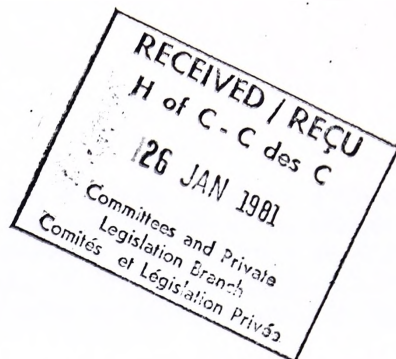




COUNCIL
OF
CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCHES
IN
CANADA

January 15, 1981

Hon. Senator Harry Hays
Parliament Buildings
OTTAWA, ON



Sir:

Because you are a prime mover in the current constitutional debate we urge that you consider and adopt as your own the concerns which we have expressed to Prime Minister Trudeau in the letter enclosed.

Doubtless, it will not escape your notice that these concerns are of wide application to the use of resources, the opening up of opportunity to life for minorities and future generations, the growing importance of Canada's attitude and action to less-developed countries and the fostering of just relationships and attitudes at home.

We look forward eagerly to your response.

May you use the wisdom and courage to "do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Sincerely,

Rev. Arie G. Van Eek

Encl.

OFFICE OF THE
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

P.O. BOX 5070
BURLINGTON, ONTARIO
CANADA
L7R 3Y8

PHONE
(416) 637-3434

ARIE G. VAN EEK
B.A., M.DIV.
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY



COUNCIL
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IN
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December 22, 1980

The Right Honourable Pierre Elliot Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Parliament Buildings
OTTAWA, Ontario

Sir:

At a recent meeting of the Committee for Contact with the Government (C.C.G.) of the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, we noted with concern that a number of elements were missing in the present constitutional debate, elements which, if included, might serve to place both the character and the substance of that discussion on a more positive footing.

As you yourself stated in your address to the nation on October 2, 1980, our country should become one in which "would live a people that was truly free." Yet to date we have not tasted much of that freedom in the debate. Furthermore, you expressed the hope that in this country "people would grow a tradition where English and French, Indian and Inuit, new Canadians and pioneers would unite despite their differences, so that justice and fair play and the practice of sharing would flourish." Yet it has struck us that the quality of the present debate has rendered the realization of your laudable objective unlikely. It is because of the discrepancies between your stated goal and the present reality that we urge you to take note of these observations:

We find it regrettable that until now the major participants in the constitutional debate have neither provided a clear definition of justice, nor asked any questions as to how division of powers relates to the exercise of justice. In our view a debate concerning which structures could best serve the doing of justice would promote a unity of purpose in the land rather than engender the antagonisms implicit in any divisive struggle over political prerogatives and material possessions.

In this context the fight over resources should not concern itself primarily with ownership and rights, but rather with stewardship and obligations. What indeed shall we do with our country's magnificent deposits, and to what constructive use can we put them, both at home and abroad, in the service especially of the poor and the needy? Once urgent questions such as these are addressed we believe the problem of ownership will become far less pressing. Indeed, it can be solved amicably.

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This applies in equal measure to the raising and spending of taxes. If viable programs were to be proposed for, say, allowing the Atlantic provinces to become more self-reliant, or for settling some long standing Western grievances, or even for ensuring a range of opportunities for future generations, the problem about who should have the right to tax what and for how much would become far less contentious.

It is our ambition to see Canada develop a responsible society. Yet such a society is most likely to emerge if the structures of government facilitate the broadest possible opportunities for citizens to serve the larger community. In consequence, the distribution of powers between the various levels of government should be designed to enable all people to foster the well-being of their fellow citizens, and thus realize the just society you spoke of earlier in your career.

With reference to Canada's international obligations, we fear that the present vitriolic nature of the constitutional debate will so fracture the national will and drain the national energies that we will seriously reduce our effectiveness in pursuing justice at the international level. Surely, if we fail to emphasize justice at home, we can not expect to become viable champions of justice abroad.

In this regard we would like to ask some questions concerning the proposed Bill of Rights. Why, first of all, is the federal proposal not better publicized? We experienced considerable difficulty discovering its contents. We are even more curious, however, to find out how the new charter safe-guards and improves the rights of Canada's native peoples. Indeed, how would the rights of all Canada's diverse value communities be maintained and even enhanced?

It is our strong conviction that any discussion on rights within a restructured confederation should emphasize the rights and freedoms of both individuals and groups of citizens to practice the fair play and sharing of which you spoke on October 2nd.

It is the unique responsibility and concomitant privilege of the Prime Minister to provide constructive leadership in the current debate by assuring that the vital elements of justice and service so cogently articulated in your October speech receive greater emphasis.

Wishing you the Lord's blessing and guidance in your difficult office, we remain

Yours Sincerely,

Rev. Mr. John G. Klomps, Chairman

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John G. Klomps", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned below the typed name and is underlined.