

Government Orders

Within this multicultural framework, political unity and cultural diversity are both seen as priorities. Thus, through decades of legislative tradition and active Canadian citizenship, our dream for Canada has taken shape. Our dream is of a Canada where differences are respected, where all Canadians enjoy the same opportunities and are judged on their individual merits, where people of all origins can live together with dignity and hope. Yet, in spite of these laws, in spite of our good intentions, this vision has not yet been fully realized in our pursuit of a better society. Sadly, daily examples of these shortcomings are all around us. Racism and racial discrimination have been and continue to be a burden on the soul of this nation. It is a disturbing reality, entire cultures discriminated against, denigrated and exploited, Canadian men and women treated as second-class citizens, living lives filled with bitterness, frustrated hopes and sorrow or, worse still, accepting that they are somehow deserving of the dehumanizing wrath of racism.

Ask Donald Marshall and he will tell you of his years of pain.

[*Translation*]

Today, we are more conscious of the manifestations of racism around us. I am proud to say that this government leads the way in this new awareness.

We listened to Canadians of all origins and all walks of life, and we have taken their legitimate concerns to heart. In response to their appeals, we developed our multicultural policy, and we have struck out on a new path with new hopes for a more egalitarian Canada.

However, most important is that today we must realize that eliminating discrimination is one of the most effective ways to build a more tolerant society.

[*English*]

Implicit in our efforts is a faith in the power of the human intellect, in the ability of Canadians to seek and find the truth. In our desire to put the dead ideas of the past to rest and advance as a society, this is the process through which we will move forward into the next decade and shape our history.¹¹

We are entering a new era. More than ever before, Canadians will provide the most valuable kind of leadership, and all our leadership will be through the power of ideas. Our Canadian creed will be recognized as one of

knowledge and understanding. It will reject the doctrine of racism with all its false assumptions. It will reject the pseudo-scientific concept of race.

Madam Speaker, this is not a minor or purely academic consideration. It is fundamental to our understanding of the truth. The idea of race is based on the long-held but discredited notion that cultural or physical differences are more than external, that they are biological, that a black person is inherently different than a white person, or an East Asian.

Of course, there are profound consequences to accepting that there is more than one race in the human species. When we accept this notion we tend to reinforce claims of biological superiority or inferiority. We make discrimination intellectually feasible. We make it seem rational.

There was never an Aryan race, only a German people living alongside a Jewish people, both members of the human race. Yet we know where this erroneous belief in two separate races eventually led.

Forty years later, in the nation known as South Africa, there is no white race living in the same territory inhabited by members of the black race—only black and white South Africans, equally members of the human family.

Geneticists and anthropologists have discarded the concept of race because they have found it a useless construct for meaningful analysis of differences between groups, yet racist myth-making abounds.

There are countless myths that feed on the same false premise of race. Our task then is two fold: first, to destroy the fraudulent foundation of "race" on which racism rests; second, to address the actual practice of racism—what we call racial discrimination. We must fight discrimination and prejudice everywhere it happens; in our places of work, our schools, our neighbourhoods and in our relations with each other. Without question, this is one of the principal challenges in Canada today. It is a challenge that cannot be met with old ideas, empty rhetoric or simplistic solutions. This is the weakest kind of approach, devoid of any sense of conviction.

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Instead, our challenge must be met with measures to promote institutional change, public awareness and education. It calls for political will at all levels of govern-