

June 23, 2017

**Quebec's National Day and Summer Solstice
on the Eve of Canada 150**

Days of Celebration and Reflection



Ottawa Summer Solstice Pow Wow
Friday, June 23 to Sunday, June 25

Vincent Massey Park, Unceded Algonquin Anishnabe Territory, Ottawa
www.ottawasummersolstice.ca



La Fête nationale du Québec
Saturday, June 24
www.fetenationale.quebec

Quebec's National Day and Summer Solstice on the Eve of Canada 150

• Days of Celebration and Reflection

Quebec Government Presents

"Policy on Quebec Affirmation and Canadian Relations"

- **Rehash of the Meech Lake Accord -- From Tragedy to Farce - *Chantier politique***

June 23 -- 27th Anniversary of Defeat of Meech Lake Accord

- **Canada's Existential Crisis on the Eve of Canada 150 Celebrations**
- **For a Free and Sovereign State of Quebec and an Equal Union of Sovereign Peoples - *Marxist-Leninist Party of Quebec***

Quebec's National Day and Summer Solstice on the Eve of Canada 150

Days of Celebration and Reflection



March in Vancouver to Trout Lake on National Aboriginal Day, June 21, 2017.

(Vancouver Public Space Network)

On June 21 the Indigenous peoples lead celebrations across the country of the Summer Solstice, an occasion which since 1996 is officially known as National Aboriginal Day. The Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year has been a time for Indigenous peoples to gather and commemorate since time immemorial.

In recent years, National Aboriginal Day has also been an occasion for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people to engage in actions to affirm their rights in the face of the colonial arrangements the federal government continues to impose. This year is no exception. Even as the government marks Canada 150 with a celebratory tone while it imposes a police state to keep the peoples' fight for their rights in check, Canadians clearly state that Our Home Is on Native Land and justice must be done. While the Trudeau government declares constitutional and historical questions off limits, Indigenous peoples are speaking out against the cover-ups of historical injustice and on the need for redress in deeds, not words.

On June 24, the people of Quebec officially mark their National Day. In Quebec, the Summer Solstice celebration is "an expression of exchange and friendship amongst nations living in Quebec." A "Solstice of the Nations" is held by the Indigenous nations with a Fire Ceremony "to encourage closer ties amongst the peoples living on Quebec territory," so that "the coals of that fire

light up the bonfire of the Great Show of Quebec's National Celebration, on the Plains of Abraham."

This aim is worth recalling today, when the police powers of the state are reverting to what they were when the British drowned the nascent Quebec nation in blood in 1837-38. From this suppression the British created what are called democratic institutions in which the same police powers defined rights and the electoral process which deprives the people of power to govern themselves to this day.

The patriot Ludger Duvernay was the publisher and editor of the patriot newspaper *La Minerve*. Under his guidance, the Society he founded organized a banquet on June 24, 1834 in the garden of the lawyer MacDonnell to institute a national celebration for *Canadiens* of all origins (today, the term Quebecers is used). It was the first celebration of the people of the nascent Quebec nation, in which Duvernay, the Patriots, their elected representatives and their party recognized the people as "the primary source of all legitimate authority," and in doing so also recognized their sovereignty.



June 24, 1834: Ludger Duvernay and the members of the Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera Society institute June 24 as Quebec's National Day.
(www.fetenationale.qc.ca)

This national celebration established by Duvernay and the elected members of the Patriot Party fell on the same date as Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day but was not the same. In fact, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day had been introduced long before by the King of France and the Catholic high clergy in the colonies of the French empire in opposition to the June 21 summer solstice celebrated by the Indigenous peoples.

The Church, through the Council of Trent (1545-1563), attempted to Christianize the solstice celebration -- a celebration of light around a joyous bonfire -- by replacing it with a portrayal of submission in the person of Saint John the Baptist, "the lamb of God." In the same vein, in 1702, Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier in his *Catechism for the Diocese of Quebec*, intended for the *Canadiens*, noted that the Catholic Church in the New World (i.e. the colonies of the French empire) considered that ceremony acceptable so long as the "dances and superstitions" of the Natives were banished. It was not until 1908 that Pope Pius X -- advocating the division of the Canadian people into so-called French Canadians and English Canadians, which the British empire was so determined to impose -- named Saint John the Baptist as the patron saint of "French Canadians." Sixty years later, on June 24, 1968 and 1969, at a time the resurgence of Quebec's movement for independence and people's sovereignty was in full swing, this symbol of division and submission was swept aside and, once again, the National Celebration saw the people joyfully dancing around a bonfire.



The celebration of the National Day of the people of Quebec includes the celebration of the Patriots, who fought for independence from Britain in the mid-19th century and to establish an independent homeland and republic which vests sovereignty in the people: Nelson, De Lorimier, Côté, Chénier, Duvernay and O'Callaghan, amongst others. It includes celebrating all those who have espoused and continue to espouse the cause of the Quebec

Patriots, in particular all those committed to elaborating a nation-building project commensurate with the needs of the times.



Quebec National Day, Montreal, June 24, 2012



**Quebec Government Presents
"Policy on Quebec Affirmation and Canadian Relations"**

**Rehash of the Meech Lake Accord --
From Tragedy to Farce**

- *Chantier politique* -

On June 1, the Couillard Liberal government of Quebec announced its "Policy on Quebec Affirmation and Canadian Relations." This so-called new policy is a rehash of Bourassa's "renewed federalism" from 30 years ago. It serves no purpose other than to reinforce the status quo whereby Quebec is integrated into the Anglo-Canadian state institutions which deprive the people of their right to govern. Despite this, the Couillard government claims it has invented the "first-ever such policy" and that its aim is to "affirm Quebec's nationhood and its complete expression on the Canadian scene."



The essence of the policy is to claim that by being Quebecers, we express what it means to be Canadian. The government says the policy will be carried out in two stages. First would come a

period of "dialogue" with civil society institutions in Quebec and in Canada to promote "Quebec's national character" as well as Quebec's contribution to Canadian Confederation. This dialogue period would be followed by a reopening of constitutional talks between Quebec, the provinces and the federal government with the aim of adopting the demands put forward by the Quebec government at the time of the Meech Lake Accord.

The Meech Lake Accord set the stage for a tragedy for the people in which constitutional changes would be decided in secret and imposed by the rulers to serve their own interests, without the people playing any role. It was blocked at the last minute on June 22, 1990 by Indigenous Manitoba MLA Elijah Harper, leading to a political crisis for the ruling elite and their system. Lest Couillard forget, the Meech Lake Accord failed, but this does not stop his government from trying to repeat history, this time as farce.

Prime Minister Trudeau poured water on the entire thing before it even got off the ground. At a press conference in La Malbaie on June 8, Trudeau dismissed it saying, "I am proud of this reflection which makes us reflect on how Quebecers can feel even more at home within the country." This does not require constitutional talks, he said. "We are not opening the Constitution," Trudeau said.

Meanwhile, when Quebec Minister for Canadian Relations and Canadian Francophonie Jean-Marc Fournier, announced the project, he said:

"Mr. Premier, the moment we are sharing today marks an important stage in the history of our nation, and will give our Canadian relations new momentum.

"I am a Quebecer, and proud of it.

"I am a Quebecer and it is my way of being Canadian.

"This expression contains, in a nutshell, the meaning and essence of Quebec's participation in the Canadian Federation since its inception.

"It expresses a plurality of ways of belonging that characterizes our identity.

"An allegiance to Quebec and a sense of belonging to Canada."



Whatever can be made of this mish-mash on belonging and identity and "our way of being Canadian," it is as clear as clear can be that the Quebec government is not dealing with the constitutional question on a modern historical basis. Historical wrongs of Confederation and of the constitution must be addressed by recognizing the right of Quebec to self-determination and the hereditary rights of the Indigenous peoples and nation-to-nation relations, and by enshrining citizenship rights on a modern basis.

This must be done by electing a constituent assembly to draft a modern constitution based on modern principles of citizenship and rights, to be adopted by referendum. The people must not permit the interference of political parties and state

institutions to create hysteria against proposals which enshrine the rights of nations and vest sovereignty in the people. On the contrary, the people must inform themselves and discuss widely such proposals and the principles involved. The current institutions, which are called democratic but are based on "reasonable accommodation" and subjecting people's rights to "reasonable limits" defined by police powers are not acceptable.

So long as the Quebec government does not handle the matter from the perspective of righting historical wrongs in a manner consistent with the requirements of the times, but persists in pushing narrow and self-serving motives, this initiative will fall on its face. One thing is certain; No Quebec government has the right or mandate to sign the "patriated" anti-people Constitution of 1982 behind the backs of the people. Couillard would do well to refrain from entertaining any such thought.

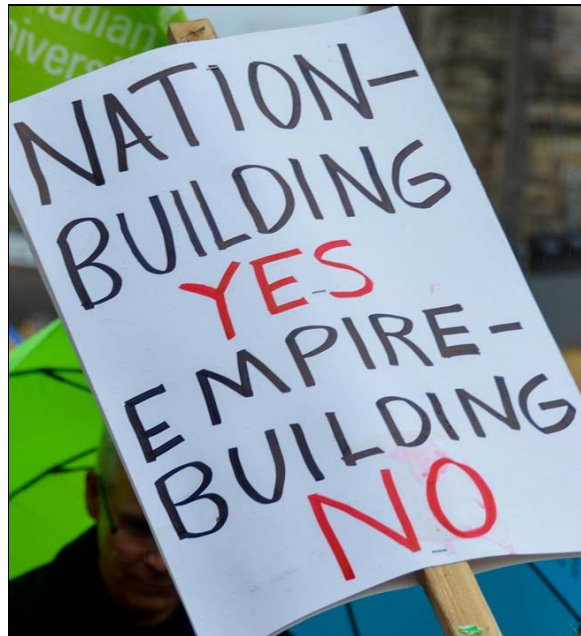
(Online newspaper of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Quebec)



June 23 -- 27th Anniversary of Defeat of Meech Lake Accord

Canada's Existential Crisis on the Eve of Canada 150 Celebrations

On June 23, 1990, the ignominious Meech Lake Accord was defeated. The Meech Lake Accord was a set of amendments to the Constitution of Canada negotiated in 1987 by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the provincial premiers behind closed doors. The failure of the Meech Lake Accord marked a deepening of the constitutional and political crises which has continued to grow since that time. To this day, Quebec is not a signatory to the *Constitution Act 1982*, the patriated version of the Constitution. This version perpetuated the negation of Quebec's nationhood and right to self-determination. While it incorporated an amending formula and a *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, it maintained the status quo of prerogative police powers which deprive the people of decision-making power. Even now, Quebec Premier Couillard has made proposals to negotiate changes which would, according to him, permit Quebec to sign the Constitution. But these changes are the same old notions of "renewed federalism" left over from the Bourassa era which claimed that Quebec should be accorded "distinct society" status, which is meaningless. Justin Trudeau dismissed his proposals outright, declaring that the constitutional question will not be opened. Meanwhile, Trudeau is strengthening the police powers already contained in the Constitution and the national question continues to fester due to the all-round neo-liberal nation-wrecking by the ruling class and financial oligarchy which have seized power by force.



The issues that remained outstanding when the Meech Lake Accord collapsed have become more significant than ever. The existence of Quebec as a nation and its right to self-determination, as well as the hereditary rights of the Indigenous peoples continue to be denied. Furthermore, citizenship

rights are reduced to privileges which are given and taken away by police powers outside the rule of law. Meanwhile, on the eve of the celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of the declaration by Royal Proclamation of the *British North America Act, 1867*, the ruling elite continue to concentrate economic and political power in fewer and fewer hands and integrate Canada into the United States of North American Monopolies compromising Canada's very existence as a country.

The Meech Lake Accord was reached within the context of the 1980 Quebec Referendum on the place of Quebec within Canada and the refusal of Quebec to sign onto the Pierre Elliot Trudeau government's patriated Constitution of 1982. Trudeau had promised that he would draft a new constitutional agreement after the Quebec referendum was defeated. His promise took the form of the addition of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and an amending formula to the *British North America Act, 1867*, which Quebec refused to sign because it did not recognize Quebec's nationhood, as well as Section 35 which recognized "existing aboriginal and treaty rights." The British Parliament passed the *Canada Act* on March 29, 1982 ending Canada's formal dependence on Britain even though the Queen of England remains Canada's Head of State and the prerogative powers (police powers) are vested in the Crown.

Trudeau's *Constitution Act, 1982* was the "Canadian equivalent" of Britain's *Canada Act*. By incorporating the text of Britain's *Canada Act* into the *British North America Act, 1867*, the Constitution was "patriated" and became the *Constitution Act, 1982* even though Quebec, a founding member of Confederation in 1867, refused to sign it. In an attempt to resolve this crisis, the Mulroney government commenced constitutional negotiations in 1985, culminating with the Meech Lake Accord two years later on April 30, 1987.



The Accord set out five main modifications to the Constitution. They were key demands for a renewed federalism made by Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa which he said had to be accepted for Quebec to sign on. In lieu of addressing the fundamental cause of the constitutional crisis, the need to affirm the right of the people of Quebec to self-determination, up to and including their right to secession, and the need to make sure the federation is a voluntary union of all its parts, the Accord deemed Quebec to be a "distinct society." It gave Quebec a constitutional veto, increased its powers with respect to immigration, extended and regulated the right to reasonable financial compensation for any province that opted out of any future federal

programs in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, and provided for provincial input in appointing senators and Supreme Court judges.

Because the Meech Lake Accord would have changed the Constitution's amending formula and modified the Supreme Court, all provincial and federal legislatures had to consent to it within three years. The ten provincial premiers agreed. However as the three-year deadline for consent of all legislatures drew near, the consensus began to unravel.

To try to save the agreement, a First Ministers' Conference was held 20 days before the signing deadline, resulting in an agreement for further rounds of constitutional negotiations to follow the Meech Lake Accord. During that conference, Newfoundland Premier Clyde Wells attacked the secrecy of the whole process of decision-making. On June 22, 1990, one day before the deadline, Elijah Harper, a First Nations member of the Manitoba Legislature, signalled his refusal to give his

approval by holding up an eagle feather. This blocked the motion required for the Manitoba Legislature to vote on the Accord. This was followed by Clyde Wells cancelling a proposed vote in the Newfoundland Legislature, following which the Meech Lake Accord was officially dead.

A main feature of the Meech Lake Accord was its obfuscation of the status of Quebec. The Accord stated that Quebec was a "distinct society" and affirmed that the role of the Legislature and Government of Quebec was to "preserve and promote the distinct identity of Quebec." By suggesting that the key thing that makes Quebec distinct is its language (i.e. French versus English), rather than its nationhood, the issue of Quebec's inherent right to self-determination was dismissed.

The term "distinct society" remained undefined in the documents and the "distinct" features of Quebec were not enumerated, nor were any guidelines given by which these features could be preserved and promoted. "Distinct society" was subject to many interpretations, but the predominant one that emerged was the old fiction that Quebec was distinct simply because the people spoke French. By making language the only issue, the Meech formulation of a "distinct society" denied that Quebec is a sovereign nation that has historically evolved with a common economy and territory, and a culture and psychology which have the imprint of this development. Further, it denied the Quebec people the right of self-determination.

Another significant feature of the Meech Lake Accord was its overall promotion of national disunity and inequality. Defining a nation by language alone leads to the theory that Canada is divided into two official languages and two official cultures which are superior and all others have to give way to them in order to be "Canadian." The multicultural dimension is an offshoot of the denial of citizenship rights in favour of privileges conferred by the Crown (i.e. the police power). It permits other languages and cultures so long as what the police powers deem to be Canadian values and what it allegedly means to be Canadian are not affected.



Meech Lake also created disunity by devolving federal powers to the provinces, suggesting the existence of ten small nations (the provinces) and one big one, the federal government. The two territories (Nunavut did not yet exist) were not invited to Meech (they participated by video conference) because Mulroney considered their power insufficient to affect any decisions, implying that different regions of Canada had different statuses. Meech also gave each province a veto to block legislation and it was clear that each province would use its veto to promote the narrow interests of its own regional economic and political power brokers rather than to advance the overall national interests.

A third main feature of the Meech Lake Accord was its failure to affirm or even address the hereditary rights of the Indigenous peoples, which amounted to a suppression of those rights. The rights of the Indigenous peoples are not a peripheral issue but should be provided with a guarantee in the Constitution of Canada. They have a rightful claim to the land of their ancestors and to the determination of what must be done with it. As sovereign peoples they have the right to determine not only their affairs but participate in determining the affairs of Canada as a whole. In the proposed modifications to the Constitution, the Meech Lake Accord did not deal with any of this. Indigenous leaders also raised two other issues. One was their exclusion from the entire Meech proceedings. The other was the potential transfer of federal services to the provinces implied by the

clause calling for compensation to provinces for opting out of federal programs. This could lead to the dismantling of programs very important to the well-being of Aboriginal peoples, they pointed out.



A fourth main feature of Meech Lake was the anti-democratic nature of the proceedings. All consultations were held behind the backs of the people. In fact, people referred to the process as eleven white men in suits dealing with the future of the country behind closed doors.

Once the Meech Lake agreement was reached in secret, the eleven first ministers then tried to impose it on the people without any discussion or deliberation. There was no broad consultation with the people at any time; the agenda was not set according to what the people wanted; the items discussed and included in the Accord were only those that the first ministers wanted.

The people's extreme displeasure with the Meech proceedings was captured by the 1990 Citizens' Forum on National Unity, commonly referred to as the Spicer Commission, which Mulroney was forced to convene just after the Meech Lake Accord was defeated, claiming that his government wanted to hear the opinions of Canadians. The Spicer Commission published its findings in 1991 with many Canadians expressing their acute awareness that something was lacking in the Canadian political process, that politicians were not to be trusted, and that mechanisms were required to empower the people. Many called for the formation of a constituent assembly which would enable the people to deliberate and decide on their own constitution.



Today the significance of Meech Lake is that in this era the people want to be the arbiters and decision-makers. CPC(M-L) pointed out at the time of the Spicer Commission that a form of political power has emerged in Canada with absolute power resting in the hands of the financial oligarchs and their political representatives. The Meech Lake Accord reflected this by suggesting that the Prime Minister and the ten provincial premiers should be the only ones to propose amendments to the Constitution and that the people should be excluded from the process. This has now become many times worse as the police powers which are by definition above the rule of law are made

"legal." This shows the crisis in which Canada's rule of law is mired.

The people rejected Meech because the times demand that power be transferred to the people acting

in their own interests. People want to take politics out of the hands of the vested interests and place them in the hands of those who will deal with the real problems that the people face, such as the economic insecurity that is the number one worry and the deepest concern of the people.

The failure of the Meech Lake Accord also led to the eventual demise of the parliamentary configuration of the Liberal and Conservative "party-in-power" and "party-in-opposition," with the virtual decimation of the Conservatives in 1993. Despite the merger of the Reform Party and the old Progressive Conservative Party which finally achieved a Conservative Party majority under Stephen Harper, the disequilibrium which set in at that time has not re-established a two-party system but, on the contrary, imposed a mafia-style cartel party system on the polity. This has exacerbated the political crisis caused by the unrepresentative nature of the representative democracy and the fact that the electoral process is designed to deprive the citizenry of power.

Since Meech Lake, as predicted by CPC(M-L), the Liberal Party also spiralled into disrepute, beginning with the Sponsorship Scandal in 2006, through to the shenanigans of the current Trudeau government. Today, the arrogance, secrecy and corruption of the government has far surpassed that of the Progressive Conservatives who were dethroned in the 1993 election. The corruption of the party system has continually become more pronounced. Since the Sponsorship Scandal rocked the very foundations of the party system in 2006, the Harper Conservatives more than rivaled the Liberals for electoral corruption, patronage appointments, closure of debate in Parliament, and anti-people measures and now the Trudeau government has outdone the Harper Conservatives.

The content of the present society has surpassed current political forms and their constitutional underpinning. Even the continuation of the status quo, which has posed such dangers to the well-being of the people and threatened their freedoms and liberties, has now become a new regime where the concentration of power in the hands of the most financially powerful has reached levels not seen before. It has given rise to the present situation where private interests called oligopolies are given political positions and the state funds and power are openly used to support them and they openly carry out the anti-social offensive with impunity against the interests of the people. The Harper government routinely attacked public right and invoked convoluted irrational arguments to claim that the most nefarious activities were "Canadian values" and that anyone who did not espouse such things is an enemy of the state. Now the Trudeau government is openly establishing a government of police powers and calling it a government of laws. All aspects of the public authority which constituted a civil society have been forsaken in favour of the police powers.

Democratic renewal is the order of the day. Canada needs a modern constitution written by the people. Confederation in 1867 and everything that has followed it, including the Meech Lake Accord, are the old project. The new project involves people taking control of their lives. The Canadian people are educated, industrious and capable of governing a modern society. The political power must represent not the privileged few but all human beings who are members of the society. Only on that basis can there be talk of equality within the body politic.

At minimum, a modern constitution must recognize the nation of Quebec and its right to self-determination, the hereditary rights of the Indigenous nations and nation-to-nation relations; minority rights on an objective, non-racist basis; gender equality; and equal rights and duties for all in a manner which eliminates all vestiges of privilege, racism and arbitrariness.



For a Free and Sovereign State of Quebec and an Equal Union of Sovereign Peoples

- Marxist-Leninist Party of Quebec -



**QUE LA CLASSE OUVRIÈRE CONSTITUE LA NATION ET
INVESTISSE LE PEUPLE DU POUVOIR SOUVERAIN!**

TML Daily is publishing below the position of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Quebec on the issue of Quebec sovereignty. It was originally published on the PMLQ website, www.pmlq.qc.ca.

The Marxist-Leninist Party of Quebec (PMLQ) was founded in 1989 with more than 1,000 members under the law governing political parties. This happened at a very important moment in the political life of Quebec, in the midst of the debate on the Meech Lake Accord that took up Robert Bourassa's proposal for renewed federalism.

The PMLQ, like many of the sovereigntist forces, had campaigned against the Meech Lake Accord because it reduced the Quebec nation to a "distinct society" and therefore did not recognize Quebec's right to self-determination. Following the failure of the Accord we wrote:

Our Party is of the opinion that with the failure of Meech Lake, it can now be said with certainty that the solution to the problems confronting the people of Quebec can no longer be sought within the confines of a constitution based upon the *British North America Act*. We believe that the people of Quebec need a new constitution, one which only they can decide upon without any external interference, one which is democratic and expresses the popular will and will serve the building of a future for the nation.[1]

On the issue of Quebec sovereignty, the PMLQ's position to realize a free and sovereign Quebec was clearly stated:

1. Quebec is a nation constituted by all the people who live in its territory;
2. Quebec, as a nation, has the right to self-determination including secession;
3. Quebec, at this time, must exercise its right to self-determination by holding a referendum

in which the people of Quebec are called upon to 1) abrogate the *British North America Act* and elect an assembly specifically to draft a democratic constitution; and 2) call upon the rest of Canada to do the same.[2]

It stated:

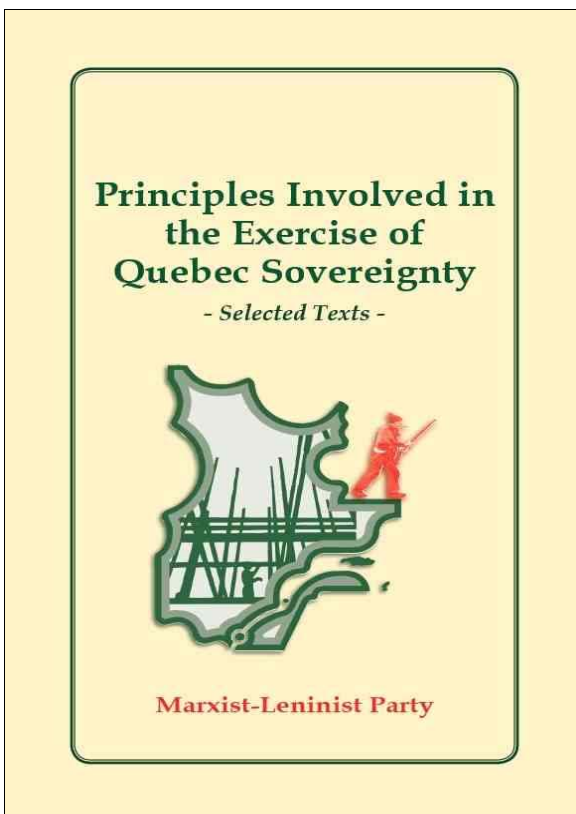
Like any nation, the Quebec nation has its inherent sovereignty, in particular its right to national self-determination including secession, if the people of Quebec so decide. For more than two hundred years the people of Quebec have been seeking precisely how this sovereignty should be expressed, how this self-determination ought to be exercised. We believe that the exercise of the right to self-determination by the Quebec people, acting as a sovereign nation, is a necessary prelude to the solution of all the other problems besetting the people, and an indispensable precondition for building a future for the nation.[3]

Beaudoin-Dobbie Report's Falsification of History Opposed

After the failure of Meech Lake, the federal government continued to seek ways to maintain the status quo with regard to Quebec by making it acceptable to the people of Quebec and the Canadian people. When the Brian Mulroney government in its final term returned the charge with the "Special Joint Committee on a Renewed Canada" (the Beaudoin-Dobbie Committee), which later prepared the Charlottetown Accord, the PMLQ reiterated that all attempts for the renewal of Canada would fail if the refusal to recognize the right of the Quebec nation to self-determination persisted:

Even though the entire document promotes the idea of a Renewed Canada, once it does not recognize the right of the nation of Quebec to self-determination, it fails. It opts for recognizing the status quo and merely takes up the problem of how to make the status quo valid for our times. The Joint Committee does this by upholding the status imposed on Quebec by the British colonialists in the *Quebec Act* of 1774, which it says "responded to French Canada's demands for the preservation of its laws and customs," and the *Constitutional Act* of 1791 which

"divided Quebec into two parts corresponding to the linguistic and cultural divergence of its inhabitants." The Joint Committee correctly points out that "These two statutes acknowledged and provided the political framework for a distinct society in Quebec with institutions, laws and culture quite different from those of other political communities in North America." It goes further to point out that when the Canadian state was established through the BNA Act in 1867, it enshrined this practice of the British. The Joint Committee writes: "In 1867, Confederation recognized and re-established Quebec's distinct society as an autonomous political community while it embraced the principle of linguistic duality in the



In 2016, the Marxist-Leninist Party of Quebec published this pamphlet presenting the PMLQ's position on the Quebec national question. It includes the item reprinted here. Order from the [National Publications Centre](#).

political institutions of a new country that would eventually span a continent."

We couldn't agree more. This is precisely what is called suppressing the nation of Quebec and denying its right to self-determination. By the time the British fought their intercolonial wars with the French, the "French settlers," whom the Joint Committee recognizes as a mere abstraction, had forged a new society. They had produced an indigenous population, born and bred in the new territory, partly of French parentage and partly born of the inter-marriage between French settlers and the Native Peoples. This indigenous population forged a new economy, through its own labour, blood and sacrifice. These people developed their own trade and commerce and set out to forge the political, educational and legal institutions they would require to administer themselves. All the while, they remained a colony of France, ruled by the French colonial power and its institutions. In other words, Quebec had become a nation by virtue of its common territory, population, language, psychology and economy. The fact that the British won the inter-colonialist wars against the French and gained Quebec as part of the Paris Treaty of 1763 simply meant that the colonial ownership of Quebec was transferred from the French to the British. While the people of Quebec, consistent with the times, were ready to embark on the road of modern nation-building, in the manner of either the French, who, in their Revolution of 1789, ended feudalism and set forth on the road of a modern bourgeois republic, or of the peoples of the Americas, who won their independence from colonial rule, the British imposed their own colonial rule over Quebec and suppressed the emergent nation of Quebec. Quebec has been a suppressed nation ever since, denied the right to self-determination.[4]

Federal Referendum on the Charlottetown Accord -- 1992

In the federal referendum on the Charlottetown Accord in 1992 -- an attempt to divide the people of Quebec with the notion that Quebec is a "distinct society" and a blatant refusal to recognize the Quebec nation and its right to self-determination -- the PMLQ actively campaigned for the No camp. During the campaign, it explained the failure of the arrangements of the empire-builders of the 19th century that the Charlottetown Accord sought to maintain in all its essentially anachronistic elements. It also published important theoretical texts on the history of the nation and political power, as well as a modern definition of rights and the distinction between citizenship and nationality.

National Campaign for a Modern Constitution and Democratic Renewal -- September 1994

In September 1994, the PMLQ launched a national campaign for a modern constitution and democratic renewal with a series of conferences on the future of Quebec. The campaign's goal was also to not permit the political discourse to be disinforming by the false discourse of the federalists on "national unity." The PMLQ judged that the question of vesting in the people the power to decide was more important than ever. The campaign's slogan was "For a sovereign and independent state of Quebec."

Referendum on Quebec Sovereignty -- 1995

The PMLQ actively participated in the 1995 referendum campaign on Quebec sovereignty from its launch in September that year, with the slogan: "For the people's Yes!" The Party considers it played an important role in the formation of Yes Committees and it held conferences at several universities, colleges and cities to encourage everyone to participate in the referendum campaign for the Yes side.

Even before the campaign, the PMLQ organized extensive internal and external consultations on

the position to take in light of the referendum question and submitted a brief to the Commission on the future of Quebec.

The PMLQ said about the referendum:

A great opportunity exists for the working class of Quebec to lead the project of nation-building in a manner which leads to the formation of a state in Quebec on the basis of its own model. [...]

In nation-building, we have to be careful not to found the nation on the basis of 19th century concepts of ethnicity as the British did in formulating the BNA Act.[5] On the contrary, we should begin with the modern definition according to which a modern polity is established which recognizes the collective rights of all the people of Quebec and vests sovereignty in the people.[6]

We proposed that the Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Quebec read in part as follows:

We, the people of Quebec, exercising our inviolable and inalienable right as a sovereign people with collective rights irrespective of the languages we speak, the religions we practice, the ideologies and political opinions we hold on basic values and social objectives, or other attributes such as skin colour, national background, gender, age, lifestyle, ability, wealth or social position, hereby declare the formation of the Republic of Quebec, a modern nation--state and polity in which all citizens enjoy equal rights and duties and all minority rights based on concrete objective reality are recognized as inviolable and inalienable.

In this modern nation-state and polity, our collective rights reign supreme, and the rights of individuals are protected by passing legislation which harmonizes them with the general well-being of society.

In this modern nation-state and polity, the people are sovereign and set the fundamental law and govern themselves as we have done by means of the referendum through which we expressed our collective will to establish our modern nation-state and polity.

Our action from now as a sovereign people is to collectively establish state structures according to this law of the land, the Constitution of the Republic of Quebec, and begin to govern ourselves on the basis of this Constitution.

Since the 1995 referendum, the PMLQ has continued to argue for the necessity of a sovereign and independent Quebec. "The Marxist-Leninists," said PMLQ Leader Pierre Chénier, "have always defended a principled and consistent position on the national question, which the Canadian establishment and its representatives in Quebec keep using to divide the people and prevent the political unity required to solve their problems and those of the society." [7]

Conferences on the Future of Quebec -- 1998

In 1998, the PMLQ organized a series of conferences on the future of Quebec with the aim of organizing workers and youth to take up the national question. The conferences had as their theme: "The working class must constitute the nation and vest sovereignty in the people." The main challenge was not to permit the propaganda that said that the economy required integration with global markets and the abandonment of the principle of a sovereign nation-state to pass:

Today, the issue of nation-building concerns the people of the entire world. The neo-liberal

offensive to sell out all the resources of nations, especially the human and natural resources, to serve the aim of making the monopolies competitive on global markets has put this issue on the agenda of the peoples everywhere. The issue is of great urgency. This concern cannot be dismissed by portraying everything to do with nation-building as an issue of separatism versus federalism or which equates separatism with sovereignty and so on, as the federal Liberals and their fellow travellers are doing. Whether or not Quebec opts for independence, the approach towards nation-building will determine the future of Quebec. Today the interests of the bourgeoisie are not identified with those of the nation. They lie in selling out all its resources, in using the state power to seize the entire social product produced by the working class to hand it over to those who invest it to make maximum profits for themselves. This is why the working class must constitute the nation and lead society so that it can advance.[8]

Opposition to *Clarity Act* -- 1998

When the Jean Chrétien Liberal Party, in the context of making Canadian monopolies "number one" in the world, tried to put an end "once and for all" to the national question in Canada through the *Clarity Act* that dictated the Canadian government's terms for holding a referendum in Quebec, the PMLQ participated in the opposition campaign. It published the document "Quebec Case for Sovereignty Before the Supreme Court" in February 1998, which addresses the problem from all angles.

Harper's Motion on the Quebec Nation -- November 2006

In the wake of the Sponsorship Scandal and the defeat of the Liberal Party of Canada in Quebec, intense competition once again broke out among the political parties of the rich for the conquest of the Quebec electorate. While rejecting any discussion of the need to renew the arrangements that had their origin in the Canadian federation and choosing not to respond to the rejection of the Charlottetown Accord, they declared they had a plan to fix the problem. The reason was simple -- so long as the Quebec issue is not resolved, no political party can claim "to govern Canada from coast to coast."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservative government joined the dance in November 2006 by filing a resolution in the House of Commons stating, "the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada." The motion passed, thwarting a long-standing strategy of the Bloc Québécois to submit resolutions to the Parliament of Canada recognizing the Quebec nation.

Harper's motion does not recognize Quebec's right to self-determination or any rights whatsoever based on the fact that Quebec is a nation in itself. First, the motion gives no power to the nation that Parliament is said to recognize. Quebec is a nation insofar as it "forms a nation within a united Canada." On the other hand, the Harper motion once again tries to establish the Quebec nation along ethnic lines, which is equally condemnable, with the deliberate goal of creating division in Quebec. Thus, the English version of the resolution reads that "the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada," which reveals the intention to cause trouble as concerns the refusal to recognize all Quebecers as forming part of the Quebec nation so as to deny its right to self-determination.

Lawrence Cannon, Stephen Harper's former Quebec lieutenant, later gave the interpretation of the motion by declaring to reporters who asked whether the term Québécois included all Quebec residents, whatever their origin, "No. Four hundred years ago when Champlain stepped off and onto the shores of Quebec City, he of course spoke about les Canadiens. Then, as the debate evolved, we spoke of French Canadians. And in Quebec now we speak of the Québécois who occupy that land, America." This means that the Conservatives want to perpetuate divisions based on an ethnocultural basis, blocking the modern definition of the nation and the ensuing rights. It

was intentional; it could be used to promote the partition of a sovereign Quebec.

These days, the PMLQ is touring Quebec to ensure that Quebec's interests are defended especially against the measures taken by the federal government, which is selling off Canada's natural resources and integrating the Canadian Armed Forces into U.S. wars of aggression.

One of the specific projects that the PMLQ takes up on a constant basis is the study of the experience of the Patriots of 1837-38 and the dissemination of Quebec history from the people's perspective, not that of the British or the federal state. The Party often brings groups of youth to the Patriots Museum in St. Charles so they may be inspired by the role that the Quebec people played at the height of the wars of independence in the Americas in the 19th century. It is also to show them that the Republic was suppressed by the British at that time, leaving no other choice but ultramontanism and liberalism, which explains the origins of the so-called reasonable accommodations of the federal government in the twentieth century, the so-called Laurier century, that are now in crisis.

The PMLQ's position is that the question of Quebec's identity should be used to unite the people to pave the way for society's progress.

Why the Working Class Must Constitute the Nation

The working class must constitute the nation because in today's world, the bourgeoisie is working to destroy the nation: it sells the nation's assets and puts its human, material and natural resources at the disposal of monopolies competing on world markets. The arrangements at the base of the 19th century nation-state have been replaced by arrangements that promote the success of the most powerful monopolies on world markets regardless of the consequences for the nation, its economy, trade and political affairs, as well as the rights of its citizens and residents.

In practice this means that major decisions about the direction of the economy are taken by private monopoly interests that have taken over the public authority. The trade agreements concluded on this basis give global monopolies the right to challenge the national public authority and destroy the national networks of public services and social programs and subordinate public right. Far from responding to people's needs on the basis of a modern definition of the rights of all in this new era, they are being redefined on a neo-liberal basis, that says society is not responsible for the well-being of its members but instead should ensure monopoly right at all times. Meanwhile, the refusal to renew the political arrangements means that the only alternative presented is to return to the old arrangements in which a hierarchy of rights is established based on national origin, race, gender and beliefs.

It is not possible to establish a nation-state in Quebec without taking into account this current reality. The question is simple: if the new arrangements do not favour the working class and the people, why would they have an interest in establishing and defending them?

The PMLQ has given the call for the working class to constitute the nation. It must do so in order to open the door for the progress of the society. This can only be achieved on the basis of modern definitions and by making modern arrangements which vest sovereignty in the people. Such arrangements will not come out of thin air. They are established in the course of the struggle to affirm the human rights of the people and the political, economic, social and cultural rights which derive from this.

The working class must take the lead to ensure that Quebec's future is not shaped by the global private monopoly interests that are leading the world toward war and economic and humanitarian disaster.

For a Free and Equal Union Between Sovereign Peoples in Quebec, Canada and First Nations

Because of its fundamental world outlook the working class does not stop with independence. It aims to go further and establish a free and equal union between the sovereign peoples of Quebec, Canada and the First Nations. There can be no free and equal union without independence. In other words, the working class is not circumscribed in its aims. It does not consider its interests as separate from or in opposition to those of workers around the world.

The PMLQ believes that a great opportunity exists for the working class to show that it can be at the cutting edge of solving contemporary problems. Far from the paralysis and hesitation that characterizes the ruling elite and political parties that champion private interests, workers must position themselves in the van of the society to fight for democratic renewal and the exercise of power by the people. The workers should call on all the people to say Yes to self-determination and Yes to a free and equal union of the sovereign peoples of Quebec, Canada and First Nations.

Notes

1. Brief of the PMLQ National Council, November 2, 1990.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. National Council of PMLQ, March 1992.
5. The Patriots' conception or way of thinking and acting considered anyone fighting the occupation, domination and oppression of our people and our country by the British Empire as Canadian. In reality, during the years 1834-1840 there was no "French Canadian" or "English-Canadian," except in the words and writings of Molson, McGill, Moffatt et al. The members of the economic oligarchy, the monopolists of the time -- the Molsons, McGills and Moffatts -- with their supporters and their bureaucratic administrators, organized societies that were not at all national societies, but societies that they controlled to divide citizenship on the basis of national origin, language and religious beliefs. These sectarian societies were organized in direct opposition to our citizenship and its movement and the Patriot Party. This is why they created at that time the St. George's Society, the St. Andrew's Society, the St. Patrick's Society and the German Society. On January 28, 1835, these were grouped under an umbrella organization: the Constitutional Association of Montreal, which would establish "a paramilitary organization of the English party," the party representing the interests of the British Empire. On December 16, the organization took the form of the British Rifle Corps.
6. Brief of the Outaouais Commission on the Future of Quebec, February 14, 1995, Hull, Quebec.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Presentation by Christine Dandenault to the Conference on the Future of Quebec, Montreal, June 20, 1998.



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