

# Analogy proves nothing

Family breakup parallel invokes emotion instead of reason.

By Gary Levy

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The only thing worse than argument by analogy is argument by bad analogy. A case in point was the recent speech on the constitution by Ian Scott, former attorney-general of Ontario and one of the architects of the ill-fated Meech Lake accord, at the University of Western Ontario.

In response to the argument that there was really no constitutional crisis (before or after Meech Lake), he made the analogy with a marriage: One partner may think there is no crisis, but if the other partner keeps insisting there is a crisis, then the unbelieving partner had better stop saying there is no crisis and do everything possible to find out what is the problem and how it may be addressed. Otherwise, he implied, the marriage is over.

**FUNDAMENTAL FLAW:** Scott went on to suggest that Quebec is what makes Canada distinct from the United States and that without Quebec we may eventually all become Americans.

His marriage analogy is a powerful one, worthy of someone who has held high office. But it is a fundamentally bad analogy and goes a long way in explaining why Ontario Liberals found themselves so unceremoniously bounced from office last September.

It is simply a restatement, in non-

academic language, of the compact theory of Confederation — that Canada was and is a compact between French and English, the two founding peoples. This is not a new attitude, and may possibly have been supportable at one time. But times change and the dualist vision of Canada has become offensive not only to aboriginal people and Quebec nationalists, but to many Canadians whose reasons range from self-interest to out and out anti-Quebec prejudice.

**COUNTER ANALOGY:** Perhaps those opposing the dualist argument should offer their own family analogy. They could say Canada is like a family with 10 children and while no child will ever cease completely to be a member of the family, he or she can walk out without causing the rest of family to break up and will in fact draw those remaining closer together.

Personally, I prefer to refrain from argument by bad analogy. Rather, let us be prepared to consider the question of Quebec independence with as much reason and as little emotion as possible. If our political leaders are unable to meet the challenge, let us begin to think of ways of involving non-politicians (as suggested by Scott in a brief allusion to a constitutional convention at the end of his speech) or even non-Canadians.

For, in the final analysis, the negotiation of independence may just be too difficult and too painful for Canadians to resolve unless they can agree to put all the issues before some international body and agree to abide by its decision. Let us have more creative thinking and less argument by analogy in Ontario and in the rest of the country.

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