

Multiculturalism

to get the floor. I may be able to complete my remarks in a couple of minutes so he will have an opportunity to speak.

First of all, I should like to say how much I regret the word "regrets" and all that follows in this particular motion before the House today. I think it most unfortunate that one member of the official opposition a moment or two ago summed up what I really wanted to say this afternoon, that this is surely a subject of concern to us all. We are all of ethnic backgrounds and all part of the multicultural complex that makes up Canada today. In fact, if anyone can say he is not a member of one of these ethnic groups, then he must be a native Canadian. Only a native Canadian can honestly say he is not part of what has been developed in Canada.

I think I am one of the few people who has risen this afternoon in the House who is perhaps not tarnished with that term I so much dislike, the "third group". I think perhaps the hon. member for St. Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) and myself somehow get shoved into the other two categories. I do not see it that way at all. I see us as one people in Canada, members of a nation that has been built to greatness by diversity. It is only because we have grown over the years as English and French that we can say we are stronger because of that, and because of what one has offered the other and what each has offered this country. That is also so of the so-called "third force". It has grown in strength and is equally important. We are all equal and we all have something important to contribute.

I can very well remember 12 or 13 years ago, when I began working in the metropolitan urban area of Toronto as a young journalist, how dull and staid a city it seemed. It was not because the English, Scottish and Irish did not have a great heritage and style, but because that was all we had. That was the main force within the boundaries of that area. We learned about little else to diversify our understanding, pleasure and interest in the cultural backgrounds, languages and styles. In that 10 or 12 years, I have seen a tremendous change, which I think has in fact created a really great city that did not exist 10 or 12 years ago. It is now one of the most cosmopolitan cities on earth.

Some five years ago if you were a first or even second generation Canadian and did not speak English or French, you suffered a stigma; you were second class. I do not believe that is so today. I think all that changed in October 1971 when this multicultural direction was established by parliament. I think we have followed through on that with the \$3 million given to the program last year and the \$10 million this year. What other program dedicated to preventing the slipping away of the cultural backgrounds of these people has had its funds tripled?

I share the concern of some hon. members on the other side about the radio station in St. Boniface, and I certainly will make as many representations as I can to the government that its multicultural programming should remain. I agree with the issue presented by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) concerning second languages in school. I think that is predominantly a provincial matter, but certainly any federal input that can help should be forthcoming.

There are a number of things I wanted to mention, but I want to leave a moment or two for the hon. member for Meadow Lake. I want to conclude by saying how very proud I am to be the member of a riding in which, while it is made up of 40 per cent or 45 per cent with Italian background, 40 per cent or 45 per cent with an English background, 5 per cent with a French background and 5 per cent with other backgrounds, all the constituents consider themselves Canadians and have come to enjoy each other and to enjoy Canada even more because of each other.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I cannot recognize the hon. member for Meadow Lake (Mr. Nesdoly) as it is now six o'clock, unless the House agrees that we should continue.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

An hon. Member: We have two minutes left according to that clock.

Mr. Elias Nesdoly (Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I should first of all like to quote something said on television not too long ago by a character named Archie Bunker. He said "Whattaya wanna learn yourself Spanish for? English is good enough." I hold in contempt the sentiments mouthed by this illiterate American television character, yet there appears to be reason for believing that the imbecilities cherished by Mr. Bunker are not totally absent from the Canadian scene.

I regard the various cultural traditions now domiciled in Canada as a great national good and as an extraordinary national resource. There is no reason for believing that a theatre group offering plays in German or Ukrainian is less important to our national wealth and welfare than mineral deposits or arable lands. It does take money and labour to extract minerals or to make wastelands arable. It also takes money and labour to extract cultural values, yet this fact is not accepted as completely. Much money is put into various economic programs by both federal and provincial governments. We are interested in creating jobs. However, we forget that things of cultural value nourish the body as well as the mind. In at least one aspect of national interest it seems preferable to pour development grants into multicultural programs rather than into industries because industries often are owned by non-Canadians. Multicultural projects in my view are most completely Canadian.

I have much more to say, Mr. Speaker, but this will complete my comments for today. I feel that one aspect which has not been touched upon today during this debate is that we should not worry so much about multiculturalism but should be thinking in terms of a Canadian culture, period.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. It being six o'clock, according to Standing Order 58(11) this debate is now terminated.

[*Translation*]

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at two o'clock, pursuant to Standing Order 2(1).

At six o'clock the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.