

Mr. Speaker,

On Monday, January 19, the honourable member for Hamilton West directed a question to me and to the Prime Minister regarding allegations of racial discrimination in Canada.

Since the incident which occurred at the Sir George Williams University Computer Centre in February 1969, various statements have been made, both in Canada and in the Caribbean, by some of those accused of offenses in connection with that incident and by other persons with an interest in the matter, alleging that Canada has a racist society and pursues racialist policies. As honourable members are aware, such statements are without foundation. The fact that the Canadian Government does not engage in and will not tolerate in any department or agency for which it is responsible policies which involve discrimination on grounds of race, creed, colour or ethnic origin is well known. Furthermore, as an adherent to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, and a signatory of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Canada has affirmed its opposition to such discrimination. The Government reiterates its fullest support of these principles and objectives.

Since the events of February 1969, I have met on several occasions with a number of people interested in the Sir George Williams University incident. At one such meeting with a group of students and professors, I gave them the Government's assurance that the events at Sir George would in no way affect Canadian government policy with regard to the admission of Caribbean students or the functioning of Canadian Educational Assistance programmes. I have also met twice with diplomatic representatives of the Commonwealth countries of the Caribbean, when I assured them that our immigration regulations and policies would not be altered as a result of these events. I also expressly made the point that the incident at Sir George Williams University should not be allowed to damage relations between Canada and their countries.