

Multiculturalism

If some people in Canada, and especially in the House, believe that is perhaps there a superior race showing more tolerance towards the others, I immediately say that we must dispute such an ideology.

● (1720)

[English]

There is in Canada no superior race and no superior group. We are all equals in this country, and as long as I am a member of this House or am anywhere else in Quebec or in Canada, I will make absolutely sure that everybody realizes that no one is superior to anyone else because of background, because of the alleged superiority of his language or because we use one language more often than any other language in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, to my mind it is unfortunate that the hon. member for Athabasca should have told us that the government is not really interested in a multicultural policy, that it uses it merely to flatter the people and induce them into supporting the liberal party, perhaps for political ends.

For the guidance of the hon. member for Athabasca and those who may share his views, I shall quote a journalist of high repute who is certainly very well known in Canada. I refer to an article published in the *Montreal Star* on May 12, 1973.

[English]

I now wish to quote something written by a man, highly regarded, not only among Ukrainian Canadians but, as well, by all others across Canada, including many writers and journalists. I am referring to Mr. Roman Rakhmanny, a Montreal journalist and native of the Ukraine who moved to Montreal 14 years ago. I will not quote much of his article. Nevertheless, what he wrote, it seems to me, refutes the charge that we are merely interested in tokenism in our multicultural policy. He wrote:

To be sure, no one doubts the sincerity of the architects of the policy; they did what they believed to be just and necessary for Canada. Nevertheless, there was no debate during the last election campaign, which would have clarified the primary issue of the problem; the need of constitutional guarantees for the 'third-language' groups.

More specifically, neither the Progressive Conservative Party nor the New Democratic Party has included in its program any form of multicultural policy.

I shall continue reading from the article in a moment. The author refers to the Ontario government. I wonder which government is guilty of adopting positions of tokenism in this country. Is it this government, the government of Ontario, or the government of the province of Alberta? Mr. Rakhmanny goes on to say:

The Ontario government supported a large Heritage Ontario Congress last June. A similar conference on multiculturalism was held in Alberta and its recommendations were upheld by the new Conservative administration.

However, as Professor M. E. Lupul, a prominent Ukrainian Canadian of whom the mover of the motion must be aware, remarked, although those recommendations were upheld by the new Conservative administrations, "Neither has lifted a finger yet to put into practice the precepts they seemingly have embraced."

[Mr. Prud'homme.]

Let me tell you what I think about this, Mr. Speaker. I think that because the federal government in October, 1972, announced that Canada was a bilingual and multicultural country, and showed the way, the province of Ontario said, "We must do something, too," so they organized Heritage Ontario. This action was followed by the action taken by the provincial Conservative government of Alberta, which thought that it, too, must organize something similar. Consequently, it organized Heritage Alberta. Neither of these governments has done anything yet in the multicultural field. I will not mention all the things that the minister has done. I will only say that ever since he was appointed, the minister has been absolutely tireless.

[Translation]

The minister spared neither his efforts nor his time in making of this policy a truly positive policy to help Canadians better respect, know and understand one another.

The hon. member knows full well—and I said so a while ago to the hon. member for Winnipeg North—that it is not easy to set up an advisory committee whose members are obviously not all chosen from the riding of Winnipeg North. It is quite obvious that if the members of that advisory committee had been selected in the riding of Saint-Denis in Montreal, where 17 languages are spoken, and not solely in Winnipeg North—

[English]

I have always said that the district I represent is like a small United Nations, and it works. My majority was not provided by the French; it was provided by every group. The community I represent includes 17 linguistic groups. If the minister had asked me to supply him with a multicultural board from the riding of Saint-Denis in Montreal, it would have been easy to oblige him. Obviously, it would have taken me only one week to do this. However, the minister had to consult with people all across Canada, with people in every one of the ten provinces and in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. He had to attend an unbelievable number of meetings with various groups.

Mr. Yewchuk: Nonsense. He sent letters.

Mr. Prud'homme: I think the minister started by doing the right thing. He sent letters first and, after that, held consultations, as the hon. member ought to know.

[Translation]

There are also, in the hon. member's remarks, certain points which I should like him to elucidate—not today, of course, but in the future—and which I find hard to understand.

When, for instance, he says that the CBC, under the Broadcasting Act, is denying us programs in languages other than French or English, I should like to ask him, in the first place, what he is suggesting to the House. Is it the creation of a third state television network, over and above the French and English ones? There is something which I personally dislike to hear, although I am of French origin, is that Canada is divided into three groups of different origins.