

Multiculturalism

to sensitize the majority groups in Canada to the value of a multicultural society.

Last November the Liberal government manifested its faith in the concept of multiculturalism by appointing a Minister of State responsible for multiculturalism and by assigning to him the task of the implementation of its policy in a vigorous and effective manner. Upon assuming this post, I requested of my officials that they prepare a policy paper which would, on the basis of the experience in the past year and a half, and in light of representations made to us, expand the existing programs and introduce new ones. I am happy to say to you today that I was successful in obtaining approval for a new and expanded program which underlines the fact that the policy on multiculturalism, initiated by this government, is being implemented with both seriousness and determination.

● (1550)

On May 17 in the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to announce the first appointments to the Canadian Consultative Council on multiculturalism. I envisage this council playing an important role in the development of multiculturalism in Canada. It is composed of able people who were selected on the basis of their achievements and abilities, and not, and I wish to emphasize this, because they belong to certain ethnic organizations. The primary role of the council is to provide an overview of all ethno-cultural groups in Canada including the dominant groups, the native peoples, the well-established minority groups and the newer ones which are still arriving in Canada. It is intended to examine their changing relationships to each other and to chart the long-range course of multiculturalism.

We see this council as a unique experiment in consultation for the federal government. It is much larger than most advisory bodies simply because we want to ensure that it is as fully representative as possible of all peoples and regions of Canada. In addition to serving as a source of consultation for the government, it is our desire to see it serve as an effective instrument for the development of cross-cultural understanding among members of all Canada's ethno-cultural groups, by playing an important role in sensitizing members of the dominant cultures to the needs, aspirations and values of Canada's minority groups.

The responsibilities of the council are onerous, but we have every reason to be optimistic for, in my judgment, the membership of the council is composed of excellent people who will work to ensure the full participation of all Canadians in the cultural development of this country. I am asking them to begin their work as soon as possible and expect that five regional meetings across the country will be convened in the next few weeks in preparation for a national meeting.

Our federal government continues to take the initiative in meeting the need to preserve and nurture our cultural heritage and is responding to the aspirations of the ethnocultural groups of Canada by creating and further developing the multicultural program. If the program is to continue to meet the needs of Canadians, an ongoing consultative process is necessary. The Canadian consultative council on multiculturalism is, of course, an important instrument in this process. But other techniques are neces-

sary, too, if we are to keep closely in touch with those we serve, and specific organizations and individuals should be given an opportunity to express their views within a national forum. For this reason, I am convening the first national conference on multiculturalism to be held in Ottawa this fall. The members of my consultative council will be in attendance and I hope that all interested organizations will be active participants in these deliberations.

There have been those who said that the multicultural policy has been one of "tokenism". The hon. member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk) said that a few moments ago. We reject this view entirely. Funds in the amount of \$3 million were made available in January, 1972 to carry out the initial organization and launch not only a project grants program, but also other specific programs to express the multicultural reality of Canada. These included a major research program into the role that language plays as a factor in cultural retention, the commissioning of a series of textbooks on the histories and contributions of ethno-cultural groups to the development of Canada, an examination of ethnic studies in academic institutions, developmental work with multicultural centres, negotiations with provincial governments and ethnocultural groups regarding the writing of language textbooks, the beginning of a series of films on the present day life styles of different ethnocultural groups, the initiation of programs to make books and films in ancestral languages available across Canada, and the development of collections and exhibits depicting the heritage of all the groups making up Canadian society.

I list these activities not merely to illustrate how much work has been done since January 1972, but to make a very essential point. The multicultural program is not merely a granting program. It is something far more complex and far more significant than that. It is a response to a major change in direction in our society, a change of which many organizations in Canada are in the forefront and of which they are well aware.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that at a time when governments at all levels in Canada are being accused of excessive, and indeed frequently wanton expenditures of public funds, it is refreshing to be accused of having an undue regard for the public purse. Unfortunately, the allegation that has been made by the hon. member for Athabasca rests neither upon accuracy nor a recognition of this government's efforts to exercise both restraint and wisdom in the expenditure of public funds.

The basic argument of his party is that we are not doing enough to promote multiculturalism and more especially our expenditures reflect a token recognition of the multicultural fact in Canada. As I mentioned, only a few days ago I announced in this House that my budget for the multicultural program has been tripled to \$10 million. This is a large sum by any standards and if the members of his party regard amounts of this size so lightly, I think the people of Canada ought to note this and count their untold blessings that they have not entrusted the government to a party which would use public funds of this magnitude so flippantly.

I do not take the hon. member's charge of tokenism seriously, Mr. Speaker, as I do not think he really means it. Perhaps it is intended to be provocative for its own sake

[Mr. Haidasz.]