

when rights of this kind could no longer be exercised as they were then. But even today we have not yet told the Indians that that is indeed the case. This resolution tells the Indian population, the Inuit and the non-status Indian population, that the Prime Minister is as committed now to the white paper of 1969 as he was then, and that today he is committed to a course of assimilation and integration at the most rapid pace possible. His opinion on it has not changed since 1969. Why does he not consult with native leaders before making these amendments to the constitution? In answer to my questions in the House he said, "We will patriate the constitution, we will bring it home, and then we will consult with Indians and other interested groups." He forgot to say that the rights of certain minority groups would be entrenched and that the rights of other minority groups would be very much in a secondary position.

I should like to say a few words about another minority group to which I belong. It is not as small or as helpless as the others I have mentioned. It has always been reluctant and perhaps somewhat afraid to speak out. Most assuredly it does not have the same kind of claim and right to speak out in this particular debate. I refer to the one third of our population consisting of new Canadians who did not inherit this great land by birth. All of us in this House with the exception of my hon. friend from the Arctic have belonged to this minority group at one time or another, or our ancestors have. People come to this land for different reasons, mostly for reasons of economic opportunity, which compelled them to make the move. But in many cases it was to escape political persecution and tension. They came to this country to seek political freedom. By accepting citizenship in this country they felt they were entering into a contract, a contract to which they had contributed the assets they had brought with them, such as their education, the skills they had acquired and brought with them and which someone else had paid for. They made a commitment to totally embrace the practice and way of life which was in evidence in Canada when they came. In return they expected the kind of freedom which was in evidence here, the kind of democracy that is the envy of the world. And they expected it would be assured not only to them for the rest of their lives but to their children as well. So they have a very clear stake; they entered into a contract and I, as one of this minority group, think this contract is now about to be broken.

● (2150)

As I said earlier, most of these people came from countries which do possess an entrenched charter of rights. Probably the most beautiful and philosophical charter of rights is that contained in the constitution of the Soviet Union. But what does it mean? It does not mean anything unless it is entrenched in the hearts and minds of the people who interchange with each other. Immigrants expected they would be accepted as full and equal members of this society and that there would be no disadvantages for reason of race, religion or colour. Again, the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mrs. Erola) spoke in glowing terms of the immigrants with whom she came in contact and told us how they had been discriminated

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against. Well, sir, to entrench rights creates nothing but expectations which sometimes cannot be fulfilled. What, for instance, does freedom of religion mean to some of us? Does it mean that an immigrant family can come from India and bring with them their sacred cow and walk it down Yonge Street in Toronto? Of course not.

I can honestly and truthfully say, sir, that I have never been discriminated against. But my commitment was very complete to this country the very first day I arrived here. I was under no illusion that my children could be taught my native language in school. I was under no illusion that I could for ever practice my culture. I knew I had to attune myself to the mainstream of life which was practised here. Indeed, that was the reason for which I came. Certainly I have been in contact with bigots, of whom one has to be charitable and understanding, and it will probably be only my children who will become full members of this society.

Honestly, though, to talk about the generosity of this country one has to look at my experience as an example. Here I am, a member of Parliament. If someone had told me when I landed in Halifax on October 15, an immigrant at the age of 19, that some day I would be a member of the House of Commons, well, sir, I would not have believed it.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Oberle:** Nevertheless, there are members of ethnic groups in my constituency who are being discriminated against every day and were discriminated against after the First and Second World Wars, as well as in between. The reason they are sometimes discriminated against is because they have unreasonable expectations about the relationship between the old country and the new country and their own relationship with this country.

An immigrant knows better than anyone else that one cannot legislate the attitudes of people. Immigrants are most tolerant of those who are narrow minded and who have no understanding. Our immigrants know that only time can heal and that the only rights one has are those which are entrenched in the hearts and minds of the people with whom you live, the people who are your neighbours, the people who share your community. Entrenching the laws does not and will not help the immigrant, or the Indian, to make accommodations for bigotry and insensitivity.

What can we do as a government other than entrench rights? We can create a climate in which hostile attitudes will change. We can assert ourselves in the field of education. When I entered Parliament in 1972 multiculturalism was one of the identifying features of our country. Now we seem to be saying that multiculturalism is a secondary objective, that there are only two cultures and two languages with official status, the others being in a secondary position.

Sir, I know my time is running short but if you would permit me I would like to read a statement by the present Prime Minister when he spoke in 1969: