

Government Orders

purpose are a cultural magnet that pull Canadians together.

As the author wrote in the book entitled *Canada in the '90s*, we need an *élan vital*, a mission, a statement, a national purpose. Why do we need it even more today? Because we see that there is a continental pull to the United States, as a consequence, I believe, of the free trade agreement that will pull our provinces apart. And, of course, there is the present constitutional impasse that threatens the unity of our country.

Third, and perhaps more important, are the demographic shifts in our country with the arrival of new immigrants. It is estimated that beyond the year 2000 we will see more and more immigrants from Asian countries which will thereby change the demographic composition of Canada as we know it today.

The challenge is to the minds and hearts to have that mission, that so-called *élan vital*, the psychological force that should drive citizens, countries and institutions together. When we have achieved that, then the meaning of the establishment of a Canadian Race Relations Foundation will truly be appreciated. We will truly support the concept of multiculturalism, the essence of which, I submit, is equality and dignity for all Canadians.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to discuss Bill C-63, an act to establish the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

The foundation which will be established as a registered charity will facilitate the development, sharing and application of knowledge and expertise, and contribute to the elimination of racism and all forms of racial discrimination in Canada.

The preamble to this bill outlines the international and domestic obligations of the Canadian government to the protection of minorities and prevention of discrimination. Such obligations include one to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which commits nations to the adoption of all measures designed to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982 states that every citizen is equal and thus, the establishment of such a foundation will help bring the social and legal reality closer together.

The Multiculturalism Act attempts to bring about the participation of all Canadians in our society. In concluding the Japanese Canadian redress agreement, the government agreed to establish a race relations foundation.

The above obligations are attempts by the federal government, in particular past Liberal governments, to make a commitment to equality in Canada.

First, I would like to point out how unfortunate it is that in this day and age we even need a foundation to promote racial harmony and tolerance in our country. The fact that every day we see more and more evidence of racism is deplorable.

When I was reading the information for this debate, I could not help but think about how sad it is that we even need to take up time discussing racism in Canada. I could not help but ask myself, why can't people treat each other regardless of colour, religion, or language with the same respect every human being deserves. Unfortunately there are people in this world and in this great country of ours who are intolerant to minorities and who harbour racist discriminatory sentiments.

• (1700)

We see evidence of this almost daily now. Just last week I was one of many people who attended a rally in my riding of Nepean condemning vandals who attacked the Ottawa Jewish Community Cemetery, knocking over headstones and spray-painting swastikas and Nazi slogans on graves. I pointed out that Canadians everywhere joined together to voice our disgust about the barbaric action by a few individuals filled with hate.

Unfortunately, because of individuals like these who advocate intolerance, we are forced to stand in this House today to debate the establishment of a foundation to promote racial harmony and tolerance. The creation of institutions such as this one is important to the fight against racism. However, the creation of institutions is no substitute for concrete policy action and in this respect the present government has failed miserably.