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ROYAL COMMISSION  
ON BILINGUALISM AND BICULTURALISM

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1. **Summary.** Translation of Canadian works is advocated more widely in this country than it is practised, largely because it is uneconomic from the publishing standpoint. There is a distinct need for the support of translation costs by appropriate non-profit agencies, but there is also some danger that such organizations might usurp the publishing function. The costs of adequate translation are substantial, and often exceed payments to authors; this does not mean, however, that they are unreasonable. Notwithstanding the important role of translated editions in a bicultural community, the sometimes-proposed development of textbooks with a common content (e. g. in Canadian history) is neither a practicable nor a desirable goal. A closer liaison between French – and English-language organizations of publishers would be desirable and mutually advantageous. Finally, the cultural development of both language will to a very significant extent be influenced by the health of the indigenous book publishing industry which each supports.
2. This brief is intended to supply information on some bilingual and bicultural aspects of book publishing in Canada. Although concerned by the need of Canadians of both languages to expand and improve their book reading habits, the English-language book publishers on whose behalf it is submitted do not consider that a state of competition exists between their members and French-language publishers in this country. No programme of publishing reform is advocated in this brief, and it is likely that its short contents will inspire more questions than they answer. However all members of the Canadian Book Publishers Council will be glad to furnish additional information on their work and interests on request.
3. The Canadian Book Publishers Council, suite 5, 60 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto 7, is made up of twenty-nine member firms engaged in the publication of English-language works in this country in original editions, in imported editions, or in both. The Canadian Book Publishers Council comprises two constituent organizations of book publishers, the Book Publishers Association of Canada (twenty-two members firms) and the Canadian Textbook Publishers Institute (thirteen member firms); in addition there are a few firms which are members of the Canadian Book Publishers Council without being members of either of the

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two constituent associations just named. The members of the Book Publishers Institute's name will be self-explanatory. A number of firms with interests in both fields are members of both bodies.

The records of the Canadian Book publishers Council at July 17, 1964, showed the following firms on its roster of members:

Abelard-Schuman Canada Limited (BPAC)  
Thomas Allen Limited (BPAC)  
Ambassador Books Limited (BPAC)  
The Book Society of Canada Limited (CTPI)  
Burns & MacEachern Ltd. (BPAC)  
Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited (BPAC)  
Collier-Macmillan Canada Limited (BPAC)  
Wm. Collins Sons & Company Canada Limited (BPAC)  
The Coop Clark Publishing Co. Limited (CTPI)  
J. M. Dent & Sons (Canada) Limited (BPAC, CTPI)  
Doubleday Canada Limited (BPAC)  
W. J. Gage Limited (CTPI)  
Ginn and Company  
Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Limited (BPAC, CTPI)  
The House of Grant (Canada) Limited (CTPI)  
Longmans Canada Limited (BPAC, CTPI)  
The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited (BPAC, CTPI)  
McClelland & Stewart Limited (BPAC, CTPI)  
McGraw-Hill Company of Canada Limited  
George J. McLeod Limited (BPAC)  
The Musson Book Company Limited (BPAC)  
Nelson, Foster & Scott Limited (BPAC)  
Thomas Nelson & Sons (Canada) Limited (BPAC, CTPI)  
Oxford University Press (BPAC, CTPI)  
Palm Publishers (BPAC)  
Sir Isaac Pitman (Canada) Limited (CTPI)  
The Ryerson Press (BPAC, CTPI)  
S. J. Reginald Saunders & Company Limited (BPAC)  
University of Toronto Press (BPAC)

4. With the purposes of expanding access by Canadians to their two national literatures as well as of simultaneously encouraging domestic writing in both languages by increasing readerships, publication in translation continues to be urged much more widely in this country than it is practised. Nevertheless, this question of translation is an important one man has many aspects; it might be useful to consider at least a few of them here.

To begin with, a Canadian work published in this country (in either French or English) is more often than not a marginal commercial venture in the first instance. Translated and offered to the other language group, its attractiveness as a risk undertaking ordinarily becomes even less. Indeed, a publisher deploying his capital seldom has an economic reason for preferring to issue the manuscript of a translation rather than an additional original work. Rather, the publisher of a translation faces all the normal costs of production, rarely has ground for anticipating better sales for the translation than were enjoyed by the original edition, and usually comes to be rightly suspicious of the publishing judgment of those who have most loudly proclaimed the need for translation – a group naturally made up of those who have already read it in the original. A publisher seldom has reason to suppose that even the sales pattern of the original edition will repeat itself for the translation, recognizing as he does the many differences between the language groups with respect to reading interests, channels of distribution, traditions of format, book price patterns and manufacturing costs. One expense is in fact added for the would-be publisher in translation, and that is the cost of translation itself. This can represent a formidable part of his fixed outlay – frequently substantially more than total royalty payments to the author or copyright owner (who is normally paid out of sales revenue in due course instead of out of investment capital).

It will be apparent from these considerations that the practical barriers to the expansion of publishing in translation go somewhat beyond the mere costs of translation themselves, although these are high enough. It may safely be concluded, however, that the costs of translation will be added to the risk investment in publication only behalf of exceptional works, and for this reason the costs of translation are very often a legitimate object of subsidy by independent non-profit agencies. Hemingway and Gide are translated, the bulk of the run-of-the-mill works in any language are not. When Canada produces a Hemingway or a Gide, the costs of translation will cease to loom large. At present, the aim of translating in Canada has a reason over and above ordinary commercial reasons for publishing.

Translation of foreign reference or long specialized works published in English are now often undertaken as a labour of love by English-speaking students in the field. These scholars frequently accept a small royalty as return for their labours, which have been undertaken primarily because of their own interest. This exchange does not operate as between French and English Canada, translation not being needed by scholars (who can read either language). It does not of course follow that the subsidizing of translation expenses is per se worthy of such support any more than it follows that a publishing market exists for works in translation simply because the latter are produced. Rather, a strong argument can be advanced in favour of subsidizing funds being made available to cover adequately the costs of

high quality translation if and when publication by a responsible firm can be assured in advance. (See paragraph 7 below)

5. The foregoing recommendation that translation costs frequently deserve to be subsidized by independent non-profit agencies justifies some consideration of what translation “costs” may properly entail, how the quality of translations may be assured, and where the editorial responsibility for manuscript selection should lie. It is to be admitted that translation costs can exceed royalty earnings by authors for the same work, but this will happen only in selected cases; more important, translators fee will normally be fixed regardless of sales, whereas authors earnings will fluctuate according to the degree of public approval accorded the work. (Occasionally a translation will be undertaken speculatively in return for a share of the total royalty percentage; in such cases, the requirement for outside subsidy of such costs of translation does not normally arise.)

The rate of payment for translating will vary substantially according to the literary responsibility and competence of the translator, as well as according to the nature of the assignment. Two or three cents per word will often be sufficient to secure a “rendering” of a book-length manuscript in the other language (an estimated figure, which includes the costs of typing services usually embodied in a typewritten translation). However, a translation which preserves and reflects true literary style requires qualities in the translator parallel with, if not equal to, those in the original author; such services will require remuneration at an appropriately higher rate. Even where this is set as high as four or five cents a word, a moment’s reflection on what this represents in payment per page related to time required per page will make such a calculation appear quite reasonable. That is to say, fifteen to twenty dollars a page for translating, checking, revising, and typing a difficult text in political theory is a modest charge; if the book runs to 500 pages, however, it represents as much as &10.000!

6. It is appropriate here to point out that translations should always be undertaken by experts whose mother tongue is the target language. In our experience, exceptions to this rule are so rare that departures from it should be strongly discouraged as a matter of principle.

7. Reference has been made to the desirability of translation costs being subsidized by independent non-profit agencies where publication by a responsible house can be assured. It is assumed that such agencies might include government-appointed cultural councils, foundations, universities, and similar bodies. It seems proper to point out here that where such translation costs are subsidized in this way, the interests of Canadian literature will be best served if the subsidizing body can avoid become editorially involved in the publishing function. That is to say, qualitative evaluation of a published work being proposed for translation

(involving the decision whether it is “worthy” of translation) is less advisable than simple underwriting of a publisher’s expenses of translation “of works by reputable authors” – perhaps with payment of the subsidy deferred until adequate publication has actually taken place. If a policy of support to the costs of translation could be counted upon by publishers in both our principal ethnic communities, much encouragement would be given to the broadening of the impact of our two national literatures – all without the slightest danger of an unreasonable drain on public funds. The body of publishing in translation that can be undertaken by our present book industry on a speculative basis is not sufficiently large at the present time to be a source of embarrassment to sponsors of translation costs. What would be desirable is the removal of the actual translation overhead from the advance planning by Canadian publishers in both language; if this could be accomplished, their creative ingenuity could be counted upon at least to expand the body of bilingual publishing in this country, and to plan works with bilingual editions scheduled for simultaneous publication from the outset.

8. The Canadian Textbook Publishers Institute, one of the two constituent bodies in the Canadian Book Publishers Council, is of the opinion that the sometimes-proposed development of a common Canadian history textbook or reference work for in French-language as well as English-language schools in this country is neither a practicable nor a desirable goal. This opinion is based largely on a long experience in the development of class-room history textbooks suited to the various English-language regions of our country. Regional interests and emphases vary too much, as do scholarly interpretations, to justify in our opinion any effort to create an artificial uniformity in history teaching on a national level, when any experiments in such a direction even in regional areas would be repugnant to the pedagogical principles recognized by most curriculum planners to-day.

9. Although we recognize the inevitability, and indeed the probable desirability, of a continued separation between the organization of the English-language publishing industry in Canada on the one hand and of the French-language publishing industry on the other, we believe that Canadian literature as a whole would have benefited by a closer liaison between the two publishing organizations over the years. We believe that better communications between the two groups will strengthen the bicultural publishing image of Canada internationally, for example. In noting that a closer liaison between French – and English-Canadian publishing could be developed in this country, it should be added immediately that nothing even vaguely resembling competition between the two exists now or is likely to arise in the future. The two groups of publishers have everything to gain and nothing to lose from mutual conferring in the years ahead on matters ranging from tariff policies to international exhibits; to the best of our knowledge this

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sentiment is fully shared by both French-language and English-language publishers in Canada to-day.

10. In conclusion, it should be observed that the cultural development of English-speaking Canada is being served by English-language publishing in this country just as the cultural development of French-speaking Canada is being served by French-language publishers. Novelists, biographers, playwrights, and authors of children's books can hardly exist in the absence of publishing facilities; certainly in such conditions they would not proliferate. It is difficult to conceive of a field which better illustrates the bicultural and bilingual nature of our country than that represented by the products of our book publishing houses. Just as those cultures are to so large an extent acquired from and perpetuated in books, so can the book publishers of both languages be used to interpret one culture to the other. The strengthening of the Canadian book publishing industry, French-language as much as English-language, will contribute directly to the enhancement of a healthy biculturalism and bilingualism in Canada over the years.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Canadian Book Publishers Council  
this 1<sup>st</sup> day of October, 1964, by

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