

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 8, 1971

The House met at 11 a.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN SPEAKER'S GALLERY OF PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

Mr. Speaker: May I bring to the attention of hon. members the presence in the Speaker's gallery of a very distinguished guest of Canada, the Honourable Tun Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Even during his relatively brief tenure of office, the Prime Minister has achieved an enviable reputation as the enlightened leader of a progressive country and of a leading nation in the Commonwealth.

Just a few weeks ago, Mr. Prime Minister, your government and your Parliament hosted the annual meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. I am pleased to have this occasion to thank you, your fellow parliamentarians and your government for the generous hospitality which on that occasion you extended to the Canadian members and Senators who represented the Canadian Parliament.

[Translation]

On behalf of all my colleagues, I bid you the most cordial welcome.

[English]

On behalf of my colleagues in the House of Commons I extend to you, Mr. Prime Minister, the warmest of welcomes.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

CANADIAN CULTURE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY OF MULTICULTURALISM WITHIN BILINGUAL FRAMEWORK

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am happy this morning to be able to reveal to the House that the government has accepted all those recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism which are contained in Volume IV of its reports directed to federal departments and agencies. Hon. members will recall that the subject of this volume is "the contribution by other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution".

Volume IV examined the whole question of cultural and ethnic pluralism in this country and the status of our various cultures and languages, an area of study given all too little attention in the past by scholars.

It was the view of the royal commission, shared by the government and, I am sure, by all Canadians, that there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples and yet a third for all others. For although 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 Canadian, and all should be treated fairly.

The royal commission was guided by the belief that adherence to one's ethnic group is influenced not so much by one's origin or mother tongue as by one's sense of belonging to the group, and by what the commission calls the group's "collective will to exist". The government shares this belief.

• (11:10 a.m.)

The individual's freedom would be hampered if he were locked for life within a particular cultural compartment by the accident of birth or language. It is vital, therefore, that every Canadian, whatever his ethnic origin, be given a chance to learn at least one of the two languages in which his country conducts its official business and its politics.

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. Such a policy should help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies. National unity if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create this initial confidence. It can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all.

The government will support and encourage the various cultures and ethnic groups that give structure and vitality to our society. They will be encouraged to share their cultural expression and values with other Canadians and so contribute to a richer life for us all.

In the past, substantial public support has been given largely to the arts and cultural institutions of English-speaking Canada. More recently and largely with the help of the royal commission's earlier recommendations in Volumes I to III, there has been a conscious effort on the government's part to correct any bias against the French language and culture. In the last few months the government has taken steps to provide funds to support cultural educational centres for native people. The policy I am announcing today accepts the contention of the other