

*North-South Relations*

Ontario, New Brunswick, Manitoba and, of course, Quebec were part of the Canadian delegation to the conference that established in 1970 the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation. The major centre of French language and culture in Canada, the province of Quebec, in agreement with the Canadian government, has held from the start a special place in the governmental francophone community, through its status of participating government.

In December 1977, New Brunswick, as a 42 per cent French-speaking province, applied to the Canadian government for that same status of participating government. What exactly is involved by the participating government status? That status allows the Quebec government and the New Brunswick government to participate on their own behalf, but within the Canadian delegation, in the agency's activities and programs. That status allows them to have a seat and an identification plate at the discussion table, with the right to speak. It allows them to communicate directly with the agency on matters involving program planning. These two governments contribute financially to the agency's budget. Their contributions, also identified, are computed as a fraction of the Canadian contribution of which they are an integral part.

That kind of status developed by the Canadian government is absolutely unique. Nowhere else in the world is to be found a similar arrangement, under which the federal government grants to the government of one of its provinces or federated states a special status to participate on its own behalf in an international or regional organization. This is to be found nowhere else in the world, and I suggest it is the most perfect example of the flexibility of the federal government to allow provincial governments, within their own fields of jurisdiction and to the extent compatible with Canada's foreign policy, to fully participate in international organizations.

Information and consultation mechanisms have been established between these two participating governments and the national government to ensure active and genuine participation from the three governments, while ensuring united Canadian action within the community of the agency's members.

Canada is involved in all of the agency's programs, with a view to maintaining a balance between cultural and technological activities. To that end, in 1975 Canada proposed the establishment of the Special Development Program, or SDP for short, patterned after the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. Financed through voluntary contributions, the SDP reviews and carries out modest technical assistance programs geared to the needs expressed by any ACTC member, especially in the fields of education, training, research, agriculture, health and social communications. By establishing the SDP Canada wanted to revitalize the ACTC and turn it into a concrete instrument of solidarity to complement more significant bilateral and multilateral aids.

I might even say, Mr. Speaker, that in the twelve months I have been acting as advisor to the Prime Minister (Mr.

Trudeau) and to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) on relations with French-speaking countries, a number of them told me that their interest in the agency is directly related to that aspect of co-operation at the social, technical and economic levels, and a great many of them would be much less interested if the agency were to restrict its activities solely to the defence and the renown of the French language. That is another way of saying that Canada was right to insist that the agency be also directly involved in socio-economic co-operation in addition to its cultural vocation. Very recently the agency has become the site for sectorial ministerial meetings. The first of those meetings was held in Luxembourg in 1977 for ministers of science and technology. The second took place in September 1980 in Paris where justice ministers gathered and there I acted as representative of the Canadian government; similarly, there was a conference of agriculture ministers in March 1981 and I had the opportunity to attend as spokesman for my colleague who holds that portfolio. The ministers for cultural affairs will get together in Cotonou this coming September. Other ministerial meetings are scheduled for 1982 and the following years. Slowly but surely the ACTC is getting to be the foremost and privileged centre for French-speaking communities. One of the objectives of the Canadian government is to have the agency regroup, under various forms, most of the activities of international French-speaking communities. However, when we speak of international French-speaking communities we must be very careful not to see today's reality solely through the prism of language.

Many of my counterparts whom I had the honour to meet during my various trips, a great number of the participating countries which are full members of the agency told me that on several occasions. Several of those countries have barely 2 or 3 per cent of their people who speak French. It would therefore be a serious mistake to try to look at reality solely through the prism of language. To the extent that language will help us to communicate and draw closer together, we will extend, enrich and deepen those relations which should be developed and bear fruit in all areas.

On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that the international French-speaking community emerged from various private French-speaking associations, some of which go back to some forty years. Most of them had a professional basis, such as the Association internationale des parlementaires de langue française, the AIPLF of which I have been appointed delegate for the Americas, or still l'Institut de droit d'expression française, or IDEF, which will hold its fourteenth convention in Montreal in September following the joint invitation of my colleague, the Minister of Justice of Canada (Mr. Chrétien) and the Quebec Minister of Justice. Others regrouped according to their common goals such as AUPELF, the Association of partly or fully francophone universities, which is to hold its convention both in Quebec City and