

Government Orders

I come from Montreal—as I say, I have emigrated from the United States—which is a city with many cultures. Before that I lived in Saint Hyacinthe, actually a small town called St. Barnabe Sud. I am sure, Madam Speaker, you are aware of it. I am proud of what I found in that small town in Quebec. I found a tolerance for people from other cultures. There is a tolerance for English speaking people and even for Americans, particularly for this American while he was learning his French.

By learning French and living with the people in that town of St. Barnabe Sud, Quebec, I learned less to fear making a mistake. I learned less to fear the French fact. Much more, I learned to respect the differences in other people. Surprisingly enough, I learned that as much as the English language versus the French language separates us, there is much more that unites us. To me it was an amazing discovery.

To this day I find that when I am speaking with my English speaking counterparts in Quebec, many times they do not have a full appreciation of what the Quebec government or Quebec itself is about or they do not understand what we are dealing with either in Meech Lake or in any other subject touching almost to the quick English speaking Quebecers. I find invariably that there is a lack of contact, a lack of knowledge, and a lack of living the French fact, really.

This exists between French and English in Canada. We see it not just in Quebec but in Newfoundland, in Manitoba, and in other provinces in dealing with Meech Lake. We have a failure to communicate, to borrow a phrase from the film *Cool Hand Luke*.

If this can happen just because of something that is recognized as French and English, imagine to what degree this occurs when a person happens to be black, wears a turban, or comes from Asia. It is far easier to hate people who you do not know than it is those who you know or those about whom you know.

I am not suggesting that we live in communes with everybody so that we can have one happy family. I do not think that is possible, but I do believe when we are talking about Canadian Race Relations Foundation that by facilitating the information and contact among groups we take a large step toward better comprehension among

groups, a less volatile situation, and in the end we create understanding.

This is not a panacea to the problems we have today. Certainly it is not a panacea for some of the most outrageous images we see on TV that create tremendous amounts of friction among our different cultures. I was shocked and tried to understand when I saw the image of the Quebec flag trampled and walked upon in I believe Brockville, Ontario. The people of Brockville said—I believe them—that that was not their sentiment.

I am sure the minister on the other side would agree with me. I am sure he would also agree with me that by that time the damage had been done. I do not think the foundation can prevent that kind of damage, because we are always going to have hotheads and people who are going to be attempting to make a statement visibly with the media. Being a part of the media, many times we are part of the problem because we have a tendency to cover that which is exciting and explosive. By doing so we tend to create the situation. I believe that with the foundation we have an opportunity to give people a fair chance to learn about each other. By learning and understanding I believe we can reduce the number of such incidents.

• (1720)

I realize that the minister of state responsible for this legislation will have the right to appoint people who he thinks best represent the multicultural society in Canada. I wish him good luck because it will not be easy.

I ask the minister to be extremely careful and do something that we have not seen for a long time from the other side. I ask the minister not to appoint people for patronage purposes. He should not give this foundation a false start by appointing people who are more beholden to the Conservative party than they are to their own constituents. That would run counter to the foundation's objective and would destroy what confidence people could ever have in it. That is the crux of the problem.

We ask the government to do something that is done rarely. We ask it to proceed with appointing directors to this foundation who will consider of primary importance the competency of the representatives they appoints rather than their political stripe. I hope and trust that the minister will do so. If he does not, people will quickly find that this is a \$12 million boondoggle and only