

It will be obvious that courage and imagination will be needed from us all if we are to set our hands effectively at this conference to this kind of stage-by-stage action, which I, for one, believe essential.

In our initial discussions, this week, the representatives of the Federal Government will, of course, be receptive to the wishes and open-minded to the proposals of every province. But I should be less than candid if I failed to point out that there are certain federal positions which must be maintained. The Federal Government must be strong enough to carry out its responsibilities for moderating economic fluctuations and for promoting economic growth. It must be able to promote economic equality for Canadians in all parts of the country and for every economic region. It must maintain the right and the power to assist in research and in cultural developments. It must maintain the unity of Canada's foreign policy, as an indispensable attribute for any state that does not intend to allow itself to be divided.

I believe that the review which I am recommending will prove that there is large room for constitutional revision. But even now Canada has one of the more decentralized federal systems of the world. For us, this is right. But federal powers must not be so reduced that the Government of Canada will be unable to carry out the responsibilities it must discharge if the country is to remain strong, prosperous and united.

The reservations that I have listed are important. But none of them need stand in the way of the great new act of reform and accommodation which we believe should now be undertaken. On the contrary, they are to be regarded as a necessary complement to it, since it would be impossible to build more amply without maintaining the strength at the centre which is necessary to hold the whole structure together.

Let me recapitulate, then, the main elements of a programme to being about a new federalism:

- (1) Agreement at this conference to accept the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism recommending English and French as our official languages and establishing the cultural and linguistic equality of the two groups who together made Confederation with constitutional guarantees in that regard.
- (2) Agreement on the principle that certain basic rights should be constitutionally secured for all Canadians.
- (3) Agreement to embark on a comprehensive process of constitutional review.

The nature of such a programme puts it above regional or racial or party interest or advantage. It is a programme for all Canada.

In moving in the direction I have been recommending, we shall be making many new departures and slipping some old moorings. Some traditions may be altered or left behind in the process. For some that will be painful. As for me, I believe it can be done in a way which will meet the challenge of the future without betraying the values of the past.