

Social Development Ministry

historical, political or economic instruction, is necessary for active participation in the Canadian social system.

Present policies are not doing enough to help the average person out there in a new land. Dispensing funds to song and dance groups, writers, academics, etc., is a very commendable thing, but is it helping the person out there looking for a job who cannot speak the language and does not know what assistance is available to him? I do not question the importance of cultural and artistic endeavours of ethnic groups being encouraged and funded, not at all. I do question, however, the priorities. There is a certain amount of nostalgic feeling being fostered by multiculturalism. It has become, as in all things Liberal, an elitist idea feeding on the emotions and insecurities of Mr. Average, under the guise of helping him to retain his ethnicity.

We are all Canadians, whether of Lithuanian, German, Portuguese, Russian, Welsh, Chinese, East Indian, Scottish or, as the hon. member for Edmonton East (Mr. Paproski) reminds me, Ukrainian or any other background. Our concern should be directed at equal opportunities being available and known to each and every one of us, regardless of our background, not at whether our child can still be taught to do a highland dance or a polka, but can our child be taught to feel that he or she belongs in university, in the House of Commons or in any other profession and still feel comfortable if he or she wants to do a polka? Multiculturalism has been relatively successful in the cultural areas, but has it removed the idea of tokenism? I do not think so.

The third force, people with ethnic backgrounds other than French or English, as referred to by the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), are sadly represented here in the House of Commons.

The principle behind the multiculturalism program is a good one. Liberal implementation has left a lot to be desired, even in the minds of those affected. It has not made sufficient progress in overcoming the inequalities, or ultimately in establishing a true Canadian identity within a culturally diverse nation.

The principle behind this proposed social development ministry is good, but will the implementation get bogged down by bureaucratic mismanagement? Will this new social development ministry have final decision-making powers and become a super ministry over all the areas I have mentioned both today and last night? Will it aid all Canadians, all of us, who must of necessity undergo attitudinal changes in the 1980s in order to survive as a united and free nation, and if we are to economically and socially prosper? We cannot have a healthy social climate without a healthy economy. We cannot have a healthy economy without some drastic realignment of priorities by this government.

Will the minister, if he ever shows up in the House, see fit to answer the questions we have and give this country an idea of just what this ministry is going to do for Canadians?

We on this side of the House support the principle of social development and only hope that the Liberals are not setting up another smoke screen, a gimmick, to dupe Canadians into

thinking the government are doing something about much needed social reform. I hope they are sincere in wanting this ministry to activate social reform and that they are not just establishing another propaganda machine.

We approve this motion but expect action from the department, and we put them on notice that we will be monitoring its performance. We on this side will not put up with just another bureaucracy. We want a functioning and relative department. That is their challenge, Mr. Speaker, and I hope they can live up to it.

● (1540)

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my few remarks on the setting up of a new social development ministry by asking a question: Is this trip really necessary? My distinguished colleague, the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie), in his magnificently nostalgic speech about the 1960s yesterday, was fond of quoting the great old song titles, and the one which keeps running through my mind at the moment is "That Old Feeling". Because I cannot help getting that old feeling that once again the Liberals are coming along to give us a social cure when for the past 20 years at least they have been the social disease.

When I question the need for this new ministry of social development, I am asking the question in an historical perspective, after watching the succession of Liberal governments operate as they have during their many years in office. It is true that the short-lived Clark government was actively working on setting up a ministry of social development, so it is not my intention to shoot down the idea in principle, now that we are in opposition. It is a good idea in principle.

But where the principle may be the same, the practice and the implementation of this new social ministry, I suspect, will be vastly different from the plan proposed by the previous Conservative administration. We on this side were setting up such a ministry as part of the total long-range thinking that the Conservative administration had embarked upon, in the same way we had launched a five-year program in the economic sphere. We felt it was important to look at the Canada of the next decade, as my hon. friend for Rosedale did so well yesterday afternoon, and up to the year 2000 in terms of how the federal government's social policy can best benefit all Canadians.

Part of our long-term planning included select special committees of this Parliament, including the study of volunteerism in society and a special study on the disabled and handicapped citizens of Canada, a subject which is so dear to the heart of the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale). Those select committees were hampered at every turn by the then Liberal opposition and they never did become really operational.

Now, all of a sudden, the Liberal government finds it expedient to have a super ministry of social development. Whereas we on the Conservative side were planners always considering the long-term benefits to Canadians as opposed to the short-term appeal to the country's headline writers, the