

Official Languages

development and preservation of the languages and cultures of Canadians who are not of English or French origin. All too often the assistance which comes from the Department of the Secretary of State amounts to a pittance in terms of the promotion of ethnic cultures. I should like to appeal at this stage of the debate to the Secretary of State to reassure all Canadians as to the development of a cultural policy.

Mr. Aiken: May I ask the hon. member a question? I take it from his remarks that he is in sympathy with the amendment we are discussing. I should like to ask him whether he intends to support it.

Mr. Haidasz: I am awaiting further assurance from the Secretary of State with regard to the development, preservation and promotion of the other cultures and languages. I realize that the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism has not made its report on the other languages and cultures in this country. However, in order to dispel the fears and doubts expressed by some Canadians, I hope it will be possible for us in this chamber to hear from the Secretary of State once again the assurance he has given in other places.

Mr. Aiken: I appreciate the hon. member's forthright answer.

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): I can be very brief in my remarks this afternoon. May I indicate at the outset that I am heartily in favour of the amendment to clause 38 which has been advanced by my hon. friend from Peace River. It is one with which I am sure every member who understand the mosaic aspect of Canadian cultural and linguistic development will sympathize. Indeed, I would like to have put forward the amendment myself.

Listening to the hon. member who has just spoken, I thought his remarks could fairly be interpreted as an endorsement of the amendment. One of the unhappy aspects of the debate so far has been the government's reluctance to accept any amendments either from its own supporters or from members of the opposition dealing with the more discriminatory features of the bill. These shortcomings have been brought out in earlier contributions which I have made to the discussion. However, from the point of view of the new Canadianism which operates with particular force in the western provinces, and in some of the larger metropolitan communities, little has been done by legislative action to

remove those discriminatory features from the legislation.

I feel that the amendment proposed by my hon. friend would have this effect. Clause 38, in its original form, says that nothing shall be done to derogate from or diminish in any way any legal or customary right or privilege acquired or enjoyed either before or after the coming into force of this act with respect to any language which is not an official language. At the same time, the clause does nothing in a positive sense to recognize what has become a major fact of life in our Canadian mosaic. I refer to the enrichment that has come from the recognition of the contribution of new Canadians from many countries of Europe, indeed from many parts of the world, and also of the creative force that they have contributed in making Canada a nation which over the years has been the cynosure of hope from the standpoint of goodwill and tolerance.

● (4:00 p.m.)

The amendment proposed accentuates the positive and not the negative. Perhaps I can indicate how this is so and how the original clause 38 is improved immensely. Clause 38(2) as proposed in amended form reads:

The Governor in Council may by order in council enter into an agreement with the government of any province which has been authorized by legislation so to do, for the purpose of encouraging natural development of any such minority language especially as regards the use of such language in matters of education.

In other words, the amendment is suggesting not only that there be the negative stance of doing nothing to remove what has been achieved thus far; it also includes the positive approach, namely that there be official encouragement in the bill of the further development of the cultural and linguistic mosaic that has become a distinctive part of many sections of Canada, particularly, as I have already indicated, western Canada and the large metropolitan, urban communities.

Perhaps one of the most dynamic communities in this regard is the city of Toronto, which since the end of world war II has become one of the great centres of cultural diversity in this nation. The hon. member who has just spoken referred to the dynamism of this new spirit of Canadianism that marked the celebrations in that city as recently as yesterday.

I am afraid that the government of Canada, as it exists at the present time, is not at all cognizant of this important fact in Canadian

[Mr. Haidasz.]