

MULTICULTURALISM IN A BILINGUAL FRAMEWORK

The following is a statement by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on October 8:

I am happy this morning to be able to reveal to the House that the Government has accepted all those recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism as contained in Volume IV of its reports directed to federal departments and agencies. Honourable Members will recall that the subject of this volume is "the contribution by other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution".

Volume IV examined the whole question of cultural and ethnic pluralism in this country and the status of our various cultures and languages, an area of study given all too little attention in the past by scholars.

It was the view of the Royal Commission, shared by the Government and, I am sure, by all Canadians, that there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples and yet a third for all others. For although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly.

The Royal Commission was guided by the belief that adherence to one's ethnic group is influenced not so much by one's origin or mother tongue as by one's sense of belonging to the group, and by what the Commission calls the group's "collective will to exist": The Government shares this belief.

The individual's freedom would be hampered if he were locked for life within a particular cultural compartment by the accident of birth or language. It is vital, therefore, that every Canadian, whatever his ethnic origin, be given a chance to learn at least one of the two languages in which his country conducts its official business and its politics.

A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the Government as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians. Such a policy should help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies. National unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create this initial confidence. It can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all.

The Government will support and encourage the various cultures and ethnic groups that give structure and vitality to our society. They will be encouraged to share their cultural expression and values with

other Canadians and so contribute to a richer life for us all.

In the past, substantial public support has been given largely to the arts and cultural institutions of English-speaking Canada. More recently, and largely with the help of the Royal Commission's earlier recommendations in Volumes I to III, there has been a conscious effort on the Government's part to correct any bias against the French language and culture. In the last few months the Government has taken steps to provide funds to support cultural-educational centres for native people. The policy I am announcing today accepts the contention of the other cultural communities that they, too, are essential elements in Canada and deserve government assistance in order to contribute to regional and national life in ways that derive from their heritages yet are distinctively Canadian.

FEDERAL SUPPORT

In implementing a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework, the Government will provide support in four ways.

First, resources permitting, the Government will seek to assist all Canadian cultural groups that have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop, a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada, and a clear need for assistance, the small and weak groups no less than the strong and highly organized.

Second, the Government will assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society.

Third, the Government will promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity.

Fourth, the Government will continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society.

CO-OPERATION WITH PROVINCES

Mr. Speaker, I stated at the outset that the Government has accepted in principle all recommendations addressed to federal departments and agencies. We are also ready and willing to work co-operatively with the provincial governments towards implementing those recommendations that concern matters under provincial or shared responsibility.

Some of the programs endorsed or recommended by the Commission have been administered for some time by various federal agencies. I might mention the Citizenship Branch, the CRTC and its predecessor the BBG, the National Film Board and the National Museum of Man. These programs will be revised, broadened and reactivated and they will receive the additional funds that may be required.

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