

COMPUTERS IN LEGAL MATTERS

In a recent ceremony inaugurating a jurimetrics project by Queen's University, the University of Montreal and the Department of Justice, the Minister of Justice, Mr. John Turner, presented a cheque for \$30,000 to Dr. J.J. Deutsch and Dr. Roger Gaudry, representing Queen's University and the University of Montreal. The joint undertaking is an experimental pilot project in the application of computer technology to legal materials that may eventually revolutionize the administration of the legal process in Canada.

The ever-increasing volume, variety and complexity of statutory and regulatory law in Canada has produced a situation in which conventional methods of gathering information are slow, inefficient, inaccurate and sometimes ineffective. Moreover, the problem of updating, revising and reforming such legal materials has become a difficult if not impossible task. Yet, though the computer has become an indispensable tool of other disciplines, the law has had little recourse to it. The time has come to bring the computer into the law and to feed the law into the computer.

At present, however, the Department of Justice lacks both the mechanical and human resources to embark by itself on a development and testing programme for the electronic processing of statutory and regulatory data, as well as the base data of judicial decisions. Yet the need for the aid of machines in the drafting, revision and consolidation of legislation and regulation, and for an information retrieval system, is urgent, if the Department is to meet the demands made upon it in this respect. Such demands, it should be remembered, are made in both English and French, and with special attention to the relation between the common and civil law systems.

Since, therefore, Queen's University and the University of Montreal were both deeply involved in the development of jurimetrics, and since they represented both official languages together with the civil and common law legal systems, it was thought both expedient and desirable to take part in this joint enterprise.

RESEARCH PROGRAMME

In accordance with the agreement, the Department of Justice, with Queen's and Montreal, will take part in a programme of research concerning the application of computers to legal materials. In recognition of the

object of the Department of Justice in participating in this study, the universities will provide the Department with the following (*inter alia*):

(a) the rudiments of a common and civil law thesaurus in a form that will permit its use in any of the more common information retrieval programmes now available from industry;

(b) the rudiments of a French-English thesaurus in a form that will permit its use in a computer retrieval programme to which inquiries may be addressed in either official language; (while there is no expectation that a comprehensive and complete thesaurus can be developed in the time provided for in this study, the Department will expect some form of French-English legal equivalent file that can be put to an immediate practical use).

(c) the use of a series of computer programmes and systems as a pilot project for automated legislative drafting and printing of legislative material as set forth more fully in the agreement;

(d) information respecting investigations and uses of retrieval techniques that pertain, in any way, to material provided by the Department of Justice.

Since the Department of Justice is primarily interested in working towards a completely self-sufficient operation to handle its computerized information retrieval needs, it was agreed that the Department of Justice will have an opportunity to indicate its requirements in those instances where the direction of the work performed in the study is towards a development of a system that precludes an eventual use by and within the Department of Justice.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS

Live births registered in provincial offices in March numbered 29,990, compared to 26,772 in March 1968. The cumulative total for the first quarter of 1969 was 2.6 percent higher than that for the corresponding period of last year, with four provinces reporting increases.

The 7,732 marriages recorded in provincial offices during March brought the total number registered for the first quarter of 1969 to 26,307, a decrease of 1.9 per cent from the 26,821 registrations for the corresponding period of 1968.

During March, 12,694 deaths were recorded in provincial offices compared to 12,901 in 1968. The total for the first quarter of 1969 was 2.8 percent lower than that for the corresponding months of last year, with three provinces reporting increases.