

forward to the government getting the legislation through the House and passing the challenge along to the Senate.

Senator Molgat: I certainly appreciate the comments of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and I will take that into consideration. If, by the end of next week, it appears that we would not have a meaningful workload before us, I will certainly contact him then. I think we have to attempt to find the best way in which the Senate can work, and that is my objective.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

MOTION FOR ADDRESS IN REPLY—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Gigantès, seconded by the Honourable Senator Cools, for an Address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-fifth Parliament.—(4th day of resuming debate)

Hon. Peter Bosa: Honourable senators, I am pleased to take part in the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. However, before I do so I would like to congratulate Senator Gigantès and Senator Cools, the mover and seconder of the motion, for setting the tone of the very vigorous debate to follow.

I want to take this opportunity to speak on the policy of multiculturalism; how it is perceived by some segments of our society and how misleading that perception is. Like our colleague, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Michel Dupuy, I believe the history of our country and our national identity is closely linked to successive waves of immigrants and to the interaction between newcomers and the existing society. Our challenge is how to integrate, not assimilate, these new Canadians and how to promote a Canadian identity that will serve as a rallying point for our diverse population.

Multiculturalism was declared an official policy of the Trudeau government in 1971, some two years after the Official Languages Act was promulgated in 1969. Canadian multiculturalism has always emphasized the positive aspects of ethnic and cultural diversity, and in particular those aspects related to mutual enrichment. Since its inception, multicultural policy has focused on eliminating the barriers to the successful integration of ethnic minorities: barriers such as interethnic and intercultural misunderstanding and conflict, discrimination and racism.

Without the adoption of a policy of multiculturalism, adoption of a policy of official bilingualism would have been interpreted as a rejection of the contribution made by those Canadians whose

ancestors are neither French nor British toward building our country.

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act, adopted in 1988, sets out the ten aims of our multicultural policy. Without reciting verbatim the ten points, let me just highlight some of the aspects of the policy.

The policy aims at recognizing and understanding cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society, that it is a fundamental character of the Canadian heritage, and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future. It recognizes the existence of communities whose members share a common origin, and their historic contribution to Canadian society. It encourages Canadian institutions to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character. It promotes multiculturalism throughout Canada in harmony with the national commitment to the official languages of Canada.

Nothing in these aims can be considered injurious to national unity. On the contrary, some are absolutely essential to it, such as the promotion of the full and equitable participation of all individuals and communities in Canadian society, the elimination of barriers to such participation, and the assurance that all individuals shall receive equal treatment and protection under the law.

Attacks on multiculturalism appear to be based on misinformation or lack of understanding of policy objectives. There is the frequent assumption that multiculturalism is a luxury that we cannot afford. In reality, the estimates for the current year show that the multiculturalism budget is approximately \$35 million in a government budget of \$160 billion. Of the \$35-million multiculturalism budget, approximately \$7 million is used by the department for salaries and operating costs and the balance is spread over four programs. Much of this money is paid out in grants and contributions to individuals, community and service organizations and mainstream institutions.

I believe it is significant to note that practically the entire budget is devoted to salaries and wages, whether it be in the department or through community activities that are funded through the programs, so there is a significant economic aspect to these expenditures that cannot be overlooked. Bringing the cost of funding to the lowest denominator, it works out to approximately one dollar a head for the Canadian people.

So much for the policy of multiculturalism, its objectives and costs, but what is the perception of the critics of the policy?

Some Canadians attribute to the policy all the negatives that irk our society: the illegal entry into Canada of bogus refugees, abuses of the welfare system, the swelling numbers of unemployed and increases in the crime rate. The policy of multiculturalism and the policy of immigration are often intermingled with, and are frequently used as scapegoats for, everything that ails us. Some believe that the policy is designed to ghettoize minority groups by encouraging them to keep apart from the rest of society, and that large sums of money are spent to promote folklore — meaning songs, dances and ethnic foods. This is absolutely not true. Its focus is on integration of first generation Canadians and on promoting societal cohesion.