

*Government Orders*

The main tenets, the main principles embodied in multiculturalism are familiar to all whose historical perspectives go beyond the mere parochialism of personal experience. For that in a global, international context is surely as inhibiting and as restricting as it is limiting.

Let me make clear that when we speak of multiculturalism we are not breaking new ground, by no means, by no stretch of the imagination. The concept of equality among all men, all women, universal brotherhood, the rule of law in western civilization is not new to Canada. They date at least as far back in history as Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC, pre-Diaspora Israel, and in more recent times to the emperor Caracalla in the 3rd century AD when with a single stroke he bestowed citizenship upon the several and disparate parts of the Roman Empire, thus giving equality before the law, equality of access to decision making without—and this is important—a *a priori* transformation into something else.

• (1340)

Thus we could see in an historical perspective that one could acquire Romanitas without being a Roman. One can become Canadian without having been born here. An individual in the past, as today, could retain his traditions, do business, participate in the local or larger economy, enjoy the privileges of citizenship, fulfil the obligations incumbent upon a holder, and yet not give up his or her identity religious, cultural, linguistic. He or she needed only obey the laws which he or she could shape.

I could easily in that description have referred to our own country Canada—citizenship, the rule of law, tolerance, brotherhood, multiculturalism. It seemed then as now a logical solution to problems emerging when different races with unique religious backgrounds and the *modi vivendi* that emanate from them, with different needs, aspirations, with peculiar social units and economic organizations for their realization, were brought about and brought together. A *lingua franca*, though not indispensable, facilitated the functioning of the marketplace and the exchange of both ideas and culture.

Multiculturalism, by its definition, encourages and stimulates that exchange in a non-threatening environment. It does not confuse culture with language, but it recognizes that language both as an extension and as an expression of culture is the vehicle for finding common values that transcend different cultures. Language bridges and opens doors to peoples, to markets, to ideas. It does not set apart nor does it exclude or seclude.

Canadians face the unhappy condition of being governed by a party that has blurred the distinction between culture and language and in fact has come to equate the one with the other, all to great detriment. It has downgraded the word “culture” to a national or racial designation and has caused Canadians to seek security of being in the refuge of assimilating, voluntarily or otherwise, in the so-called cultures of the two main language groups, an exercise, as some of my colleagues to my left have noted, that has had the effect of marginalizing Canada’s visible minorities in particular. This ethnoculturalism is not multiculturalism.

Any noble Canadian worthy of the adjective should react vigorously against the deliberate refutation of the realities of a new and expanding Canada. To say one believes in multiculturalism is merely to accept what is; a thriving expression of the ultimate definition of individuality grouped in as small or as large units as per individual preference, living according to values commonly accepted by those units and sanctioned by the acquiescence of a duly constituted larger jurisdiction.

As an example, Europe, whose countries and peoples have histories dating back as far 1000 BC, is now realizing that one builds on common ideas, on common needs, on common experiences and that differences are valuable and can be reciprocally profitable conditions that should be nurtured rather than legislated away.

Where are we going by way of contrast? Legislative, attitudinal or systemic discrimination are too ephemeral in their results, too energy consuming in their efforts, to interest our talents, and we squander opportunity.