

The Prime Minister, replying a week ago to one of Canada's "regular advisers", whose opinion is never requested but often offered, emphasized again the determination of the Federal Government to make a new start:

"The future of Canada will be decided in Canada, by Canadians. I have confidence, and I know all members of this House have confidence, in the ability and good sense of all Canadians, French-speaking or English-speaking, to make the right decisions. They will do it in their own way and through their own democratic process. I believe this decision will require further constitutional changes to bring our federalism up to date and to ensure, among other things, that French-speaking Canadians, who form one of our two founding cultural and linguistic groups (or societies, if you like), will have their rights accepted and respected in Canada."

Within a few months, we shall be in a position to show tangible progress. By then, we shall have studied the results of the Toronto conference and gone thoroughly into the Laurendeau-Dunton report. In particular, we shall have experienced the first test, that of the Federal-Provincial Conference on Civil Rights.

I should like to emphasize this point, since it seems to me that, throughout this debate, not enough attention has been given to its importance. Even the enlightened, whose who are concerned every day with the rights, the survival and the growth of the French-Canadian community, do not appear to have realized all the effects of introducing the principles of cultural and linguistic equality across Canada into the constitution. Quebec does not seem to have grasped all the constitutional implications of a measure of this nature, all the doors which will be opened by it to the essential constitutional changes. Moreover, all the recommendations of the Report on Bilingualism and Biculturalism will be on the agenda of this conference. This will make the first step in the implementation of the measure for which a need is demonstrated by all the work, all the studies, all the commissions and all the debates. From the first phase, which is one of information, organization and study, we shall go on to action. I am convinced that the results will be profitable for our two communities and the future of Canada.

This measure will be a true turning-point; it will demonstrate to us all that Canadian solidarity does indeed exist, if the people of Canada, whether French- or English-speaking, are prepared to accept each other as they are. For this is the crux of the matter, the desire to live together in two different communities.

From this point of view, the most recent official discussions have performed an immense service for Canada. They have permitted the first contact in today's new atmosphere. They have allowed the first citizens of the provinces to talk, to see and understand each other, instead of engaging in quarrels via the news media.

We shall build this country together. We shall give the Canadian federal system the flexibility and the originality which it must have for the proper operation of its administration and the growth of its economy.