



Nationalism in Quebec

Steffen Blatt

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Essay from the year 2000 in the subject Politics - Political Theory and the History of Ideas Journal, grade: 63% (Credit), Monash University Melbourne (School for Social and Political Inquiry), course: Nationalism, 21 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: A couple of months ago, I asked a fellow exchange student where he was from. "Canada" was his reply and after further questioning he told me that he was from Ottawa in the province of Ontario. A couple of days later, I asked another Canadian student the same question, and she replied "Quebec" in the first place, just mentioning her home province but not the country she was a citizen of; and, as it turned out, she did this intentionally.

How can we explain such a different self-perception of two residents of the same country? Why does it seem that for French-speaking residents of Quebec it is more important to be recognized as Quebecers than as Canadians? The Referendum 1995 has brought Quebec nationalism back in the headlines of the world press. Suddenly, we were aware of the existence of a separatist movement in the middle of a western liberal democracy and people were asking themselves if nationalism was not a product of nineteenth century Europe and if the nation-building process had not already ceased in the west. However, Quebec stands not alone as a minority in a western state seeking independence or more autonomy. Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Catalonia are some of the cases that received increased scientific interest in the last couple of years. With those regions in mind, we can say that we have witnessed the emergence of a 'new' nationalism that threatens post-industrialist nation-states that seemed to have finished their process of nation-building a long time ago. This essay wants to answer the question of what kind of nationalism we can find in Quebec. I will begin with a historical overview, because history is one of the most important features the 'new nationalists' draw upon to legitimate their struggle for more autonomy. I shall then continue with a discussion of the social and economic changes in the province in the post-war years and during the Quiet Revolution. This will be followed by an analysis of the factors that shape and influence the ideology of the contemporary Quebecois independent movement. Then I will try to locate Quebec nationalism on the theoretical scale, using the two concepts of ethnic and civic nationalism. I shall conclude with an outlook on the future relations between Quebec and the federal Canadian state.

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