

QUEBEC SEPARATION – A QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY (1989)

Quebec is being torn apart the way it was before the 1980 referendum on sovereignty- association, says a prominent nationalist and president of the giant Desjardins credit union movement.

Quebecers should keep “a level head” in the constitutional debate, Claude Beland says.

Instead, emotionalism and squabbling seem to be the order of the day, he told about 130 people attending a weekend Quebec city seminar on financial co-operatives.

This situation, he said compares with an apparent consensus among Quebecers that emerged after the failure of the Meech Lake constitutional accord in June last year.

“We took two steps forward and all of a sudden we’re taking two steps backward,” he said, “maybe three even.”

“We’re back to the point of asking ourselves whether Quebec is really a distinct society.”

Beland lamented the growing tendency of groups to treat those who disagree with them as “imbeciles.”

He said it reminds him of the bitter climate that split Quebec in the days and months leading up to the 1980 referendum.

Quebecers are again beginning to tear one another to pieces, Beland said, “instead of keeping a level head and weighing the arguments for and against sovereignty in a calm and rational manner.

“We’re getting all caught up in various campaigns of misinformation. It’s not very encouraging.”

Beland, a member of the former Belanger- Campeau commission on Quebec’s political future, said he doesn’t understand people who say: Stop talking about the Constitution and talk about the economy.

“The two are linked. If I took over a business that had two vice- presidents, two of planning, two directors of personnel and two production managers – I’d have to clean house before addressing any other problems.”

Beland, who has made no secret of his wish for a sovereign Quebec, is a key player in the economic future of the province because he heads the Desjardins credit union empire, which has total assets of \$50 billion.

It acts as a major lending institution to small and medium sized Quebec firms.

Is this situation a question of internal or external sovereignty?

Would Quebec benefit from becoming a “sovereign nation” in your opinion?

What could or would happen to Canada’s Sovereignty in the event of separation?

Would Quebec actually become a totally sovereign nation?