

Government Orders

of Canadian Heritage. There would be less chance of conflict of interest. The smaller the cabinet the less chance there would be of conflict of interest. There would be one less typical Liberal bigwig to worry about.

I close by again saying let us rethink whether we even need a Department of Canadian Heritage, whether we would be better off in this country and have a better heritage if we had no Minister of Canadian Heritage. Let us rethink this whole thing rather than reorganize it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval-Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the reorganization proposed in Bill C-53 to make the Department of Canadian Heritage a promoter of Canadian culture from coast to coast is in fact a direct attack by the federal government on Quebec's specificity, in terms of its culture, language and cultural institutions.

This is evidenced by the inclusion of the Canadian culture in Canada's new foreign policy and it demonstrates once again the growing desire of the federal government to marginalize Quebec's specificity by imposing an all encompassing Canadian multiculturalism. This desire was very clearly expressed by the Minister of Canadian Heritage in his speech on Bill C-53, when he said: "We hope to rally the mighty forces of multiculturalism behind a cultural identity that is uniquely Canadian".

The objective is clear. Since the only references made in that speech to French culture in Canada concern the official languages and TV5, we have to conclude that the government feels it must absolutely manage to bring not only Quebec culture but also native culture into the supposedly ideal context of multiculturalism, considering the ever present and ever powerful American culture.

In such a context, you can easily imagine that the Official Opposition feels it would be suicidal to support Bill C-53.

In spite of the noble statements made by the minister, a man of letters if there ever was, how can the Canadian Parliament not be concerned to see today's culture, including our authors and creative artists—what I would call heritage in the making—be considered like an industry such as steel, footwear or poultry?

• (1710)

For example, who will have the last word on the review of the Copyright Act? The Minister of Industry or the Minister of Canadian Heritage? Chances are that the Minister of Industry will keep the powers already vested in him, since nothing in Bill

C-53 clearly states how responsibilities are to be divided between the two departments.

Here is another example that should ring an alarm bell in this House. Thanks to the information highway, communications will soon reach a speed of Mach 2. Is it reasonable to reduce the whole issue to the marketing of fibre optics?

Yet, that is the conclusion we must reach since the Minister of Industry will be the one in charge. They are thus refusing to admit that the major technological revolution generated by the information highway will no doubt transform global culture quickly and dramatically.

It is often said that war is too serious to be left to generals. Could it be that a society's culture is too precious to be left to technocrats and businessmen?

I think that Quebec culture is too precious to be left in the hands of the federal government. The state of Quebec must be the only authority responsible for Quebec culture.

Quebec's historical demands in the field of culture have always been based on the recognition of its specific identity and on the desire of the Quebec government to be the only one in charge of promoting and defending Quebec culture. Examples of this political will are not lacking. In 1966, at a meeting on Canada's tax system, Premier Johnson said that Quebec must be the master of its decisions concerning cultural development.

In 1969, Premier Bertrand said that cultural affairs were in Quebec's jurisdiction. In 1973, under Robert Bourassa, Quebec wanted to take back control of all cultural policy, including the federal funding for it. In 1976, Quebec proposed that each province alone legislate on issues concerning the arts, literature and cultural heritage.

More recently, in 1991, the Bélanger-Campeau Commission mentioned the need for Quebec to have exclusive jurisdiction and responsibility for social, economic and cultural development. The same year, the Arpin Report, commissioned by the Quebec government at that time, said this: "We can conclude that overlap between the two levels of government clearly exists in terms of structures, programs, target groups and even legislation and fiscal measures. . . Harmonizing the action of the two levels of government has always been difficult. The federal government never wanted to recognize Quebec's precedence in cultural affairs".

For more than thirty years, the federal government, on the strength of its spending power, has meddled without any scruples in culture. The purpose of these incursions was clearly to downplay the impact of Quebec culture. The result has been to