

we started with no organization and no representatives at all. I do not think that is a very valid reason for taking so long.

Mr. Otto Jelinek (High Park-Humber Valley): Mr. Speaker, I hope you will bear with me and my bad voice, but spring has been catching up with me.

I enjoyed hearing the minister's statistics in respect of moneys proposed for ethnic grants, but to date I still fail to see a clear government policy benefiting all Canadians. I should like to take the opportunity of answering the minister's allegation regarding this party. I can assure him that, if and when this party forms the government, we will not only have a policy we will update on a continuing basis but, more importantly, it will not take us three and a half years to realize that we have a multicultural situation in Canada, whether we like it or not.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, let me just make my thinking clear as far as multiculturalism is concerned. Contrary to the critics of multiculturalism in Canada, and unfortunately there exist a great number of critics, some here in this House, multiculturalism in no way constitutes an attack on the basic duality of our country. We all know there are two official languages in Canada and no one is trying to take away the importance of either of them. We all know that Canada has many of its own original cultures, such as Eskimo and Indian, and no one is trying to take away the importance of that. We all know that Canada has developed many talented individuals and organizations over the years in all walks of life, be it in education, literature or the arts, and no one is trying to take away the importance of that either.

What then do we want, Mr. Speaker? We want both justice for all Canadians and recognition of the cultural diversity of this country. We want the opportunity of continuation of the talent, cultures and arts brought to Canada by our fathers and forefathers. The federal government can and must play an important role in utilizing the resources and powers which only it has rather than promoting itself and its ministers as it so lavishly did through the recent national advertising campaign at the taxpayers' expense. The government should assist all ethno-cultural communities in Canada to become dynamic and creative. This course would benefit not only the Canadian members of a certain community but, in the long run, all citizens of Canada. This is a simple principle of preserving and enhancing the many cultural traditions which exist within our country.

I agree with some of the suggestions made last year by Heritage Ontario for the benefit of all Canadians. These are suggestions which the government has not acted upon or even reacted to. But how can you expect this government to act upon anything if it does not even have a clear policy of its own on these matters? The only thing the government seems to have done so far, as I said earlier, has been to advertise through the ethnic press across Canada the fact that it, indeed, has a minister responsible for multiculturalism. I suppose we cannot blame the government completely for this display, as how else would the people of Canada know there was such a department, let alone a minister responsible for it?

Multiculturalism

In the last number of years, Canada has been characterized by an expanding economy in which there has been a vast increase in the impact of technology on the forms of our social organization and the cultural life of our society. Two results of these changes have been the social and spatial mobility of people and the increasingly important role played by the mass media, primarily television, in the lives of the population. For the minority ethno-cultural groups, the consequence has been an increased pressure to adapt to these changes at ever increasing rates. Groups have been forced to concentrate most of their energies on self-preservation. Since the cultures of Canada's ethno-cultural minorities are a common resource, they must not only be maintained but, above all, developed.

It is not only necessary to deal directly with the individuals and their organizations, but to deal and work as much as possible with such national bodies as the National Film Library, the Public Archives, the National Film Board and many others; to work and to promote in the interest of all Canadians, within a unifying scheme, the development and promotion of all cultures available to any Canadian citizen. For Canadians to reap full benefit from the many-faceted nature of these cultures, we must have an adequate means of cultural exchange among all segments of our population. The government, the media, the cultural agencies and our educational systems must share responsibility for ensuring that the people of Canada are informed about all of Canada's ethnocultural groups and have access to each other's cultural heritage.

It has long been recognized in Canada that international cultural exchange is an important aspect of cultural development. It was to this end that the government of Canada participated directly in international conferences with France and other French-speaking countries. I believe this to be a very positive development which should be extended to other countries that share with Canada common cultural attributes. I strongly endorse the recommendations of Heritage Ontario that the federal government and Canada's ethnocultural groups initiate cultural exchange programs with the originating countries of Canada's ethnocultural groups.

● (1640)

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a suggestion concerning what I believe to be the only realistic way to operate with regard to this multitude of problems and possibilities. I must point out that I am speaking personally and am merely expressing my own opinion in this regard. I do not believe that the council which is presently being assembled by the minister will be able to cope with the problems at hand, if for no other reason than size alone and the indiscriminate manner in which appointments are made to the council. I believe a government agency, perhaps along the line of Sports Canada, should be formed which would be representative of all Canadians. This agency would be manned and operated by representatives of all minority groups, including Indian and Eskimo, who would be selected or elected by their own communities and who would sit under one umbrella organization, so to speak, which would be directly responsible to the minister and his department.

Until something along this line is developed, I cannot foresee the government being in a position to deal in an