

are working well. The job of Parliament is to formalize its name and its existence, enabling the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the department staff to carry out, in a single ministry, related mandates previously held by a number of separate government departments.

In reference to why the Department of Canadian Heritage is so vital, we like to use the term synergy. We believe the combined impact of the whole of the department exceeds that of its individual parts. We believe the formation of the new department has enhanced and strengthened the effectiveness of many of its programs.

The Department of Canadian Heritage brings together important common elements of the federal government, those elements which define Canada as a multifaceted dynamic nation with a rich cultural and natural heritage.

The department is responsible for everything relating to Canadian identity and values, cultural development, heritage preservation, and areas of natural or historical significance to Canada and to Canadians, values that we share and that unite and define us.

While the discussions concerning Bill C-53 have been interesting, many of the arguments put forward against the formation of the department are fundamentally flawed.

Opposition members have tried to erect roadblocks in what should have been a routine legislative exercise. Those roadblocks were reduced to speed bumps as the necessity for the legislation became clear. It is an important and vital tool for the effective and efficient government Canadians want.

The leader of the Reform Party of Canada has argued against Bill C-53. On December 7 he spoke before the Standing Committee of Canadian Heritage. He expressed the view that multiculturalism, one of the components of the new department, is the responsibility of individual private associations and, interestingly enough, where necessary lower levels of government: not the role of the federal government.

• (1300)

Conversely, he also stated or asserted his belief that the federal government should confine itself to combating racial, linguistic and cultural discrimination. While as usual condemning the whole program, he supports most of our multicultural activities. He is the master of contradictions.

Assisting all Canadians to participate in Canadian life and access the same rights helps them to contribute to and ultimately change society so that it reflects the lived experience of all Canadians. Yet there are always going to be individuals who will

### *Government Orders*

blame one identifiable group for whatever social or economic ills that disturb them.

As the government and as individual Canadians, we must recognize that understanding and respect between peoples is central to combating racism and other forms of discrimination. We have to build that awareness into our social structure at all levels of society.

At the federal level there is an important and essential leadership role to play. In its 1992 report the Canadian Human Rights Commission stated that "economic hard times and human rights make uneasy bedfellows".

Tolerance for diversity and human difference becomes diminished during times of fiscal difficulty. In times like these the temptation is to make choices: economic over equality issues. If our mandate is to create opportunity then it must be for all and not just for the privileged, well positioned and fortunate.

*[Translation]*

The criticisms of Bill C-53 voiced by the leader of the Reform Party clearly shows that his party's policies are not rooted in the life and the future of all Canadians.

The minister's multiculturalism programs support a wide variety of activities which promote the integration of first generation Canadians, irrespective of their origin, into the social, cultural, economic and political life of Canada. We all benefit from the contribution of each Canadian to the growth and development of our country.

The contribution of all Canadians is an integral part of the strength and diversity of Canadian culture. Culture is the very basis of Canadian identity and sovereignty. As a whole, the arts and our cultural industries contribute over \$24 billion to the gross domestic product, and this is about 4 per cent of the GDP and 660,000 jobs. This is no accident; it is the result of the commitment and determination of successive governments, and of the enormous pool of talent in Canada. The Department of Canadian Heritage will be at the centre of government action in the area of arts and culture.

To help artists and creators even more, the heritage minister announced an amendment to Bill C-53, which would give the department significant responsibilities in matters of copyright. Copyright legislation, which determines the ownership of works of art, is vitally important to artists and the income they derive from their work. This is a most timely measure for artists and creative artists, some among whom earn the lowest wages in the Canadian economy. This is a positive, effective and efficient change.

Change is also part of the life experience of Canada's First Nations. Native culture is part of our history and our heritage, and it enriches the Canadian identity significantly. At the present time, more than a million aboriginal Canadian citizens, members of our First Nations, are at a crossroad. In 1986, Bill Erasmus, then Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said that native people would have a lot to contribute in the next century. "It is our turn", he said.