

Opinion

Signs of the times

It would appear from recent events in the province of Quebec that the prickly issue of French majority vs. English minority rights is no closer to reaching a compromise than it was 10, 20, or even 100 years ago.

In mid-December, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down several key aspects of Quebec's language law, Bill 101. (Among other things, this controversial piece of legislation banned the use of English or other languages on public and commercial signs in the province.)

Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa responded by negating the Supreme Court's decision and instead, introduced legislation that would require French-only signs outdoors while allowing French plus a second language on signs indoors.

Bourassa was constitutionally sanctioned to override both the Quebec and federal charters of rights and freedoms by invoking the so-called "notwithstanding" clauses in the charters, a provision guaranteed to the province under former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's revamped constitution.

In fairness to Bourassa, the Bill 101 issue—a legacy from former Parti Quebecois Premier Rene Levesque—was a no-win situation from day one. Defenders of Bill 101 say the right to ban English from signs in the province is at the heart and soul of their struggle to preserve their French culture. Opponents, on the other hand, say the bill denies their rights as a minority inside the province of Quebec.

One of the less vocal groups throughout the most recent storm of controversy has been the very group that will be the most affected by Bourassa's decision: small and medium-sized retailers in the province. And, according to a series of public opinion polls on the subject, an awful lot of people don't agree with the new legislation.

For example, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, whose membership approximates the demographics of Quebec (80 per cent francophone, 15 per cent anglophone and 5 per cent of neither French nor English mother tongue), found after surveying a portion of its members in that province, that 85 per cent of respondents agreed that French should be obligatory in Quebec, but that English should be allowed on signs.

Michel Decary, CFIB's director general in Quebec, says that although very few Federation members have a need to use English on store signs, those merchants in English majority areas of the province would like to have the choice of adding a second language.

And in another poll, Gallup found that 85 per cent of Canadians—including 61 per cent in Quebec—felt that bilingual commercial signs should be permitted in that province.

These results, along with similar others, indicate that Bourassa's decision to appease as many people as possible inside the province may not be working.

—CFIB Feature Service—
by Ann M. Smith

Letters

Says religion column one sided, opinionated

To the Editor,

I have just received my usual unsolicited copy of your paper the Independent/Free Press Week End. As is my custom I glance at the grocery store ads and browse through the real estate listings. As this paper concerns itself primarily with Georgetown and Acton news I usually move on to the column on religion. I assure you I read this feature only to see what a one sided and highly opinionated view is held each week by your writer.

I find that the column should be headed "Christian Religion" for your writer apparently allows for no other viewpoint to be stated. In a back issue I was quite perturbed to read what I considered to be very anti-semitic (anti Jewish) remarks, it certainly didn't surprise me to read these comments in a small town paper where almost all the community is white Anglo Saxon by heritage.

In today's column (vol. 3, no. 40) your writer spouts the same anti-Jewish drivel handed down through the centuries that "Those who do not believe His claim to be God are as much responsible for His death as those who cried crucify Him crucify him, 2000 years ago." Your writer goes on further to quote the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Patriarchs of the Jewish people.

I find this writer's remarks reprehensible and defamatory in view of our history of an open and tolerant society. In conclusion, I believe that this writer is expressing a view that if you are not Christian you are nothing and not only to me but to all open minded and tolerant people who want to keep open lines of communication not close them.

We are heading into the last decade of the century when I had hoped we would all tend to want to open lines of communication not hide behind doors of prejudice and ignorance.

David Yorke
RR 1, Acton



"... OH MY GOSH! THE CREDIT CARD BILLS FOR DECEMBER MUST HAVE COME IN...!"

Memories were made like this

Scores of press releases pass over this desk each week, all clamoring for special recognition. Sometimes they are marked "exclusive to weekly press", such as one which arrived recently.

Hockey—Are you playing a dangerous game? it enquires in capital letters. It goes on to note that every year young hockey players are blinded because they neglect to take simple precautions such as having the proper equipment.

Prepared by the Standards Council of Canada it maintains the cost of proper protection is low with helmets costing between \$32 and \$55 and masks \$20 to \$35. The alternative, of course, is taking a chance on head and eye injuries.

Of course, most youngsters playing hockey are required to have the equipment because the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association demands it be worn. But pick-up games on ponds and outdoor rinks of all kinds finds the kids usually just equipped with a stick and skates. Should they be wearing headgear, too?

The cautious probably think so but most kids playing outdoors for fun try and keep their sticks down and avoid the rough stuff associated with league games. Those who resort to dirty tactics are usually ostracized by the other kids.

Of course, accidents still happen. Last year alone 62 people experienced eye injuries on the ice and 11 were blinded in one eye in league games. None of them were wearing

certified masks.

When I see figures like these I wonder how my generation ever survived with so few injuries. Most of us couldn't afford even the equipment considered fundamental to every kid who steps on the ice today. And we were crazy about hockey. We played on ponds, rivers, roads, filter beds, big puddles and any place where there was a sheet of ice bigger than 2 x 4. We played after

Coles' slaw



HARTLEY COLES
Managing Editor

school, all day Saturday and as much of Sunday as we could escape the eyes of our parents.

We shovelled snow off every place we thought might be big enough for a game. Hockey sticks then were not laminated. They were one piece and cost anywhere from 15 to 25 cents. Some couldn't afford one. They carved their own out of tree roots. Or borrowed one from some player taking a rest.

Some couldn't afford skates. They played goal or winged it on their gumboots. Pucks? Anything from regulation to frozen "horse buns".

Protection? Just the clothes we wore every day.

Hockey wasn't so organized.

There were minor hockey teams or house leagues. Games were played Saturdays when there was ice at the big arena.

When there was ice? Yep. Just natural ice in those days. A winter like this one has been would create havoc with schedules. Sometimes when a warm spell hit they'd let us play with water on the ice. We'd create enough slush to dry the water up when it was scraped.

Remember the big scoops they used to clear off the ice between periods? No Zambonis then. Just rink rats with brooms and shovels. No flooding between periods. The ice was flooded at night when it was coldest, then used all day and night.

If it was extremely cold the rink manager might sneak a flood on before skating or evening games. But no one was allowed on the ice the day before an intermediate B hockey game.

Hockey schedules in the OHA then were only 10 or 12 games. Playoffs came next. No three out of fives or four out of sevens. The schedule and playoffs had to be worked in before Spring arrived, usually early in March. Two out of three or two games total goals was the norm.

Teams which won their group title usually had to play home games in city rinks where they had that marvel—artificial ice. Arenas like Galt's and later Guelph were used by teams here. It meant special trains, believe it or not, arranged in two or three days. Now it takes a

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