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## Speaking of sovereignty

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Premier Bourassa would be more persuasive in his constitutional pronouncements if he talked about giving rights to people rather than powers to government. But his argument, as elaborated during the weekend to a Liberal policy conference, seems to be that the greater the jurisdiction given a particular government, the greater the rights of the people within that jurisdiction. It is a faulty proposition, since democratic constitutions must be as concerned with the limits of power as with its exercise.

In a federal system, the rights of the people and the limitation of the power of governments is partly achieved through dividing jurisdiction between the central government and the governments of the component parts. Each level of government is limited in the authority it can exercise.

### Power question

When Mr. Bourassa talks about shifting jurisdiction in language, communications and immigration so that they are entirely under Quebec control, he may do so in the name of French. But the wary citizen must ask himself whether such transfers would in reality have the main effect of enhancing the French culture and community in Canada, or whether they would be more likely simply to enhance the power and authority of the Quebec government in a general way.

"French is Quebec," says Mr. Bourassa in justification.

"French is much more than Quebec," says Prime Minister Trudeau in reply.

The fact is that the more Mr. Bourassa elaborates on his slogan of "cultural sovereignty", the more he makes the point of his critics that "culture" is so encompassing a concept that a balanced federation is scarcely possible in which "cultural jurisdiction" for a portion of its population is assigned entirely to one of its component parts.

### Gain for Lévesque

Exclusive jurisdiction, or veto power, in the fields of linguistic, communication and immigration legislation would hive off Quebec from Confederation in a way that would be compatible only with the associate-states concept of René Lévesque, not with the concept of a balanced federal system. The rights of French-speaking Canadians nationally would be ignored by Quebecers in such a system, freedom of movement of people within Canada could not be made consonant with exclusive Quebec control over immigration into the province, federal cultural programs in Quebec would have the status of foreign aid.

One often hears the criticism of opposition parties that they fail to offer an alternative to the government in power. But the problem with the Bourassa government's cultural policies is the reverse. Though purporting to espouse federalism, the premier is failing to offer a federalist alternative to the separatist opposition, the Parti Québécois.