

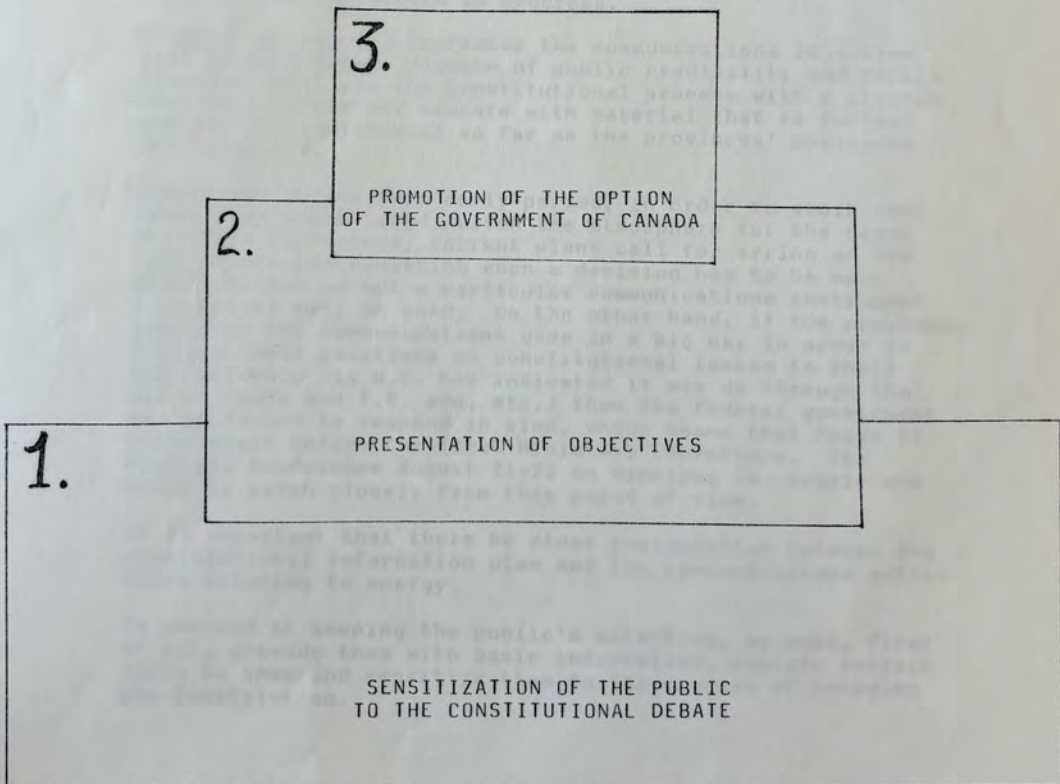
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SECRET

SHORT-TERM INFORMATION PROGRAM: Constitutional Reform

The unity of Canada is a long-term objective on which the Canadian Unity Information Office should continue to work. In the short-term, still in the context of national unity, the CUIO should concentrate a large part of its efforts on the constitutional reform in progress. To this end, the CUIO has developed an information strategy composed of three phases that will not necessarily be consecutive, but could be parallel.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM



The first phase will be emphasized from now until the end of the First Ministers Conference in September. The second phase would go into action in the post-September 12 period. Phase III would be applied if the Government of Canada should feel obliged to proceed unilaterally or with a national referendum.

Phase one: Sensitizing the public

The referendum period in Quebec aroused in Canada an obvious interest in the renewal of Canadian federalism and created a climate favourable for a new round of constitutional discussions. Now it is important for the Government of Canada to maintain this climate and to draw the public's attention to the debate in progress.

Between now and mid-September the communications objective will be to create a climate of public credibility and receptiveness vis-à-vis the constitutional process with a program that will inform and educate with material that is factual and non-confrontational so far as the provinces' positions are concerned.

Therefore, during this early period, in order to avoid confrontation which could poison the atmosphere for the First Ministers Conference, current plans call for erring on the side of non-confrontation when a decision has to be made about whether or not a particular communications instrument or activity will be used. On the other hand, if the provinces jump into the communications game in a big way in order to explain their positions on constitutional issues to their own residents (as B.C. has indicated it may do through the use of radio and T.V. ads, etc.) then the federal government may be forced to respond in kind, which means that Phase II could start before the First Ministers Conference. The Premiers Conference August 21-22 in Winnipeg is clearly one event to watch closely from this point of view.

It is important that there be close coordination between the constitutional information plan and the communications activities relating to energy.

To succeed at keeping the public's attention, we must, first of all, provide them with basic information, explain certain facts to them and sensitize them to the urgency of renewing the Constitution.

1) Educating the public

The public must understand that the Constitution is more than an abstract document; the Constitution is above all else the foundation of the unity of our country; it is everything that describes the system of government chosen freely by Canadians to watch over their destiny and that of their country. The Constitution is also what determines which order of government will best respond to the needs and hopes of the people.

2) Re-establishing the facts

Canadians must recognize that, after 113 years of use, the system of government established in 1867 no longer corresponds, in certain aspects, to the needs of the Canada of today. They must also recognize that the first objective of Constitutional renewal is not to give more powers to the federal and provincial governments, but rather to determine how these governments can best serve the interests of all Canadians and respond to the new needs of all communities.

In addition, the new Constitution will benefit the public by guaranteeing to Canadians, above all else, the protection of their fundamental rights and freedoms, their language rights, their right to move freely throughout the country, and the right to share in the resources of their country.

3) Establishing the importance of a Canadian Constitution

We must remind all Canadians of the urgency of renewing the Canadian Constitution if we care about the unity of the country. Politicians of all the provinces and of all parties committed themselves publicly, during the referendum campaign, to uniting their efforts towards renewing the Constitution according to the hopes and needs of the 1980s.

Thus, we must inspire among Canadians a feeling of national pride with regard to the renewal and repatriation of the Constitution. It is also a matter of national pride to have, in Canada, a Constitution written by Canadians and for Canadians. It is important to have a Constitution that is all ours.

4) Means of communication

During the phase of sensitizing the public the CUIO counts on using the means of communication that it has used effectively since its establishment in 1977.

Texts written in clear and understandable language will be presented in the form of notes, speakers' kits or explanatory dossiers on the Constitution. The notes will be the object, in particular, of a massive distribution since they will give the tone to the entire campaign to educate the public. This same material will be adapted for use in the preparation of advertising messages and the production of audio-visual presentations.

In the framework of the advertising campaign, the CUIO will use written and electronic media, advertisements and perhaps inserts accompanying certain cheques sent out by the Government of Canada. Thanks to a network already solidly established, the CUIO will be able to undertake mass mailings to members of non-governmental organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce, the Canada West Foundation and the Council for Canadian Unity. These organizations include the principal opinion leaders at the regional level and thus join together a strong body of the population of the country.

5) Media relations

During the meetings in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, CUIO provided media relations support, which included staffing the media room, organizing news conferences, fielding inquiries from journalists and co-ordinating the printing and distribution of federal position papers, and writing, printing and distributing news releases. As well, background briefings, special interviews and informal talks notably by Messrs. Michael Kirby, Roger Tassé and Gerard Veilleux were arranged for journalists, and this produced some positive results in terms of making certain that the federal position was understood, as reflected in media coverage. As well, CUIO was able to keep federal officials informed concerning the attitudes, views and general mood of the media. CUIO also monitored public statements of provincial delegations and news media coverage.

In the next three or four weeks, it will be important to keep up the momentum insofar as media relations are concerned. We have suggested that the Honourable Jean Chrétien hold a general "overview" briefing for national journalists in Ottawa as soon as possible. The timing is right, inasmuch as we are in what the media fraternity

calls the "summer doldrums," which means nothing much else is happening. Thus we can be sure of drawing a good turnout of journalists.

Also, Mr. Kirby, Roger Tassé and Mr. Veilleux should be available to give background briefings to selected serious journalists. Also under consideration is the possibility of meetings with editorial boards of major newspapers. It is important to keep getting the federal message across in advance of anticipated communications campaigns to be launched soon by the governments of Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta.

Other media relations initiatives may also be necessary, depending on decisions from the cabinet as to general strategy between now and the meeting of provincial premiers in late August.

Second Phase: Presentation of Objectives

In this second phase, it will be a question of explaining clearly and in more detail what the government is trying to do and why. This phase aims at really making the public understand the reasons why it is important and even necessary to undertake reforms in the months that follow. There will be greater emphasis on the questions that concern Canadians. Therefore, we will have to sell more strongly the idea that the public will benefit from the entrenchment, in the new Canadian Constitution, of a charter of basic rights and freedoms, the principle of sharing, and the principle of free movement of people, capital, goods and services. We will have to explain why it is necessary to repatriate our Constitution to Canada and why it is desirable to come to an understanding on the rules concerning its modification.

The public will be informed more fully on those questions that concern the sharing of responsibilities and powers among the governments. Concerning these questions, we will have to explain that transfers of powers can take place in two directions and this must be done in the context of the defence, as much as possible, of the interests of Canadians before those of governments. Thus, for example, the changes envisaged at the level of family law will be explained as benefiting Canadians first of all.

This second phase should encourage people to accept in general the orientation followed for constitutional reform and should help the public to want this reform more strongly. People should, following this phase, be ready to accept the offer that will be made to them this autumn.

Third phase: Promotion of the option of the Government of Canada

Phase III is a "hard sell" campaign, and is planned with the possibility in mind that the federal government may act unilaterally. Once the public understands what a constitution is and its purpose, once the people realize why it is important to modify it, they will be more ready to accept changes. At this stage, the information campaign will be orientated strictly toward the proposals of the Canadian government and responding strongly and positively to whatever criticisms may be forthcoming. It will be a question of putting these proposals forward, of convincing the public that the option proposed by the Government of Canada is the one that best responds to the aspirations of all Canadians.

This phase of promotion will aim essentially at convincing the public of the merits of the reform envisaged by the Government of Canada and the concrete actions it is prepared to take. We will be in a position, at this point, to orientate our messages in terms of the expectations and opinions of the population of each of the provinces.

The CUIO will adjust its strategy of information according to the evolution of the debate. The next meetings of the first ministers will permit us to discover areas of agreements, litigious points and the "constant" proposals of the federal government. It is these firm proposals that will form the object of the third phase when the CUIO will reach certain well-identified publics in certain provinces according to the nature of the federal government's proposals.