

*Supply*

I want to ask the member if he could confirm that point and reiterate once again why it is necessary that these cases go to the highest court of the country.

**Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni):** Yes, Madam Speaker. Maybe I will go back to an even more remote case where the United States Constitution guaranteed equal rights to all of its citizens regardless of race, creed, colour or nationality, whatever. That was understood to mean that everyone had the right of access to schools of the same quality. It was not a simple guarantee written into the Constitution or the Bill of Rights of the United States that provided that. Ultimately those children in the United States who were black had to win their right to go to quality schools at the point of a gun. The U.S. army had to be sent into some states of the United States that refused to obey the Constitution.

• (1920)

What is needed is mechanisms by government to challenge, through the judiciary, the Constitution on behalf of disadvantaged people if we are going to avoid the kind of situation that we had in the United States back in the 1950s. I encourage this minister and this government to keep the Court Challenges Program in place. It is an examination of what the alternatives are. This is a valuable program, we should—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry, the time has expired.

**Mr. Murray W. Dorin (Edmonton Northwest):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to be able to join in this debate about the Court Challenges Program. Before I begin my intervention, I would like to remind members that this Progressive Conservative government has put more funding and political will into ensuring human rights for all Canadians than any other government in our history.

No other government has created anything like the Court Challenges Program but now the time has come to share the responsibility. Times are tough; money is short. We all know that. What we should be exploring here today is a new direction that involves natural partners like the provinces, the territories, the Canadian Bar Association and the law societies.

First, let me put the Court Challenges Program into the context of all the programs which currently serve to support language and equality rights.

As members will have read in the 1989 official languages annual report, the Official Languages Act, administered by the Secretary of State remains a key law in support of linguistic minority groups. It fully covers both anglophones in Quebec and francophones throughout the rest of the country. It gives that department the mandate to insist and support the development of linguistic minority communities and to promote complete recognition and use of both official languages. That mandate has not changed.

The rights of these citizens are laid out for all to see in our Constitution. By no means is this government abandoning that set of legal statements, but the use of our judicial system is the only way to ensure the protection of human rights in Canada. We must continue to develop other systems through negotiation and co-operation with other levels of government, with human rights lawyers and with advocacy groups by which linguistic and social rights are safeguarded.

Federally we shall continue to pursue the values of Canadian citizenship that influence our daily lives: equality and participation. In addition to the official languages program, the programs of the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship and Secretary of State remain in place.

We have, for example, a disabled persons participation program. Since 1985 project funding and technical support from the Disabled Persons Participation Program Fund have helped organizations work to change the attitudes, systems and practices that have kept persons with disabilities from getting jobs and gaining access to buildings, goods, services and information. In 1991 the program was expanded to include a partnership fund so that other relevant organizations can join with groups of people with disabilities to address these issues which are important for all Canadians.

The projects funded under the Disabled Persons Participation Program must relate to one of three objectives. First, representation, that is to enhance the capacity for persons with disabilities to represent effectively their rights and responsibilities as Canadian citizens.