

Multiculturalism

people by standing up and talking about it, or addressing that very cancer which is apparent in all societies. I would like us to do the latter.

We cannot divorce ourselves from those issues. We cannot divorce ourselves from employment equity, from a government that called it an national emergency when only 300 people came to our shores some summers ago when we had invited thousands upon thousands individually? Is the Government trying to educate Canadians or excite them by that?

Mr. Speaker, we have some good things to say about this Bill, but the Minister fails to recognize that he must do better than simply give a 20-minute speech in the House or attend a cocktail party, a picnic or celebration, as important as they are, and read a prepared text. It is also time that we go beyond the 15-page speech or the 25-minute press conference, and try to address the very issues that we have addressed in the Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party, and which Members opposite have begun to address. Only then, when we attach priority to the full essence of multiculturalism in Ottawa and in Parliament, will we do justice to the feelings that we are trying to communicate to the country. Only when we stop to think what it means to people and groups will we try to embrace the very essence of what they are doing on a voluntary basis in the community, out of a belief and deep conviction.

Sometimes it hurts to see the corridors of power here in Ottawa out of whack with what is important to families, individuals and communities across the country. I draw the Minister's attention to some of those issues and advise him that we will be raising these issues in committee until such time as he takes this issue and this policy as seriously as we do.

• (1720)

Ms. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I noticed the Hon. Member made quite a strong point of the advantages of having a separate Standing Committee on Multiculturalism, and I know as a past critic that he was in favour of this. At least I assume he was since the committee as a whole were in favour and felt very strongly about this matter. I wondered if he was aware that when I raised this in the form of a motion at the standing committee that the present critic of multiculturalism of his Party voted against this idea, voted against bringing this matter

back to the House to ask for reconsideration to establish a separate committee? In fact, the multicultural critic felt that this would be a way of ghettoizing multiculturalism. I appreciate knowing whether or not he agrees with that position, and if he does not, has he talked with his critic and tried to educate him?

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, I think the Member does no justice to herself in trying to divorce oneself from purely political partisanship in a debate that goes much further than that. We in the Liberal Party do not have to take any lessons from the New Democratic Party who preach and suggest that they have a monopoly on virtue. When we were in government, we did the appropriate things. We moved on appropriate things. We will continue to do that in Opposition and look forward to doing them in government in 1992.

Ms. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I have a question on another subject. In my remarks I mentioned that the Government has cut back 50 per cent on the SILT Program, which is essentially a program of language classes for adult immigrants. I wondered if he was aware of this and what the impact is in his community.

In British Columbia, for example, the elimination means that 23,000 students in British Columbia, or 83 per cent of the adult immigrants, will not have access to ESL classes, a very serious thing. Of course, in our schools in British Columbia over 50 per cent of the students now in elementary and high schools throughout the province do not have English as their primary language. They also need classes. As I said in my remarks, I think this is a real undermining of the whole principle of citizenship and certainly of developing an effective multicultural policy.

I would be interested in the Hon. Member's views and whether he had any more information in this area.

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, I realize that we have a couple more speakers who wish to put their views on the record. Therefore I will try to be very brief.

Suffice it to say that the Member from Vancouver raises a very legitimate and lamentable point in terms of English as a second language and training.

It is my view, and I have raised it in the House and I have raised it with my caucus colleagues and in the Chamber, that all Canadians would want the Govern-