

office in seeing that the spirit and letter of the act are carried out. He and his staff of twenty-two officers deal with citizens' complaints and initiate their own special studies to assist federal agencies bilingualise and biculturalise themselves. He can report failings to the institution concerned, to parliament, and to the Privy Council. He reports to Parliament annually. If no action is taken, he can publicise the case. However, it is the law that public institutions be bilingual. The first linguistics ombudsman, who took office two years ago, April 1, 1970, has taken a firm but gentle approach: coffee and cookies, he is fond of calling it, or Dr. Kildare rather than Machiavelli, Maigret, or Don Quixote. He is Keith Spicer, a 38-year-old former university professor (Universities of Ottawa and Toronto, York University, and Dartmouth) and *Toronto Globe and Mail* editorial writer.

He feels the job goes beyond the traditional case-by-case approach of an ombudsman and even beyond the more systematic, yet essentially denunciatory role of an auditor-general. He says he is "trying to deconstipate and demystify, to get people talking lucidly and serenely about this issue that people have been far too emotional about.\*" English Canadians have to be assured that institutional bilingualism does not mean they have to learn French. French Canadians must be assured this is not "just another federal con game."

\* Twice the Moose Jaw city council voted not to hear him, but visits to the town turned out friendly.

Dr. Spicer said more recently that in his second annual report, which will be published in November, he will recommend moderation in implementing the Official Languages Act. He said he will oppose overzealousness in applying the Act particularly where it affects civil servants caught in mid-career. There has been considerable pressure for this attitude from many such civil servants.

The main thrust of the government's and the ombudsman's efforts will center in Quebec, which has a special role in the play. Dr. Spicer says, "Plainly, the decisive effort to protect and enrich Canada's French-language heritage cannot take place in the French-speaking communities of predominantly English-speaking provinces — or even in the Federal government's language schools. The long term future of French in North America will depend mainly on Quebec's ability to strengthen its principal language of culture as a language of work and general social use. In the end, the vitality of French everywhere in Canada will rest on the dynamism — indeed the healthy predominance — of French in this unique jurisdiction."

He adds that while the law says he is to uphold the equal status, rights, and privileges of both French and English in federal institutions, "one must recognize that the English language, resting on the massive cultural infrastructure of some 225 million Anglophones in North America, does not seem in danger of imminent disappearance in Quebec — particularly in federal agencies."

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