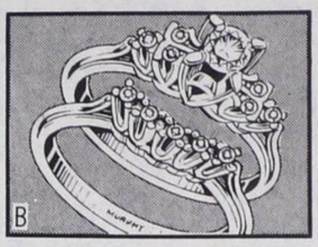

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