

*Government Orders*

about what would happen when this particular department was established.

It is impossible to separate the kind of definition we are trying to put in place here from the administrative and technical details. Surely, a new department needs a positive statement of its values, its vision, its role and, in fact, of where it tries to take Canadian society. When using a word like "multiculturalism", which may mean different things to different people, it is very important to define it.

Second, it is very important in the context of the national debate about what this country really means to us. It is no secret to anybody that we are embroiled with trying to give serious thought to the ongoing nature of our country, to what kind of a country Canada is going to be, to what we want Canada to become, how all Canadians can feel comfortable in this country. We have a committee travelling from coast to coast hearing opinions on what kind of a country we want to have.

Some of the points that were mentioned earlier bear repeating. Surely it is a flawed vision of this country to speak only about French and English Canadians as being the fundamental peoples of this country. Surely the aboriginal peoples of this country deserve recognition constitutionally and in all other ways with regard to our national character. I would hasten to add that the aboriginal peoples feel that they deserve a unique role and a unique voice in Canadian society and are not properly lumped in with the multicultural framework that some people would include them in. I have to say that I agree with that particular point of view. I think they are another distinct group of Canadians that is often neglected.

The whole multicultural aspect of our country bears recognition because it is fundamentally alienating to people who have come from places other than the British Isles or French speaking countries to be talked about in terms of English and French. A lot of the resistance to the constitutional discussions that we undertake in this country comes, in fact, from Canadians whose origins are neither English nor French. It is important to include definitions like this one in the legislation, perhaps in a symbolic way, to give those Canadians the recognition that their very significant role in Canadian society that has not been forgotten and will not be neglected.

I have found that as the whole debate over multiculturalism has evolved over the years we have made progress. I guess that is why I am in some ways disappointed that we seem to be so tentative about the step that we are taking now.

I have spoken to many immigrant people. My own mother emigrated from the Soviet Union at the age of 10. The original immigrants of many communities in Saskatchewan are still there to communicate with. Saskatchewan is the one province where people who are of neither French nor English ancestry are a majority.

There was a real problem in years past in that we did adopt too much of a melting pot kind of philosophy. The cultures, languages and customs that people brought with them from places like Poland, Ukraine, Germany and Scandinavia tended to be scoffed at and scorned, very much in the same way that more recent immigrants experience racism and so on. In those days, however, it seemed to be an official policy of governments to assimilate people and to wipe out the differences of people as rapidly as possible. I think our society lost a lot during that process.

In my own community of Prince Albert the ethnic and immigrant communities have made our life a lot richer. There are 32 groups that belong to the Prince Albert Multicultural Council. They add a tremendous amount to our community. They put on a show called Tapistrama which 6,000 people attended last year. They teach functional English to immigrants to help people deal with the anxieties they experience in trying to come to terms with life in a new country. They lead racial discrimination workshops, work with the citizenship court and sponsor celebrations like Flag Day, Canada Day, Citizenship Week and so on.

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It always strikes me as quite remarkable that these more recent Canadians are the ones who remind those of us who have been Canadians much longer about what it means to be a Canadian. They often seem to show a lot more enthusiasm for Canadian life and the meaning of Canadian identity than do some of us.

A lot of the enthusiasm for Bill C-18 has dissipated. We are looking for progress but where is the progress? Last year there was a 15 per cent cut to the advocacy groups for different multicultural organizations. This has meant a serious loss in capacity for those organizations to plan and to support their volunteers with things like phone banks, transportation and carrying on many of the