

Canadians have felt they were fully equal or could fully develop the richness of the culture they had inherited. And therein is the source of our central problem today. That is why a minority of the people of Quebec feel they should leave Canada and strike out in a country of their own. The newly-elected government of that province asserts a policy that reflects that minority view, despite the fact that during the election campaign it sought a mandate for good government and not a mandate for separation from Canada.

The accommodation of two vigorous language groups has been, in varying fashion, the policy of every Canadian Government since Confederation. The reason is clear. Within Quebec, over 80 per cent of the population speak French as their first or only language. In Canada as a whole, nearly one-fifth of the people speak no language but French. Thus from generation to generation there has been handed down the belief that a country could be built in freedom and equality with two languages and with a multitude of cultures.

I am confident it can be done. I say to you with all the certainty I can command that Canada's unity will not be fractured. Accommodations will be made; revisions will take place. We shall succeed.

There will have to be changes in some of our attitudes; there will have to be a greater comprehension of one another across the barrier of language difference. Both English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians will have to become more aware of the richness that diversity brings and less irritated by the problems it presents. We may have to revise some aspects of our constitution so that the Canadian federation can be seen by six and a half million French-speaking Canadians to be the strongest bulwark against submersion by 220 million English-speaking North Americans.

These very figures illustrate dramatically the sense of insecurity of French Canada. But separation would not alter the arithmetic; it would merely increase the exposure.

Nor would the separation of Quebec contribute in any fashion to the confidence of the many cultural minorities of diverse origin who dwell throughout Canada. These communities have been encouraged for decades to retain their own identities and to preserve their own cultures. They have done so and flourished, nowhere more spectacularly than in the Prairie Provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The sudden departure of Quebec would signify the tragic failure of our pluralist dream, the fracturing of our "cultural mosaic", and would probably remove much of the determination of Canadians to protect their cultural minorities.

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