

Canadian Multiculturalism Act

for multicultural activities, I have to face up to the fact that what we are getting most is mere words.

I know that my colleague, the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon has put a great deal of effort into his work in this area. I want to say on behalf of myself and all members of the New Democratic Party that we support those efforts and we call on the Government, as we called on the former Liberal Government, to do more than say the right things, to do more than make pretty speeches, to do more than appearing at functions organized by various ethnic communities in this country. We call on this Government to take seriously the principles supported almost unanimously in this Parliament by all Members from all Parties to support the efforts of the new ethnic communities and of the native communities to help them maintain the cultures which they brought, all of which in the years to come will help to make this country a much better place in which to live.

Mr. John Ostrom (Willowdale): Madam Speaker, I take great pleasure rising in today's consideration of Bill C-93, the Canadian multiculturalism Bill and to urge Members on both sides of this House to support this basic and fundamental amendment No. 6 to the Bill.

Some weeks ago the Minister of State responsible for Multiculturalism (Mr. Weiner) appeared before the legislative committee examining Bill C-93 and told the committee that he was willing to work with it to improve Bill C-93, as he stated in the House today. That is exactly what happened. The Bill which we are considering today is considerably stronger. It is considerably more vital than that with which we started in late March.

There have been amendments made to this Bill which strengthened it from the preamble to the very last clause. But one or two things have been left to be done here today.

The amendment which I proposed today makes this recognition even more clearly. Many witnesses appeared before the committee expressing their concerns that the multicultural nature of this society could be lost in other considerations and that the Bill was not sufficiently precise in underlining this fundamental characteristic of Canadian society. Many witnesses urged the committee to make a clearer expression of this matter.

The motion that I propose does so. This motion states simply and cleanly that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of our Canadian heritage and identity. In a few moments I will also propose an amendment which brings these clear, simple and precise words to the important preamble of the Canadian multiculturalism Bill.

Why have I chosen to make this motion? Why do I feel the words "fundamental element" are not clear enough? It is true that the Bill, even from its first reading, was clear in stating that multiculturalism was part and parcel of our identity and our heritage. But I feel that it is important to underline this. It is not only part and parcel, it is one of the foundations of our

identity and heritage. It is one of the foundations of Canada. That is why we adopted simple and precise language, language which has clearly entered our constitutional lexicon to express what multiculturalism means to this society.

I know my hon. friends, the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi) and the Hon. Member from Thunder Bay have proposed relatively similar amendments and I congratulate them for doing that. I do not think these particular amendments are well founded for a number of simple reasons.

The Hon. Members from York West and Thunder Bay have translated in their motions "fundamental characteristic" to be *trait fondamental*. If we are to use the same strength of language that is used in other places, we must use the expression *caractéristique fondamentale*. This is not just a matter of terminology. It is important that the language of this Bill in both official languages be crystal clear. I hope the House appreciates the motion that I am presenting today and I urge hon. colleagues from both sides of the aisle to support this simple motion, a motion which in both official languages underlines that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of our society.

I would like to take a few moments of the time of the House today to explain Motion No. 32 which clarifies and strengthens the preamble of the Canadian multiculturalism Bill.

Earlier in this debate I rose and urged the House to support a simple, clear and precise amendment to the multiculturalism policy of Canada which stressed that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of our identity and heritage. I would urge this House to accept a similar, simple and clear amendment to the preamble of the Canadian multiculturalism Bill which states in only a few words that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic in the continuing evolution of our nation.

This is an important amendment. The amendment shows that the Government has listened to those who appeared before the legislative committee examining Bill C-93. This simple amendment shows that the Government has been willing to work with the committee and with Members of this House to strengthen the Canadian multiculturalism Bill.

At this time there are two other amendments relative to the preamble, one presented by the Hon. Member for York West and one presented by the Hon. Member from Thunder Bay. These amendments are excellent in spirit, but they are flawed, I believe, in their creation. First, both amendments in the French language utilize the words "*trait fondamental*" as opposed to "*caractéristique fondamentale*". This is an important difference. It is an important shortcoming in both motions about which I spoke earlier today. If we are to signal what this amendment is about and to say that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic, and if we wish to give the language sufficient force, we must use the language which is already in the lexicon; namely, *caractéristique fondamentale*.