

followed by television broadcasting services were extended by the national French network to all regions with Francophone minorities.

The same period witnessed an increased use of French in Quebec business activities. French Canadians, individually and collectively, especially in Quebec, acquired a new sense of self-awareness. They developed a strong determination to defend their language and culture in a world dominated by American economics and technology.

This intense ferment led to the creation, in 1963, of a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism....

At the conclusion of its enquiry, the commission made a very considerable number of recommendations based on a set of specifically Canadian factors: the vastness of the country; the increased mobility of labour and management at all levels; the scattering of the two official language minority communities; the existence in major population centres of official language minorities which, although proportionately very small, were already at that time numerically important. These factors and the commission's recommendations became the basis for the drawing up of the Official Languages Act of 1969.

Official Languages Act

The passage of the Official Languages Act marks a fundamental turning point in the history of Canada. Supported by all political parties represented in the federal Parliament, the act declares in Section 2: "The English and French languages are the official languages of Canada for all purposes of Parliament and Government of Canada, and possess and enjoy equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all the institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada."

In practice, this section obliges the federal government — all its departments, agencies and Crown corporations — to acknowledge the equal status of English and French as languages of service to the Canadian public.

The act includes a whole series of provisions relating to the rights of the public and the duties of federal departments and agencies. Thus, it calls for the use of the two languages in the courts, provides for the establishment of so-called bilingual districts and, finally, creates the position of Commissioner of Official Languages, whose role is to act as a kind of "lin-

guistic ombudsman"....

With the co-operation of the provincial and territorial governments, the federal government has implemented a series of programs to promote bilingualism in education, in the provincial administrations and in the private sector. Other programs intended for official language minority groups seek to inform each linguistic community of the other's needs. Although the federal government has invested several hundred million dollars in these programs, language reform cannot succeed without the efforts of the provinces themselves since it touches upon areas which fall under provincial jurisdiction. Thus it is that New Brunswick's Official Languages Act acknowledges the right of children to be educated in their own mother tongue and to be taught the other language as a second language.

In the same vein, Ontario passed legislation in 1968 to authorize the use of French in the teaching of all subjects, to make French an obligatory language of instruction under certain conditions and to authorize the establishment of French-language secondary schools.

And, along the same lines, Manitoba's Education Act of 1970 recognizes English and French as the two official languages of education in the public schools of that province.

The great majority of Francophones outside Quebec live in these three provinces. As for the other provinces where Francophone minorities represent a smaller proportion of the population, legislation and regulations in some cases guarantee the right to a French-language education where a significant number of parents or students warrants it and, in certain other cases, tradition has led to *de facto* situations where education has come to be provided in French in a variety of different ways depending on the regions concerned.

Thus, on the whole, one may safely say that outside Quebec most provinces have made efforts to improve the situation of the French language.

As for Quebec, the province proclaimed French as its official language in 1977 and implemented a whole series of measures to elevate its status in both government and business. The Charter of the French Language stipulates that French is the language of education, but that school boards must provide English instruction for the English-speaking students of the province. However, the charter

currently prohibits all new arrivals to the province, including Canadian citizens, from having their children educated in English. These measures represent a considerable break with tradition and some see them as possible threats to the status of English in Quebec.

Meanwhile, not all the problems have been solved at the federal level because much remains to be done in order to attain the three objectives of official languages policy: language of service, language of work and equitable participation of both language groups in the Public Service.

Even today, the two language groups are not equitably represented at the federal level. Francophones do not occupy their fair share of positions and there are still many problems in terms of language of work in the federal government. And the situation is no brighter in the provinces, either for English Quebecers or for Francophones living in English Canada....

Constitutional language reforms

In general terms, the language provisions of the constitutional reform bill currently being debated in the Canadian Parliament may be summarized as follows: proclamation in the Constitution of the equal status of French and English; the right to use one's preferred official language when dealing with the federal government; the right to have children educated in the official language of their parents; the maintenance of institutional bilingualism in Quebec and Manitoba and the creation of a similar system in New Brunswick.

In some quarters, the federal bill has provoked strong reactions and protests which have probably been picked up by the European press. There is some variance in the reactions of provincial governments to the central government's plans. Most are opposed in principle to the kind of unilateral action being espoused now by the federal government given that it lacks unanimous provincial consent. Some also have doubts about the very essence of the constitutional question, in particular about the proposed Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I must note, however, that two provinces which contain the majority of French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec — Ontario and New Brunswick, favour entrenching in the constitution the fundamental rights outlined in the charter....