

are owners and are prepared to give to build a bigger and better Canada for ourselves and for generations to come.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I, too, wish to join in the debate on Bill C-18 and the amendment introduced by my colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver East in whose name the member for Kamloops moved the amendment today.

As my colleague mentioned, when Bill C-18 was introduced there was a general agreement by all parties in this House to help matters along. I believe it is fair to say that there was a sense of hope, optimism and co-operation to bring into force this new department of multiculturalism and citizenship. I think we all thought on all sides of the House that this was a good move and I believe everyone was prepared to give co-operation.

It was at the committee stage that the spirit of co-operation broke down. Hon. members attempted to introduce motions that would have strengthened the bill, added to it, and would certainly not have detracted from it, but these were met with resistance. We see that type of resistance today. The spokesperson from the Liberal Party has said that we do not understand why the government is so opposed to a definition of multiculturalism in this bill.

This definition helps to define and clarify the bill. It adds to it. It was introduced in the spirit of co-operation and to help make better legislation. Yet, for some obscure reason the government says "No, we will not consider this".

I listened to the parliamentary secretary give his reasoning. I am afraid I do not follow his reasoning. He mentioned there was a definition of multiculturalism but not a definition of citizenship. Is the parliamentary secretary playing games with us? He knows there will be a citizenship act introduced and in that act there will be a definition of citizenship. Why is he suggesting to the House today that because there is not a definition of citizenship in this amendment we should turn down the amendment that defines multiculturalism? I am afraid that the spirit of co-operation and helping to get good legislation is suddenly breaking down with the attitude of the government.

Government Orders

When the budget came down, we began to dream. I said: "Well, Bill C-18 might just be window dressing and lip service." We saw the cut-backs to essential programs. We saw cut-backs to programs that would help in terms of heritage language, that would help new immigrants to learn the English language and adjust to the Canadian culture.

Since that time, I met with various ethnic groups in my community of Regina—Qu'Appelle, particularly with the German community. They have registered to me their own and protest to the cut-backs to the grants that that community will get to allow young men and women, kids in my constituency, to received education and to receive language training in their former language, German. That is not true just for the German community, but it is true for many other communities as well.

I think the cut-backs to language training for new immigrants is terrible. We all recognize that the Canadian society is undergoing some tremendous strains and stresses. We see the beginning of racism in many quarters. All members of this House recognize that we need new immigrants in this country; otherwise our population will continue to decline. We need new immigrants.

It is important that, when new immigrants come, they are able to have some opportunity of learning the language so that they can integrate themselves into the economic life of this community, and not be thrown on the welfare, recipient-type line which will only breed further racism and resentment. These programs are essential for the social well-being of our country. Yet, the government cuts them and cuts them and cuts them.

One of the tenets of Canadian society is that we are a multicultural society. It is a goal. It is an ideal that this country has built on as opposed to the American ideal of the melting pot. We believe that when people come from different cultures, they have something unique to contribute to add to our mosaic. Indeed, they have. I think of the many contributions that the immigrant community has made to the economic, cultural and social well-being of Canada. We are what we are today is because of these many contributions.

Canada is unique, and I am proud of it. I am one of the members, but not the only member in this House, who was not born in this country. I was born in Indonesia.