

### Multiculturalism

**Mr. Yewchuk:** I agree with that.

**Mr. Prud'homme:** I want to say this in conclusion. I hope that in future politicians of every party will try to explain the history of Canada. I hope they will try to explain what we mean by recognizing two official languages. Then it will be much easier to make people understand why Ukrainian is not one of the official languages, even though in one particular district they might number 40 per cent of the population while the Canadiens français might account for only one per cent. The day politicians begin to realize the history of this country and explain it in various parts of Canada, Canada will be really bilingual as well as highly multicultural.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher):** Mr. Speaker, in speaking in favour of the motion before us, my purpose is to give the minister responsible for multiculturalism some of my views and suggestions. I trust they will be in a positive vein.

First, though, I must comment on some of the statements just made by the hon. member for St. Denis (Mr. Prud'homme). It is precisely that type of veiled threat he has just finished making with reference to western Canada, in which he gave the impression that people are elected on the basis of bias and bigotry, which should have no place in this House. It should have no place in Canada whatsoever.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Does the hon. member rise on a question of privilege?

**Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Economic Expansion):** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I took all possible precautions to escape the trap in which the hon. member would like me to fall now. I never said what the hon. member suggests I said and he has no right to credit me with such intentions. I spoke in a general way. I did not show any political partisanship and I think that the hon. member opens the debate on a very unfortunate note as my intentions were not really such and if that is what the hon. member understood, well, I think he misunderstood me.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Order. I regret, but I rather feel the hon. member is initiating a debate.

[English]

**Mr. Epp:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, I believe the innuendo was there, and I do not think an innuendo of that type has any place in a discussion of bilingualism or the multiculturalism we are discussing today.

As the underlying premise of the ideas I wish to convey to the minister, let me state clearly that bilingualism, together with biculturalism, is an historical fact of Canada. It is also a constitutional fact. I agree with other speakers that for too long we have paid only lip service to the French language. I fully recognize that Canadians who are French speaking have a right to expect services from

[Mr. Prud'homme.]

the federal government to be provided in the language of their birth. In other words, I want to say that multiculturalism does not detract from the official policy on bilingualism and biculturalism. I do not believe that multiculturalism is divisive. It does not undermine bilingualism or biculturalism. But I believe that this government in the past, especially between the years 1968 and 1971, gave the impression to many Canadians of so-called multicultural background that multiculturalism had to be played down in order that bilingualism and biculturalism could survive. It is clear to many smaller ethnic groups that while multiculturalism has been played down and just lip service paid to it as a policy, there has in fact been very little constructive policy between these years.

● (1740)

Ethnic and multicultural groups have made contributions to Canada of various kinds, and I shall not go into that aspect. Canada is a pluralistic society, but first of all we must be Canadians, not hyphenated Canadians. There is no such thing as an English-speaking or French-speaking Canadian being any better than any other Canadian; we are all Canadians and that is what we should stress. Each member of this House should take it upon himself to bring this message to all Canadians in their ridings. Divisiveness on the basis of nationality and ethnic background has no place whatever in Canada. I suggest members on both sides of the House heed this lesson very carefully. I do not disagree with the minister that multiculturalism as such has been recognized, and I welcome this and commend him for it. But we must also recognize that the so-called third group—a term that I also have some difficulty with—has a background which, when its members came to Canada, had to be if not negated at least reduced in terms of the importance those members would have liked to give it.

Today, we see our young people whose background is not French or English asking for a clear identification of their cultural background of generations ago. Someone said that a person who forgets the lessons of the past has no right to look to the future, and I think that multiculturalism proves that looking to the past is a valid concept. Canada has been a refuge for many people. This country welcomed those who do not belong to the two largest ethnic groups in Canada, and I believe that they have made their contribution in a positive way and added to Canada's contribution on the international scene as well.

Multiculturalism policy can fall into the trap of becoming partisan. Much has been said today about former prime ministers of the Liberal party recognizing this fact when they made multiculturalism part of government policy. I do not want to discredit that fact, but I should like to refer to the contributions made and the leadership given by the government led by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker). Speaking now as a western Canadian, the right hon. gentleman was recognized by multicultural groups as a man who, in turn, recognized the contribution that they had made to life in Canada, and that it was a positive contribution. It was not simply a matter of increasing funds from \$3 million to \$10 million and of saying: "I have now recognized you and that you have made a contribution".