

Oral Questions

Last night a very generous allotment of time was provided to conclude all questions so the matter could be brought back to the House for consideration. Last night a precedent established by the hon. member's party was followed. It takes a pretty vivid imagination to call that a tromping upon of democracy.

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[Translation]

MULTICULTURALISM

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship).

Last year, the minister cut funding to cultural groups. This year, he eliminated the language education program and cut funding to native people. He subsequently ordered a study to create a new race relations network. I wish the minister would explain why he cut funding to cultural agencies established by their own communities, and then creates a new partisan agency.

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, if I were the hon. member, I would be ashamed to ask such questions about multiculturalism. You did nothing during the whole time you were in power! You spent \$45 million during your last term. We more than doubled this, to \$94 million, during our first term. Today, we are spending more than \$138 million, and the Canadian Race Relation Foundation we are going to establish, with a centre in Toronto, will be a project for all Canadians, to help us gain a better understanding of one another.

[English]

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): For the minister's edification, we never replaced elected leaders by nominations from a political party.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maheu: Mr. Speaker, the minister has cut funding to cultural groups. Recently, he set up an advisory committee on multiculturalism, and he tabled a bill to establish the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. Why

does the minister keep injecting partisan politics into cultural issues, creating a lot of ill-feeling in the process?

An Hon. Member: Shame!

[English]

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, as usual the member is wrong again. There were constraints and reductions in this budget which have been approached in a very consistent and fair manner. The funding for multiculturalism will be the same this year as it was last year in addition to the other \$24 million.

But let me tell you what we have been doing. We have been bringing forward an expression of long-term commitment with a statutory basis—a Canadian Multiculturalism Act, a new Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship, a Canadian Heritage Languages Institute, and a Canadian Race Relations Foundation. All of these are commitments which cannot be changed by future governments on a whim. It is our commitment to create a society and a community of equal opportunity and equal access for all Canadians.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Government House Leader. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you, like the rest of us, heard the House Leader say that what happened last night in the finance committee was the exact parallel of what happened in the justice committee on June 6, 1984.

I have the minutes of that committee meeting from 1984 and I quote one paragraph: "It goes without saying that if the committee does not uphold this ruling, then the chairman has no other recourse except to resign. Even if this ruling is upheld, at the conclusion of this process I will offer my resignation to the committee to avoid the future work of this committee being tainted by the process undertaken in relation to Bill C-9."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nystrom: If this is the exact parallel of what happened in the justice committee in 1984, the logical conclusion and the honourable thing to do at this time is