

Multiculturalism

colour. The new Department of Multiculturalism must have appropriate, sensitive staff who have an ethnic background themselves which would prepare them for this job. There must be adequate funds for community organizations to achieve this goal.

• (1700)

Perhaps even more important than multiculturalism when one begins to think about Canadianism is the importance of promoting an appreciation of Canadian citizenship, an identity with Canada and with all our people as a whole that supersedes but also includes the specific ethnic heritage of individuals.

It was only in 1977 that we dropped British citizenship to become Canadians first. We brought home our Constitution to Canada in 1982. We are proud of this glorious land, and proud of being Canadians from diverse origins. However, we are still in the process of defining our identity. It is only the last generation which has overcome a certain complex that we had in relation to our southern neighbours.

[Translation]

For Québécois, the process was more internal. The Quiet Revolution and the nationalist movement for independence contributed to Québec's evolution. Our present policies recognize Québec as a distinct society whose culture and language must be protected.

[English]

The free trade debate helped Canadians to distinguish the important values we hold that are different from those of the Americans. For those of us who oppose the Conservative sell-out of Canadianism to the United States, I think our emotional commitment and our pride in Canada was renewed.

Our commitment to social programs show that we are a caring nation, not only interested in the almighty dollar. We care about people. We share and want all people to have security, whether they be a single mother on welfare, an elderly person on a pension or a person who is unemployed.

We are committed to regional development and to a mixed economy that allows for government intervention when this is appropriate. We are committed to preserving our environment and our resources for future generations, and to adequate planning, which means that there has to be an appropriate, well-planned role for governments.

We are also committed to social as well as economic development, not just to the market-place but to planning for people and helping our economy to provide adequate jobs to meet the needs of our population. Of course, we are committed to multicultural policy. I cannot say that these were commitments made by the Government. I can certainly say very strongly that these are commitments of the New Democratic Party as social democrats.

New Canadians and old Canadians must become much more conscious of the wonder and the freedom of being Canadians. I appeal again to all Canadians to experience the richness of getting to know their neighbours from whatever background they come and enjoying the intercultural activities that we can have in our communities and our neighbourhoods. This Government must restore funding for citizenship classes and must increase funding for language classes to strengthen Canada as well as to promote multiculturalism.

We must also have a new multiculturalism Act. I think some of the groundwork was laid in a previous Parliament. A Department of Multiculturalism will be of little use if there are no resources to implement multiculturalism and to promote Canadian citizenship.

I look forward, as do my colleagues, to presenting amendments in committee and to working with the Minister to make it the most effective Department possible to carry out the important policies of multiculturalism in Canada.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in this afternoon's debate on a subject that is very dear to the hearts and souls, hopefully, of all Members of the Chamber. Let me start by congratulating our chief critic on multiculturalism, the Member of Parliament for Saint-Laurent (Mrs. Maheu), who I believe articulated the thoughts of our caucus colleagues. She articulated the principles by which the