

my opinion, is no less than Canada's survival as a nation.

Some aspects of constitutional change may also not come easy to many in these old provinces by the Atlantic seaboard. I would ask them to believe that I am very much aware of the decisive part those provinces played in the creation of our country 100 years ago. I am very much aware also that economic progress there has been slower than in other parts of the country. I have joined others before me in trying to remedy that, but I am very conscious of the fact that much more remains to be done. Indeed, I regard the problem of raising economic levels in the Atlantic Provinces as a principal aspect of the total problem of maintaining Canadian unity. There will, I know, be support from those provinces for a programme of constitutional progress and reform if only because they also would be surely and quickly injured if Canada were divided.

THE PRICE OF SEPARATION

What I would say to French-speaking Canadians is perhaps best expressed in the programme of policy that I have put forward in the document entitled *Federalism for the Future*. I should like to say merely two things. The first is a comment on the suggestion that has been made that, if Quebec were to secede, it could then enter into negotiations with Ottawa in order to work out a *modus vivendi* with the rest of Canada while acquiring independent sovereignty. As someone not without experience in international negotiations, I should like to state my view that any such proposal rests on illusion – indeed, on a whole set of illusions. It is an illusion to think that a declared intention to seek a disputed divorce can be the basis for amicable and productive negotiations, especially when the parties concerned are still living in the same house or as next-door neighbours. It may even be an illusion to think that in such circumstances there would necessarily be an "Ottawa" that could speak for the whole of English-speaking Canada. Indeed, the whole proposal disguises the obvious fact that separation could not be carried out without rupture and loss and pain.

Secondly, and more generally and positively, I should like to say a few words to French Canada in explanation of the spirit that animates the course of action I think should be taken. It is designed essentially to create conditions – and with all possible speed – so that French-speaking Canadians may feel that every part of this country is their homeland. But this feeling requires understanding and good will – and patience on their part as well as on the part of English-speaking Canada.

Our federal proposals are designed to set in train a process of constitutional review so that Quebec may have the largest possible scope for the development of its own society, its own destiny, in Canada. But this process of change must be consistent – let there be no doubt on this – with the continued existence of Canada as a single federal state....

TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Last October the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism submitted the first volume of its final Report. That volume deals with English and French as the two official languages of Canada; with the basic issue of cultural and linguistic equality. It makes 14 recommendations. Some of them are addressed to the Federal Government. We accept these and we will proceed to implement them as quickly as we can.

Some are addressed to the provincial governments. We hope that the provinces will find it possible to accept them. For our part, we stand ready to offer such help as may be necessary and desired.

Some of the recommendations are addressed to the Federal and provincial governments jointly. In those cases we would be glad to enter immediately into negotiations with the provinces with a view to agreement on joint implementation. As I see it, it will be one of the most important tasks of this conference with top priority to secure the widest possible measure of agreement on these far-reaching and carefully considered recommendations.

There are recommendations which, if accepted, would involve changes to the British North America Act, which would have to be agreed to by the Federal and provincial governments. These two changes, whether in the precise form recommended or in some other, are, in my view, fundamental if we are to establish and to ensure the basic principle of equality for the communities of people speaking our two official languages. It is essential for Canada that this principle be accepted and become real.

CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS

I hope also that we can reach agreement in principle at this conference on a constitutional Charter of Rights for all Canadians. This would cover a wide variety of rights, political, legal, egalitarian as well as linguistic. To agree on the detailed provisions and the mode and pace of enactment of a Charter of Human Rights will clearly not be easy, and it will take time. There are subtle and important legal and constitutional questions at issue. But I would urge that in this process none of us lose sight of the large goals before us. What we will be aiming at, if we can agree here in principle, is to provide a firmer, wider and more secure basis for the freedom of all Canadians, not only as individuals but also as members of particular societies within a larger unity. That, I believe, is the beacon that we should steer by.

I hope, finally, that we can agree here to undertake jointly – as a matter of fundamental importance – a comprehensive constitutional review and agree as well on the methods and procedures that we should follow in carrying it out. The British North America Act was a great act of statesmanship in its day. It has served as the constitutional basis for the growth of the strong and varied Confederation that we know today. But it is hardly to be expected that an act