

Madam Speaker: Order, please. That is not a question of privilege. The Hon. Member may have another chance to explain himself but I suspect he wanted to say it was supplementary in the sense that it was a question about Mr. Bush's visit. That is not a supplementary either. At any rate, he does not have a question of privilege.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

MULTICULTURALISM

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Jim Fleming (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Madam Speaker, Hon. Members, today was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It commemorates the anniversary of the massacre of unarmed people who, on March 21, 1960, were demonstrating peacefully in Sharpeville, South Africa, against that country's racial laws.

[Translation]

Canada is one of the signatories to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which came into force in 1969, and since then we have reported six times to the United Nations on our adherence to the provisions of that instrument.

Here in Canada, our Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as the fact that our Constitution does acknowledge the principle of multiculturalism demonstrate clearly to what extent we want all Canadians, regardless of their culture or race, to enjoy equality and justice.

[English]

The policy of multiculturalism, adopted by Parliament over a decade ago, committed Canada to the concept of cultural pluralism within a bilingual framework. One of the basic thrusts of that policy is to assist all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society. Discrimination against certain cultural groups is certainly a barrier to such participation. The "visible minorities", that is native peoples and people with origins in Asia and Africa, face particular difficulties in this respect.

While we in this country are making progress toward eliminating these barriers, much still remains to be done to achieve the goal of full and equal participation for all our people. In the area of racial discrimination we have begun to open up a constructive dialogue among Canadians in various fields to seek ways in which such discrimination can be eliminated in our society.

The Government of Canada has taken a number of initiatives in this area over the last few years. The most important of these are multiculturalism's tenth anniversary conference in

Elimination of Racial Discrimination

1981 which brought together at the national level for the first time, to begin this dialogue, leaders of business, labour, the media and visible minority groups. The symposium on Race Relations and the Law in April of last year similarly brought together leaders to deal with issues of the use of the law to fight racial discrimination.

• (1510)

A National Conference on Visible Minorities and the Media was held in the fall of 1982. Key representatives from the advertising and broadcasting industries and visible minorities discussed how Canadian media can better reflect and portray the diversity of Canadian society in its advertisements and programs. The Government of Canada has set an example in this area by adopting guidelines on the portrayal and depiction of minorities in federal Government communications.

Within my own ministry, I have established a race relations unit within the multiculturalism program to identify areas which we as a society have to address to remove racial prejudice and discrimination and to promote positive communications and relations.

We all recognize that the promotion of better understanding, tolerance and harmony among our diverse communities is a long-term undertaking. Canada is firmly committed to this undertaking.

[Translation]

I firmly believe that we can forge a multicultural and multiracial society which is creative, dynamic, fascinating and harmonious so as to set an example for others. Canadians have enough goodwill for that and they are ready. We must derive maximum benefits from their constructive approach and the progress we have made so far.

[English]

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, with its explicit inclusion of the principle of multiculturalism, its preservation and enhancement, is a proclamation of a promise for the future. It is up to all of us to ensure that the promise is fulfilled.

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to respond on behalf of my Party to the statement that has just been delivered by the Hon. Minister of State for Multiculturalism (Mr. Fleming).

When I was told an hour ago of the Minister's intention to make a statement, my immediate reaction was that we were moving closer to a general election because, as we know, multiculturalism is a very seasonal public policy with this Government. One never hears of a Minister of Multiculturalism until it is necessary for the Government to assure itself of the electoral support of those whose privilege it has not been to inherit Canada by birth but who have made their personal choice to live in Canada and share in its richness, the splendour of our natural heritage and the generosity of the people.