Canadians that the concept of equal partnership between our two groups must be at the root of any future Canadian constitution?

Before we can discuss this question intelligently, we must agree on what we mean by equal partnership, and what it implies in practice. To me, equal partnership means the effective and real participation of competent French-Canadians in all areas and at all levels of Canadian life — particularly in the fields of public administration, both in politics and the Civil Service, and of business.

In the political sphere, equal partnership means that French-Canadians must have a true and meaningful share in the direction and administration of the country. In the economic sphere, equal partnership means that French-speaking Canadians must have the same opportunities for advancement and senior responsibility as English-speaking Canadians with similar qualifications, in all sectors of economic activity throughout the country.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Equal partnership does *not* mean numerical equality at all levels and in all fields. French-speaking Canadians form only 30 per cent of the population of this country, and they are fully conscious of the fact. Neither does it mean that they must hold 30 per cent of all positions in a given area, or any other fixed proportion. Above all, it does not mean that any French-speaking Canadian should be promoted to a position for which he is not qualified, simply in order to satisfy demands for equality. Equal responsibility entails equal qualifications. What equal partnership *does* mean, essentially, is true equality of *opportunity* in all fields. There is no need to depart from the principle of promotion according to merit. On the contrary, the point of equal partnership is that this principle must be strictly adhered to, keeping in mind the fact that, in a bicultural country, measurement of a man's merit should include measurement of his bicultural attainments. This is particularly true in the federal Civil Service, which must serve a bicultural population.

Equal partnership has never really existed in Canada. It is now of vital concern to French Canada. Will English-speaking Canadians accept equal partnership? Can formulas be found to make it a reality? These are vital questions, basic to the future of our country.

BICULTURAL QUESTION

The second great question on which we must seek a consensus concerns the cultural nature of our country. Do we agree that Canada should be a bicultural country or not? This is another question that French-Canadians regard as vital to Canadian progress. It has nothing to do with bilingualism at the personal level — with whether the average Canadian speaks one language or two. What I mean by biculturalism is the equality of our two major cultures — equal status for the English and the French cultures and languages throughout the country, and equal access to cultural facilities everywhere in Canada.

Are we prepared to translate into reality the ideal of biculturalism? Biculturalism has nothing to do with the proportion of French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians now living in a given area. Biculturalism implies the equality of French and English cultural services available to all Canadians everywhere in Canada, for the benefit of the whole population — radio, television, books, newspapers, magazines, theatre, cinema and so on — and especially education. In the field of education, biculturalism must not always be linked to religion. Biculturalism in education simply means that education must be available throughout Canada both in the English language and culture and in the French language and culture. If that were the case, then Canadians could freely choose whichever education they wanted, or both if they wanted. The same holds true for other cultural services — there must be no question of *forcing* two cultures on anybody, but simply of making facilities in both cultures *available* to all Canadians, so that they can choose whichever they want.

It is to be hoped, of course, that many Canadians would sample and enjoy both cultures, and would themselves become bicultural citizens of a bicultural country. This is not the primary purpose of biculturalism, but it is perhaps the most rewarding and enriching result of it, and one that would give Canadians a potential for a rich and full life perhaps unequalled anywhere in the world.

WHERE BILINGUALISM IS ESSENTIAL

At this point I would like to open a parenthesis on the question of the bilingualism of individuals in certain areas. As I have intimated, I do not think it possible for every Canadian to speak both English and French, wherever he may live in the country. Language is a vehicle of cultural expression, and it is also a vital tool of economic activity. There can be no question of forcing a language on people. Those who want to enjoy two cultures will learn two languages, and those who feel that one language is sufficient for their cultural and economic objectives will not. But there are, nevertheless, certain areas where bilingualism is essential in a bicultural country.

In my opinion, these areas are as follows:
(1) Where there is a substantial proportion of people of each culture living in the same area, people who deal with the general public should be bilingual. This applies to all government and public services, whether federal, provincial or municipal, and to business and industry as well. Moreover, the administrators of such bodies should also be bilingual in these areas, to ensure fairness and equality of opportunity to all employees.
(2) The federal Civil Service in Ottawa should be bilingual enough to allow French-speaking Canadians to work in their own language, in order to attract more competent French Canadians to the Federal Government.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

The third great issue we must face is the chronic problem of pronounced regional differences in the economy of our country. We must assure to all Canadians in all regions of the country a level of