

Government Orders

promote duplication and overlap, while making the arts community dependent on federal largesse.

The federal cultural offensive reflected in Bill C-53 is only the tip of the iceberg. Consider the report of the Special Joint Committee reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy, which confirms Ottawa's resolve to subject Quebec culture to federal standards.

The dissenting report tabled by the Official Opposition condemns this attempt by the federal government to dilute Quebec's distinct identity by stirring it into a Canadian sauce of bilingualism and multiculturalism. Clearly, the sauce makes the dish.

The Official Opposition maintains, and I quote: "Where culture is concerned, the direction of Canada's foreign policy, as prescribed in the majority report, is based on the theory of a single nation, one single culture (so-called Canadian culture), and the resulting requirement that all the provinces must have equal status".

• (1715)

To the Official Opposition, it is clear that "the principles of bilingualism and multiculturalism, which form the political bases for defining so-called Canadian culture, have the effect of denying the existence of Quebec culture, which is original and which developed essentially from its French origins, with contributions from the British, the aboriginal peoples and, more recently, the various immigrant communities".

Quebec will never let its culture be beholden to the federal government. The Official Opposition vigorously condemns this blatant attempt to make Quebec subject to federal dictates.

[English]

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to address Bill C-53 once again. It is my pleasure to talk about the various aspects of the Department of Canadian Heritage and to suggest that what is really needed when we talk about this department is not just a superficial streamlining of the department but a complete overhaul starting with many of the departments that reside within the Department of Canadian Heritage, including specifically departments like multiculturalism, the Canada Council, the National Film Board, status of women, CBC and many more.

Let me talk about some of these different departments on an individual basis and suggest that in some cases we could do completely without them.

Let me talk first about the department of multiculturalism, something many Reformers have talked about already. Hon. members from across the way have suggested that if there were not a department of multiculturalism somehow there would be no multicultural diversity in Canada. That is a crazy notion.

I remind members across the way that when we settled the west in this country we had cultures from all over the place. We did not need a department of multiculturalism. Those people had their own cultures, they preserved them with their own money,

which is a new concept for Liberals. It is something that is still done today. People do not need the government to tell them they need to preserve their culture. They will preserve their culture if they see fit with their own funds. That is what makes sense to most Canadians.

For some reason this government has decided that some cultures are more deserving than others, that there should be a list of priorities in terms of cultures and that some groups should get money and others should be shut out. I think that is very divisive.

I point out to the members across the way who have often said that Reformers offer no solutions on cutting spending, here is an area where we can cut spending, something like \$21 million. We could cut it today, I would argue, and most Canadians would be very much in favour of it.

I want to talk for a moment about some of the other problems with the department of multiculturalism. A minute ago I said that sometimes I think having a department of multiculturalism creates division. As an extension of that, not all behaviours are equal. Some cultures advocate types of behaviours that are clearly not supported by most Canadians. For instance, some cultures suggest that women should be somehow subservient and that they should play a lesser role. I do not agree with that.

I think when we start to fund cultures and give people money to support cultures, it stops what has become a standard in Canada, sort of an ethical or moral standard from spreading into these other cultures where sometimes they do not treat people with respect on the basis of gender. That is something I very much oppose and I hope the government across the way would oppose as well. We can make the argument that the department of multiculturalism has outlived its usefulness.

I would also argue that when we see things like what the justice minister proposed on the weekend or what came out of his department, that there be something like a culture defence in law, I think we can see the danger of this whole attitude toward setting up special status for certain cultures and what it can lead to, possibly opening up a Pandora's box.

• (1720)

Thankfully Reformers were on guard for Canadians and quizzed the minister about this immediately. He backed away from it, and well he should have.

It is not because they saw this was flawed from the outset. It was only because Reformers jumped up, raised the point and forced the minister to back down and hopefully we will always be there to do that.

In the meantime we would certainly encourage the government members across the way to take another look at this whole department of multiculturalism and to acknowledge that this approach to governing can lead to division, can lead to some of these strange ideas in the justice system.