

*Government Orders*

The minister stated in a press release of January 31 that the foundation "will play a vital role in the national effort to rid our society of the scourges of racism and racial discrimination by undertaking research, raising public awareness, and assisting business, labour and government and public and private institutions in their efforts in this area".

This is very, very important. First, let us look at research. One of the major areas in which the foundation could start is in analyzing the stereotypes and myths which exist in society today and are being perpetuated, often by the media I am sorry to say. They must document and present accurate facts.

It is important, for example, that we look at public attitudes to immigration where there is frequently an undercurrent of racism. We need to determine what these attitudes are, dispel the myths, provide accurate data about the positive effects of immigration in Canada and make positive recommendations in this area to the government.

I think of one other example of the kind of myths that are perpetuated. This often happens when there is stress in the community, as we have had in Vancouver with increasing immigration. It is grossly unfair that Hong Kong immigrants have been blamed for this.

• (1220)

When this issue was researched more carefully, we found that it was speculators who were escalating the price of housing; that sellers of homes, who wanted to get the most for their houses, certainly contributed to it; and that a lack of adequate planning, particularly on the part of the city, led to the so-called "monster houses" which were built, not by immigrants, but by developers. This shows how common myths need to be dealt with and facts presented in the process of increasing understanding and, hopefully, warm acceptance of immigrants. This is certainly a major role for the new foundation.

It would be extremely important that a foundation on race relations also work with aboriginal groups who have experienced the greatest degree of racism in all facets of their lives. There are many, many skilled persons and organizations available to assist in this process and to document facts. There are many skilled people from the aboriginal communities who have public relations skills

and art skills who could help with public programs which would promote greater understanding.

Media watch programs are very important. It is very important that a new foundation would monitor and sensitize the media when there are incidents of stereotyping or discrimination. I could mention a number of them. I was involved in one myself when I was speaking in Saskatoon to the Chinese cultural society there. The headline in the paper the next day read: "Chinese say" so and so. Of course the people at that meeting were very offended because this was implying that they were not Canadians, not Canadians of Chinese origin, but that they were Chinese. It was very misleading. So the changing of media attitudes is very important, not only of reporters, who are often not at fault, but of the people who develop headlines as well.

Another function of the new foundation would be to raise public awareness. It is extremely important this new foundation work through existing networks, and organizations and the media directly. It is very important that this not be an isolated academic kind of foundation. I assume they will be contracting out projects as well. They need to consult with persons who are directly affected and people who are working with race relations.

I would like to mention two people whom I know. Sadie Kuehn in Vancouver and Olivia Chow in Toronto are both people who have worked, not only to document racism in their communities—the black community and the Chinese community—but have run as school trustees and worked to change the school system to have positive race relations. Those are the kind of people we need to have involved.

We need to encourage more action in the public as a whole and raise public awareness. I was reminded at a meeting on Sunday that it is not good enough just to be concerned, that it is not good enough for us just to speak out here in Ottawa. Individuals must write to the editors of our papers locally to counteract the racist attitudes that are often expressed. We need people phoning in to hotline shows where perhaps there is the worst kind of bigotry expressed.

Another objective of the foundation is to counteract discrimination in justice. I think we would all agree that it is very important to concentrate on early education. Teacher training and retraining must focus not just on facts, although any foundation could help to provide facts, but on cultural sensitization as well. It is very important that people be tuned in to the cultural sensitivities. To do that requires more than the help of a foundation, of course, but I am sure that could be part of