

that could be of benefit to the very issues that my hon. friend wants continued to be addressed.

Again, I thank the member for his concern and the dedicated manner in which he brought the issue forward today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister a question. He said that the time had come to move this Court Challenges Program to other levels, and he mentioned the provinces. In every case, the province was the accused, and to say that the provinces could take over is like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse. It makes no sense. This program costs each Canadian 10 cents a year.

[*English*]

Ten cents per year per Canadian and the minister cries economic tough times. We know that Tory times are tough times, but it is ten cents a year per Canadian for a program that helps Canadians to get their rights clarified before a court.

I say to the minister in all honesty that his argument does not convince me. I do not think he has convinced Canadians the reason he has given that it is economic tough times that have forced this program to be cut is appropriate.

I ask him very sincerely, is he not telling us that indeed this was done for ideological reasons rather than for economic reasons?

Mr. Weiner: Almost all my efforts in this past eight-year period as a federal member of Parliament and minister have been to help Canadians understand the benefit of having one level of citizenship, first class citizenship, the equality that we all believe to be in the law, which is not there in practice.

What I have done is I have tried in a very open and honourable manner in the creation of this department to make the centrality of our effort bringing forth partnerships, partnerships with Canadians from coast to coast in every one of the institutions they represent. In that way those institutions, once and for all, will get it through their heads that what we need is significant change. What we need is a change of attitude. What we need is an opportunity to participate.

Supply

How can you feel good about your citizenship if you are not included? How can you feel good if you do not have the same access to jobs, to housing, to the same income, if your young, dedicated, intelligent, young people, have no job offers?

What we have done very practically is we have taken almost all the resources of the new department and we have placed them to fight racism, racial discrimination. We have brought forward a program on integration and equality.

Now there is a consensus of people from coast to coast who are really recognizing the benefit of having this kind of program. Maybe it has been some of the public education and awareness. Maybe it has been the work of members from coast to coast. Because we have a consensus of opinion in this House which is very supportive of what we are doing.

In a survey, a very in-depth analysis last year by Angus Reid, almost 90 per cent of Canadians when faced with the most in-depth type of questioning of their attitudes recognized the need for that kind of programming and wanted it to continue to go on unabated.

So the accusation that there is something ideologically wrong, I can tell you that for me this is the opportunity to make the Canadian dream a reality, to give every one of our citizens that opportunity to participate fully, the human opportunity.

There are a lot of program areas beginning with literacy and going through to voluntary action, human rights, the racism and integration programs that we manage. With this particular program we have nothing to be ashamed of, nothing at all to be ashamed of. It has been an enormous success. It is at the backbone of promoting what we all wanted to do. The program has fulfilled its objectives.

It does not mean that it could go on forever. It does not mean that we had to have this kind of a program to the year 2000. I have said in this House in answer to the hon. member's questions that yes, we do have a significant body of jurisprudence. Whether we have enough or not is debatable. Whether others should perhaps want to participate in a new kind of creative programming, that I think is the excitement of Canada.