

**CLAUDE
RYAN**

Liberal Values in Contemporary Quebec

A historical perspective
on the role played by the Quebec Liberal Party
in the development of Quebec,
past and present

FOREWORD BY **JEAN CHAREST**
Premier of Quebec

REVISED
EDITION



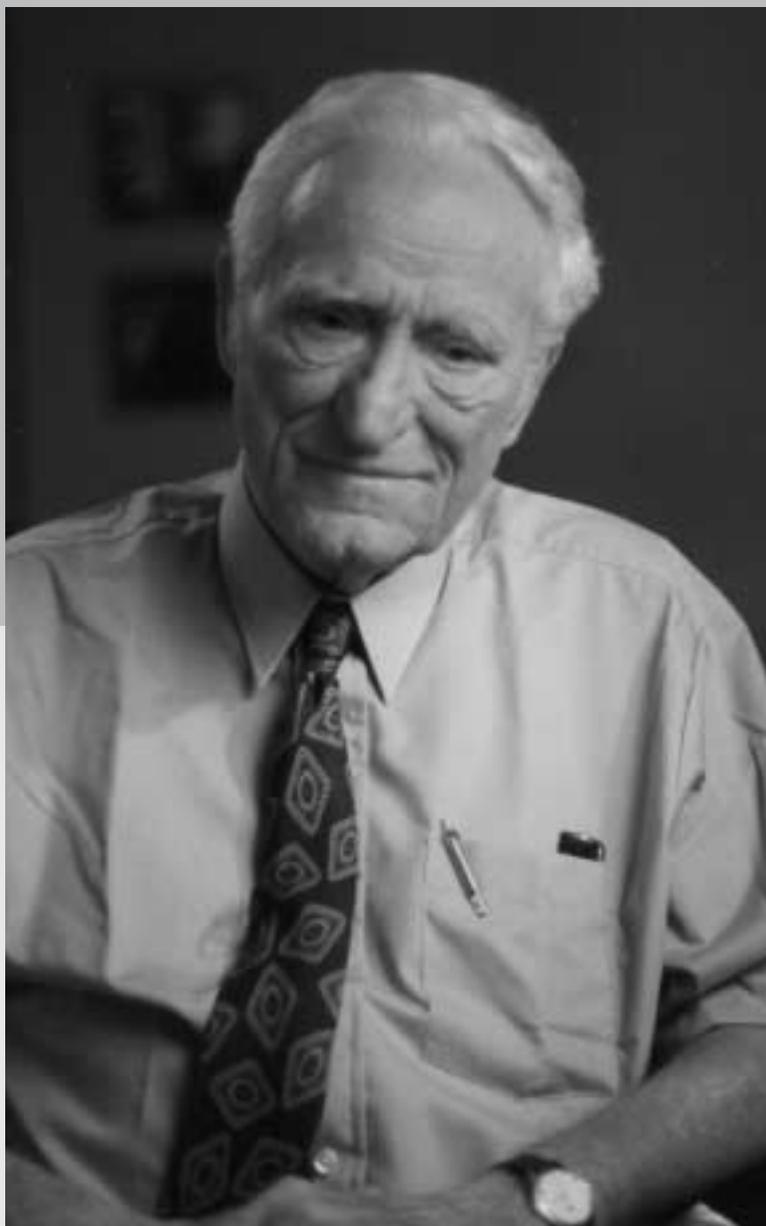
Parti
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Québec

CLAUDE RYAN

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(Revised edition)



CLAUDE RYAN
1925-2004

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Preface

DEEP-ROOTED VALUES THAT SHAPE OUR ACTION

When I suggested to Claude Ryan that he share with us his reflections on the values and accomplishments of the Quebec Liberal Party and what distinguishes it from the other Quebec political parties, I knew I had turned to the right person. Throughout his entire public life, as national secretary of the Action catholique canadienne, as editor-in-chief of *Le Devoir*, as leader of the Quebec Liberal Party and as a minister in the cabinets of Robert Bourassa and Daniel Johnson, Claude Ryan continually demonstrated an abiding interest in the principles and actions that guide human action in general and political action in particular. With this insightful, rigorous essay, he has given us a stirring homage to the core values that have bound Quebec Liberals together as a family, from the latter half of the 19th century until the present time.

The party of freedoms

If the Quebec Liberal Party is the only Quebec political party that has managed to span the generations, the reason is that it has always defended the values and goals that not only met the needs and aspirations of Quebecers but that also reflected who they were. Quebecers are profoundly

liberal, in the humanistic meaning of the word. Never have they been swept up in racism or sectarian nationalism; never have they glorified the state to an undue degree; never have they approved acts of violence or anarchy. This is the lesson shown by the crises we have undergone in the 20th century—World Wars I and II, the October crisis of 1970, as well as the various constitutional crises—all of which had the potential for seriously disturbing the foundations of our democracy. Out of their love of freedom, Quebecers opted for the constructive alternative.

In the word “Liberal,” there is the word “liberty.” As the party of individual freedoms and, by extension, collective freedoms, as Claude Ryan so ably explains, the Quebec Liberal Party has governed Quebec for more than two thirds of the 20th century. It is thus no exaggeration to speak of a “Liberal century” only recently concluded. Great leaders such as Godbout, Lesage and Bourassa clashed above all with the conservatism of yore and its hostility to individual freedoms and social progress; so doing, they literally moulded Quebec around the core values of freedom: universal suffrage; the creation of non-confessional school systems and the transfer of social and welfare missions from the Church to the Quebec government; compulsory education; free, universal social programs; as well as the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*.

At all times, a hallmark of Liberal political action has been its determination to allow citizens to fully exercise their individual freedoms, while also taking care to prevent this founding notion from veering off into unwholesome individualism. Claude Ryan explains that quite to the contrary, the Quebec Liberal Party believes that individual

freedoms must carry within them the kernel of solidarity, because only a citizen with free choice can choose others.

The party of Quebecers

Since the disbanding of the Union nationale and until only recently, the Parti Québécois was, and remains, the main adversary of the Quebec Liberal Party. The outgrowth of a dissident wing of the Liberal Party, the Parti Québécois has developed around a single idea: the sovereignty of Quebec. This quest for a nation-state has given rise to a series of socialistic policies sharing the characteristic of giving the government a prominent role in Quebec's economic and social development, all as part of a thinly veiled effort to promote the cause of sovereignty. As the result of devising policies according to the dictates of this cause, some aspects of Quebec have been strengthened but at the same time, its government has become overweight and undereffective, its citizens the most heavily taxed in North America.

By comparison, the Quebec Liberal Party has never been the party of a single idea. Its "cause," as it were, has always been the economic and social progress of Quebec. According to this pragmatic perspective, Canadian federalism, with its pooling of risks and opportunities, stands out as the environment most conducive to our fullest development.

Thanks to its firm but constructive attitude, the QLP has succeeded in causing the Canadian federal system to evolve in the direction of the interests of Quebec and has contributed to its advancement as well as Canada's. On this point, I wholeheartedly agree with Claude Ryan when he asserts that the Quebec Liberal Party has

achieved more through negotiation than all the other political parties have through fruitless confrontations. Even in difficult times, this ongoing appeal to Quebecers' reason is a Liberal attitude of great dignity.

The party of progress

The QLP has always promoted the economic development of Quebec and, to that end, it has resolutely equipped our society with powerful economic tools such as Hydro-Québec, the Caisse de dépôt et de placement or the Société générale de financement. “Maîtres chez-nous” – Masters in Our Own House – proclaimed Jean Lesage when implementing the reforms designed to patriate major economic levers, in particular for the benefit of Francophones.

We have Robert Bourassa to thank for launching the huge James Bay projects, the crowning jewel of Quebec's hydroelectric legacy, and his ministers for developing policies promoting the growth and expansion of the high technology industries that are today one of the most dynamic poles of our economy.

With its strong attachment to the principle of social justice, the Quebec Liberal Party has also striven to assure all citizens equality of opportunity and easy access to education and healthcare. It also created Quebec's education ministry, invested massively in schools and institutions of learning at all levels and in all regions, and helped make higher education available to the greatest possible number of citizens. It also set up a hospitalization insurance and health insurance fund. It created Quebec's cultural affairs ministry and the Conseil des arts et des lettres in order to

promote both the growth of culture in Quebec and access to culture for all. Finally, it set up the Quebec Pension Plan and adopted numerous income assistance measures. All in all, it is an outstanding track record that proudly testifies to our values.

The ambitions our party holds for Quebec are just as bold and impressive as those expressed in the slogans of “Masters in Our Own House” by Jean Lesage in 1962, “100 000 Jobs” by Robert Bourassa in 1970 or “Maîtriser l’avenir” [Mastering the Future] in 1985.

As Claude Ryan has so aptly pointed out, our work should, first and foremost, draw on the values that have always driven our party—the same values that have been the source of the most significant accomplishments of modern-day Quebec, in social, economic, institutional or cultural terms.

From Godbout, who met the threat of fascism head on and give women the right to vote, and who, moreover, changed the way justice was generally understood in Quebec, through Jean Lesage, who firmly captained the building of a modern government, and on to Robert Bourassa, who enabled Quebecers to rank among the great hydro engineers of the world, the Quebec Liberal Party has played an instrumental role in all of Quebec’s great leaps forward.

Down through the eras, and through the great leaders who marked them, the Quebec Liberal Party has shouldered a historic responsibility for change and renewal. For the Quebec Liberal Party, it is no sacrilege

to challenge the status quo: it is a government's inherent duty to do so. Indeed, it is a government's foremost responsibility to cast aside outdated customs so Quebec stays in step with its time, seizes its opportunities and successfully confronts change.

With the 21st century only just beginning, we are, as Liberals, being called to a new encounter with our history. It is now up to us to remodel the government that we ourselves once built. This government, justifiably a source of great pride, was designed prior to the advent of globalization, the deployment of new information technologies and the phenomenon of an ageing population. This blueprint was drafted in another time, for another populace. Today, we must recast our great collective apparatus so it meets the needs of Quebecers today, with the means and technologies of today. That is how we will be able to forcefully and confidently claim our place among the best societies in this new century.

There are challenges facing us. We must take charge of our public finances and adapt our social services to our ageing population. We owe our mothers and fathers, the builders of our unique society, a healthy old age; we owe our young people, the up and coming generation, a world-class education, because knowledge is the root of future growth. We must promote autonomy in our regions, supporting regional initiatives rather than centralized solutions. We must ensure Quebec's energy security and conceive of our energy potential within a continental framework.

We are on the eve of a sweeping redeployment of the main creative and driving forces of Quebec. Once again,

Quebecers have turned to the Quebec Liberal Party to ensure the success of this enterprise.

The values that inspired us in the past still inspire us today: protection of individual freedoms; primary identification with Quebec; economic development and social justice; respect for social, economic and community partners; the advancement of democracy; as well as ties to the Canadian federation and active participation in its workings.

As noted by Claude Ryan, these values must be taken together; we cannot just pick and choose the ones we happen to view as being most convenient to us.

The following thought piece makes us aware that the Quebec Liberal Party has contributed like no other party to the birth and development of a modern Quebec and that this contribution has, throughout our recent history, grown out of a profound commitment to values both just and legitimate.

These values, so deeply rooted in our past, remain our key for a wide-open future whose challenges we meet with enthusiasm and commitment, never forgetting, as some people apparently hope to, that politics is above all a desire to change society for the better.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jean Charest". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a large, stylized "C" for "Charest".

Jean Charest

Leader of the Quebec Liberal Party

Introduction

The origins of the Quebec Liberal Party can be traced to the beginning of the government that the *Act of Union* set up in 1840, shortly after the troubles of 1837-1838. This system of government united Lower and Upper Canada under the authority of a single parliament. At the time, the population of Lower Canada was greater than that of Upper Canada. Despite this fact, each province was given equal representation in the new parliament. Inspired by Lord Durham's Report, which recommended the gradual assimilation of French-speaking Lower Canada into a country whose dominant language was to be English, the *Act of Union* was badly received in Quebec. Many hoped that Quebec would refuse to participate in the new system. This was not the opinion of the leader of French-Canadian Reform Party, Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine. He felt that instead of ignoring the new constitution, better results would be obtained by working within it. A remarkable alliance was set up between the reformers of Lower Canada, led by LaFontaine, and those of Upper Canada, led by Robert Baldwin. From this alliance grew two reforms that the *Act of Union* had made nearly impossible: the use of the French language during the first speech made by LaFontaine in parliament in 1841, and the coming of responsible government under the Governor, Lord Elgin, in 1848.

In addition to its adherence to constitutional pragmatism, the party that LaFontaine founded was marked by its attachment to liberty, its desire to reform political institutions and its openness to debates within its ranks. Starting in the decade which followed the *Act of Union*, the party fell prey to deep tensions between those who held moderate positions and those who proposed a more radical nationalism in constitutional matters. In the years which preceded Confederation, the party was dominated by elements more sympathetic to Louis-Joseph Papineau's views than those of LaFontaine. In 1865, under the leadership of Antoine-Aimé Dorion, the party opposed confederation. Dorion held that the proposed structure would subject Quebec to the will of the English-Canadian majority. He favoured a regime which was close to what we would call today sovereignty-association. Subsequent to Confederation in 1867, and under the influence of Wilfrid Laurier, the Liberal Party immersed itself in the Canadian experience. At this time, provincial and federal politics were not as divided as they are today. They were linked together, and one passed easily from provincial to federal politics and vice-versa.

Since the end of the 19th century, two principal currents have dominated Quebec politics: the "Rouge" tendency, represented by the Liberal Party, and the "Bleu" tendency, first represented by the Conservative Party, then by the Union Nationale and more recently by the Parti Québécois. While both sides affirmed their commitment to Quebec, the leaders of the two groups generally presented different visions of the development strategy best suited for Quebec in a country and a continent dominated by English culture. The "Bleus" stressed the necessity to defend and reinforce the Quebec identity inside

Quebec's borders and to promote the greatest power to manoeuvre for Quebec, at times through greater autonomy within the Canadian federation, at times through political separation. The "Rouges" stressed individual rights and freedoms, the importance of being open to and participating in the Canadian federation, and the confident acceptance of the growing diversity that was marking Quebec.

Between 1867 and 1935, the Liberal Party had as its principal rival the Conservative Party. After a long series of defeats at the hands of the Liberals, the Conservative Party was replaced in 1935 by the Union Nationale, a coalition formed of Conservatives and former Liberals from the reform and nationalist wings of the party. The Union Nationale was in turn replaced, starting in 1970, by the Parti Québécois, made up of militant sovereigntists who were joined by elements of the Union Nationale and the Liberal Party who were won over to the cause of sovereignty and attracted by the reform platform of the PQ. Up until the arrival of the Action Democratique formed by Liberals who were disappointed with their party after the rejection of the Allaire Report, and by people drawn to its right-wing reform platform, the battle for power from 1970 to our present day was fought between two parties occupying almost the entire political arena, the Liberal Party and the Parti Québécois.

Winner of the 1939 election, the Liberal Party had the difficult task of governing Quebec during the Second World War from 1939 to 1944. As the conflict grew, Canada was called upon to strengthen its commitment to its allies. Recalling the solemn promises made by federal Liberal politicians, nationalist circles opposed any intensification of the war effort and especially the imposition of compulsory



ADÉLARD GODBOUT

He gave women the right to vote

military service. Notwithstanding this opposition, the Liberal government of Adélard Godbout believed that the war threatened the future of freedom and of civilization itself. It unhesitatingly supported Canada's role in the war effort. It also accepted fiscal arrangements which aimed to give the Federal government the additional resources needed to finance the war effort. These decisions were mercilessly attacked by its adversaries in the years that followed. Sixty years later, we must recognize that Godbout was right in his assessment of what was at stake during the Second World War. But due to the controversial decisions he had to take, he was the object of severe criticism in Quebec. Maurice Duplessis criticized Godbout for not being firm enough in his defence of the interests of Quebec. As demagogical

as such accusations were, Godbout was unsuccessful in restraining their impact. Towards the end of the war, in 1944, the Liberal Party was sent into opposition by the Union Nationale.

Re-elected by wide margins in 1948, 1952 and 1956, the Union Nationale government became increasingly a regime in the image of Maurice Duplessis. Backed by a powerful electoral machine, Duplessis ruled with an iron hand for 16 years. The reign of the Union Nationale appeared to be headed for more victories when suddenly, in 1959, its leader died. The next year, the Liberals were returned to office.

Since 1960, the Union Nationale governed Quebec for four years (1966-1970). The Parti Québécois has formed the government for over 17 years (1976-1985, 1994-2003). The Liberal Party has been in power for 21 years. In addition, when not in power, the Liberal Party has always formed the Official Opposition.

Chapter 1

Liberal Values

The values that underpin the Liberal Party stem for the most part from the key word that has shaped the party for more than a century, the word “liberal.” The Liberal Party holds this word in great esteem. It has been in use for more than a century, because it captures the spirit of the party. To be a liberal, according to the dictionary, is to be a person who is a friend of everything that is worthy of a free spirit; welcoming towards ideas in general, including ideas different from one’s own; open to new experiences and to broadening one’s horizons; open to dialogue, tolerant, generous, sensitive to the needs of the less fortunate; committed to the fundamental equality of all human beings which prevails over any discrimination. To be a liberal in politics is to put into practice the traits of the liberal spirit. It is especially to be open to the values of freedom, justice and democracy; to be committed to public discussion of issues and to transparency in the management of public affairs. In politics as in any other area of activity, to be narrow, mean-spirited, sectarian, doctrinaire, jealous, cultish, attached to the established order, enclosed by preconceived notions, mistrustful of liberty and opposed to progress, is to be opposed to the liberal spirit.

The word “liberal” refers first to the individual. It has been used for many years to glorify individual values to the exclusion of broader values. But the individualistic side of the liberal idea has been enriched by the addition, since the

time of Georges-Emile Lapalme, leader of the Liberal Party from 1950-1958, of a “social” component which is just as important. For the Liberal Party, the freedom and growth of the individual remain the principal objective of political activity. But an individual can only flourish within a society which offers a great deal but also expects a great deal from the individual. “To be a liberal,” wrote Georges-Emile Lapalme, “is to be socially just.” In other words, to be liberal is to work for both the progress of the individual and that of society.

It is not enough to claim to be liberal in spirit. Anyone who is involved in politics must seek to put this spirit at the service of values capable of advancing individual freedoms and the common good of the society. Subject to nuances or the addition of other considerations, the values of the Liberal Party can be summed up under seven headings. These are the primacy of individual freedoms; the identification with Quebec; the emphasis on economic development; the commitment to social justice; respect for civil society; the attachment to democracy; and the sense of belonging to the Canadian federation. We are speaking of values and not abstract principles or dry doctrines. Values are based on principles, obviously, but they refer to principles embodied in action and society, not to proposals estranged from reality. Because we know, either through intuition, or through experience, or through reflection, that these values are essential, we are prepared to defend at great cost the values which we cherish. But we do not need to affirm or show them at every instant. The values described in this essay form a whole. It is together, and not separately, that they give the Liberal Party its own distinctive shape. It is out of the question to only keep the values one approves and to discard the rest.

Chapter 2

Individual Freedoms

As its name suggests, the Liberal Party first accords attention to the values which relate to freedom. Whether it is a draft bill or a regulation or a government program, the first concern of a liberal spirit is to ensure that the proposal does not contain any unjustified restriction of individual freedom. In the Liberal view, for any limitation of freedom to be acceptable, it must be justified by a greater good, which must be established conclusively.

This attachment to individual freedoms goes back to the days of LaFontaine. But it should not be confused with the rigid doctrines put forward by liberal parties of the European model. In this regard, the Liberal Party represents values drawn from three different traditions, the continental European tradition, which stresses the doctrine of the supremacy of the individual and the values of reason and of progress; the British tradition, which stresses political freedoms; and the American democratic tradition, which attempts to reconcile individual rights and social rights.

The prejudice of the Liberal Party in favour of freedom was shown at the time of the numerous changes which occurred during the Quiet Revolution. Following the Liberal victory in 1960, an atmosphere of liberation spread through educational institutions, the media, cultural bodies and trade unions. In most areas of social activity, the controls that had been in place for a long

time gave way to a nearly unlimited permissiveness. The end of movie censorship, the lawful extension of the trade union movement into the health and education sectors, and the transfer of most of these institutions from the private to the public sectors, illustrate the winds of freedom which were blowing in Quebec.

The Liberal Party was the principal architect of the changes which led to the recognition of the equality of men and women in Quebec society. This started in 1940, when Adélar Godbout set aside objections from church authorities and gave women the right to vote. Later on, under Jean Lesage and Robert Bourassa, the equality of the rights and obligations of men and women in marriage were set out in the *Civil Code*.

The equality of the rights of spouses in sharing the assets at the end of a marriage was also affirmed in a law adopted by a Liberal government. More recently, the Liberal Party was the first party to put in its program the recognition, for civil purposes, of a union between individuals of the same sex.

The Liberal Party commitment to individual freedoms found its fullest, most enduring, and richest expression in the adoption, in 1975, of the Quebec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* by a Liberal government led by Robert Bourassa. Rights and fundamental freedoms; political rights; equality of rights; judicial rights; economic and social rights; all the rights that are usually found in this type of document are protected in the Charter. The Charter enjoys an exceptional status. It takes precedence over all other laws. In addition, the Liberal Party always supported the principle of inserting a *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* into the Canadian Constitution. In 1980, it supported this idea in the *Livre Beige*. If it has never given its

assent to the *Constitution Act* of 1982, it is not because of objections to the content of the Canadian Charter, but because of the unilateral manner, injurious towards Quebec, that was employed to adopt the *Constitution Act* in 1982. The position of the Liberal Party is different from that of the Parti Québécois, which rejects the Canadian Charter because it rejects the country called Canada.

While recognizing the necessity of protecting the French language through legislation, the Liberal Party has always been of the opinion that the *Charter of the French Language* must, barring exceptional reasons, be applied while respecting individual rights and freedoms. When a major conflict arose between the two charters as regards commercial signs and company names, the Liberal Party took a position opposite that of the Parti Québécois. The Canadian courts and the UN Human Rights Committee had concluded that certain provisions of the language charter were incompatible with the freedom of speech guaranteed by the Quebec *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Liberal government of the day allowed itself five years to review the situation, as allowed under the Quebec and Canadian Charters of Rights. At the end of this period, in 1993, it amended the language Charter in a way that respected the Quebec and Canadian charters of rights and freedoms. But the Parti Québécois voted against this legislation.

In addition to promoting individual freedoms, the Liberal Party has often been called upon to examine the collective rights and freedoms of groups of citizens. Not content to see their individual rights and freedoms recognized, many people want to see their rights recognized as members of an association or a group of persons. The trade union movement offers the best example of this kind of

claim. Workers feel that their collective rights should be legally recognized and protected so as to be on equal footing when negotiating their working conditions with employers. There are other forms of collective rights, including educational rights recognized for official language minorities in the *Constitution Act* of 1982 and the legislative powers that were conferred upon the National Assembly on behalf of the people of Quebec within the Canadian federation. Generally the Liberal Party has supported the recognition of certain collective rights. However, collective rights are more acceptable when they exist as an extension of recognized individual rights and when they are exercised in a way that does not suspend or reduce individual freedoms, except where these limits are reasonable and can be defended before the courts.

Liberal governments have not hesitated to curb abuses which can result from the unbridled use of collective rights, especially in the area of labour relations. Under Robert Bourassa, in particular, many labour stoppages paralyzed the operations of essential public services in crucial areas including policing, fire protection, health-care, hospitals, education, and the civil service. On several occasions, the National Assembly was forced to intervene to send striking workers back to work, under the threat of serious penalties if the legislation was not obeyed. The exercise of collective rights in these cases had gone beyond acceptable limits. The Parti Québécois, when it sat in opposition, generally voted against these special laws. In power, however the PQ was obliged to force through special emergency legislation in order to put an end to labour conflicts which threaten the public interest.

Chapter 3

Identification with Quebec

The Liberal Party emerged from the Second World War with its “Quebec credibility” weakened. After colliding with major segments of public opinion, it became necessary to convince the public that the party’s first commitment was towards Quebec. This challenge fell to Georges-Émile Lapalme (1950-1958) and Jean Lesage (1958-1970). Lapalme and Lesage were active in federal politics before coming to Quebec. They had to struggle to dissociate the Liberal Party from the image of subjugation to a federal big brother that had been created by their adversaries. Their efforts were not in vain.

First, Lapalme and Lesage undertook to give the Liberal Party participatory and management structures that were



GEORGES-ÉMILE LAPALME
Father of the Quiet Revolution

completely distinct from the federal Liberal Party. In 1956, the Liberal Party became legally and politically distinct and autonomous from the Quebec section of the Liberal Party of Canada. Membership in each party is open, and as a result many people may belong to both parties. However, each party has a life of its own, its own autonomous and distinct structures, its own objectives, and its own ways of functioning, which often are very different. The Quebec Liberal Party derives its legitimacy from the will of its own members, who hold regular meetings. It elects its leaders democratically. It sets its own goals, without suffering outside interference.

Second, it was necessary to establish independent financing to place the Liberal Party on solid footing. During the time of Jean Lesage, there were still overlapping fundraising activities for the federal and provincial parties. There were even individuals who on occasion felt mandated to solicit funds for both parties. But this practice disappeared a long time ago. In 1980, the “No” campaign in the referendum was entirely financed by the Quebec Liberal Party with funds it collected from the public. The Liberal Party of Canada did not contribute any money to the campaign. Acting in conformity with Quebec legislation on the funding of political parties, the Liberal Party, with the support of its members and sympathizers, is responsible for its funding year after year. The party belongs to its members, and to no one else.

But the most important change brought about by Georges-Émile Lapalme, Jean Lesage, Robert Bourassa and the other leaders of the Liberal Party over the past half-century has been at the level of ideas and aims for the party. While remaining federalist, the party has identified itself more closely with the needs and expectations of the

people of Quebec. It has dedicated itself to developing a greater understanding of their needs and hopes. Above all, it has sought to translate these needs into constructive proposals which focus on the interests of Quebec and its citizens. From this work have emerged new expressions such as “the state of Quebec,” “Quebec, a distinct society,” “special status,” “opting out,” and “renewed federalism,” which are now part of our current political vocabulary.

Quebec is a society with a vast territory. It encompasses many regions, each having its own history, culture, model of economic and social development, particularities, and most importantly, its own problems and aspirations. A major challenge for the Liberal Party has been to identify with each region. This has not been easy, since the party has traditionally drawn its strength from the solid support it receives in the metropolitan region of Montreal. However, the four victories of Robert Bourassa in 1970, 1973, 1985, and 1989, as well as the recent victory of Jean Charest in April, 2003, were won with the support of large majorities in most regions outside Montreal. When armed with enlightened leadership which is willing to listen, a program adapted to their needs, and candidates with solid roots in their communities, the Liberal Party is able to win the confidence of the regions.

The identification with Quebec starts with an identification with its French-speaking majority. This presumes that the party reflects the aspirations of this majority, as well as its history, its language and its culture, its institutions, its way of life and its particularities. The Liberal Party has recognized the distinctive character which its French-speaking majority has given to Quebec society, and has pledged to vigilantly and constantly affirm and defend the French character of Quebec, and to be a party

that is preponderantly French-speaking, without causing prejudice to the equality of rights of all its members. It recognized this important majority by making the French language the official language of Quebec, in Bill 22 in 1974, by stressing the quality of French language instruction in our school system and by favouring the rise of the French language in all sectors, especially in the economic sector, where dynamic and able French-speaking leaders are increasingly to be found.

Quebec also includes an English-speaking community, which has its own solid historic roots. This community maintains an important network of institutions of excellent reputation in the economic, health, social service, education, cultural and communications fields. Its members are present in virtually all sectors of activity. Given its long record of working with the English-speaking community, the Liberal Party recognizes and respects its rights, and ensures that its institutions receive equitable treatment. The Party includes several anglophone members in its caucus in Quebec City. The members of the anglophone community are full citizens in the eyes of the party. They stand before the law with the same rights and responsibilities as all other citizens.

Quebec also is part of a country where two languages, English and French, are recognized as having equal status at the federal level. Canada has a million francophones who are a minority in the provinces and territories that have English-speaking majorities. In this Canadian context, the Liberal Party cannot condone an attitude of distrust, even hostility towards the English language or adopt an attitude which treats English as a foreign language, comparable to Spanish, German or Russian. Quebec is situated on the North American continent, where

English dominates. Some see this situation as a danger leading to assimilation, against which Quebec must be protected by restrictions of all sorts. The Liberal Party sees this situation more as a challenge which requires a positive response. This response must be based on the clear acceptance of a double-rule of excellence, whereby Quebecers must excel in their first language, French, and in a second language in which they must be able to communicate effectively. From this necessity stems the importance of working, as Liberals, with the support of parents and against the intransigent opposition of our adversaries, to ensure the improvement of English second language instruction, and the fair recognition of the place of the English language in Quebec collective life.

We cannot ignore the presence of eleven First Nations in Quebec (Abenaki, Algonquin, Atikamekw, Cree, Huron, Innu, Malecite, Micmac, Mohawk, Naskapi and Inuit). There are 75,000 people of aboriginal identity in Quebec. To this number must be added at least 50,000 native persons living off the reserve. The First Nations each have their traditions, their culture, and their history solidly rooted in Quebec soil. They insist on the recognition of their identity and the acceptance of the rights and freedoms they feel are due them. The Liberal Party has on many occasions recognized the legitimacy of the aspirations of the First Nations to a substantial measure of self-government. In office, it favoured negotiated agreements to this end. The *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* was a first major step in this direction. It was followed by many other initiatives, taken up by subsequent governments both Liberal and Parti Québécois. The Liberal Party has supported these recent initiatives.

Finally, Quebec has been a receptive society to thousands of immigrants. Far from being fearful of these newcomers, Liberal governments have traditionally welcomed high levels of immigration, in a spirit of openness. The Liberal Party hopes that immigrants integrate into the life of society. But it accepts that they will do so at their pace, and not that which is set by bureaucrats or politicians. It accepts as well that this integration will be achieved with the active co-operation of the cultural communities. It is proud to count in its ranks, at all levels, many members of the cultural communities. The latter have several of their members in the Liberal caucus in Quebec City.

The Liberal Party, through its acceptance of diversity and its long experience with the English-speaking community and the cultural communities, is better prepared than any other party to facilitate the harmonious emergence, in today's context, of a Quebec that must remain vigilant so that French remains the dominant language, but where an emerging characteristic will be a growing multiplicity of origins, of cultures and of opinions. As a result, cultural policies will increasingly have to be developed and applied with understanding and moderation. A clear difference exists in this regard between the Parti Québécois and the Liberal Party in the use each make of the word "nation." The Liberal Party readily accepts that Quebecers form a nation in the cultural and sociological sense of the word. But aware that even designating this reality inside Quebec, the word "nation" has created more than one misunderstanding, the Liberal Party avoids using this term in a way that could be understood to set apart the French-speaking majority from the other communities which make up Quebec society. It avoids oppos-

ing the “Quebec nation” and the “Canadian nation” as if the word “nation” had the same meaning in both cases. In the view of the Liberal Party, the “Canadian nation” refers to a political entity which contains more than one nation in the cultural and sociological sense of the term. Quebec is one of these nations, with all the inherent rights that this implies, including the right to self-determination. But Quebec is not and cannot be a political nation within the Canadian federal framework. Unless there is a change in our constitutional arrangement, nothing can prevent Quebecers from taking part, as individuals and as a society, as full partners in the Canadian political nation, while at the same time being part of the social-cultural nation which is Quebec. Furthermore, Quebecers can claim all the freedom they need within the Canadian federation. Hence the reluctance and caution of the Liberal Party when it comes to using the word “nation.” “To the important question: Is Quebec a nation? One must reply ‘yes’ (translation),” said Jean Charest at the launching of a book on the Quebec nation published by *Le Devoir* in 2002. But the Quebec nation is a pluralist nation, he added. “To respect this pluralism, the idea of nation must go far beyond partisan considerations and the sovereignty debate. It cannot be taken hostage by one side or the other. As much for sovereigntists as for federalists, it is an idea that must be set apart from political conflicts. It should not be set up as a rampart at any time” (Speech at the launching of the book *Penser la nation québécoise*, April 10, 2000).

The Parti Québécois continues to use the word “nation” for many purposes. It does not think that Quebec is a nation only in the cultural and social sense. For the Parti Québécois, Quebec is already a nation in the

political sense. On this ambiguous basis, the Parti Québécois promotes a vision for Quebec which it defines as broad, but which excludes from the start the English community, the cultural communities, and the First Nations, since their members in large numbers have another idea of nation and country. Even applied within Quebec, the Parti Québécois version of nation raises many difficulties. Even if its spokesman wrap up the idea with language taken from “civic” nationalism, they are in reality promoting assimilationist goals which derive from a Jacobin concept of nation and country.

Chapter 4

Economic Development

The Liberal Party has been consistently committed to simultaneously promoting the economic and social development of Quebec. Because it creates the wealth that a society needs to pay for its social development, economic development has been a major concern for all Liberal governments of the modern era.

In 1960, Jean Lesage put forward three key ideas which have inspired the Liberal Party since that time. First, the government must put an end to improvisation in economic matters, and set up a planning process based on the best abilities available. Second, as proclaimed in the slogan “Maîtres chez-nous,” in 1962, it was necessary to patriate to Quebec the control of the economy as far as this was possible. Third, it was important to give Quebec a modern state.

Once elected to office, the Lesage government set out to nationalize 11 private electric companies and to incorporate them into the Hydro-Québec network, to create a Quebec Economic Advisory Council (judged necessary at the time to ensure better planning of economic development), to create the Caisse de dépôt et placement, to modernize transport infrastructures, and to reorganize government ministries having an economic mission. Many Crown corporations were created to serve as tools for economic development in strategic areas (mines, agriculture, fisheries). For the first time in decades, the Ministry

of Finance was placed under the responsibility of a francophone; the Premier himself served as Minister of Finance. The traditional relations between the government and the financial world were altered to ensure a more equitable treatment of francophone institutions and professionals.

After becoming leader of the Liberal Party in 1970, Robert Bourassa pledged in his first campaign to create 100,000 jobs during his first term in office. The commitment was judged to be reckless by some, but by the first Bourassa government's third year in office, more than 100,000 jobs had been created. With this commitment, Robert Bourassa wanted to stress the primary importance he accorded to economic development. This interest in the economy was the dominant characteristic of his four terms of office.

The most remarkable economic decision taken by Robert Bourassa on economic matters was his choice of favouring hydroelectric power over nuclear energy. The major ecological risks posed



ROBERT BOURASSA
Father of the James Bay project

by this option had been seriously underestimated by its advocates, among whom was Jacques Parizeau. Robert Bourassa chose to develop our hydroelectric resources and to start up the James Bay project. Thanks to this decision, Quebec now has an abundant supply of clean energy, some of which is exported, thus generating substantial revenues for Quebec.

Apart from the early 1990s, which coincided with a North American recession, the Liberal Party's terms of office have contributed to the reduction of the gaps which have traditionally separated Quebec from the other provinces in the areas of personal income, investment and employment. Liberal Party strategies have always favoured the rational use of our natural resources (forests, water, minerals, agricultural) and their transformation in Quebec. Added to these concerns, during its terms of office following the 1985 and 1989 elections, the Liberal Party prioritized the development of new technologies. Today, Quebec has many companies which are on the cutting edge of technology in aerospace, in the pharmaceutical industry, in research in bio-technology, in communications, in the computer sector, etc. The wealth of developments in these areas was achieved in large measure thanks to the policies put forward by Daniel Johnson and Gérald Tremblay in the last two terms of office of Robert Bourassa's government.

The Liberal Party has historically refused to be tied to doctrinaire approaches in economic matters. From this stems the caution it has expressed on many occasions regarding rigid neo-liberalism (or "laissez-faire liberalism"), which argues that economic laws should prevail in all sectors of activity. According to this ideology, the laws of the market should be left untouched and the State should be confined

to providing police services and maintaining highways. Decisions regarding economic development should be left to private sector leaders outside government control.

The Liberal Party is convinced that, subject to the necessary legislative and regulatory framework, private enterprise is and must be the primary motor of economic activity. Economic freedoms are, in its view, the indispensable corollary of freedom itself. Why be free if we are not free to do business? The Liberal Party has favoured small and medium businesses. In addition to allowing the creative talents of company leaders to come to the fore, these businesses create three-quarters of all jobs in Quebec. As a result, they deserve the attention and support of the government. Through various programs, this support has been offered abundantly by the Liberal Party. In Quebec as elsewhere, however, the conclusion was reached, during the last government of Robert Bourassa and the current government of Jean Charest, that direct and unconditional financial assistance programs ended up creating dependence and irresponsibility. The Liberal Party policy now calls for assisting private enterprise through indirect means such as access to credit, participation in risk capital, manpower training and support for innovation, rather than through direct grants. While maintaining a special concern for small and medium-sized businesses, the Liberal Party is not indifferent to the contribution of corporations to Quebec's economy. They create thousands of jobs and are often an important source of innovation. In the regions where they are established, their activity is a source of major spin-off for the local economy. The companies which develop our natural resources, however, have special responsibilities towards the resource itself and their workers. The Liberal Party has often reminded them of these through laws and regulations when necessary.

In the private sector, companies which pursue social objectives in addition to trying to make a profit are of special interest to the Liberal Party. This is especially true of co-operatives, especially the *Caisses populaires Desjardins* and the agricultural co-operatives which, while generally operating under the same administrative rules as capitalist concerns, are based on a structure of ownership where each member has one vote, no matter how many shares he or she owns or the volume of business he or she does in the co-operative. The companies which make up the social sector of the economy are of recent creation. It is up to them to prove that they are viable. The Liberal Party, however, believes that at this stage of their development, they should be able to count on the enlightened support of government.

The role of the State, in the view of the Liberal Party, should not be to establish or run businesses, but to create the conditions favourable to the orderly development of free enterprise. The party prefers, however, to keep open the possibility of targeted involvement of the government in the ownership and management of a limited number of companies which have a direct link to the public interest. Hydro-Quebec, the *Caisse de dépôt et de placement*, the *Société des alcools*, the *Société générale de financement*, *Loto-Québec*, and *Télé-Québec* are all examples of the direct involvement of government in diverse sectors of the economy. These interventions were justified at the time they were conceived, and could still be necessary today in certain cases if the public interest is better served through public ownership.

But the reasons which were deemed valid in the past to justify direct government involvement in some areas are not necessarily valid today. The economic context is no longer the same. Scarce energy resources, changes in

communications, and globalization in its diverse forms, have all shaken the rules of trade. To remain competitive in a world where interdependence is the rule, each government must revise its ways of doing business, reduce its costs, eliminate bloated and costly programs inherited from the past, and place more and more confidence in the freedom and the spirit of initiative of its citizens. In this new context, there can be no sacred cows. A periodic review of all government involvement must be on the agenda of any conscientious government. For example, the government of Robert Bourassa concluded, following a review, that several Crown corporations should be returned to the private sector. Between 1985 and 1994, it undertook privatizations in several domains. Jean Charest caused a stir when he had the courage to say that the Quebec model of economic development was not cast in stone. But today, there are few people left who do not share this view.

To make sure that its support for economic development is offered in the best conditions, the Liberal Party expects of enterprises, whether in the private or public sector that:

a) they treat their personnel with respect, because they are an enterprise's most precious resource. Through legislation that was enacted by Liberal governments, every employer is required to afford his employees certain minimal working conditions, including a minimum wage fixed by government regulation. Employers must also accept, or face sanctions, that their employees may freely negotiate their working conditions by means of a trade union without any constraint or threat. The Liberal Party also looks favourably on the participation of employees as shareholders in their companies, but does not claim to make this option mandatory;

b) while taking into account the conditions inherent to the North American context, companies recognize the right of francophone employees to work in French;

c) when they develop a natural resource, companies do so in a way that ensures the renewal of the resource if possible, or that the resource be developed over the longest possible period to ensure the greatest profit if the resource is not renewable;

d) they respect, in their planning, their production activities and their development programs all applicable, environmental norms and regulations and that, in a general way, they avoid methods of production and activities likely to produce negative ecological impacts. In 1972, a Liberal government gave Quebec its first legislation in the area of environmental protection., covering all of the problems linked to the protection of the environment—air, water, soil, automobile pollution, contaminated sites, abandoned buildings, etc.

In a Liberal perspective, regional development must also be an essential dimension of economic development. “The Quebec that we will build together,” asserted Jean Charest, “is a Quebec of the regions, it is a Quebec of all of the regions. No region of Quebec deserves to miss the train of prosperity... The Quebec I wish to build with you is a Quebec which will decentralize decision-making powers and which will offer to our regions the tools they need to ensure their economic and social development” (speech to the General Council meeting, May 31, 2002).

Chapter 5

Social Justice

A society which exclusively exalts individual values quickly becomes an egotistical society. Sooner or later, it is given over to domination by its strongest members, to the detriment of its most vulnerable members. Without necessarily being poor, many low-income individuals and families are denied access to services such as education and healthcare, which they cannot obtain through their own efforts. A pooling of resources is therefore necessary to ensure a reasonable equality of opportunity for all, and a minimum of justice in our society.

In order to ensure that everyone has a reasonable chance to make his or her way in life according to their talents and ambitions, it is important to guarantee to every person access to a minimal list of essential services. The content of that minimal list varies from society to society according to its degree of development and its level of social awareness. In Quebec, thanks in large measure to the role played by the Liberal Party, this minimum list of services has been expanded in recent decades. It includes the right of every person, without discrimination, to free health services; free elementary, secondary and college education; help from the government when an individual is in dire need; government financial assistance to pursue post-secondary studies; various assistance measures for housing; a guaranteed pension for seniors; as well as to the protection available through federal programs such as

employment insurance, fiscal benefits for children, old age pensions and the income supplement for seniors.

In the area of education, before the Quiet Revolution, the majority of citizens did not even have the chance to complete high school. The Liberal Party committed itself to vigorously shaking up the school system so as to democratize education. It kept its word. In 1960, education became a top priority. A royal commission was created to study the situation and to make recommendations. In the wake of the Parent Report, the Ministry of Education was created in 1964 and reforms were instituted at every level of instruction. For the first time, the government of Quebec took charge of its responsibilities in education.

The fruits of these efforts can be seen everywhere. Quebec's education levels have become one of the highest in North America. The number of students who attend college and university has risen dramatically. After having been left out of higher education for far too long, women now account for the majority of college and university education matriculations. Everyone who has the ability and the desire can now receive free high school and college education as a regular student. Given that free university tuition would be very expensive, tuition fees are still charged to students. However, access to a financial assistance program is available for college and university students, as well as for those receiving professional training at the secondary level.

Under the pretext of widening access to education, the Action démocratique du Québec has proposed to send vouchers to families which they could then use to register their children in the school of their choice. While attractive at first glance, this proposal displays a serious misunderstanding of the real situation. It ignores the fact

that under the current legislation, parents are entitled to send their children to the public school of their choice. It ignores as well the existence of a private school sector which is generously funded by the government.

As a result, Quebec parents benefit from a freedom of choice much greater than anywhere else in North America. This proposal also reveals a dangerously superficial knowledge about vouchers in the United States. In the republic to our south, vouchers are only granted, in the states where these measures exist, to parents of children who attend public schools whose performance is considerably below average. They only benefit about 1% of students. The general application of a similar measure in Quebec would create major upheavals in the organization of the public school network. Its promoters do not appear to have evaluated this risk.

Support for arts and letters and culture in general is found in the platform of any serious political party. Early in the 20th century, the Liberal Party began to show its interest in this sector of activity. In



"L'Équipe du tonnerre's" electoral platform (QLP, 1960)

addition to having created several institutions, such as the the system of music conservatories, which have trained generations of musicians, Liberal governments have offered tangible support for cultural life. We owe to Georges-Emile Lapalme the creation of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which became the Ministry of Culture under the second government of Robert Bourassa. This government also adopted Bills 78 and 90, which offer protection for artists in respect of their working conditions. The government also increased budgets to support cultural activities, exempted books from the sales tax, and created a Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, which placed financial assistance for artists at arms' length, free from any political interference in its distribution of grants.

In the area of healthcare, it was only a short time ago that people depended on the generous dedication of religious orders and healthcare professionals, especially doctors, so that people of modest income would have access to medical and hospital treatment. People of modest means were particularly vulnerable under this system. Situations of crushing debts existed in thousands of homes. Hospital insurance, created by Jean Lesage in 1962, and health insurance, created by Robert Bourassa in 1970, with financial support from the Federal government in both instances, put an end to a system where the costs had become too great for low- and middle-income families. Healthcare became a public service in Quebec. On several occasions, the current leader of the Liberal Party, Jean Charest, has rejected the idea of a two-tiered healthcare system consisting of one level of medical services for the rich and another level of service for the poor. The Action démocratique du Québec has proposed instituting one

healthcare system for the average citizen and another system, no doubt more advanced and having restricted access, for those who are willing to pay. This proposal, if it is carried out, would create serious inequalities in the availability of care. In the long term, the average citizen will have to pay the price for these proposals by in the form of less accessible services.

In the area of income security, two basic measures came into being under Liberal governments:

a) the Quebec Pension Plan, under which each worker who contributes to the plan during his working life is assured of receiving a minimum income during his or her retirement. Under the Jean Lesage government, Quebec wisely thought that it should control the management of the large pools of capital generated by the savings deducted from each pay cheque for the pension plan. To this end, it created the Caisse de dépôt et placement. The Caisse is now one of the most powerful financial institutions in Canada;

b) the income security program for underprivileged individuals and families, which ensures financial support from the government for these families and individuals who have no employment income and who do not have access to Federal employment insurance. Set up in its modern form by Jean Lesage, the income support program has undergone major changes. Among the most important were those made by the Liberal government in 1989. The 1989 reforms allowed for an increase in allocations paid to truly needy households. They also helped to cut off many beneficiaries who were ineligible for financial assistance from the government. These reforms also instituted equal treatment for young people between the ages of 18 and 30, and raised payments for people who

had preschool-aged children in their care. The most durable effect was to stress incentives to work, coupled with support measures and training for welfare recipients in order to facilitate their reintegration into the workforce.

The quality of the healthcare and education services was severely compromised by the cutbacks often made recklessly by the Bouchard and Landry governments. Cuts in the assistance given to welfare recipients who are unable to join the workforce, the savage deinstitutionalization of patients in psychiatric hospitals, the deterioration of services offered to students with learning difficulties—these are some of the measures whose negative impact will be felt well into the future. Given that both parties have been in office, however, there is a tacit agreement between the Parti Québécois and the Liberal Party on preserving the essential achievements of the Quiet Revolution in the areas of healthcare, education, and income security. “In social matters,” said Jean Charest, “the fundamental principle put forward by Liberals is unequivocal. Economic growth must not come at the expense of the least privileged” (Speech to the Québec City Chamber of Commerce, September 10, 1998).

The ADQ has proposed to replace existing programs with a guaranteed minimum income for everyone without having studied the administrative, constitutional, or financial impact of its proposal. The ADQ ignores or minimizes the issues raised by this idea, which has been shown to be difficult to put into practice. If the Liberal Party has not put forward a guaranteed minimum wage proposal, it is not through indifference. It is because the proof has not yet been made that a guaranteed minimum wage could be achieved in conditions which will improve and not degrade the circumstances of the needy.

Since 1960, successive Liberal governments have given special attention to supporting families. Convinced that the family is at the heart of all solid and sustainable social development, the Bourassa government, during the 1985 and 1989 terms of office:

a) substantially reduced the tax burden on families. The minimum taxable income for a family with two children rose from \$10,015 in 1989 to \$27,300 in 1994. In 1994, at the end of the last Liberal government, the average Quebec family was treated more advantageously when compared with an average family living in Ontario;

b) created a non-refundable tax credit for dependent children;

c) created a birth allowance which had a positive impact upon the birth rate over five years;

d) promoted the development of daycare services for children, which went from 42,079 places in 1985 to 102,183 places in 1994, while maintaining the freedom of choice for parents in this area through various fiscal measures.

Access to housing is one of the services that is now seen as indispensable for the healthy development of individuals. For the Liberal Party, the principal providers of housing facilities should be the private sector. In order to correct certain inequalities in this regard that are created by market forces, the Bourassa government in the late 1980s implemented a measure aimed at providing an income supplement for households living in regions where the rents were higher than the market average. This measure, the housing allowance, was added to a similar program, Logirente, which provided financial aid to seniors who found housing in the private sector. Each of these measures aids 150,000 households annually.

Experience has shown, on the other hand, that housing built and managed by public authorities costs more and creates serious inequalities in the assistance given to low-income households. Those who live in public housing facilities enjoy far greater advantages than those housed in the private sector. The Liberal Party believes that financial assistance for housing should be offered by the government to low-income households. It believes, however, that the construction of public housing units should, in principle, be used only to respond to specific needs such as those of handicapped individuals, the mentally ill, people in rehabilitation, etc. The party favours equal treatment for low-income households in housing assistance programs, whether the individuals live in private or public housing.

Social development in Quebec includes a demographic dimension that political leaders cannot ignore. While the Quiet Revolution was the source of many positive changes, it was also marked by a dramatic drop in the birth rate. With a fertility index of 1.48 in 1998, Quebec was well below the 2.1 level of fertility required for a society to reproduce itself. In this context, immigration takes on a crucial role. It is no exaggeration to state that in this area, Liberal governments have outperformed the PQ. From 1970 to 2000, the Parti Québécois and the Liberal Party have each been in office 15 years. The Liberal record in demographic matters is superior in three ways to the Parti québécois

a) regarding international immigration, the years 1971 to 1976 and 1986 to 1994 saw a net surplus of 353,000 people, as compared to a surplus of 252,029 during the years 1977 to 1985, and 1995 to 2000, or an additional net gain of 100,000 people during the Liberal years. In its last

term of office, the Bourassa government gave Quebec an immigration policy whose excellence was recognized by its opponents. It also concluded, with the Federal government, the McDougall-Gagnon-Tremblay Agreement, thus granting for Quebec an important role in the selection of immigrants;

b) regarding interprovincial immigration, Quebec has recorded losses each year since 1970. The annual average deficit under Parti Québécois governments has been 20,283 individuals, compared to deficits of 12,023 individuals under Liberal governments, or a an additional net loss of 125,000 individuals during the years of PQ government;

c) regarding fertility, the average number of births was 91,827 during Liberal years, compared to an average of 87,405 during the PQ years. This represents a difference of over 60,000 births over the entire period. According to official statistics and detailed studies, the family support measures instituted by the Bourassa government significantly contributed to the increase in the birth rate from 1986 to 1991.

Chapter 6

Respect for Civil Society

In modern societies, few governments still have the power to define the values to be held in common by their population. Each individual, each group has its own view of life and its own values. Instead of wanting to impose its own views, the government should find ways to make institutional arrangements which, with due respect for public order and morality, take into account the ongoing evolution of opinions and behaviours.

While the government must be careful and reserved regarding values, it should not be concluded, however, that decisions or values should or could be removed from life in society. These choices of values are necessary, even inevitable. In a liberal society, they are taken in a vast space with indistinct boundaries that we call “civil society.” By civil society is meant in general those human activities that take place outside the marketplace and the political arena. The market society is made up of utilitarian transactions based on the value of goods and services exchanged. In civil society, exchanges generally obey other considerations, such as family ties, friendship, art, faith, culture, etc. Political society is, by definition, regulated by laws which are in principle the same for all. In contrast, values of spontaneity, improvisation, freedom and diversity occupy an important place in civil society.

Civil society rests first on the personality of each individual. But it is also made up of social relations and

institutions. Included in civil society are those associations and institutions which operate in a society, without being part of the market society or being dependent on the government. Under the heading of civil society are found families, local and regional institutions such as municipalities, school boards, regional social and cultural bodies, churches, the media, professional associations and the many groups dedicated to myriad causes, whose proliferation in 19th-century North America won the admiration of the visiting French observer, Alexis de Tocqueville. To understand the fundamental preferences and the general spirit of the population, the tendencies observed in civil society are generally a more reliable barometer than the speeches of politicians. Because they are fertile ground for the exercise of freedoms, civil society is a precious rampart against authoritarianism. That is



CLAUDE RYAN AND HIS WIFE MADELEINE

Architect of the decentralization of the 1990s

why totalitarian regimes try to silence civil society, or to replace it with government bodies.

One of Quebec's strengths is that it has a healthy and vigorous civil society. On occasion, political parties are tempted to use the institutions of civil society as vehicles for the circulation of their ideas. These efforts may give the impression of succeeding in the short run. When such efforts have occurred, however, they efforts have run up against a discreet but impregnable resistance from the populace, which instinctively has always preferred policies marked by prudence and realism, over ideological strait-jackets.

Municipalities and school boards offer good examples of how the Liberal Party views relations between government and civil society. From a strictly legal standpoint, municipalities and school boards are in effect "the creatures of the Quebec government." In principle, according to this point of view, the government can do what it pleases with them. This narrowly legal definition of municipalities and school boards ignores, however, another aspect just as important to their stature. If these bodies owe their existence and their legal roles to Quebec City, their leaders obtain their mandate from the voting public. They are consequently political institutions, not merely branches or administrative offices of the Quebec government.

The way that the Bouchard and Landry governments have managed the issue of municipal mergers provides a singular contrast with the approach used by a Liberal government in order to promote the reorganization of school boards, which were felt to be too numerous, and to manage municipal mergers. True to the philosophy of the Liberal Party, the Bourassa government succeeded in merging

school boards in a climate of co-operation. All governments on occasion are required to make decisions that will be unpopular with municipalities and school boards. Liberal governments could not avoid this eventuality. However, they generally saw to it that the interested parties were informed beforehand about the orientations that the government was going to adopt, and were given time to let their views be known. In two specific cases, the Bourassa government transferred to the municipalities and the school boards responsibilities that had previously been shouldered by the government. In each case, however, the transfer of responsibilities was accompanied by the transfer of additional sources of revenue. Given that Quebec has so many municipalities, too many even, Liberal governments have generally favoured municipal reorganization. Only on rare occasions, however, has a Liberal government felt that it must impose a merger. When it did so, it was for reasons that were imperative. The opposition of the Liberal Party to recently forced municipal mergers was based much more on the cavalier manner in which these mergers were forced than on the goals they sought to achieve.

The organization of the liberal professions offers another example of the attitude adopted by the Liberal Party towards civil society. In Quebec, it has traditionally fallen to the members of the professions themselves, rather than the government, to define and enforce high standards of competence and ethics for their members. Due to the proliferation of the professions, caused by the rapid evolution of knowledge and the ever-increasing numbers of people drawn to these occupations, it had become necessary to revise the organization of the liberal professions. A centralizing government would have taken

advantage of this situation to subject the professions to heavy-handed bureaucratic controls. Liberal governments chose instead to reinforce the principle of self-regulation for each profession by its members, but to also set up a body to coordinate the system—the Office des professions du Québec—which oversees all the professions while also respecting each one’s autonomy.

Due in large measure to Liberal governments, Quebec labour legislation recognizes the right of workers to associate and their right to the unfettered negotiation of their working conditions through the intermediary of an accredited trade union. The laws recognize the rights extended to trade unions not only for the negotiation of collective agreements but also for their application. The freedom of trade unions is a fundamental element in Quebec labour legislation. It must be recognized that the current regime governing labour relations was built on laws adopted at times by PQ governments, at times by Liberal governments. However, it was thanks to Liberal Government that the unionization of public and para-public sector workers became a reality. It was also under Liberal governments led by Robert Bourassa that some trade unions had to be reminded that the law must be obeyed by everyone in a democratic society. Liberal governments have attempted to be fair in their dealings with the trade union movement. At the same time, they have avoided being too familiar with its leaders.

The management bodies created to administer the hundreds of educational and health institutions transferred from the private sector to the public sector during the Quiet Revolution offer another example of the attitude of the Liberal Party towards civil society. First, the transfers of ownership were accomplished through

negotiation, fair compensation being made. Second, it was decided that for the administration of the institutions that were transferred, new boards of directors would include representatives of the community served and the employees of the institutions. Recent changes made by the Landry government to the status of regional health and social service boards opened a serious breach in the system, subjecting the boards to a more direct control by the government. The Liberal Party fought against these changes, which it felt were incompatible with its concept of relations based on mutual respect that must exist between the government and civil society.

The policy of the Liberal Party towards private schools is another example of its respect for the institutions of civil society. These institutions are the expression of initiatives taken by individuals and groups, not by the government. During its first term in office, the Parti Québécois gave the impression that it wanted to condemn these schools to gradual extinction by imposing a moratorium on the recognition of any new institution for the purpose of awarding grants. As soon as it was returned to power in 1985, the government of Robert Bourassa put an end to this moratorium. It let it be known that while the priority for the government was clearly public schools, a significant role, accompanied by financial support from the government, would be reserved for private schools. The PQ governments in office between 1994 to 2003 maintained the assistance given private education, but the idea of a new moratorium and the eventual abolition of financial assistance to private schools remains an element of the PQ program.

Freedom of the press is an essential attribute of a democratic society. Without becoming involved in the

management of media enterprises, the Liberal Party has always been opposed to excessive concentration of ownership and power in this vital sector. On different occasions, governments led by Robert Bourassa intervened to stop transactions that would have had dangerous consequences in this regard. One cannot say the same about the governments of Lucien Bouchard and Bernard Landry. Under the cover of a parliamentary committee doomed to failure because of the permissive attitude adopted by the government, the greatest concentration of power in the ownership of daily newspapers in the history of Quebec has been achieved under the Landry government, for the benefit of a small but powerful group.

Thousands of voluntary associations, at times spontaneous, at times organized, in which people like to participate for a wide variety of reasons, are an essential component of Quebec civil society. Political parties cannot ignore their existence because they encounter them on a daily basis. They must find ways to accommodate them, as all people elected to office soon discover. The Liberal Party recognizes the irreplaceable utility of these groups. While avoiding all interference with their internal operations, the Liberal Party ensures that it maintains cooperative relations with them. Voluntary associations have often been invited by Liberal governments to give their opinion on government proposals, to participate in the choice of members of boards of directors of local or regional institutions, even to play an active role, accompanied by fair compensation, in the implementation of government measures. The role played by hundreds of community organizations dedicated to working in underprivileged areas is an important characteristic of Quebec democracy. In a report on *L'État québécois et la pauvreté*

(1998), a task force of the Liberal Party called for greater recognition of the work done by these groups, and the creation of financial assistance that would offer them greater stability.

In Quebec, as in all liberal societies, religious communities enjoy great freedoms. They are recognized as non-profit organizations and hence qualify for generous tax exemptions. They manage their affairs, free from any government interference. Many of them receive financial assistance from the government in return for the public services they offer in areas such as education, assistance to various categories of individuals, recreation, and culture. Among the religions, the Catholic Church has roots which are the oldest in Quebec history and enjoys the greatest influence. While maintaining with it relations generally marked by co-operation, the Liberal Party has, since the 19th century, adopted an attitude of healthy independence from the Catholic Church and other faith groups. Since the era of Wilfrid Laurier, the party has favored freedom for all religions, a position which did not always coincide with the views of the Church leaders of the time. On the basis of these principles, the Liberal Party enacted over the past decades major changes in the role that the Catholic Church had traditionally played in education, healthcare and social services. Accomplished for the most part under Liberal governments, these changes were made in a spirit of mutual healthy independence and respect between civil and religious authorities. There was no despoiling of property, no wars of religion, just negotiations that were often intense. While continuing, for practical purposes, the numerical preponderance of the Catholic and Protestant religions as regards the need for services in certain areas (schools, hospitals, prisons, social services), the changes

over the last few decades allowed the government to assume added responsibilities that it alone can shoulder in order to protect the right of all individuals to freedom of religion and equal access to public services.

A government concerned about efficiency and finding long-term solutions must make every effort to maintain strong links with representatives of the civil society. It is to be expected that it seek to establish co-operative relations with organizations from civil society, and to associate them with government initiatives either through permanent ties or more informal meetings. Liberal governments created several organizations to this end. For example, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, the Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec, the Conseil du statut de la femme, the Conseil des communautés culturelles. These bodies play a useful role. From these experiences, however, certain guidelines must be drawn up whenever the government decides to have recourse to this kind of structure. First, they must be as representative as possible of all interested parties. To this end, appointments should only be made after serious consultation. Second, their role should be one of consultation and not decision-making. In principle, decision-making should remain the prerogative of the executive branch of government. Third, they must have true freedom. Finally, the government must make sure that these forums are not transformed into parallel power structures to the detriment of elected officials, or into activities where ministers promote their popularity by distributing favours to a locality or region.

Chapter 7

Democracy and Politics

A major contribution made by the liberal spirit to the political development of Quebec was promoting a more positive vision of politics and the role of political institutions. The day after the election, for a fourth term, of the Union nationale in 1956, two priests who specialized in social ethics blasted the political morality displayed during the election campaign. “We were told,” wrote Gérard Dion and Louis O’Neill, “of many cases where not only did the electors not hesitate to sell their vote, but also of incidents when electors spontaneously offered their vote for money or generous favours. This is how they paid for roof repairs, hospital bills, the birth of their children, the promise of generous contracts, and so on. Not even mentioning the parade of refrigerators and TV sets” (Abbés Dion and O’Neill, *Le chrétien et les élections*, Editions de l’homme, 1960).

Prior to the 1960 election, the Liberal Party had pledged to set up an inquiry into the administrative practices of the Union nationale government. This inquest was led by a judge. It discovered a long-standing, elaborate system of fraudulent financial arrangements to support the party in power, including kickbacks made by companies receiving government contracts. The Liberal Party promised to reform the electoral process to ensure that all parties were treated on an equal footing, that election officials were to be accountable for their conduct before the



JEAN LESAGE

In 1960, he laid the groundwork for a modern Québec

courts, that election expenses were limited and controlled, and that people could not fraudulently vote in the place of others on election day. Many of these reforms were accomplished in the first term of the Jean Lesage government. Other reforms, including giving the right to vote to people at age 18, as well as a reform of the electoral map were achieved in the years that followed. Among the most important were the reforms enacted in 1977 by the PQ government to prohibit companies from contributing to the financial campaigns of political parties, and limiting individual contributions to \$3,000.

In order to compensate for the loss of revenue that resulted from stricter controls over party fundraising and restrictions on spending campaign, government funding was also granted to political parties. This assistance was made available, on the basis of the ballots cast in the pre-

vious election, to all candidates who received at least 15% of the vote in an election. On the basis of their overall performance in election, funding is accorded to political parties on an annual basis to pay for their operating costs. With this government funding and, more importantly, with the revenues generated by their fundraising activities, political parties now have permanent staffs and are better equipped to manage their affairs. They now have organization, information and research capacities which help them pursue their activities between elections and renew their respective platforms. Having emerged from their previously quasi-clandestine existence, the political parties are now out in the open. They operate under the watchful eye of everyone. If the reform of political morality and electoral institutions has been generally successful in Quebec, it is because both of the major parties contributed actively to this effort and, moreover, once the new rules were put in place by the legislature, they were generally accepted and complied with by both parties. The results of this evolution can be easily seen. Quebec today is one of the world's models when it comes to the openness and integrity of electoral procedures and party financing.

The role of Members of the National Assembly has also been improved due to reforms enacted either by Liberal or PQ governments. MNAs today are better paid. They receive budgets to cover their expenses in their riding office as well as other operating expenses. The work of the National Assembly has been reorganized on several occasions to enhance the role of parliamentary committees. These committees, more numerous and more active than ever before, encourage MNAs to participate in drafting legislation, reviewing govern-

ment operations, and studying topics that have been in the news.

Our voting system, however, has not been modified for a long time. From time to time, the number of seats won in the National Assembly does not faithfully reflect the intentions of the electors. The Liberal Party is open to a reform which would introduce elements of proportional representation into the current system, while maintaining the right of local citizens to elect their own representative. It has also indicated its support for changes that would allow MNAs more freedom from party discipline and the party line in parliamentary debates. Soon after it came into office, the government of Jean Charest signalled its intention to go forward with its reform of the electoral system.

The Liberal Party played a major role in the creation of a dynamic vision of the role of government and political institutions. The legacy of the inaction of the Union nationale government before 1960 in the areas of education, healthcare, and income security forced political leaders to conclude that a key element—the government—was missing from many issues where its presence would have been essential. In other societies, government was often used as a lever to promote social progress. In Quebec, the government often failed to play this role.

The Liberal Party has never been a blind supporter of government intervention. Unconditional support for interventionist policies runs counter to the priority it gives to the values of individual freedom, initiative and responsibility. For the Liberal Party, government should be a tool and not a finality. But in our modern context, this tool must neither be insignificant nor powerless. It must be able to shake up society each time that the need

arises, and the resources are available to carry out its intentions. Because of the inaction of his predecessors, Jean Lesage felt that the role of government should be expanded in many areas.

The first goal for the Jean Lesage government was to give Quebec a competent, honest and impartial civil service. Key posts were given to candidates who were trained in the appropriate disciplines. For the first time, sociologists and economists went to work for the government. Standards of rigour and impartiality regarding recruitment and career development were written into the law governing civil servants. Civil servants were given the right to unionize. Today, the government, regardless of the party in power, can rely on a civil service of excellent quality when managing affairs of state. With their support, the government can represent Quebec at any Canadian or international conference with carefully developed strategies on a wide range of issues.

The existence of an impartial civil service, which enjoys an enviable status and working conditions, has also allowed the government to put order and integrity into its transactions with private suppliers of goods and services. These transactions are now conducted according to strict rules guaranteeing transparency, impartiality and equity. Every contract above a certain amount must be awarded according to rules under which the suppliers that submitted the best offer will win the bid. This has all but eliminated the practice of kickbacks that was in place for many years.

The judicial branch has not escaped the attention of the Liberal Party. The presence of judges who are competent, honest and independent of political interference is an essential component of a democratic society. In the

courts under Quebec's jurisdiction, Liberal governments have worked to establish conditions that ensure that judges are competent, honest and impartial, and that they enjoy professional freedom. Even when their own convictions were challenged and although they availed themselves of their right to recourse, Liberal governments have generally respected the decisions of the courts. Administrative justice has also made considerable progress under Liberal governments, offering the public procedures that are swifter, and less costly than the court system.

Of the many changes made over the past decades, the competence and integrity of the government apparatus in Quebec, except for certain isolated cases, are rarely challenged today. The same cannot be said about the size of the public and parapublic sectors. In a given year, the Quebec government, the municipalities, the hospitals, the CLSCs, the regional health and social service boards, the highway network, Crown corporations, school boards, colleges, universities absorb more than a quarter of the goods and services produced in Quebec. The Federal government and its various services and agencies make a similar claim on our economy and production. No matter how justified each individual initiative may be, there can be no forgetting that the government's operating costs are very high, and that the tax burden and debt charges generated by the policies of the last four decades are amongst the heaviest in North America.

No party can avoid this dilemma. Is it better to reduce government spending and the taxes levelled on the taxpayer and risk eroding the quality of services and creating discontent public? Or is it better to maintain the services at the highest level possible and be forced to either maintain taxes at their current high level or generate new debts

for the government? All governments in Quebec over the past 30 years have struggled with this dilemma.

At the first meeting of the Bourassa cabinet in December 1985, ministers were asked to present a list of budget cutbacks to be made in their ministries at the next cabinet meeting. Between 1986 and 1994, there was only one year when ministers were not asked to make proposals to cut their budgets. How many times did a minister rejoice because a project he had supported was given the green light, only to discover that the funds needed for the project had to be supplied through cutbacks in his or her own ministry's budget! In the almost uninterrupted series of cutbacks that marked the period from 1985 to 1994, the sectors education and healthcare received special consideration. The damage observable today in the healthcare system, following the drastic cuts made without any plan by the subsequent PQ government, was avoided during Robert Bourassa's two last terms in office. He often said to his Cabinet colleagues that cutbacks were necessary, but they must be avoided or at least reduced to a strict minimum if they created additional costs or a reduction in services for low-income families and individuals. The current premier, Jean Charest, has stated on many occasions that for this government, education and healthcare are the key priorities. In the first budget of his government the health and education budgets were increased.

The Liberal Party rejects the idea that government can play the role of universal saviour. It also rejects the vision that government should be reduced to simply providing police services and maintaining highways. It desires for Quebec a government that is not only able to meet the needs of its citizens but that also takes into account their capacity to pay. Government must be

functional, competent, equipped with the resources it needs, modern and efficient. The Liberal Party wants to rid government of bloated programs that have grown in recent decades, and it is resolved to do so with discipline, and within its means. Finally, it wants to be attentive and sensitive to the needs of Quebec's citizens, in particular to the needs of those who are most vulnerable in our society, and to be conscious of the leadership role it must play whenever the values of freedom and justice and social, economic and cultural progress for Quebec are called into question. This explains the importance given to constantly review and critically re-evaluate the roles played by the State in order to ensure that they respond to real needs, and that these programs are delivered efficiently and economically.

Given this vision of the role of government, we must then ask ourselves with what means government is to be paid for. We have always thought that two avenues were open to governments—taxation and borrowing. But a tightening up is now required in both areas. Taxation has reached the saturation point. Borrowing has too. In this context, the role of government must be changed so as to eliminate those responsibilities that may no longer be required of it and to protect the main gains made in the area of social justice. It is essential that government operations be conducted as economically as possible. To the extent that cuts in government spending could lead to cuts in taxes, one question must be settled. Who should benefit from lower taxes? They cannot help low-income households, because they are already exempt from income tax and they benefit from refunds of the sales tax that they pay. The choice is between middle-income taxpayers and those whose income is higher. To the extent that some lee-

way can be created, it should first be used, according to most observers, to reduce the tax burden of middle-income individuals before aiding the rich. The ADQ platform proposes a measure that would have undermine a main characteristic of our tax regime. The progressive nature of our tax system, in which tax rates rise according to income levels, would be replaced by a uniform flat tax rate for everyone. It has been shown in the United States that this approach would benefit the wealthiest taxpayers. Even President Bush discarded this idea. But the ADQ did not hesitate to include this measure in its platform.

Chapter 8

Ties to Canada

Devoted first to serve Quebec, the Liberal Party is also convinced that, subject to the recognition of its distinct character, maintaining the link to the Canadian federation is the best constitutional option for promoting the interests of Quebec and its partners. According to sovereigntists, it would be normal that Quebec should have and control its territory through a government shaped by the culture of its majority. The Liberal Party sees this as a legitimate aim—because in its view the institutions of a people should reflect who they are—but it refuses to see this as an absolute. In reality, a growing number of states are made up of groups of humans who represent diverse cultures. The structure of the State should reflect this reality. Cultural diversity is a growing phenomenon in many countries. The argument of normality put forward by sovereigntists becomes highly debatable from the moment they seek to make it an absolute necessity.

For the Liberal Party, Quebec's attachment to Canada is justified for many reasons:

- 1) Canada is one of the most advanced and dependable countries in the world from the standpoint of respect for individual freedoms;
- 2) Canada is part of our history and culture. It represents an important part of who we are. To end a political union, according to the founding fathers of the American

Republic, there must be serious reasons to justify a break that one must be ready to demonstrate them before the world. As sincere as they may be, the reasons that the spokesmen for sovereignty have put forward to date have not achieved this degree of seriousness;

3) Canada, world's is one of the wealthiest territories in terms of natural resources. To the extent that the ownership of these resources has not been transferred to the provinces, this natural wealth remains in the possession of all Canadians, including Quebecers. Leaving the Canadian federation would mean abandoning this heritage;

4) experience has shown that since 1867, under the Canadian federal system, Quebec has had the powers it needs to maintain and promote the French culture of the large majority of its population. Nothing prevents Quebec from continuing to negotiate in order to make improvements in this regard, where they are deemed necessary;

5) the citizens of Quebec participate on an equal footing with people from the other provinces and territories in electing candidates to Parliament and forming the government of Canada. Quebec enjoys a place in Parliament which reflects its proportion of the Canadian population;

6) on the social and economic level, Canada offers a broader source of financial and human resources. This pool of resources allows for a sharing of opportunities and risks, and affords each Canadian broader horizons and greater protection against the impacts of unemployment, economic stagnation, or disasters;

7) through its participation in the Canadian federation, Quebec has made a large contribution towards achieving better recognition of the language rights of the million francophones who live in the other provinces and territories;

8) participation in the Canadian federation has allowed Quebec and the predominantly English-speaking provinces and territories to form a geographical, political, and economic entity which, in the eyes of its citizens and the rest of the world, represents a credible counterbalance to the influence of the powerful and omnipresent American neighbour in many areas of our society;

9) through its participation in Canada, Quebec has contributed to the development of a country known around the world as a friend of tolerance, justice and peace. The network of contacts that this reputation has helped to develop around the world also benefits Quebec;

10) the Canadian experience places us at the centre of the historical trend towards a diversification of populations around the world, along with the attendant challenges involved in promoting individual and collective rights in many countries of the world.

While supporting the Canadian federal system, the Liberal Party has, over the past 40 years, continually affirmed that due to Quebec's role as the main voice for the French fact in Canada, it can never be a province like the others in the federation. As stated by all its leaders to this day, the Liberal Party has stressed that in addition to being a province in the legal sense of the term, Quebec forms a distinct society in many regards. These include its language, culture, legal system, institutions, and way of life. It has, on several occasions, asked that the Canadian Constitution be amended in a way to recognize this distinct character. Some believe that Quebec was asking for special privileges. This is not the case. Quebec has always sought a fair recognition of its distinct character, not a special status. That has been the position of all its previous leaders. It is also the position of its current leader, Jean Charest.

The current position of the Liberal Party was set out in the Pelletier Report in 2001, named after the chairman of the committee, Benoit Pelletier, MNA for Chapleau. His report was criticized for having taken its distance from positions adopted in previous Liberal Party documents, especially *A New Canadian Federation* (The Beige Paper, 1980) and *Recognition and Interdependence* (1996). This criticism is without foundation.

All of the aims that had been defined time and time again—recognition of the specific nature of Quebec, a veto for Quebec over any constitutional amendment, enshrining of the McDougall-Gagnon-Tremblay Agree-



Signature of the Meech Lake Accord

ment on immigration in the Constitution, enshrining in the Constitution of the right for Quebec to have at least three of the nine judges of the Supreme Court drawn from the civil law tradition, giving a framework to Federal spending power, without affecting the program of equalization payments, Senate reform—these are all familiar positions found in the Pelletier Report.

The Liberal Party is, on the other hand, aware of the impasse in the constitutional debate created by the failure of the Meech Lake Accord and the rejection of the Charlottetown Agreement. It realizes that a new climate of confidence must be created to permit a reopening of constitutional negotiations. But instead of adopting a passive approach of waiting for a more favourable context, the Party is committed to seeking the maximum possible changes to improve the federal system through administrative and legislative avenues. It has included in its program a series of initiatives to this end. This approach includes taking into account the needs of other partners, intergovernmental co-operation and co-management in the areas of common interest, modifying the Agreement on the social union to make it acceptable to Quebec, participation in the negotiation of international treaties in areas of provincial jurisdiction, redistribution of the tax base and the recovery of tax points, the creation of a Council of the Federation, bilateral and multilateral agreements with other provinces, the shared definition of certain pan-Canadian objectives in selected areas, etc. The creation of a Council of the Federation, as proposed by the Charest government, responds to an objective that has been put forward by the Liberal Party on many occasions in the past.

Of the three parties represented in the National Assembly after the 2003 election, the Liberal Party is the only one

that has a true constitutional platform to offer to citizens of Quebec. True to its sovereignty option, the Parti Québécois has nothing to offer in terms of improving Canadian federalism. It is forced to improvise a position every time a new issue or situation arises. This attitude leads to conduct that it is either narrowly egotistical, in which only the interest of Quebec is considered, or in which the overall good of the entire federation is of no interest. In 2003, The Action démocratique du Québec has once again adopted policies which are one small step removed from the PQ proposal for sovereignty-association. Following the example of the Allaire Report, the ADQ calls for the transfer of 22 legislative powers to Quebec, powers now held either exclusively or partially by the Federal government. This list was included in Allaire Report as a sort of shopping list, without a careful study being made of the consequences for the management of each area to be transferred. By espousing these proposals ten years after the were, without offering any further analysis, the ADQ is showing that it is improvising. It has cloaked its real intentions in ambiguity.

One often hears that the Liberal Party approach on constitutional matters has produced nothing and, on the contrary, has culminated in a series of failures. It is also claimed that the constitutional position of the Liberal Party has not prevented the Federal government from interfering in provincial jurisdictions on many occasions. These are observations which have some basis in fact, but which do not take into account other, more favourable developments. While setbacks have admittedly occurred, one cannot ignore that throughout this time, many changes favourable to Quebec were being made to Canadian federalism. Here is a list of such changes in contemporary times:

A) Constitutional changes

1) inserting in the Constitution in 1964 a provision allowing the Federal Parliament to legislate in the area of pension plans, but specifying that in the case of a conflict between federal and provincial legislation, the provincial legislation will be preponderant (article 94A);

2) including in the *Constitution Act* of 1982 a provision guaranteeing the right of each province to opt out of any constitutional amendment that calls for the transfer of a provincial jurisdiction to the Federal Parliament (articles 38(3), and 40);

3) including in the *Constitution Act* of 1982 another provision which stipulates that a province which exercises its right to opt out of a constitutional amendment that calls for a transfer of provincial legislative powers to the Federal Parliament in “education or other cultural matters will be entitled to fair financial compensation from the Federal Parliament” (section 39(2));

4) inserting in the *Constitution Act* of 1982 a provision recognizing Quebec’s exclusive power to decide how to apply the eligibility criteria for admission to English schools in the province, as defined by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (article 59(2));

5) including in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* a provision guaranteeing that the composition of the Supreme Court, which by law must include three judges drawn from the civil law tradition, cannot be changed without the assent of Quebec (article 41);

6) placing in the 1982 Act a provision that an amendment that affects only one or several provinces can be adopted with the consent of the Federal Parliament and the province or provinces in question. This provision allowed Quebec, at its

request, to lift the constraints of article 93 of the *Constitutional Act* of 1982 as regards denominational schools.

B) Legislative and administrative changes

1) the enactment by the Federal Parliament in 1995 of an act which requires the Federal government to obtain the prior consent of Quebec before presenting to Parliament a proposal to amend the Constitution;

2) the enactment by the Federal Parliament in 1995 of a motion which states that the Federal government and its agencies are required to take into account the distinct character of Quebec in the application of Federal legislation and programs in Quebec;

3) the enactment in 1964 of the *Established Programs Financing Act* which established provisions designed to permit Quebec to opt out, with a transfer of tax points, from Federal shared-cost programs;

4) the Cullen-Couture and McDougall-Gagnon-Tremblay Agreements, which allow Quebec to participate in the selection of candidates for immigration to the province, and to assume full responsibility for their integration;

5) the agreement which allows Quebec to collect the harmonized provincial and federal sales tax in Quebec;

6) the agreement which allows for the harmonization of federal and provincial measures in the areas of fiscal deductions for children and services for children and the family;

7) the agreement which permitted the transfer of manpower training to Quebec;

8) the agreements which allowed Quebec to oversee tripartite programs aimed at modernizing local and regional infrastructures.

These facts trace an evolution that is more laborious than many would have hoped for, but which nevertheless led to more flexible arrangements and a more explicit recognition of the distinct character of Quebec within Canadian federalism. They show that without abandoning its constitutional demands, Quebec has every interest in the short term in seeking new administrative and legislative agreements, and in creating a climate of mutual respect with the Federal Parliament and the other provinces and territories.

The adversaries of the Liberal Party often say that the party is an unreliable defender of Quebec's interests in federal-provincial matters. First, it should be noted that the Federal Parliament's inclination to intervene in areas of provincial jurisdiction seems to be more pronounced when sovereigntist governments are in office in Quebec. The loss of the right to a veto, the unilateral patriation of the Constitution, the Supreme Court reference case on secession, Bill C-20 all these measures were taken while the PQ was in power in Québec. One cannot recall comparable initiatives that were taken by the central government from 1985 to 1994, when a Liberal government was in office. On the contrary, a great number of agreements beneficial to Quebec were worked out during this period: for example, the McDougall-Gagnon-Tremblay Agreement, the agreement on the collection of the sales tax, and the agreement on the infrastructure program.

One way or another, Quebec governments have had to deal with Federal initiatives that called into question the balance of power within the federation. Each time that these issues have been raised, the Liberal Party has sought to defend the legitimate interests of Quebec. In 1964, under Jean Lesage, it rejected a proposal for a pension plan submitted by the Federal government and succeeded in

having the rest of Canada accept a plan that was designed and promoted by Quebec. It also obtained a constitutional amendment confirming the preponderant jurisdiction of the provinces in pension matters. In 1970, under Robert Bourassa, it refused to endorse the Victoria Charter because it did not respond to Quebec's proposals concerning the division of jurisdiction in areas of social policy. In 1981, in extremely difficult circumstances, the Liberal Opposition in the National Assembly joined with the PQ government of the day to say "no" to the unilateral patriation of the Constitution then being planned. In 1997, it disapproved the reference to Supreme Court by Ottawa on the matter of secession, arguing that the constitutional future of Quebec was above all a political question that must be resolved in Quebec. In 1998 it opposed Bill C-20,



In 1980, 60% of Quebecers vote No to independence

which imposed on Quebec rules that excessively restrained the province with respect to constitutional referendums. In 1999, it argued not against the principle of a social union, but against some of the centralizing provisions of the agreement signed by the Federal government, the territories and the other provinces. In 2000, it opposed the creation of the Millennium Scholarships and helped find through negotiation a solution acceptable all parties to this dispute. In 2002, it called, in a detailed submission to the Seguin Commission, for a more equitable division of tax revenues between the Federal Parliament, the provinces and the territories. When confronted with these facts, how can anyone seriously claim that the Liberal Party of Quebec has been lukewarm in its defense of Quebec's interest in constitutional matters and in its relations with other governments in Canada?

Those who like to repeat that the Quebec Liberal Party is under the spell of the Liberal Party of Canada in constitutional matters either ignore the facts or act in bad faith. The reality is completely different. The Liberal Party has defended and promoted the interests of Quebec within the Canadian federation over the past half-century. It was the source of most of the gains Quebec obtained in this regard. It was also the only party able to defend the interests of Quebec in the area of federal-provincial relations, based not on slogans carefully crafted or myths but on ideas and policies. The Liberal Party is best suited to deal with constitutional issues and other matters because it is the only party among the three contenders which can show not only its repeated identification with the interests of Quebec but also its loyal and sincere commitment to the ideals of freedom, sharing and co-operation which are embodied in Canadian federalism.

Conclusion

Enduring Values

In light of the history of the past 50 years, it is fair to conclude that the Liberal Party, driven by the values it holds, was the main architect of modern Quebec on the political level. It engineered the changes that transformed Quebec during the Quiet Revolution. At various times it continued to put into service the values of freedom, progress and reform.

Citizens of Quebec today enjoy a high degree of freedom, whether in the area of personal choices or regarding their social, religious or political opinions. They benefit from a standard of living that has been greatly improved. They have access, for the most part without charge, to quality public services in healthcare and education. They can rely on political institutions in which the values of service, competence, and transparency are widely shared. If Quebec has succeeded in achieving this level of development, it owes this achievement first to its people, businesses and institutions, whose efforts and sacrifices are the main source of its progress. But its progress is also due, to a large degree, to the policies implemented by the Liberal Party and the values it embodies.

The Liberal Party is a party with deep roots in the history and the contemporary reality of Quebec society. All levels of society and religions are represented in the party, and it welcomes in its ranks a great range of opinions. The advancement of Quebec through the promotion of

the highest political values constitutes its *raison d'être*. Far from hampering these efforts, our participation in the Canadian federation has helped our progress and it will make further contributions in the future.

The Liberal Party has a resolutely optimistic view of human nature. While recognizing human shortcomings, it is convinced of humanity's basic good will and believes in each individual's ability to succeed. But in its view, this progress can only be achieved if people are free. When the Liberal Party speaks of policy, it does not think immediately about controls, structures and grand schemes. It seeks to promote the unfettered development of individuals, families and groups.

The Liberal Party also believes that all members of society have the right to reasonable equality of opportunity in life. Absolute equality is a dangerous myth in its view, however. Due to the talent and effort of each individual, as well as to the circumstances of time and place, inequalities between individuals will always exist. It is nevertheless up to society to ensure that all of its members can benefit from a reasonable equality of opportunity at various stages of life, especially when starting out. This explains the importance given by the Liberal Party to a strong economy, which creates employment and prosperity; to social policies which aim to provide universal access to educational and health services; and to the protection of individuals against the loss of income illness, unemployment and ageing.

The Liberal Party is resolutely open to change and to reform, for change is the law of society. At all times, it must be ready to undertake the reforms that may be needed. What was valid yesterday is not necessarily so today. If one asks a Liberal Party member to explain why

he is interested in politics, he will usually reply by saying it is because he wants to change things. Without always knowing the exact nature of the change that must be made, he knows from daily experience that changes are necessary. His involvement stems from his desire to promote, in co-operation with others, the search for, and the achievement of the necessary reforms.

The Liberal Party accords great importance to the values of reason and intelligence. Political leaders must take into account an array of traditions, received ideas, and concepts that have been in place for centuries; overlooking or challenging them may be a recipe for disaster. Politics is full of this received wisdom and of taboos inspired by political correctness. The Liberal Party itself does not always avoid these pitfalls. When it acts in harmony with its deepest convictions, however, it never hesitates to overcome certain myths. Throughout its long tradition, it has maintained a deep faith in the values of reason and intelligence in politics. It believes in a necessary role for authority and for tradition in politics as in other domains. But the judgment that leads to action must be based before all else on the free exercise of critical reason. In the same perspective, parties and governments should never make decisions until they are sure that they are based on a deep understanding of the facts and on the best expertise available.

Finally, the Liberal Party believes in democracy. Having often exercised power, it is aware of its limitations. As a result, it is careful not to create expectations among the populace that can never be met. It is equally aware that the outcome of an election is often determined by images and impressions rather than on ideas. It is nevertheless convinced that of all forms of government, a

government of the people by the people and for the people is the best form of government. It also believes that this form of government is better suited than any other to continued improvements.

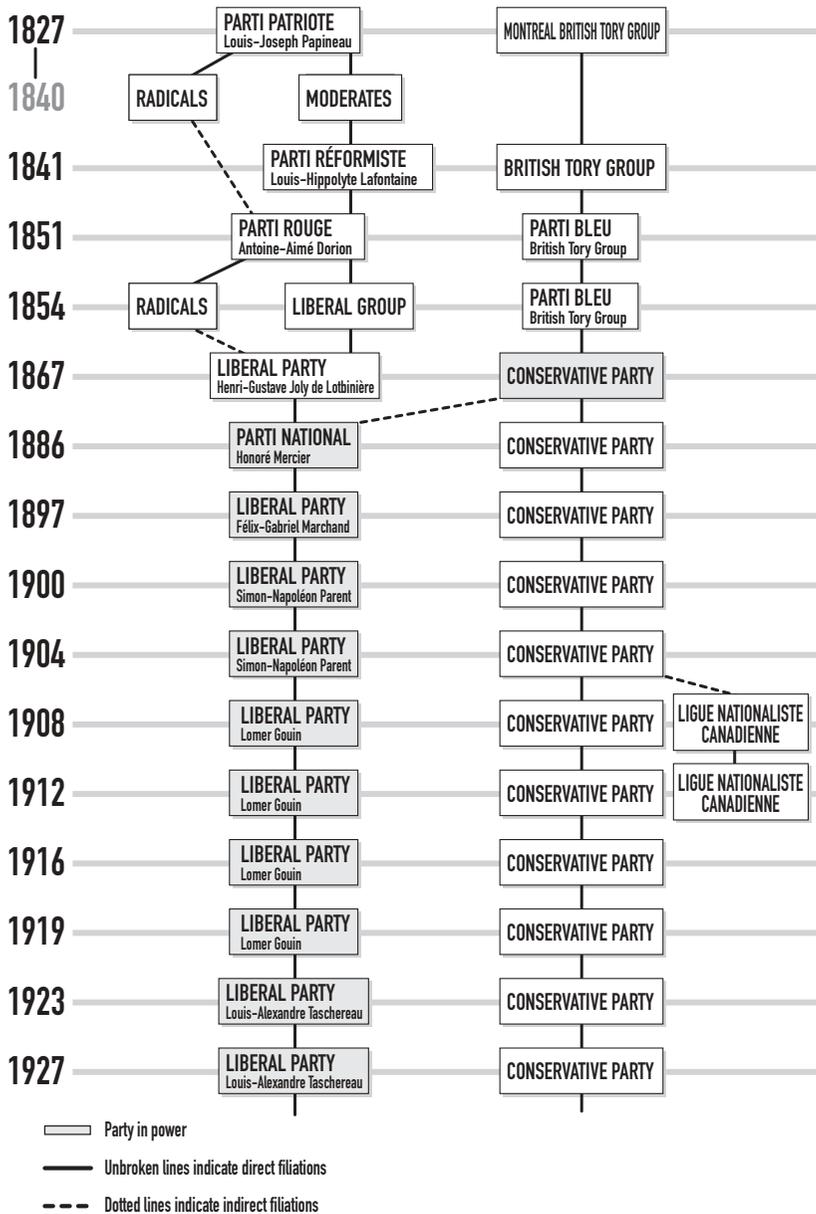
The enduring values characterizing the Liberal Party stem from its attachment to its society; its optimistic vision of human nature; its faith in freedom; its commitment to equality of opportunity; its confidence in the value of reason; and its attachment to democracy. It is these values that the Liberal Party, without claiming to have always respected them beyond all reproach, has identified with and draws upon each time that Quebec and the party face new challenges. These values, as we have seen, are the primacy of individual freedoms, the identification with Quebec, an emphasis on economic development, the concern for social justice, respect for civil society, the promotion of political democracy, and the attachment to Canada.

Liberal values have served Quebec well at various stages of its history, and particularly during the last half-century. These values remain fresh and pertinent because they take their inspiration from the richest sources not only in Quebec history but in human history. Now as in the past, these values can be a rich source of new accomplishments while maintaining a necessary continuity.

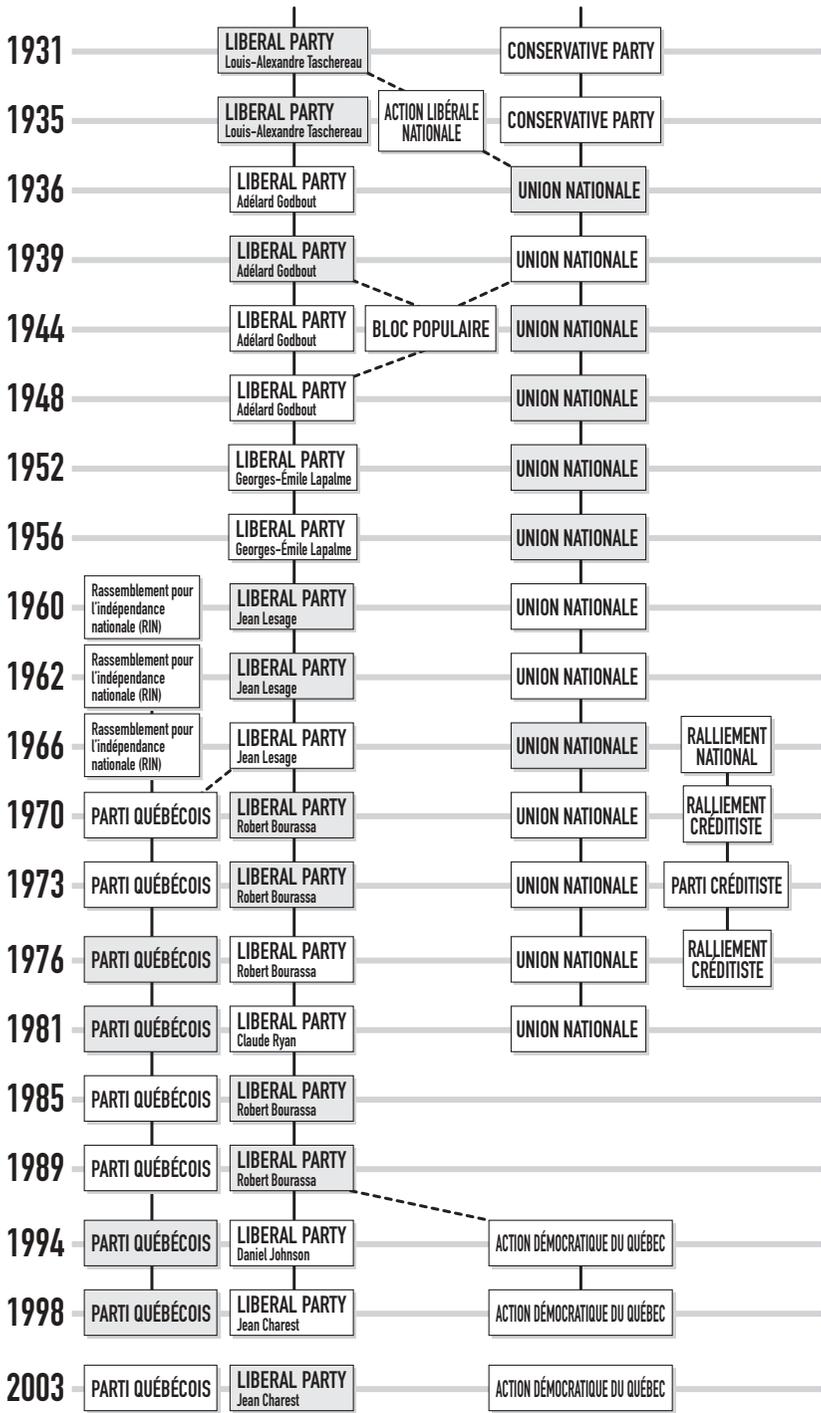
It is up to the current generation of Liberal Party members to translate these values into a political vision capable of responding to the challenges of the 21st century. These challenges include the defence and promotion of democracy, the strengthening of individual and group responsibility, the protection of private freedoms, the well-ordered development of economic life, the promotion of the equality of opportunity with each society and

worldwide, the response to changing demographic trends, the expansion of knowledge, the phenomenal progress of communications, the participation of citizens in democracy, and the search for common goals in societies facing a growing diversity of individual choices and in which the State is being challenged in the role that it has traditionally played in this domain.

Genealogy of the Quebec Liberal Party from 1827 to Today



Source: Based on Robert Boily, "Les partis politiques québécois — perspectives historiques," in Vincent LEMIEUX, *Personnel et Partis politiques au Québec*. Montreal: Boréal Express, pp. 38-39.



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1. This electoral platform is accompanied by 14 policy documents that outline priority political actions by sectors. The reader may consult these documents on the QLP website at www.plq.org.

Photos: QLP Archives

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At a time when, according to an oft-heard opinion, nothing aside from the national question genuinely distinguishes Quebec's political parties from one another, Claude Ryan has scrutinized the values and accomplishments specific to the Quebec Liberal Party in the 20th century. With his customary rigor and discernment, Claude Ryan offers us his reflections on the values that have, now as in the past, inspired the Quebec Liberal Party's action in the service of Quebec society. These values are, specifically: protection of individual freedoms; primary identification with Quebec; economic development and social justice; respect for social, economic and community partners; the advancement of democracy; as well as ties to the Canadian federation and active participation in its workings. In his view, these are the enduring values that the Quebec Liberal Party has striven to serve; he notes, moreover, that while results have fallen short of stated objectives, these are the values the party has generally identified with and which it feels the need to draw on each time that Quebec, and itself, are compelled to meet entirely new challenges.

In this work, Claude Ryan describes liberal values and explains how they have contributed to the building of modern-day Quebec. He shows how the Quebec Liberal Party's numerous achievements have stemmed from the articulation of these seven core values, which continue to frame its action in the present time. Finally, he argues that if the Quebec Liberal Party still intends to play a major role in the development of Quebec and confront the challenges with which any modern society is faced, these values must continue to guide the party now and into the future.



Claude Ryan was National Secretary of Action catholique canadienne from 1945 to 1962, President of the Institut canadien d'éducation aux adultes (the Montreal-based Canadian Institute of Adult Education) from 1955 to 1961, Editor-Publisher of *Le Devoir* from 1964 to 1978, Member of the National Assembly of Quebec for Argenteuil from 1979 to 1994, Leader of the Quebec Liberal Party from 1978 to 1982 and held a variety of major ministries in the Robert Bourassa and Daniel Johnson governments between 1985 and 1994. Claude Ryan passed away on February 9, 2004.

“In light of the history of the past 50 years, it is fair to conclude that the Liberal Party, driven by the values it adheres to, has been the main architect of modern Quebec on the political level. It engineered the changes that transformed Quebec during the Quiet Revolution.”

CLAUDE RYAN

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