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Quebec's Minorities: Trapped Between Two Solitudes – an article on racism re French and Canada by Julian Samuel

5 December, 2000 Parti Quebecois, Yves Michaud:

"In the interview on CKAC... I said that the Jewish people were not the only people in the world to have suffered. I said that. Is it anti-Semitic to say that? The Armenians suffered. The Arcadians suffered. And, B'nai Brith wanted to rename the Lionel Groulx metro station. I said they were anti-Quebecois and anti-sovereignist extremists. I don't withdraw those words."

Every time a Parti Quebecois luminary, inebriated or sober, lets go in front of the media, white federalists rejoice. Last December they acted as though Michaud's statements were manna and cream cheese falling from heaven. Politicians gleefully pointed fingers and the cultural elites wasted vats of ink. Few in the media asked the 'NO' voting minorities themselves what they thought of the issue.

The PQ has consistently accused Quebec's minorities of thwarting its desire to create an independent nation-state. Minorities continue to reject the PQ project of partitioning of Canada along racial lines. It is evident to us that the PQ project is about race and that is why the issue of race comes up more and more often these days. The PQ surpasses even the Canadian Alliance in verbal race attacks by its enlightened political figures (Parizeau, Laundry, and Bouchard).

In instigating a discussion about the race of "visible" citizens, Michaud and the PQ bring about a tactical awareness of racial differences in the population at large. People are developing a phenomenological knowledge of skin tonalities, pigment, facial features, whether or not people have flat noses, whether they speak with non-pure wool or pure wool accents.

This hyper-awareness of racial, linguistic and facial features is a way for the PQ to exaggerate the differences between white francophones and "les autres." Michaud connects race to voting patterns, as do many American commentators regarding the "black vote", the "Hispanic vote" and less often

mentioned, the "Jewish vote". Notice that Yves Michaud did not comment on the white French-Canadian 'NO' vote in the last referendum. Nor does he mention anything about white the Anglo vote. Why mark out the minority vote? What purpose does it serve?

Partially, here are some reasons why minorities vote no:

White women should have more white babies -- Lucien Bouchard

Money and the ethnic vote -- Jacques Parizeau

Only Quebecers should vote in the referendum (1995) -- Pierre Bourgault

It is because of people like you that we lost our referendum (to a Canadian-Mexican hotel clerk) -- Bernard Landry

Courts would not see the above statements as actionable even though they resemble the thinking of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Jurgen Haider. The effect of Michaud's statements is pernicious. Purely racist statements are actionable and the courts usually punish the author. In most provinces condemned racists get little support from the public.

The PQ will continue to make racial and linguistic distinctions between citizens -- and they will do this without getting taken to court. This is the advantage of making unactionable statements. The PQ modernists believe they have distanced themselves from Michaud, in an act filled with sincerity. Minister of Finance Bernard Landry sweats blood; he reluctantly condemns Michaud. Parizeau, like an old elephant, trumpets his unconditional support for Michaud. Bouchard shows mock disgust and quits. Readers should remember his 1995 suggestion to the white women of Quebec.

Why do these verbal attacks persist in 2001? Why are the separatist elites pointing the finger at us? Why have not Quebec's white anglo journalists taken a serious look at the lack of racial equality in Quebec?

Visible minority demands are a thorn in the side of Quebec's white anglo elites. By placing a few handsome, smiling minorities on TV they think they have confronted and resolved the race issue. Who are they kidding? Michaud, the PQ and Quebec's white anglos will continue bludgeoning the minorities. What are the provincial Liberals going to do to help us? Certainly they will not establish any mechanism which will help us get us the jobs that some of deserve -- key posts in political and cultural institutions. These jobs are reserved for white anglophones and white francophones: wall-to-wall White Affirmative Action. More lip service condemning Michaud and friends is clearly not enough.

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