

*Government Orders*

cutbacks that this government will show us its commitment to social peace. Or was that just more idle talk?

• (1200)

Madam Speaker, this government has not been sensitive to the problems of pay equity and discrimination in the workplace. A study published on March 21 by the Canadian Ethnocultural Council shows that only 2.9 per cent of the public service officers are from visible minorities. Such percentage is far from being representative of their place in the workforce, of which they make up 6.4 per cent.

Is that the example the government is setting? More to the point, how can a government preach something it does not want to practice? It seems to me that this is another case of double standards.

[*English*]

In its 1989 annual report the Canadian Human Rights Commission stated that visible minorities were under-represented in occupations throughout the country and that hiring and promotion practices reinforced their present concentrations in less well-paying jobs.

What is the Conservative government doing to change the situation? Keeping people at a lower financial level of society does not enable them to feel pride in their work and in themselves. Ignoring this fact will not cause it to correct itself. I agree that there is a lot to be done, but saying it is not enough. It is high time the government makes a move to correct the situation, not in a year or so, but now.

What is the good of having a race relations foundation if we do not start doing what we can to cut off useless tensions? If the Conservative government cares about Canada, it will start by reconstructing the Canadian society by investing rather than cutting funds. It is not normal for a government that wants to be taken seriously when it talks about racial harmony to start by cutting funds to the Heritage Languages Program of Secretary of State.

This program was designed to promote racial harmony and national unity by providing an opportunity for the preservation and understanding of ethnic languages and cultures. Such actions promoted the positive values associated with cultural preservation and promotion and,

moreover, heritage language training provides Canadians with a competitive edge in the global economy. The net result of a prosperous economy and high standard of living is greater unity and harmony.

In a time of hardship and social tension it is even more important to promote understanding and tolerance. It is not the time to cut and have people suddenly feel like second class citizens.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, we must change people's attitudes, and we cannot do this with words and reports. We must act. It is high time that all the media—radio, television and the newspapers—started reflecting Canada's cultural diversity and included more members of ethnic and racial minorities within their ranks.

The Conservative Government should start paying close attention to what is going on if it really wants a united Canada. It must show leadership. It must have more employees—in decision-making positions—representing these minorities. How can it ask others to do what it does not do itself? It must get an example.

Madam Speaker, if we want Canada to remain a nation, we must learn to live together. It is important that we learn to accept each others' differences and that we unite to create a positive force on whose diversity will make this country a better place to live. We must stop wanting to change everyone to correspond to our own image. We must be willing to discover, to assimilate and to share. A country can only survive when people live in harmony. Discord only breeds destruction.

Madam Speaker, the Conservative Government must invest in the human potential that exists in this country. The Race Relations Foundation is a first step, but from the very beginning it must be in touch with the support groups that are most familiar with the problems.

The foundation will only be useful if it is truly aware of the problems and provides short—and long-term solutions. It must be willing to look at the real problems and make a genuine commitment to implement solutions. Policies must be followed by concrete action. Otherwise, the foundation will be just one more agency receiving funds to write papers that will not be taken seriously by anyone.