

Multiculturalism

forth have acquired the same rights as the English-speaking minority in Quebec. So I think those two concepts must not be mingled together, and that is exactly what this quotation from the Prime Minister does, and if I go on reading it will be seen how I am right.

We are free to be ourselves, but this freedom cannot and should not be left to chance.

Now what does that mean again? Well, these are eggs now being laid by the Prime Minister of our country, and they are square eggs, Mr. Speaker. He goes on:

If freedom of choice is in danger for some group, it is in danger for all.

What choice? What is it all about? Does it relate to the distinction to be made between French Canadians and English Canadians? Is it about ethnic groups? What does it have to do with the subject matter?

So, Mr. Speaker, I should like to take the opportunity of this statement to emphasize those points which will have to be clarified and to bring the government to consider much more seriously all the things and all the areas having to do with the free evolution and fulfilment of individuals in this country.

● (1542)

[English]

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I understand that after ministerial statements we are allowed to ask a question or two. I want to ask one question in particular so that there will be no mistake about the stand of this party in respect to multiculturalism. I resent the member of the socialist party bootlegging in what was a complete untruth.

It is a poor thing to register concern about the multicultural aspect of this country by dipping into the taxpayers' pockets in order to pay him off, and I resent that very much. I want to remind the minister that it is his party, through the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the former minister responsible for multiculturalism, and the present minister, who sat on the government side, when this side of the House introduced an amendment to the Immigration Act to bring in the word multiculturalism. This was a positive step and one which would indicate that we in this House recognized the great contribution—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Would the hon. member please ask the question?

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I was just going to ask the question because I saw you out of the corner of my eye and knew I was treading on dangerous ground.

Mr. Cafik: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: The minister says hear, hear! What information does the minister have for the Canadian people now in terms of recommending to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Cullen), in light of this great concern about the multiculturalism aspect of this country, that he introduce

[Mr. Matte.]

an amendment to the Immigration Act? Mr. Speaker, I see the Attorney General (Mr. Basford) bothering the Minister of State (Multiculturalism) (Mr. Cafik) when I am asking an extremely important question. Where is the respect around here?

The minister promised me that he was going to take this matter up with his colleagues. I should like to know if he has done so in order that an amendment to the Immigration Act, which would be a positive step, would be introduced to insert the word "multiculturalism". This would give some credibility to the minister's concern.

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, I think the matter raised by the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) is a legitimate one. There is no doubt whatsoever that the ethno-cultural community—the non-Francophone or non-Anglophone community—put forward strong representations about the inclusion of a reference to the multicultural aspect of our society in the Immigration Act. I was not involved, as I was chairman of the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs at the same time. In any event, I am quite cognizant of the genuine desire of the ethno-cultural community to have some substantive base in legislation for the multicultural concept. I must admit that I relate favourably to that genuine concern.

● (1552)

I have indicated previously to the hon. member for Hamilton West that I was looking into the possibilities of dealing with this question. Now that the Immigration Act is a fact of law there are better ways of looking at this question in order to achieve more substantive references to multiculturalism. It has been suggested, not only in this House but by the public generally, that there may be some desirability to refer to multiculturalism in any new constitution that might be brought forward. Quite clearly that would be one of the most significant ways that one could give recognition to this concept in the law and in the constitution itself. That is one avenue to consider. There are other avenues that should be considered.

Should we have a legislative base for multiculturalism itself by virtue of a special act of parliament which would promote programs and develop concepts? I believe that is an area where more significant achievement could be made than by opening up the Immigration Act and making a reference specifically in that act. I would draw to the hon. member's attention that the concerns of this House, and the concerns of the public at large, are my concern. I am addressing myself to this question so that we can give important and symbolic recognition to the multicultural dimension of Canada, which is a pragmatic reality of our nation. Whether to do that in terms of legislation or acts of parliament is a useful matter to consider. My directorate is actively pursuing ways and means by which this may be better done in order to achieve the objectives which have been brought to my attention.

Mr. Alexander: That was very interesting, very interesting but to me it is still foot dragging. We are talking about a