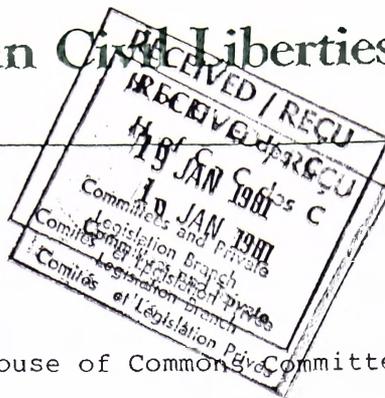


South Okanagan Civil Liberties Society

Community Legal
Information Centre



103 - 304 Martin Street
Penticton, B.C. V2A 5K4

Phone: 493-0210

January 9, 1981

Special Joint Senate-House of Commons Committee on the
Constitution of Canada
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Members of the Special Committee on the Constitution:

Following our telegram to you November 25, 1980 we received a draft prospectus from THE CANADIAN CONNECTION on "Moving Towards a Community-Based Movement for an All-Canadian Constitution."

The South Okanagan Civil Liberties Society enthusiastically endorses the objectives of this movement, launched and supported by concerned Canadians and their organizations, "To enable Canadians to understand, participate in, and actually make a difference to the constitutional discussion now occurring in Canada."

In our telegram and in the brief presented to your Committee on December 8, 1980, by the Canadian Federation of Civil Liberties and Human Rights Associations, we have criticized "the indecent haste with which this important legislation is being dealt."

One thing may be said in defence of the Prime Minister's tight deadlines. During the past half year, they have sparked more public study and debate concerning the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms than ever before in the history of Canada. However, this process is just getting started. It would be a shame to kill it now.

Canadian confidence in our governments might gain significant strength if this democratic process could now be enhanced and allowed sufficient time to realize its full benefits instead of being chopped off arbitrarily on February 6, 1981 when, we understand, your Committee is required to submit a final report.

Those Canadian people most likely to need protection for their rights, responsibilities and liberties in any new constitution are the very ones with the least power and influence on elected governments.

You have heard, for an important example, from Indian and Inuit speakers a great fear that their most basic aboriginal rights and land claims will be terminated, rather than recognized and protected by the Canada Constitution proposed to Parliament in 1980.

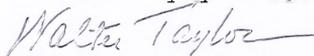
Special Joint Senate-House of Commons Committee on the
Constitution of Canada
January 9, 1981
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We agree with native people and their many friends that no new constitution can be justified until it does recognize and protect the fundamental special rights of the first people of this land.

Other Canadians also need time and opportunity to study any new constitutional recommendations from the Special Joint Committee. Following that, the constitution deserves a nationwide process for effectively hearing the response of the people, especially groups with special concerns and limited political power, such as: women, workers, farm workers, pensioners, handicapped people, unemployed, low income people, welfare recipients, small farmers, small business people, prisoners, and so forth.

If the Committee has not yet heard recommendations from THE CANADIAN CONNECTION, we hope that arrangements will be made to do so. The contact persons are Karen Hill at (613) 728-1865 and Mary Hegan at (613) 733-8270. The address is 269 Remic Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1Z 5W6.

Sincerely yours,



Walter Taylor, Vice President
Human Rights

WT:as

CC: Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau

THE CANADIAN CONNECTION

Canadian Federation of Civil Liberties and
Human Rights Associations

South Okanagan Civil Liberties Society

Community Legal
Information Centre

103 - 304 Martin Street
Penticton, B.C. V2A 5K4

January 11, 1981

Phone: 493-0210

Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Mr. Trudeau:

You have successfully inspired more public interest in Canada's constitution than has ever been shown before in history, simply by taking unilateral action and setting unreasonable deadlines on the hearings of your Special Joint Senate-House of Commons Committee on the Constitution of Canada.

We urge you now to take full advantage of this unprecedented and possibly unexpected public concern by encouraging THE CANADIAN CONNECTION's effort to launch a national "Community-Based Movement for an All-Canadian Constitution" and allowing sufficient time for such an extraordinary democratic process to work effectively.

THE CANADIAN CONNECTION has invited everyone to comment on a proposed "community-based movement, launched and supported by concerned Canadians and their organizations, to enable Canadians to understand, participate in, and actually make a difference to the constitutional discussions now occurring in Canada."

Now that people from all regions of the country have begun studying the issues raised by the government's resolution to patriate and change the constitution, Parliament has a unique opportunity to facilitate a creative process of interaction among all the diverse elements of the great Canadian mosaic.

Canadians with the least power have the greatest need for protection of their rights. The constitution will benefit immensely if Parliament will allow enough time and accept an effective process to include them in designing it. Some of these groups are pensioners, ethnic and religious minorities, handicapped people, working people, farm workers, low income workers, unemployed, welfare recipients, women, small farmers, small business people, prisoners and so forth.

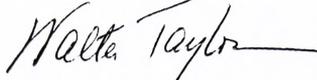
Canada's first people, those who were here hundreds of centuries before either French or English was heard in this land, must have their aboriginal rights clearly recognized and firmly entrenched before any new Canadian charter of human rights and freedoms can possibly be justified. The Indian and Inuit people must have a strong voice in revising the present draft. Unless significant changes are made in the charter proposed by your government in 1980, crucial rights, responsibilities and freedoms belonging to native groups, and required for their survival as a people, may be extinguished.

Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau
January 11, 1981
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As THE CANADIAN CONNECTION notes, "Our constitution belongs to all Canadians -- past, present and future -- and not solely to our governments. It is our most basic statement of who we are, how we govern ourselves. Therefore, it is not just a law. Nor is it only the agreement by which federal and provincial governments regulate their relationships."

We hope you will make it possible for the public involvement process, that you have inspired, to unfold as it should.

Sincerely yours,



Walter Taylor,
Vice President, Human Rights

cc: THE CANADIAN CONNECTION
c/o Mary Hegan
269 Remic Avenue
Ottawa K1Z 5W6

Canadian Federation of Civil Liberties
and Human Rights Associations
323 Chapel Street
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