

Government Orders

● (1625)

For example the Liberals are presently reviewing a cultural defence which would allow someone whose culture or religion provides an escape from prosecution for something someone else of another culture would be prosecuted for. The cultural proposal leaves open the question of whether wife beating, violent discipline of children and polygamy are to be condoned according to culture. This issue raises questions once again: How do you define cultural background? Do you have to be from this culture? Do both your parents have to be from this culture?

Another example would be the Ontario plan which would divert black youths from courts to community service work. Essentially this program would treat black youths differently from everyone else, even though there is no statistical evidence that black youths commit more crimes. The reason that data of crime by blacks in Canada is scant is that police departments do not generally keep race based figures. Why is that? Perhaps it is because our justice system in Canada is blind and should be blind to factors such as race or ethnicity.

What happened to equality before the law? What happened to treating all Canadians the same regardless of race or ethnicity? Both of these examples are classic illustrations of multiculturalism run amok.

What Canada needs is a government to lead by example. So give the people what they want. Scrap among other things the funding for multiculturalism. Send Bill C-53 back and replace it with a bill which has eliminated overlap and duplication as well as government waste.

Multiculturalism works counter to unification. It pulls at the very fabric of this great nation. What we need is equality, not special treatment for different groups and individuals. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with multiculturalism, provided it is funded by the multicultural organizations themselves. However, this is not the case in Canada and the reality is that multiculturalism is nothing more than an abuse of our generosity.

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona. I suppose I should assure him right off the top that neither I nor my colleagues on this side have any intention of adopting Reform policies nor their manners I do not think.

It is interesting that the member speaks about this policy and how it has been adopted from Reform and the next words out of his mouth are why it should be defeated. I am here to tell my colleagues and everyone else who are prepared to give me a fair hearing on both sides of the House why the bill should be supported.

Let me assure the member there is precious little in the way of the philosophy of his party that we are interested in adopting. Indeed that is why we ran candidates in every part of this country, in every single province. We ignored no provinces to field candidates. I think my colleagues opposite have realized their error there and are about to attempt to rectify that. Canadians know and realize what is their one truly national party in the House. That was seen in the fact that there was only one party which elected members in every province coast to coast to coast.

I am interested in explaining why I feel this is a very important bill that is worthy of support from those with open minds in all parts of the House.

There are several purposes for Bill C-53. It seeks to establish by law the Department of Canadian Heritage. It sets out the powers, duties and functions of the Minister of Canadian Heritage. It would settle various technical matters relating to the establishment of the department and it would put in place the public service organizational structure formalizing the transition of employees. It would bring under one roof communications, cultural industries, official and heritage languages, national parks and historic sites, voluntary action, multiculturalism, state, ceremonial and amateur sport.

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In other words, the bill would provide a much better co-ordination and integration of several important functions. It would seek to streamline those functions and to carry them out more effectively and more efficiently. I think that is a goal that ought to be supported by members on all sides of the House, that we provide the services of government more effectively and more efficiently.

I would hope that we would share that philosophy in all parts of the House. No, there are comments from members opposite in which we can see that because multiculturalism is part of this bill somehow it is not worthy of support. That is regrettable and it is simply un-Canadian.

What does it mean to be a Canadian. I would encourage some of the members from the Reform Party, who are hollering out comments now during my speech, to take a look at the Canadian Coat of Arms. The concept that somehow this nation has ever been one sort of pure culture or one blended culture is absolutely and patented nonsense. The very Canadian Coat of Arms has emblazoned on it the symbols of four cultures. This nation has four founding races.

I quite frankly think that many Canadians do not know that. I regret to say I suspect that some of my colleagues opposite are ignorant of the fact that there are four cultures that founded this country and they are very well depicted on the Canadian Coat of Arms.