

Government Orders

problems among people who have to deal with it daily on the street.

Winnipeg would be an ideal place for the centre of such a foundation because Winnipeggers have spent many years trying to work out relationships among these different groups so everyone feels comfortable, not only in this city, but across the country.

Before we give too much credit to the federal government for moving to establish the race relations foundation, we should put it in the context of what else this government is or is not doing. Time after time in the last 15 months the House has been reminded of the inability of this government to move quickly and without any hesitation on issues of race relations and human interaction. For example, on the issue of turbans, how many months did this government wait before it made a decision dealing with the right of Sikh Canadians to wear their turbans? By the time the decision was made members of this House had to deal with petitions from hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are concerned about the wearing of turbans.

Within the aboriginal community we have had ongoing difficulties in the judicial system. It is quite apparent at this point from responses to questions in the House that the government has no strategy for dealing with some of the fundamental changes that must take place in our judicial system to respond to the concerns of aboriginal peoples.

Instead, the last budget cut back on the ability of native people across this country to communicate. The reduction of the communications budget under the Secretary of State, which in the past assisted so many native organizations to communicate among themselves and with other Canadians, shows that when it really comes down to it this government is not committed to assisting native people. It may set up a race relations foundation which gives the public the impression that it is in favour and support of race relations and the public education thereof, but in reality in the activities that really count in these communities it is withdrawing services.

A second example that I would like to use, one that I think is very important and often overlooked in this House, is English as a second language. This government

has constantly undermined the ability of new Canadians to learn English as a second language. It did it by first of all withdrawing materials available to organizations which teach English as a second language to Canadians when they first arrive in this country. Second, through other programs and through transfer payments, it has made it more and more difficult for the provinces to provide training in English as a second language.

This has to be discussed in the House as part of this package for dealing with race relations because it is very difficult for new Canadians, particularly those from Asian countries, to learn the language skills necessary to obtain the proper training to get themselves into a better paying job. It is not just a cliché, it is a reality of the workforce that when you first come to cities throughout this country you enter the labour market at the lowest wage going—somewhere around \$4.50 to \$5 depending on which province you are in. You can only get out of those jobs if you obtain skills, if you have access to better job markets, if you have access to language, if you understand how our system works. How can you do that if you do not have access to training?

We can talk in all our studies and everything we do about the willingness of the federal government to assist new Canadians, but when we apply the test of action rather than words we find that the immigrant communities in Canada are being underserved. The basics that we thought were necessary a generation ago are being removed and they have been made more vulnerable.

• (1620)

That, of course, leads to tension in the street. One of the other members raised the question of the relationship between economic problems among new Canadians in their immigrant communities and the fact that there are rising rates of racism. One of the difficulties that young Canadians from families of new Canadians have is that without the language skills, the understanding of the job market, the need for training and the access to training, they cannot get themselves into the job market when they are 16, 17, 18 or 19, or into the community colleges or universities. They have watched their parents suffer year after year in jobs paying less than \$5 a hour.

Street life is rough. It is rough in Winnipeg and it is rough in Toronto. We occasionally catch a glimpse of headlines which indicate just how rough it is.