

Government Orders

very devoted individuals in my community are having a great deal of difficulty.

Last year the immigrant and refugee centre in Victoria serviced 350 to 400 families and individuals and tried to incorporate them into the greater Victoria community. These are people who are frightened because they do not understand the language, they do not even understand how to go grocery shopping. Yet these are the people who are affected by these budget cuts. At the same time, it gives the encouragement for those elements in our society to say: "Oh, they are just a bunch of lazy dogs, they do not want to participate in our community". Well, we have to support them if they are going to participate. We have to give them that initial support so they can be full participants in our society.

• (1700)

The racism evidenced by the racist knick-knacks that have been for sale in our country is a result of the budget cuts. This government's lack of commitment to funding for multiculturalism encourages that. We in this House of Commons have to say that we are not standing for that, that we are committed to multiculturalism in Canada, that we applaud the diversity, that that is what has made Canada great. We do not want to go back to the kind of racist history that we have had in our country. We want to go forward.

All members of Parliament have the great privilege of attending citizenship ceremonies. That is one of my pleasures as a member of Parliament. I try to attend as many as I can. As a fourth generation Canadian I took my citizenship for granted until, as an adult, I had the opportunity to travel elsewhere in the world. It was only when I came back to Canada, having been in Africa and Central America, that I realized what a wonderful country we have, what a gift it was to have been born here. Reverence for citizenship is often stronger in the multicultural communities than it is in native born people. I count myself as a native born Canadian. I do not refer to native born in the sense of our Indian people.

That is the kind of program that we have to support. This amendment that my colleague for Vancouver East has put forth really speaks to the need for definition. I wonder why the government is frightened of this defini-

tion. Why it is not willing to support what seems to be a very supportable motion which clarifies what multiculturalism is? Is it because there is a lack of commitment to multiculturalism?

Mr. Shields: No.

Ms. Hunter: Is it because the rhetoric is not matched by the real commitment?

Mr. Shields: No.

Ms. Hunter: The government member says no. Well then I challenge the government member and his colleagues to support this motion to give real commitment to Bill C-18. The member says that we have a job to do. Yes, we have a job to do and it is more than speaking a lot of empty words with no action. We need to have action behind our words, otherwise the lack of confidence in the political process that we are witness to now in our country will only increase.

I urge the government members to support this amendment. This is an important amendment. It gives a little more teeth to Bill C-18, and I support it.

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to comment on this bill because the multicultural identity of many people in this country is one of the most important aspects of the make-up of Canada and something that we all too often do not adequately focus on in our debates and thinking about this country.

I rise specifically to support the amendment by the member for Vancouver East which says that multiculturalism means that fundamental characteristic of Canadian society which recognizes the diversity and equality of all Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion.

Members opposite say that we are dealing here only with a housekeeping kind of bill, that it is an administrative bill which does not require these kind of definitions, that these things have all been dealt with elsewhere and so on.

To me that is a somewhat spurious argument. We are trying to give some substance to a large number of election promises, to commitments that have been made, to an evolution of policy that has been developed over the years. A lot of people had very high expectations