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LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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A REFORMIST-NATIONALIST POLITICAL OPPOSITION
TO MAURICE DUPLESSIS 1936-39

by Richard Weatherston

Thesis presented to the School of
Graduate Studies and Research of
the University of Ottawa as partial
fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts.

Ottawa, Canada, 1981



R. Weatherston, Ottawa, Canada, 1982

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INTRODUCTION

The ^{*}reformist nationalist political opposition to Maurice Duplessis after 1936 was comprised largely of those men who had been members of the Action Libérale Nationale before 1935. In 1935, the A.L.N. united with Duplessis' Provincial Conservative Party to form the Union Nationale. When Duplessis showed no interest in social reform, some of the prominent members of the A.L.N. broke with him. Paul Gouin, leader of the A.L.N. was the first to leave the Union Nationale with several friends. He was followed later by Philippe Hamel and several close associates. Philippe Hamel founded the short-lived Parti National, while Paul Gouin revived the A.L.N. The aim of this study is to investigate the activities of those nationalists who were sufficiently dedicated to social reform

*The word reform is capable of many interpretations. In this thesis I am using it to apply to those who have a critical attitude towards the capitalist system and who advocate government measures to facilitate trade union organization and break up of trusts. By these criteria both Hamel and Gouin were reformers.

to break with Duplessis' Union Nationale.

Although there are several studies of the Action Libérale Nationale, historians have not paid much attention to the activities of former A.L.N. members after Duplessis took power in 1936. Herbert Quinn concentrates on the Union Nationale while Patricia Dirk's thesis focuses on the 1934-36 period, with secondary attention only being given to the 1936-39 period. Neither do Robert Rumilly's and Conrad Black's books, while reporting salient activities, contain any detailed analysis of Gouin and Hamel during the 1936-39 period.

The Philippe Hamel Papers at Laval University provided invaluable information on the Parti National and Hamel's other political activities. The newspaper, Ere Nouvelle, stored in the Seminary of Quebec, was most useful since it was the party organ of the Parti National. The newspaper is available for the period from its foundation on August 20, 1937 to May 1938 and also includes several issues from July 1939 to January 1940. The sources of this thesis include the Paul Gouin Papers and the Abbé Groulx Papers. Numerous newspapers especially the A.L.N. organ, The Province as well as Le Devoir were essential to this work. Newspaper clippings in personal papers also had shed light on various events.

The thesis is divided into four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter deals with the rise of the Action Libérale Nationale and Philippe Hamel's eventual alliance

with it. The chapter ends with the isolation of Paul Gouin and the victory of Maurice Duplessis as leader of the Union Nationale. The second chapter deals with Hamel's and Gouin's fundamental ideology: corporatism. This chapter analyses material mostly from the 1937-39 period when the two men propounded these theories. The third chapter returns to political events with a study of Philippe Hamel's opposition to Duplessis and his relations with the Catholic Church. The fourth chapter follows Paul Gouin through his national education campaign and the revival of the A.L.N. in 1938 and then continues until the provincial election of 1939. The conclusion will discuss the significance of the two men's ideas as well as focusing on the reason for their political failure.

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CHAPTER I

AN UNEASY ALLIANCE

Encouraged by Quebec's provincial Liberal governments, the industrial revolution continued to transform Quebec's economy during the first part of the twentieth century. Between 1911 and 1929 the manufacturing sector quadrupled.¹ Phenomenal expansion also took place in the exploitation of natural resources. Pulp and paper production rose dramatically as did mineral production. The value of mineral extraction more than doubled in the decade prior to 1931, with many new copper, gold and zinc mines being opened.² Likewise the hydro-electric companies more than quadrupled their output during the same decade.³ The Liberal government of Alexandre Taschereau gave impetus to such expansion by selling forest, mining and water

rights to British and American investors.⁴

This rapid industrialization caused the growth of new urban centres and the mushrooming of old ones. The population of Quebec grew to 2,874,622 by 1931; a 74% increase since 1900. From being a rural society in which only 40% of the population was urban in 1900, Quebec became an industrial society which was 63% urbanized by 1931.⁵ Many small towns such as Drummondville and Asbestos rose to importance. Montreal tripled in size between 1901 and 1921, and grew by 31% again by 1931.⁶ Two-thirds of Quebec's population now lived in Montreal and its suburbs.⁷ Quebec City grew more slowly, although it doubled its population between 1901 and 1931.⁸

The rapid growth of the cities as well as industry indicated the rise of urban classes, both worker and small business. Although many smaller centres employed large numbers of workers in resource extraction or manufacturing, Montreal, with 42% of all Quebec wage earners had the greatest concentration.⁹ This process of industrialization emphasized a social imbalance in which English Canadians dominated the managerial positions in industry while French Canadians provided the labour force.¹⁰

Although French Canadians were largely excluded from the higher positions in the large industries, they controlled most of the small businesses in the province.¹¹ There was a rapid growth of French-Canadian small capitalists during the

prosperous 1920's. The service sector, which includes shop owners and small businessmen, employed 279,000 people in 1921 but grew to 412,000 in 1931.¹² It would seem that the small businessman, or the petite bourgeoisie as they are often called, proliferated in the 1920's.

Many French Canadians did not welcome the new industrial and urban society. During the early 1920's Henri Bourassa and Abbé Groulx were the foremost Catholic spokesmen criticizing the direction in which French Canada was evolving. They abhorred the increase in materialism, individual selfishness and class jealousy.¹³ They saw that rapid urbanization was weakening the role of the family in society and consequently that, of Catholic values. As late as 1937 Abbé Groulx declared "that no environment has been better suited to the production of a healthy and strong group of men attached to their family and national traditions than the fertile atmosphere of a rural life."¹⁴

The social dislocation and economic breakdown brought about by the Great Depression vindicated the Catholic critics who had denounced the new industrial system during the era of prosperity. The economy collapsed with frightening rapidity. The gross value of manufacturing production in Quebec which had risen from \$729,497,000 in 1921¹⁵ to \$1,106,475 in 1929, fell to \$604,497,000 by 1933.¹⁶ Pulp and Paper industries went bankrupt and the mining industry slowed almost to a standstill.¹⁷

Agricultural markets declined leaving many farmers with debts they could not pay. Unemployment in many areas rose to between 30-50%.¹⁸ Many of the unemployed flocked to Montreal or to other urban centres in search of work. Soon the municipalities were unable to cope with the demand for relief. The urban problems and the industrial decline convinced many thoughtful Catholics that the laissez-faire economic policies which had encouraged rapid urbanization and industrialization had been misguided.

The increased competition created by the economic decline also brought about calls for ethnic solidarity among French Canadians. Small businessmen, jealous of the tax exemptions enjoyed by the new industry, formed retail merchants' associations, ostensibly for the defence of independent business but in reality to attack Jewish and English controlled chain stores.¹⁹ The Achet Chez Nous campaign, organized by the nationalist St. Jean Baptiste Society, was supported by small businessmen as a means of curtailing competition from other ethnic groups.²⁰

Thoughtful French Canadians were not the only Catholics who began to question the benefits of economic liberalism. In 1931 Pope Pius XI had issued his encyclical, Quadragesimo Anno, which called for the intervention of the state in the economy where necessary. How the Pope's directives could be applied to Quebec became a topic of lively interest among many fervent

Catholics. In the spring of 1933 the Jesuit-sponsored Semaine Sociale produced the first Programme de Restauration Sociale. Later, during the following winter, a second more detailed version of the Programme was issued.²¹

Major Catholic religious and lay leaders contributed to the Programme. Among them was Philippe Hamel, a long time enemy of the private power companies.²² Hamel, a Quebec City dentist, had gained public recognition through his campaign to municipalize Quebec Power and his denunciation of the abuses of capitalism.

The Programme de Restauration Sociale was a call for the reform of the capitalist system. Reforms were needed to end the economic dictatorship of a few trusts (monopolies) and to improve the economic situation of the lower classes. The state had the obligation to nationalize public utilities which were essential to the common good of society. At the same time it defended the right to private property and denounced the socialist doctrines of the C.C.F.²³

Certain sections of the Programme de Restauration Sociale called for progressive social legislation in order to deal with the plight of the urban workers; contributory social insurance, old age pensions, slum clearance and laws to strengthen unions were cited.²⁴ These sections concerned with the lot of the urban worker were combined with colonization schemes to open up new farm lands. The programme claimed that

industrial expansion should be restrained and that greater efforts should be made to re-establish the urban population on farms.²⁵

The Programme de Restauration Sociale proved to be useful to politicians seeking to challenge the Taschereau government. One of these was Maurice Duplessis, leader of the Provincial Conservatives, who incorporated some of its ideas in his party's programme. Another to be impressed was Paul Gouin, son of the former Premier Lomer Gouin and grandson of former Premier Honoré Mercier. Paul Gouin was born in 1898 and had fought in World War I. He had obtained a degree in Civil Law after studying in Montreal and the Quebec Seminary.²⁶

During the 1920's he had come under the influence of Abbé Groulx.²⁷

He had been involved in the study groups which produced the Programme de Restauration Sociale. In 1934 he headed the Comité de Colonisation founded by the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste which denounced the rapid industrialization of the previous decade.²⁸

Meanwhile the discontent of young Liberals had been evident since 1934 when one of them, Jean Martineau, attacked both Liberals and Conservatives for adopting policies dictated to them by a handful of bankers and financiers. During a speech at the Reform Club, he demanded a return to true liberalism. He accused Montreal Heat, Light and Power Company of charging excessive rates and demanded state intervention.²⁹

By 1934 Paul Gouin was leading many young Montreal Liberals of the Reform Club such as Jean Martineau, Roger Ouimet and Fred Monk. They complained that there was no room in the Liberal Party for young men who wished to introduce social legislation and to curb the abuses of the industrial system.³⁰ During April 1934, faced with Taschereau's resistance to change within the Liberal Party, Paul Gouin organized a pressure group, Action Libérale.³¹ However, Taschereau's firm control of the Liberal Party soon forced Paul Gouin to set up an independent political party.³² In his efforts Gouin was aided by Edouard Lacroix, a rich industrialist who provided funds both to organize political rallies and to begin a newspaper.³³

Like the Programme de Restauration Sociale the manifesto of Paul Gouin's Action Libérale Nationale, published in July 1934, emphasized rural reform. It proposed to revitalize rural life by colonization programmes and by the establishment of rural industries based on the processing of raw resources. It also promised among other things to create health insurance, to give pensions to needy mothers and to institute old age pensions with the aid of the federal government. It called for the better regulation of working hours, industrial hygiene and safety, and the replacement of slums by workers' housing.³⁴

The A.L.N. also proposed to attack financial monopolies, or trusts as they were then called, in order to protect small

business and the consumer. Tax reform would be carried out so that larger companies would no longer benefit from tax exemptions.

The A.L.N. promised to:

Briser, par tous les moyens possibles, l'emprise qu'ont sur la province et les municipalités les grandes institutions financières, le trust de l'électricité et celui de l'industrie du papier.³⁵

The A.L.N. considered that these institutions had too great an influence on Taschereau's government. They were held responsible for exploiting consumers and causing economic stagnation.

Therefore, the A.L.N. demanded it be against the law for government ministers to be directors of banks or industries doing business with the government. Other trusts such as the dairy, coal, gasoline and bakery industries would be broken in order to help consumers, small producers and distributors.³⁶

The A.L.N., like the Catholic thinkers from whom it drew inspiration, emphasized rural reconstruction but did not ignore the need for urban reform. Paul Gouin stressed:

Il me semble qu'en attendant que le retour à la terre ou que la colonisation et l'industrie complémentaire rétablissent notre surplus de population urbaine ouvrière dans de nouveaux centres industriels, plus nombreux, et plus petits, il me semble, dis-je, que nous devrions exécuter dans les grandes villes certains grands travaux nécessaires comme par exemple, ceux que résulteraient de la disparition des taudis à Montréal.³⁷

Paul Gouin, although motivated by idealist visions, was realistic enough to propose reforms which could gain votes.

The coming of the A.L.N. meant that reform-minded Quebecers no longer had to choose between Taschereau's Laissez-faire government or Duplessis' Conservatives who had been discredited by the conscription crisis of 1917 and the reactionary policies of the Bennett regime. Action Libérale Nationale appealed to those who wanted a reform party which would not ignore the social injustices intensified by the depression. To Catholic critics who feared the dangers that industrialization and socialism posed to traditional society, or to liberals who disliked the close connections between Taschereau's government and business, the A.L.N. appeared as a credible alternative.

The Montreal Liberals who formed the original nucleus of Paul Gouin's A.L.N. were not the only reformers in the province. In Quebec City a separate reform movement developed under the leadership of Philippe Hamel. Born in 1884, a dentist by profession and a member of the Board of Directors of Action Nationale, Hamel led the demand for cheap electricity.³⁸ He had many supporters in the Quebec daily newspaper Action Catholique, the nationalist publication Action Nationale, and the Association Catholique des Voyageurs de Commerce. Since 1931 he had been demanding the nationalization of the powerful Beauharnois Power Company.³⁹ He had produced extensive documentation on the power companies and had issued many pamphlets. Meanwhile his friend and political ally, Ernest Grégoire, won the municipalelections in Quebec City in early 1934.

The Quebec power companies were controlled by a small group of English Canadian financial barons⁴⁰ who charged excessive rates and cut off gas and electricity to the unemployed who could not pay their bills.⁴¹ Philippe Hamel believed that the abuses of the electric companies were a threat to both the survival of French Canada and to the capitalist system. He complained to Abbé Groulx about the ways the English dominated these companies and he feared that French Canadians would remain subordinate.

Contrôlée par des éléments étrangers à notre race, cette organisation ne désire rien moins que notre servitude.⁴²

He saw the corrupting influence of the companies everywhere and was convinced that they were the source of the economic crisis. These abuses, he felt, seriously endangered the capitalist system:

A notre avis, le capital se sauvera en autant que nous mettrons à la raison ceux qui le poussent à sa ruine, en empêchant la correction des abus.⁴³

Thus Philippe Hamel wished, like the other writers of the Programme de Restauration Sociale to preserve the essence of the capitalist system by attacking the abuses of the trusts. Since these trusts were largely controlled by English Canadians and foreigners, there was a French-Canadian nationalist component to his anti-trust outlook.

When Paul Couin had organized a separate political party in June-July 1934, he asked Hamel for support.⁴⁴

He had added the word "Nationale" to the name Action Libérale in order to appease Hamel's supporters who did not see themselves as Liberals. He also placed a greater emphasis on rural reforms in the A.L.N. manifesto than many Montreal Liberals such as Jean Martineau would have liked.⁴⁵ Although some of Hamel's supporters joined Gouin's Action Libérale Nationale in July 1934, others along with Hamel remained aloof.⁴⁶ The fact was that the A.L.N. programme stated that the power companies would be nationalized only after a public commission had determined that electrical costs could be lowered by public ownership.⁴⁷ Gouin did not see the nationalization of the electricity trust as the key issue.

Dans certains milieux...on semble croire que l'oeuvre de restauration économique, que l'oeuvre de survivance nationale, se résument chez nous à une question de colonisation et d'électricité. C'est là une profonde erreur qu'il faut dissiper à tout prix.⁴⁸

Because of this attitude, Hamel preferred to carry on separate political action.

Meanwhile the Liberal government of Alexandre Taschereau finally responded to attacks on the power companies by establishing the Lapointe Commission. During November 1934 this commission heard public reports. Philippe Hamel, who received front page coverage in Le Devoir, pointed out the benefits of publicly owned power companies.⁴⁹ He showed that Ontario Hydro charged a third of the price for electricity

compared to the privately owned Quebec Power companies.⁵⁰

The publication of the report of the Lapointe Commission proved to be a political watershed. Reporting in January 1935, it proposed some new laws but did not insist on public ownership. Taschereau's government took little action on the report. In March 1935 the government created a new ministry but refused to nationalize the power companies.

Taschereau's response to the Lapointe Commission finally convinced Hamel to join Paul Gouin's A.L.N. In January 1935 Hamel had written to Abbé Groulx saying that if Paul Gouin would take a stronger stand against the electricity companies, he would support the A.L.N. He believed that while the A.L.N. was gaining strength in Quebec City, his own influence could greatly strengthen the movement. He asked Groulx to convince Paul Gouin to make a clear commitment to nationalize the power companies.⁵¹ In April 1935, after the Liberal government's response to the Lapointe Commission, Paul Gouin wrote to Hamel:

En plus d'établir immédiatement la concurrence d'état, j'envisage la possibilité d'étatiser éventuellement tout le système hydroélectrique de la province, ce qui mettrait, à la disposition de nos compatriotes, une foule de belles positions qui leur échappent actuellement.⁵²

This statement of economic nationalism, directed against the English-Canadian dominated power companies, pleased Hamel who, subsequently joined the A.L.N.

Paul Gouin and Philippe Hamel had been united in an uneasy alliance. Paul Gouin believed that social reform had

to come about by bringing back the Liberal Party to the true liberal principles, with its insistence on "liberté de pensée". Gouin believed that this ideology opened the way to social progress.⁵³ Hamel on the other hand, disliked liberalism and did not want to be part of a movement which called itself Liberal, preferring the formation of a "national party".⁵⁴

After the adherence of Hamel's partisans, Action Libérale Nationale was a French-Canadian nationalist as well as reformist movement. For many, to attack an English-Canadian capitalist was to attack a trust. In the view of Abbé Groulx, social conflict was reduced to a vision of national conflict, where French-Canadian society was defended against the domination of foreign ethnic groups. Often articles in the A.L.N. party newspaper La Province would denounce the government for being the tool of foreign capitalists:

Vous avez gouverné dans le souci exagéré
et ridicule de plaire avant tout aux
minorités anglaise et juive.⁵⁵

Similarly those French Canadians who opposed the A.L.N. were treated as agents of foreign domination rather than as compatriots who had a competing social vision:

La lutte, elle se fera entre les traîtres
et les patriotes, entre ceux qui ont déshonoré
leur patrie en la livrant pieds et poings liés,
pour quelques piastres, à l'ennemi, à la finance
étrangère et ceux qui veulent rendre à leur
patrie, la force, la liberté, la splendeur
qu'avaient rêvé pour elle les fondateurs de ce
pays.⁵⁶

This evolution no doubt strengthened the A.L.N.'s appeal to some French Canadians.

In the autumn of 1935, Paul Gouin faced a difficult situation. Pecuniary problems were severe,⁵⁷ and many would-be candidates believed that they could not win in a three-way fight between them and the Liberals and Conservatives. Rural supporters insisted that an alliance with the Conservative Party be formed in order to challenge Liberal candidates successfully.⁵⁸

The Conservatives for their part faced little prospect of winning the election alone. Conservatives were viewed with suspicion because of the 1917 conscription crisis and their association with Bennett's mishandling of the economic crisis. Moreover, the common feeling that French Canadians were being exploited and a common adherence to the Programme de Restauration Sociale brought the two sides together. To defeat the entrenched Liberal government, Duplessis and Gouin signed an agreement whereby the A.L.N. would present two-thirds of the candidates while the Conservatives would present one-third. Duplessis would be the Premier in the event of victory, but the Cabinet would be chosen from A.L.N. members.⁵⁹

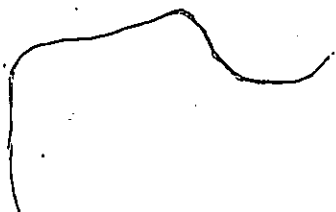
The electoral alliance, called Union Nationale, was supported and funded by the well-organized Conservative Party while the A.L.N. provided the new blood and fresh face which the Conservatives lacked. As a result of the election of

November 1935, the A.L.N. captured 26 seats, the Conservatives 16 and the Liberals 48. All the key A.L.N. leaders were elected including Paul Gouin, Jean Martineau, Philippe Hamel, Ernest Grégoire and Oscar Drouin. The Liberals, while still maintaining power were put in a precarious position.⁶⁰

But rivalry between Paul Gouin and Maurice Duplessis started almost as soon as the election was over. As early as January 1936, Philippe Morin, a Quebec City A.L.N. organizer and elected member, warned that it was necessary to "protéger l'Union Nationale contre l'aile trustard conservatrice."⁶¹ Paul Gouin found his authority increasingly challenged by Conservative members.⁶² Obviously Gouin would have to defend his position from an aggressive Duplessis.

Meanwhile "Chubby" Power and Ernest Lapointe were attempting to bring the A.L.N. back to the Liberal Party. Throughout the winter and spring of 1935-36, Gouin was prepared to consider this possibility.⁶³ But these negotiations were unsuccessful since Gouin would not support the Liberal Party until "la vieille gang" of Taschereau and his entourage were completely expelled.

As the parliamentary session progressed, Paul Gouin's authority continued to be eroded by Duplessis. The attack on the Liberal Government by the Conservative leader through the use of the Public Accounts committee proved to be enormously successful, exposing the corruption of Taschereau's regime.



Not only was Duplessis a better orator and master of parliamentary tactics than Gouin, but also he had a strong local organization and plenty of campaign money to offer A.L.N. members. From a purely practical point of view, only Duplessis would be able to ensure the re-election of the opposition members and the defeat of the Liberal government.⁶⁴

Philippe Morin pointed out to Paul Gouin that Duplessis was able to gain the loyalty of many A.L.N. members by getting favours done for them and generally looking after their interests.⁶⁵ Duplessis encouraged the elected members to see the advantages of political office under his leadership. Morin commented on how much better Duplessis was than Gouin in appealing to the self interest of the A.L.N. members.

Il paraît manifeste aujourd'hui que ce qui vous aliène quelques anciens adeptes, temporairement du moins, c'est que vous ne voulez pas commencer à partager les dépouilles avec personne, tandis que l'autre chef sait mieux exploiter ce côté humain de la politique, comme le côté humain des relations en général.⁶⁶

By now some of the A.L.N. members faithful to Gouin were becoming alarmed. An unsuccessful attempt was made in June 1936 by Fred Monk, A.L.N. organiser for Montreal, to convince Ernest Grégoire and Philippe Hamel that Duplessis had to be abandoned and that a new government had to be formed around some Liberal leaders with the exclusion of Taschereau.⁶⁷

The resignation of Alexandre Taschereau on June 11, 1936 subsequent to revelations of corruption extending to his

nephew Antoine Taschereau, brought the conflict between Duplessis and Gouin to a head. Six days later Paul Gouin announced that because Duplessis had refused to renew the electoral pact,

l'Action Libérale Nationale, fidèle à ses principes, entre donc aujourd'hui en lutte contre les deux vieux partis tories et trustards.⁶⁸

Only four elected members, Jean Martineau, Roger Ouimet, S. Vachon and Philippe Morin followed Gouin in his break with Duplessis.⁶⁹ The rest of the A.L.N. recognized Maurice Duplessis as their leader at the Sherbrooke caucus of the Union Nationale on June 20, 1936.⁷⁰

While Gouin denounced Duplessis' attempt to rebuild the Conservative Party on the back of the A.L.N.,⁷¹ Philippe Hamel, Oscar Drouin and Ernest Grégoire played a key role in advising other A.L.N. members to remain with Duplessis.⁷² Ernest Grégoire, a close friend of Hamel, was encouraged by Duplessis to lead the counter attack against Gouin. In a particularly vicious speech, Grégoire condemned Paul Gouin as well as his father.⁷³

Edouard Lacroix, a rich industrialist friendly to Gouin, denounced Duplessis as being in the pay of the trusts.⁷⁴ He wished to keep the A.L.N. going by presenting candidates in various ridings during the election, announced for August 17, 1936.⁷⁵ He tried to convince Gouin that this was the best

course. Paul Gouin however decided that it would be fruitless to fight an election in which Duplessis claimed to be a reformer and was supported by the majority of former A.L.N. members of Parliament. He now claimed that since Taschereau had been defeated, it would be best to pursue his goals through a non-partisan national education campaign,⁷⁶ to make adherents of all political parties aware of the need for social reform. The decision not to become involved in the election was no doubt based on the realization that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to reorganize the A.L.N. in the short time remaining before the election.

Philippe Hamel rejoiced in the fact that Paul Gouin and his friends had left the Union Nationale which he claimed was now purged of its liberal elements.⁷⁷ In a speech he recounted how he had tried to change the name of the A.L.N. to Action Nationale when he joined Paul Gouin's movement and how he had been opposed to the A.L.N. motto "relibéralisons". He claimed that:

Depuis le début de l'Action Libérale Nationale, M. Grouin et surtout son entourage immédiat n'étaient pas nationaux, mais libéraux. Tout ce que demandaient ces gens, c'était le départ de M. Taschereau.⁷⁸


Hamel was soon to find out that the same hatred of Taschereau was the main unifying factor in the Union Nationale. As later events would show, the commitment to social reform and to an attack on the trusts was stronger among Paul Gouin and his

followers than among the Duplessis group.

The Union Nationale entered the election of 1936 with the support of Hamel's followers and offering the A.L.N. programme as its political platform. The disappearance of Paul Gouin did not stop the Union Nationale from gaining victory at the polls. For the moment Maurice Duplessis had become Premier by pretending to be a reformer. However, he had no intention of fulfilling these promises. Consequently, he would soon be challenged not only by Gouin but by Philippe Hamel.

The need for social reform in Quebec had drawn Paul Gouin and Philippe Hamel into political action. Although both men drew inspiration from the Programme de Restauration Sociale, they disagreed on how reform should be obtained. Paul Gouin and his associates were essentially reformist liberals who desired to purge the Liberal Party of Taschereau and his pro-big business ministers. Hamel had been drawn to Action Libérale Nationale because he wished to combat the electricity trusts. As an adherent of the nationalist movement he had probably assimilated the traditional hostility of ardent Catholics to the Liberal Party which they suspected of trying to undermine the Catholic Church. Consequently, Hamel's suspicions of Gouin's "liberalism" made him more vulnerable to Duplessis' demagoguery.

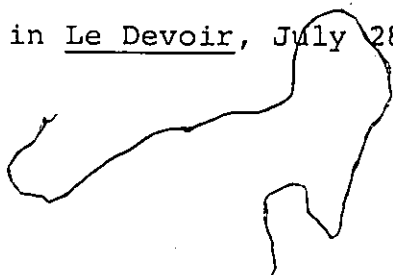
Duplessis had been able to exploit these contradictions within the A.L.N. Paul Gouin was pushed aside in a power



struggle. Although Gouin accused Duplessis of being in the pay of the trust with no intention of carrying out social reform, he could produce no concrete proof that this was so.⁷⁹ Philippe Hamel believed that Duplessis was a true enemy of the trusts; he would only discover his error after the election.

FOOTNOTES

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- 2 W.D. Posgate, "Social Mobilization and Political Change in Quebec", unpublished Ph.D., Political Science, Buffalo, State University of N.Y., 1972, p. 102.
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CHAPTER II

C O R P O R A T I S M

In combatting Duplessis, both Gouin and Hamel developed a whole set of reform policies. Their underlying philosophy was that of corporatism, of which they both became strong advocates after 1936. It is therefore necessary to turn to a description and analysis of this outlook.

Both men believed that the policies of economic liberalism were leading to class struggle. An unhappy proletariat might even come to question the institution of private property and the religious and social hierarchy. It was better to have a system of corporatism which rejected both monopoly capitalism and socialism and worked towards class harmony. But such a social order could only be established with the co-operation of

the elite. Consequently, both Hamel and Gouin spent a good deal of their time trying to educate it to its moral duty.

Hamel wanted to combat the trend which was converting social relationships into economic transactions and to destroy the cynical belief that a class or individual could prosper at the expense of society. People should work in the national interest for the real goals of the nation.¹ Men should have spiritual, rather than economic goals in life. Only its dedication to national and spiritual ideals, and not its method of distribution of material goods justified a social order.

Hamel wrote:

Le libéralisme économique et le socialisme cherchent, tous deux, la satisfaction de l'homme dans les biens matériels; le corporatisme demande que l'homme s'élève dans le spirituel, qu'il recherche le bien-être matériel comme un moyen de servir sa famille et la société pour rendre sa patrie fière et forte, sans jamais oublier lui-même d'où il vient et où il va.²

It followed that a common dedication to protecting the family and society rather than material prosperity would ensure social stability and class harmony.

Philippe Hamel warned French Canada's elite that it must instigate social reform before it was too late. Only by prompt action could the horrors of civil war be avoided. No doubt thinking of Spain and Russia he wrote:

Pour avoir préféré l'argent, les honneurs et l'étude, selon son seul plaisir ou selon son intérêt immédiat, une classe dirigeante pourrait expier son erreur bien chèrement.

Les exemples assez récents devraient être pour nous un avertissement.³

It was the responsibility of the elite to carry out the reforms necessary to create a corporatist society. This line of reasoning led Hamel to demand the formation of an "army of intellectuals" which could spread the corporatist ideology.⁴

The problem, according to Hamel, was that economic liberalism favoured the powerful, while socialism would create the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Les Etats, sous l'influence du libéralisme économique ont conduit la société de manière à toujours favoriser les puissants. Comme réaction le socialisme exige le groupement des faibles pour dominer la société. Le corporatisme, lui, s'efforce de donner justice aux puissants, tout en défendant particulièrement les droits du prolétariat.⁵

The corporatist system would appease the proletariat while maintaining the social hierarchy.

Hamel predicted that an ill defined "people" of Quebec would eventually demand that political life be brought under corporatist organization.⁶ He denounced Quebec's parliamentary system because of the political conflict which it created and upon which it survived. He declared:

Il semble absurde que l'on garde un régime qui dans son principe essentiel, divise et attise les luttes...⁷

He demanded the creation of a form of government that created harmony and conciliation by the creation of a Corporative Council.⁸

Hamel claimed that this body would constitute a state powerful enough to protect French Canadians from the "economic dictatorship" of the trusts as well as the subversion of the Communists.

...le corporatisme travaille à créer la puissance durable de l'état, puissance où le communisme ne germe pas...⁹

In keeping with his views on the divisive nature of parliamentary democracy, and his intense fear of communism and civil war, Hamel looked with a benevolent eye on authoritarian regimes.

...la dictature est une forme d'autorité qui prend sa puissance en elle-même après l'avoir reçue de Dieu. Et aux heures graves, c'est encore de cette façon qu'un peuple se sauve. La dictature fasciste, ne nous méprenons pas, reste un suprême mouvement de droite pour arracher un peuple des horreurs d'une guerre fratricide.¹⁰

Corporatism was to be established through the creation of corporatist unions for both workers and employers.

Entre l'Etat, instrument de la finance, et l'individu désespéré au milieu de sa misère profonde, il faut de toute nécessité poser un intermédiaire susceptible d'accorder plus de protection au faible et d'assagir les puissants par éducation ou contrainte. Cet intermédiaire c'est le syndicat et son corollaire, la corporation.¹¹

The existence of these unions would force the more powerful capitalists to sacrifice their more immediate interests and join the corporation for employers. Corporative unionization would be an extension of the system already established for the liberal professions into the industrial, agricultural and

commercial domains.¹² Consequently, the corporative unions of both workers and employers, like those of the liberal professions, would have the power to control the members in their profession and could limit competition. Politicians, once they realized the popularity of the corporatist movement would abandon their alliance with finance and would help establish the system.¹³

Representatives from both sides would take part in a local corporative Council to attempt to solve the dispute between workers' and employers' unions. These councils would then send representatives to the supreme Corporative Council which would deal with all social conflicts not solved at the local level and which would also determine the economic and political orientation of society. Through its Labour Tribunal, the Corporatist Council would have the authority to pass final judgement on any disputes between employers and employees which could not be resolved in the local corporative councils.¹⁴

Like Philippe Hamel, Paul Gouin also advocated a form of corporatism. According to Gouin, social harmony, cooperation, social cohesion and religious values would ensure the prosperity of all. Gouin also felt that it would be through the aid of the elite that social change would come about. He maintained that

L'élaboration de ces réformes ouvrières,
l'élaboration de toutes les autres réformes
dont nous avons un si pressant besoin, ne

peut nous venir que de notre élite,
c'est-à-dire des meilleurs éléments
de chacune des classes de notre société.¹⁵

A dedicated, organized and intelligent elite would be able to carry out the necessary reforms.

Gouin insisted that people need not wait until the A.L.N. took power before organizing corporations. The urban artisans in Montreal, because of the facility of contact between members, should have no trouble in forming a corporation. They could meet and elect a properly qualified director who would lay out rules for the functioning of the corporation and establish quality controls. As well, the corporation would be able to stop foreign competition. The importation of Japanese "souvenirs de Montreal" could be prohibited.¹⁶

Merchants involved in selling and repairing automobiles might follow this example also. The corporation could fix prices to stop large companies from undercutting small firms. Amateur mechanics giving poor service or not officially incorporated as a business could be eliminated. Large stores would also not be able to get more advantageous prices from the manufacturers to the detriment of small buyers.¹⁷ Evidently the establishment of these corporations would defend small producers against big business and yet at the same time prevent the entrance of too many competitors into the profession. Quality would be controlled by education of the members and by the elimination of undesirable elements.¹⁸ A captive market or profession

would be divided amongst the members of an exclusive organization.

The corporatist system would grow spontaneously as a result of the proliferation of these professional organizations. The work of completing the corporatist state would then be both inevitable and relatively easy at the political level. Gouin proposed that a Corporative Council replace the Legislative Council (Upper House). Instead of being composed of former provincial members of parliament, the Corporative Council would be formed of delegates from various corporatist unions. The liberal professions, farmers, women's groups, workers' unions, co-operatives, banks and other groups such as bank tellers and journalists which had still to be organized into unions would be represented.¹⁹ Gouin defended this idea on the grounds that:

...au lieu d'avoir aux affaires publiques, les élus d'un suffrage universel basé sur des divisions géographiques artificielles, on y trouverait les réels représentants des diverses classes de la société, des différents intérêts économiques, placés là avec un mandat bien défini, à qui on ne demanderait que de régler les questions de compétence et qui auraient été formés à ce rôle par de longues et patientes études.²⁰

This proposal was incorporated into the 1938 A.L.N. platform.

The Corporative Council would have a largely advisory role. Public and private bills would be submitted to the Council which would then study these proposed laws and comment on their social and economic ramifications. The Council's report would then be sent to the members of the Legislative Assembly and also be published in the newspapers. This would

allow the provincial members of parliament and the general public to receive advice on the proposed laws from educated representatives of the various professional corporations. The Legislative Assembly would then vote on the bill.²¹ The Council would also help prepare the text of laws and help orient the general social and economic policies of the province.²² Consequently, the Corporative Council in the corporatist system advocated by Paul Gouin would have an influential but not governing role in economic and social policies.

The manner in which Gouin advocated the choosing of the members of the Corporatist Council differed sharply from the system proposed by Hamel. The corporations would elect several delegates each but the government would have the right to choose which of these would sit on the Corporatist Council. Gouin admitted that it would be simpler if the corporations could elect delegates directly to the Council, but he felt that such a system might reduce the power of the Legislative Assembly and lead to a dictatorship by the corporations.²³

While Gouin was aware of the danger of creating a dictatorship of the corporations, he believed that the corporations should have the right to elect some members of the Legislative Assembly. This system would allow such groups as catholic and international workers' unions, universities and other professional groups to have some representation in the Legislative Assembly. Under this system, geographic and professional

representation would balance each other. Gouin insisted that such a system would remain fundamentally democratic.

Il ne s'agit ici, mesdames et messieurs, en aucune façon de rompre avec le principe qui est aujourd'hui la base de toutes nos institutions: le suffrage universel: Il s'agit au contraire de substituer à l'irresponsabilité d'un suffrage universel inorganisé, un suffrage universel organique; il s'agit au contraire d'assurer "le gouvernement du peuple par le peuple" de la façon la plus sûre et la plus directe.²⁴

While Gouin advocated reforming the parliamentary system along these corporatist lines, he insisted that he would oppose any tendencies towards a corporatist dictatorship:

Car quoique l'on pense et quoiqu'on dise en certains milieux, je suis aussi ennemi de la dictature que du parlementarisme outrancier...²⁵

While it is unclear how exactly Gouin's proposed reformation of the Legislative Assembly would operate, it is obvious that Gouin, unlike Hamel did not admire dictatorship.

The powers of the Labour Tribunal envisioned by Gouin well illustrate the nature of the corporatist system he advocated. Before a strike or lockout could be declared, there would be obligatory negotiations between the employer and workers. The workers would be represented by a committee chosen by their unions or by elected representatives if there was no union. These negotiations would not remove the right to strike by the union or lockout by the employer. If they failed, the two disputing groups could present their case before the Labour Tribune if they so wished. This Tribune would be composed of

elected delegates from the provincial organizations of employers and unions. It would serve as an arbitrator and offer a solution to the dispute. However, the decision would not be binding and either the workers could continue the strike or the employer the lockout.²⁶ Viewed along these lines a corporatist system would depend on mediation rather than arbitration: Neither the state nor the corporations would have the authority to impose solutions on employer-employee conflicts.

The types of corporatism proposed respectively by Philippe Hamel and Paul Gouin differed sharply. Hamel, motivated by his fear of social revolution, wanted to create a powerful state which could arbitrate between the interest of competing social groups. In Hamel's system the Corporative Council would for all intents ^{and} purposes usurp the role of the state and would restore the social equilibrium destroyed by unregulated capitalism. Hamel had no special attachment to democratic institutions. He envisioned the abandonment of parliamentary democracy and its replacement by a Corporative Council composed of delegates from the corporations.

Paul Gouin on the other hand had a rather different view of corporatism. The Corporative Council that he wished to create would have an advisory rather than governing function. He wished to create workers' and employers' unions but, unlike Hamel, did not want the Labour Tribune to impose final decisions on their disputes. The parliamentary system, although modified

in Gouin's proposals, would retain its democratic character. Gouin was adamant in his opposition to the idea of establishing any form of dictatorship in Quebec.

Both Hamel and Gouin agreed on the general goals that the corporatist social order should achieve. Generally they believed that it would create class harmony and preserve traditional religious values. They both considered it necessary to control the trusts and to protect workers from undue exploitation. They attacked the laissez-faire economic theories which encouraged Quebec's elite to abandon its responsibility to the lower classes and engage in selfish attempts to increase its wealth. They hoped that the moral reform of the French-Canadian elite, necessary to combat "social egotism" and to establish corporatism, could be brought about by education campaigns.²⁷

FOOTNOTES

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³ Ibid., p. 16.

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⁵ Ibid., p. 14-15.

⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷ Ibid., p. 14

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⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

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¹² Ibid., p. 12.

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¹⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁵ P. Guoin, Causerie de la Province, October 20, 1937,
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¹⁶ La Province, January 9, 1937.

¹⁷ P. Guoin's Speech to the Automobile Dealers'
Association, March 9, 1939, Paul Guoin Papers.

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CHAPTER III

THE PARTI NATIONAL

When the political victory of August 1936 brought the Union Nationale to power, Maurice Duplessis, as leader of the party had a large political debt to pay to Philippe Hamel. The latter had publicly denied Paul Gouin's assertion that he had used the A.L.N. to plaster over the Conservative Party. It seemed evident that Duplessis would appoint him to a cabinet position.

Several days after the election victory, Dr. Hamel had an interview with Duplessis. At this meeting, in Trois-Rivières, the new Premier suggested that Hamel become the Speaker of the Assembly. Since this post would give him no political power

and would terminate his active attack on the electric companies, Hamel refused. His colleague, Ernest Grégoire, the Mayor of Québec City would not take a cabinet post unless Hamel was given one.¹ Duplessis then offered to create an electricity commission of which Hamel was to be president; but unfortunately it would not have sufficient powers to nationalize Beauharnois, a large electric company in the province.² Consequently, Hamel declined this offer. This was a betrayal, Hamel felt, of Duplessis' written promise to carry out an attack on the privileges of the electric companies.³

Oscar Drouin was the only former A.L.N. member to whom Duplessis gave a cabinet post. The rest of the ministers were former Conservative Party members.⁴ Grégoire warned Duplessis that he would regret excluding Hamel from the cabinet.⁵ The dissatisfaction with the Duplessis cabinet over the betrayal of the promises to fight the trusts, came to a head in a boisterous meeting at Palais Montcalm in Quebec City on the night of the 26th of August, 1936. Ernest Grégoire claimed that 5,000 to 6,000 people attended the assembly.⁶ René Chaloult, the newly elected member from Kamouraska, asserted that Hamel had used his great authority to prevent the crowd from rioting. Even so, some members of the meeting caused a disturbance at Château Frontenac where Duplessis was living; they dispersed only on the insistence of René Chaloult who was following the instructions given by Hamel.⁷

René Chaloult⁸ and Abbé Groulx⁹ were disappointed in their hopes that Hamel would attempt to supplant Duplessis as leader of the Union Nationale. But Hamel told Groulx that at least Duplessis would be an improvement on the Taschereau régime.¹⁰ And later, in response to the ambitious Throne Speech of Duplessis' government, he declared that he would remain loyal to the government if it seriously attempted to apply the ideas of Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno.¹¹ The reformist rhetoric of the Throne Speech cooled the agitation of Hamel and his followers.

Hamel remained in this comparatively tranquil mood throughout the rest of 1936. His stance allowed Duplessis time to consolidate his influence among the former A.L.N. members; but by February 1937, Hamel began to realize that Duplessis had no intention of implementing the A.L.N. programme. At this time, Oscar Drouin, the only former A.L.N. member to receive a cabinet post, resigned. He claimed that Duplessis had blocked his attempts to create a provincial hydro-electric company to rival the English-dominated electricity trusts.¹² By now, Drouin was not the only rebel banned from the Union Nationale caucus; Hamel, Grégoire and Chaloult were also kept out.¹³

About Duplessis, Chaloult declared: "Il n'a rien, absolument rien, de national."¹⁴ He now revived his old idea of replacing Duplessis by Hamel. Surely, members of the Union Nationale would rally to Hamel and reject Duplessis. "Notre

parti va le bouter dehors", he proclaimed.¹⁵

Hamel and his followers, taking the offensive, organized a huge rally in Quebec City on March 1, 1937. Le Devoir reported 10,000 people in attendance.¹⁶ While addressing the crowd, E. Grégoire maintained that Duplessis would soon be forced from power. René Chaloult denounced the U.N. premier because:

Lui, le chef d'un gouvernement national, il a pris dans son cabinet trois ministres de langue anglaise...¹⁷

Other speakers praised Hamel and criticized Duplessis' failure to battle the trusts.

During the rally, Odilon Cliche, the Mayor of St. Joseph de Beauce, asked Hamel to present a candidate in the by-election which was about to take place in La Beauce.¹⁸ Dr. Hamel decided to take this opportunity to test the popularity of his ideas. Unfortunately, Vital Cliche, a former A.L.N. candidate for La Beauce and protégé of the powerful Edouard Lacroix, refused to sign a document pledging allegiance to Hamel. Consequently, Hamel chose another candidate, Wilfrid Doyon.¹⁹ This tactical error split the anti-Duplessis vote. Wilfrid Doyon trailed last while Duplessis' candidate, Emile Perron, was successful.

While Wilfrid Doyon was relatively successful in the town, the rural areas were not receptive to Hamel's ideas.²⁰ This probably reflects the fact that in rural La Beauce, economic nationalism and the attack on the electricity trust were minor issues since there was little electricity and few English

capitalists. Nevertheless, such a defeat in a rural area was a rude shock to a group which placed its hopes for a future Quebec on the renaissance of agricultural life.

While the campaign in La Beauce was getting under way, Hamel led the attack on the Duplessis government in the Legislative Assembly on March 10, 1937. During his reply to the Throne Speech he concentrated on Duplessis' repudiation of the written promise to create a provincial electric company to rival those of the private sector. He accused Duplessis of being financed and manipulated by the trusts. Pointing to social and economic abuses which the government had done nothing to correct, Hamel asked whether Duplessis would have "la même indulgence pour les puissants que celle du gouvernement Taschereau?"²¹

Drawing inspiration from his corporatist ideology, Hamel decried the abuses of modern finance and capitalism. While he praised those capitalists who used their wealth for the benefit of society, Hamel denounced those who had obtained their wealth by robbing workers of their wages. He called their riches "fortunes de malédiction, fortunes qui préparent les ruées sanglantes et fratricides quand l'Etat trop faible leur permet de grossir sans fin."²² Workers throughout the province were underpaid and could barely survive on their wages. Their employers, especially in the textile industry, continued to refuse to allow them to organize unions. If allowed to continue, such a state of affairs would nourish the "spectre abominable,

du communisme"²³

At the same time, Hamel did not forget the countryside. Viewing the farmer as the bastion of traditional morality and a bulwark against communism, he called agriculture "le champ d'action d'où nous attendons le salut".²⁴ He demanded higher prices for farm produce as well as the creation of agricultural colleges. Rural colonization and, in fact, rural renaissance in general would make a major contribution to solve the economic crisis.²⁵

But all such reforms were conditional on destroying the electricity trust. Hamel insisted that agriculture could not modernize the farm, nor could the amenities of modern life be brought to it, until the electricity trust had been destroyed.²⁶ In general the main villain for Hamel was the electricity trust. He blamed all the ills of society on it:

Devenons maîtres du problème hydro-électrique pour attirer des grandes industries chez nous; permettre le développement de la petite industrie; faciliter l'accroissement du pouvoir d'achat du peuple par la hausse des salaires et diminuer le chômage; électrifier intensivement nos campagnes pour le relèvement de l'agriculture et l'amélioration des conditions de vie sur une ferme; former une saine opinion par l'épuration d'une presse aujourd'hui stipendiée; obtenir un crédit plus facile par la libération de nos institutions bancaires de l'influence tyrannique de ce trust; mettre fin aux maux de supercapitalisme, afin d'éviter ceux du communisme.²⁷

Hamel saw electricity as the key force in society and was alarmed that this power was in the hands of a small group of English-Canadian financial barons. Only when this source of

energy was controlled by the state, might society be reformed along corporatist lines. Without such government ownership, Quebec would continue to be dominated by a small group of men whose abuse of the capitalist system would lead to social revolution.

During the Beauce by-election Hamel had reason to believe that he had clerical support. One correspondent asserted that "le clergé est presque unanime pour vous approuver"²⁸. Of the names of important financial contributors to Doyon's by-election fund, eight out of twenty could be identified as priests. One was the Superior of the Seminary of St. Victor de Tring in La Beauce.²⁹ Similarly, the clerical newspaper Action Catholique gave thinly veiled support to Hamel's attacks on Duplessis.³⁰

But by the late spring of 1937, Cardinal Villeneuve began to restrain the ardour of many clerical nationalists for Hamel's crusade for social reform. He was perhaps influenced by the Premier and members of his government. Duplessis suggested that Hamel's attacks on established authority revealed communist tendencies.³¹ Shortly after the La Beauce by-election, Cardinal Villeneuve decided that these attacks by the official church newspaper on the government had gone far enough. The editors of Action Catholique were told:

En ce qui concerne la situation actuelle, j'estime que l'Action Catholique ne doit pas, pour son compte, travailler à renverser le Gouvernement élu régulièrement, quoi qu'en pensent tels ou tels hommes publiques.

Qu'on se souviene que la dictature vaut encore mieux que la révolution...³²

When he realized that clerical support for him was wavering, Hamel declared that if the ecclesiastical authorities told him that his cause was not a good one, then he would withdraw from politics.³³

Hamel eventually became frustrated by Cardinal Villeneuve's alliance with Duplessis. During the Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City during the summer of 1938, Duplessis was congratulated by Cardinal Villeneuve for his devotion.³⁴ Hamel complained to a friend:

Il est manifeste que monsieur Duplessis se coule, et il est aussi manifeste que l'épiscopat le reflue malhabilement... Il est déplorable aussi de voir nos sommités religieuses accepter tous les cadeaux qui viennent de la dictature économique et la citer en exemple ni plus ni moins à toute la population.³⁵

By 1938, the Church hierarchy had moved some distance from its support of the Programme de Restauration Sociale. The frustrated Hamel wrote to the Cardinal warning that the Church would only survive if it adopted a reformist position:

Les puissants aiment à dissimuler leurs coffres-forts derrière les autels. Ils savent l'Eglise une force capable de contenir longtemps l'exaspération des masses. Par intérêt, ils se font de cette Mère leur alliée, et les prolétaires aigris accusent cette dernière de plus en plus de protéger le capitalisme honni, alors qu'Elle veut surtout la protection du capital véritable: l'épargne, le fruit du travail.³⁶

Dr. Hamel told the Cardinal that should the Church not attack the concentration of wealth in society, a communist revolution would not be long in coming; the members of the elite would be "impitoyablement fauchés par la révolution".³⁷ The Spanish Civil War illustrated the dangers that lay in wait for Quebec. Evidently, the Cardinal did not share Hamel's fears. Although disappointed, Hamel nevertheless resolved to remain "un fils respectueux et soumis à l'Eglise catholique".³⁸

Meanwhile Hamel had acquired a powerful new ally in the person of Oscar Drouin. This former minister had lent his prestige to Hamel's cause by campaigning actively in La Beauce in support of Doyon. He had denounced Duplessis' alliance with the English-Canadian trusts. During his reply to Duplessis'

Throne Speech, Drouin asserted:

Il [Duplessis] sait pourtant que les compagnies du trust ne se servent que des maisons anglaises pour leur finance, que leurs techniciens, leurs experts ne sont que des Anglais. Quand une de ces compagnies a besoin d'un médecin, c'est un médecin anglais qu'elle choisit. Si les Canadiens français veulent occuper la place qui leur est due, c'est par l'étatisation qu'ils l'auront, pas autrement.³⁹

Drouin alleged that although French Canadians had been educated in technical and commercial fields, they had been excluded by English-Canadians from important positions in industry.⁴⁰ He showed much less hesitation than Hamel in publicly denouncing English-Canadian economic domination of Quebec.

Drouin was also much more willing to use the state to nationalize the exploitation of natural resources than Hamel was. The latter feared that if industries, other than the electric companies were nationalized, the dangers of socialism and collectivism would increase. By contrast, Drouin wished the government to take over the mines to break the trusts and help French Canadians control industries.⁴¹

At the end of June 1937, the Congrès de la Langue Française was held in Quebec City. At this congress Abbé Groulx made an extraordinarily fervent speech. So enthusiastic were Hamel, Drouin and Chaloult that they decided to set up the Parti National.⁴² Founded on June 26, 1937, following Groulx's speech, the Parti National had five members in the Legislative Assembly: Dr. Hamel, O. Drouin, E. Grégoire, R. Chaloult and Dr. A. Marcoux.⁴³ This was an encouraging start, since the Liberal Party had only nine more members in the Assembly than the Parti National. In addition, the party began publishing its own newspaper: L'Ere Nouvelle.⁴⁴

In a radio speech shortly after the foundation of the Parti National, Drouin explained why a new party was necessary. Following the Union Nationale's election victory in 1936 he had fought to have Hamel included in the cabinet.

Je lui représentais qu'un gouvernement national ne pouvait réellement être national sans y inclure le docteur Hamel, ...⁴⁵

But Duplessis had failed to provide "un gouvernement réellement national", instead "nous avons un gouvernement antinational, je le répète, un véritable gouvernement de désunion nationale."⁴⁶

Drouin explained that:

Nous du parti national, nous proclamons que notre doctrine pro-canadienne-française doit être unie, rivée, soudée au corporatisme...⁴⁷

It would seem that for many of Hamel's followers, to be a French-Canadian nationalist was to support social reform.

Duplessis' rural reforms and colonization schemes had made him invulnerable from attack by members of the Parti National on this flank. However, unions had been infuriated by Bills 19 and 20 passed by Duplessis. The Loi des contrats collectifs allowed the government to reduce wages won by workers through collective bargaining. The Loi des salaires raisonnables set minimum wages lower than the level which could be obtained by collective bargaining. Since Duplessis' sympathies lay with employers rather than with employees, the arbitration boards created by this legislation were used to prevent union gains.⁴⁸

Although as corporatists, the adherents of the Parti National wished to see mediating boards between capitalists' and workers' interests, they complained that there was no worker representation on the arbitration committees.⁴⁹ They rejected Duplessis' claim that he was creating corporatist arbitration boards. In fact, he was undermining unions, the building blocks of the corporatist system.⁵⁰ They branded the

U.N. Premier the "Assassin des contrats collectifs."⁵¹

Hamel toured the province on behalf of the Parti National, trying to make political capital out of the industrial strife which had erupted on August 2, 1937.⁵² Organized by the Catholic syndicates, thousands of workers at the Dominion Textile and Montreal Cotton Company plants went on strike and demanded higher wages and a union contract. Dr. Hamel condemned the exploitation of the workers in the textile mills:

... l'ouvrier des textiles n'est pas traité
comme un être humain mais comme un numéro
correspondant à une machine.⁵³

At a rally in St. Jean Dechaillons, attended by several thousand people, Hamel assailed Duplessis for opposing collective contracts and the closed shop principle (atelier fermé).⁵⁴ He observed that in neighbouring Ontario, the textile workers were better paid as well as having union rights recognized.⁵⁵ Citing the Commission Royale sur l'industries textile, Hamel noted that the industry had used the economic depression as an excuse to lower wages even though its profits had not declined. Such abuses undermined a capitalist's right to be master of his business. Unless the industry reformed, state intervention would become necessary.⁵⁶

By defending the textile workers, Hamel claimed that he was attacking not only abusive capitalism but communism as well. The aim of the Parti National was to fight the root causes of communist disorder by supporting all elements helping to create

social stability. Speaking of the textile workers, Hamel said:

Vous êtes un élément sain, un élément d'ordre, qui tient le communisme en horreur. Votre grève devient une lutte contre le désordre et le pire ferment pour les idées subversives: le capital abusif, le capital sans coeur.⁵⁷

Hamel's corporatist ideology led him to attack both "inhuman" capitalism as well as communism.

At the same time, Hamel's colleagues were attacking Duplessis for helping English-Canadian capitalists fight French-Canadian unions. Ernest Grégoire contended that Duplessis had turned his back on his "race"⁵⁸, while Oscar Drouin protested:

C'est la trahison d'un chef de gouvernement qui livre ainsi toutes les forces sociales de sa race à l'oligarchie financière anglaise et américaine de cette province.⁵⁹

For many members of the Parti National, the defence of the Labour movement was entwined with the preservation of French Canada.

On the 25th of August 1937, Cardinal Villeneuve intervened and proposed mediation between striking textile workers and their employers.⁶⁰ He persuaded the workers to go back to work with no wage increases and no union contract. But he hoped to reconcile the two conflicting groups. The Parti National quickly cancelled a rally in Drummondville after Hamel received a letter from the Cardinal asking that agitation be stopped. Hamel thought that his activities were being censured; so he temporarily withdrew from public life.⁶¹ Although it appears that Hamel was displeased with the imposed solution to the textile strike, he refused to

exploit worker discontent, fearing the Cardinal's disapproval.⁶²

Affirming his submission to the wisdom of ecclesiastical authority, Hamel proclaimed:

Si nous n'avions pas le Cardinal et la hiérarchie ecclésiastique pour aider le peuple à endurer ce qu'il endure, il y a longtemps que tout aurait sauté. Si jamais nous avons l'ordre dans la province, nous le devons à notre clergé, nous le devons à la presse catholique, à l'Action Catholique.⁶³

This crisis caused the Parti National to cease its activities until October 1937. It was hardly a very auspicious beginning for a new party.

The parti National recommenced its activities on October 2, 1937,⁶⁴ after Hamel had become convinced that the Cardinal had not condemned his role in the textile strike. An attempt was made to organize support in Montreal, an area with which the Parti National had hitherto little contact. Oscar Drouin, acting on Hamel's orders, tried to persuade Paul Gouin to help.⁶⁵ Unfortunately for the Parti National, Gouin's hostility to those who had repudiated him after his break with Duplessis had not abated. Gouin refused to attend the rally organized by the Parti National. Nevertheless, his name was widely applauded whenever it was mentioned during that rally.⁶⁶ Support for the Parti National in Montreal remained marginal; it never managed to expand beyond its Quebec City base.

During January and February 1938, the Parti National faced a crisis which brought about its temporary demise as a

political force. Ernest Grégoire, a key party member and loyal supporter of Hamel, faced a serious challenge to his position as mayor of Quebec City. He had won in 1934 and had been re-elected in 1936. His municipal victories had given Hamel political credibility, something of which the Parti National was in great need in early 1938.

At first it seemed he would have little trouble; but an alliance of Liberal and Union Nationale forces behind the Liberal, Lucien Borne, finally put Grégoire on the defensive.⁶⁷ The Parti National feared that the defeat of Grégoire would bring about its collapse.⁶⁸ Consequently, the election was hotly contested. Duplessis no doubt felt that the election of a Liberal mayor was a small price to pay for the elimination of a party which continued to denounce him as being "anti-national". The Liberal and Union Nationale forces put half the lawyers in Quebec City to work full time for Lucien Borne.⁶⁹

Compounding Grégoire's problems was the fact that he had alienated the English and Irish-Canadian vote by refusing to build new schools for Irish Canadians.⁷⁰ Some French Canadians had been pleased with this stance. Paul Bouchard, editor of La Nation, asserted that "son attitude énergique contre les Irlandais lui vaut de nombreuses adhésions".⁷¹ However, now this policy worked against Grégoire's re-election. The Montreal Star pointed out that there were 4,000 English-speaking electors who had been alienated by Grégoire's stance.⁷² His supporters

lamented that the "race cry" was being effectively used against them.⁷³

Ernest Grégoire received support from 10,000 electors against the combined Union Nationale and Liberal vote of 15,000 for Borne.⁷⁴ To make matters worse, Dr. Hamel and Oscar Drouin's constituencies were within areas of the city which had voted strongly for Lucien Borne.⁷⁵ Chances for the survival of the Parti National appeared dim.

Dr. Hamel was discouraged by Grégoire's defeat, since he felt that the election had been stolen from the people by lawyers.⁷⁶ "Notre élite ne joue pas son rôle", he lamented and predicted social upheaval.⁷⁷ Writing to René Chaloult who was vacationing in Florida, Hamel admitted:

Je me demande souvent s'il y a moyen de sauver
notre peuple autrement que par une évolution
rapide vers la dictature de droite.⁷⁸

The defeat of his forces in the municipal election's temporarily shattered Hamel's belief that the democratic system provided the means for successfully opposing the trusts and averting communism.

The defeat of Grégoire dealt a decisive blow to the Parti National. Grégoire eventually left the party and Oscar Drouin rejoined the Liberals. Many of the rank and file members subsequently rallied to Paul Gouin when he revived the A.L.N. during the summer of 1938. Hamel retired to private life while his party slowly disintegrated.⁷⁹

The Parti National's appeal had been hampered by the charge that it was a racist party. The speeches of many of its members gave it the reputation of being "ultra Nationalist".⁸⁰ During October 1937, Dr. Hamel had found it necessary to make it clear that he wished to destroy the trusts, not the English Canadians:

Nous combattons les trustards, peu nous importe leur nationalité. Nos plus grands ennemis, ne l'oublions pas, ceux qui nous ont fait du mal, ce sont les nôtres, nos chefs canadiens-français.⁸¹

Hamel told the audience at the Montreal rally that French-Canadians had to follow Abbé Groulx's advice: "A nous de prendre notre place, ce qui n'est pas prendre celles des autres".⁸² Oscar Drouin, who had been vocal in his espousal of economic nationalism, told his audience that they must advocate "healthy nationalism",⁸³ and not engage in excesses which might lead to a race war. He rejected the racial nationalism of Germany, Italy and other totalitarian nations.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, articles in the party newspaper, written by minor party members, continued to denounce the control of the economy by the English, Americans and Jews.⁸⁵

There was another charge however which only one member of the Parti National took pains to deny. As one critic said, the Hamel group represented the "radical wing" of the nationalist movement which was "strongly tinged with fascism and clericalism".⁸⁶ Jean Charles Harvey was much more precise in

his denunciation of the authoritarian tendencies in the Parti National:

Grégoire, Chaloult et Hamel sont des fascistes avoués cependant qu'Oscar Drouin est intégralement opposé à la dictature...⁸⁷

It was true that, while he reaffirmed his belief in corporatism, Oscar Drouin maintained he was not a fascist, extreme nationalist nor a separatist. He declared that fascism was no better than communism since it also represented a system of legalized terror and dictatorship. He reiterated his support for democracy.⁸⁸

On the other hand, Philippe Hamel, even though claiming not to be an outright fascist, did not deny that he looked upon fascism with a benevolent eye. In response to critiques of his authoritarian tendencies, he told a cheering crowd of supporters on December 16, 1937:

Je n'ai pas peur du fascisme autant que du communisme parce que je sais qu'il sauve les pays d'Europe. Si demain je voyais le communisme nous envahir, je ferai appel à n'importe quelle force de droit pour nous sauver.⁸⁹

Although Hamel did not espouse fascism directly, he had definite authoritarian tendencies. He considered the anti-fascist leagues to be agents of communism.⁹⁰ Fear of communism and social revolution led him to endorse Duplessis' Padlock Law and to demand the suppression of the communist newspaper, Clarté.⁹¹

Months later, in May 1938, when the tensions between Drouin and Hamel had widened into a rift, the former wrote to Gouin explaining the problems within the reformist movement. Drouin had become worried about the rise of fascism in the world and in Quebec. He wrote:

Il y a une chose aussi que je ne saurais accepter, c'est toute tendance quelconque au fascisme. Je ne ferai partie d'aucun groupe qui, directement ou indirectement, encouragerait ou aurait de la condescendance envers cette "doctrine" ou ses organisations. ⁹²

Such sentiments probably forced Drouin slowly to separate himself from the other members of the Parti National.

The decline of Philippe Hamel as a political leader left the field open for the other reformer, Paul Gouin. Hamel sank into political obscurity until the provincial election of 1939 when he threw his energies into the fight against Duplessis. The loss of clerical support and Grégoire's defeat seems to have drained Hamel's passion for his political crusade against the trusts and for the improvement of the conditions of the working man.

FOOTNOTES

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⁹ L. Groulx to P. Hamel, September 4, 1936, Lionel Groulx Papers.

¹⁰ P. Hamel to L. Groulx, September 10, 1936, Lionel Groulx Papers.

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CHAPTER IV

THE REVIVAL OF THE A. L. N.

After Paul Gouin broke with Duplessis in June 1936, he became politically isolated. At first he had intended to lead the A.L.N. in the provincial election against both the Liberal Party and Duplessis' Union Nationale.¹ But Philippe Hamel and his Quebec City followers, by declaring their loyalty to Maurice Duplessis and by criticizing Paul Gouin during the summer of 1936, had effectively undermined the latter's attacks on Duplessis. The preference of the vast majority of A.L.N. elected members for Duplessis, as their leader, left Paul Gouin with only a handful of supporters. With the election date set for only two months away, Paul Gouin had neither the time,

money nor the political credibility to build an alternative to Duplessis.

Consequently, rather than present candidates in the election, Gouin announced his intention of beginning a national education campaign to prepare the ground for future reforms. He argued that the main aim of the A.L.N. had been to destroy Taschereau's dictatorship. Since Taschereau had now resigned, it was now necessary to prepare the basis for an uncorruptible party of reform. Indeed, in the present atmosphere it would be dangerous to attempt to pursue reformist aims in the political arena.²

Gouin had founded the newspaper La Province in April 1935 to propagate the ideas of the A.L.N.³ It now served as the principal vehicle of the national education campaign. Formerly it had been subtitled Organe d'Action Libérale Nationale. In February 1937, it was changed to Organe d'Action Canadienne-française, thereby honouring Abbé Groulx's nationalist movement of the 1920's. The newspaper devoted less and less space to political issues. Most articles dealt with nationalist, artistic, literary or historical subjects. The editorials maintained that politics was not as important as the campaign for national education.⁴

The central theme of Paul Gouin's national education campaign was the need for French Canadians to be aware of and to protect their cultural heritage. During the summer of 1936,

Gouin denounced both the Liberal Party and the Union Nationale because they failed to heed Abbé Groulx's warnings of the dangers inherent in the coming industrial order. Gouin proclaimed:

Ni M. Godbout, ni M. Duplessis n'ont manifesté un véritable esprit national: ni l'un ni l'autre n'a osé faire sienne la doctrine de l'Abbé Groulx, qui seule, peut assurer la survivance nationale et économique des nôtres.⁵

Both the Union Nationale and the Liberal Party were financed by English trusts, he asserted, and were therefore incapable of attacking them.⁶ When Hamel was excluded from the cabinet, La Province was quick to point out that Gouin's followers had warned him that Duplessis would not carry out pro-French-Canadian reforms, would not nationalize the Beauharnois Power Company and would give cabinet posts to English Canadians.⁷ French Canadians should therefore follow Abbé Groulx's advice and be vigilant in the protection of their own interests.

Paul Gouin proposed that the traditional French-Canadian parish with its Catholic values should be the basis on which a new society could be created. Criticizing those who wished to abandon traditional social structures to combat the economic crisis, Paul Gouin said:

...ce n'est pas comme certains esprits veulent nous le faire croire, en nous éloignant de l'église, du presbytère, de l'école, en nous éloignant de la paroisse, que nous résisterons à ces attaques. Bien au contraire. La forteresse qui a résisté aux assauts du passé peut et doit encore nous sauver. Pour cela, il faut nous y retrancher; pour cela, comme je disais tantôt,

il faut la rendre plus forte, la moderniser dans le bon sens du mot afin qu'elle puisse résister aux armes nouvelles dont se servent nos adversaires.⁸

By revitalizing this time-honoured community, French Canada would surmount the problems facing it. The Catholic Church was naturally to play an important role in creating this renewed society. Paul Gouin declared "nous n'aurions jamais trop de ces prêtres éclairés qui savent être des chefs non seulement spirituels mais aussi temporels."⁹ The doctrine which Gouin felt was necessary to save French Canada was in tune with the corporatist ideology propounded by Catholic thinkers.

Paul Gouin criticized the theory of the English and French-Canadian "bonne entente" adopted by Duplessis as well as the Liberal Party:

...tout le monde admet l'opportunité pourvu qu'elle soit le fruit des concessions réciproques et non unilatérales, pourvu, aussi, qu'elle repose sur l'égalité économique, sociale et politique des deux parties contractantes.¹⁰

In the meantime, the correct policy should not be anti-Jewish or anti-English but should rather be aimed at obtaining for French Canadians their just social position. It was the middle road between "bonne-ententisme" and "séparatisme" which he wished to follow:

En d'autres termes, plutôt que de nous poser en ennemis irréductibles des Anglais ou de nous aplatir devant eux à propos de tout et à propos de rien, avant de nous

prononcer pour ou contre le maintien de la Confédération, nous croyons plus sage de continuer à élaborer une politique canadienne-française aussi complète que possible...¹¹

This attitude was at the base of the national education campaign and was an important thread running through the reforms that Gouin would later propose.

At a mass rally at Assomption in August 1937, Paul Gouin linked the concentration of wealth in society with the foreign domination of French Canada.

Nous avons donc d'un côté quelques individus, des étrangers pour la plupart, qui jouissent d'une richesse, d'une prospérité inouïes. De l'autre côté, nous avons toute une population, des milliers et des milliers de personnes qui gémissent dans l'esclavage et aussi, souvent dans la misère.¹²

He proposed that wealth, industry and population be decentralized. The establishment of small rural industries could be used to create more employment and to better distribute the profits created by industry. Gouin attacked the abuses of the capitalist system but did not wish to destroy it. At this time, Gouin did not even declare himself in favour of nationalizing the electricity trust but simply stated that the problem should be studied.¹³ He sought to "decentralize" the profits from the capitalist system away from a largely non-French Canadian elite.

But in concentrating on the nationalist theme, Gouin was in danger of alienating some of his supporters. One outraged

subscriber to La Province wrote:

J'ai toujours admiré votre lutte pour le relèvement économique et social de notre province, ainsi que l'épuration des mœurs électorales... Malheureusement vous préconisez maintenant un nationalisme outré que je n'approuve pas et qui ne saurait être apprécié par ceux qui ont suivi les événements depuis un quart de siècle.¹⁴

Another subscriber pointed out that nationalism had incessantly provoked conflicts between nations and had often been the tool of dictators.¹⁵ Although probably only a small minority of Paul Gouin's reformist liberals were so opposed to the nationalist theme that they cancelled their subscriptions to La Province, he had to be careful lest too many of his supporters be alienated.

Gouin, who defined himself as an "autonomiste décentralisateur", opposed the conclusions of the Rowell-Sirois Commission which suggested the expansion of the federal government's powers. His attacks on the Liberal federal government in Ottawa, however, caused two of the founding members of the A.L.N. to resign and to rejoin the Liberal Party. During the disastrous summer of 1936, Fred Monk and Roger Ouimet had remained loyal to Paul Gouin and, by their denunciations of Duplessis, had helped to keep the decimated A.L.N. alive. But Monk left the party in the summer of 1937, and Roger Ouimet, who opposed the focus upon the nationalist theme,¹⁷ quit in early 1938. In Ouimet's letter of resignation, he explained that he felt that the A.L.N. should have retained its reformist liberal stance and not have abandoned the Liberal Party. He

claimed that Gouin's movement had changed since the spring of 1937. Although he liked articles in La Province criticizing Duplessis, he felt the newspaper should not have attacked the federal government as it had been doing in the preceding months.¹⁸ Obviously Gouin's encouragement of the "esprit national" as defined by Abbé Groulx was not acceptable to many former liberals who had helped found the A.L.N.

Meanwhile the Liberal Party was disoriented because of its defeat in the election of 1936, in which it had won only 14 seats. Adélar Godbout, the successor to Alexandre Taschereau, had even been defeated. The party seemed weak in face of the Union Nationale's 76 seats. Even the Parti National had 5 seats. Yet the Liberal Party was stronger than it appeared; after all it had received 41% of the vote.¹⁹


The Liberals now set about winning back former A.L.N. members. Party organizers hoped that by reforming the party and by reabsorbing the elements which had followed Paul Gouin into opposition, they could become strong enough to defeat Duplessis. Edouard Lacroix and Fred Monk spoke for those former A.L.N. members interested in returning to the Liberal fold. Negotiations were made easier by the fact that under their temporary leader, T.D. Bouchard, the Liberal Party had adopted a more reformist stance.²⁰

The Liberal convention of June 1938 did much to win back the former A.L.N. defectors. The presence of such reformers

as Cardin, Power and Rinfret at the convention was reassuring. For the first time women delegates participated in a Liberal Party convention. Some members from Quebec's international unions also were present at the convention; the Liberal Party had opposed Duplessis' anti-labour laws.²¹

Paul Gouin refused to attend the Liberal Party convention as long as the "vieille gang" of Liberal leaders controlled the organizational committees and remained in power. According to Gouin, such leading personalities as Bouchard and Godbout would block any attempts by the party to combat the trusts.²² Instead he decided to organize a competing convention at Sorel on July 23 and 24, 1938. Gouin ended his national education campaign and returned to active politics.²³

To broaden his support, Gouin attempted to forge an alliance with the Parti National. After Ernest Grégoire's defeat in the municipal election of February 1938, it had been seized by a defeatist paralysis. Through the months of May and June 1938, Gouin received reports that Philippe Hamel might be unable to prevent a desertion of his followers to the Liberal Party.²⁴ And Oscar Drouin who had long attempted to unite the A.L.N. and the Parti National,²⁵ was now suggesting that the only way to achieve electoral victory was to make an alliance with the Liberal Party. After all, neither the A.L.N. nor the Parti National had the organization needed to win an election.²⁶



Gouin needed Hamel's Quebec City followers in the Parti National in order to build up the A.L.N. which was particularly weak in the Quebec City region.²⁷ To win them over he would have to move with determination. Paul Bouchard, the nationalist editor of La Nation and former member of the Parti National, worked closely with Gouin's Quebec City organizer, Horace Philippon to achieve this aim. Bouchard reported that Paul Gouin's radio speech in which the Liberal Party had been criticized and the Sorel Congress announced, had been well received by members of the Parti National. And Hamel was discouraged and confused after Grégoire's defeat. Prompt action would win over many Parti National members and force Hamel to accept a fait accompli.²⁸

During the month of June, Gouin started negotiations with the leadership of the Parti National. But the two leaders soon quarrelled. Hamel insisted that Ernest Grégoire, who refused to apologize for insulting Paul Gouin's father when Gouin broke with Duplessis, be accepted.²⁹ The leaders of the Parti National also demanded that there be dual chiefs, one for Montreal and one for Quebec City, as well as a guarantee that the Parti National would obtain a certain number of ministries after the election.³⁰ These conditions were unacceptable to Paul Gouin.

Meanwhile Paul Bouchard's La Nation was urging members of the Parti National to put the cause of French Canada ahead of

party quarrels. Horace Philippon busily collected the signatures of those members of the Parti National who promised to go to the Sorel Congress. The success of these tactics can be judged by the fact that Horace Roy and J.N. Nadeau, two Quebec City industrialists who had been key members of the Parti National, defected to Gouin's convention.³¹ In the face of such desertions, Hamel had no other choice but to wish Paul Gouin the greatest possible success and to announce his temporary retirement from politics.³²

Delegates to the Sorel Convention were elected at meetings in various counties of Quebec. Although organized by individuals who had remained members of the A.L.N. after Gouin's break with Duplessis, all groups who opposed both major political parties were invited to attend.³³ Only the dissident members of the Parti National, led by Horace Roy, were given special representation. Thirty delegates were allotted to this group, no doubt as a concession to encourage them to attend the convention.³⁴

The Sorel Congress, held on July 23 and 24, 1938, was a great success for Paul Gouin. He was uncontested in his bid for leadership of the convention. Le Soleil reported 656 delegates in attendance, while a crowd of 3,000 gathered to hear Paul Gouin's speech.³⁵ The absorption of small groups such as Paul Bouchard's "mouvement autonomiste"³⁶ and members of the Parti National, set the stage for the political revival

of the A.L.N.

The resolutions adopted by the Sorel Congress demanded the break up of the trusts and the creation of co-operatives. The new manifesto which embodied these resolutions, proposed rural, colonization, fishery and forestry reforms. Resolutions called for the abolition of Duplessis' anti-labour laws. The manifesto demanded higher welfare payments for the unemployed, as well as public remuneration for doctors and dentists who treated the poor.³⁷

By adopting these resolutions, the delegates reaffirmed many of the A.L.N.'s former aims but also gave expression to the newer corporatist tendencies. Under the section dealing with labour reforms as well as in that dealing with rural reforms, the manifesto insisted upon:

Association professionnelle dans toutes les classes de la société en général et chez les cultivateurs et les ouvriers en particulier, en vue d'en arriver à l'organisation corporative.³⁸

Consequently, a resolution recommended that collective contracts between workers and employers be created as a step towards this goal.³⁹ Another resolution emphasized the importance of creating an Economic Council to help orient the corporatist evolution of society.⁴⁰

Paul Gouin suffered political defeat only once during the convention. This was on the subject of giving the vote to

women. Gouin and his chief lieutenant, Jean Martineau, intervened in a heated debate to indicate their support for women's right to vote. The latter pointed out that women were as intelligent as men and that men had no right to deprive them of the vote.⁴¹ Many delegates with a more conservative view of women's role in society opposed this stand. They complained that such a step would destroy men's authority in the home. They were probably supported by delegates from the Parti National. After all, their newspaper, Ere Nouvelle, had demanded that all women secretaries in the Parliament be fired in order to make way for young men who could not get jobs. The paper had asserted that the women would be better off at home.⁴² Finally, Horace Roy, leader of the Parti National delegates, put an end to the debate by proposing that the subject be put to the women of Quebec in a provincial referendum.⁴³

Interpretations by observers of the nature of the Sorel Congress varied from a denunciation of what was seen as a reunion of reactionaries to criticism of the reformist liberal nature of the convention. T.D. Bouchard, house leader of the Liberal Party, held the former view. He asserted that corporatists and fascists who wanted to lead the people of Quebec back to the darkness of the Middle Ages had met at Sorel.⁴⁴ Another Liberal, Jean-Charles Harvey, admitted the presence of some good members such as Jean Martineau, but claimed that fanatical elements had dominated the convention. He denounced

one group in particular for passing a resolution⁴⁵ which would force Protestants to abstain from doing business on all Catholic holidays. Despite Gouin's wishes, his congress had attracted "les débris du fascisme" and "l'extrême droite raciste".⁴⁶ The adhesion of Paul Bouchard's La Nation group⁴⁷ as well as the presence of Joseph Menard, editor of the Fascist Party newspaper,⁴⁸ led credibility to such claims.

On the other hand, some people criticized the Sorel Congress for retaining the reformist liberal orientation of the A.L.N. A lengthy article in Le Droit which Philippe Hamel found very perceptive,⁴⁹ maintained that the convention did not create a new nationalist party; rather the convention allowed the A.L.N. to absorb other groups:

Le mouvement Gouin a reconstitué ses rangs laissés aux trois-quarts vidés par l'abandon des libéraux qui croyaient s'en servir pour replâtrer le vieux parti libéral des Taschereau et des Godbout. Le parti Gouin reste donc un mouvement libéral qui fait de l'action nationale. Il n'a pas eu le courage de subir sa dernière transformation logique et se muer en parti simplement national. Il s'est fait - il est vrai - une tentative en ce sens au congrès - mais là très grande majorité des délégués s'y est opposée fermement.⁵⁰

What Le Droit meant by "national" is not quite clear. Probably it was a reference to the Catholic and economic nationalist policies defended by the Hamel group. If this is the case, then the paper is correct in saying that the absorption of diverse opposition groups did not change the essential character of the

A.L.N. The resolutions adopted at Sorel do not differ much from the A.L.N. programme used in the 1935 election. The nationalist and corporatist tendencies, which had been increasingly evident in La Province and in Paul Gouin's speeches, were still presented within the framework of a liberal democratic and reformist ideology. The more conservative and authoritarian corporatist delegates had not dominated the convention.

After the Sorel Congress, Gouin toured the province, holding meetings at which he made the revised programme of the A.L.N. known to the public.⁵¹ Even though there were many industrial reforms mentioned in the new programme, agricultural and rural reforms were still given pre-eminence. This was the case, despite the fact that Duplessis had introduced such reforms as rural credit for farmers and had expanded colonization schemes. Gouin envisioned the creation of small rural industries based on the processing of agricultural and other local resources. The programme proposed drainage, colonization and rural electrification schemes aimed at improving agriculture. There would be measures to make it easier for farmers to modernize their farms by the purchase of agricultural machines and the building of greenhouses. Gouin also suggested the collective use of farm machinery in colonization areas where none of the farmers had much capital.⁵²

While Gouin idealized rural society and small towns, he realized that Quebec would continue to have a large urban population:

Nous devons donc orienter une large part de la population vers l'industrie, non seulement la petite industrie complémentaire et rurale, plus ou moins greffée sur l'agriculture et les pêcheries, mais aussi l'industrie purement urbaine...⁵³

Since French Canadians did not have enough capital to create these large industries, foreign capital would continue to be necessary to Quebec's development:

Nous ne sommes pas contre le capital étranger auquel, j'insiste sur ce point, nous laissons de nombreux champs d'action...⁵⁴

However, to make sure that these foreign capitalists provided opportunities for French Canadians to become part of the industrial managerial elite, Gouin promised:

Législation immédiate, afin que l'industrie alimentée par du capital étranger emploie les citoyens de la province, surtout les Canadiens français, non comme main-d'oeuvre mais aussi dans les postes de commande.⁵⁵

Industrial development, Gouin told Montreal audiences, and not just rural reform would be used to raise French Canada's standard of living.⁵⁶

Gouin blamed the economic crisis on the trusts. The findings of the Commission Royale d'Enquête sur les Ecartés des Prix, showed how many large companies made high profits but paid low wages to workers and paid low prices to farmers.⁵⁷

Gouin denounced the fifty financial barons who together with the state controlled the economy:

Nous voulons que l'Etat cesse d'être le chien de garde placé à la porte du coffre-fort de quelques privilégiés et reprenne son rôle de régulateur entre les appétits des forts et les droits de tous.⁵⁸

In this respect Duplessis was only continuing to maintain the status quo by supporting Dominion textile in its struggle against its workers:

Quand M. Duplessis rencontre les trusts, on voit tout de suite le résultat de l'entrevue. Les ouvriers sont éconduits comme depuis un an que dure l'état de tension dans l'industrie textile. M. Blair Gordon, protégé par le premier-ministre n'a rien changé de ses prétentions abusives...⁵⁹

French-Canadian as well as English-Canadian capitalists were attacked; the Simard brothers were criticized for underpaying their workers at Sorel.⁶⁰

In a radio speech in which he repeatedly praised Salazar's Portugal, Gouin explained the aim of the A.L.N.'s programme:

Il ne s'agit de rien moins que de faire cesser l'emprise de la dictature des trusts, qui a presque fini de transformer nos gens, de petits propriétaires, des praticiens et d'artisans libres qu'ils étaient, en simple prolétaires, sans attache terrienne ou foncière, vivant au jour le jour d'un salaire de famine et dans l'insécurité permanente.⁶¹

As an example of the class transformations caused by the trusts, Gouin mentioned the chain stores. These chains were destroying the middle class by changing store owners into salaried and underpaid employees. This trend had dangerous consequences for social stability.⁶² In general, private enterprise was being killed by the trusts. Instead of being allied to industrial capitalism, the state should regulate the economy in a way which would protect the legitimate interests of the various social classes.

One method of allowing small business to flourish was through nationalization. He was not, against private enterprise, Gouin told his audience:

...nous sommes encore plus respectueux que
M.M. Duplessis et Godbout ne le sont de
l'initiative privée bien comprise...⁶³

However, certain industries such as the electricity, gas and coal utilities, the mines, transportation companies and the armament industries would probably be nationalized. The Beauharnois Power Company was now especially singled out for takeover.⁶⁴ Stockholders would be fairly indemnified,⁶⁵ and nationalized industries would be profitable for the state.⁶⁶

As for the workers in large urban industries, Gouin believed that they might continue to find it necessary to go on strike. Exploited by ruthless capitalists, workers often had no other choice but to take industrial action:

Toutefois, on ne saurait nier à l'ouvrier le droit de se mettre en grève car il arrive trop souvent que les ouvriers, poussés à bout ne peuvent faire autrement que d'employer ce moyen pour obtenir justice.⁶⁷

Even though he disliked these "désordres de notre système social",⁶⁸ he refused to call for the removal of the right to strike since the working class, especially in the textile industry, "vit dans un sevrage, un esclavage indigne des temps modernes".⁶⁹

Gouin was especially critical of Duplessis' attitude towards unions.

...toute son administration n'a été consacrée qu'à affaiblir les unions ouvrières et qu'à les empêcher de travailler à l'obtention de meilleurs salaires pour leurs membres, afin de protéger les dividendes de ses amis, les trusts, soutiens de sa caisse électorale.⁷⁰

Gouin insisted upon the repeal of the restrictive labour laws: Bills 19 and 20. The repressive attitude of Duplessis' administration towards legitimate workers' unions would only profit communist agitators and hinder social progress.⁷¹

Gouin opposed the government having the absolute power to certify a union or to determine workers' wages through the Office des Salaires Raisonables:

L'organisation ouvrière qui travaille à l'avancement moral et matériel de ses membres, en plus de veiller aux intérêts de la profession, est dans la société où nous vivons un grand facteur de progrès. Or quelle sera son utilité le jour où le gouvernement se chargera de tout cela en fixant le salaire et les heures de travail.⁷²

Gouin asserted that once a certain percentage of workers in an industry were unionized, the union should be automatically recognized. He did not want to see unions and workers become "vulgaire marchandise" subordinate to the desires of the state.⁷³ Unlike some corporatists, Gouin did not advocate state controlled unions; in fact he criticized Duplessis for trying to regulate them.

Recognition of unions and fair remuneration for workers would not scare foreign capital, Gouin assured his audience:

Assurés d'une main d'oeuvre compétente, honnête et stable; ainsi protégés contre les grèves intempestives, le sabotage et l'insouciance d'un travail mal dirigé, le capital étranger sain, c'est-à-dire celui qui ne fonde pas ses profits sur l'exploitation des ouvriers...voudra profiter de ces avantages.⁷⁴

Corporatism, by protecting and educating the worker would raise productivity and wages as well as profits.

Gouin sympathized with the working class but like most corporatists he was firmly opposed to communism. Unlike Hamel, however, Gouin hesitated to support Duplessis' Padlock Law. Anti-communism was such an important part of Hamel's ideology that he subsequently taunted Duplessis for the mildness of his anti-communist activities.⁷⁵ Gouin on the other hand failed to see the benefit in repressing communism:

Le communisme et les autres théories subversives sont des poisons. C'est bien entendu. Mais ils n'ont comme antidote que l'amélioration sociale du sort des classes infortunées.⁷⁶

He also warned that Duplessis who had not hesitated to "prostituer la cause nationale" might use the fear of communism to distract public attention away from his incompetent administration.⁷⁷ It would be better to condemn the abuses of the Duplessis régime rather than communism which was only a product of this mismanagement. Nevertheless, Gouin admitted that it might be necessary to forbid communist rallies but cautioned that such repression could give the communists the mystique of martyrdom.⁷⁸

While Gouin continued to organize the A.L.N. and hold occasional rallies throughout the winter of 1938-39, the Parti National remained relatively dormant. But international tensions radically changed the provincial political atmosphere. The approaching clouds of war on the horizon spurred the members of the Parti National to action during the spring of 1939. In March they held a rally at Palais Montcalm in Quebec City, attended by two to three thousand people, to denounce the threat of conscription.⁷⁹ The five original members of the Parti National from the Legislative Assembly were present. René Chaloult claimed that civil war would ensue if the federal government imposed conscription.⁸⁰

At this meeting René Chaloult had suggested an alliance with the A.L.N.⁸¹ But after long negotiations, attempts to reach an agreement broke down.⁸² The members of the Parti National were convinced that only a temporary pact with the Liberal Party would ensure the defeat of Duplessis whom they

considered "l'assassin-du mouvement national".⁸³ Gouin, on the other hand, felt that the main enemy was the "vieille gang" of the Liberal Party. He declared his intention to oppose both the Union Nationale and the Liberal Party in the coming election.⁸⁴ He hoped to capture 15 to 20 seats or at worst divide Liberal supporters and thereby help re-elect Duplessis. This manoeuvre would destroy the "vieille gang" and thereby bring about the renaissance of the Liberal Party.⁸⁵ These divergent goals of the two reformist parties doomed plans for an electoral alliance. While Gouin wanted to rejuvenate the Liberal Party, Hamel wished to reorganize the Union Nationale after Duplessis had been removed by an electoral defeat.⁸⁶

Although Hamel and Gouin could not agree on election tactics, they were unanimous in their stand against military conscription. Shortly after Canada entered the Second World War, Duplessis called a provincial election, making opposition to conscription and provincial autonomy a central theme of his campaign. However, the Liberal Party also claimed to oppose conscription.⁸⁷ Gouin, finding that conscription rather than social reform was the dominant issue in the campaign, tried to suggest that the A.L.N. was the party which could best prevent military conscription. At one anti-war rally he proclaimed:

Je tiens à répéter que je ne suis pas
séparatiste. Mais...Je dis que si la
conscription est imposée par un gouverne-
ment d'Ottawa, sous quelque prétexte que
ce soit, nous de la province de Québec,

un gouvernement de l'Action Libérale Nationale dirigeant les destinées de cette province, nous mettrons fin au pacte confédératif.⁸⁸

This stance probably did little to enhance the A.L.N.'s chances for electoral victory. The Liberal Party, with its influence in Ottawa, evidently seemed to be the best protection. Also, such attacks on the federal government alienated at least one veteran politician, Grégoire Bélanger, who had previously been willing to be an A.L.N. candidate in the election.⁸⁹

Paul Gouin realized that the conscription issue could only hurt the A.L.N. In his election campaign, while asserting his opposition to conscription, he tried to remind people of the social reforms which the A.L.N. wished to accomplish. He denounced Duplessis for trying to use the theme of provincial autonomy to make people forget the betrayal of the promises to combat the trusts.⁹⁰ At the same time the A.L.N. was facing severe organizational problems. Gouin had only started to reorganize the A.L.N. a year earlier, after the Sorel Congress. Only \$300 to \$500 was available for each riding,⁹¹ and only 56 candidates could be presented.⁹² Such weaknesses prevented the A.L.N. from carrying on an extensive publicity campaign.

In the meantime, the Parti National had become an ally of the Liberal Party. René Chaloult became a "nationalist liberal" and ran successfully in Lotbinière with Hamel's support. Adélarde Godbout wanted Ernest Grégoire and Philippe Hamel to join the Liberal Party; "Chubby" Power prevented this open

endorsement.⁹³ Hamel nevertheless gave speeches in which he declared that Duplessis was the main enemy and that voters should defeat the "gouvernement de la trahison nationale" by voting for the opposition candidate most likely to succeed.⁹⁴ In practice this was an appeal to voters to support the Liberal Party.

The election was a disaster for Paul Gouin's A.L.N. which received 4.6% of the vote and elected no candidates.⁹⁵ Gouin concluded:

Nous avons contribué justement à faire haïr Duplessis, mais de crainte de prendre un risque en nous appuyant, tous se sont jetés dans les vieilles lignes de partis, selon le conseil du bon Dr. Hamel.⁹⁶

According to Gouin, the elite of Quebec were to blame for this debacle. He pointed out that the A.L.N. had been unable to get any lawyers to help with legal work and that many priests had counselled their parishioners to make sure that they voted for the winning side.⁹⁷ This lack of support among the elite, poor financial resources and the intervention of the Federal Justice Minister, Ernest Lapointe, combined with the failure of Hamel and Gouin to agree on a common position, brought about the absolute electoral defeat of the A.L.N.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Le Devoir, June 8, 1936.
- 2 Press release, July 16, 1936, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 3 La Province files in Paul Gouin Papers.
- 4 La Province, February 6, 1937.
- 5 Speech by Paul Gouin, August 9, 1936, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 La Province, September 5, 1936.
- 8 Speech at Paroisse Ste. Catherine, March 3, 1937, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 La Province, January 9, 1937.
- 11 Speech at Assomption, August 1, 1937, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 La Province, September 26, 1936.
- 15 La Province, October 10, 1936.
- 16 Le Devoir, May 21, 1938.
- 17 R. Ried, "L'Action Libérale Nationale 1934-39", M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1966, p. 211.
- 18 R. Ouimet to P. Gouin, January 26, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.

- 19 C. Black, Duplessis, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1977, p. 228.
- 20 Ibid., p. 300
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Le Canada, June 1, 1938.
- 23 La Province, articles in the spring of 1938.
- 24 P. Morin to P. Gouin, June 16, 1938 and Paul Bouchard to P. Gouin, May 31, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 25 See P. Ried, "L'Action Libérale Nationale"
- 26 O. Drouin to P. Gouin, June 4, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 27 P. Morin to P. Gouin, June 4, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 28 P. Bouchard to P. Gouin, June 3, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 29 P. Gouin to H. Philippon, June 14, 1938, and P. Gouin to O. Drouin, June 17, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 30 Comments about Sorel Congress, H. Philippon to P. Gouin, March 15, 1939, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 31 Party lists in Philippe Hamel Papers and list of defectors from the Parti National in Paul Gouin Papers.
- 32 Speech by Hamel, undated, Philippe Hamel Papers.
- 33 Reid, "L'Action Libérale Nationale", p. 230.
- 34 H. Philippon to P. Gouin, July 6, 1939, and P. Gouin to H. Philippon, July 21, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.

- 35 Le Soleil, July 25, 1938.
- 36 P. Gouin to H. Philippon, June 30, 1938 Paul Gouin Papers.
- 37 A.L.N. Manifesto, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 38 Agricultural Reforms; no. 4 and Workers' Reforms, no. 8, A.L.N. Manifesto, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 39 Workers' Reforms, no. 4, A.L.N. Manifesto, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 40 Political Reforms, no. 4, A.L.N. Manifesto, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 41 Le Devoir, July 25, 1938.
- 42 Ere Nouvelle, October 22, 1937.
- 43 Le Devoir, July 25, 1938.
- 44 R. Rumilly, Maurice Duplessis et son temps, Montreal, Fides, p. 470.
- 45 This is contained in Part IV no. 9 of the A.L.N. 1938 Manifesto.
- 46 Le Jour, July 30, 1938.
- 47 Le Devoir, July 25, 1938.
- 48 Reid, "L'Action Libérale Nationale", p. 226
- 49 Notes on newspaper article by Le Droit in Philippe Hamel Papers.
- 50 Le Droit, July 26, 1938.
- 51 Paul Gouin Papers.

- 52 Le Devoir, July 25, 1938 (Gouin's speech) -
- 53 Speech, October 21, 1939, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 54 Speech at Sorel, July 24, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Speech, October 21, 1939 and 1938 undated, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 57 Speech at Thedford Mines, October 2, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 58 Speech at St. Ours, June 18, 1939, Paul Gouin Papers
- 59 Speech at Richmond, August 23, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 60 Speech at Sorel, July 24, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 61 Radio speech, October 25, 1939, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 62 Speech at Place Youville, April 16, 1939, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 63 Speech at St. Ours, June 18, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 64 Economic Reforms, no. 2. A.L.N. Manifesto 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 65 Speech, October 31, 1937, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 66 Speech at Richmond, August 23, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 67 Speech at Lachine, June 2, 1939, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 68 Speech in Montreal, October 20, 1937, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 69 Speech at Sorel, July 24, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.

- 70 La Presse, October 12, 1939.
- 71 Speech at Sorel, July 24, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 72 Speech at Lachine, June 2, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Election speech, October 21, 1939, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 75 See Ere Nouvelle, November 12, 1937.
- 76 Le Devoir, May 21, 1938.
- 77 La Province, November 13, 1938.
- 78 Speech, October 31, 1937, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 79 Le Canada, March 28, 1939.
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- 81 L'illustration, March 28, 1939.
- 82 P. Gouin to H. Philippon, June 24, 1939, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 83 P. Hamel to Abbé Groulx, October 14, 1939, Lionel Groulx Papers.
- 84 Speech, April 2, 1939, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 85 P. Gouin to H. Philippon, March 16, 1939, Paul Gouin Papers.
- 86 P. Hamel to Abbé Groulx, October 12, 1939, Lionel Groulx Papers.
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C O N C L U S I O N

The economic crisis and the Taschereau government's insensitivity to the need for social reform brought Paul Gouin and Philippe Hamel into politics. Hamel became the leader of the fight against the electricity trust and established a firm base in Quebec City where his friend, Ernest Grégoire, was mayor. Gouin headed the young Montreal Liberals who were dissatisfied with Taschereau and who eventually set up the A.L.N. After much hesitation, Hamel finally joined with Gouin. The political and financial difficulties faced by the new party in 1935 paved the way for the alliance with Duplessis.

Gouin became alarmed when he realized that Duplessis intended to absorb the A.L.N. into his Union Nationale. Hamel, having confidence in Duplessis, did not seriously oppose him until 1937. Hamel's support for Duplessis in June 1936 allowed the latter to reduce Gouin to political impotence. By the time Hamel realized that Duplessis had no intention of carrying out the reforms enunciated in the A.L.N. manifesto, the majority of Union Nationale members had fallen under the Premier's influence. Hamel was unable to extend his influence beyond Quebec City and failed to unite the opposition to Duplessis. Likewise, Paul Gouin was frustrated in his attempts to enlarge his organization much beyond Montreal and was caught off guard by the snap election called in September 1939.

Because Hamel and Gouin opposed the status quo some writers have made the assumption that Hamel and Gouin were left-wing nationalists.¹ As European history shows, however, corporatists tended to be on the right of the political spectrum during the 1930's.² Anti-communism and submission to clerical authority were powerful currents in the Parti National and to a lesser extent in the A.L.N. Both Hamel and Gouin idealized Portugal's dictator, Salazar. At the same time, they disagreed among themselves on the type of corporatism they favoured. Gouin advocated a type of voluntary corporatism while Hamel had more authoritarian sentiments. The latter felt that in the last

resort, industrial conflicts would have to be resolved by a final decision of a Labour Tribunal. By contrast, Gouin desired to create a corporatist system wherein the decision of such a body could be accepted or rejected by the parties concerned. He saw corporatism as a system which would increase the chances of conciliation rather than as a way of putting an end to strikes and lockouts. Unlike Gouin, Hamel was ready to defend fascist dictatorships; he was often hostile to democracy and wanted to create a strong state in order to stamp out communism. Rather than creating an egalitarian society, both men sought to preserve the class distinctions of status and wealth through corporatism; in addition however Hamel was prepared to accept a more authoritarian society than Gouin.

Many contemporaries and some historians have pointed out the anti-semitic and racist elements of French-Canadian nationalism during the 1930's. While Michael Oliver recognizes in his thesis that not all nationalists were racists, he points to Paul Gouin's La Province as a nationalist newspaper containing anti-semitic articles.³ Contemporary critics accused Paul Gouin and Philippe Hamel of having similar racist sentiments.⁴ Yet, research done on the personal papers and on the political speeches of the two men reveal neither anti-semitism nor other forms of racism. Both men were anxious to attract English Canadians into their political organizations.⁵ The A.L.N. even presented an English-speaking candidate, J. Burton Walker, in

the riding of St. Ann. It is true of course that as followers of Abbé Groulx, Gouin and Hamel wished to redress the social imbalance wherein English Canadians controlled the managerial positions in industry. They attacked Duplessis for pretending to be a nationalist yet allying himself with English-Canadian trusts. The economic nationalism advocated by the two reformers no doubt attracted some men with a more narrow view to their organizations. Nevertheless, one must not forget that while attacking English-Canadian capitalism, Hamel and Gouin did not forget to denounce the abuses of the Simard brothers who were major French-Canadian industrialists. They resisted any descent to vulgar racism in which the English and the Jews would be blamed for the ills of industrial society.

Paul Bouchard, the xenophobic editor of La Nation, went so far as to assert that Hamel was "anti-nationaliste"⁶ and that the only ground he shared with the Quebec reformer was the common dislike of the trusts. During a heated anti-war rally in September 1939, Gouin asked the crowd who was responsible for the war. He received the response, the Jews and the English. Gouin contradicted them and asserted that it was not these two groups but rather international finance which was to blame. For this action, Gouin received praise from The Canadian Jewish Review.⁷

The rivalry between Gouin and Hamel greatly reduced both men's chances for political success. Gouin could not

forgive Hamel, and especially his ally E. Grégoire, for the attacks made upon him in June 1936. Hamel's suspicion of Gouin's "liberal" tendencies blinded him to the danger of Duplessis. Later, during the Sorel conference, Hamel refused to join the A.L.N. unless he was given control of the Quebec region. The personal hostility between Hamel and Gouin kept the two reform movements separate.

Lack of political acumen contributed to Hamel and Gouin's nemesis in 1939. Hamel who had previously denounced Gouin's liberal leanings, was allied to the Liberal Party. Gouin, who had every reason to be apprehensive of Duplessis' political skills, hoped for the latter's re-election in order to destroy the Liberal Party leadership. Such manoeuvres divided and weakened the reform movement. Hamel's sole aim was to defeat Duplessis but his refusal to support Gouin created what Abbé Gravel called "la guerre des nationalistes".⁸ Abbé Groulx lamented Hamel's alliance with the Liberal Party which served only to further weaken the A.L.N.

On n'arrive pas à comprendre que ces messieurs qui trouvaient tant d'objections à s'allier à Paul Gouin, de qui ne les séparaient de leur propre aveu, que des questions de tactique, se soient alliés si facilement à M. Godbout de qui les séparent toute une histoire politique et toute une doctrine.⁹

While propounding a similar ideology, Gouin and Hamel succeeded only in negating each other's efforts. They failed to make alliances which would strengthen rather than weaken their

political movements.

A closer look at party organization and membership reveals other reasons for the political failure of Gouin and Hamel. Gouin kept extensive records on party organization during 1938-39. Hamel on the other hand did not organize the Parti National extensively. It appears that while Hamel could rely on spontaneous support on certain issues, such as conscription, the Parti National had no organized support.¹⁰

An analysis of A.L.N. membership in Montreal and Quebec City shows the following breakdown. (Methodology explained in appendix, page 105.)

Occupations of A.L.N. Members

Professionals	17.4%
Semi-professionals	5.7%
Managers & Industrialists	4.3%
Small Businessmen	30.5%
Clerical Workers	7.7%
Skilled Workers	21.1%
Industrial & Manual Labourers	13.3%

Although it is not surprising to see professionals involved in politics, the large number of workers (42.1%) proves that Paul Gouin did manage to make contact with those people outside Quebec's traditional professional elite. Not surprisingly, small businessmen and shopkeepers were well represented in a corporatist party which hoped to protect small capitalists

from being crushed by the trusts. A look at the professions of the delegates elected by these members to go to Sorel, discloses continued worker representation. Similarly when the list of candidates for the 1939 election is checked, numerous union leaders in key ridings appear.¹¹ This is in sharp contrast to the members of parliament of the two other provincial parties.¹² Paul Gouin's corporatist movement was composed of social classes not normally included in Quebec's governing elite.¹³

The A.L.N. received support from many workers, small businessmen and some small industrialists; yet, generally, Quebec's traditional elite of lawyers, priests and wealthy families avoided it in the 1938-39 period. Many of the professionals involved in the party were doctors; very few lawyers, unlike the other two parties, were members. It seems that the wealthier segments of the population avoided the party most concerned with the redistribution of wealth in society. This predicament was realized by A.L.N. organizers. Louis Philippe Morin, an accountant, told Gouin:

A mon retour de Sorel, j'ai eu des avertissements que je ne saurais ignorer...¹⁴

He would have to retire from public life, he said, since his clients were beginning to desert him because of his political activities. He continued:

C'est même normal puisque seuls ceux qui ont une certaine aisance ont besoin de comptables

et la plupart d'entre eux se croient ou se sentent visés par notre programme.¹⁵

The boycott of the A.L.N. by the wealthy hampered Gouin's efforts to collect campaign money. It would seem that Quebec's elite was not interested in corporatist reform while workers had little political power.

The religious elite also moved away from support of the reform movement. Hamel had been the first to notice this withdrawal in the wake of the Beauce by-election and during the textile strike. Cardinal Villeneuve's subsequent praise of Duplessis during the 1938 Eucharistic Congress greatly grieved Hamel. Similarly Gouin felt that the indifference of the clergy to the fate of the A.L.N. contributed to the party's disastrous performance in the 1939 election.

The fact that many fascist countries espoused corporatism also worked against Gouin and Hamel. Many people considered the two terms to be synonymous. In Hamel's case they may not have been far wrong, but Paul Gouin also had to face such criticism. He was constantly forced to disassociate himself from fascist regimes:

Encore une fois je tiens à répéter que je ne suis pas fasciste. D'ailleurs, il existe une différence frappante que seuls peuvent ignorer les esprits mal intentionnés ou ignorants. Le fascisme n'est qu'un simple parti politique tandis que le corporatisme est surtout une formule sociale et économique, employée d'ailleurs dans les pays où il n'y a pas de fascisme, entre autres le Portugal et, sous une forme un peu différente, la Suède.¹⁶

In spite of such statements, there is no doubt that corporatism's association with totalitarian regimes lessened its chances for success in Quebec.

On top of such problems, the Great Depression which had given birth to the reformist movements was beginning to recede by 1939. Industry was reviving aided by the rapid rearmament policies of the federal government. At the same time the outbreak of war meant that public attention was focused on the immediate problem of conscription and not on long term issues like social reform.

"Nationalism", according to a widely held view, "meant an attempt to recreate in Quebec an idealized past by sealing provincial society against outside forces... an attempt to build an agricultural dream world."¹⁷ This may be true for most nationalists during the 1930's. But, although Paul Gouin and Philippe Hamel yearned for an idyllic rural society, they realized that the industrial system had come to stay. Hamel ardently desired a rural renaissance and Gouin hoped to move some of the urban population to rural areas; yet they were prepared to face the consequences of industrialization. Gouin wished to break up the financial monopolies which were crushing small businesses and charging excessive prices to consumers. He also wanted to facilitate the entry of French Canadians into the managerial elite. Hamel concentrated on breaking up the trusts, especially those which dominated the

production and distribution of electricity. In addition both men defended urban workers. Immediately following its foundation in 1937, Hamel's Parti National toured the province, holding rallies in support of the striking textile workers. Gouin also focused on the same subject and gave many speeches in support of unions. He made a point of speaking in areas of industrial tension such as Asbestos, Theford Mines, Buckingham, Lachine and Sorel.¹⁸ Following corporatist thinking, both men insisted that workers needed to protect themselves through unions.

Gouin and Hamel are important figures, in view of their recognition of the impact and permanence of industrialization. Instead of simply condemning the industrial order and proposing rural reforms, they sought solutions to Quebec's industrial problems. Their anti-trust and pro-union activities show that they responded to the new needs. By contrast, Duplessis concentrated on provincial autonomy and rural reform. He did nothing to improve the lot of urban dwellers. As reformers, Hamel and Gouin reflected a trend which was to resurface a few years later in the Bloc Populaire.¹⁹

FOOTNOTES

¹ H. Quinn, The Union Nationale, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1963, p. 75 & A. Bélanger, L'Apolitisme des Idéologies Québécoises, Quebec (Univ. de Laval Press, 1974, p. 152. & Gazette de Montreal, February 22, 1938.

² M.H. Elbow, French Corporative Theory, 1789-1948, New York, Octagon Books, 1966 & J.J. Wiarda, Corporatism and Development: The Portuguese Experience, Amherst, Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1977, also see, J.M. Malloy ed. Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America, London, Univ. of Pittsburg Press, 1977.

³ M. Oliver, The Social and Political Ideas of the French-Canadian Nationalists 1920-1945, unpublished Ph.D., McGill, 1966.

⁴ Quebecer, Canadian Forum, March 13, 1936.

⁵ Le Devoir, October 25, 1937, and Montreal Organization File, Paul Gouin Papers.

⁶ P. Bouchard to Abbé Groulx, October 20, 1937, Abbé Groulx Papers.

⁷ The Canadian Jewish Review, September 22, 1939, in Paul Gouin Papers.

⁸ Abbé Gravel to P. Hamel, October 22, 1939, Philippe Hamel Papers.

⁹ Abbé Groulx to P. Hamel, October 24, 1939, Lionel Groulx Papers.

¹⁰ Philippe Hamel Papers

¹¹ For example:

a) Alphonse Bouge - Union leader, mechanic at C.P.
C.P.
Maisonneuve

11 continued

- b) Philippe Girard - Ex-president of the Central des syndicats catholiques Saint Henri
- c) Armand Le Caire - Vice-president of Catholic Unions Sainte Marie
- d) Napoléon Mathieu - Member of the Syndicats catholiques d'Amiante et Ouvrier Beauce
- e) Philippe Grenier - Secrétaire de la Fédération des employés de la pulpe et papier Chicoutimi
- f) Alphonse Lamy - Secretary of the Syndicat d'Aluminium Saint Maurice

12 Rapport sur les élections générales de 1939 et sur les élections partielles pendant la vingtième législature (1936-1939), Quebec, Redempti Paradis, Imprimeur du Roi, 1940.

13 R. Boily, "Les Hommes Politiques du Québec", Le Personnel Politique Québécois, Montreal, Boréal Express, 1972.

14 P. Morin to P. Gouin, August 30, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.

15 Ibid.

16 Speech by Gouin, October 20, 1937, Paul Gouin Papers.

17 M. Oliver, "Quebec and Canadian Democracy", C.J.E.P.S., vol 23, p. 506.

18 Paul Gouin Papers, 1938-39 period.

19 M. D. Behiels, "Prelude to Quebec's Quiet Revolution: the Re-emergence of Liberalism and the Rise of Neo-Nationalism," unpublished Ph.D., York University, 1978.

A P P E N D I X

The A.L.N. organization in rural areas seems to be almost non-existent in the 1938-39 period, or at best to be grafted on to the political organization of a local politician. This was the case in Asbestos and Buckingham, two industrial towns where the mayors declared their support for Paul Gouin.¹ In Montreal and Quebec City, however, detailed records are available.

Just before the Congress of Sorel, meetings were held in various counties to elect delegates to the conference. While not only former A.L.N. members were invited to participate in these elections, one can safely assume that individuals

adhering to the Congress of Sorel either became A.L.N. members or were strongly attracted to Paul Gouin's ideas. The names of those present at the meetings, along with their addresses, appear on Paul Gouin's records. From the names and addresses, and through the use of several years' editions of the Montreal Municipal Directory and the Quebec Municipal Directory,² the occupations of those present at those urban meetings of the A.L.N. can be determined.

The names of 684 A.L.N. members from the counties of Quebec East, Mercier, St.-Henri, Maisonneuve and St. Jacques were used to compile information for a study of occupations. Other counties were also studied, but limited membership and the difficulty in identifying the occupations of all the members led to their exclusion from this study. The occupational trends in the counties eliminated did not differ significantly from those of the counties studied. Of the counties analysed, about 85% of the names on the membership list could be found in the municipal directories. Page 108 shows a list of the occupations included in each category.

Outside of Quebec City and Montreal, although no method of determining the occupations of the limited number of regular members is available, some hints are provided. The six honorary presidents at the Congress of Sorel from the Quebec Region for example were: a leading member of the Unions des Cultivateurs Catholiques, an organizer of the

Bucherons de U.C.C., a merchant, a leading member of the Catholic Unions at Theford Mines, a small industrialist, and the president of Fédération Nationale Catholique des Employés de pulperies et papeteries incorporée.³

LIST OF OCCUPATIONS

1. Professionals

lawyers
doctors
accountants
architects
veterinarians
notaries
engineers
professors

2. Simi-professionals

teachers
policemen
druggists
chemists
students
journalists

3. Managers & Industrialists

presidents of companies
small industrialists

4. Small Businessmen

grocers
shop owners
tailors (merch.)
merchants
travelling salesmen
insurance agents
photographers
manufacturing agents
promoters
publicity agents
contractors

5. Clerical Workers

secretaries
civil employees
clerks
tellers
bailiffs
assistant secretaries
treasurers
inspectors
post office employees

6. Skilled Workers

machinists
printers
painters
brakemen
tailors
engravers
butchers
electricians
jewellers
bakers
union officials
barbers
drivers
furriers
shoemakers

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Party Organization, Paul Gouin Papers.
- ² Montreal Municipal Directory, and Quebec Municipal Directory.
- ³ H. Philippon to P. Gouin, July 21, 1938, Paul Gouin Papers.

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