

Canadian Culture

statement of principles, then there is not a great deal of hope for the various non-French and non-British ethnic groups within Canada. With regard to the native peoples, there have been many statements about high principles but very little in the way of results and there is some doubt, to mention one example, concerning whether the government is doing enough in northeastern Alberta to help the native peoples study their own language.

• (11:20 a.m.)

It is fine to announce a principle, but perhaps the most important thing is what the government is going to do to implement this principle. When the Prime Minister uses a phrase such as "within available funds" we must keep in mind the importance of a balance here. There is no indication whatsoever in the Prime Minister's statement this morning that there will be any substantial implementation. I fully agree that a good deal of money must be expended for the encouragement of the development of bilingualism in this country, but I do not think that members of the other cultural groups with other cultural traditions are at all happy with the relatively pitiful amounts that have been allocated to this other aspect of the diversity about which the Prime Minister spoke this morning, multiculturalism.

The Prime Minister has announced the principles. We expect the Prime Minister and his colleagues to give those principles life and meaning, and we will look forward most anxiously to the implementation of these principles.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): I must say, Mr. Speaker, that it is a pleasure to be able to comment on an important aspect of Canadian life that does not have to do with the economy or with unemployment, and it is equally a pleasure to be able to agree with the statement that the Prime Minister made this morning.

As members of this House know, I have not hesitated to criticize government policy, and no doubt a great deal can be said about tardiness and other aspects of the problem which the Prime Minister has put before us. But I propose this morning merely to express our support and our hopes in order to indicate to the people of Canada that this Parliament is united in its belated determination to recognize the value of the many cultures in our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, it is with a deep appreciation of both aspects of our Canadian cultural life, official bilingualism and multiculturalism, that my party warmly supports the principles set forth this morning by the Prime Minister.

I have often said that one of the most striking wealth of our country is the fact that it has been founded by two distinctive groups having two distinctive languages well known throughout the world. However, another wealth is also important, since we find in Canada some representatives of almost all the cultures in the world. To all Canadians, whatever their ethnic origin, I say that they must be proud of those two enriching aspects of our country.

[*English*]

Every society has its own cultural treasures which it cherishes with pride. It is a fact of man's history that his preoccupations have been too frequently centred on material development and that his spirit has too often

been embittered by conflict and by prejudice. The result has been throughout the world—and this is true of Canadians as well—a failure to appreciate the values of diversity, a tendency to resent rather than to welcome enriching differences. For Canada this attitude is particularly destructive. The diversity of cultures across the land is a source of our greatness as a people.

To cite a recent example, when I arrived a couple of months ago in that small but great town of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, I was greeted in literally ten languages, four or five of which I was able to follow without translation. If *Hansard* permitted, Mr. Speaker, I would have liked to express my pleasure at the Prime Minister's statement of principles in at least two or three other languages in which I could do so without breaking my teeth and in one or two others in which I could do so with some difficulty.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Go ahead.

Mr. Lewis: I say that to emphasize the importance of appreciating the cultural diversity of our land as one of the greatnesses of our people.

As a representative from Toronto I could perhaps say that even a serious subject permits of a little lightness. There was a time not so very long ago when there were jokes made all across Canada about spending a month in Toronto last weekend, and other remarks of that sort. But it is a fact that the influx of people of Italian origin, of Greek origin, of West Indian origin, of origins from many other parts of the world, has made Torontonians proud of their city in a way in which they were not before, and makes some of them even suggest that it is now a viable rival to the city of Montreal.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, it is a fact of society that every minority has a problem of survival. It has a problem of assimilation. It has a problem of keeping alive.

An hon. Member: The NDP.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Or the Liberal party in British Columbia.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I must admit that at first I was annoyed by that vapid and rather stupid remark from the other side of the House by the hon. member for New Westminster, but I decided that perhaps the hon. member was trying to be funny and, if he did not succeed, that may not be his fault.

Mr. Hees: He did pretty well.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, if I may become serious again, I suggest that the important point that faces us is that in every society a minority has a problem, the problem of survival, the problem of keeping alive its history, its language, its traditions, its songs, its legends, its identity. When the majority in a society is as cruel as majorities have often been, not only are minorities crushed but the spirit of that society, the soul of that society, is destroyed. It is in that spirit, therefore, that on behalf of my party I welcome the Prime Minister's statement without any reservations.