

International Jurist Critical of Judicial Procedures

MONTREAL (CUPI-LAST POST) - A representative of the international legal community expressed her concern Tuesday at several aspects of the judicial procedures currently being used in Québec.

Nicole Dreyfus, a delegate of the international Association of Democratic Jurists, told a press conference at the Confederation of National Trade Unions Building that the apparently liberal use of contempt of court proceedings in the present series of trials is highly unusual by international legal standards.

Provisions for finding an accused in contempt, she said, exist in her native France and in other countries, but "I've only seen them used very, very rarely."

In the case of labour leader Michel Chartrand, sentenced

parlez-vous français ?

MONTREAL (CUPI) - A committee set up to study the use of French on the McGill campus after last Spring's "McGill Français" demonstrations has recommended that the University should not strive to become a bilingual institution.

While strongly urging the university to devote more time to promoting the language of the Québec majority, the report also questions the viability of any bilingual university.

"Such a university is extremely expensive to operate, demanding nearly a complete duplication of staff and resources," the report said. In the so-called bilingual universities, Laurentian and Ottawa, "over a period of time, one of the languages tends to predominate the other".

last month to a year in jail for contempt, Miss Dreyfus said, the penalty seems "extraordinary and extremely heavy."

She also criticized the retroactive aspects of the Public Order (Temporary Measures) Act, saying that retroactivity went against accepted judicial principles.

Dreyfus had been mandated to the Association, which has members in more than fifty-five countries, to observe the seditious conspiracy trial of Chartrand, Pierre Vallières, Charles Gagnon, Robert Lemieux, and Jacques Larue-Langlois.

She may also investigate other cases, including that of Come LeBlanc, convicted last week of advocating the aims and principles of the outlawed Front de Liberation du Québec. LeBlanc's case was the first in which the retroactive provisions of the Public Order Act were applied.

Dreyfus would not say whether she thought that motions by

the accused in the seditious conspiracy case for the withdrawal of presiding Judge Roger Ouimet should be upheld.

However she noted that Ouimet's response to the defendants' presentations with respect to the judge's alleged bias in the case "shows that the questions raised by the accused don't lack some basis."

In the trial, which opened Monday (Feb 1) Judge Ouimet has defended his ability to administer justice impartially despite his expressed sentiments in favor of Canadian federalism, and his past associations with the Liberal Party.

The trial is adjourned until Thursday while Judge Ouimet considers the first of the defendants' motions for his withdrawal.

The international legal community's interest in the current Québec trials, she said, is the result of their political nature. "If it was not a political trial, the association would not have sent me here. Sedition is obviously a political charge."

In recent months, the Association has also sent observers to the trial of the Basque nationalists in Burgos, Spain and to trials in Greece and Brazil.

In each case that the Association follows, its delegate's observations form the basis for a report which receives world-wide circulation.

One could not compare the political situations in different countries, Dreyfus said. However, "there are constants of political repressions," and she noted the similarity in wording between parts of the Public Order Act and a Greek statute that has been widely used by that country's junta.

She said she was impressed with the "profound challenge to judicial procedures" that had been issued by the defendants in the seditious conspiracy trial. "The defendants are taking the offensive...that's very impressive for an observer."

At one point, someone on the audience, which included

defendant Larue-Langlois, the only one of the five who has been granted bail, political organizers, and lawyers as well as journalists, asked whether she had seen any evidence of an apprehended insurrection during her stay in Montréal.

She laughed and replied that "it is obvious you could not qualify the events that occurred as an insurrection."

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