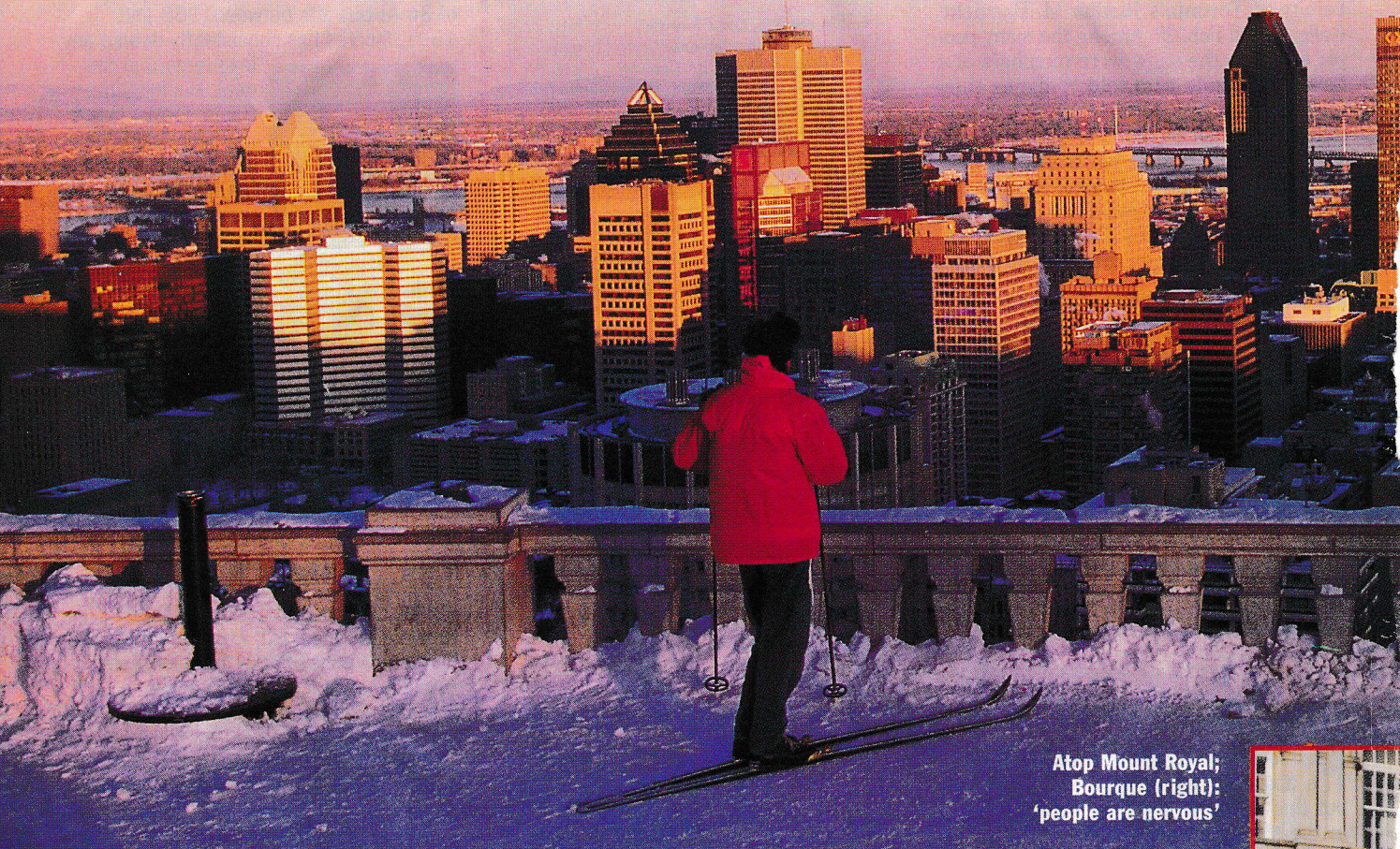


Storm War



Atop Mount Royal; Bourque (right): 'people are nervous'

BY BARRY CAME

Political uncertainty and economic decline hit Montreal

For Pierre Bourque, the idea is repellent, odious enough to strike even Montreal's loquacious mayor momentarily dumb. "Partition," he mutters as he descends into a long and bleakly silent contemplation of the winter morning dawning outside the elegant French windows in his second-floor office at City Hall. The square below—storied old Place Jacques Cartier—is still deserted, mantled in new snow. The harbor beyond is icebound. For an hour, Bourque has been talking, virtually nonstop, singing Montreal's praises, but at the same time lamenting the many woes that threaten to lock the city into a grip as frigid as the harbor's ice. And of all the wintry storms darkening the horizon, there is one the mayor fears most. "Partition," he repeats, rousing himself at last to rub a hand wearily across his brow. "I don't even want to think

about it, dividing up this city. It frightens me. People are getting nervous. If the concept ever takes hold, it could finish all of us."

Few would disagree with that assessment. Even the rising chorus of mainly English-speaking Montrealers who would smite Quebec's separatists by threatening a separation of their own concede that carving up the city is no solution to the ills that plague it. That Montreal is ailing is not in dispute. The symptoms are everywhere, from the shuttered shops of downtown Ste-Catherine Street through the

derelict factories of St-Henri in the southwest, to the rusting refineries that loom like silent sentinels over the city's east-end decay. In the opinion of some, the decline is terminal, the inevitable outcome of rampant nationalism working in lethal concert with restrictive language laws and powerful, continent-wide economic trends. Others are not so sure, pointing to



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PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTOPHER MORRIS

Montreal's still vibrant cultural life as well as the city's burgeoning role on the cutting edge of high-tech, knowledge-based industries such as pharmaceuticals and aerospace. But no matter where they stand, Montrealers agree that all Canadians have reason to be concerned about the city's fate. "Montreal is the only city in the country where Canada makes sense," maintains Luc-Normand Tellier, director of the department of urban studies at the Université du Québec à Montréal. "It's where the old Canadian dream of a bilingual, bicultural nation really took form. If Montreal fails, then that idea of Canada is very likely to fail with it."

Government and business have launched strenuous efforts to make sure that does not happen. Ironically, perhaps, it is Premier Lucien Bouchard's avowedly separatist Parti Québécois government that has been in the forefront of the effort, which took on new urgency in the wake of October's referendum vote. Most of the rest of Quebec voted Yes, but Montreal—bilingual, multicultural and outward-looking—went solidly No. Overnight, Montreal's distinct nature inside the province was dramatically underlined, and the continuing political uncertainty put investment in the city on hold and sent its English-speaking population into a collective anxiety attack (page 24). When Bouchard assumed the premiership in late January, he immediately listed Montreal's economic recovery as one of his government's three top priorities. He created a new cabinet position to attend to the needs of the Montreal region and he picked Serge Ménard, one of the rising stars of Quebec politics, for the job.

Precisely what Ménard will do to halt, let alone reverse, Montreal's slide remains an open question. "I'm still in a learning mode," he frankly admitted last week during a quiet moment in the new office he is setting up in a downtown skyscraper. "You have to remember that three weeks ago, my job didn't even exist." Despite that, Ménard is under no illusions about the daunting task he faces. "There are no simple solutions," he says. "If there were, somebody would have found them long ago."

Montreal's decline, of course, is nothing new. It has been more than a generation since it was Canada's business and financial capital—and since then it has simply failed to keep pace with other cities in both Canada and the United States. During the 1980s, for example, the Montreal region's population grew by a modest 9.6 per cent (to 3.5 million) while Toronto expanded by 22.1 per cent—and Vancouver grew by 25.2 per cent. The number of jobs in Montreal increased by 60 per cent between 1971 and 1991—but that left the city well behind Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Edmonton and Calgary, all of which saw jobs grow by more than 100 per cent over the same period. According to economist Marcel Côté of the Montreal consulting firm Groupe Secor, the city continually places last among 30 major North American urban centres with more than two million inhabitants in a wide range of categories: unemployment, poverty, job creation and per capita income. "Montreal has had some success in the high-tech sector," Côté argues, "but that cannot mask the sad reality that the city continues to trail by most of the major indicators of economic dynamism."

Montreal boosters skate around such statistics by focusing on the city's undeniable strength in such areas as aerospace and information technology, in concert with its four universities and

nearly 200 research establishments. Ménard, for one, points out that Montreal is the source of 86 per cent of Quebec's research and development funds, equivalent to 26 per cent of all R and D spending in Canada. And he claims that the only place Montreal has really lost ground in recent years has been in the flight of corporate headquarters. On that score, there is no doubt: among Canada's top 200 companies, 73 are now headquartered in Toronto, compared with only 32 in Montreal (just ahead of Calgary with 26).

Those concerned with Montreal's future worry about another kind of gap, as well—that between the poverty and shrinking tax base of Montreal island, and the relative wealth and growth of the surrounding suburbs. In many ways, that reflects trends in other big North American cities, where the traditional core has lost out to outlying areas. Between 1972 and 1991, the island's population fell by 260,000 (to 1.8 million), while that of the off-island suburbs rose by more than 500,000. That has led to an increasing polarization, with the bulk of the poor concentrated in the centre city, where living costs are soaring, and the more affluent French-speaking middle class migrating to such areas as Laval to the north and the South Shore of the St. Lawrence River, where taxes are lower. Businesses, too, have voted with their feet, drawn to the suburbs where non-residential taxes are 64 per cent lower than in the city. "They call it the doughnut effect," complains Bourque. "Montreal is the hole in the doughnut. The city is like a mother, forced to look after her poor and her old while the young and the wealthy—the middle classes, in effect—have fled to the suburbs."

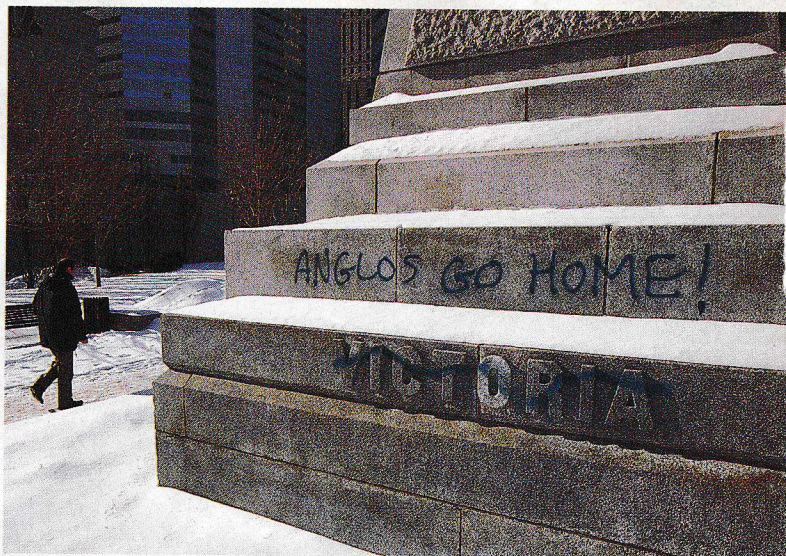
For John Zacharias, director of urban studies at Montreal's Concordia University, suburban flight is the most worrisome aspect of the region's development. "Montreal is surrounded by lots of cheap land, which local municipalities have been more than happy to zone for fairly high-density use," he argues, pointing at the same time to another of the city's handicaps. The Montreal region—home to roughly half of Quebec's seven million people—has 133 municipal governments, all competing for people, services and business.

The Quebec government attempted to unravel the web in 1993, when a task force led by economist Claude Pichette handed down 105 recommendations. Chief among them was a proposal to establish a Montreal Metropolitan Regional government, encompassing 102 municipalities stretching all the way from Mirabel, 55 km northwest of Montreal, to Chambly, 20 km to the southeast. In an effort to stem urban sprawl and equalize taxation, the proposed authority would have been empowered to levy taxes and user fees and oversee land use, economic development, transportation, waste disposal, environmental protection and policing. Predictably, the report was greeted with warm applause from the City of Montreal and howls of outrage from the suburbs. Arriving on the eve of a provincial election, it was quietly shelved by the then-Liberal government.

In the two years since Pichette tabled his report, Montreal's prob-



Gauthier; anti-English graffiti on a statue in Victoria Square (right): 'Montrealers have supremely mastered the art of leisure. People here are not uptight.'



'There are a lot of people circling Montreal like buzzards'

lems have grown worse—but few urban experts are willing to endorse yet another level of government for the region. Jeanne Wolfe, director of McGill University's School of Urban Planning, doubts that any provincial government would ever sanction the creation of a powerful authority for an area where one out of every two Quebecers lives—much less a PQ government that draws much of its electoral support from French-speaking, middle-class suburbanites. Both Wolfe and Raphael Fischler, assistant professor at McGill's urban-planning school, also maintain that Montreal's problems have been exaggerated. "Montreal does not need to be saved," argues Fischler. "It needs to be promoted." Adds Wolfe: "Don't say things are bad in Montreal. For the residential environment, the protection of old parts of the city, the public transportation, it's just wonderful. The levels of creativity are enormously high here, particularly in music, painting and writing. It's partially due to linguistic tension and the cultural mix."

Natasha Gauthier would certainly agree. Gauthier, 24, is one of a new breed of Montrealers, completely at home in both the city's major cultures. The daughter of a francophone father and a mother who emigrated from the Indian state of Goa, she is at ease in either language. She makes her living as a freelance journalist, writing for both French and English publications. "I have the best possible future here," she says, relaxing in her stylish

apartment in Plateau Mont Royal, the richly multicultural neighborhood just east and north of the mountain. "I have twice the markets open to me. I couldn't make a better living anywhere else."

Part of the city's attraction is its affordability. "It's possible to have a fine quality of life because the rent is so cheap," says Gauthier, who shares her \$1,000-a-month three-bedroom apartment with two companions. "In Toronto, everyone is always so stressed about their rent." Her attachment to Montreal extends beyond mere economics, however, touching on matters of style and beauty. "Montrealers have supremely mastered the art of leisure," she explains. "What's better on a summer afternoon than sitting on a terrace on Rue St-Denis, enjoying a three-hour coffee break? People here are not uptight about having fun. They take time to enjoy a good meal. They take time to appreciate art and dance and music."

If pressed, Gauthier will admit that the city has lost some of its vitality over the years as businesses have moved away and urban decay and poverty have taken their toll. "Montreal is like one of those vibrant, beautiful courtesans from an earlier age who lived well beyond their means but always looked beautiful doing it," she laughs. And then, on a more sober note, she adds: "I think too much is being made of Montreal's decrepitude. Yes, you do sense despair and the unemployment rate is awfully high, but I think there is a very negative attitude about the city. There are a lot of people circling Montreal like buzzards awaiting the dying gasp."

For Gauthier, the city's twin cultures are an asset, not a liability. "You have to be adaptable here," she maintains. "Employers are looking for people who not only speak two languages but who are familiar with all of the symbols and the background of both cultures." Her

generation, she claims, is more likely to come equipped with those skills. "There's more mixing among the younger crowd." Most anglophone young people, after two decades of laws promoting the use of French, are at ease in the province's official language, while younger francophones often do not share the sense of linguistic oppression felt by many of their parents. "We haven't grown up with that prejudice and bitterness," she says. "I think francophone Montrealers now have less of an inferiority complex."

That may well be true. But language remains a divisive issue, a prime cause of the political insecurity that has helped to undermine the city's attempts to halt its economic decline. Much to his dismay, Ménard discovered that soon after assuming responsibility for the region. Attempting to rebuild bridges to the English community, he was indiscreet enough to wonder aloud about the possibility of relaxing some of the more restrictive aspects of Bill 101, Quebec's language law. The words were no sooner out of his mouth than he was jumped on by several cabinet colleagues, led by Cultural Affairs Minister Louise Beaudoin and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Jacques Brassard, both of whom maintained that easing the restrictions was out of the question. "I may have been a little premature," Ménard ruefully remarks as he recalls the incident. "In the future, if I have any recommendations to make about Bill 101, I'm going to make sure that I have fully studied the proposals and all the ramifications. I don't think we can toy with the law, which is fundamental. But perhaps we might deal with the way it is applied."

Even that small gesture may be politically impossible, if the furor over language that erupted last week in Montreal is any indication. At issue was a 407-page draft report on the state of French in Montreal, prepared by two language hardliners, political scientist Josée Legault and a former president of Quebec's Conseil de la Langue Française, Michel Plourde. Far from recognizing the gains that French has made in recent years, the report maintains that the situation is deteriorating. It complains, among other things, about "creeping bilingualism" in Quebec's civil service, a lack of respect for use of French in commercial signs and the spreading use of English by anglophones and, even worse, by the so-called allophones (those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English).

When the preliminary study was released, it prompted an immediate uproar. The powerful French-language lobby argued that it proved once and for all that Montreal island (where 56 per cent of the people speak French, with the rest speaking English and other languages) is in danger of losing its French character. English spokesmen responded by claiming that the report could endanger the government's attempts at reconciliation. Caught in the middle was Bouchard, confronted by the first real test of his premiership.

Fleurette Fernando is all too aware of the problem. A 22-year-old Toronto transplant, she is artistic director of Montreal's Black Theatre Workshop. She arrived in the city three years ago, drawn by a course of studies offered by the National Theatre School, as well as her image of Montreal "as a place to party, with cheap beer and cigarettes." She instantly fell in love with the city's cultural effervescence. Unlike the Toronto arts scene, which she characterizes as focused on "big money and big business," Montreal has a thriving concentration of small, community-centred groups that nurture young artists. "I'll forever be grateful to Montreal because I couldn't have started my career in Toronto," she says. "I feel like I've been able to connect with people here."

However, while Fernando says she would like to make Montreal her home, the referendum and Parizeau's comments blaming the No victory on the ethnic vote have forced her to reconsider. "People are really tense these days," she complains. "It feels like there could be another mass exodus." In her view, Montreal's cultural tensions are both the city's main strength and its primary weakness. The pull between different groups creates a sense that "things are really happening here." On the other hand, there are linguistic and cultural barriers. "Like many cities," she maintains, "Montreal seems pretty ghettoized: there are black neighborhoods, Italian neighborhoods, French neighborhoods. In Toronto, I think you get more of a crossover." On arriving in Montreal, she

Tellier: 'Montreal is the only city in the country where Canada makes sense'



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER MORRIS

was ready to immerse herself in French culture. But despite her bilingualism, she has discovered subtle pressures to avoid mixing. "When I first moved here, I wasn't going to let the language issue affect me," Fernando remarks. "But it has. All too often, I find that I am immediately typecast, treated as one of those Anglos who don't understand or want to understand French culture."

Fernando's experience is not unique. It is for precisely the same reasons that many Montrealers, both natives as well as long-term residents from afar, despair about the city's future. German-born Stephen Jarislowsky, a Montreal financier, has managed to amass a large fortune in the city, but now finds himself wondering aloud about his future. "I keep asking myself what I'm doing here," he says. "I'm 70 years old, my four children all live abroad and I grow more convinced with each passing day that the separatists are leading us down a road to ruin. The major corporations that used to call this town their headquarters have all left or are in the process of leaving. What's going to be left?"

Other businessmen are asking similar pointed questions. Developer Jonathan Wener, president of Canderel Ltd., complains that he is continually pestered by government investigators delving into his role in helping to organize Montreal's huge pro-Canada rally three days before last year's referendum. While he will not divulge figures, Wener bemoans the vacant office space his firm controls that he can no longer rent. "Even when I can," he notes, "I often have to include a 'separation clause' that allows tenants to break a lease in the event of Quebec independence." Wener and other businessmen are about to launch a new organization called Citizens Together, aimed at reviving the city. "Quebec cannot succeed without a healthy Montreal," he says. "Montreal is the motor of Quebec."

But with political uncertainty hanging over the city, major corporations are putting investments on hold or diverting them elsewhere. Lorne Trottier, president of Matrox Electronic Systems Ltd., a Dorval-based manufacturer of computer video cards, admits that he diverted a proposed \$75-million expansion from the Montreal region to Boca Raton, Fla., as a result of the uncertainty surrounding Quebec's future. Also in Dorval, Air Canada scrapped plans for a \$112-million upgrade of its base facilities. And just last week, the federal government announced that Mirabel Airport will lose all its regularly scheduled passenger flights, starting in 1997. Transport Minister David Anderson attributed the move to Montreal's slow economic growth—which he blamed in turn on the separatist threat.

For similar reasons, aircraft engine manufacturer Pratt & Whitney Canada Inc. chose to expand in Mississauga, Ont., rather than in the Montreal suburb of Longueuil, where it is based. While CP Rail officials deny it, company employees privately admit that politics played some role in the decision to shift the corporation's headquarters last November from Montreal to Calgary. CN Rail is in the midst of closing down its locomotive facility at the Taschereau Yards in the western part of the city, and is about to sell its railcar maintenance unit in Pointe St-Charles. Even printer and publisher Quebecor Inc., owned by separatist sympathizer Pierre Peladeau, has quietly shifted key headquarters operations from Montreal to Boston and Toronto.

"In terms of corporate head offices, Montreal is bleeding," says

economist Marcel Côté. "And a principal reason is the widely held view that the city is not a good place to base executives, the vast majority of whom are English-speaking." Côté and others are busily debating ways to

stem the tide: some revolve around granting Montreal some kind of special city-state status within Quebec. Monique Jérôme-Forget, president of the Montreal-based Institute for Research on Public Policy, proposes the creation of new political structures for the city based on the model of Brussels, the capital of a country with its own brand of linguistic tension. "Montreal is really Quebec's distinct society," she argues. "As a result, we might want to look at the Belgian capital, where both Walloons and Flemish have an equal say in running the city." Although she is still working out the details, Jérôme-Forget is thinking along the lines of a government for the Montreal region with powers equally divided between French and English no matter what the actual proportion of the population. "It may be totally unrealistic," she acknowledges, "but it is one good way to reassure anglophones that Montreal is a place



'In terms of head offices, Montreal is bleeding'

Boarded-up shops on Ste-Catherine Street: major companies are delaying investments or moving elsewhere

to stay no matter what happens in the rest of the province."

For the moment, there are few signs that Bouchard's government will heed any such advice. But that may change if a new poll heralds a developing trend. The survey, conducted between Feb. 16 and 18 by COMPAS Inc. for *The Financial Post*, indicates that support for sovereignty is slipping for the first time since the referendum. COMPAS pollsters found that those who would now vote

for independence in a clear question had declined from 54 per cent in November to 51 per cent. Intriguingly, the survey found that so-called soft nationalists are drifting away from sovereignty at least in part because of the rise in talk about partitioning Quebec, and widespread publicity given to the perceived decline of Montreal. The survey suggested that Quebecers tend to blame the separatist movement for Montreal's long-term decline more than they blame English-speaking Canada. It found that 49 per cent of those who responded feel that English Canada bears no responsibility for Montreal's woes. In contrast, only 24 per cent feel the separatists are blameless. For Bouchard, the implications are unsettling, a sign that Montreal may well turn out to be an even bigger headache than it is now for him and his government.

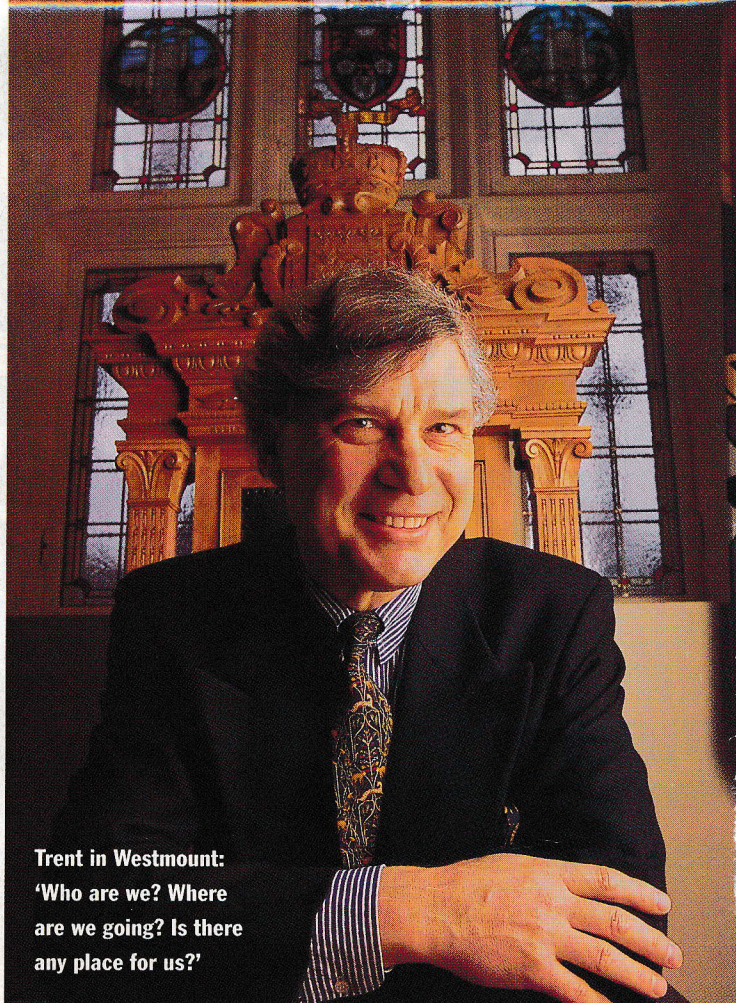
With LIZ WARWICK in Montreal

BY ANDREW PHILLIPS

Around the kitchen table in Jeffrey and Lisa Silver's home in the Montreal suburb of Hampstead, the Great Debate is being played out. The Silvers—both 31, both embarked on successful careers in marketing—are wrestling with the question that preoccupies many Montrealers these days, and virtually obsesses many English-speaking Montrealers: should we stay, or should we go? Jeff Silver is a third-generation Montrealer, and even the spectre of separation cannot break his attachment to the city. "Montreal is a part of me," he says. "I feel at ease here." Lisa, however, is American by birth and for her, the choice is clear: "There's zero growth here. The writing's on the wall." They have given themselves until July, when the lease on their rented house expires, to decide whether to make their future in Quebec or move to Florida, where her family lives. "We truly are," says Jeff, "at a crossroads."

For English Quebecers, this is the winter of their discontent. From Pontiac County in the far southwest corner of the province, to the farms of the Eastern Townships, anxious federalists are in the grip of what has become known as "Anglo angst." In Montreal, where after a quarter century of language wars and sovereignty scares the English-speaking community still numbers 520,000, the talk is of selling out, moving on—or, more ominously, of digging in and fighting for a secure place in Canada. The partition movement, dedicated to the proposition that the best way to prevent the breakup of Canada is to threaten to split up Quebec, is spreading like a prairie fire at the grassroots while leaders of the English establishment look on with nervous disapproval. Even French-speaking commentators, accustomed to reporting on their anglophone fellow citizens with the lofty detachment of foreign correspondents discovering a new land, are anxiously asking a new version of an old question: what do the Anglos want?

The short answer, English Montrealers with widely differing politi-



Trent in Westmount:
 'Who are we? Where
 are we going? Is there
 any place for us?'

The New 'Anglo Angst'

English Montrealers endure a winter of bitter discontent

cal perspectives agree, is simple: they want the threat of separation so dramatically underlined by last October's narrow federalist victory to be lifted. And since the government of Premier Lucien

Bouchard remains committed to continuing its push for sovereignty, there seems little obvious room for comfort, or compromise. The last time Quebec's anglophones endured a comparable shock, following the election of the first Parti Québécois government in 1976, community leaders rallied to carve out a new role in what had become a dramatically new province. The message was clear: adapt or leave. Some 200,000 *did* leave—mostly in the 10 years following 1976. The rest largely made their peace with Quebec; they may have griped and grumbled, but they learned French and, for the most part, accepted their position as a minority in a determinedly francophone province. Outside Quebec, many anglophones surprised even themselves by jumping to the defence of the province's right to safeguard its cultural distinctiveness.

This time, though, possible compromises are not so clear. "Those of us who stayed felt we could work something out—and we did," says Michael Goldbloom, the 43-year-old publisher of the *Montreal Gazette* and one of the new leaders who came out of the anglophone community after 1976. "The difference now is that there isn't a feeling that it can be worked out. There's a sense of anger: many people feel they made compromises and sacrifices and thought Quebec society could work for them. And the feeling now is that all that risks coming to naught."

Goldbloom speaks calmly and thoughtfully in a boardroom looking north across the city towards Mount Royal and its legendary cross. But the insistent new voices of Anglo Montreal these days are anything but calm. On a recent Friday night, 1,400 people jammed a hall in a downtown hotel to cheer on an idea that has vaulted from fringe to front line in a matter of weeks: partition. Overwhelmingly English-speaking, they proudly wore yellow-and-white buttons declaring themselves "ethnic/*éthnique*"—a jab at former premier Jacques Parizeau's sour referendum-night remark that his Yes forces had lost only because of "money and the ethnic vote." And they leapt to their feet to hail such new heroes as William Johnson, a pro-partition *Gazette* columnist who has been greeted as something of a martyr to their cause since his newspaper said it intends to eliminate his full-time position (he received a financial settlement and will continue to write a weekly column). "A Canadian I was born, and a Canadian I will die," Johnson declared, laying down the partitionist line that any bid to make Quebec independent will lead to dismembering the province. "Quebec cannot destroy Canada without destroying itself."

The partitionists include people like Mark Kotler, a 52-year-old printer from suburban St-Laurent who had never been involved in politics until the day after the referendum vote. "I'm an Anglo and an ethnic and I have some money, so I took Parizeau's remarks as a per-

soral insult," he says. Kotler now heads a pro-partition group called the Committee for a New Quebec in Canada, which claims 4,000 members (20 per cent of them French-speaking) and is one of several organizations that advocate carving a new province out of the mainly federalist parts of west Quebec, Montreal and the Eastern Townships if Bouchard wins a Yes vote in a future referendum. Before Oct. 30, he says, he was considering moving to Lancaster, Ont., just across the Ontario border. "I won't move now, just out of spite," he says. "Every anglophone should stay in Quebec and be counted."

That is the voice of the new "angryphones," as one anglophone leader sardonically labels them. Other English Montrealers—as well as many federalist francophones—are more frustrated and fearful than angry. Barbara Wainrib, a psychologist based in Westmount, found her patients suffering symptoms typical of victims of post-traumatic stress disorder in the weeks following the referendum. They included sleep disturbances, anger, irritability and a loss of a feeling of security in the world. "One of the things about trauma is that it shatters the way we expect the world to be—and that's what happened here," she says.

Wainrib received 300 responses to a survey she circulated about



CHRISTOPHER MORRIS/SABA

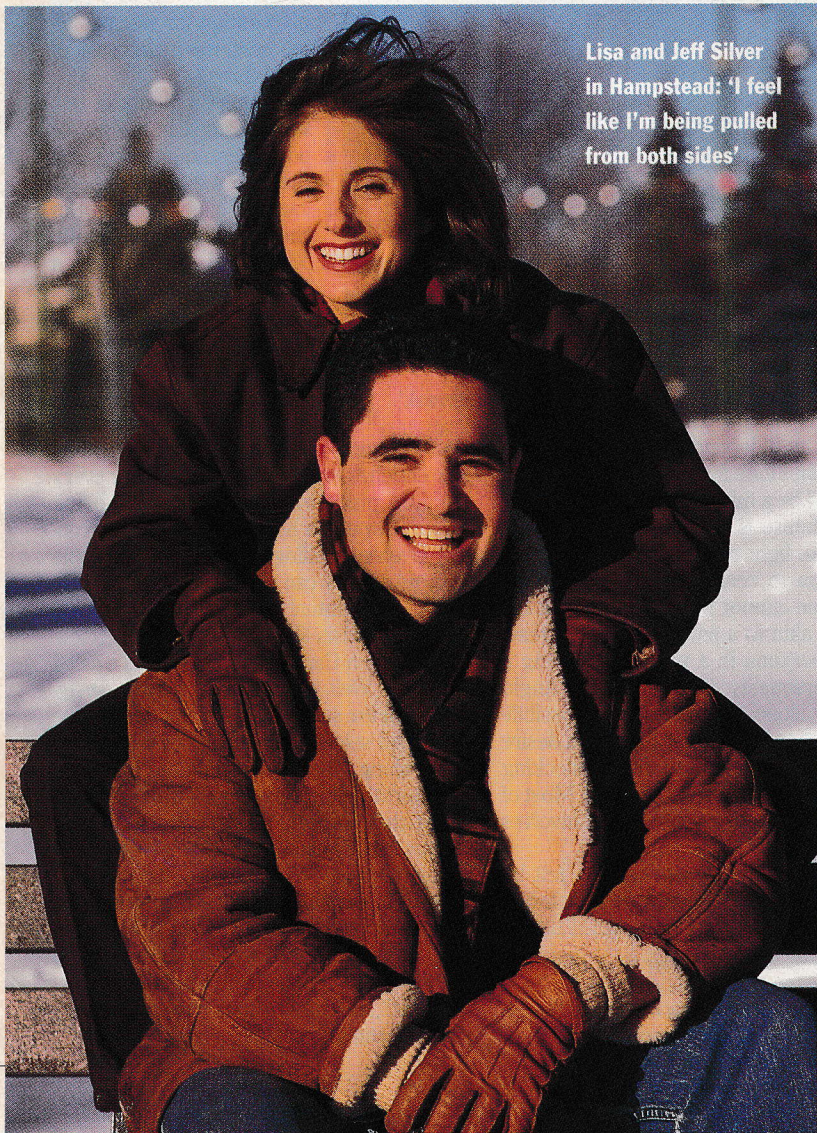
For sale sign in Pointe Claire: selling up and moving out, or digging in to stay

least in part as a means for anxious anglophones to feel they are taking control again. "It's a way for them to re-empower themselves," she says. "It gave people a sense that there's something they can do. And it let them get out of their sense of isolation and work with people who feel the same way they do."

Some English-speaking Montrealers, of course, do not share those feelings at all. The community has never been monolithic, and it includes many who are determined to stay no matter what. Two groups of anglophones—one including the philosopher Charles Taylor and the novelist Neil Bissoondath—published statements disavowing any attempt to split up Quebec and lamenting "the current obsession with doomsday scenarios." Others warn that an incessant drumbeat of scare talk may turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy: the more English Montrealers hear that their neighbors are about to leave, the more they may be inclined to follow suit. Peter Scowen is the 36-year-old editor of *Mirror*, an urban weekly that along with its French-language competitor *Voir* has become a voice for younger Montrealers who do not fit easily into the traditional solitudes. Westmount born and bred, the son of a prominent former Quebec Liberal cabinet minister, Scowen insists that he and his thoroughly bilingual friends cannot relate to talk of partition. "I'm a totally anglophone Westmount guy, and if anyone should feel that way, it's me," he says. "Our natural allies are moderate francophones, but at the time when it's most critical to reach out to them, all anglophones can talk about is partition!"

The official voice of Westmount is surprisingly similar. Peter Trent is the 50-year-old mayor of the city on the southern slopes of Mount Royal that has long been the traditional home, and symbol, of the Anglo establishment. Inside his stately grey-stone city hall, dignified portraits of past mayors with such names as Rutherford, Merrill and McCallum serve as reminders of the past. The city is still 80-per-cent English-speaking, but it is no longer the WASP bastion that it was as recently as the 1960s. Jewish Montrealers and so-called allophones (those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English) have taken the place of the old Anglo-Saxon population as it moves out. Trent himself is married to a francophone and is quick to distance himself from the partitionists. "A lot of Anglos are extremely hurt," he reflects. "They thought they had a fairly progressive attitude towards the francophone majority and thought they had a secure place here. The referendum called all that into question. Who are we? Where are we going? Is there any place for us here?" Still, he says, English Montrealers should reassure francophones that they are committed to the city instead of threatening to leave—or tear Quebec apart. "We need to say, 'I like

CHRISTOPHER MORRIS



Lisa and Jeff Silver in Hampstead: 'I feel like I'm being pulled from both sides'

A struggling marriage

BY PETER WHEELAND

At first they called it Referendum Flu. Quebecers of every political stripe flocked to their sick beds and consulted physicians and psychologists about the trauma they felt in the aftermath of the Oct. 30 vote. Four months later—thanks in large part to a chance encounter in a Montreal bookstore between Lucien Bouchard and an anonymous anglophone who told the premier all about his fears—the spotlight has shifted to a particular strain of the virus popularly dubbed “Anglo angst.”



CHRISTOPHER MORRIS

Anyone who has spent time talking to English-speaking Quebecers in recent months knows that the malaise is real, even among those of us who slip easily from French to English, from the CBC to Radio-Canada. Just because I'm capable of thriving in an independent French Quebec doesn't mean I look forward to the prospect. But it would be a mistake to believe that fear about the future is limited to anglophones. Not to make light of Bouchard's recent determination to reach out to disaffected Anglos—one cannot help thinking that his efforts are akin to a psychiatrist who treats only one persona in a patient suffering a multiple-personality disorder. In the Anglo community alone, reactions to the possibility of separation run the gamut from a desire to hop the next plane to Florida to stocking a bunker in preparation for civil war. Most of us, fortunately, want a solution that involves neither extreme.

And let's not ignore the trauma felt by francophones who voted No last October.

Peter Wheeland, 36, is a former news editor and columnist for Hour magazine in Montreal. He is writing a novel about tensions in a mixed French-English family during the referendum.

Although Jacques Parizeau pointed his stubby finger at “ethnics” as the cause of the referendum defeat, we had an easy ride compared with the many francophones whose family, friends or co-workers denounced them as *pissous* (pea-soupers—a Québécois insult akin to calling a black person an Oreo).

Nationalists, too, are reeling under the weight of their own post-traumatic stress disorders. Bouchard's effort to calm Anglo angst is just the most visible manifestation of fear in the sovereigntist camp that they underestimated the depth of feeling among a significant proportion of No voters.

Nationalist angst might not draw much sympathy in the rest of Canada, but it should not be ignored. There is a real threat of violence implicit in the partition debate, since force is the only way to guard a disputed border. And you don't have to look deeply into history to see that preparation for war has often been the main cause of its outbreak.

So there's plenty of reason for angst in the fragile post-referendum era. But if there is a sign of hope, it can ironically be found in the partition heartlands: Montreal, the Eastern Townships and the Ottawa Valley. Where else can Quebecers and Canadians find better proof that peaceful co-existence between anglophones and francophones

is not only possible, but that the cultural mix enriches everyone it touches? For every isolated piece of political graffiti, brick thrown through a bookstore window, or conflict involving unilingual store clerks, people in these regions can provide a thousand daily examples of mutual co-operation and respect.

Sovereigntists like to describe the relationship between Canada and Quebec as a failed marriage. Well, the marriage may be struggling, but the success of the family cannot be measured solely on the ability of the parents to get along. That same union has produced a generation of offspring who are living proof that Canada's two main linguistic groups can live and work together in astonishing harmony. While the parents exchange threats and compete for their affection, the only question the children want answered is why neither parent loves them enough to find a way to keep the family together.

Angst? Hell, we're lucky we're not in a state of catatonic shock.

Quebec, and if push comes to shove I will stay here.’”

That kind of talk, Trent acknowledges, is too conciliatory for some of his constituents “who say it's time to draw a line in the sand.” Many of them, along with many other anglophones, are once again talking about leaving. A new crop of *A vendre* signs has sprung up in Anglo neighborhoods—and many houses without signs are up for grabs as well. “It's all for sale—want a house cheap?” jokes Barbara Wainrib. Despite the talk, the post-1976 exodus may well not be repeated. Many people cannot sell houses and businesses, and jobs elsewhere are scarcer than they were 20 years ago. Toronto, battered by two recessions and embroiled in its own round of government layoffs and corporate cutbacks, no longer seems so alluring. Many people are investing money outside Quebec, even if they have no definite plans to move. And the talk now is that the rest of Canada will also be hard hit if Quebec secedes, so younger people with more options tend to look more towards the United States.

That is true for Jeff and Lisa Silver as they weigh their future. They attended a recent meeting sponsored by a branch of the Canadian Jewish Congress attended by Serge Ménard, the Quebec minister responsible for reviving Montreal. Ménard tried to reassure young English-speaking Quebecers that they should stay put—part of a new effort by Bouchard and his government to reach out to anglophones in a way that Parizeau never did. But the minister's message fell flat, especially when he made a clumsy comparison between English Quebecers and white South Africans (for which he later apologized). “It was just the typical gobbledegook, pushing the sovereignty cause,” Jeff Silver lamented later. “I don't think it's ever going to resolve itself. It's like, enough already.”

The Silvers married a year ago and want to have a child, but say they don't want to go ahead until they know where they will be living. “My clock is ticking,” says Lisa. “But our lives are on hold.” For her, the answer is clear: move to Boca Raton, Fla., where her mother lives and the economy is booming. Jeff, meanwhile, feels the pull of family and friends in Montreal: his parents and two brothers live in the city, and the family gathers each week for the traditional Jewish Friday night dinner. “I feel like I'm being pulled from both sides,” he says. “There have been many sleepless nights, because once we go, we're not coming back.” With four months left before they will decide, they are worrying and pondering—much like tens of thousands of others. □