



Bulletin

Vol. 23, No. 45 November 6, 1968

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES BILL

In a statement to the House of Commons on the resolution before the introduction of the Official Languages Bill, Prime Minister Trudeau said that the most important example of Canada's diversity was the existence of two major language groups, both of which were "strong enough in numbers and in material and intellectual resources to resist the forces of assimilation". "In the past," Mr. Trudeau said, "this underlying reality of our country has not been adequately reflected in many of our public institutions."

Part of the Prime Minister's statement follows:

...Much of our political theory and tradition has been inherited from the major countries of Western Europe. It happens that the majority of these countries are relatively homogeneous in language and culture. It has been practical for many of them to operate on the principle: one state, one language. For Canadian descendants of West Europeans this has often appeared to be the normal situation, subject to a few unimportant exceptions. Even today it is not unknown for a European statesman to offer advice on the future of this country based on such old world ideas.

Looked at from a contemporary world viewpoint, it is the apparently homogeneous states of Western Europe which are the exception. Many Eastern European, Asian and African states contain within a single political unit a great variety of languages, religions and cultures. In many of them this diversity is reflected in a federal system of government and in two or more official languages. In the past, multi-cultural states have often resulted from conquest or colonialism. In the modern world many are based on a conscious appreciation of the facts of history, geography and economics.

CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Official Languages Bill | 1 |
| Highlights of 1968-69 Budget | 3 |
| Arctic Oil Rush | 3 |
| Canada's Olympic Showing | 3 |
| Flemish Art Exhibition | 3 |
| Algeria Irrigation Study | 4 |
| Botany Research Grant | 4 |
| Conference Ship | 4 |
| Costly Cup of Cheer | 4 |
| Diplomats Change Posts | 5 |
| Progress on Indian Reserves | 5 |
| Study of Immigrant Problems | 5 |
| Atlantic Salmon Station | 5 |

In Canada, a country blessed with more prosperity and political stability than most, we are making our choices methodically and democratically.

In all parts of the country, within both language groups, there are those who call for uniformity. It will be simpler and cheaper, they argue. In the case of the French minority, isolation is prescribed as necessary for survival. We must never underestimate the strength or the durability of these appeals to profound human emotions.

Surely these arguments are based on fear, on a narrow view of human nature, and on a defeatist appraisal of our capacity to adapt our society and its institutions to the demands of its citizens. Those who argue for separation, in whatever form, are prisoners of past injustice, blind to the possibilities of the future.

We have rejected this view of our country. We believe in two official languages and in a pluralist society not merely as a political necessity but as an enrichment. We want to live in a country in which French Canadians can choose to live among English Canadians and English Canadians can choose to live among French Canadians without abandoning their cultural heritage.

Those of us who have some experience of the difficulties and opportunities of this course are conscious of the risk. But we are convinced that, as