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CONFIDENTIAL

12 November 1981

MEMORANDUM FROM MICHEL C. SAYKALY

RADIO-QUEBEC SURVEY REVEALS THAT QUEBECERS WANT CONSTITUTIONAL NEGOTIATIONS TO BE RESUMED

Premier René Levesque left Ottawa last week in a somewhat distraught state of mind. He played up for the media his sense of Quebec's betrayal by the seven premiers with whom he was allied and let loose a series of threats. Subsequently, he solemnly declared in the Quebec Legislature that he would not participate in further meetings with either the Premiers or with the federal government except those dealing with the economy.

Opposition Leader Ryan urged Mr. Levesque to resume negotiations, pointing out much of merit in the Accord and suggesting slight modifications to it which would have his support. Many federal leaders have spoken out since the Accord of the flexibility in negotiating adjustments with Quebec in order to achieve unanimity; surely, the fact that Quebec represents one of Canada's two founding language communities underlies these overtures.

On Tuesday, 10 November, Radio-Québec's program "Objectif" revealed the results of a survey conducted by Multi-Reso, a highly reputable Quebec-based research firm. The survey was conducted by telephone among a representative sample of 625 Quebec voters from November 6th to 9th, immediately following announcement of the Accord. According to the survey, a majority of Quebecers (52%), including a majority of francophones (55%), would like to renew negotiations with Ottawa. Very few Quebecers support the Premier's flirtation with still another referendum (11%), a general election (5%). There are indications that current PQ polls are telling the Premier the same thing, given his partially acquiescent attitude toward the Multi-Reso poll while simultaneously discounting it saying that the people are still too confused about the implications of the Accord.

Premier Levesque is under considerable pressure from radical nationalist groups to avoid, and to be seen as avoiding, any entente with the federal government. His behaviour at the Conference reflected this pressure. However, he is a democratic indépendantiste and desirous of remaining close to his people. Hence, now would be a propitious moment to reach out to him, using the Ryan proposals as a basis for negotiations. The federal position must not only be conciliatory. It must also be seen as conciliatory.

Encl.

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RAPATRIEMENT DE LA CONSTITUTION: MEMORANDUM