

Multiculturalism

When questioned in the House on this matter, the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner) seemed to be of a different opinion. He felt that it was up to the CBC to set policy, and only a day ago suggested that possibly amendments to the Broadcasting Act would have to be made in order to allow third language broadcasting. Whether or not it is intentional, there appears to be a conflict between the opinions of the president of the CBC and the Secretary of State on this question of third language broadcasting. However, this is a subject which must be squarely faced and dealt with in order that multicultural programming can be made available to the Canadian public within a reasonable time. Cablevision could be used for this purpose initially, and the national networks in due course. The National Film Board and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation should certainly be exhibiting a greater awareness of the variety of backgrounds of Canadians than they presently are.

The ethnic press in Canada has been an important source of information, cultural and otherwise, to many Canadians, but it is experiencing severe difficulty. While government advertising in the ethnic press is of some benefit from the point of view of revenue, such advertising in itself is in no way a means of guaranteeing the viability of the ethnic press. I do not need to emphasize the importance of the survival of the ethnic press as a tool of maintaining language and culture.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Yewchuk: Increases in postal rates in recent years have acted as a great drawback to a wide circulation of Canada's ethnic press. The situation could be easily remedied by a roll back in postal rates as applied to ethnic and other uniquely Canadian publications.

Another step in assisting the ethnic press would be to establish an ethnic press bureau in Ottawa operated by the ethnic press itself, independent from government ties but with government assistance.

Finally, greater recognition of the third force in Canada could be given by promoting more outward signs of Canada's multicultural nature. Again, these do not run into additional costs. They simply require decisions to be made. For example, we could produce commemorative stamps commemorating authors, poets or other great men originating from ethnic groups. Every level of government can certainly do more to promote multiculturalism through the naming of public buildings, streets, and other public institutions by names which originate in other ethnic groups. In short, all public means should be used to give more indication of our commitment to multiculturalism.

These are some of the principles that must be considered and some of the policies that must be implemented. We must create a society in which every Canadian is proud of his past, his present, his origin, his name, and his ability to achieve equality in this country.

Hon. Stanley Haidasz (Minister of State): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak on the motion before the House this afternoon, a motion submitted by the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) on behalf of his party, which reads:

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

That this House, re-affirming that generations of peoples of diverse races and many nationalities have joined in peace and war to build a free Canada and to mould a Canadian nationality, regrets the government's reluctant and token recognition of this reality.

In my 12 years as a member of the House of Commons, I have never heard anything more unfair to a government which has a tremendous and enviable record of achievement on all fronts. This motion, I think, demonstrates such an incomplete knowledge of the facts and lack of appreciation of this government's and other Liberal administrations' achievements in the recognition and support of all the people comprising the Canadian society that I am disappointed that the hon. member for Athabasca allowed his name to be associated with such a motion.

I am pleased this afternoon to take this opportunity to put on record the achievements of Liberal governments and to clarify any misconceptions. We in the Liberal party have always worked for unity in diversity. May I refer to the first Liberal prime minister of Canada, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, under whose administration Canada flourished and welcomed to our shores people from many nations. Who is there who is not stirred or not inspired by his ideals and his oratory, especially when he reads the speech that Sir Wilfrid Laurier delivered to Acadians in August of 1900 when he likened his concept of Canada to the harmonious structure of a great English cathedral, saying:

As long as I live, as long as I have power to labour in the service of my country, I shall repel the idea of changing the nature of its different elements. I want the marble to remain the marble; I want the granite to remain the granite; I want the oak to remain the oak. I want to take all these elements and build a nation that will be foremost amongst the great powers of the world.

I recall many other speeches of Liberal prime ministers, such as those of the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent who recognized the Canadian reality of multicultural Canada, who in their words as well as in their deeds worked tirelessly for unity in diversity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) wishes to rise on a point of order.

Mr. Epp: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the minister for interrupting his speech but he is lauding former Liberal prime ministers. I believe he made a statement which was erroneous when he said that the first Liberal prime minister was Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In fact, it was Alexander Mackenzie. I would think he would know that.

Mr. Haidasz: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I meant the first French Canadian Liberal prime minister.

It was our beloved prime minister, the late Lester B. Pearson, who recognized the need to build a modern Canada as we were approaching the 100th birthday of Canadian confederation. When he established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963, he directed them, among other things, in their terms of reference to:

take into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution.