

Resident fights for court trial in French language

by Dona Beauvais
Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith says that she feels like a second class citizen in the country where she was born.

On January 26, 1978 Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith will go before Judge Montgomery of the Provincial Court, in Penetanguishene. She has been charged with careless driving, under the traffic act. This in itself is not unique, but the circumstances surrounding this case are. Ms. Guay-Galbraith believes that this case will set a precedent in this area.

The 'Judicature Act' governs the functioning of the Ontario Court system. According to this act, the working language of the courts is English. Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith is French Canadian by birth and her mother tongue is French. Provincial law does take into consideration that not all residents of Ontario speak English. Therefore an interpreter is provided by the court for the accused, be they of French, Italian, German, or any other origin. In order that a case may proceed.

Ms. Guay-Galbraith will be represented in court, according to that law, and an interpreter will be present for her benefit. According to OPP Constable Ivan Price the interpreter will be "just an ordinary citizen". Ms. Guay-Galbraith does not feel, however that she can properly explain her case to the courts through an interpreter nor does she feel that she should have to.

"Franco-Ontarion's are not an ethnic group," states Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith, "we are very much a part of this country." Ms. Guay-Galbraith says that she feels that her case should be heard by a French speaking court, from the Judge to the crown attorney. She says: "Anglophones defend themselves in Quebec, they have their rights, they are as much of a minority as we are here." Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith has stated that she will not defend her case through an interpreter. She has said that she will refuse to answer questions put to her in this manner and that she will repeatedly state that she is a French-Canadian who deserves to have her trial conducted in French.

"I am not avoiding the action, I will gladly go and defend my case, in French," said Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith. She says that she realizes that there is little that the judge or the court can do about this law and Ms. Guay-Galbraith wants to emphasize that she places no blame on local officials. "I do not blame Penetanguishene Court, I know the history, I know that as such, and I don't blame the judge either," she said.

Nor by her actions, she says, does she wish to polarize the people of this area. "I just want to be treated with respect due to Franco-Ontarion's," she said. Who then is Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith appealing to by refusing to cooperate with the judicial system, when she appears in court this Thursday? The answer seems to be the Honorable Roy McMurtry, Attorney General of Ontario. Last week Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith sent a letter to the Attorney General explaining the situation and her views on this subject.

A carbon copy of this letter was given to the Penetanguishene Citizen. The opening paragraphs explain Ms. Guay-Galbraith's views. "In this letter, I do not wish to discuss the facts, the accusation or the defense of my case since it is now pending in the Penetanguishene Criminal Court." "I would like to bring to your attention my request for a French trial." "The reason for my demand is very simple. I

myself I can only presume that they will find me guilty as accused," she said. Ms. Guay-Galbraith added: "I'm not going to pay a fine for a case I can't defend. I don't know what the judge will decide. In case his decision is jail then I'll have to abide by that, but I refuse to live in prison, in which the government of Ontario or their representative has sent me without having a

chance to defend myself in the proper way and so I will not accept their food. That is of course if my health permits me." Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith has prepared herself for a hunger strike should she be jailed. She says that she has been extremely careful about her vegetarian diet in the past few weeks, eliminating potentially harmful foods. She has been consuming mainly water, juices and green vegetables and has said that she will accept only juices and water should she be jailed. On January 26 Rejeanne Guay-Galbraith will go before Judge Montgomery of the Criminal Court of Ontario charged with 'careless driving'. It is almost certain that this case will not be treated lightly. The outcome of this trial may very well set a precedent in this area.

Life saving attempt

Hydro workers honoured

Quick thinking and good training make Ontario Hydro workers capable lifesavers in an emergency. Nine forestry workers found that out when they made an attempt to save the life of Harold Taylor last August. The crew encountered the emergency in White Falls, where they discovered Mr. Taylor being given artificial respiration by a nurse. According to crew chief Remi Robillard, the men wasted no time in giving assistance by taking turns giving artificial respiration to the unconscious heart attack victim. An ambulance was called immediately, and within half an hour it arrived at the scene—having travelled 25 miles from the hospital. According to Mr. Ribolard, a number of people were at the scene, but none of them knew how to give assistance to the victim except the nurse. "Not a second is wasted the way we're trained," Mr. Robillard said,

"otherwise we'd have been standing around with the rest of the people." Mr. Taylor—a retired forest ranger—was taken to the hospital, but was pronounced dead on arrival.

Shown with the plaque they received for their efforts are four of the nine Hydro workers who attempted to save the life of heart attack victim Harold Taylor. From left to right they are: Remi Robillard, Paul Sauve, John Morrison and Bill Klug. Other members of the crew who weren't present for the picture are: David Horne, Ken Brown, Brad Rayment and Roger Ladoucer.

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