

Government Orders

Some immigrants describe the downside in terms of stolen dignity. Others argue that the policy ghettoizes newcomers instead of encouraging them to develop loyalty to their new land. On the basis of what immigrants themselves are saying, it seems clear that the policy, now more than 20 years old, is due for an overhaul. It does not say a reorganization. It says an overhaul.

The financial crunch provides another reason for an examination of the multiculturalism program just as it does in the case of the Canada Council with its \$98 million budget this year, amateur sport with \$64 million, Advocacy for Women \$8 million and so on.

On a per capita basis, multicultural grants cost each Canadian less than \$1. Some of the projects seem worth much more than \$1 but in other cases \$1 is too much. Why is any money spent on poster and button campaigns against racism or on teaching Armenian?

If Armenians or any ethnic group wants their kids to be able to speak their language, they should find the money for it in their own pockets. Government funding for this kind of language training speaks to Mr. Bissoondath's point about the policy's role in fragmenting Canadians by giving groups a heightened sense of their own ethnicity.

It also confirms native Canadians in their disinclination to embrace immigrants as full citizens. We do not suggest that Canada should opt for the U.S. style melting pot, but our cherished mosaic feels a bit battered. It is time to rethink multiculturalism, its purpose, effects and costs in dollars and cents.

Thanks to Mr. Bissoondath, whose foreign roots make him uniquely qualified to debate multiculturalism, it is now on the agenda along with everything else. I concur in the thought that this ministry needs to be rethought rather than reorganized.

When I spoke to amendments to the bill I talked about the dozens of agencies and organizations that answer to the Ministry of Canadian Heritage. They range from the CBC to the museums and multicultural programs. I cannot help but wonder if many of these institutions could better serve Canadians from the private sector or whether they should have their funding reduced or eliminated altogether. Perhaps their functions could be better performed within other departments and under other ministries.

For example, I believe we could seriously consider cutting all the funding to institutions such as the status of women in Canada and, as I mentioned earlier, multicultural grants.

Another area where federal spending is unnecessary is on official languages. Why do we need an official languages commissioner? By making this a responsibility of the provinces and private organizations, more relevant service can be delivered with considerable savings to the federal treasury.

Under the Department of Canadian Heritage we have a National Battlefields Commission. I am sure that the forming of that is necessary, but perhaps it could fall under the jurisdiction of the defence department if there was no Canadian heritage ministry.

Then we have the Race Relations Foundation. It sounds like perhaps there may be some justification in that. It is hard to say but if there is perhaps that would fit under justice. Certainly it seems odd that we would want to indicate that race relations were part of our Canadian heritage. It almost has a negative connotation. It is not something we want to be part of our heritage but if there is a problem, it is something we want to fix.

The Public Service Commission might more appropriately fall under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Board.

• (1705)

There are perhaps some things we should do with the CBC. If you asked the average Canadian what they saw as the most outstanding example of Canadian heritage I wonder whether they might talk about our people and the qualities of our people, or whether they might talk about our environment and the wonderful land that we have. I doubt very many would point to the CBC, especially to Telefilm Canada and the National Film Board, which certainly could be merged and probably privatized at a great reduction in cost to Canadian taxpayers.

I hate to even mention this because it has been mentioned so many times, but the museums are funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage. I wonder if they could not possibly be privatized as well. Maybe then the people that enjoy these museums would find things that would cause them to want to come to the museum rather than be disturbed by what they saw in some of these museums. It certainly would eliminate some of the boondoggles like the current museum being built in the Prime Minister's riding, I would add again, at great cost to the taxpayers and a study indicating that this thing is doomed to failure.

We find that after thoroughly and objectively reviewing all of the current responsibilities of the agencies of the Minister of Canadian Heritage that this minister may not be required at all. It is possible that once all the unnecessary or obsolete spending is removed there will not be enough left to justify a ministry at all. Perhaps the remaining justifiable responsibilities could be provided by other ministries. We believe that this would provide some savings to Canadian taxpayers.

I will take just a couple of minutes in wrapping up to indicate what they might be. There could be one less car and driver for a minister. There could be one less big office with minister's staff. There could be one less multimillion dollar MP pension plan to pay out, topped up by taxpayers. There would be less chance of letters of intervention to the CRTC if we removed the Minister