

shown that there are significant numbers of Canadians who are not racists and who would not consciously deny equality of opportunity. Nevertheless we are a flawed society. Research has shown that as many as 15 per cent of the population exhibit blatantly racist attitudes, while another 20-25 per cent have some racist tendencies. Moreover, even those individuals who are very tolerant can, with the best of intentions, engage in racism without knowing it or meaning to do so. Similarly, institutions can unintentionally restrict the life chances of non-white individuals through a variety of seemingly neutral rules, regulations and procedures.

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Yet the make-up of the Canadian population has always been multicultural and multiracial. When Europeans first came to this area of the world there were over fifty Inuit and native Indian cultures in existence. It is also the case that the demand for full participation in Canadian society by citizens whose culture is neither French nor English in origin is not a recent phenomenon. The demand for equal participation has, however, gained momentum in the last 20 years. Those developments provide the background for the establishment of the Parliamentary Committee on the Participation of Visible Minorities in Canadian Society.

The spark that ignited the increase in activity was the 1963 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. One of the terms of reference of the Commission was to examine the ways in which Canadians of non-British and non-French origin have taken their place "within the two societies that have provided Canada's social structures and institutions". The terms of reference seemed to have been included as an afterthought and strong opposition developed among ethnic minorities, particularly in the Prairie provinces, because they believed they were being treated as second-class citizens. As a condition for the acceptance of two official languages the demand was made for a greater recognition of the positive cultural and linguistic rights of ethnic minorities. When the Official Languages Act was introduced in October, 1968, the Prime Minister's speech contained the disclaimer that we have two official languages in a pluralistic society. When the legislation came into force in September, 1969, the backlash, particularly in western Canada, led the government to conclude that an overly literal interpretation of the bilingualism formula would lend support to the "two nations" concept. That was considered unacceptable. The result was a formal multicultural policy for Canada introduced in October, 1971, as an official response to the recommendations contained in Book IV of the Bilingual and Bicultural Commission Report. The policy objectives included: support for all of Canada's cultures; assisting members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society; promoting creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups; and assisting immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages. A year later, the Multiculturalism Directorate was established in the Secretary of State Department and a Minister of State for Multiculturalism was appointed.

The structure of the Directorate remained unchanged until 1981, when the existence of both overt and covert racism in Canadian society resulted in the federal government announcement of a national program to combat racism and the establishment of a Race Relations Unit within the Multiculturalism Directorate. The increase in racism was attributed in part to Canada's immigration policy, which increased the numbers of Canadians with origins in the West Indies and India. Once the Race Relations Unit was established, the then Minister of State for Multiculturalism undertook a number of initiatives, which ultimately led to the formation of the Special Committee on the Participation of Visible Minorities in Canadian