

Government Orders

promote and defend five days of the week, 52 weeks of the year.

Therefore, we must ask why the government objects to putting into this legislation confirmation of the facts that you, Mr. Speaker, and I know are alive on the streets of Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver—on Main Street, Canada.

If it is already in the Multiculturalism Act, and if the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, which was before the parliamentary committee looking at the McKenna proposals last Saturday, and which reflected the aspirations of millions of Canadians who want to see that aspect of Canadian society recognized as a fundamental characteristic, then what is the fear of the government to recognize that as a fundamental characteristic in an act that establishes a new department of multiculturalism? It would be solidifying, confirming and celebrating what they recognize as being enshrined in the Multiculturalism Act which was passed in the last Parliament. What has changed?

I appeal to the good sense and the good judgment of my colleagues on the other side.

One hopes that this new department will be a transition point, a transition point from a junior ministry or an appendix of the Secretary of State where it has been for a number of years under successive and different governments and administrations, to one department, a department of culture.

I recognize that in politics and with reality being what it is that you cannot make one giant leap all of a sudden overnight. Therefore, if this motion provides a transition between that junior ministry to a ministry of multiculturalism and eventually to a ministry of culture, then that will harness the support of most of my colleagues in this House of Commons, irrespective of the political allegiances that they may have. A powerful ministry of culture, something which we advocated in the last Parliament, as you no doubt recall, Mr. Speaker, leaves behind the feeling of tokenism, the feeling that somehow there is a department of culture and communications on the one hand and a department of multiculturalism on the other.

What is our official culture? Our official culture is multiculturalism. We are proud to have two official languages, English and French. Our official culture is defined and expressed by multiculturalism.

Therefore one would hope that eventually we will arrive at the stage where our structural expressions to departments will in fact reflect the reality that we find on Main Street, Canada.

• (1600)

My final and concluding remarks would be—

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend across the way keeps referring to the act to establish a department of multiculturalism. He should make it very clear that it is an act to establish a department of multiculturalism and citizenship. I think that should be made very clear in his remarks.

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, the last remarks would be—and my colleague from Broadview—Greenwood should be commended as one of our two co-critics on the issue of multiculturalism and citizenship—that there seems to be two agendas; one agenda before a national election on multiculturalism and another following an election.

If we cast our minds back to the days prior to the last election, we had a flurry of activity and announcements, be they for the Japanese-Canadian redress, increased grants, increased advertisements to third language media, an introduction of a multiculturalism act, or an introduction of the heritage languages institute. These were introduced within days and weeks of the election. After a general election you have the stripping of dollars and cents that gives expression and life to the principles adopted before the election. This builds cynicism and abstraction in terms of what this government believes when it speaks about multiculturalism. That is why we are after clarity, precision and commitment in terms of defining multiculturalism, not just when we speak in Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver at various picnics and gatherings of Canadians, but that we make them equally high priorities in the corridors of power in this city and namely on the floor of the House of Commons. We think it is a small price to pay to send out a strong symbol that this country and Canadians, who are neither English nor French, are not renters in this country, but that they, too,