

Constitutional talks begin

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau met with Canada's ten provincial premiers in Ottawa, June 9, to discuss proposals for constitutional change.

The premiers, who met with Mr. Trudeau for an all-day meeting at the Prime Minister's residence were: William Davis of Ontario, René Lévesque of Quebec, Peter Lougheed of Alberta, William Bennett of British Columbia, Allan Blakeney of Saskatchewan, Sterling Lyon of Manitoba, Richard Hatfield of New Brunswick, John Buchanan of Nova Scotia, Brian Peckford of Newfoundland and Angus MacLean of Prince Edward Island.

The first ministers unanimously agreed on a timetable for constitutional reform and a list of priorities to be dealt with during the first round of discussions. However, the premiers said that they were unable to support a statement of principles for a new Constitution at this time.

The high-priority items agreed upon by the premiers comprise: a statement of principles; a charter of rights, including language rights; a dedication to reducing regional disparities; patriation of the Constitution; resource ownership and inter-provincial trade; offshore resources; powers affecting the economy; communications and broadcasting; family law; fisheries jurisdiction; a new Senate involving the provinces; and changes in the Supreme Court.

Calendar of events

The calendar of events agreed upon included an organizational meeting of ministers of federal-provincial relations on June 17 and a three-week meeting of the premiers and their officials between July 7 and July 25. Federal-provincial relations ministers and their officials are scheduled to meet again August 25-29.

Between August 30 and September 7 governments will be asked to consider their positions and prepare for a first ministers' conference. The first ministers' conference will be held in Ottawa from September 8-12 "to reach conclusions on work under way and to put in train a further work program". The premiers requested that this meeting be open and that its stated purpose include the words: "to finalize agreements on work under way".

In a press conference after the meeting, Prime Minister Trudeau said he was willing to "go a long way" in giving the provinces more powers in areas like resources and communications if they recognized the necessity to preserve the "Canadian common market". Mr. Trudeau said he wanted the provinces to recognize that the Federal Government needs the power to maintain a strong economy. He said he wanted it emphasized in a new Constitution that Canada is "one sovereign country from an economic point of view".

Newfoundland Premier Brian Peckford expressed some of the premiers' views when he said: "The talk was very frank, very open. Everyone is in favour of change — from sea to sea. There is still a lot of frustration, but there seemed to be a feeling that maybe we can work some of these frustrations out."

Consulates change status

The status of the Canadian consulates in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil has been raised to the level of consulate-general, Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan has announced.

This action has been taken in order to reflect the current importance of the programs carried out by these two missions in the context of Canada's increasingly important relations with Brazil. The consulates-general principally carry out commercial functions but they are also responsible for administering consular, public affairs and immigration programs.

Canada's representation in Rio de Janeiro is one of the oldest in Latin America, dating back to 1941 and the establishment of the Canadian legation in what was then the capital city of Brazil. In 1944, the legation was raised to the status of an embassy and in 1972, when the Canadian embassy was moved to Brasilia following the transfer of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to that city, a consulate was opened in Rio de Janeiro.

The Canadian consulate in Sao Paulo was established in 1947 and in the subsequent years Canadian commercial and consular interests in that city.

Consul and Trade Commissioner in Rio de Janeiro Marc Lemieux will become Consul-General and Trade Commissioner in Rio de Janeiro; Consul and Trade Commissioner in Sao Paulo Victor Lotto will become Consul-General and Trade Commissioner in Sao Paulo.

Telidon chosen for U.S. trial

Telidon, Canada's videotex/teletext technology, has been selected for the first United States consumer trial of teletext, Communications Minister Francis Fox has announced. The trial will be conducted at PBS station WETA in Washington, D.C., starting in late 1980.

Telidon is a two-way TV system which allows users to retrieve information stored in computer data bases by means of a keypad. The information, either text or graphics, is displayed on a slightly modified TV set.

The trial is sponsored by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Science Foundation, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The trial has been designed and is being managed by the Alternate Media Centre at the New York University School of the Arts in conjunction with WETA. A variety of other systems based on the French Antiope and British teletext systems were considered before choosing the Telidon alternative.

The Telidon teletext receivers will be placed in selected homes and in several public locations in order to evaluate consumer reaction to various information services being considered for the new medium. As part of its study, terminals will be especially fitted with monitoring devices to record usage and collect such information as the particular page of information requested by the consumer and the time the request was made.

The Canadian Department of Communications, which developed Telidon at its Communications Research Centre, will be providing technical assistance and advice as will TV Ontario, the organization which is conducting the first Telidon field trial in the broadcast mode. (TV Ontario is a major educational information provider and has offered to provide educational information already prepared in the Telidon format.)

Among the information providers for the trial are the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Star*, the District of Columbia public libraries, several U.S. Government agencies, the Federal Trade Commission, the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Energy, the Smithsonian Institute, the Federal Information Centre, and the General Services Administration Consumer Information Centre.