

## **INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS TO A PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE JUDGMENT STRIKING DOWN THE SIGN LAW.**

By William Johnson, President of Alliance Quebec, October 20, 1999

JUSTICE triumphed today. Long live justice.

La liberté a triomphé aujourd'hui sur une loi oppressive et inconstitutionnelle. Vive la liberté.

Today, a freedom was restored to the land of Quebec. The French supremacist sign law was struck down. But this is and must be only the first step in the reconquest in Quebec of a just and free society. We must win back our freedom to choose the language of schooling for our children, the freedom to work in English, the freedom to live without the constant threat of new repressive laws to strangle English. Long live freedom!

Le bon sens, la Charte canadienne et la Charte québécoise des droits et liberté ont eu raison de l'intégrisme linguistique, du tribalisme et du suprémacisme. Vive le bon sens et nos précieuses chartes qui protègent nos libertés contre l'oppression!

Today, the siege mentality that supposedly justified restraining our freedoms by a language War Measures Act was exposed as unjustified. Le tribunal a jugé que seule une preuve que la langue française se trouve en état précaire, menacée de disparaître, aurait pu justifier l'atteinte à nos libertés fondamentales, et Mme la juge a déclaré qu'on n'a pas fait cette preuve devant elle et que, sans cette preuve, nous avons droit à nos libertés.

Today's judgment reverses the general assumption that the restrictive measures of Bill 101 are normal or are here to stay. They are not normal in a free and democratic society. They were justified 11 years ago only on the basis of out-of-date statistics that French was threatened with disappearance. Recent data shows that French is thriving. Those restrictive measures on our freedom and on the English language are no longer justified.

I want to congratulate those who never gave in to oppression, those in this room, and above all, Brent Tyler. He was told it couldn't be done. He proved that it could be done and he did it.

The lesson of the court is this : get off your knees, stand up for justice, stand up for your rights. The nervous Nellies and the jelly-legged Jacks kept telling us : « Don't rock the boat, » don't go to court, you might provoke the nationalists.

The court is the conscience of our society, and the court told us today : you will win your rights, but only if you have the courage to defend them.

Vive le Québec – *vraiment* libre!