

## *Casseroles*

*Louis Bertrand*

A baked dish? In the streets? I think the word “*casseroles*” is symbolic of the distance between French-language and English-language media. I wanted to translate it as “pots and pans,” its literal meaning, but that was too utilitarian. But I was afraid Anglophone readers wouldn’t get it. “Tuna casserole? Hmm, my favourite!”

When the editors of *Translating the Printemps Érablé* told me translators were keeping it as casseroles, I felt it was the right choice. Just go with it. Trust that people will pick up on the nuance. “Pots and pans” wouldn’t capture the unique character of the Montreal street protests. They were joyous, playful, cheerful. They united strangers – students,

kids, moms, dads, grannies and grandpas – in prankish fun, following a randomly picked route to thumb their nose at the police and the draconian law that demanded a published route eight hours in advance. The signs and banners were witty wordplays or proclamations of neighbourhood solidarity, and sometimes profoundly thought-provoking.

I speak glowingly of those protests, yet I never walked in one. I experienced them second-hand. I read about them in blogs (heck, I translated some of them), I saw them on Youtube, I watched the beautiful video *Le Printemps Québécois: Quand le peuple s'éveille* by Mario Jean. I wanted to be there, to be part of it, but somehow I never took to the streets.

## This is Fucking Class War

You see, I live in boring old apathetic Ontario, bastion of smugness. Somehow pinning a *carré rouge* to my shirt and hopping in the car didn't feel right.

Throughout the summer, I kept wondering if something like this could happen in Ontario. Could students spontaneously organize around a "line in the sand" issue like the tuition fee hike? Much has been made of the fact that tuition fees in Québec are lower than elsewhere in Canada. To me it feels like Ontario students already missed their chance; the tuition fees are already crushing. When you're carrying the equivalent of a small mortgage and you're still a year or two away from graduation, it's hard to speak up if it means putting your school year at risk.

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If you want to understand the distinction between Québec and the rest of Canada, the *Printemps érable* gives anyone who wants to look beyond the old clichés of separatists vs. federalists a glimpse of how the two cultures differ. In Ontario, it was all about “spoiled brats” and “cry-babies” but in Québec they said “hey, you can’t beat up our kids like that!” In Québec, the protesters, the bloggers, and a few politicians with integrity made it clear that education is not a privilege to be sold to the highest bidder. The *casseroles* were loud and clear. Ontario should make the effort to listen.