

Immigration

give to the concept that this country should recognize that the people who founded this country spoke two languages. Members of parliament in all parties, if they are honest—I speak now only of members of parliament who represent English speaking constituencies because I cannot claim to be as knowledgeable about those who represent French speaking constituencies—know how much hostility there is among so many of their constituents, how often they are telephoned or receive letters asking why the French language is being rammed down their throats. Representing, as I do, a large ethnic constituency in which the majority of people are neither of French nor English origin, I know that among the most skeptical, among those to whom it is most difficult to explain the necessity for increasing the use of French in this country, are people who are neither of French nor of English origin. Their suspicions are based on the idea, I believe, that to the extent the second language is given more power, more influence and more recognition, their status as first class citizens is jeopardized.

One of the things which the government has done with the support of all parties to try to combat that feeling is to support the language and culture expansion and development of those ethnic or religious groups which come from non-English or non-French speaking countries and who have maintained, and indeed expanded, until recently on an almost completely voluntary basis, the languages, the culture, the music, the art and all the other forms which their culture took in the countries from which they came.

● (2010)

In recent years federal and provincial governments have stepped in without clearly understanding that the continuation of these other cultures, languages and arts has to be essentially on a voluntary basis. It has to be based on people's desires, whether they be Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, German or Jewish. I could go down the list with dozens of examples. They must want to do this. However, federal and provincial governments have been prepared to help them financially and materially.

We now have a Minister of State (Multiculturalism) (Mr. Guay). The federal government proposes and parliament agrees to the expenditure of millions of dollars to help fund the work of various ethnic and racial groups. In view of the importance these groups put on the preservation, maintenance and expansion of their cultures—the roots from which they came—it seems to me that every opportunity should be used to make it clear to these groups that we encourage them to develop the multicultural foundations of this country. Recognizing, as the minister said earlier today, that the purpose of this bill is essentially to deal with people who are coming into this country, and recognizing that this is not the place to discuss in any great detail the whole question of multiculturalism, I still believe that the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Greenwood is a good one.

The amendment would reinforce the knowledge of the people of this country who are of neither English nor French origin that they too are equal, first class citizens of this

[Mr. Orlikow.]

country and that the Government of Canada cares about them and wants them to succeed in their efforts to maintain their languages and cultures. I intend to support this motion, and I express my surprise and dismay that the minister has rejected it.

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a few points on the record. The hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) has done an excellent job as my party's spokesman regarding Bill C-24.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: I am a little concerned about the reluctance of the minister. I know the minister, and I respect him. In terms of implementing our immigration policy he has a very onerous job, but all the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) is attempting to do is bring to the attention of the House and the country what this country is all about.

This bill contains objectives, and I do not want anyone to think that these objectives relate only to the immigrant or the person coming into the country. They apply also to those who live in the country now. All the members of the committee of which I was very fortunate to be a member were interested in seeing that we have a just and fair immigration policy and that there be certain objectives set out in the bill. One objective is that our immigration policy be non-discriminatory. Second, we should be concerned about and aware of the need to reunify families. Third, we need to take a new approach to refugees.

Within the confines of those three principles the minister brought in Clause 3(b) which reads as follows:

to enrich and strengthen the cultural and social fabric of Canada, taking into account the federal and bilingual character of Canada;

All the hon. member for Greenwood wants to do is add a few words to bring about an actual realization that we appreciate the contribution which has been made by people of all colours, races, creeds and cultures to the development of this country, and the minister stands in his place and says he will not accept those further words. After the word "Canada" the hon. member for Greenwood wants to add "and the multicultural nature of Canada". That is all we are talking about here. I do not want to say that the government is playing politics with the policy of multiculturalism, but it seems to me that we have an on and off policy. That is continually brought home to me in terms of multicultural policy. Canada is a multicultural and multilingual country, with English and French as its two official languages. That is a fact.

I once asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) how he and his cabinet members devise policy and on what basis. This can be checked somewhere in *Hansard*. The Prime Minister said, "On the basis that this is a multicultural country, but bilingual".

Mr. Kaplan: I don't think he said that.

Mr. Alexander: The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Kaplan) says he does not believe it. I would bet him \$100, and he could well afford it. I am trying to