

Multiculturalism

On the many occasions when I discussed the amount of consultation being had between the federal government and the provincial government of Manitoba in respect of this kind of programming, I was assured that there was little, if any, consultation. The minister in charge of these programs, the former Secretary of State, came through Winnipeg once or twice and paid a courtesy call on the minister in charge in Manitoba, but there was no—

Mr. Haidasz: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Perhaps it would be helpful to the hon. member if I stated that I met, on a visit to Winnipeg, with the hon. Mr. Desjardins and had several talks with one of his chief advisers, Mr. Cecil Senchyshyn.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, I accept what the minister says and it merely confirms what I have been saying. The minister has only been in his present portfolio for a relatively short period, and I am saying that until he was appointed to his present position the federal government and the departmental officials responsible for implementing the program were not in consultation with the provinces. I am not just talking about a meeting between ministers but about detailed discussions between officials of the department of the federal government responsible for this work and provincial governments across Canada. These kind of discussions are required to achieve a sensible co-ordination that will make these programs work.

The minister spoke with a good deal of pride about the appointment of his advisory committee and I want to congratulate him on that score. But again I point out that almost a year and a half has been lost. There was no need to wait a year and a half before appointing a committee representative of most of the important ethnic groups so that the kind of consultation that is really required if the program is to be meaningful is had. The appointment of the advisory committee is a case of better late than never.

Members on this side of the House have been critical of the government in view of the fact that, having apparently enthusiastically endorsed the recommendations made in volume 4 of the B and B commission report a year and a half ago, the Prime Minister and his government have taken all this time to do the most elementary and fundamental things that are required to be done if this program is not to be what the hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) said it has been. I agree with him that, to a large extent, the program until now has been tokenism.

Those of us who represent constituencies that are largely ethnic in composition cannot be blamed if until now we have felt that to some considerable extent grants were given not on the basis of need, or on what organization can do the best job or is the most deserving, but rather possibly on the basis of political considerations. I am not saying we are right on that count, but I am saying that until the government made the move it made recently and appointed an advisory committee that is representative to conduct meaningful consultations with the provinces and provide a budget that begins to meet needs both for this year and next year, we critics could not be blamed, either inside or outside parliament, for feeling that the program was, as I say, tokenism to a large extent.

[Mr. Orlikow.]

Mr. Prud'homme: Would the hon. member accept a question?

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, I do not mind the hon. member asking me a question but I only have a few more minutes. If the House will give the hon. member the time when I have finished, I will be more than happy to answer his question.

● (1630)

Let me say further that we hope to be able to say the government has finally moved along the lines we felt it should have moved a year and a half ago. We hope that the advisory committee will have real power and that consultations with the provinces will be meaningful. We hope that if the government finds that \$10 million is not enough it will provide more money. We can assure the minister we will not criticize the minister for being profligate with the taxpayers' money but will support him in the expenditure of whatever amounts are reasonable in order to implement the policy the government has adopted in principle and that we enthusiastically support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. member for St. Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) seeking the floor to ask a question?

Mr. Prud'homme: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the hon. member a question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Since the hon. member did complete his remarks when his 20 minutes had expired, I think the hon. member must seek the consent of the House in order to ask a question. Is there agreement?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Prud'homme: This is not a controversial question, Mr. Speaker, but rather to enlighten the House. Does the hon. member realize how difficult it is, and how long it takes to set up a multicultural advisory committee? Does he realize the multitude of consultations which must take place in every province of Canada? Unless someone is appointed by the government, and this could be done very rapidly, does the hon. member realize the difficulties that must be faced in consulting every single ethnic group in every single province in Canada, and how long this would take if it is to be well done?

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member asking the question came from an area closer to Manitoba than he does, he would realize he need not ask a member of any party representing north Winnipeg that kind of question. My constituency is like a small United Nations, and if any Member of Parliament knows the difficulties and intricacies in respect of ethnic groups in this country, I want to assure the hon. member that I surely do.

Mr. Prud'homme: There are 17 languages spoken in my district.

Mr. Orlikow: I should think it would be easier to appoint an advisory committee of this kind when the ethnic groups are well organized and represented by a multitude of organization than it would be to set up a Local Initiatives Program or an Opportunities for Youth Program. We spent a lot more money in this regard, and