

● (1540)

The Liberal government of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) acted upon the recommendations of that royal commission, and he announced formally in the House of Commons on October 8, 1971, his government's policy on multiculturalism. That, Mr. Speaker, was an historic date that will be remembered as the most significant event in the Canadian history of our time.

Our late prime minister, Lester B. Pearson, will also be remembered for his enlightened and humanitarian approach to the needs of the Canadian people. The legislation he introduced such as medical insurance, the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Assistance Plan, and other progressive and reform legislation will be remembered gratefully by the Canadian people.

Canada also honours its men and women of outstanding achievement with the Order of Canada, thanks to Lester B. Pearson. The Order of Canada was created on Canada's 100th birthday, and will be forever associated with Lester B. Pearson whose initiative led to the establishment of the order, and gave our country its own system of recognizing merit, achievement and courage. It is a fitting memorial to his great patriotism and statesmanship. Among his many other achievements is our national flag which takes its place of honour to the right of your chair, Mr. Speaker. It was with satisfaction that the Canadian people learned that effective July 1, 1972, the Order was to be enlarged, while at the same time a new Order of Military Merit gives recognition for outstanding achievement on the part of members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The Liberal governments, present and past, have recognized other outstanding Canadians of various ethno-cultural groups by appointing them to the cabinet, to the Senate to diplomatic posts around the world, to the courts of justice, and to federal agencies and advisory bodies. I recall at this time distinguished Canadians so honoured by Liberal governments such as the famous Ukrainian Canadian, Senator Wall of Winnipeg, a Lebanese Canadian, Senator Basha of Newfoundland, our Jewish Canadian senator, Senator David Croll, a Ukrainian Canadian physician, the Hon. Stephen Worabetz who was appointed the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, His Honour John Decore, a chief judge for the district of northern Alberta, and also the Hon. Michael Starr and Peter Taraska, and as recently as May 15 this year Mrs. Isa Scotti, were appointed judges of the Canadian Citizenship Courts. The Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) is also considering commemorating famous Canadians and ethno-cultural groups through a special series of commemorative stamps.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, it was Liberal governments, always guided by compassion and humanitarian considerations, that opened Canada's gates to refugees from displaced persons camps, to thousands of former soldiers, to refugees fleeing from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Tibet, Uganda, and to other immigrants. Our governments have a distinguished record also in assisting these refugees to settle in Canada. Many immigrants to this country have been assisted through paid language courses, vocational retraining or up-grading, in this way facilitating their entry into the main stream of Canadian life.

Canada has also assisted its citizens who are striving to be reunited with their families by being a signatory to the

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United Nations Charter on Human Rights and by insisting, during preparatory talks on European security, that countries act on the reunification of families, freedom of travel, and information exchange.

But the most recent significant development in the field of federal recognition of the contribution of Canadians of all ethno-cultural origins was on that historic date, October 8, 1971, when the Prime Minister formally announced his government's official policy on multiculturalism. May I take time to quote some of his remarks on that occasion. He said:

There are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than a Canadian, and all should be treated fairly.

He also said on that occasion:

A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the government as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians.

The importance of the Prime Minister's statement is that it clearly presents the government's position in this sensitive area, and in doing so it removes constraints and sanctions, particularly official or quasi official ones, that impede the full participation of all groups in Canadian society. Furthermore, the statement is a clear recognition of a reality, the reality that multiculturalism has always existed in Canada, beginning with the diversity of the native peoples, followed by the arrival of explorers from various countries, and reinforced by waves of immigrant settlers from around the world. The record of our government is one of recognition, respect for and encouragement of this cultural diversity as a distinctive feature of the Canadian identity.

An aspect of this recognition is that while Canada is to have two official languages, and legislation in the form of the Official Languages Act has been passed to ensure that Canadians can deal with their government in one or the other of the official languages and guarantee the acquired legal and customary right of other languages, Canada does not, and I repeat does not, have an official culture or cultures. A policy of multiculturalism is a policy of virtually unlimited scope and one which allows all strands of thought, values and beliefs to contribute to the identity we have as Canadians. Culture is not something which should be officially sanctioned, for if it is to have any meaning it must be free to grow and change as the values and beliefs of the Canadian people change. The role of the government is to eliminate barriers to cultural development and, where necessary, to provide support to expressions of the various cultures in our country.

Moreover, this support must be in response to an initiative on the part of the groups themselves. To have it otherwise, in my judgment, would be folly. The government cannot and should not develop a multicultural society by decree, for in attempting to do so something artificial would be created. The cultural identity we have as Canadians is for all Canadians to contribute to, and what we as a government must ensure is that everyone has a full and equal opportunity to participate in the development of our way of life. This concern of ours that all Canadians should participate in the development of our cultural identity is a major consideration which guides our actions. Consequently, we are well aware of the need