

*The Address**[English]*

I wish to share a few thoughts regarding the benefits that lie with a diverse society such as ours.

The history of our country is closely linked with successive waves of immigrants and the interaction between newcomers and the existing society. How immigrants adapt to the Canadian way of life will always be a major factor in the development of the Canadian identity.

The challenge is how to integrate diverse cultures with our existing cultures without melting them down into a single mould, thereby assimilating them out of existence. We must promote the development of a wholly Canadian identity as a rallying point for diverse cultures in support of a blueprint for a society based on consensus and continuity with our history.

Let us face the facts. The coexistence of cultures throughout the world is one of humanity's greatest challenges as this century draws to a close. Every day we hear people talk about racism or ostracism, both of which are exacerbated by hard times. This is a global phenomenon from which Canada is not exempt. We must consider the dangers inherent in self-centred attitudes. We must keep in mind the benefit Canada can derive from the diverse cultural makeup of our society.

In a world increasingly focused on economic and cultural globalism, our diversity could be to our great advantage as we strive to maintain our place in the community of nations.

[Translation]

We have to respond to this wave of intolerance that has swept western countries with better information about the advantages of cultural diversity. Perhaps we should begin with the very young and, together with the provincial governments, as they have jurisdiction over education, explore new ways of responding to the irrational violence that a fear of someone from a different culture may engender.

A foundation on race relations will be established precisely in order to throw new light on productive exchanges between the numerous ethnic groups that make up our population, the old and the new, and to unite the forces of multiculturalism around a cultural identity that is specifically Canadian. It might also be worthwhile to make more effective use of gatherings like the Canada Games and transform them into an authentic illustration of Canadian diversity by incorporating a cultural component.

• (1020)

I take this opportunity to remind the House that athletes from coast to coast are getting ready for the Lillehammer Winter Olympic Games. We all know how exciting it must be for them to represent their country at such an outstanding event. I am sure

the House will join me in wishing them all the success in the world.

I might add that, in my opinion, the preservation and the promotion of our official languages does not turn Canada into a tower of Babel. Let us keep the individual freedom to use the language of our choice, but recognize that the English and the French languages give us access to two of the greatest sources of world culture. They are part of our national heritage that the government must maintain and develop.

Allow me finally to express a few thoughts on cultural policy. Culture is neither an abstraction nor a decoration. It is above all a viewpoint on the world and a manifestation of our civilization. There can be no identity without culture and this is recognized in the Liberal Party's plan of action: "Culture is at the very core of our national identity. It is the basis of our sovereignty and the pride of our nation".

In an era of trade globalization and fantastic breakthroughs in information technology, our cultural resources have become powerful tools of economic development. In 1992, the cultural sector contributed about 22 billion dollars to the gross domestic product. It employed nearly half a million people, which represents an employment growth rate of about 21 per cent between 1987 and 1992.

[English]

As impressive as it may be such growth must not mask the problems facing our cultural industries. These industries do not have access to the capital and market they need to compete on their home turf with the major producers of mass culture, mostly our neighbour to the south, the United States. This is why I think it is of paramount importance for Canada to maintain its freedom of action under the international agreements linking us with the United States, Mexico and our GATT partners. We achieved success in this respect and we can now bring new policies to the forefront.

In the past we have set policies in place to stimulate production, strike a better balance with foreign products and pave the way for greater creative expression from our artists. We made great progress. Nevertheless I do not think our traditional policies alone will be enough to surmount the challenges presented by the globalization of cultures, by financial constraints and by the revolution of the communications field. We will still be called upon to adapt our policies and to be innovative.

[Translation]

Our new policies will always seek to stimulate the production, the marketing and the distribution of our cultural products at home and abroad. We are preparing legislation which should allow our authors, producers and performers to earn a decent living.