



Parti communiste du Québec (PCQ)

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We must give the people an answer to the national question

Statement of the National Executive Committee of the PCQ

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The national question has been and remains at the forefront of discussions in most left-wing organizations including the PCQ which, as it was formed in 1921, is one of the oldest parties. In the PCQ this discussion has been around for a long time.

For more information about the resolution that was passed by our delegates at the XVth Convention in April 2005 we include a copy. This is our most up to date position

We feel that when Quebec becomes independent that this will be an important advance in our struggle for socialism. **We consider that the best way to advance, not only the struggle for socialism but also in the struggle to eliminate all forms of national oppression in Quebec is by putting these two battles together..**

An additional important point : **Not only does the PCQ support the independence project for the Quebecois people but also the national aspirations of First Nations and Inuit people, likewise found within the actual territory of Quebec.** The XIVth and XVth PCQ Conventions were very clear on this point and furthermore on the right of First Nation and Inuit people to make their own decisions on self-determination where ever that might be the case and when ever they so desire.

The PCQ is flexible on how to go about getting independence for the Quebecois. In terms of laying out strategies and tactics it must be taken into consideration that a number of hurdles have been put up by the central state in Ottawa and they have further confounded by all the federalist parties in order to prevent the Quebecois people from deciding their own future; that includes the infamous referendum Clarity Law. It is also important to consider the political reality of Quebec along with the make up and relationships of forces within the sovereignist movement. Debates in the PCQ ; as in the other movements of the sovereignist movement continue to evolve.

In any case, as events develop it will always be necessary to fine tune strategies and tactics.

The PCQ wants to work closely with all other groups of the left within the sovereignist movement in order to find the best approach to follow.

During the last 30 years the PQ has become a major force in the sovereignist political movement and throughout these years as done everything possible to insure its almost complete control of it. This has always been the strategy of the PQ leadership. Today is no different; **but its plan of action does not work as well as it used to.** For so many years, the bourgeois leadership of the PQ **has demonstrated its own weaknesses.**

The term « bourgeois party » used to describe the PQ might cause some confusion in that even today within its membership there is a sizeable number from working-class backgrounds. None-the-less, the PQ leadership is ever more dominated by bourgeois elements who have no scruples about being openly right wing and pro neo-liberal. More and more people have serious misgivings with this. This is very important to note. This is a further cause for the PQ's slide towards the right. Since the end of the 70s the leadership of the PQ has also drifted towards a compromise that is a pro-integration movement with the USA. This does not sit well with a major portion of Quebec's population.

Not only has this strained tensions within the sovereignist movement and in particular that part of it within the left wing (which has led to the objective development of a party such as *Québec solidaire*), but in recent years while only the PQ was in power in the National Assembly there was an erosion several; accomplishments in the realm of social benefits that major portions struggled for such a long time to win. This has raised a series of new problems and challenges for the sovereignist movement in achieving its objective of an independent Quebec.

The slide of the PQ to the right has also had an impact and the fact that the PQ is less and less counted on as an active militant base is directly related to it.

When *Québec solidaire* arrived on the scene, a new pole of reference for left-wing forces to rally around was set up, one which allows the pendulum to swing back towards a more « normal » and beneficial situation without the virtual monopoly of the PQ and the Liberal Party on the Quebecois political scene that has been stagnating political life here. The recent appearance of the ADQ, in final analysis, has done nothing more than to re-enforce the dominant bourgeois ideology.

In today's environment, left-wing forces in Quebec can play a role which is more important than the one they have been used to playing over many years and the main question remains as to whether they will be successful in this new role, whether they will be able to satisfy the expectations that more and more people have in them.

Over the next few years left-wing forces will have to prove that they are able to break down the barriers of the political orientation of the traditional sovereignist movement and **redress the almost exclusive control that the PQ leadership has had of it up to now.** These left-wing forces should show that they are the ones most qualified to not only defend workers' interests and popular concerns but that they are also the best ones to handle the national question.

In order to advance the debates and develop conditions to open up the situation there are some things which can be done and that should be encouraged. Since its XIVth Convention in 2001 the PCQ has called for the setting up of a **Constituant Assembly**, which would represent all the different elements of the civil society as well as the various political tendencies found within the Quebecois society. The mandate of this Constituant Assembly would be to establish a plan for a future independent Quebec.

The PCQ makes no claim to be the inventor of such a project, others thought of this before us. Unfortunately, however, this idea has not had all the publicity and attention it deserves and that is a pity.

This assembly could also have the mandate to establish the ground work for some type of association with the rest of Canada, provided that Quebecois were agreeable to negotiate such an association.

Setting up a Constituant Assembly would have the principle advantage of making the process of the transition to independence even more democratic. It would have to also consider the fact that the PQ does not have an exclusive monopoly over the sovereigntist movement and the make up of the National Assembly does not represent all the political tendencies on the Quebec political scene. Setting up such an assembly would have to be done quickly the beginning of the process, It is only necessary to have one referendum for things to begin at this level.

Finally, the PCQ furthermore believes that it would be necessary to organise, between then and the end of the process before the official declaration of independence a referendum in which the Quebecois people could endorse a proposed Constitution that would be presented by the Constituant Assembly. Having a referendum need not be the starting point for the process but it could be, at some point the means for confirming the proposal by the population and for insuring that the process is truly democratic from start to finish.

Between now and then the majority of voters would support the eventual opportunity of a general election with candidates from different parties who are openly in favour of a sovereign Quebec, this should be enough to start the process for transition to sovereignty. All this could even be done within the context that an alliance might be possible. Meanwhile it is necessary and a basic point that all parties concerned act in some way or other. This is something which is far from evident within the PQ.

For the rest of us, as we mentioned earlier, we are open to all ideas that may develop.