

Canadian Multiculturalism Act

only debating Motion No. 4. It is an important step. It is a step the Liberal Party tried to have recognized in the Meech Lake Accord when we moved one specific amendment. It was to have in the opening clause of our Constitution a recognition that our two official languages and our multicultural society constitute fundamental characteristics of the same country. To suggest one is fundamental and the other is an element really implies a different status for the two.

While we are not changing the constitutional Accord, and while this Party is still committed to negotiating a Meech Lake Accord that would see the opening clause proudly recognize multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic, I am pleased that in Bill C-93 we are recognizing that multiculturalism constitutes a fundamental characteristic of our nation. It is my hope that we can go from this one specific clause in this piece of legislation and transfer that feeling and emotion into our Constitution the next time Parliament deals with the Meech Lake Accord.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, I rise to support the amendments that are being discussed, particularly the amendments moved by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp).

It is not difficult for Governments to enunciate policies and for Governments to try to implement those policies by passing legislation. Unfortunately, experience and history have taught us that we can have a law and a policy, but if the determination to see that those policies are carried out is not very firm, then not much happens.

I remind Hon. Members that long before this Parliament or any of the provinces dealt with the question of multiculturalism the Parliament of Canada, and I believe almost every province in Canada, enacted after a great deal of discussion and after hearing many representations, fair employment practices legislation and fair accommodations legislation. The Parliament of Canada and the legislatures of Canada enunciated the principle that to discriminate in the fields of employment or housing against a person or persons because of their race, religion or colour and, later, sex, was contrary to the law. That sounds fine, but if one looks at the reality one sees that very little in fact has been accomplished.

If a study were made of Governments, federal, provincial or municipal, to see how many public servants employed by the three levels of government come from visible minority groups we would all hang our heads in shame. In my own City of Winnipeg I am certain that, if I examined the people who worked for the police and fire department, I could count on the fingers of my two hands the total number of people working for those two departments who come from visible minority groups.

● (1650)

Last week my colleague, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—North Centre (Mr. Keeper), was urging Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to use its influence to take action

against the owners of rental housing because there is a great deal of evidence that they discriminate in renting apartments to native people. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—North Centre, was correct in raising that matter. But I have to say with a good deal of dismay that I believe that not only was Canada Mortgage and Housing remiss, but so was the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, a commission set up in legislation in a province that has had an NDP Government for years. That commission should have been dealing with this question.

These are not easy matters. There is a great deal of prejudice among sections of our population. The whole point of that type of legislation, and the whole purpose of our attempt to deal with the reality of multiculturalism is to help the people from minority groups. My friend, the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi), stated that he is a first generation Canadian. I am a second generation Canadian. The fathers and grandfathers of some of the people whom I represent came to this country years ago, and some of the people I represent have come more recently in the last few years. They need assistance. They do not only need speeches telling them that we welcome them. They do not only need legislation which supposedly helps and protects them. What they need is real action on the part of Governments.

I say with a great deal of regret, and perhaps if I thought about it I could use much stronger language, that regardless of Party, Governments have not been as vigilant, as aggressive, and as determined as they should have been to deal with the type of discrimination that goes on.

Let me return to the debate when the Government brought in its Employment Equity Act. What is contained in the Act is fine as far as it goes, but the Act will be a failure because there is nothing in the Act that requires Departments to set targets, to attempt to reach those targets, and to report each year on how close they have come, or if they have come anywhere near to achieving the targets. If Departments are not implementing the policies that Governments have stated they believe in, then Governments can take the action to see that the type of principles set forth in that Employment Equity Act, and in the principles that are set forth in this Bill, become more than words in a Bill which gathers dust on the shelves of most law libraries in this country, but become a reality. That reality is extremely important and necessary for many people who live in this country.

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, I have a few words to say about this legislation, and I do wish to make a few points with regard to the motions that we are presently dealing with, particularly Motion No. 14 put forward by my colleague. This motion is designed to commit federal institutions to implementing policies, programs and practices rather than simply promoting them.

The reason this motion is significant is that in presenting this notion I hear my colleague saying that Governments ought to take action and not only have great rhetoric with regard to