

# CHC2P Unit 4: 1960s-1980s: A Nation's Challenges

## Activity 4: Trudeau versus the Separatists

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### Overview

In this activity, you will investigate Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's recurring battles with various separatist movements of Quebec.

### Lesson

#### *Official Languages, 1969*



In 1968, Pierre Trudeau succeeded Lester Pearson as Liberal leader and Prime Minister. The 49-year-old bilingual lawyer from Montreal won the election that year on a wave of Trudeaumania. This describes an emotional outpouring of affection for the political newcomer, somewhat similar to the 1960's phenomenon of Beatlemania.

In 1969, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau passed the Official Languages Act. This made French and English Canada's two official languages and it made the Federal public service and judicial systems bilingual.

With official Federal bilingualism, many provinces improved the educational and language rights of Francophone minorities. In the same year, New Brunswick, with a third of its population Francophone, became Canada's only officially bilingual province.

While Francophones across Canada generally welcomed bilingualism, many inside Quebec saw it as an empty gesture that did little for French Canadian nationalism.

#### *The October Crisis, 1970*



When the FLQ kidnapped a Quebec Cabinet Minister and the British Trade Commissioner in Montreal in October 1970, the October Crisis erupted. After the Quebec government asked for Federal help, Prime Minister Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act. This Act gave the Federal Government emergency powers to use law enforcement and to arrest anyone without legal procedures. Tanks rolled on Montreal streets, and over 400 people were arrested on the suspicion of being FLQ sympathizers.

By the time the crisis was over, the FLQ had murdered the kidnapped Quebec cabinet minister, Pierre Laporte and released the other hostage, James Cross. The vast majority of Quebecers rejected violent,

terrorist acts. The organizers of the kidnappings were arrested or exiled and the FLQ disappeared into the pages of history.

### ***The Parti Québécois***



In 1976, the Parti Québécois, under its leader René Lévesque, shocked most Canadians by winning that year's provincial election. With the goal of making Quebec "as French as Ontario is English," the PQ passed Bill 101. This made French the official language of Quebec.

The use of any other language in the workplace and on outdoor signs was strictly regulated. Employers needed to communicate with their workers in French only. On outdoor signs, French was the only language permitted. Only children with at least one parent educated in an English school in Quebec could be educated in English. Immigrants were forced to send their children to French-language schools.

In the 1970's, the Francophone birthrate in Quebec, once the highest in Canada, had become the lowest. The vast majority of immigrants to Quebec were electing to speak English. Bill 101 was designed to protect the French language and the French culture in Quebec. In that sense, Bill 101 was an expression of French Canadian nationalism.

## **Assignment**

- 1) Explain the meaning or historical significance of each of the following items:
  - a) Francophones
  - b) Anglophones
  - c) Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ)
  - d) Parti Québécois (PQ)
  - e) Official Languages Act, 1969
  - f) October Crisis, 1970
  - g) War Measures Act, 1970
  - h) Bill 101
  
2. Pretend that you are a resident of Quebec in 1977. In each of the cases described below, explain what would be your reaction to Bill 101:
  - a) You are a unilingual Francophone factory worker in Montreal. You are interested in becoming the supervisor in your plant (unilingual means you speak only one language – in this case, French).
  - b) You are a unilingual Anglophone print shop owner in Montreal. The print shop has been in your family for 150 years and you are very proud of the sign outside which says "Singer Printing."
  - c) You are an immigrant from Italy. You live in Montreal, and both you and your husband were born in Italy. You have two children ages five and six. You want your children to have the best opportunities in Canada and the best jobs.