

Cultural Assistance Policies

have to check with the multicultural people and take a look at their grants to see whether they have in fact given the cultural institutions. I think that they pursue different criteria, a multiculturalism approach. I would not want to end that because some other group was not getting it. I would prefer, in the case of the Hillsborough Girls Choir, to expand the funding in other initiatives.

If the Member is making the point that cultural institutions are equal to sports, then I think he is right concerning that. I do not think he can say that there should be funding for amateur sports and no funding for amateur cultural institutions. In some ways they are all part of Canadian culture, in a broad definition of culture.

The NDP, my Party, and I hope the Hon. Member, believe in a broad definition of culture, a culture for the people and not just for a few elite groups. The Member for Ottawa made some comments, as well as the Member from Nova Scotia, about the Government's deep commitment to helping the arts. I have two criticisms here that I want the Hon. Member to consider. The Government has underfunded the CBC and in fact politicized the boards of the arts, organizations like Jean Sirois and Telefilm and some of the other bad political appointments. I will finish by saying that the Hon. Member's point was well taken and worth considering and studying. I want to broaden the study to look at the things that I suggested, and I hope that the Hillsborough Girls Choir can continue to represent Canada both here and abroad and that the L'Insolite band from St. Jérôme can represent St. Jérôme, Québec, and Canada abroad just as successfully as before. I hope that we can find some additional funds for them and for the people that help them.

● (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for External Relations): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to rise in the House today and respond to the comments of the Hon. Member for Fundy Royal (Mr. Corbett) concerning the Government's funding of various Canadian cultural groups.

In fact, this gives me an opportunity to focus on a vital aspect of one of our Departments, and I am referring to the Department of the Secretary of State. And speaking of the Department of the Secretary of State, I think I should say that the new incumbent is someone of immense value both to Quebec and to Canada. He has great credibility in Quebec and the other Canadian provinces, and even internationally. Mr. Speaker, I know to what extent the Department of the Secretary of State . . .

Mr. Waddell: Wait and see!

Mr. Champagne: I know it hurts the NDP to realize that intelligent people, men of integrity and especially men of this stature, come to us instead of to their party. In fact, Mr.

Speaker, in politics, intelligent people generally opt for parties that are doers, not dreamers. I think this was borne out by the election in Lac-Saint-Jean, and the Hon. Member should listen instead of making remarks.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I would like to get back to the fact that the Department of the Secretary of State is a very important department, and that also extends to the riding level, in Champlain, among my constituents. The Department is very much involved in promoting the status of women and in helping and promoting the status of the disabled, and since the motion moved by the Hon. Member for Fundy Royal is about multiculturalism, it is a Department that covers a host of different aspects and facets since it promotes the linguistic duality of this country.

This Department already offers many support programs for professional and semi-professional groups and tries to respond to their needs. The Department also encourages our cultural agencies such as the Canada Council to be more receptive to the needs of groups and performers in the multicultural sphere.

Mr. Speaker, in its structure, its range of activities and its staff, the Department of the Secretary of State reflects the regional, linguistic and cultural realities of this country. Many of its activities complement those of other departments. However, the Department plays a distinctive and important role within the Government in that it defends the interests of our socio-cultural communities.

In other words, its mission is to contribute to enhancing our national identity and to preserving the cultural heritage of all Canadians. It would be impossible for me to describe or even to touch on all the aspects of the programs offered by the Department of the Secretary of State in the areas of literature, visual arts, and the performing arts. But these areas are an inherent part of several large programs of the Department of the Secretary of State.

All those involved in the Multiculturalism Program, the Status of Disabled Persons Secretariat, the Women's Program, and the Native Citizens Directorate are firmly committed to promoting the interests of the groups that concern them. Literature, visual arts, and performing arts make up an important part of their activities in this regard. For instance, Mr. Speaker, we know that the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism wants to ensure that all Canadian men and women will have the opportunity of participating fully in our national life.

The Minister strives to help them preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage. He is thus the advocate of multiculturalism within the federal Government and with the support of the Department he administers a wide array of national and regional programs. The Multiculturalism Program provides technical and financial assistance to hundreds of volunteer community groups and to the heads of various specific projects that are seeking to bring about a better understanding and a greater appreciation of Canada's cultural diversity.