

Multiculturalism

I shall be quite content, Mr. Speaker, to have the Canadian people decide at an appropriate date whether this government's effort to foster a multicultural society has been a token one or not. I take some consolation in this matter, even at this stage in the life of our government, in knowing that we shall have a record on which to go to the people. Unfortunately, the Conservative party continues to remain in its traditional position of saying what they would do if only they could persuade the people of Canada to entrust them with the responsibility of leading the country. The record of this government already exceeds that of any government in the past with respect to assistance to all of Canada's peoples and our position and programs are clearly stated. We have not indulged in epithets; we have not recited meaningless clichés or adopted positions of tokenism.

Canada stands today on the threshold of troubled times. In an era when economic and technological changes in the world have produced sweeping dislocations without precedent in the entire swell of human history—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the minister, but the time allotted to him has expired and he may continue only if he has the unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Bell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it is with deep regret that we must insist that members stick to their allotted times. The minister could be allowed a minute or two in order to finish his remarks but it will take our members every minute that is available this afternoon to straighten out the fantasy which he has been putting on record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Is the proposal submitted by the hon. member agreed to?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Haidasz: In an era when economic and technological changes in the world have produced sweeping dislocations without precedent in the entire swell of human history, and at a time when the traditional seams of cohesion threaten to snap, a major thrust in Canadian multicultural development is most opportune. Whether the search for identity and struggle for survival prove to be divisive or cohesive, futile or fortunate, will depend on the degree of our participation in shaping Canadian society.

Our attitude, our interest, our response to the federal government's initiative and leadership must transcend economic problems, social differences and language barriers. It must involve all of us. Yes, all of us must be concerned with the development of the Canadian cultural mosaic that will do justice to all Canadians. The additional human and financial resources which will be allocated to carry out these programs is further evidence of the importance that this government attaches to its multicultural policy. That is what multiculturalism is really all about, and I invite all hon. members to participate fully in this Canadian multicultural destiny.

[Mr. Haidasz.]

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might be permitted to ask the minister a question on a matter that needs clarification.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Haidasz: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Alexander: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I could not ascertain from press releases whether the people who represent the minister's advisory council represent visible minority groups who make up our cultural mosaic. Can the minister clarify this question for us? Does it, in fact, represent the ethnic minorities?

● (1610)

Mr. Haidasz: I am pleased to say the membership of the council on multiculturalism is representative of all the ethno-cultural groups in Canada. I will send the hon. member particulars of the membership, from which he will see that it includes representation from among the black people in Canada.

Mr. Alexander: I was not making reference particularly to the black people, though I am glad to see the minister has included them. I am thinking of the Indians, the East Indians and the Eskimos. I am pleased to know that this is what is happening. I would appreciate the information in any event.

Mr. Haidasz: The native peoples of Canada are represented, both Indian and Eskimo. And the East Indians.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the former Prime Minister, Mr. Pearson, proposed the establishment of the Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The New Democratic Party Members of Parliament supported the recommendations made by that commission because we recognized that the unity of Canada was endangered by the feeling among French people, particularly those in Quebec, that they had not been treated fairly in Canada. Some of us, though, including the former member for Selkirk who is now premier of Manitoba, suggested on more than one occasion that while recognizing that English and French were the official languages of Canada, both the federal government and provincial governments should encourage, financially and otherwise, the continuing use and development of the cultures and languages brought to Canada by the other ethnic groups. This was probably because all of us represent essentially English-speaking constituencies and because many of us represent constituencies whose population is largely ethnic in origin, that is, they contain large numbers of Canadian citizens whose origins are neither English nor French. Such citizens, now, in fact, make up one third of the population.

I do not regret the support which I and other members of the New Democratic Party gave to the policy of biculturalism. But I want to say to the minister who has just completed his statement that it is because so many Liberals made this policy appear to be a political issue which only the Liberals can solve that so many Canadians have in recent years felt doubts about that policy. The Liberal