THE EVOLUTION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE MINORITY IN QUEBEC SINCE THE QUIET REVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the evolution of the English Language Minority (ELM) in Quebec since the Quiet Revolution of 1960-1966. It briefly examines demographic changes, changes in attitude and the reaction of the Anglophone community. It concludes with a description of the Evolution of Anglophone language institutions and leadership since the Quiet Revolution using census data from1971 and 2006.

DEMOGRAPHIC DEFINITIONS AND EVOLUTION

In thinking about the demographic evolution of the English Language Minority (ELM) since the Quiet Revolution, a single linguistic consideration outweighs all others. Indeed, for most of that period, the Anglophone community was the object of an unprecedented effort on the part of the provincial government to increase the knowledge and use of French in Quebec, in both the private and public sectors. This implied a corresponding decrease in the use of English and so the demographic evolution of the ELM must be assessed in the light of these circumstances.

Given this background, we can take a look at the understanding of how linguistic communities are defined demographically and then try to make sense of the shifts that have occurred since the Lesage Government of 1960-1966.

We begin by noting that there is no single "Anglophone community" in Quebec, at least not in any accepted sense of the word. The ELM is made up of people who are speaking a minority language as part of their daily life, some frequently and some infrequently. Many of them would not identify themselves primarily by their primary language, but with reference to many other social and cultural interests and organizations in their lives.

The ELM includes:

- The remaining Anglo-Saxon descendants of the class that controled the levers of power in Quebec during the first half of the twentieth century. At this point, most of this cohort are senior citizens. They have typically been, and remain, strongly opposed to langauge legislation. But there are also a number of Anglophones who are devoted to Canada's Official Languages Act and believe that language legislation is good because it encourages bilingualism, which in turn stimulates tolerance and learning skills.
- Throughout downtown Montreal and in its western suburbs, there are thousands of English speaking middle class and blue-collar workers. There is also an important Jewish community, and a Black community from the Caribbean. The members of these communities, or their parents, were leading their day-to-day lives in English before the Quiet Revolution. There are also, recently, many first-¬generation immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Latin America, who use English mainly. Further, in rural Quebec, a number of Anglophone communities remain and a handful of towns still have a majority English speaking population. In addition, most of Quebec's First-Nations population use English as a first or second language.

The reality is that there are many thousands of Quebecers whose mother tongue is French, but who use English all or most of the time. There are hundreds of thousands more who retain French as their home language but use English regularly in their daily lives. For example, living in the Western and downtown regions of Montreal

you will find thousands of English-speaking corporate executives and technicians, university students and academics from all over the world – with their spouses. In the offices and factories of Montreal, and throughout the province, there are countless conversations taking place in English, face to face or over the Internet, with people from other parts of Canada and the world.

To summarize, we note that members of the ELM are frequently referred to in Quebec as the "Anglophones", for which there are two generally used definitions:

English Speakers - For some, an Anglophone is simply a person who can speak English. The census counts these people as such, and in 1971 there were 3.3 million of them in Quebec out of a total population of 6 million (about 55%). By 2006, thirty five years later, the number of English speakers was essentially unchanged, but their percentage of the total population had fallen from 55% to 45%.

English Community - There is a second, more widely used definition of ELM. This is one which limits membership to someone who speaks English all the time, or at least a good deal of the time. These people are often referred to as the members of the "Anglophone community". The census also counts these people, but uses several definitions which provide somewhat different answers than above (see Annex) and include categorization by mother tongue, home language and First Official Language Spoken (FOLS).

If we measure the demographic changes in the size of the English Community over the 35 year period being examined, we get the following results:

- Quebecers whose Mother Tongue is English – a drop of 23% from 789,000 to 607,000.
- Quebecers whose Home Language is English – a drop of 11% from 886,000 to 744,000.
- The FOLS group – a drop of 8% from 958,000 to 885,000.

As a rough generalization, employing the above statistics, it can be said that in the 35 years since the Quiet Revolution the size of the "Anglophone community" in Quebec has been reduced by one third, from about 15% of the total population to fewer than 10%. As well, the percentage of the total population which understands and uses English has also been reduced by about 15%. All this occurred lawfully, peacefully and with generally little opposition from those most negatively affected.

ANGLOPHONE REACTION

The ELM has reacted to this unprecedented demographic shift in their daily life in a variety of ways. An estimated 250,000 (net) simply left the province. For those who remained, there have been a variety of responses due to the great diversity of the ELM. In short, the Anglophones who remain in Quebec have evolved in a number of different directions in their thinking about language.

Some (approximately 10%), are in the process of assimilation into the French speaking community; a few (another 10%) object strenuously to the language laws and believe that somebody, perhaps the federal government, should "do something about it". Between these two poles there are others (25%) who enjoy life in Quebec the way it is and speak French quite well. Others (25%), are considering the possibility of leaving. Some are here on a temporary basis and will be going as soon as their studies or jobs in Quebec come to an end.

Finally, a plurality (30%) of English Quebecers don't like Bill 101, but they are trying, and in most cases managing, to live with it. In their daily lives the language laws have been relegated to the category of background noise. Like snow, potholes and high taxes, the language laws are now accepted as a fact of life in Quebec. For some Anglophone Quebecers they pose a big problem, for others they are a minor irritation; but no one in this group spends much time thinking about it any more and no one is proposing an alternative.

THE EVOLUTION OF ANGLOPHONE LANGUAGE INSTITUTIONS SINCE THE QUIET REVOLUTION

Given the above demographic changes and accompanying reaction, we are now more fully able to look at the rise and fall of the institutions and the leadership which were created within the ELM in response to the language legislation in the years following the Quiet Revolution.

The Creation of an "other"

Back in 1977, the new Parti Quebecois (PQ) government understood that to mobilize the French speaking majority in support of language legislation it would not be enough to merely provide census data. A bogeyman was required; the adversary had to be personalized. And so "les anglais" appeared, essentially as the oppressive class, in the minds of French speaking Quebecers. Once the Parti Quebecois had invented "les anglais", there was no option for the ELM but to provide itself with an organization and some elected leaders to speak on its behalf. Thus Alliance Quebec was born.

Alliance Quebec

After the shock of the 1976 election, a number of voluntary groups sprang up to "save Canada", several of them based in Quebec. But the first organization specifically created to represent Anglo Quebecers on the language issue was Alliance Quebec, in 1982. It was welcomed by the PQ government as an official *vis-à-vis* to respond to its language initiatives. Alliance Quebec had a competent staff, developed policy suggestions of its own, responded to government initiatives and was consulted and respected by the government, the media and the community at large, during that time.

The Quebec Liberal Party (LPQ)

The other source of Anglo leadership in Quebec during the 1980s was the LPQ, which, as a federalist party, monopolized the Anglophone vote. There were a number of electoral districts with an Anglophone majority and about a dozen Anglophone members of the National Assembly. LPQ supporters were bound to a party program designed to appeal to the Francophone majority, but Anglophones in the LPQ were influential in getting acceptance for proposals which would also be acceptable to the members of their own community, enabling them to ensure the ongoing vitality of its institutions. The Anglophone vote was instrumental in achieving the election of an LPQ government in 1985.

The Crisis

However, once elected to power, the LPQ government did not respect its electoral promises. In 1989, four years after being elected, the viable leadership of the Anglophone community of Quebec was ruined in a single month by the decision of the Bourassa government to continue the ban on the use of English on public signs, already declared unconstitutional, despite a specific election promise to the contrary. The Anglophone community was furious. As a direct result of this decision, the three most prominent Anglophone MNAs, all cabinet ministers, resigned in protest and immediately abandoned public life in Quebec. Alliance Quebec was left exposed to extremely bitter accusations of ineffectiveness and irresponsibility by its own supporters – its critics renamed it "the lamb lobby", and "Compliance Quebec" – for having played into the hands of the LPQ.

Within a space of one month in 1989, Anglophone leadership in the National Assembly and in the community itself, was eliminated, and it has never been reconstituted.

A New Political Party

The Anglophone reaction was chaotic. At the political level, a new protest party – Equality –was formed under Robert Libman. It received most of theAanglophone vote in the following election and elected 4 members, but subsequent infighting assured its rapid demise. Since then, most Anglophones continue to support the LPQ (mainly because of the sovereignist threat), but the role and the influence of Anglophone members of the LPQ has been greatly reduced and on the subject of language legislation today they have no discernable influence.

The End of Alliance Quebec

Within a demoralized Alliance Quebec, the leadership was taken over by a group which adopted the more radical approach of attacking Bill 101 in a series of court challenges; a project which did not succeed. Other, more eccentric ideas were subsequently tried out, but to no avail. Organizationally, Alliance Quebec had 10 Presidents in the 15 years between 1989 and 2005 and subsequently became insolvent and went out of existence.

The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN)

In the meantime Alliance Quebec members from outside the Montreal area, who had frequently complained of neglect by the Head Office, established a new organization in 1996, the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), which now receives some of the federal government funding previously allotted to Alliance Quebec. The QCGN is a federation of about 36 regional and sector based organizations, overwhelmingly devoted to the interests of Anglophones living outside the Montreal area. Of its 13 regional members not one represents any part of Montreal, where about 80% of the English speaking population resides. Most importantly, it has not succeeded in establishing its credibility as a voice

ANNEX 1: Demographic Evolution of ELM Since the Quiet Revolution

KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH	1971*	2006*	CHANGE*	%
Total Quebec Population	6,028	7,435	1,407	23
People who can speak English	3,296	3,354	58	2
Speak English only	633	337	(296)	(47)
English Mother Tongue	789	607	(182)	(182)
English Home Language	886	744	(100)	(11)
FOLS	958	885	(73)	(8)

Another Reading

KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH	1971*	% OF TOTAL	2006*	% OF TOTAL
Total Quebec Population	6,028	100	7,435	100
People who can speak English	3,296	55	3,354	45
Speak English only	633	11	337	5
English Mother Tongue	789	13	607	8
English Home Language	886	15	788	11
FOLS	958	16	885	12

Source: Statistics Canada * = Thousands

for the many Montrealers in the ELM who are not involved in Anglophone organizations. The structure and policies of the QCGN will require significant modification if it aspires to become the voice of English Quebec.

But it is also possible that the National Assembly of Quebec will conclude that it has now done all it can for the advancement of the French language, and that the next chapters in this contest must be played out "in the street", in the *vécu*.