

*Multiculturalism*

movement officially began in 1971. Obviously and formally, the creation and building of a nation by people from all over world began much before then.

There are those among us in our country who would suggest that the creation of a separate ministry would be paramount to ghettoizing people, concepts and ideas in a dark ugly corner. I take a somewhat different view from that, as long as we know the directions in which we are going and the final concepts at which we wish to arrive for a cultural statement on Canada and its peoples.

Like every policy, every piece of legislation evolves in terms of ideas and evolves through different times and generations. For instance, we have an evolving Constitution. There is an ongoing debate on the Meech Lake Accord which tries to amend and build upon the foundations of our federal statutes. A few months ago there were amendments to the Official Languages Act which were introduced in 1969.

To a certain degree the process that we are undergoing today is simply a modification, an adaptation to the current standards, or perhaps to the evolving standards that people place on the legislation that governs ourselves and our country.

It is important to underline the condition that we as Liberals attach—at least this Liberal—to the whole question of that evolution. That is to say that as long as we can say that this an intermediate step, that this is a bridge from where we were in 1971 to perhaps a single ministry of culture, then I think we can win those hearts that we talked about a few moments ago. That is to say that the challenge for multiculturalism is to try to bridge the different definitions that we all bring and attach to that word “multiculturalism”.

The policy may mean a very different set of criteria to my father as compared with the definition I attach to it. However, which definition is more relevant? Is it my father's from an earlier generation, or is it mine? As a younger Canadians are my views more relevant? I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that both views are relevant. Both views are dynamic in their own sense of the word. Both views ought to be respected for what they are—definitions of who we are and what kind of country we have. Therefore, the challenge for multiculturalism today is to try to reflect in our policies both those views, both those generational forces that come to meet somewhere in the forum of this great Parliament.

To have a multiculturalism which simply ignores one of those two generational forces would be inadequate. That is why I believe this step to a separate ministry should only be seen as one step in that evolution, one step to a separate or single ministry of culture, so that we would be sending out a signal that multiculturalism is for all Canadians, not only for a certain segment of society, or depending upon where one comes from, or what year one arrived in Canada. In fact, it is part of our fundamental foundation as a people and as a country.

I believe it has to be seen in the long-term for us to embrace it and for us to expect the younger generation to embrace it as well. If it will not go to that final chapter, then, yes indeed, critics would have legitimacy in saying that it is short-sighted and that it will simply ghettoize people.

We have to see this measure as a sure step rather than an attempt to take a giant leap which goes nowhere. Notwithstanding that, I think the Minister and the Government have a number of shortcomings inherent in their policies and approaches to multiculturalism that have to be addressed and cannot simply be admitted to as being addressed by a Bill or by the Act.

• (1710)

For instance, what happens to the financial support that dwindled for those community groups? Before the election these community groups were showered with gifts and promises. Why is there one agenda before the election and a different one after the election? That will only breed cynicism, that will only breed criticism of those who suggest that somehow multiculturalism is being politicized. It is not the people of Canada who are politicizing it. It is not the ethnocultural groups who are politicizing it and selling it short. It is being circumscribed by the Government in having two different agendas, one before the election and one after the election.

What happened to the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism? A few months ago, in the last Parliament, the Minister said we do not need a commissioner because there will be a full Standing Committee on Multiculturalism to review and monitor the progress of the Multiculturalism Bill. Now we do not have a full Standing Committee on Multiculturalism but a hybrid, together with four or five other subjects. If we are not going to have a full Standing Committee to review and monitor in an efficient and vigorous way, then the