

THINKING ABOUT THE UNTHINKABLE: PLANNING FOR A POSSIBLE SECESSION

Reg Whitaker

The Québec Referendum of 1995 was a traumatic event in the life of the Canadian political community in a way that the earlier referendum of 1980 was not. There is a sense that after October 30 nothing will ever be the same again.

Little has changed on the surface of political debate, but in the depths there has been a tectonic shift. Now we *know*: Canada *could* break up. We came within a whisker of having to confront the most fundamental, and the most threatening, question that can face any community. The 1980 referendum indicated that Québec had a *right* to national self-determination, even as Quebecers chose decisively not to exercise that choice (that is, the rest-of-Canada awaited the choice of Québec voters, but left the initiative in their hands). The 1995 referendum indicated that Québec had the *will* and the *capacity* to break away, even as the sovereignists failed narrowly to go over the top. It is indisputable that something in the order of 60% of francophone Quebecers voted against Canada. What exactly they thought they were voting *for* is another question, to which there are probably innumerable answers, but the negative verdict is clear. What is just as clear is the resounding rejection of the sovereignty option by the non-francophone population of Québec: the anglophones and the Aboriginal peoples with virtual unanimity, the allophones with near unanimity. This too is a negative, not a positive, verdict. The result of October 30 is by any measure a very ugly one — an indecisive, divisive standoff of negativities.

The only uglier outcome would have been an equivalently paper-thin Yes victory with no federal guidelines whatsoever about where to go next, and the initiative resting firmly with the PQ on the one side armed with a single-minded action plan, and on the other, the equally single-minded Aboriginal peoples — especially the James Bay Cree — ready to

defy the PQ and appeal to Canada and international opinion to initiate their own secessions from the secession, thus initiating a chain of unpredictable events at the far end of which might be discerned the spectre of the former Yugoslavia. Even short of this, there would have been the prospect of an unprecedented degree of political and thus economic uncertainty and potential chaos. That this *could* have happened, and might very well happen in the near future, ought to be the signal for a searching self-examination by the rest-of-Canada of how it should begin to think about the unthinkable. The imminent prospect of hanging, it is said, concentrates the mind most wonderfully.

From the outset of the referendum campaign, it was obvious that, unlike 1980, the federalist side was labouring under severe disabilities. After Meech and Charlottetown, there could be no positive constitutional inducements, no 'renewed federalism', on offer. Indeed, when late in the campaign the Québec Liberals panicked and pushed Mr. Chrétien into throwing vague constitutional promises onto the table, it may have added to the momentum of the Yes vote. Lucien Bouchard shrewdly capitalized on the panic by pointing out that if even the *prospect* of a Yes vote could wring concessions from Ottawa, how much better a 'new partnership' could Québec achieve if it went ahead and actually voted Yes. Again, unlike 1980, the 1990s climate of fiscal restraint and anti-government conservatism, not to speak of heightened regional rivalries, forbade the use of positive economic inducements to persuade Quebecers of the value of continued federalism. The same climate of downsizing has also reduced the positive attraction of a national government seemingly intent on dismantling itself and eliminating those institutions and services that made 'Canada' meaningful to its citizens. Neither the prime minister nor the federal Liberal party has the kind of commanding presence

in Québec that Pierre Trudeau and his party held fifteen years ago. Indeed, for the first time, the majority of House of Commons seats from Québec are held by sovereignists. Given the lack of positive arguments for voting No, the Yes side held something of a trump card when it argued again and again that by voting No, Québec would be simply shooting itself in the foot in terms of negotiating with Ottawa.

Under these difficult circumstances, the only potentially effective weapon in the federalist armoury was negative: *fear* of the uncertainty entailed in a Yes vote. Until well into the campaign, it was the opinion of pollsters and political observers that in the absence of any apparent popular mobilization or passion for sovereignty, the conservatism of the electorate would translate into a fairly strong No vote. Once the Yes side surged ahead, there was no alternative but to move to outright threats of the dire consequences of a Yes vote.¹ This was hardly a pretty or ennobling prospect, but under the circumstances it was the only option left. Thus the spectacle of federal finance minister Paul Martin brandishing the wild figure of “one million” jobs lost in Québec.² But unlike in 1980, it appeared that intimidation no longer worked. Despite the threats, three out of five francophones voted Yes. Herein lies a powerful lesson for the rest-of-Canada (ROC) contemplating another referendum a few years down the road.

One million lost jobs was an exaggerated, self-destructing threat. But just because warnings are issued in the form of threats or are intended to intimidate does not mean they lack substance. No matter what the response from ROC, any conceivable transition to independence will be painful, both for Quebecers and Canadians. Objective reflection upon the likely reaction of international capital is, or ought to be, a sobering exercise. The microeconomic rationality of corporate investment suggests that in a context of sudden political uncertainty, risk averse behaviour is prudential. In very many cases, this will mean cutting potential losses and pulling out, or simply making decisions not to commit resources in the near future. In the globalized economy of the late 1990s, it is not as if investors lack alternatives. Nor do they lack the means to move very large amounts of money with devastating speed. The picture is, if anything, even bleaker from the perspective of the macroeconomic rationality of international capital — the general interests as opposed to the specific interests of individual corporate actors — embodied particularly in the actions of the New York bond

rating agencies. Of course, in the long run, capital will return to an independent Québec and a post-separation Canada (the opportunities will be too great to pass up). But it will return on the best terms it can get. This means maximizing the leverage that can be exacted by the infliction of short-term pain, on Québec and Canada alike. No matter how amicable or hostile the divorce, no matter how rationally or crazily the assets and liabilities are sliced up, the transition will likely be vicious.

Contrary to this picture, the PQ has for years assiduously worked the theme that the transition to sovereignty will be entirely risk free. In the *péquist* vision, a Yes vote will be like Star Trek’s transporter beam: Québec will be instantaneously whisked from federalism to sovereignty *intact*. Everything — society, economy, culture, the Montreal *Canadiens* — will be magically recreated just as they were, except that this time they will be topped by a *fleur-de-lis*. Everything, as the sovereignists stress with Freudian insistence, will be ‘*normal*’. If enough Quebecers choose to believe this soothing lullaby, and ignore the economic costs, there is little that ROC can do to dissuade them. We know from the 1995 campaign that threats did not work, may indeed even have rebounded against the federalists. Yet there is an intellectual sleight-of-hand involved in the PQ’s no-risk proposition, and there may be another way of pointing this out, without the offence to Québécois pride inevitably committed by Martin-style threats.

This sleight-of-hand is made passable by the *péquist* predilection for hyphenating sovereignty, or by adding a crucial plus sign, and by never leaving it as sovereignty full stop. The original preparatory movement leading to the foundation of the PQ was called the *Mouvement souveraineté-association* and the 1980 referendum asked Quebecers for a mandate to negotiate sovereignty-association. In 1995 Jacques Parizeau committed one of his many *faux-pas* by actually talking about sovereignty unadorned, but the combined forces of Mr. Bouchard and Mario Dumont soon shunted him onto a siding and went on to sell sovereignty *with* a new ‘partnership’.

Sovereignty equipped with hyphens or add-ons is obviously more reassuring and thus more saleable, but there is a crucial fallacy embedded in both the 1980 and 1995 questions. The government of Québec can ask its citizens if they wish to become sovereign, that is, to indicate a *will* to achieve sovereignty. The will to become sovereign is a unilateral expression and can be stated without reference to ROC. But

when that will is premised upon a particular response from ROC, indeed is *tied to* a particular political/economic arrangement with ROC (whether 1980 'association' or 1995 'partnership'), when electoral consent to sovereignty is only made possible by this imagined hyphen or link to ROC, we (both Quebecers and Canadians outside Québec) have a problem. The sovereignists have absolutely no business promising any specific kind of association or partnership or any other kind of relationship following independence, because they cannot deliver any such outcome. Any post-independence arrangement would be the result of negotiation. Negotiations take place between two or more parties, and as such, cannot be predicted or anticipated on the basis of the desires of one party without reference to the objectives, and, equally important, the bargaining strength of the other party or parties. Yet that is precisely the confidence trick twice played by the PQ on Québec voters. True, the deception was not quite as egregious in 1995, in that 'partnership' was more open-ended than the preposterous blueprint of 'association' offered in 1980, and the theoretical possibility was left on the table that such a partnership might not be achieved, leading to a unilateral declaration of independence. But in practice, Yes campaigners made it abundantly clear that Quebecers had every reason to expect Canadian consent and participation, on the PQ's terms. Lucien Bouchard's leading role in the campaign was announced, after all, by naming him the chief 'negotiator'; it was at this point that he began speaking of the Yes vote as a 'magic wand' that would fulfill the PQ's dream of a unilaterally defined 'partnership'.³

The errors embedded in this wishful thinking are almost too numerous to count. I would like to look briefly at a few. Negotiations, even in this peculiarly unilateral form, assume that the other party presents a united face, or at least is represented by an *interlocuteur valable*. In reality, there was no such unity in ROC. Despite Professor Robert Young's relatively optimistic scenarios,⁴ there would not even have been unanimity about whether a Yes vote (or how high a Yes vote) should trigger negotiations on secession, let alone how such negotiations should be conducted. Once that hurdle is passed, which can only be done by setting it aside for purposes of discussion, not resolving it, the even thornier question arises of *who* would negotiate and under what *authority*, and how any negotiated arrangements would be *ratified*. Many different interests would be contending on the Canadian side, in some cases with startlingly different

perceptions of *what* 'we' want. To complicate matters to the point of potential gridlock, any agreements with Québec could not possibly be separated from contending visions of how Canada-after-Québec should be constituted and how power should be distributed between national and provincial levels and between provinces. Now throw in the wild card of the Aboriginal peoples of Québec and their claims and link this to the inevitable spinoff of expectations and demands by Aboriginal peoples in ROC. Finally, add the dimension of international capital, and international speculators, who presumably will not be sitting still in respectful silence while Québec and Canada work out their problems. Quite a stew, but hardly a prescription for a quick and easy negotiation with an outcome so predictable and assured that it can be promised to Quebecers as an enticement to vote for sovereignty.

The difficulty for federalists lies in the speculative nature of any discussion of how ROC will react. Robert Young paints a generally optimistic picture, and tends to minimize the problems; Patrick Monahan,⁵ on the other hand, paints a deeply pessimistic picture, and tends to maximize the conceivable difficulties. Other scenarios range themselves between. The PQ has taken advantage of this uncertainty to largely define the outcome in the eyes of Quebecers on terms highly favourable to their project. English Canadians are passionless economic actors, they argue, they will act according to their bottom line. Present them with a business proposition that offers mutual advantage and they will quickly whip out their pens and sign on the dotted line. Uninterrupted trade and investment; the free movement of capital, goods, services and people across a new international boundary; common citizenship; the use of the Canadian dollar by an independent Québec; immediate Québec entry into NAFTA on identical terms to those given Canada; an amicable division of the debt and federal government assets; a swift and painless resolution of Québec Aboriginal status; the genial separation of the Canadian armed forces into two armed forces, etc.: *pas de problème*, everything is taken care of, everything is *normal*.

There are a number of questionable assumptions built into this line of reasoning. Are English Canadians as bereft of emotions, as lacking in the notorious fervour of nationalism, as this would imply? Are they so obviously oblivious to the effects of wounded self-esteem? Might they not lash out in anger, might they not be vindictive rather than accommodating? In their fury, might they not even

do things that would be economically irrational, that would hurt everyone, Quebecers and Canadians alike? Or, short of these possibilities, might they not react according to the maxim that revenge is a dish best eaten cold, and bargain coolly and hard for a result that would protect Canadian interests while forcing the new Québec state into an invidious position (for instance, by playing the Aboriginal card and insisting upon a partition of Québec territory)?

These are *possible* outcomes, but none have been given much, if any, credence among Quebecers, where the rosy scenarios of the sovereignists reign virtually unchallenged. I think there is a reason for this. Assumptions about English Canadians as passionless economic calculators go only so far. They do not explain why economic calculations would lead ROC to accord a breakaway Québec the degree of equality of status and bargaining leverage implied in the 'partnership' that it does not have while still a province in Canada representing less than a quarter of the population; or why Canada would be so deferential to Québec's claims, whether to territorial inviolability or to common citizenship or to Québec's interpretation of its share of the debt. There must be another, hidden, assumption at work.

Part of the answer to this puzzle may be glimpsed in the various surveys of Québec opinion over the past few years that reveal notorious confusion about what 'sovereignty' actually means. There are a substantial number of Quebecers who persist in believing that following 'sovereignty' they will continue to send representatives to the federal parliament and continue to receive federal government benefits. Of course, years of selling sovereignty with hyphens or add-ons have encouraged this muddle. But this represents a more serious misunderstanding than mere lack of clarity in defining political institutions. Political communities, whether unitary or federal, centralized or decentralized, require for their vitality and viability that citizens balance the recognition and protection of their rights with an acceptance of the mutual obligations implied in common citizenship. I accept that fellow citizens may hold claims on me, but at the same time I have reasonable expectations about their obligations to me. Mutual rights and obligations are a product of common membership in the community. If one party unilaterally breaks that bond, both the rights and obligations formerly entailed in that arrangement are dissolved. I do not hold equivalent obligations to people who stand outside my community (there are obligations that arise from common humanity, or membership in the

international community, but these are different, and less intense, than the obligations of common citizenship in the same national political community). Hence relations between Quebecers and Canadians from outside Québec will be radically transformed if Québec breaks the ties of political community.

As a Canadian, I recognize the validity of certain claims by Quebecers against me (say, the redistribution of my tax dollars as an Ontarian to Quebecers through equalization payments) because these are based upon a set of shared and reciprocal rights and obligations that come with common citizenship in the Canadian federation. I would, however, recognize no such claims against me on behalf of a Québec that had unilaterally broken the bonds of common citizenship. Following this break, Quebecers would be foreigners with whom relations would be regulated by treaties and other agreements, and by the usual customs and usages of relations between states on the international stage. In setting the terms of these relations, I would expect my government to bargain hard on behalf of my interests and the interests of my fellow citizens. I would hope that such negotiations would be conducted rationally and prudentially, and not so as to force agreements that were so invidious to the other party as to create the future conditions for unproductive backlash. I would also have to accept that some of my fellow citizens might not be exempt from motives of wounded pride and desire for retaliation, and that they too might have an influence on bargaining strategy. What I would not admit is that Quebecers could still claim the benefits of any residual sense of obligation on our part arising from former common citizenship. Yet this is, I think, precisely the hidden assumption that explains the sovereignists' scenarios of how such negotiations would turn out to their advantage. Even those sovereignists who really do want a break from Canada seem to have difficulty conceptualizing this break as clean and decisive. The transition to sovereignty will be risk-free because Canadians and Quebecers will continue to treat one another differently than they treat Germans or Mexicans. This is a questionable assumption on the part of sovereignists, but it has never been authoritatively questioned. Hence, the PQ's *vie en rose* is largely uncontested in Québec opinion.

The 'what, me worry?' strategy of the Chrétien Liberals (a strategy that collapsed like an evacuated balloon in the last desperate week of the referendum campaign) is not capable, or worthy, of resuscitation. Part of the problem is the generations-old discourse

of national unity that forbids as illegitimate any discussion of how ROC would or should respond to a vote for secession from Québec. This discourse had been accepted by all significant political actors in English Canada. The Prime Minister and his party obediently followed the dictates of the national unity gospel (after all, the Liberals had done more than anyone to shape and preach that gospel). Yet cracks had already begun to appear in the facade. It began with the appearance of Reform, as the second largest party outside Québec, with no commitment to national unity as defined by the older established parties. Reform insisted that a simple majority, even a 50%-plus-one vote would suffice to trigger negotiations for Québec's departure, while the Liberals waffled and refused any clear commitment.⁶ Then under pressure from alarming polls out of Québec, some of the premiers started talking about how they would react in the event of a Yes vote and what kind of negotiating positions might be expected. The problem with these statements, however, lay in their lateness and in their fragmented and incoherent message. The PQ simply heard what it wanted to hear and dismissed what it did not want to hear. Apparently, a large section of francophone opinion was carried along by this selective interpretation.

Selective hearing was also apparent in the sour and rather mean-spirited reaction of the sovereignists to the appearance in Montreal of tens of thousands of Canadians from outside Québec to bring the message to Quebecers that ROC wanted them to remain. To be sure, the sentimentality-without-content of the "My Canada Includes Québec" genre is easy to ridicule. There was nevertheless a remarkable quality to this movement, a spontaneity that is not diminished by the fact that airlines offered lowered fares. English Canadians had already shown during Meech and Charlottetown that they were fed up with the monopolization of constitutional questions by the political elites. Now many saw their country slipping away, and refused to let it happen without finding a way to make their voices heard. This was a genuine grass-roots expression of sentiment; the fact that this expression was warm rather than hostile toward Québec was a message of note to Quebecers about to cast their ballots. The sovereignist response — to diminish the impact by ruthlessly downsizing the numbers involved; to carp about "where were they during Meech" (thus ignoring all those outside Québec who had supported Meech); to charge that the rallies were in violation of Québec's law on referendum spending; to denounce 'outsiders' for interfering in an internal Québec matter — was not

only small-minded and petulant, but paradoxically revealing of a sovereignist double standard. They expect continued obligations by other Canadians toward them (as implied in the 'new partnership'), while at the same time insisting that ROC has no rights in relation to the making of a decision that will profoundly affect the whole of Canada. The decision Quebecers made on October 30, and the decision they will make in the almost inevitable event of a third referendum, is not just a decision affecting them alone. The economic consequences alone — let alone the psychic costs — of a Yes vote would have been very significant for all Canadians. The sovereignists cannot hold expectations of accommodative responses from ROC while denying Canadians outside Québec any legitimate role in the decision-making process.

This leads me to a policy prescription, preferably for immediate implementation. ROC should set up its own deliberative and consultative mechanism to produce clear and authoritative guidelines for its response to a future Yes vote and the acceptable terms of separation. The Reform Party has already shown the way with its terms, but this should not be left to the realm of partisan politics. Mr. Chrétien has already shown an admirable willingness to break with his own past pronouncements and move toward federal recognition of Québec's distinct society, a virtual constitutional veto for Québec, and the removal of at least manpower training to the provinces. But the way in which this is being done (holding strictly to moves within the power of the Liberal majority in Ottawa, and without consultation even with the premiers) has had negative political consequences, especially in the West, as well as a tepid response from the targeted group in Québec, the 'soft' nationalists. Moreover, residual national unity dogma continues to cripple Ottawa's responses: the bizarre suggestion from Mr. Chrétien that he could use the federal power of disallowance to block another referendum represents about as foolish and politically inept an approach as could be imagined. Paradoxically, however, the Prime Minister could take the initiative away from Reform by handing over responsibility to a democratic mechanism that would be more legitimate than any party or combination of parties.

The idea of a *constituent assembly* was raised in the run up to Charlottetown, and dismissed by the political elites. These same elites subsequently failed miserably to sell *their* package to Canadians. Perhaps the concept should be considered again. Or, if this presents insuperable practical difficulties, or is too

distasteful to sitting politicians, there is the alternative of a *commission* drawn up to be broadly representative of all regions and leading elements of civil society that would hold extensive public consultations, commission a wide range of studies from different perspectives, and then deliberate (preferably in public) to produce terms of separation acceptable to ROC. There are precedents for this form: the Bélanger-Campeau Commission and the regional and sectoral commissions called by the PQ in preparation for the sovereignty referendum. These were Québec mechanisms that sought the views of Quebecers only. Whatever precise device might be used in this case, it should be made clear that it is an attempt to find the authentic, democratic voice of Canada outside Québec. Perhaps provision should be made for popular ratification of the results, preferably prior to another sovereignty referendum in Québec.

A process like this would have a number of advantages. Quebecers would have before them an authoritative statement of just what they could expect if they do vote Yes. If the result were not to the PQ's taste, they could of course try to brush off this statement and claim that their own version of what English Canada thinks is more realistic. But they would have diminished credibility. Just as important, ROC would have given serious consideration to how they ought to respond and would be ready in the event to behave in a more coherent and concerted fashion than would have been likely in 1995 if the result had gone the other way. If there is a future Yes vote, a prior process such as I have described would presumably contribute to a more rational, orderly and far less dangerous transition. It would also lessen the degree of uncertainty and thus alleviate some (but certainly not all) of the potentially disastrous economic ramifications. Thirdly, such an assembly or commission would, *ipso facto*, not merely be formulating the terms of response to Québec, but would be laying valuable groundwork for how Canada-without-Québec would set about constituting itself. Perhaps the most serious charge that can be laid against the national unity gospel is the way that it consistently disabled English Canada from thinking about itself.⁷ As the last in a long line of prime ministers from Québec, all of whom have preached the national unity gospel both inside and outside their own province, perhaps it is time for Mr. Chrétien to recognize the need for Canadians outside Québec to define their own aspirations, in the face of the consistently stated preference of Quebecers to do the same thing, whether inside or outside Confederation.

There are objections to this course of action. National unity dogmatists deny legitimacy to any such exercise undertaken by Canadians without Quebecers. It is increasingly hard to sustain this objection in the face of the behaviour of Quebecers who have now held two Québec-only referenda (and even Charlottetown was a *separate* referendum in Québec), and who send a majority bloc of secessionist MPs to the federal parliament. A slightly more plausible argument is that such a process would be a self-fulfilling prophecy, that to discuss how secession could come about is to hasten that very eventuality, to make the unthinkable thinkable, thus doable. In response to this, one might note that the "hear no evil, see no evil" approach has not exactly slowed the progress of sovereignty. Indeed, one might argue the reverse: not discussing the response of ROC has left the field open to the partisan promises of the PQ and thus contributed to the risk-free mythology so prevalent in francophone Québec. Some of the leading voices who have in the past refused to countenance any discussion of a possible separation are now reconsidering the wisdom of their previous position.⁸

Perhaps the most telling objection is that if such a process were launched, it would quickly become apparent that ROC could not think in one mind and approach a common position. This is certainly a possibility. Another danger that must be faced arises out of the democratic deficit that plagued the Meech and Charlottetown processes and the deep populist distrust towards elites that characterizes English-Canadian opinion. Even a process that stands outside normal parliamentary channels can be infected by this distrust; however many honest attempts are made to widen the consultative process, there is no guarantee that the results will receive popular consent. The answer to these objections is simply that it would be better to get this dirty laundry on display before rather than after a Yes vote. In the latter case, the dangers would be intensified by disorder and uncertainty. If ROC is unable to formulate a common position in advance, it is unlikely that it will do so after the event. It is preferable that this be known.

We need not, however, take the pessimistic prognosis as given; the process has never been tried and the result cannot be confidently predicted. If it is tried, and fails, we will know the worst: that Canada-without-Québec is unlikely to hang together and that we can start thinking about alternatives. If it is tried, and works, it is a win-win situation: if it deters Québec, on rational grounds, from choosing sover-

eignty, the federation will not only have survived, it will have been strengthened; if Québec still chooses to leave, the process will be more orderly, predictable, and less likely to slip over into the chaos and violence that is all too familiar from other cases of secession.

Dotting the 'i's and crossing the 't's of how the country can be broken up is not a happy scenario. It is, however, better than desperately trying to cope with the rush of events after the dam has burst. It may even prevent the dam from bursting. □

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Endnotes

1. Prior to the campaign, I argued the scenario for a serene federal 'Plan A', followed by a panic-induced 'Plan B': Reg Whitaker, 'The National Unity Portfolio' in Susan D. Phillips, ed., *How Ottawa Spends: 1995-96* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995).
2. Alan Freeman, "Million Jobs in Peril, Martin Warns" *Globe and Mail* (18 October 1995) A1.
3. Tu Thanh Ha, "Yes No Picnic, Chrétien Warns" *Globe and Mail* (19 October 1995) A1.
4. Robert Young, *The Secession of Quebec and the Future of Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).
5. Patrick Monahan, *Cooler Heads Shall Prevail: Assessing the Costs and Consequences of Quebec Separation* (Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute, 1995).
6. Tu Thanh Ha, "PM May Not Co-operate If It's Yes" *Globe and Mail* (19 September 1995).
7. This is a point I argued at greater length in an article that appeared in the aftermath of Meech Lake: 'With or without Quebec' in J.L. Granatstein and Kenneth McNaught, eds., *"English Canada" Speaks Out* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1991) 17-29. It is also the theme of Philip Resnick's book, *Thinking English Canada* (Toronto: Stoddard 1994).
8. The best thought-out proposal so far for a process along the lines I am suggesting has come from Jeff Rose, the former deputy minister of intergovernmental affairs in the Ontario NDP government (see 'Beginning to think about the next referendum' Occasional Paper, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto, Nov. 21 1995, and a shorter published version in *Canada Watch* 4:2 (Nov/Dec. 1995) 17-19). Rose's former boss, Bob Rae, had adamantly refused to consider the question while premier, but in a recent article he argues: "We must be as well-prepared as Mr. Bouchard for the next referendum. That means a

much firmer position on what our common bargaining position would be in the event of a Yes vote. We cannot continue with the pretense that a Yes can't happen; it very nearly did. Quebeckers must go into the voting booth with a clear sense of what the consequences of their vote will be." (Bob Rae, 'The unfinished business of the Quebec Referendum' *Globe and Mail* (12 December 1995) A17). See also Jeffrey Simpson, 'Federalists need a Plan B to show to secessionists in the future' *Globe and Mail* (5 December 1995) A20.

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