

As I said in the House on the occasion of the death of Valinda Leonard and her infant son in the Egypt Air incident, no nation is immune to the scourge of terrorism. It is for this reason that it is essential that we pursue with our allies the development of concrete measures to combat terrorism. Similarly, we must put in place protective measures at home and be vigilant in ensuring the prevention of occasions and opportunities for terrorism to incubate or to strike.

That, Sir, if I may say so, is particularly important in a country like Canada precisely because we are a multicultural nation that encourages people to come here from every corner and every colour of the world and to follow their goals, their religions, and their views here in Canada in accordance with Canadian law. There is more opportunity for more people to come here to express their traditions, to live their lives, than is the case in many other countries. As we provide more opportunity, that imposes upon us a greater obligation of care and imposes upon public officials a greater sense of responsibility.

The obligation is greater for us also because we are a free nation and we take our freedom seriously. It is protected in the courts, it is enshrined in the Charter, it is part of the practice of life in Canada. Sir, we all know the elemental reality that there can be no freedom for a society if there are not restraints accepted by individuals. Some of those restraints are set out in law and in policy.

Surely, Sir, we who hold the trust as public office holders have a particular obligation to ensure that laws are respected in Canada, to ensure that this country and its officials do not inadvertently become instruments of organizations or of interests which might seek the dismemberment of friendly states or which might promote or encourage the violence which could be so destructive to the freedom and the multicultural reality that we know here.

Separatism has a particular meaning for Canada. It reminds us of a very difficult period in our history. I think that most Canadians would strongly object to any other country giving support to anyone who promoted separatism in Canada, particularly through violent means. We would certainly press to have that country's government not give, or even be seen to give, any kind of support to such activities.

Mr. Speaker, the Sikh community has a long history in Canada. It has made an outstanding contribution to Canadian society, and as I said in the House on March 3: "This House knows that the vast majority of Canadians of Sikh origin are first-class Canadian citizens trying to raise their families in peace and trying to raise their families in freedom". The Government has a duty to help them do so.