

*Government Orders*

ill-thought remarks and responses of politicians and those in leadership who should know better.

Racism is best attacked, not by study, but by action. Increasingly, there is disillusionment with the way in which questions of race and racial discrimination are being dealt with by this very government. There have been any number of examples.

The federal government has failed to implement adequately an employment equity program that results in an over-all performance with respect to the employment of minorities by the federal government. That program does not even compare well with private corporations that the government is supposed to be regulating, and does regulate with respect to employment equity through legislation.

Whereas, 6.4 per cent of the workforce available to federally regulated corporations and 5.7 per cent of the employees of those corporations are members of minority groups, the federal government has only 2 per cent in its employ of visible minority groups.

I would like to cite two examples of quite outrageously bad performances. One is in External Affairs and the other, in Correctional Services. I want to cite the latter, in particular, because last Friday I visited Kingston Penitentiary, Joyceville, and the Women's Prison in Kingston. There we heard testimony revealing an outrageous, tragic situation with respect to the treatment of black prisoners and native prisoners.

I asked whether any natives or blacks were in positions of significance in the prisons. Were there a significant number of native or black guards in those prisons? We are talking about a situation in which a far higher percentage of natives and a far higher percentage of those of African descent find themselves in prisons under circumstances revealed in the Marshall inquiry and other studies. Racial discrimination itself has led to their disproportionate representation in those places. It is well documented that the legal system of the country is biased against native people and minority groups and the poor. Yet, Correctional Services of Canada has one of the worst records with respect to the employment of minorities.

With respect to the Secretary of State Department doing its job, one of the most important things in attacking racism—not in trying to understand it, but in attacking it—is to empower those minority groups that

seek to bring about appropriate change in that regard. Yet, instead of engaging in legitimate consultation with affected minority groups in the country, we find that the Minister of State for Multiculturalism and Citizenship and Secretary of State is contriving to create his own network of chosen Progressive Conservative minority members, rather than the legitimately chosen leaders of the variety of affected communities.

• (1640)

I am told that the commitment to a real attack on racism in the Secretary of State Department is revealed by an insistence that they be very careful even to talk about racial diversity in documents released from that department. I find this incomprehensible. Increasingly, there is an impression that there is a certain lack, if not of commitment, then of a structured, coherent, and consistent approach that can be respected with regard to the treatment of the issues—not the roots of racism, but the effects of racism.

The legislation would also provide the Race Relations Foundation with the means to consult with industry, government, and various other institutions and organizations with respect to how to eliminate racism. Yet, we have departments that are supposed to be addressing that issue. We have a Human Rights Commission which is a scandal in its ineffectiveness. We have the machinery in place, but now we are going to back up and start all over again to see if we can understand racism better.

I suppose the evidence is there that the government and other elements in our society, including the provincial governments, have utterly failed to understand racism adequately. Otherwise, after 50 years, we would have seen a deterioration in the attack on racism and its practice, racial discrimination. Instead, we find ourselves still almost at square one.

If we are back at square one, then we should do it and do it right. I hope it will be done right. I am not standing to oppose this legislation, because in principle it is fine. It just seems to me that it is a significant disappointment that we should have to stop and study, when by now we should have made so much more progress. Circumstances change and maybe this new foundation will permit the government to understand how it, itself, has contributed to the evolving situation in this country. There is an interconnectedness between racism and the