

Language proposal rejected

A proposal by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to the provincial premiers for a constitutional amendment to guarantee minority language rights across Canada has been turned down by Quebec Premier René Lévesque. A constitutional amendment would require the unanimous approval of all premiers.

Mr. Trudeau proposed the amendment to the Constitution in a letter dated September 2 to all the premiers, which was made public on September 9. Mr. Lévesque replied: "Quebec will never accept that its sovereignty in such a vital matter [education] be replaced by a limited jurisdiction subject to judicial interpretation."

PM's letter

In his letter to Mr. Lévesque, the Prime Minister said:

"...As you know from the statement on language policy that was issued in June, the preference of the Federal Government would be to have the constitutional right established in terms of the official language of choice. This could be done by inscribing in the Constitution a provision recognizing and declaring that, in Canada, every Canadian parent has the right to have his or her children receive their schooling in the official language of the parent's choice, wherever the numbers of children for whom one or the other official language is chosen warrant the provision of the necessary facilities. It is our hope that such a provision would be acceptable to the provinces which have adhered to the St. Andrews' "Statement", but we realize that it might cause difficulties for your government at the present time.

"If the government of Quebec feels that to be the case, one possibility would be to have the above-mentioned provision written into the Constitution in a form that would be binding on the other nine provinces. In the case of Quebec, if your government feels that the guarantee must be on the basis established in your recent legislation, the constitutional guarantee would be based on the language — either French or English — in which the parent has received his or her education.

Special arrangement

"In making this proposal, however, I am well aware that one of the most diffi-

cult problems that your government felt it had to deal with in its recent legislation on language of education was the question of the education of children in Quebec whose parents received their education in a language other than French or English. As already mentioned, the strong preference of the Government of Canada is to permit full freedom of choice, and we disagree fundamentally with your legislation in the way in which it deals with the problem. Nevertheless, in the interest of achieving an objective that is of such great importance to all Canadians, we are prepared to accept, with reluctance, the possible need for some arrangement for dealing with this problem that differs from our preferred policy and we would of course be willing to discuss with your government how such an arrangement might best be achieved. In the course of those discussions, we would also wish to propose that, however the guarantee is framed, it

would provide that children moving into Quebec from any other province would be able to pursue their education in the official language that they are in fact accustomed to use, just as French-speaking children moving from Quebec to any other province would be able to pursue their education in French.

"While a special kind of guarantee for Quebec would almost certainly be demanded by your government for the shorter term, I would hope that, over time, the government of Quebec will come to perceive a new sense of collective security about the development of the French language and culture and that it will then become possible for the government of Quebec to accept the general guarantee which we are proposing to the other provinces. I would propose, therefore, that the provision for Quebec should be such that there could be "opting in" to the general guarantee when the province feels that this is possible...."

Two-way Channel champion

Toronto's Cindy Nicholas, record-holder for her Lake Ontario swim three years ago, captured the world record on September 7 for swimming the English Channel both ways, non-stop. Twenty-year-old Cindy is also the first woman to complete the round-trip swim. The 44-mile journey took 20 hours — over ten hours under the



Happy it's over. Cindy Nicholas (above) is the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways, and in record time.

previous record set by Jon Erikson of Chicago in 1975. Breaking the speed record was of secondary importance to the young swimmer: "...It mattered more to me that no woman had ever done this before. A time is something that can always be beaten. This can't be taken away," she said. The University of Toronto science student plans to return next year to try to break the record for the most crossings.

Marine traffic system

The Canadian Coast Guard has introduced a vessel traffic-management system to improve marine safety in Arctic waters.

The new Arctic Canada Traffic System, called NORDREG, will provide ships with information on ice conditions, aids to navigation and icebreaker support. Ships will be required to provide the Coast Guard with information on operational or structural defects as well as release of pollutants or damage which may result in pollution.

NORDREG, a computerized communications network monitoring ship movement throughout the North from the Canada-Alaska border eastward, is a voluntary service, similar to Eastern Canada Traffic System (ECAREG) in eastern Canadian coastal waters.