

During the February meeting, the Constitutional Conference reached the following consensus on language rights:

- (1) French-speaking Canadians outside of Quebec should have the same rights as English-speaking Canadians in Quebec.
- (2) Each government should take the necessary actions in this field as speedily as possible, in ways most appropriate to its jurisdiction and without diminishing existing rights recognized by law or usage.
- (3) The Conference established a special committee to examine the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and other matters relating to language rights and their effective provision in practice, and to consult on methods of implementation, including the nature of possible federal assistance, and on the form and the method of constitutional amendment.

The Conference also established a continuing committee of officials which met in May, July and September and will meet again next month. They are preparing for another meeting of prime ministers and premiers which will be held on December 16 to 18.

Today's resolution describes the Official Languages Bill which will provide for the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations which lie within the jurisdiction of Parliament. As the resolution indicates, this will include provisions to establish the status of the English and French languages as the official languages of Canada for all purposes of the Parliament and Government of Canada, and will also provide for the appointment of a Commissioner of Official Languages with the duty of ensuring recognition of the status of the two languages. It sets out for the first time the language rights of citizens in their dealings with Parliament, with the Federal Government and with federal institutions, and the duties of those institutions toward the citizen in matters of language.

We do not claim that this bill will take care of all of Canada's needs in respect of French and English or other languages. It is important to point out some of the areas to which it does not apply.

It does not, of course, amend the constitution. I have often stated my belief that such amendment is necessary to guarantee the fundamental language rights of our citizens. It does not affect provincial jurisdiction over the administration of justice or any other matter within provincial jurisdiction. It does contain an enabling provision relating to proceedings in criminal matters, but discretion is left to the courts over its implementation.

It does not regulate the internal operations of the Government. Other statutes and policy statements deal with such matters as communications between one government employee and another and bilingualism is a factor in employment.

In drafting it, we have not ignored the practical limitations of manpower and equipment. There are provisions for periods of adaptation where necessary. The bill does not require every government document to be produced in both languages in certain cases where production in one language does not violate the principle of equality of status.