

*Private Members' Business*

This motion refers to the head tax levied on immigrants from China at the turn of the century. This is indeed a very serious issue because it touches a number of important social questions that are of growing concern.

The member who introduced the motion and myself live in a community that is blessed with a strong and vibrant Chinese community. The city of Scarborough is quickly becoming a major social, commercial, and cultural centre for Chinese Canadians, and we are proud of it.

Canada has been blessed in many ways by the hard work of Chinese Canadians who literally built much of the country.

The historical treatment of Chinese immigrants is deplorable. That is why the Minister of State for Multiculturalism and Citizenship has met with representatives of the Chinese Canadian community to listen to their concerns. Their proposal for redress is being given careful and thorough consideration. I can assure the member and all members of the House that the minister is very conscious of the issue and that he has a personal commitment to issues that concern injustice and racial intolerance.

In just a few weeks we will join together in a celebration of Canada Day. July 1 is a time for all of us to celebrate our country and our shared national heritage. Canada is an international nation. We have built a strong and prosperous country on the foundation of freedom and independence.

The government is continuing to strengthen that foundation. Our record since 1984 is a testament to that commitment.

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act outlines in legislation a vision of Canada where justice, cultural diversity, equality, and national unity are interwoven into a social fabric. Multiculturalism will continue to thrive because the concept is enshrined in our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

• (1720)

The employment equity legislation establishes strict objectives to enhance the participation of all communities, in the Public Service and companies that deal with the federal government.

We have dealt effectively with the redress issue for Japanese Canadians. I might add that the party of my colleague opposite who introduced this motion ignored that issue while it was in office. Out of that redress issue, we are in the process of establishing a Race Relations Foundation and the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute. We are creating a new department of multiculturalism and citizenship which I know my friend also supports. We created the first parliamentary Standing Committee on Multiculturalism.

These policies embrace all Canadians, whether of Chinese or any other heritage. Of course, shameful acts of the past, such as the Chinese head tax, were the result of ignorance and fear. Human nature is fearful of what is different. The way to combat ignorance is through education. The government's policies and programs are doing just that.

Through associations of educators, an understanding of multiculturalism and race relations is being integrated into school programs. As well, the government is working to improve the relations between police forces and the communities that they serve. There is cross-cultural awareness training for personnel and efforts to increase recruits from cultural minorities.

Eliminating racial discrimination requires sound research to develop effective responses. We must understand the causes of racism in order to eradicate it. To that end, as hon. members know, the government has tabled Bill C-63, the Race Relations Foundation Act, which will be established in metropolitan Toronto.

The foundation will serve as a major national resource to facilitate throughout Canada the development, the sharing, the application of knowledge, and the expertise that will help to eliminate racial discrimination. I want to report that today in committee we heard witnesses from the Japanese Canadians are this very issue.

As well, our Canadian Multiculturalism Act commits federal institutions to ensuring that government policies and programs respond to the needs of all Canadians. Federal institutions are building bridges to communities and delivering services in a manner that makes them accessible to everyone.

Along the same lines, the federal government is working with the provincial, territorial and municipal governments in a partnership to eliminate the blight of injustice and racial discrimination. Joint initiatives and