

Private Members' Business

I was mentioning earlier that the issue of multiculturalism is of high profile in the media of late. I was reading a recent edition of *India Abroad* in which Professor Milton Israel wrote about the issue of identity as it pertains to multiculturalism. He wrote:

For some the emphasis on ethnicity facilitates division; for others, it provides a means to cope and a possibility of unity on better terms. Still others insist that national boundaries and the limited and distinctive identities they produce are eroding and the future lies with the "transnationals", people who are at home in more than one society. The loss of old home through migration or the substantial immigration of others is not to be lamented but a new kind of cosmopolitan nationalism is to be embraced.

I share this view. We do not need a special dispensation from the government to foster this belief. Members of ethnic communities also espouse these views. I experienced this when I spoke to the Human Rights and Race Relations Centre in Toronto, a privately funded organization that works to end discrimination in Canada. I went there on March 21 which was a day that acknowledged a race-free society. In fact it was called "the day to eliminate racism in the world".

I was so impressed that day with the individuals I met. They were all volunteers, leaders from the ethnic communities in Toronto. They had strived free of federal government funding to bring together other community leaders to discuss the issue of racial discrimination in the hope that it could be eliminated in this century.

There was a wonderful letter in the conference package that had been written by the hon. Paul Martin. He said he wished to acknowledge the work and contribution of the Human Rights and Race Relations Centre toward ending racial discrimination in this country. He acknowledged the dedication and commitment demonstrated by the staff and the volunteers—indeed all of them in this centre are volunteers—and that their efforts had been exemplary. He said that they all deserved to be commended for their efforts.

This is an excellent example of a group of Canadians who are working together without government funding to support and to further the process to eliminate discrimination.

The Speaker: I wonder, only because I take a special interest in what the hon. member is saying, would she clarify if that was the hon. Paul Martin Sr. or Jr.?

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, this was from the hon. Paul Martin, Jr. It was a letter he had written dated March 13, 1995. It was to help give support to this group in Toronto. I wanted to share that with the House because he had written such a wonderful letter to them.

The Reform Party opposes the current concept of multiculturalism and hyphenated Canadianism pursued by the Government of Canada. We would end funding of the multiculturalism

program and support the abolition of the department and the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism.

If the Minister of Finance sincerely wants ideas on how to cut the deficit he will get rid of this aspect of special interest funding. He would immediately save the taxpayers of Canada some \$38.8 million a year. This also sends a powerful message to all concerned that beliefs in self-reliance, the indomitable spirit of the self in search of autonomy and independence is encouraged and championed in Canada.

• (1810)

Multiculturalism was introduced in the House of Commons on October 8, 1971. In the 23 years that have followed, it has been politically incorrect for anyone to criticize it. I will repeat that. It has been politically incorrect for anyone to criticize it, especially in the House of Commons. I do not know the number of times I have had to bear the label of being bigoted because I speak from a different point of view. I have no patience for that any longer when all I want to do is bring reasoned and rational debate to this issue.

In fact, members of Parliament from the Tories, the Grits and the NDP have all used the multiculturalism policy in a way that I believe is insincere, superficial and shallow in order to garner political support from ethnic communities.

We all want the right to retain our roots, but what we have is Trudeau's enforced multicultural scam and the costs have been excessive. Ethnic group is pitted against ethnic group and the country is fragmented into a thousand consciousnesses. Trudeau's ideas about multiculturalism continue to contribute as a primary factor in the erosion of federalism and Canada's unity. Catering to special interest groups a la Trudeau and company smashes the spine of federalism. This destructive outcome is almost inevitable so long as we officially encourage large groups to remain apart from the mainstream.

The multiculturalism policy of Canada was designed to "recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage". It is intended to "promote full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins" in all aspects of Canadian life, including "equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity". The language of the policy is fairly innocuous and well meaning, but in practice it endorses special interest groups' agendas at the expense of the taxpayer.

Canadians remain unsure of what multiculturalism is, what it is trying to do and why and what it can accomplish in a free and democratic society such as ours. Multiculturalism can encompass folk songs, dance, food, festivals, arts and crafts, museums, heritage languages, ethnic studies, ethnic presses, race relations, culture sharing and human rights. Much of the opposition