

## RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

### INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

**Hon. D. M. Collenette (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)):** Mr. Speaker, 18 years ago, the United Nations General Assembly declared this day the International Day for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. It is appropriate that we in Canada take note of this important day. While our record in this area is better than that of most countries, we cannot afford to be complacent and we must sustain our efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

[*Translation*]

Canada's multiracial profile has become more noticeable during the last ten years, but that is not to say it is a recent phenomenon. It goes back to the very origins of this country, when European settlers and native peoples met. The first groups of Chinese, Japanese and Africans arrived more than a century ago. As for Canadians of other than European or native descent, in many cases they have been in Canada for four or five generations. They feel truly Canadian and share the hopes, dreams and expectations of other Canadians.

[*English*]

It is my firm conviction that the vast majority of Canadians share our determination to make this society one in which all of us, whatever our racial background, whatever the colour of our skin, can participate and contribute fully to building a Canada of which we can all be proud. Although our record has blemishes, we have nevertheless established within this nation the capacity to deal with racial discrimination in a forthright and public manner. The strengthening of this capacity can ensure that we will remain in the forefront of nations whose actions and deeds clearly communicate to the world that racial prejudice and discrimination are not tolerated in Canada.

**Mr. McDermid:** Mr. Speaker, I was interested in the statement of the Hon. Minister and I should like to put a question to him. As he is so strong on discrimination, could he announce when the Government might introduce legislation to remove discrimination from the Indian Act which discriminates against Indian women in this country?

**Mr. Collenette:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, this matter is under discussion now and a constitutional conference has dealt with it. I think the question should rather be addressed to my colleague, the Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal), in another forum perhaps, or to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Munro).

**Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to reply to the Minister's statement on behalf of this Party. With the Minister of State for Multiculturalism (Mr. Collenette) I welcome the opportunity to speak briefly on this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This is of particular importance in Canada and this Parliament must give it absolutely the highest priority. Racism still exists in

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Canada directly or, in many cases indirectly. I do not think any Canadian of good conscience, and certainly not Parliament, can rest until racism at all levels, in all sectors and with all people has been eradicated.

This country is a multiracial, multicultural society made up of Canadians—Canadians first and foremost, but with different backgrounds and different languages—coming from all parts of the world. We must obviously work toward a society in which race, colour, religion and even clothing make absolutely no difference to the kind of lifestyle and the goals that we want to set.

This can be achieved in two ways, Mr. Speaker. The first is by education. The federal Government could take the lead, but it has not up to this point, in educating all levels of our society in the eradication of discrimination and in raising the consciousness level of people who are different from what we perceive to be the norm.

The second area in which Parliament can work toward the eradication of racism is in the area of legislation. We must strengthen the Criminal Code, for example, and strengthen the Human Rights Commission. These are areas with which Parliament has not dealt with adequately.

We have a long way to go in this country and I believe Parliament can achieve its goals, provided that we give this matter the kind of priority that this Party thinks it should have and that I know all Canadians think it should have.

**Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin-Swan River):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to respond on behalf of the New Democrats to the Minister's statement on this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I do not want to say too much regarding the inception of this day or the decade for action to combat racism and racial discrimination which was inaugurated in the United Nations in 1973 and continued until 1983. In 1979, the United Nations proclaimed a week of solidarity with peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination. Since then, annually on March 21 we have been asked to observe this day.

I had hoped that the Minister might have made a positive statement regarding some of the representations made by this Party recently. He pointed out very correctly some aspects of our Canadian history which show a sad lack of action in the area of eliminating discrimination. For the benefit of the House I would like to underline one or two such representations that this Party has made or will make.

The Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) our justice critic, has obtained caucus approval for an all-Party resolution regarding the injustices that were perpetrated upon Japanese Canadians in World War II. We will be seeking all-Party support for this resolution and our justice critic will be approaching the other caucuses and the independent Member to my right here to seek their support for the acknowledgment of the wrongfulness of measures taken at that time. I had hoped that the Minister would have indicated that he was favourably disposed toward such action. I trust we will