

French an Official Language, but in a way both unclear and limited. In effect, it meant that English would be the language of government, with some French translations.

The public service first was staffed by Parliamentary patronage, a system which at least insured a reasonable percentage of French-speaking public servants. In 1918 patronage was replaced by the "merit" system, but the Civil Service Commission, over the decades, became a thoroughly Anglophone institution. Periodically, the French protested this and other symptoms of what they regarded as their second class citizenship, to little end. Postage stamps and currency became bilingual, but the English-speaking establishment exhibited no intention of letting the French in, or letting them go — this while Quebec is the geographically largest and one of the two most populated provinces in Canada, and there are substantial French minorities in most other provinces. In the early 1940's a royal commission recommendation that there be more Francophone participation in the federal government so incensed members of the House of Commons and the press that the matter was dropped on the grounds that it would hurt the merit system. Even in the 1950's in New Brunswick, whose French-speaking minority was already approaching forty-eight per cent, it was considered politically dangerous to make family allowance cheques bilingual.

But unrest in Quebec grew strong. The French Canadians had never had as much affection for confederation as the English, and radicals in the province found more of a public ear for demands for a sovereign status for Quebec, or separation. Among English-speaking Canadians, too, there were those who called for more recognition of the French Fact.

In 1963 Prime Minister Lester Pearson said: "It is reasonable that French-speaking people should be able to use their own language, especially in dealing with the government of their country, or in participating in the work of government." Statements of that sort became common, and that year the Pearson government

established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism — the B & B Commission, as it became known. The B & B Commission was to hold hundreds of hearings and would document in six fat volumes that Canada had a problem.

In February, 1965, the Commission published a preliminary report, concluding that the country, without being fully conscious of the fact, was passing through "the greatest crisis in its history." The word crisis took many by surprise.

[SUBTLETIES]

While the Royal Commission gave the touch of authority to what Francophones already knew, it did so in an exceptionally thorough way. This had several effects. Firstly, even though Canadians are used to eloquent reports, the B & B Commission reports were so overwhelming that the English-speaking public could not ignore them (that and the daily press reports of radical politics in Quebec). Secondly, the Commission came up with some unprecedented recommendations.

For page after page the Commission discussed broad facts and subtleties of the Canadian condition, and comparable ones in other countries:

— All people have ethnic origins, but some feel more a part of an ethnic group than others — and that alone helps set them apart.

— "The existence of two great, distinct cultures in our country may seem unreal to many Canadians, particularly those who have very little contact with the other culture."

— It detailed economic, educational, and other social conditions of the Canadians of French expression for those who might not have known. For example: "An informal survey among members of the judiciaries and bars in all provinces and territories confirmed that in actual practice the Canadian system of language interpretation for participants in court proceedings is weak, improvised, and likely to lead to miscarriages of justice. The system is not satisfactory even in Quebec."

The six-volume *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* is available from Information Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. When ordering please specify English or French.

Book I, *General Introduction; The Official Languages*, (211 pages, \$3.00).

Book II, *Education*, (350 pages, \$4.00).

Book III, *The Work World*, is published in two volumes. Volume 3a covers "Socio-economic Status," and "The Federal Administration," (440 pages, \$5.00). Volume 3b

covers "The Private Sector," and "Conclusion." It also contains a summary of Volume 3a, (136 pages, \$2.00).

Book IV, *The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups*, (352 pages, \$4.00).

Book V and Book VI, *The Federal Capital and Voluntary Associations*, (234 pages, \$3.00).

Those interested may also obtain the First Annual Report (1970-71) of the Commissioner of Official Languages from Information Canada. This report is bilingual and free.