

# FLQ Manifesto 1970

edited by **Damien-Claude Bélanger**

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## Editor's Note

The Front de libération du Québec (FLQ)'s use of the media was far more extensive and effective during the October Crisis than at any other point in the movement's history. The Libération Cell of the FLQ released the following manifesto shortly after kidnapping James Cross, the British trade commissioner, on 5 October, 1970 in Montreal.

The broadcast of the FLQ Manifesto was listed among the seven demands for Cross's release. Although the Trudeau government initially attempted to suppress its circulation, it reluctantly allowed the French CBC to broadcast the manifesto on 8 October. The manifesto had been broadcast by CKAC, a Montreal radio station, the previous day. Designed to appeal to the masses, it eschewed the heavy theoretical leanings of previous FLQ manifestos and contained elements of *joual* (colloquial Canadian French). Its populism and irreverence struck a chord among many Quebecers.

# Front de libération du Québec

## MANIFESTO

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The Front de libération du Québec is neither the Messiah nor a modern-day Robin Hood. It is a group of Quebec workers who are determined to use every means possible to ensure that the people of Quebec take control of their own destiny.

The Front de libération du Québec wants total independence for Quebecers, united in a free society and purged for good of the clique of voracious sharks, the patronizing “big bosses”<sup>1</sup> and their henchmen who have made Quebec their private hunting ground for “cheap labor”<sup>2</sup> and unscrupulous exploitation.

The Front de libération du Québec is not an aggressive movement, but rather a response to the aggression perpetrated by high finance through the puppet governments in Ottawa and Québec (the Brinks “show,”<sup>3</sup> Bill 63,<sup>4</sup> the electoral map,<sup>5</sup> the so-called “social progress”

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<sup>1</sup> In English in the original text (“big boss”). The FLQ used English terminology as a form of derision and also as a means to highlight the dominant role of Anglophones in Quebec’s economy.

<sup>2</sup> In English in the original text.

<sup>3</sup> In English in the original text. Shortly before the 1970 provincial election, the Royal Trust transferred thousands of certificates from Montreal to Toronto in a convoy of Brinks armoured trucks. The Royal Trust claimed that concerned clients had insisted that their investments and property be protected from a possible Parti québécois victory. The well-publicized event was intended to dissuade Quebec voters from supporting the fledgling separatist party.

<sup>4</sup> Enacted in 1969, Bill 63 was Quebec’s first major language law. It guaranteed parents the right to choose the language of instruction for their children, but required that children who received their education in English acquire a working knowledge of French. Bill 63 also encouraged immigrants to learn French upon arrival in Quebec. The bill was viewed as a weak measure by a great number of French-speaking Quebecers and contributed to the 1970 defeat of Jean-Jacques Bertrand’s Union nationale government.

<sup>5</sup> In 1970, Quebec’s electoral map magnified the political power of rural ridings. This contributed to the Parti québécois’ poor showing in the 1970 provincial election. The PQ drew the bulk of its support from urban areas in the early 1970s.

(*sic*) tax,<sup>6</sup> Power Corporation,<sup>7</sup> “Doctors’ insurance,”<sup>8</sup> the Lapalme boys<sup>9</sup> ... ).

The Front de libération du Québec finances itself through voluntary taxes (*sic*)<sup>10</sup> levied on the establishments that exploit workers (banks, finance companies, etc.).

“The financially powerful, who uphold the status quo and who make up the majority of the traditional tutors of our people, have obtained the reaction they hoped for: a step backwards rather than the change for which we have worked harder than ever before, and for which we will continue to work” (René Lévesque, April 29, 1970).<sup>11</sup>

We briefly believed that it was worth channeling our energy and our impatience, as René Lévesque so aptly put it, into the Parti québécois,<sup>12</sup> but the Liberal victory<sup>13</sup> clearly demonstrates that what we call democracy in Quebec has always been, and still is, a “democracy”<sup>14</sup> of the rich. In this sense, the Liberal party's victory is a victory of the Simard-Cotroni<sup>15</sup> election riggers. Consequently, we

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<sup>6</sup> Federal tax designed to fund socialized healthcare. Quebec was denied its share of the funds until it implemented its own medicare programme in late 1970.

<sup>7</sup> Power Corporation is one of Canada’s largest companies. Its chairman and chief executive officer, Paul Desmarais, is a media mogul and a long-time supporter of the Liberal party.

<sup>8</sup> Early version of medicare.

<sup>9</sup> Group of postal truck drivers who lost their jobs after the federal Post Office Department cancelled their company’s contract. In 1970, the “Lapalme boys” became something of a *cause célèbre* in Quebec. The FLQ listed their rehiring among its seven demands for the release of James Cross.

<sup>10</sup> Allusion to Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau’s use of “voluntary taxes” (lotteries) to fund various city projects. The FLQ financed most of its terrorist activities through theft and bank robberies.

<sup>11</sup> Statement made by René Lévesque (1922-1987), leader of the Parti québécois and later premier of Quebec (1976-1985), on the night of the 1970 provincial election. In 1970, the Parti québécois received 23 percent of the popular vote, but only won 6.5 percent of the seats in Quebec’s National Assembly. This poor showing left separatists disheartened and convinced radical fringe elements that violence was the only means to achieve independence and socialism.

<sup>12</sup> Founded in 1968, the Parti québécois advocates sovereignty for Quebec, but wishes to maintain certain formal ties with the rest of Canada.

<sup>13</sup> Led by Robert Bourassa, the Liberal party won a sweeping victory in the 1970 provincial election.

<sup>14</sup> In English in the original text.

<sup>15</sup> The Simard family were wealthy industrialists from Sorel, Québec. The head of the Simard family, Édouard Simard, was Robert Bourassa’s father in law. The Cotroni family dominated

have washed our hands clean of the British parliamentary system<sup>16</sup> and the Front de libération du Québec will never allow itself to be distracted by the electoral crumbs that the Anglo-Saxon capitalists toss Quebec's way every four years. Many Quebecers have realized the truth and are ready to take action. In the coming year Bourassa<sup>17</sup> will get what is coming to him: 100,000<sup>18</sup> revolutionary workers, armed and organized!

Yes, there are reasons for the Liberal victory. Yes, there are reasons for poverty, unemployment, slums, and for the fact that you, Mr. Bergeron of Visitation Street,<sup>19</sup> and also you, Mr. Legendre of Laval,<sup>20</sup> who earn \$10,000 a year,<sup>21</sup> do not feel free in our country of Quebec.

Yes, there are reasons, and the guys at Lord know them, and the fishermen of the Gaspé, the workers of the North Shore, the miners of the Iron Ore, of Quebec Cartier Mining, and Noranda also know these reasons.<sup>22</sup> And the brave workers of Cabano<sup>23</sup> who you tried to screw again know many such reasons.

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Montreal's criminal underworld in the 1960s and 1970s. It is alleged that both families bankrolled the Quebec Liberal party.

<sup>16</sup> The Parti québécois' poor showing in the 1970 provincial election can be attributed, in part, to the distortions of Quebec's electoral map (see note 5) and to the effects of the Canada's British-style electoral system. Known as single-member district plurality, this system awards a parliamentary seat to any candidate who obtains the largest share of the vote in a particular riding, regardless of whether or not the candidate has received a majority of ballots cast. Single-member district plurality has traditionally hampered political parties whose support is significant but diffuse. This was the Parti québécois' case in the early 1970s.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Bourassa (1933-1996), Liberal premier of Quebec (1970-1976, 1985-1994).

<sup>18</sup> Allusion to Premier Bourassa's promise to create 100,000 jobs in 1971.

<sup>19</sup> Visitation Street is located in a working-class and largely French-speaking area of Montreal.

<sup>20</sup> Laval is a largely French-speaking suburb of Montreal.

<sup>21</sup> An upper middle class income in 1970.

<sup>22</sup> The Lord steelworks, Iron Ore of Canada, Quebec Cartier Mining, and Noranda Mines had poor records of labour relations in the 1960s. The Gaspé peninsula and the North Shore are resource-dependent regions in eastern Quebec.

<sup>23</sup> Located in the Lower St. Lawrence, the town of Cabano was the centre of a major dispute in 1970 involving the Irving conglomerate of New Brunswick and the local population. Industrialist K.C. Irving had promised to build a mill in Cabano in exchange for logging rights in the region. Serious acts of vandalism occurred after Irving reneged on his promise.

Yes, there are reasons why you, Mr. Tremblay of Panet Street<sup>24</sup> and you, Mr. Cloutier, who work in construction in St. Jérôme,<sup>25</sup> cannot pay for “vaisseaux d'or,”<sup>26</sup> replete with jazz and razzle-dazzle, like Drapeau<sup>27</sup> the aristocrat, who is so concerned about slums that he covers them up with coloured billboards to hide our misery from the tourists.<sup>28</sup>

Yes, there are reasons why you, Mrs. Lemay of St. Hyacinthe,<sup>29</sup> can't pay for little trips to Florida like the rotten judges and parliamentarians do with our money.

The brave workers for Vickers and Davie Ship,<sup>30</sup> who were sacked without notice, know these reasons. And the Murdochville men, who were crushed for the simple and sole reason that they wanted to organize a union and were forced to pay \$2 million by the rotten judges simply because they tried to exercise this basic right<sup>31</sup> – they know justice and they know many such reasons.

Yes, there are reasons why you, Mr. Lachance of Sainte-Marguerite Street,<sup>32</sup> go and drown your despair, your bitterness, and your rage in a bottle of that dog's beer, Molson. And you, Lachance's son, with your marijuana cigarettes ...

Yes, there are reasons why, generation after generation, you, the welfare recipients, are kept on social assistance. Yes, there are lots of

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<sup>24</sup> Panet Street is located in a working-class and largely French-speaking area of Montreal.

<sup>25</sup> Saint-Jérôme is at the foothills of the Laurentians, north of Montreal.

<sup>26</sup> Allusion to Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau's exclusive restaurant, le Vaisseau d'or. The restaurant featured a live classical orchestra.

<sup>27</sup> Jean Drapeau (1916-1999), mayor of Montreal (1954-1957, 1960-1986). The FLQ bombed Drapeau's residence in 1969.

<sup>28</sup> Allusion to Mayor Drapeau's various urban renewal programmes.

<sup>29</sup> St. Hyacinthe is in the Montérégie region, in south-western Quebec.

<sup>30</sup> The Vickers and Davie shipyards of Montreal and Lauzon were closed in 1969. Workers were only given two hours notice of their termination.

<sup>31</sup> Murdochville, a mining town in the Gaspé peninsula, was the site of a major strike in 1957. The dispute was centred on the workers' right to unionize and resulted in a significant defeat for organized labour. The courts would eventually order the United Steelworkers of America to compensate the Gaspé Copper Mines for the strike.

<sup>32</sup> Sainte-Marguerite Street is located in a working-class and largely French-speaking area of Montreal.

reasons, and the Domtar workers in East Angus and Windsor<sup>33</sup> know them well. And the workers at Squibb and Ayers, and the men at the Liquor Board and those at Seven-Up and Victoria Precision,<sup>34</sup> and the blue collar workers in Laval and Montreal and the Lapalme boys know lots reasons.

The Dupont of Canada workers also know them, even if soon they will be able to express them only in English<sup>35</sup> (thus assimilated they will enlarge the number of New Quebecers, the immigrant darlings of Bill 63).<sup>36</sup>

And the Montreal policemen, those strong-arms of the system, should understand these reasons – they should have been able to see that we live in a terrorized society because, without their force, without their violence, everything fell apart on October 7!<sup>37</sup>

We have had our fill of Canadian federalism that penalizes the Quebec milk producers to satisfy the needs of the Anglo-Saxons of the Commonwealth;<sup>38</sup> the system which keeps the valiant Montreal taxi drivers in a state of semi-slavery to shamefully protect the exclusive monopoly of nauseating Murray Hill<sup>39</sup> and its proprietor – the murderer Charles Hershorn and his son Paul who, on the night of October 7, repeatedly tore the twelve-gauge shot gun from his

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<sup>33</sup> In 1968, a violent labour dispute took place in Domtar's pulp and paper plants in East Angus and Windsor, in Quebec's Eastern Townships.

<sup>34</sup> Between 1966 and 1970, serious labour disputes occurred at Squibb Pharmaceuticals in Montreal, the Dominion Ayers in Lachute, the Quebec Liquor Board, Seven-Up's Montreal bottling plant, and Victoria Precision in Montreal. The FLQ bombed the residence of the Seven-Up plant's manager in 1967.

<sup>35</sup> Dupont of Canada was known for its refusal to employ French Canadians in management positions and for its insistence that only English be used in its Quebec plants.

<sup>36</sup> Under Bill 63, an overwhelming majority of immigrants chose to send their children to English school (see note 4).

<sup>37</sup> On October 7, 1969, Montreal's police officers and firefighters staged an illegal strike. The city was rocked by several hours of violence and mayhem.

<sup>38</sup> In mid-1970, federal civil servants had suggested that the government curtail Quebec's milk production.

<sup>39</sup> In 1970, only the taxis and buses of the Murray Hill Company could carry passengers from downtown Montreal to Dorval (now Pierre Elliott Trudeau) Airport. This monopoly was contested by the militant Mouvement de libération du taxi, which had ties to the FLQ.

employee's hands to fire at the taxi drivers, thereby mortally wounding Corporal Dumas, killed while undercover.<sup>40</sup>

We have had our fill of a federal system that exercises a senseless policy of importation<sup>41</sup> while the low wage-earners in the textile and shoe manufacturing trades,<sup>42</sup> who are the most ill-treated in Quebec, are thrown out into the street for the benefit of a clutch of damned "money-makers"<sup>43</sup> in their Cadillacs; we have had enough of a federal government which classes the Quebec nation among the ethnic minorities of Canada.

We have had our fill, as have more and more Quebecers, of a pathetic government that performs a thousand and one acrobatics to charm American millionaires into investing in Quebec,<sup>44</sup> la Belle Province, where thousands and thousands of square miles of forests, full of game and well-stocked lakes, are the exclusive preserve of these almighty twentieth century lords.<sup>45</sup>

We have had our fill of hypocrites like Bourassa who rely on Brinks armoured trucks,<sup>46</sup> the living symbol of the foreign occupation of Quebec, to keep the poor "natives"<sup>47</sup> of Quebec in fear of the misery and unemployment in which they are accustomed to living.

We have had our fill of the Ottawa representative to Quebec who wants to give our tax money to the Anglophone bosses to "encourage" them to speak French, my dear, to negotiate in

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<sup>40</sup> Taking advantage of the Montreal police and fire department strike of October 7, 1969, the Mouvement de libération du taxi attacked the garage of the Murray Hill Company. Several buses were burned and gunfire was exchanged. A number of people were injured, including FLQ members Jacques Lanctôt and Marc Carbonneau, and an undercover officer of Quebec's provincial police, Corporal Robert Dumas, was killed.

<sup>41</sup> Since the 1940s, the Canadian government has tended to support multilateral tariff reduction.

<sup>42</sup> The textile and shoe industries were the backbone of Quebec's manufacturing sector.

<sup>43</sup> In English in the original text.

<sup>44</sup> Like many Quebec premiers before him, Robert Bourassa was eager to encourage American capitalists to invest in Quebec. Premier Bourassa was in New York on a trade mission when the October Crisis began.

<sup>45</sup> Until 1977, a good deal of Quebec's best hunting and fishing land was controlled by private clubs owned by wealthy Americans.

<sup>46</sup> See note 3.

<sup>47</sup> In English in the original text.

French.<sup>48</sup> Repeat after me: "Cheap labor is *main d'œuvre à bon marché* in French."

We have had our fill of promises of work and prosperity, when in fact we will always be the diligent servants and boot-lickers of the big shots, as long as there is a Westmount, a Town of Mount Royal, a Hampstead, an Outremont,<sup>49</sup> all the fortresses of high finance on St. James Street<sup>50</sup> and Wall Street; we will be slaves until all of us, the Québécois, have exhausted every means, including arms and dynamite, to rid ourselves of these economic and political "big bosses"<sup>51</sup> who are prepared to use every dirty trick in the book to better screw us.

We live in a society of terrorized slaves, terrorized by the big bosses like Steinberg, Clark, Bronfman, Smith, Neaple, Timmins, Geoffrion, J.L. Lévesque, Hershorn, Thompson, Nesbitt, Desmarais, Kierans.<sup>52</sup> Compared to them, Rémi Popol<sup>53</sup> the nightstick, Drapeau the "dog,"<sup>54</sup> Bourassa the twink of the Simards,<sup>55</sup> and Trudeau<sup>56</sup> the faggot<sup>57</sup> are peanut politicians!

We are terrorized by the capitalist Roman Church, even though this seems less and less obvious (who owns the property on which the stock exchange stands?);<sup>58</sup> by the payments to Household Finance; by the advertising of the grand masters of consumption: Eaton, Simpson, Morgan, Steinberg, General Motors ...; we are terrorized by

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<sup>48</sup> Allusion to Prime Minister Trudeau's Official Languages Act of 1969.

<sup>49</sup> Westmount, Town of Mount Royal, and Hampstead are wealthy and largely English-speaking suburbs of Montreal; Outremont is a wealthy and largely French-speaking suburb.

<sup>50</sup> St. James Street is the centre of Montreal's financial district.

<sup>51</sup> In English in the original text ("big boss").

<sup>52</sup> Many of the leading figures of Quebec's business establishment are listed in this sentence.

<sup>53</sup> Rémi Paul (1921-1982), Union nationale minister of justice of Quebec (1968-1970).

<sup>54</sup> In English in the original text.

<sup>55</sup> Allusion to rumours regarding Premier Bourassa's sexual orientation and to his relationship with the wealthy Simard family. Bourassa married Andrée Simard in 1958.

<sup>56</sup> Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1919-2000), Liberal minister of justice (1967-1968) and prime minister of Canada (1968-1979, 1980-1984).

<sup>57</sup> In the 1960s, rumours regarding Trudeau's sexual orientation were fuelled by his 1967 Omnibus Bill, which decriminalized sodomy, and by his status as a bachelor.

<sup>58</sup> The Sulpician Order owns extensive real estate on the island of Montreal.



the closed circles of science and culture which are the universities and by their “monkey see, monkey do” bosses like Gaudry<sup>59</sup> and Dorais<sup>60</sup> and by the assistant monkey Robert Shaw.<sup>61</sup>

There is an increasing number of us who know and suffer under this terrorist society, and the day is fast approaching when all the Westmounts of Quebec will disappear from the map.

Factory workers, miners, and loggers; service-industry workers, teachers, students, and the unemployed, take back what belongs to you, your jobs, your determination, and your liberty.

And you, workers at General Electric, you make your factories run; only you are capable of production; without you General Electric is nothing!

Workers of Quebec, take back today what is yours; take back what belongs to you. Only you know your factories, your machines, your hotels, your universities, your unions. Don't wait for some miracle organization.

Make your own revolution in your neighborhoods, in your places of work. If you don't do it yourselves, other technocratic usurpers and so on will replace the handful of cigar smokers we now know, and everything will have to be done over again. Only you are able to build a free society.

We must struggle, not individually but together, until victory is ours, with every means at our disposal, like the Patriots of 1837-38 (those whom Our Holy Mother the Church hastily excommunicated to better sell out to British interests)<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Roger Gaudry (1913-2001), first lay rector of the Université de Montréal (1965-1975).

<sup>60</sup> Léo Dorais (b. 1929), first rector of the Université du Québec à Montréal (1969-1974).

<sup>61</sup> Robert Shaw (1910-2001), deputy commissioner-general of Expo '67 and vice-principal of administration at McGill University (1968-1971).

<sup>62</sup> In 1837-1838, an anti-colonial rebellion swept across south-western Quebec. The Roman Catholic Church condemned the rebellion and refused to administer the sacraments to the rebels.

In the four corners of Quebec, may those who have been contemptuously called "lousy French"<sup>63</sup> and alcoholics start fighting vigorously against the enemies of liberty and justice and put out of commission all the professional swindlers and robbers, the bankers, the businessmen, the judges, and the sold-out politicians!!!

We are the workers of Quebec and we will fight to the bitter end. With the help of the entire population, we want to replace this slave society with a free society, operating by itself and for itself, a society open to the world.

Our struggle can only be victorious. An awakening people cannot be kept in misery and contempt for long.

Long live free Quebec!

Long live our imprisoned political comrades!

Long live the Quebec revolution!

Long live the Front de libération du Québec!

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<sup>63</sup> In English in the original text. Pierre Trudeau had used this expression to describe the French spoken by ordinary Quebecers.