—FOR QUEBEC?

'ANYONE WHO WANTS TO WORK HIS WAY UP.... HAS TO USE ENGLISH'

Shortly before Canada celebrated its centenary, the terms of confederation began to earn increasingly hostile publicity from Quebec nationalists. In response to this rising tide of criticism, the Privy Council met on July 19, 1963, to constitute the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. After holding hundreds of meetings across Canada the commission produced a four-volume report on the problems posed by the presence of two distinct major cultures in Canada and offered various solutions. This represented a fuller treatment of themes first outlined in the commission's preliminary report, issued 18 months after it was constituted. CANADA magazine herewith reproduces excerpts from this preliminary report which will acquaint our Indian readers with the nature of the problem. The excerpts deal with various aspects of the problem as brought out in the interviews with members of the public.

THIS idea of a French Canadian nation, having a common language, territory, history and a common culture or way of life, was expressed in Quebec by many people who have no association with separatism. In their mind, it provides the foundation for the ideal of a partnership on equal terms. And when these Quebec French Canadians think of themselves as one nation, it is easy—if not logical—for them to lump all the others together as a nation. Thus concentrating on themselves and on what we may call their own self-conquest, they view the rest of Canada as a single entity—'les Anglais'—the non-self. The expression "two nations" still rings in our ears, it was so often heard in our Quebec meetings.

India's language problem at first sight has little in common with Canada's. Canada has only two major linguistic groups to reconcile, India—maybe a score. But wherever there's a felt conflict it is between two languages out of the many—between Hindi and English, between Hindi and a regional language or between two regional languages. That puts the problem on all fours, to some extent, with Canada's. Specifically, Quebec's determination to maintain the status of French against the inroads of English cannot but recall the predicament of different language groups in India, each of which sees in the erosion of its mother-tongue a threat to cultural identity.

The matter looked very different to most English-speaking Canadians that we met. They might concede that there are uses of the word "nation" which are suited to the French Canadians in Quebec, but the same term, they felt, could not so easily be applied to all the non-French inhabitants of Canada taken as a whole. The non-French people are united only by their common citizenship in Canada, the bond that also links them with the Canadians living in Quebec.......

Nothing could be more foreign to the thinking of the French Canadians we met than the idea that their language and their culture are an artificial fact in North America: to some it was even an insult. At one time a group of English Canadians were speaking with a certain detachment of the "French minority", when a French Canadian present suddenly flung at them: "Do you know, gentlemen, that French has been spoken in Quebec without a break since 1608?"*

*The Acadian branch is even four years older than the Quebec one: Acadia was already in existence in present day Nova Scotia in 1604. Thus the French have been established in North America for three and a half centuries and in two original homes: Quebec, numerically the most important, and Acadia, whose main centre has become New Brunswick. As a result of distance and the vagaries of history, the French in Quebec and those in Acadia have long lived quite separately and have developed what may be called two strong regional particularisms. However, the unifying factors are equally strong such as the possession of a com-