Allaire Report

The collapse of the Meech Lake Accord in 1990 weakened the legitimacy of federalism in Quebec and embarrassed the Liberal government headed by Robert Bourassa, which had staked its own credibility on the Accord. To appease nationalist sentiment within his party and elsewhere, Bourassa asserted that Quebec was entitled to decide its own future. The Quebec Liberal Party established a constitutional Committee, headed by Jean Allaire, a spokesman for the party's nationalist wing. The Committee's mandate was to prepare proposals for the reform of the Canadian Constitution, which would be presented to the party's convention early in 1991. These proposals were introduced in the 'Allaire Report'.

When it appeared in January 1991, the 'Allaire Report' was a very radical document, particularly when compared with the party's previous constitutional blueprint, the so-called Beige Paper of 1980. It would have left the Parliament of Canada with only five exclusive fields of jurisdiction: defence, tariffs, currency, management of the public debt, and equalization. Jurisdiction over Aboriginal peoples, foreign policy, fisheries, communications and the post office would be shared between the federal and provincial levels, while all other powers would be exclusively provincial. The Senate would be abolished, the Supreme Court of Canada replaced by a "community tribunal", and the Bank of Canada reorganized to provide input by the provinces. On the other hand, barriers to economic integration between the provinces would supposedly be reduced, insofar as this was compatible with the other proposals.

In March 1991 the party convention accepted most of the Allaire Report, but Premier Bourassa's speech in response was deliberately ambiguous, and it was soon apparent that he was not committed to the proposals. The Charlottetown Accord, which he accepted the following year, fell far short of the Allaire proposals and would have increased Quebec's autonomy only slightly, if at all. Allaire and other nationalist Liberals later formed a new party called Action Démocratique, which elected one member to the National Assembly in Quebec 1995.

Sources:

- Constitutional Committee of the Quebec Liberal Party (Montreal: Quebec Liberal Party, 1991).
- J. Lisee, *The Trickster: Robert Bourassa and Quebecers*, 1990-1992, trans. R. Chodos, S. Horn & W. Taylor (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1994).
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