

*Government Orders*

recognized Quebec's distinct identity. It is essential, because Quebecers have the right to protect their language and their culture. That is why we support Quebec's five conditions, and that is why we shall go on supporting them.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. McLaughlin:** Quebecers have realized, thanks to the work of people like Thérèse Casgrain, Robert Cliche, Ed Broadbent and now the hon. member for Chambly, our new Quebec member, that we share the values that Quebecers hold dear. We believe in social and economic justice.

[*English*]

Because of our belief in equality, and social and economic justice, we also assert that the rights of other communities in Canada must be recognized in the Constitution. A constitutional agreement which fails to address adequately the rights of women, aboriginal peoples, multicultural groups and northerners does not reflect our vision of Canada.

We are particularly concerned about this, quite frankly, because of the attitude that this government has shown in the treatment of those groups, an attitude that has varied from indifference to contempt. For example, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, had its budget cut in half. Eighty-five women's centres across the country have been closed by this government's budget. Post-secondary funding for aboriginal people has been limited. Aboriginal communications programs have been devastated by budget cuts. The Assembly of First Nations, a key representative for the aboriginal community, has had its entire Secretary of State funding cut.

It is no wonder that these communities feel threatened. It is no wonder that they do not trust the government. It is no wonder that they seek constitutional guarantees.

The New Democratic Party is going to work in this committee. We are going to speak out in the House. We are going to fight to ensure that these Canadians get those guarantees.

We also look forward to addressing the concerns of westerners, Canadians from the Atlantic provinces and ethnic and visible minority Canadians in committee. With western Canadians, there are very real concerns about the institutions of Parliament and that they do not provide adequate representation from the regions. With

Atlantic Canadians, there are real concerns about justice and equity in the delivery of national social and economic programs.

As strong supporters of minority rights and the multicultural character of Canada, we will be raising, with Canada's cultural communities, their concerns and listening to their aspirations.

New Democrats believe that the rights of one community do not compete with another community; they complement each other. Just as Canada belongs to the people of Alberta, it belongs to the people of Quebec. Just as Canada belongs to immigrants, it belongs to aboriginal people. Just as Canada belongs to men, it belongs to women.

Canada belongs to all of us. It is a part of all of us. Our Constitution must do nothing less than reflect that reality.

[*Translation*]

In recent months, we have seen a growing wave of intolerance moving across this country. I find this disturbing and ugly, and the ugliness troubles me. The reasons behind this intolerance are many and varied. I believe one of the main reasons is a feeling of financial insecurity shared by many people across this country. Our responsibility as politicians is to help increase our understanding of others, both as individuals and as a community.

• (1600)

People in this country tend to forget their history, which prevents us from celebrating our successes or understanding the injustice committed against our Native people, against Quebec and against ethnic communities.

[*English*]

The political parties and political leaders of Canada have a crucial role to play in Canadians getting to know their history and one another. We have a crucial role, not just in moving from intolerance to tolerance, but to understanding and friendship.

One way of doing this is through the strengthening of our cultural institutions and programs. Now is not the time to destroy the CBC, as the government seems intent on doing. It is not the time to cut youth exchange programs, but to expand them. It is not the time to destroy the rail link that links this country. The value of friendship between our language and cultural communi-