

*Private Members' Business*

RCMP officers possess? In the final analysis, what is important is not an officer's headgear, but the quality of the head under the hat or the turban.

I certainly support this bill. It is in keeping with the principle of multiculturalism and it is in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and it will ensure that the effectiveness of the RCMP is not obstructed. Equality is based not on popularity; equality for all ought to be a living principle. Support for this bill is support for the principle of equality for all.

**Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, unless I speak for about a minute, I am told that the bill will be talked out.

Very briefly, having worked as a Crown Attorney in three western provinces for many years and in this city with the RCMP, I would yield to nobody in having greater respect for the RCMP and the fact that the members risk their lives, theoretically, every hour of every day they serve. I have many friends in the RCMP.

I would also speak in favour of the motion. There is only time to make one key point: wearing a turban is a requirement, to the best of my understanding, for a baptised Sikh. It is not a cultural or an optional thing. If you are baptised, you have to wear a turban. Therefore, if you are banned from wearing the dress uniform and, therefore, from joining the RCMP, you are being banned, as I understand it, on the basis of religion.

Secondly, I wonder why the people who in good faith defend the present dress code, did not object when women were allowed into the RCMP at first, and when we began to have skirts in the dress code. It has been pointed out by members of the New Democrats and the Liberals that there have been many changes in the dress. The reality is that the RCMP should be accessible to all on the basis of competence.

I believe if the House were to support this motion today and not to talk it out, that we would have a significant impact on recognizing the fact that eight million Canadians are of non-British, non-French origin. I would urge all members here to support it and not to talk the bill out.

**Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, this protest which is challenging the decision of the commissioner of the RCMP to allow turbans to be worn

by RCMP officers is promoting hatred in Canada. I am appalled and sickened by a pin that is being worn in Alberta saying: "Keep the RCMP Canadian", with a picture of a Sikh in a turban and a line drawn across. This is the kind of hatred that is promoted by the actions of some members of Parliament. I deplore this.

I had many things I wanted to say today. In the interests of not talking this out, I just want to say simply that this is contrary, not only to our Charter, but also to the new Multiculturalism Act which requires that federal institutions like the RCMP must enhance the understanding and respect of the diversity of Canadian society.

I call on all members of this House to support the motion before us today.

**Mr. Greg Thompson (Carleton—Charlotte):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Burnaby has asked the House to consider the question of whether or not the turban should be introduced as part of the uniform of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This issue has clearly evoked a strong response from many Canadians, both for and against the proposal.

I believe it would be helpful to this discussion to examine briefly the policies of police forces in other parts of the country and what they are doing. For example, what is the Department of National Defence doing regarding the turban. In so doing, I hope to provide some information to those individuals who have differing points of view on this topic. Both sides have raised valid concerns in support of their respective positions. This is the reason why a decision in respect to the proposal requires careful consideration and reflection.

It seems to me that the reason the RCMP's proposal to introduce turbans has elicited such a heated response is because it brings into play two long-standing traditions. On the one hand, the red serge "Mountie" uniform has become for many Canadians a symbol of this country's unique heritage and culture. Those familiar with the force's role in the orderly settlement of western Canada have every reason to be proud of the RCMP's enormous contribution to the development of this nation. Consequently, any change to the RCMP dress code represents more than just a simple variation to a police uniform. It represents to some a challenge not only to the policing traditions of the RCMP, but also to the