

*The Address—Mr. Murta*

months before election time—and we are seeing some of that at the present time—and it is largely, although not completely, forgotten a few months after the election is over. This viewpoint is repeated over and over again, Mr. Speaker, as one talks with various people across the country. The present Directorate of the Department of Multiculturalism is generally viewed as too political. The feeling is that what is needed is a department which deals with multicultural issues in a committed and meaningful way. The present directorate does not do that.

The Liberal Government, Mr. Speaker, must change its ways, and not only for demographic reasons. I mentioned the size of the multicultural community we are dealing with. From a demographic point of view, it is one-third of the total population of Canada. We must ensure that a comprehensive multicultural policy is accorded the national status it deserves. Canadians of every heritage have a right to expect no less from their federal Government. Canadians of various ethno-cultural backgrounds want to participate in a meaningful way at all levels of society. They do not at present and they feel they are blocked from moving into the senior levels of the private sector or of government, whether it be agencies, Departments or Crown corporations. They feel cheated of their rightful place in Canada. We in the Progressive Conservative Party believe that Canadians of every race, colour, religion and cultural heritage should have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential in any area of endeavour they might choose. That has to be one of the basic points of a multicultural policy in this country. We must promote tolerance and respect for those who share various cultural heritages and values. That is not always done.

● (1550)

Multiculturalism is not a concept thought up by bureaucrats and sociologists. It is a central fact of Canadian life. One third of all Canadians have neither a French nor an English heritage, but recognition of this fact has been very grudging. Cultural communities are not adequately represented in the senior Public Service, on boards, commissions or Crown corporations. There is an almost complete absence of visible minority individuals at senior levels of all aspects of Canadian life. Government insensitivity to a new cultural reality in Canada has gone unnoticed for too long. This is not going to be allowed to continue.

The Present Government's lack of commitment is shown by the repeated denial of requests for a Ministry of Multiculturalism with an independent budget. We in the Progressive Conservative Party are going to change this when we form the next government. Canadians from all backgrounds are going to be asked to participate more vigorously at all levels of government, because in many cases it is government which has to lead the way and show the rest of the country what is fair and equitable. If we as government, responsible for the taxpayers' money and responsible for managing the affairs of this country, cannot be fair and objective, then we certainly have no room to criticize anyone else for doing the same thing.

Some people have become cynical because of what they perceive to be political manipulation. The Liberal Government sees multiculturalism as a political tool and not a social reality. That must change. Multiculturalism has to be looked at as a social reality, not something through which to garner votes. A full Ministry of Multiculturalism must be implemented so the Minister can have the same input around the Cabinet table, so Government can be sensitized to the needs of this large community. Equal opportunity must become a way of life and a central tenet of government policy. Any and all barriers to full participation by members of any particular heritage group must be removed. All cultural communities must be made welcome in the political process. We must make all Canadians aware of their contribution to our country by members of the various cultural communities. We must make government agencies and policymakers aware of the particular needs and aspirations of the cultural communities.

Something which comes to mind, Mr. Speaker, is the Department of Employment and Immigration and its regulations which affect these communities across the country. Most important, the cultural communities must be brought into the decision-making process and given the opportunity to compete on an equal basis with all Canadians. All anyone can ask for is to be able to compete on an equal basis with all Canadians. We should tighten up the Criminal Code concerning racial discrimination. The visible minorities must be allowed a greater role in the media in the portrayal of their community on television. There is much evidence to indicate that the visible minorities in this country really have no part to play in the media, hence the feeling of alienation, discrimination and isolation. We could and should make it as easy as possible for new Canadians to integrate into Canadian society. The integration must take place and the facilities must be there and made available.

Coupled with all this, Mr. Speaker, is the unique problem many immigrant women have in not only learning the language but, if they are a single parent, in caring for a child while they go out to earn a living. These special problems and special needs must be addressed. Having conferences and paying lip-service to the problem is not enough. We must look to strengthening the Human Rights Act in the area of discrimination and dissemination of hate literature. We as parliamentarians can strengthen that Act. The Government should look to hiring and training counsellors in dealing with the special problems of the visible minority community, people with a sensitivity which is not always displayed by those who have to deal with the public. We could also use Governor in Council appointments to increase the number of visible minorities on federal boards and commissions if they are qualified. That is all anyone asks for. But it is not happening in a sufficient number of cases. We could work with the provincial Governments to help sensitize the public school system to demonstrate tolerance, something not always there at the present time. The federal bureaucracy, through a new ministry, could accomplish many of these things I have mentioned.