

The focus of our multicultural policy should be to integrate these prodigious experiences and talents into our mainstream. They are in fact our culture. We can do that only if we acknowledge their merit and allow individuals with proven merit from their midst to take leadership roles.

The economy and the arts have witnessed their immense productivity and impact. Politics, bureaucracy and the national media will surely follow—fifth columnists notwithstanding.

Our government should be setting an agenda wherein multiculturalism as the operative ethos permeates all levels of government but at the very, very least the ministries of culture and communication. It is an ethos that would both integrate newer Canadians, showcase their heritages and provide expression for their talents and merits.

We are offered a distant second best with this department, but Canadians of origins other than English or French are accustomed to building on scraps.

[*Editor's Note: Member speaks in Italian.*]

As the government continues to bog itself in the centuries old language wars the rest of us will continue to construct a Canada in which all Canadians will share proprietorship equally, equality based on the acceptance and promotion of a multicultural ethic.

Ms. Mitchell: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member who just spoke to clarify the confusion that certainly is in my mind, and I imagine it is in the minds of other people, about the Liberal position on this Multiculturalism Act.

Earlier today we had I think three Liberal members from the Toronto region who seemed to be opposed to the idea of a multicultural department. In fact if you carry their thinking a little bit further it seemed that they were opposed to multiculturalism, period. In one case they saw this as something that would perhaps reflect heritage issues. A couple of them said that they felt this would ghettoize Canadians who were not from either French or English speaking origins. One member in particular felt that we should not have a separate

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ministry of multiculturalism but that this should all be under the Department of Communications. He also seemed to suggest that racism and job discrimination against visible minorities would just disappear by some magic. In my party's opinion, this is one of the main needs and should be one of the priorities of a multicultural department.

I would like to ask him whether he agrees with their opinion. I gather from what he said that he does not. He was complaining that the multicultural department was not strong enough, that it was really just token recognition of a third of Canada's population, I think he said. I am confused and I am sure the public is from the point of view of what is the Liberal position. Does he agree with the speakers who spoke earlier?

Mr. Volpe: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the questions. They were very craftily put with very wise insight into the questions themselves.

I am not sure that we need to trivialize the discussion further by highlighting the fact that there are various opinions on the various aspects and components of multiculturalism and about this bill, because this bill has given rise to an opportunity to debate the issues, to debate all components and aspects of multiculturalism. You quite rightly alluded and pointed to the fact that many of us, unfortunately, have begun to equate multiculturalism with racism or with multiracism. It goes much beyond that.

It is a fact of life that there are many who have a different origin than another and have a different colour than another. None of that should stand in the way of progress and in the way that we deal with each other. None of that should stand in the way of people developing policies and having access to government, access to bureaucracy, having delivery of services, having delivery of a vision of Canada that applies to each and every one of them individually and collectively in the way equally that it applies to all others.

And so when you ask me what is the position of the Liberal Party, it has been one that has been open to the infusion of new ideas. It has been one that has been open to the infusion of criticism.