

Bilingual courts compulsory

The Supreme Court of Canada handed down landmark decisions December 13, guaranteeing bilingual legislatures and courts in Quebec and Manitoba.

Sections of Quebec's Bill 101, making French the only official language of the provincial assembly and courts, were ruled unconstitutional. In a parallel case, provisions of Manitoba legislation passed in 1980, taking away the right to use French in provincial courts, were also struck down. The Quebec decision applies retroactively to all legislation introduced since August 26, 1977, when Bill 101 was passed in that province's legislature.

The main thrust of both rulings is that neither province had the power to pass laws abridging language guarantees in their legislatures and courts. The guarantees are provided in the British North America Act and the Manitoba Act.

Quebec Premier René Lévesque called the judgment "insulting" and a "cruel wrong to French Canada", which was trying through Bill 101 to prevent mass assimilation similar to what has allegedly taken place in Manitoba. Mr. Lévesque said that the Supreme Court's decision showed an unprecedented rigidity in its adherence to "the spirit as well as the letter of the Constitution". He said that his government, in its contingency planning, never anticipated such a tough decision.

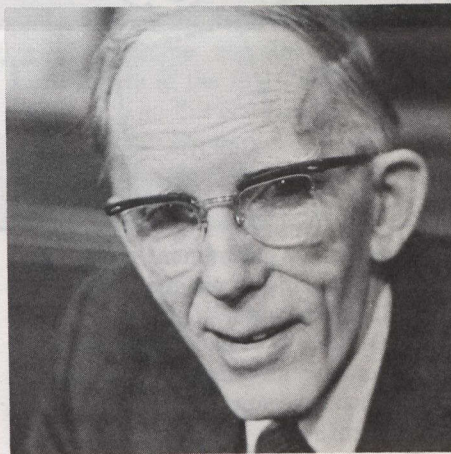
In the case of the Quebec law the Supreme Court, in rejecting an appeal by the province, was upholding the judgments of two Quebec courts that had struck down the provision of the language law that applied to the courts and legislature. The ruling does not affect other provisions of the language law, such as the requirements that signs be bilingual and that corporations conduct their business in French.

Premier Lévesque had indicated that his government would try to comply with the ruling before Christmas with an omnibus bill sanctioning English versions of legislation. The Quebec National Assembly has continued to produce unofficial English versions of bills since the passing of Bill 101, but the Cabinet has "almost never" written English versions of orders-in-council. Quebec courts are already prepared to hold trials in either French or English. Manitoba could be faced with the task of translating past legislation and providing a bilingual court system.

New Privy Councillors

New Democratic Party House Leader Stanley Knowles and former Senate Speaker Renaude Lapointe have been appointed to the Privy Council by Prime Minister Joe Clark.

The Privy Council is an advisory body to the Governor General comprising 80 distinguished people, mainly Canadians, who hold office for life and are entitled to attach the initials "P.C." after their names. The Cabinet in practice advises the Governor General.



Stanley Knowles

Mr. Knowles, the 71-year-old member of Parliament for Winnipeg North Centre, received a standing ovation by the House of Commons following Prime Minister Clark's announcement.

"It is not simply that he was first elected here 37 years ago today," Mr. Clark said, "what distinguished Stanley Knowles is that he has come to personify the best of Parliament."



Renaude Lapointe

Miss Lapointe, a former Quebec journalist, was appointed to the Senate in 1971.

Native women get additional funds for new projects

A five-year program to assist native women "who are doubly-disadvantaged due to their sex and ethnicity", has been announced by Secretary of State David MacDonald.

The program equipped with an additional \$117,000 in new funding, will provide \$417,000 for national, provincial and local projects across the country this fiscal year. It is to be expanded to include a national newsletter, annual national-regional consultation and to develop a more comprehensive information base respecting Native women.

"We want to advance the participation of native women within their own community, and the larger society and to ensure their input into the decision-making process, particularly as it affects them," Mr. MacDonald said.

The Native Women's Program, which began in 1971, has provided grants increasing over the years from \$150,000 to \$300,000 for projects sponsored by native women's groups, with an emphasis on funding at the community level.

The new program will provide funding in the next fiscal year to the two national native women's organizations, the Native Women's Association of Canada and Indian Rights for Indian Women.

Project funding will also be provided to the provincial and local groups. Projects can take the form of research projects, education, seminars, workshops to learn new skills, management and leadership training programs and information sharing workshops.

Fewer federal employees

Federal Government employees (including members of the Canadian Armed Forces and government enterprises) numbered 577,476 at September 30, 1979, an overall decrease of 5,249 from the September 1978 figure. General government employees decreased by 15,051 while those in government enterprises increased by 9,802. The decline in general government was principally owing to a general reduction in staff in various departments in the 1979-80 fiscal year, and the termination of temporary employment under the Federal Labour Intensive Projects in March 1979.

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