

Private Members' Business

that this great and beautiful land afforded them. They settled and built communities that helped to build this country.

I suggest to the multicultural minister that what transpired during those pioneering decades was real, genuine, unvarnished multiculturalism. All these people, these families from varied backgrounds, from different parts of the world worked together and co-operated to build churches, schools and communities. Together they worked to build the country.

That was multiculturalism at its finest with no government dollars. They were all proud of the fact that they had become and were Canadian.

Since government funding for all types of programs began, many communities have divided. Friction and animosity has developed. Dependency on the state, on government handouts has been created. Apparently the multicultural minister thinks so too because she has recently mused that Canada has no culture.

• (1855)

I would suggest the minister leave the confines of Montreal and Ottawa and visit rural Canada, the west and Atlantic Canada. She might be pleasantly surprised, if she stays for awhile, of the flourishing culture that she might not only see but also feel. I suspect culture in this country would flourish even more and probably bring Canadians closer together from all parts of the country if the state would only get its nasty little nose out of culture, along with its close sister multiculturalism.

Ms. Maria Minna (Beaches—Woodbine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know I have a very short time so I will try to be brief. It is very difficult to be brief.

Multiculturalism is about a participatory democracy. The members opposite have consistently used the myths out there in society to defend a position instead of using that which they know to be the truth and the facts from the department itself.

My colleague and I were talking about experiences when we were growing up, experiences that are still happening today, where the teachers would stream whole classrooms of kids into vocational schools because they were Italian, Portuguese, Ukrainian, Polish or what have you. That happened then and it is happening now in Toronto with the Portuguese kids. It is happening with the black children. It is happening everywhere.

Multiculturalism tries to break down those kinds of barriers so that those children have equal access by providing race relations programs and holding discussions in schools to understand the differences, that these children are not inferior in any way. We were not. My whole generation was streamed into vocational schools when we came to this country. Multicultural-

ism empowered my whole generation and a lot of other Canadians who were of different backgrounds and did not have the ability.

I will tell another story. Earlier today we were talking about Harbourfront. Not long ago, in the late 1980s, a group was putting on a poetry reading. They were choosing the names of poets who were published but not yet well known across Canada. One of the staffers who happened to be of Ukrainian background said: "Oh, there is a really good poet I know in Toronto who is published in his community but not across the country. His name is Pier Giorgio DeCicco". They said: "This is for Canadians, not for foreigners".

The multiculturalism policy is intended to create participatory democracy, to give access, to give equality, to allow Canada to evolve into a strong nation.

We talk about the fact that we are Canadians and we have all these common symbols but it is a bunch of garbage and words because it means bloody nothing when it comes down to the facts and the lives of every Canadian, when it comes to the systemic discrimination that exists in all institutions.

I spent 20 years of my life working in Toronto with multicultural and immigrant groups. Most of that time I spent fighting the invisible discrimination and systemic barriers in the school systems and in social services that people could not access because they were not of Anglo background. To this day in metropolitan Toronto, one still cannot access the majority of the dollars for social programs unless one is from the Anglo community.

This is about participatory democracy, rights, equality and being a Canadian. The members opposite should inform themselves before they speak about myths.

• (1900)

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of things I would like to say. First, I have very much appreciated having the opportunity to debate this matter today with other members of the House. I note their passion and their sense of wanting to debate this further. To that end I would seek unanimous consent of the House that this become a votable item and move it to committee as quickly as possible for further discussion.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is not unanimous consent. The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1), the order is dropped from the Order Paper.