

# Language

## AND SOCIETY

NUMBER 42, SPRING 1993



AT YOUR SERVICE

# Language AND SOCIETY

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### EDITORIAL NOTE

With this issue *Language and Society* is returning to a single format. In 1992 we had experimented with alternating between a magazine and a bulletin, the aim having been to reduce costs while reaching a wider audience. The experiment was not a failure, but the benefits were not all we had expected.

Our goal remains to produce a useful, informative publication reaching the best audience possible on a very limited budget.

### NOTICE

Letters to the Editor, with the writer's name, address and telephone number, are most welcome.

The Editor reserves the right to publish letters, which may be condensed.

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COMMISSIONER OF  
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES



COMMISSAIRE AUX  
LANGUES OFFICIELLES

CANADA

# Easy questions, difficult answers

***"Explaining the law can be a difficult and delicate task," Sir Ernest Gowers writes in The Complete Plain Words. "An official interpreting the law is often looked on with suspicion."***

A new version of the Official Languages Act was adopted in 1988. The language in which it is phrased was meant to be as clear and straightforward as possible – but what is clear and straightforward to a legislator or a lawyer or a judge may be intimidating to the rest of us.

What is needed, in addition to interpretation (which is the role and the right of our courts), is a practical guide for those public servants who habitually use the legislation in their dealings with their clients: Canadians.

Thus, *regulations* spring into being.

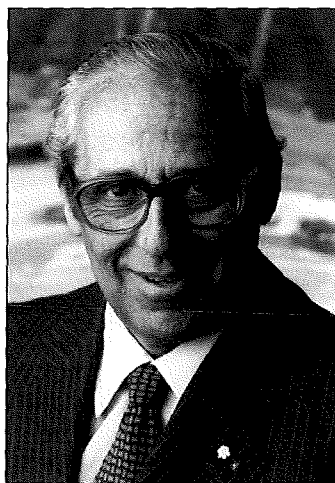
"Spring", however, is hardly the correct term.

Though the Official Languages Act is dated 1988, the first regulations did not come into effect until December 16, 1992.

If words such as "legislation" and "official" seem to have a threatening ring to them, so does the idea of regulations.

The sonorous-sounding "Regulations to the Official Languages Act", however, are but a set of instructions, as reasonably precise and comprehensive as possible, for federal agencies and employees to use in their dealings with the public. They set out situations in which various provisions of the legislation may, and should, be used to the advantage of Canadians.

Having two languages, after all, means being able to communicate with each other. Since our federal institutions can reach 98.6% of us by



using English and French it is only fair to do so. Pragmatism, however, is not enough. Our guiding light must be quality service courteously furnished. Good will and good manners do not increase the cost of a service, but the return is great.

In other words, the regulations spell out the obligations of federal departments and institutions in serving, and communicating with, the Canadian public – the taxpayer.

Our story about the new regulations begins on page 8; with it we recognize five representatives of the many federal employees who take a professional and personal pleasure and pride in providing service at its best.

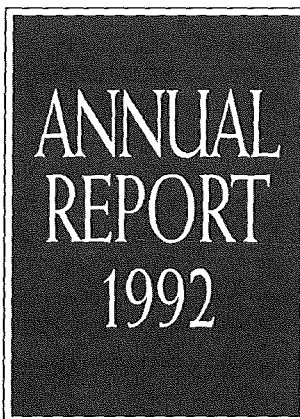
*Victor C. Goldbloom*

The 1992 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Official Languages to Parliament and the people of Canada is on its way.

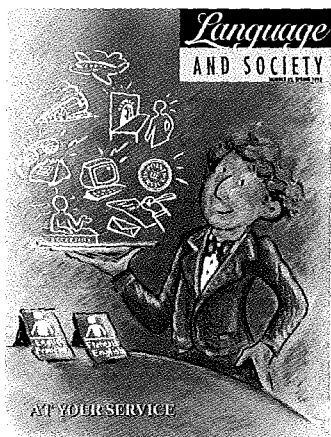
If you haven't received an order card, ask us for your copy now.

Most useful to many readers will be the condensed version of events in the field of official languages in Canada in 1992.

This summary is comprehensive, and the briefer format saves us all money and resources.



For those deeply involved with the wide-ranging world of Canada's official languages, the Report is also available in a full-length printed version and on a double-density 3.5" computer disk formatted in WordPerfect 5.1 for the MS-DOS environment.



**COVER:**  
**Federal government services in English and French: a duty, but also a matter of personal courtesy and public spirit.**



**At the Bank of Canada,  
we don't preach about service  
to Canadians in two languages,  
we practise it.**

**That sums up in a few words  
the focus that John Crow,  
the Bank's Governor,  
has given to the country's  
most important  
financial institution.**

*I*n a recent interview with *Language and Society* Mr. Crow made no secret of the fact that 20 years ago the Bank had made little progress in this regard. "We had to give a new impetus to our programs that would close the gap between our obligations on the one hand and the reality on the other."

The Bank can now count on the human resources necessary to ensure that services provided to the public and to its employees are offered actively in English and in French. From 1981 to 1991 the percentage of bilingual employees rose from 39% to 51%; among senior management and department heads this percentage has taken an even more impressive jump from 69% to 100%.

"Obviously this is a long-term program, but we can say that it is working well and that the financial and human resources devoted to this effort over the years have borne fruit," Mr. Crow answers straightforwardly when invited to make an assessment. He emphasizes that such fine results would have been impossible without waging the battle on several fronts.

# THE BANK OF CANADA: Setting an example

GILLES LAFRAMBOISE\*

First of all, he says, senior management decided to set the tone for the entire operation. In just a few years all its members became bilingual. At the time Mr. Crow spoke English, French, Spanish and Russian, languages that he had learned some years previously. "For me, being multilingual was no accident, since I



John Crow

have always taken great pleasure in working in several languages."

### The velvet glove

In terms of personnel, "we offer our employees the chance to become bilingual without forcing them to do so."

The Governor adds that the Bank created its own language school at its headquarters in Ottawa. This year more than 600 — over a quarter — of this prestigious institution's 2,300 employees are enrolled in second-language courses given by the some 20 teachers who are full-time employees of the Bank.

Bank of Canada courses are offered to both English-speaking and French-speaking employees. Thus, when Quebecers who do not know English are hired, they are given the opportunity of taking English courses in-house during working hours.

The classrooms have the audiovisual equipment needed for instruction and bilingual glossaries prepared by the Bank of Canada's translation service.

All employees have access to these glossaries, making it easier for them to communicate in both languages.

To provide the same opportunities for advancement to all its employees, the Bank has language teachers in its eight regional offices. Employees working in Montreal or Vancouver have equal opportunities to obtain a position in another region or in Ottawa.

Teachers assigned to a department of the Bank must ensure that language training is integrated into the work environment. For example, in addition to giving instruction, teachers may encourage employees to hold meetings using both languages and to write in both. They encourage closer co-operation with the translation service and promote exchanges of employees between cities.

### Benefits to the Bank

According to Mr. Crow the Bank's new two-language environment is of great benefit. "Not only does the Bank now meet its obligations in terms of bilingualism, but this daily linguistic ping-pong has given our staff a new *esprit de corps*. Communications and relations among employees at all levels have improved greatly because of

**"Communications and relations among employees at all levels have improved greatly because of the Bank's bilingual character."**



the Bank's bilingual character."

Has he ever been tempted to reduce the amount of money devoted to the enhancement of language skills? The Governor's answer is quick: "Why reduce the bilingualism budget if we are getting our money's worth?"

What advice would he give to a student of economics in Winnipeg? "Generally," he answers, "I refrain from giving advice to anyone, but I would probably say that, in 1993, being bilingual is a real advantage, and knowing more than two languages is an even greater one." ■

(Our translation)

\* Gilles Laframboise is a freelance journalist.



The Commissioner of Official Languages presenting the Governor of the Bank of Canada with a Certificate recognizing the Bank's achievements

*Linguistic capability*  
**MAKES LIFE AND  
 WORK MORE FULFILLING**

GILLES LAFRAMBOISE

**T**wenty years ago when Jean-Pierre Aubry began working for the Bank of Canada his knowledge of English was rudimentary, to say the least. As a graduate of the Université de Montréal he was an economist, but not a bilingual economist.

"Needless to say, for my first six months in Ottawa I was very tired when I got home," the Comptroller and Chief Accountant of the most prestigious financial institution in Canada now recalls with a smile.



Jean-Pierre Aubry

In the first few months his new employer did not attempt to make him fit the Anglophone mould, but instead

offered English courses to facilitate his integration while encouraging him to write his reports in French.

"The Bank had understood that it would never become bilingual by filling the gaps with Francophones to save appearances. French had to become entrenched." As a first step, and to show that they were serious, all the members of senior management became bilingual. Then, the senior and middle managers, employees in the Professional category and support staff received language training.

Furthermore, to ensure a "linguistic" renewal of the staff the hiring policy was changed to hire the best candidates from among university graduates, whether Anglophones or Francophones; bilingualism would follow. Bilingual Bank officers made the rounds of Quebec campuses to put in place and consolidate what Aubry calls a "critical French-speaking mass", a sufficient number of Francophones to develop an intellectual life in French within the Bank.

Thanks to this initiative, Aubry, who is today a senior manager, can now offer "internal immersion" to his own English-speaking employees when they return from a French course. "For a three-month period," he says, "one of my managers works principally in French, not only with me but also with his employees in the Professional category, many of whom are Francophones."



Janet Cosier

### A new world

Just as Aubry felt the need to learn English 20 years ago, so many Anglophone employees today choose to become bilingual in order to be employees in the fullest sense of the word. Janet Cosier, an auditor and adviser at the Bank, is one of them.

According to Cosier, "Since French is used more and more in the Bank's documents and at meetings, few employees can now do without it. We have to understand everything that is said and to do so we must have a good knowledge of French."

Four years ago she enrolled in French courses offered by the Bank's language school. She speaks of them enthusiastically. "Since our educational tools are

often the French versions of internal working documents, such as financial statements, we can quickly apply the new terminology."

In order to retain what she learned, and enable her employees to do the same, Cosier organizes "French days" within her unit. "It's the ideal opportunity to

use French and discover that French is also a language of work," she says.

Janet Cosier also sees important personal advantages. "Since I began to attend French courses I have discovered a whole new world that I did not know about."

A devotee of theatre, she can now attend twice as many plays as before

since she can go to French plays. "I can also go to Montreal or Quebec and enjoy living in French during my stay.

"In a few years, I have come to understand not only the language better but also the French culture." ■

*(Our translation)*

*At your service!*

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## FROM BANKNOTES to debt payment

GILLES LAFRAMBOISE

**H**ardly a week went by last year without the Bank of Canada being on the front pages of the newspapers. The setting of the bank rate affects every Canadian, from bankers in their offices to the future purchaser of a modest bungalow. A major increase in the interest rate can result in a sudden jump of several hundred dollars a month in mortgage payments and, at the same time, reduce Canadian exports to Japan.

Few people know, however, that the Bank's responsibilities extend to a host of other areas. It is not only the architect of the country's monetary policy but also the financial officer of the Canadian government.

The Bank of Canada Act gives the Bank the exclusive right to issue banknotes for circulation in Canada. The next time you handle a 20-dollar bill, take a few seconds to read the inscription. You will see the name of the Bank of Canada, the names of its Governor and Senior Deputy Governor, and their signatures.

The Bank buys and sells federal government securities, both treasury bills and bonds. It also has the power to make advances to Canadian chartered banks.

It is the Bank of Canada which acts on your behalf when it administers the public debt, pays interest and redeems securities that have reached maturity.

*(Our translation)*

# A WELL-REGULATED ACT

ANDRÉ CREUSOT\*

**A**t one minute after midnight, last December 16, the seismograph of the linguistic observatory of the National Research Council in Saint-Jean-Chrysostôme, Quebec, recorded an unusual tremor. What was this phenomenon? Was it the start of a new crisis in the middle of the night? Had Santa Claus, who, as everyone knows, is multilingual, come down with acute laryngitis? Had the Commissioner of Official Languages awakened in the middle of a nightmare in which all bilingual public servants had become linguistic amnesiacs? In effect, the jolt to the seismograph was caused simply by the coming into force of most of the regulations on official languages.

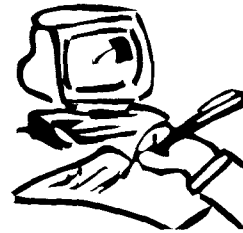


These regulations are, in a sense, the operating instructions for the Official Languages Act with respect to services to the public. They describe the locations where federal agencies shall provide their services in both languages and set out the circumstances in which such services must be offered. In large part, the regulations specify the language rights of Canadians in their contacts with government offices.<sup>1</sup>


<sup>1</sup> The Act stipulates that all services in the National Capital Region must be provided in both languages.

While the objective was relatively simple, the development of these operating instructions by the Treasury Board was not as simple a matter.

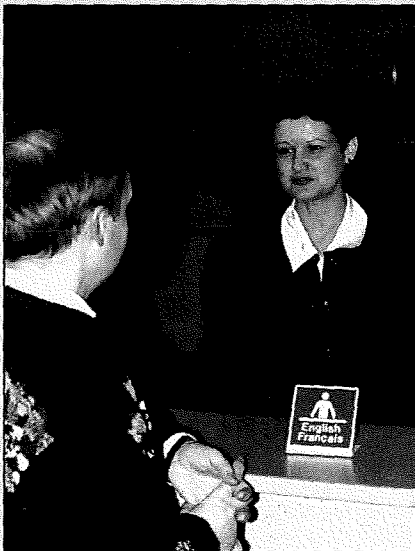
Once the principle that services should *always* be available in the *majority* language (this being defined by province) had been established, the distribution of the minority official language population, its absolute size in the major centres and its relative size in other localities had to be taken into account. The result was a sliding scale



of two-language services, proportional to the size of the minority population. This results in several levels of service, ranging from all services available, for example, where the minority represents at least 30% of the population of a small town, to key services only where it numbers less than 500 inhabitants. At the intermediate level it provides for one office of each federal institution (or a number of offices proportional to the minority population) in major centres



**ALBERTA, BRITISH COLUMBIA,  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND  
YUKON REGION**

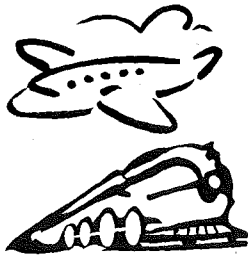


**Majella Boudreau** works at the Recruiting Centre of the Public Service Commission in Edmonton. The Centre handles applications for employment, administers screening tests and answers various questions from people seeking employment in the Public Service of Canada. Most of the clients want to know how to apply for a job with the federal government or wish to obtain information about career opportunities in the federal Public Service.

“What fascinates me about my work is meeting people from all walks of life. I try to provide personalized service. It’s very rewarding to help these people.”

\* André Creusot is Chief of OCOL’s Policy Secretariat.





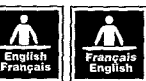
where the minority numbers at least 5,000 people.

The criteria governing resident population could not, of course, suffice for defining services to members of the travelling public. In certain instances the regulations also take numbers into account: at Customs, in airports, on ferries. So as not to neglect an appreciable number of travellers of the minority official language who might not have been covered under other criteria, provision is also made for two-language service when they represent 5% of total demand. This rule also applies to certain other cases.

There is yet another category for which, by the very nature of the services provided, numerical criteria could not be satisfactory, no matter how refined. This concerns matters of health, safety and security, and other instances where the Canadian public is always entitled to expect to receive services in either official language: embassies, consulates, national parks, national or international events, some long-distance services, and so on.

Most of the regulations came into force last December 16; the remainder will take effect on December 16, 1993, and December 16, 1994.

The Treasury Board regulations have been criticized by some for complexity and lack of uniformity. This is tantamount to criticizing them for reflecting reality. The clients of federal agencies reflect Canada itself: they constitute a mosaic. Not all Canadians are clients of every department and Crown corporation. After Canada Post, and, peri-



odically, Statistics Canada, the most "popular" institutions are the Revenue Canada triplets — Taxation, Customs and Excise. Here the clientele are already diverse. While a very large number of people keep up a

faithful correspondence with Taxation and many often stop to chat with Cus-

toms, only companies have friendly relations with Excise. In the other areas clienteles are even more fragmented. Parents have dealings with the Family Allowances Program, senior citizens with the Old Age Security Program, job-seekers with Unemployment Insurance, certain drivers with the RCMP, travellers with the Passport Office or Via Rail, new Canadians with Immigration and Citizenship, some



## MANITOBA AND SASKATCHEWAN REGION

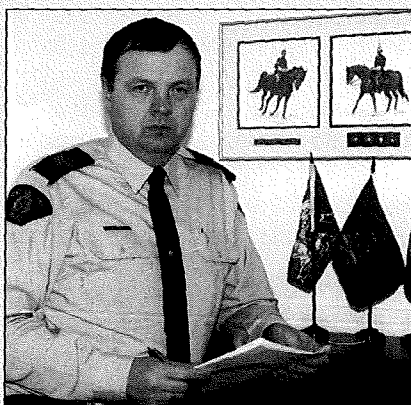


**Koren Kines** works at Riding Mountain National Park in Wasagaming, Manitoba. She provides information to the public about the services available in the Park, the facilities, regulations, trail conditions, campgrounds, fishing, wildlife observation and special activities.

Koren Kines loves contact with the public because she likes to help people and meet the visitors, who come from practically all over the globe. "It's a really interesting challenge."



## ONTARIO REGION



**Larry Gaunce** is in charge of the Timmins, Ontario, RCMP. This region has an Anglophone and Francophone population of about 80,000.

"In general, when people are approached by a police officer they feel ill at ease. Since I speak English and French I can address them in the official language of their choice, and that facilitates communication. Being bilingual is an asset and a skill that regularly helps me in performing my duties."



**QUEBEC REGION**



Every Canadian has the right to apply for and receive a passport from the federal government.

**Gail Dixon** has worked at the Ville Saint-Laurent passport office, serving the northern and western areas of Greater Montreal, for five years. The office receives over 300 applications a day from the multi-ethnic, preponderantly bilingual population of the area.

Gail Dixon likes her work because she deals with the public. She feels a sense of personal satisfaction when she solves a complicated situation and helps someone get a passport. "Once I received a thank-you card from a grateful client who got his passport on time so that he could leave on vacation!"

individuals with the Correctional Service, certain specialists with the National Archives or the Law Reform Commission. As for farmers, fishermen, loggers and others, they communicate with their support or regulatory agencies.

It is this multifaceted complexity that the regulations

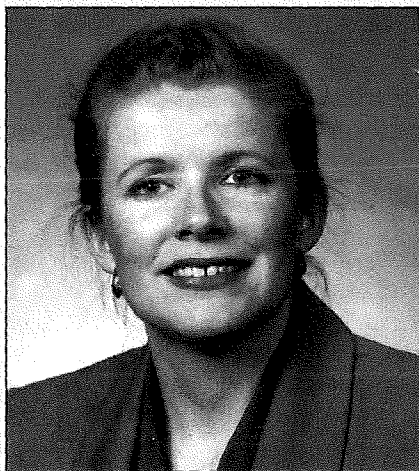


seek to take into account. They reflect the human reality of the Canadian population in its relations with government institutions and, without falling into exaggeration or artificiality, set out equitable conditions of service for the official language communities. ■

*(Our translation)*



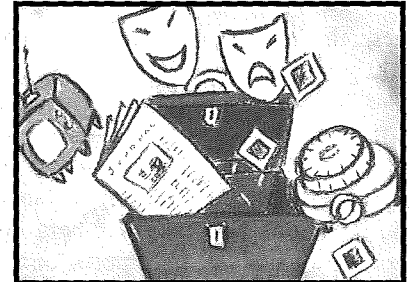
**ATLANTIC REGION**



**Carol O'Reilly**, Director of Linguistic Services for Marine Atlantic, advises managers on ensuring quality bilingual services. She is also responsible for language training and translation services.

Ms O'Reilly recently set up a second-language training program in Channel-Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, for vessel and terminal employees who do not work during the winter months. "My goal is to take the emotion out of the official languages program. We are training personnel who normally would not have access to full-time language training. As this is done on a voluntary basis, those who are attending are there because they wish to be."

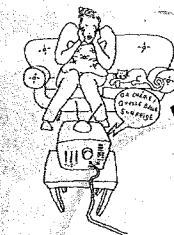
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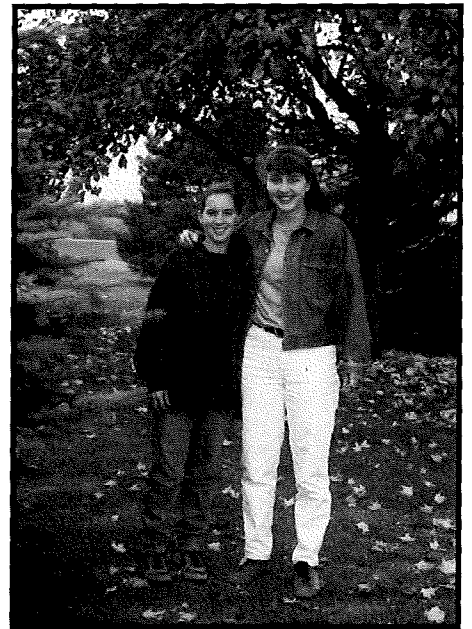
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# VOYAGEURS 1992

**Michelle Noort, of New Westminster, British Columbia, and Sara Gougeon, a 17-year-old Franco-Ontarian from L'Original, Ontario, had the chance to participate in a student exchange called Voyageurs 1992 as part of the CANADA 125 celebrations. *Language and Society* asked them to tell us about their impressions.**



*Sara and Michelle in L'Original, Ontario*

## **Michelle Noort**

I was apprehensive as the day of departure approached. I had only a limited knowledge of the exchange program and the Gougeon family had communicated to me in French. My apprehension was mixed with curiosity, but my fears were easily swept away – the Gougeons were hospitable and very friendly and made me feel at home in my prepared room. They created a cosy, warm atmosphere, one we Dutch Canadians describe with the word “gezilling”.

My curiosity was satisfied as I enjoyed a week in their diverse culture. I was surprised that the town spoke French despite being situated in Ontario. My surroundings (on a farm) were incredible (even though there were no mountains!) and the beauty of the autumn colours was overwhelming.

I am very limited in my French and I have a great deal of respect for those who have learned both languages. I was especially impressed during a visit to old Montreal – the wealth of history in the old buildings and the housing so very characteristic of their hospitality.

The program was well planned and I enjoyed all my experiences. The French Canadian people are beautiful and friendly, and I grew to love them. I gained many incredible friends and memories and learned that despite boundaries, whether of distance, or culture or language, Canadians can be united.

Thank you, Canada!

## **Sara Gougeon**

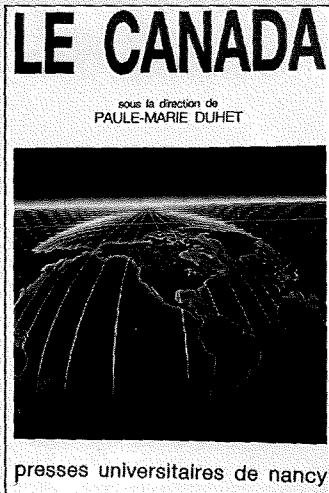
In addition to revealing to me the great cultural and linguistic diversity of our country, this rewarding experience made me realize what an asset it is to know both of Canada's official languages.

The girl I welcomed at the Ottawa airport last October was shy and somewhat apprehensive. A British Columbian, Michelle Noort spoke only English and Dutch and thought that I spoke only French because I had filled out my enrolment form for the program in my mother tongue. Michelle was relieved upon her arrival to find that I spoke English. She was a little surprised at the ease with which my friends and I could switch from one language to the other. An incredible chemistry developed within the group from the start. We spoke English and I felt respected when I spoke French to people outside the group.

When I went to Vancouver, the Noort family welcomed me very warmly. Michelle's parents were also surprised and delighted that I could speak English. That was something that helped bring us closer together. ■



*Sara and Michelle at Mount Whistler, British Columbia*



JEAN FAHMY\*

This relatively short work is published in a convenient format. It can be held in the hand, the cover is

flexible and it has only 200 pages, yet it is a very useful reference tool.

The authors are university professors who specialize in Canadian studies. The co-ordinator, Paule-Marie Duhet, of the English-Speaking Countries Studies Department of the University of Nantes, knows Canada well and visits here regularly. She is particularly interested in our language policies and has met the Commissioner in the past. This project consisted in presenting contemporary Canada in all its complexity in a clear and succinct manner. The authors wrote one or two short chapters on their areas of specialization, ranging from geography to the small, familiar details of everyday life, grouped into four subject areas: the land and the regions, the heritage of the past,

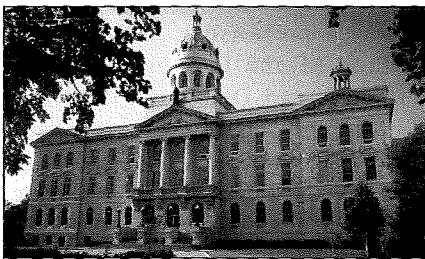
today's problems and realities and cultural life.

It is immediately evident what a formidable challenge it is to summarize in 200 short pages the history and geography of Canada, its political institutions and social life, its immigration and linguistic duality, the distinctiveness of Quebec, the problems of education in the various provinces and Quebec and Anglo-Canadian literature. The canvas is broad, the scope generous. Have the authors been overly ambitious?

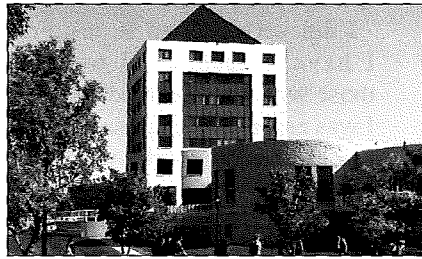
The answer is no. In fact, this small book is a veritable mine of information on our country. In the vast majority of cases the authors have succeeded in summarizing complex problems and situations clearly. To be sure, the choice of one event rather than

**CORRECTION**

*These photo captions on pages 15 and 16 of Language and Society 42 were transposed.*



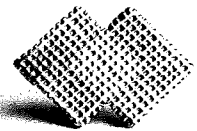
*Collège Saint-Boniface, Manitoba*



*Saskatchewan Language Institute*

**THE TEXTURE OF CANADA**

A fabric is woven of many threads. Those of us who speak English and those of us who speak French — ourselves made up of many different elements — have joined together to weave a social fabric called Canada.



Wearers of the emblem of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages are signifying their commitment to fostering the best possible human relations between the English-speaking and French-speaking components of Canada's social fabric.

**CONGRATULATIONS, NEW BRUNSWICK!**

**On February 1 the House of Commons passed legislation to entrench New Brunswick's Bill 88 (the Official Languages Act of New Brunswick) in the Constitution of Canada.**

another may be questioned, or the brevity of the treatment regretted; yet, taken as a whole, the book provides the unfamiliar European reader with a clear, complete and consistent picture of Canada.

The informed reader, however, even a Canadian, may also find the work rewarding. Certain observations are penetrating: I refer, for example, to the constant tension between "heritage" (Anglo-Saxon) and "distinctiveness" (in the interpretation of federalism) in which Sylvie Guillaume finds one of the keys to the operation of Canadian institutions. There are other shrewd analyses. Pierre Guillaume, for example, emphasizes the importance of religious influences in Canada: "Previously a country of faiths (the term should be used in the

plural), Canada remains today a country of religious cultures that profoundly influence social relations" (p. 88). It is impossible here not to think of the analysis some Canadian sociologists make of what I would venture to call a "lay clericalism" that seems to prevail in some circles in Quebec despite the Quiet Revolution and which may be the survival of ways of thinking about structures inherited from the religious past.

In view of the soundness of the work one can only regret certain easily avoided errors of fact. Regina is made the capital of Alberta (p. 43), the House of Commons is said to have only 282 members (p. 76) instead of 295, the Official Languages Act is called the Act Concerning the Official Languages of Canada (p. 109).

These, however, are trifles that the reader will pardon the more willingly because the authors cast an admiring, indeed an affectionate, look at our country. The conclusion, signed Jean-Michel Lacroix, offers a good summary of the authors' general tone: "In any event, anyone who visits Canada falls under the spell of its indefinable charm and appreciates that elusive something called 'quality of life'. Perhaps, in the final analysis, the country's charm comes precisely from the absence of certitudes, from that discreet sense of modesty that forbids imposing any sort of model on others?" ■

(Our translation)

\* Jean Fahmy is Director of liaison with federal agencies in OCOL'S Policy Branch.

## NEW PUBLICATION

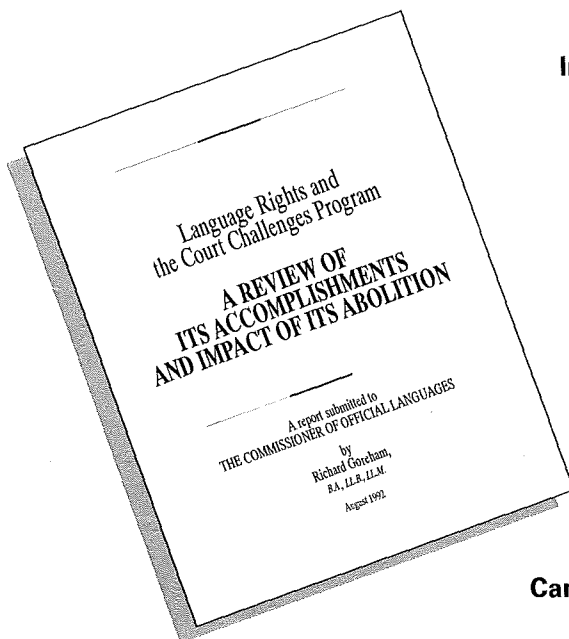
### *The Goreham Report*

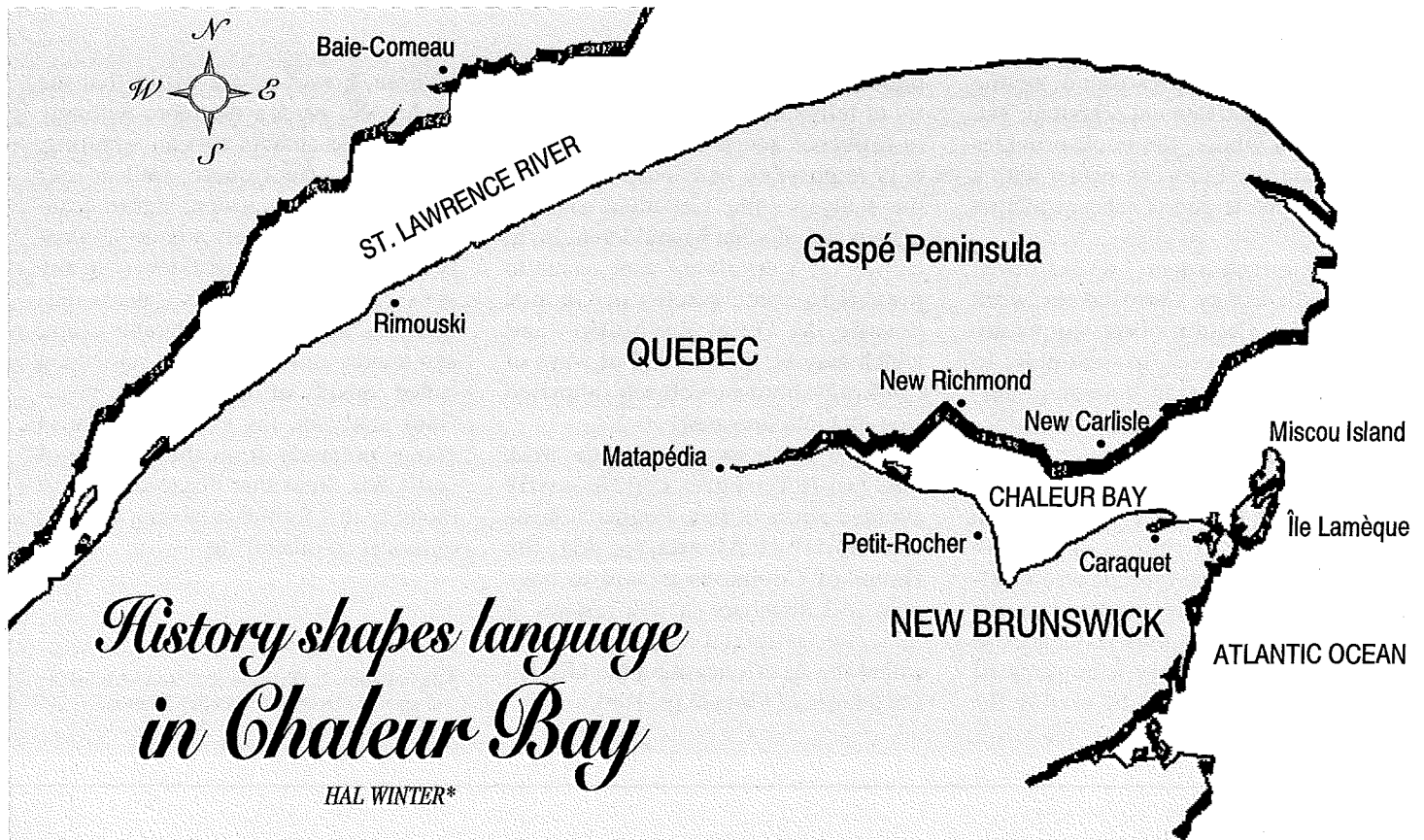
In November the Office of the Commissioner published a study by jurist Richard Goreham of the impact of the abolition of the Court Challenges Program.

The author says, "this report has shown that many language rights protected by the Constitution raise questions of interpretation and implementation that have not yet received definitive answers."

*This work is addressed to those interested in jurisprudence concerning language rights.*

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If he relied on language to fix his position, a present-day Jacques Cartier exploring Canada's eastern shores in Chaleur Bay might well conclude that his co-ordinates were upside-down.

On the Quebec side, to the north, he could anchor at places like Sandy Beach, New Carlisle, New Richmond or Carleton. And he would likely be greeted in a vernacular which might persuade him he'd landed squarely in a stronghold of English Canada.

If our navigator sailed south some 20 nautical miles to the harbours of New Brunswick, he'd be told in confident French he was in Petit-Rocher, Grande-Anse, Caraquet or Île Lamèque. On both coasts the inhabi-

tants would be expressing themselves in a time-honoured mother tongue, dignified by its acceptance as one of the nation's two official languages.

Over the centuries history and geography combined to create a unique linguistic context along the shores of this remote bay, formed by a deep arm of the Atlantic, thrusting westward between the tip of Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula and northern New Brunswick's Miscou Island. Shaped in this common crucible, the attitudes and lifestyles of Anglophones and Francophones offer living proof that the dream of the harmonious co-existence of two languages in Canada can be accepted as an everyday reality where concentrations of population make it possible.

This mutual respect was born of shared experience. For all inhabitants of the region the same harsh topography of rock-bound coastline and restless sea served as a backdrop for a

history of hardship. Both language communities faced a struggle for survival where the prime imperative was tenacity, the will to endure. Over the generations this built bonds, a kinship between peoples of very disparate origins — challenging the conventional wisdom that differences in language and culture must inevitably divide.

The backgrounds of the waves of English-speaking settlers on the Quebec coast were themselves diverse. Early New Carlisle, for example, was the Gaspé headquarters for British Loyalists fleeing the American Revolution. These newcomers carved themselves a fresh way of life in what was little more than wilderness. Today their language, traditions and institutions survive, thanks to a determined community cohesiveness, coupled with a willingness to adapt and live with the realities of modern Quebec. The town may boast the only English-language weekly newspaper (SPEC) across the

\* Hal Winter has covered the Quebec scene for 30 years. He lives in Gaspé.

Over the centuries history and geography  
combined to create a unique linguistic content  
along the shores of this remote bay.

Gaspé Peninsula, but it also has a street named after one of its most illustrious sons: René Lévesque.

New Carlisle — an Anglophone enclave nestled between the mainly Francophone communities of Paspébiac and Bonaventure — lies about mid-way along the 300-kilometre coastline running from the eastern-tip town of Gaspé to Matépédia, where Quebec and New Brunswick meet.

Along the two-lane highway serving this barren but beautiful stretch are other English-language communities, alternating with Francophone counterparts. Today, French-speakers are in the majority. Old-timers recall, however, that this used to be known as the English Coast. Each township continues to live and work in what has always been

its mother tongue. There still remain some vestiges of the former sense of self-containment imposed by the well-nigh impassability of the terrain before the winding highway was built, but, increasingly, interaction between the two language groups is the order of the day. This is achieved with almost a total absence of the frictions plaguing other crossroads areas.

The secret seems to be that the people here find so much in common. Many of the first settlers of little villages with names like Hope, for example, were brought out as indentured labour — a condition akin to slavery. Then there were the refugees like the Irish, exchanging the certainty of starvation in the 1845 famine for a life of hunger and hardship in the merciless Gaspé

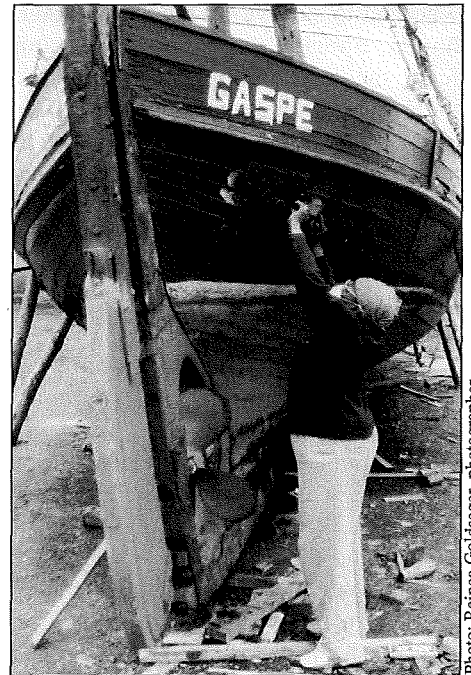
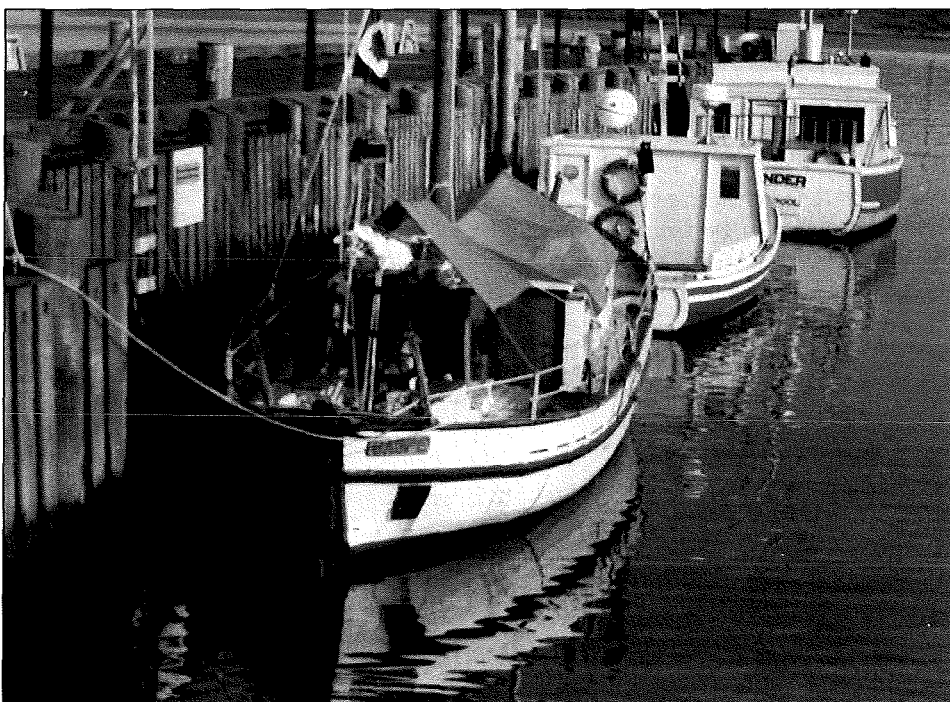


Photo: Reina Goldseger, photographer

winter. The lot of their French-speaking neighbours was little better. Whatever the language, they had to wrest a living from the forest and the sea. Between fishermen, between those who work the woods, there is a level of communication which transcends language; and if culture is involved it is a culture of respect for the other based on personal knowledge of the trials, hopes and fears shared in the struggle to survive.

Across the waters of Chaleur Bay (which must, say the locals, have been named tongue-in-cheek by Jacques Cartier), history has traced a similar pattern for the Francophone peoples of northern New Brunswick. Their origins were very different. The hardship endured by generations included active persecution, in addition to penury. Like their English-language opposite numbers on the Quebec side, they knew how to survive. Again, where else to turn for a living but forest and sea?

With the same brand of self-sufficiency as their Anglophone Gaspé counterparts, Acadian communities grew to become parishes and towns. Along with the people, the language endured. Sea and forest taught them respect for others



who had to survive by the skill of their hands. Sharing the same hopes and fears, the same triumphs and tragedies, the people of the parishes on both sides of the bay developed something close to a common culture. When a fishing boat from Quebec's Sandy Beach hails another out of New Brunswick's Caraquet the languages may be different, but there is a very genuine, human, mutual understanding.

Times, of course, have changed. Anglophones along the Gaspé coast now are well-organized, enjoying a broad range of Quebec social services, including schools, access in English to health facilities, senior citizens' residences and the like. They have learned to function effectively within the framework of a French-language society, to make use of co-operation rather than confrontation. To the Francophones, they remain good neighbours.

On the New Brunswick shore changes in the lifestyle of the French-speaking population have been dramatic over the past couple of decades. At the political level Acadian solidarity has been effective. Progress is most clearly evident in the towns and parishes which dot the coastline in a pattern so reminiscent of those just across the bay.

Where hardship and poverty once seemed entrenched there are now cohesive communities organized around support services such as co-operatives, education facilities and financial structures. Assets of the Acadian Caisse populaire — founded with few dollars in emulation of Quebec's people's bank system — recently topped the billion-dollar mark. Caraquet has grown from a marginal fishing village into the capital of what is today known as La Péninsule acadienne. It is the home of the French-language *L'Acadie Nouvelle*, a daily paper distributed across the province.

This is not to suggest that life has become a bed of roses for either Gaspé Anglophones or their Francophone counterparts across Chaleur Bay. All things are relative. Hardship may have

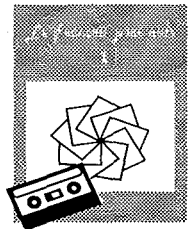
been mitigated, but for many earning a living remains a precarious affair. Jobs are scarcer and uncertainty has recently been compounded by the dwindling of fish stocks.

Yet survival over the generations has brought both language communities a quiet sense of confidence. In dealing with others, this translates into the strength to respect differences. ■

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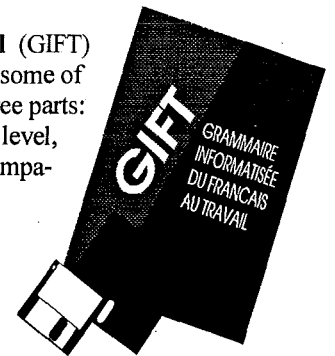
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