

Multiculturalism

danger for all. The objective of our policy is the retention and development of our cultural groups to the degree that a given group exhibits a desire for this. Government aid to cultural groups will continue to proceed on the basis of aid to self-effort.

● (1532)

The special role of the government is to provide opportunities to all Canadians to realize these goals, so that they may retain their values in a free society where Canadians of divergent backgrounds are treated with mutual respect and equality.

Mr. Gus Mitges (Grey-Simcoe): Before I begin my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that I should have been given the courtesy of receiving much more notice of the minister's statement here this afternoon than I received. Even the courtesy of two hours' notice—a minimum amount of time—was denied me. I hope that the government and the minister responsible will look into this matter and correct the injustice once and for all.

We on this side of the House are not really surprised by the statement made by the Minister of State (Multiculturalism) (Mr. Cafik) here in the House this afternoon. The minister's statement typifies the government's "here today, gone tomorrow" attitude regarding multiculturalism—reaching a crescendo in an election year and then dramatically falling flat on its face once the election is over.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitges: The government has announced an amount of \$50 million for the multicultural program over a period of five years. When this is broken down it amounts to \$10 million a year, an increase of slightly less than \$2 million a year over the present budgeted amount. A \$50 million promise really means only a \$2 million possibility. It goes back to four years ago when this government first promised to increase the multicultural budget to \$10 million annually. It has taken the government four years and another pending election to reiterate this promise.

I am distressed, as my colleagues are distressed, that this government has time and time again used multiculturalism to manipulate and curry favour with the ethnic communities all across our land, especially in election years. I am sure that this ploy by the government has finally run its course, because our ethnic communities have become wise to the ways of this government and will not be taken in or fooled again.

When you consider that our ethnic communities—and I am referring to those which have neither English nor French as their ethnic backgrounds—represent more than one third of the population of Canada, a budget of \$10 million annually is an effrontery of the first magnitude. I am sure it will not go unnoticed by ethnic communities from one end of Canada to the other.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. Cafik.]

Mr. Mitges: We in our party have a considerable stake in a true and honest concept of multiculturalism for Canada. This is well evidenced by the ethnic composition of the membership of our party. We have a higher level of ethnic representation than any other federal political party. So, you can understand, Mr. Speaker, that our concern about multiculturalism comes straight from the heart.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from a letter I received today from Dr. Hlynka, a member of the Ukrainian Canadian community of Winnipeg. I am quoting him because his thoughts are our thoughts and really the thoughts of all ethnic people in Canada today. Dr. Hlynka said:

I want to see justice for the cause of multiculturalism in Canada. To my mind that means that all three components of the Canadian nation—English, French, and multicultural—must be clearly and fully recognized... in any revised constitution, and in the hearts and minds of all Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitges: This is the goal, the challenge, and the direction that my party is taking and will continue to take in our constant pursuit and search for equal treatment and justice for all Canadians regardless of their ethnic origins or backgrounds.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I think the most interesting thing about the statement made today by the Minister of State (Multiculturalism) (Mr. Cafik) is its timing. It seems to me that the pattern of announcements concerning multiculturalism in Canada has a lot to do with elections. In 1972 there were many announcements about multiculturalism, and there was a special minister appointed. I might add that that minister did a very good job, and he still sits in the House today. He is the hon. member for Parkdale (Mr. Haidasz).

However, as soon as the election was over in 1974 the minister was booted out of office, and multiculturalism did not have a minister to answer for it in the House. We then had three years of the government's paying absolutely no attention whatsoever to multiculturalism in this country, but, of course, when an election comes up again, we have a new minister appointed. It is just a few weeks before the election call is likely to come, and we have an announcement about more money coming into the area of multiculturalism in Canada. It is blatant partisanship. The government is trying to use the ethnic people in our country as election pawns. It is looking at what used to be a traditional Liberal vote in Canada, and it is nervous about that vote, including the Italian vote in Toronto.

The government believes that it can buy the ethnic people in this country for just a few bucks of their own tax money, and I think that is a very shameful tactic by this government. It is something that the people of this country will not forget.

All of us agree that extra money should be spent on multiculturalism. We have all said that time and time again in the House, but what I am saying is that the timing of this announcement is more than suspicious. The government should be ashamed of this. There are more and more announcements being made now that are strikingly political and strikingly