

Government Orders

As my hon. colleague mentioned, these are valid questions. It confuses people. There is a feeling out there that at times multiculturalism means this department will look after everyone who is other than French or English. Our country has evolved to a point where the people in my riding—and I do have a riding that has representatives from 50 different countries who are all Canadian—say to me that they feel Canadian, they feel equal, they do not feel that they need separate, distinct status.

It is important as we go through this bill today that we realize it is a bridge. It is a bridge to a point where eventually we will have one super ministry of culture to deal with all Canadians on all issues related to culture, whether it be racism or employment equity, rather than having a separate unit.

Therefore I want to reiterate what my colleague from Mississauga said. The government has basically put forward a bill here today which obviously promotes the machinery of multiculturalism, but we must make sure that the essence of multiculturalism is properly serviced. If we continue to use this department of multiculturalism for song and dance and ethnic newspaper advertising, as it is sometimes described in the manual, then I think we are working against the evolution of this country.

I want to be very clear that never ever has anyone in our party, including myself, balked at the multicultural reality of this country; but we want to make sure that we are not entrenching ghettoization which really does not serve any of us.

Ms. Hunter: Madam Speaker, I was very interested in the member's comments, but I need further clarification. He said that he is supporting multiculturalism. His actions as critic of his party belie that statement with his request that there be no special multicultural committee.

I am wondering whether or not he realizes that his words are all very nice, but the reality in Canada is that we have racial problems and this multicultural committee and this bill may go some distance to address that reality. I would like him to address his comments to that.

• (1150)

Mr. Mills: Madam Speaker, when I think of the Department of Transport I do not think that we need to create a separate department for planes, a separate department for trains or a separate department for boats. If the Government of Canada is doing its job properly, the problems of racism should be handled in a comprehensive way and not just handled in some hived-off department.

I am very concerned that the very problem that you cite might not get the amount of priority. It might not get the amount of attention and energy put behind it when it is not right at the top of the agenda and handled in a comprehensive way through the Department of Justice, the Department of Employment and Immigration, and all the various departments that really must act on those very sensitive issues.

In my first job in Ottawa I worked for the Minister of State for Multiculturalism, Jim Fleming. I could see the frustration on a weekly basis that we had getting some of those priority issues to the top of the agenda. We at that time were not even on the inner cabinet. We were not on priorities and planning. So sometimes with those sensitive and difficult issues that you raise—and they are important—we just would not get the time we really needed. I really hope that we are not entrenching that kind of issue you raise as a concern which of course I support.

Mr. Nunziata: Madam Speaker, I have just a comment. The NDP member who just questioned my colleague referred to racial problems that exist in Canada. She is quite right, there are problems. There is a fear that the problem is getting worse, that discrimination in effect is on the increase. Canadians are asking themselves whether we are as tolerant as we say we are and whether in fact we are as pure, if I can use that word, as we say we are when it comes to racial tolerance.

I think it is important to ask ourselves what are the root causes of the increased level of discrimination and racism and intolerance in Canada today. There are those who suggest that perhaps we should examine some of the policies of the Government of Canada and try to determine whether the policy itself, for example multiculturalism, is in some way impacting in a negative way on that very serious problem.