

La langue de travail dans l'industrie au Québec Language at the Work Situation in Quebec

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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

The problem of language at the work situation in the Province of Quebec is very important for the existence, the maintenance and the development of the French Canadian culture. It is also a question of human dignity and respect.

Even if they are in majority in Quebec, how will the French Canadians maintain their identity and, develop both themselves and their culture if they have to use another language in their daily work. This is far from being a new problem in Quebec, especially in urban communities. In a large measure it is due to the fact that both economic investment and management have been held by English speaking people. A few years ago this problem was not so acute as it is today since the greater part of French Canadian manpower was either occupied in the primary industry or in small firms and was also living in rural communities or in small towns. Industrialization and concentration of workers in larger cities caused the deterioration of the situation which could even become catastrophic. Many people are aware of this problem. A solution has to be reached.

For some, there is no solution : Then with the passing of time things will settle by themselves. Others are thinking the remedy would be the enactment of a law imposing French unilinguism in the Province of Quebec. Between these two extremes, there are the moderate ones who also believe in the value of the French Canadian culture and seek for the respect of men. They recognize the complexity of the problem and do not anticipate the possibilities of an over simple solution. Realism, imagination and initiative are then necessary.

For a few years, *Industrial Relations* has been collecting a certain number of documents of different sort on the subject. We decided to publish them all together in order to allow a better comprehension of all the facets of the problem. Roger Chartier, a former colleague here at Laval, helped us in this task. We are very grateful to him and also to all those who allowed us to reproduce their articles. However we must note that opinions expressed are those of the authors alone and not necessarily opinions held by the editors.

La langue de travail dans l'industrie au Québec

La question de la langue de travail dans l'industrie au Québec n'est pas sans poser un problème sérieux pour l'existence, le maintien et le développement de la culture canadienne-française. Il y va aussi de la dignité et du respect de l'homme.

Comment, en effet, les canadiens-français, même s'ils sont en majorité au Québec, pourront-ils conserver leur identité et se développer selon leur culture s'ils sont obligés à la journée longue d'utiliser une langue qui n'est pas la leur ? Le problème n'est pas nouveau au Québec et surtout dans les milieux urbains, car, pour une bonne part, l'initiative économique et la direction des grandes entreprises a été entre les mains de personnes de langue anglaise. Dans le passé, il n'était cependant pas aussi aigu qu'il l'est aujourd'hui, alors que la plus grande partie des travailleurs canadiens-français s'adonnaient à l'agriculture ou travaillaient dans de petites entreprises et vivaient soit dans des milieux ruraux ou des petites villes. Avec la montée de l'industrialisation et la concentration des travailleurs dans de grandes agglomérations urbaines, la situation s'est aggravée et peut même devenir catastrophique. Plusieurs en sont conscients. Il faut alors rechercher une solution.

Pour certains, il n'y en a pas et on devrait simplement laisser les choses évoluer spontanément sans se soucier de l'avenir. Pour d'autres, il faut frapper un grand coup et imposer par la loi l'unilinguisme français dans les limites du territoire québécois. En dehors de ces deux catégories extrémistes, d'autres, attachés aussi à la valeur de la culture canadienne-française et au respect des hommes, reconnaissent la complexité du problème et ne croient pas à la possibilité d'une solution simpliste. C'est alors qu'il faut faire montre de réalisme, d'imagination et d'initiative.

Depuis quelques années, la direction de Relations industrielles a colligé un certain nombre de témoignages, d'opinions et de documents. Dans le but d'aider à cerner différentes dimensions de ce problème elle les publie ensemble dans ce numéro. Nous avons été aidé dans cette tâche par notre ancien collègue Roger Chartier. Nous le remercions de même que tous les autres collaborateurs qui nous ont permis de reproduire leur texte. Il va sans dire que chacun assume la responsabilité de son opinion et que celle-ci n'est pas nécessairement partagée par la revue.

Language at the Work Situation in Quebec

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