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The Society of Acadians of New Brunswick

The Society of Acadians was founded in 1881, with transformations in 1957 and 1973. Its main aim is to secure the respect of Acadian rights and to promote their social, economic, cultural and political development. The Society's elected president is Pierre Poulin. It has 1,200 card-carrying members, with some of the members representing a vast member of people (L'Assomption, City Councils, social clubs, student councils, and the French Teachers Union...).

The Society was granted \$145,000 from the Department of the Secretary of State to encourage the renaissance of the French culture outside Quebec. Of this amount \$20,000 is given for administration (meetings, publicity, salary for general secretary, rent). The remaining \$125,000 is given to six full-time employees and two secretaries who work in different regions of New Brunswick, for salaries, expenses, publicity, meetings and publications.

The Society hopes to raise \$15,000 from subscriptions in 1973 to support local activities and administration. Grants for special

projects are also received from Ottawa and Quebec.

Michel Bastarache is general secretary of the S of A. He expressed the stand taken by the Society — "We are concerned with the application of the Official Languages Acts of Canada and New Brunswick, with respect to the recommendations of the B & B Commission."

On a federal level, they would like availability of bilingual services throughout Canada, where justifiable. They are not happy with the implementation of the federal act in New Brunswick, saying "the French are just getting translation of documents."

The NB OL Act is supported by the Society, but they complain its implementation to provincial services is too slow. Bastarache remarked that many provincial depts. do not have a bilingual capacity as yet. He noted that 12 percent of the civil servants were bilingual at the Centennial Building (with most probably being French). On a number ratio, there is less than the 35 percent ratio of French-speaking people in the province. He stated

there were less than 3 percent upper French civil servants. Bastarache (as in agreement with Hum) stressed that many people classed as bilingual are not truly bilingual.

Bastarache believes the supply and demand of bilingual services should be on a provincial, not regional basis (i.e. not just the French section of N.B.). He stated "Do you not think it's normal for Quebec to be totally bilingual throughout? Then why not N.B.?"

The Society is in favor of the N.B. government's policy on separate schools. With education as the basis of their culture, separate French schools are necessary to keep their language. They want good second language teaching, but Bastarache pointed out it is not a problem for the French, since they must learn English in order to function in N.B. while an English student may give up his second language instruction, and be no worse off. Bastarache points out that even with bilingual education in Bathurst, the English there have not yet learned French.

They are against bilingual schools, believing they cause

friction between the two groups, one language will tend to dominate, and translation problems will arise.

In Fredericton, there is a proposed French cultural centre. It will be a French school grades 1-12, a French cultural centre and a language centre for government. He believes this school is necessary to draw more French civil servants to Fredericton, where, he says, there is a scarcity. He feels many French people will not come to Fredericton because they cannot place their children in a French school going to Grade 12.

The Society takes a deep interest in Moncton, pressing for bilingual municipal services. Bastarache states there are no bilingual municipal services in Moncton to date. On basis of supply and demand, bilingual services should be made available. He feels the problem in Moncton arises from "the bastion of English-speaking Loyalists". They feel bilingualism threatens them. He conjectured it is due to the University of Moncton (which has 2,500 French speaking students), the Society of Acadians and the renaissance of the Acadian People. He continued that a small group (including Major Jones and some aldermen) is totally opposed to any form of bilingualism, be it grants, services, signs etc. Bastarache stated the U. of Moncton should continue to be French — that it fills the need for higher education in N.B. for French.

Bastarache said press releases by the Society were not published in the English newspapers. Lastly he stated the Society of Acadians and the ESA are not comparable. The Society has "never worked against any programs or against an individual group". He added the Society is not anti-English but just striving for Acadian rights.

Sylvio Savoie

Savoie was the head of a Citizens Committee which presented to Moncton City Council its recommendation for bilingual municipal services in Moncton. He is also one of a group of lawyers trying to prove that the OL Acts of Canada and New Brunswick in legal matters is valid.

Savoie states that Mayor Jones has no intention to bring bilingualism into Moncton municipal services and the creation of the "Ad Hoc" committee by city Council to review the Citizens Committee recommendations was a delaying tactic. The "Ad Hoc" committee was formed in 1972, and as yet, has not submitted its recommendations.

He continued that Moncton city hall does not reflect the bilingual nature of Moncton statistically, there are 13,640 French out of 47,870 people in Moncton.

The committee had no complaint with federal or provincial bilingual services, only municipal. The problem is Moncton is "attributable to Jones" and he "had no right to take sides" and show his "own prejudice."

He stated "bilingualism should be looked at positively, not as a hindrance" and, "we should work with what we've got."

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French in new brunswick

recommended that provincial and municipal services be available in federal bilingual districts. New Brunswick is a federal bilingual district.

Federal bilingual districts are named where there is at least a 10 percent official linguistic minority, or where feasible. The flexibility aspect is shown by Spicer's question, "should the 38,000 native French-speaking people of Toronto be denied federal service in their language?" In these districts, federal services must have a bilingual capacity. "At each of its principle offices in a federal bilingual district, members of the public can obtain available services and can communicate in both official languages." This is known as institutional bilingualism. Spicer indicates the OLA does not require every federal employee or private citizen to become bilingual. In fact, bilingual capacity in the federal services is to serve the unilingual person. He states these bilingual services must be "actively offered."

He remarks that bilingual services must be made available, where necessary, to the travelling public, in services like Air Canada and CNR. In federal offices outside bilingual districts, bilingual services should be made available where necessary, to the travelling public.

"In a small town in a bilingual district this might mean adding (or reposting or retraining) one or two RCM? constables, a nurse, a postal check and perhaps a manpower advisor".

Spicer reports hearing of many federal English-speaking employees who are against bilingualism, but retorts that there are many English-speaking civil servants who loyally take the language courses with an open mind. In 1972, of the 21,000 public servants taking such courses, four out of five took French.

Spicer states "If there remains one disturbing setback in the slow march of Canada's federal administration toward equality for our official languages, it is the

scandalous misinformation that, in too many parts of Canada, still overshadows the Act's basic, civilized truths — its aim of institutional, not individual bilingualism, its fundamental and long overdue fairness... in sum, its profound realism..."

The N.B. Official Languages Act (1969) stated "The English and French languages are the official languages of N.B. for all purposes to which the authority of the Legislature of N.B. extends; and possess and enjoy equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use for such purposes."

In Section II, it states "Subject to section 16, where requested to do so by any person, every public officer or employee of the Province, any agency thereof or any Crown corporation shall provide or make provision for such person (a) to obtain the available services for which such public officer or employee is responsible; and (b) to communicate regarding those services: in either official language requested."