

Government Orders

window dressing for the Conservative party. Canadians will see, once again, that there is no strong government initiative or even concern about racism in Canada.

It will reinforce this view, particularly as a result of what we have seen with the government dragging its feet on the question of turbans in the RCMP. The government has dragged it out, did not make a decision, and let tempers become inflamed. We have seen it in other areas as well.

If we are to get this foundation off to a good start, the only way to do so is to make sure the people appointed by the minister are bona fide representatives of their constituents and not people who have been receiving political pay-offs from the Conservative party.

Mr. Ron Fisher (Saskatoon—Dundurn): Madam Speaker, on the matter of discrimination, the member has said that he is not a Canadian by birth. Has he felt, as someone who is not part a visible minority, any kind of discrimination?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): Listen, Madam Speaker, perhaps I am— It is not obvious that I belong to a minority in Quebec, but the moment I open my mouth people know that I am not a true-blue Quebecer like the hon. member for Chicoutimi may claim to be. I was not born in Quebec, I belong to the minority and, as a member of a Quebec minority I know I have some rights and I feel just fine. I can tell you that as a Canadian citizen and resident for 23 years I have never felt the least discrimination as an anglophone, and I am extremely proud of that, Madam Speaker, because I chose Quebec.

This was not an accident of birth. When I left the United States I travelled throughout Canada to see where I would want to live in this country, and I chose Quebec. I chose Saint-Barnabé-Sud, but it could have been Jonquière, Chicoutimi, Alma—I just love blueberries—but I picked Saint-Barnabé-Sud. The night I was elected in Chambly I wanted to stress the fact that Quebecers are very tolerant. We tolerate many things. But there are a few things that we do not tolerate, Madam Speaker. What struck me on the night of February 12 was the tolerance, the understanding and especially the warm welcome I was given by the residents of Chambly in spite of all the problems I experienced during the election campaign. I was deeply moved, and this is why I do not think that, basically, Canadians are

xenophobic. I do not think so. When I converse with my American friends I get the impression we are less xenophobic than Americans. It does not mean there are no cases of discrimination and racism. I could tell you about it. There are exceptions, in Montreal Haitian taxi drivers have often heard people say they want a taxi, but not one driven by a Haitian. That is unacceptable. It is inconceivable that anyone would make such a request these days, considering the progress made to give everybody equal access to government services. We sought to give equal access to everybody, we sought to put an end to discrimination. But in our hearts we still harbour the odd prejudice. It happens.

But to get back to the question of my colleague, I find that—and all I know is Quebec—back home there is very little English-French discrimination, Madam Speaker. I am very proud to be able to attest to that here in the House, and to do so in both official languages.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Madam Speaker, as I have travelled throughout Canada over the last couple of years I have noticed something rather upsetting to me. Perhaps it is because as a member of Parliament I am now getting out more and speaking to more people; I hope that is the reason. I have noted that there is less and less tolerance toward people of other races, colours, religions, and a lessening in the desire to understand the other cultures.

I applaud the idea and the thrust of this particular bill on the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, but I wonder about the record of this government in cutting funding for some of the past programs and projects and for various functions that had been set up as important and necessary. It has recognized in this particular foundation something that needs to be done. The research, the study, and the recommendations that hopefully will arise out of this committee will perhaps assure the tolerance and understanding that I alluded to earlier.

• (1730)

I am wondering if the way that this committee has been set up will really work, or is there a recipe for failure that this government can call upon if it is not very careful? In other words, is what we have here recognition of a problem with respect to which there will not be or may not be proper follow through and proper funding made by the government to this foundation? Is it