

Government Orders

From 1867 by definition this nation has always been multicultural. By definition we have always had more than one culture. This bill seeks to recognize and to continue a very important fact about this nation which is obviously not appreciated by some of my colleagues opposite.

In a word, this country represented a new nationalism, a blending of several cultures right from day one, with four founding cultures, with two dominant languages, and since 1867 we have become even more multicultural. This is not something that started recently. Those who think that ought to read some Canadian history.

Multiculturalism is not something new. It has existed right from the start of this country and it was enshrined in 1867 in the Constitution. As I have said several times, for those who care to look it is well depicted on our coat of arms. We are a polyglot nation. We are a nation which draws from the strengths of people from around the world.

I hear members on all sides of the House speaking with accents from various parts of the world. Although I may disagree with their philosophy on certain things, I am proud to hear their accents. Nothing shows more graphically that we are a nation which draws from the peoples of the globe. There is no country made up of as many cultures of this world as Canada. That is something of which we ought to be proud. It is something which makes us uniquely Canadian.

Frankly that is the Canadian identity, that we are a nation which was founded with four cultures, two official languages, but has been generous enough since 1867 to open its doors to the peoples from around the world. They are literally flocking to Canada and that is the strength of this country.

That is why my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona has no fear that we are stealing the Reform policy. Unfortunately my understanding of those members' policies is that they do not recognize that as a strength. That is a very basic strength of this country. Perhaps it is our greatest strength as a nation.

• (1635)

The fact that Canadian culture will continue to drive our economy even more in the future as we enter an era of globalization of trade ought to be something which is seen by anyone who cares to take a look at the facts of the case.

A very dominant economic activity all over the world as we enter the 21st century is tourism. I do not think as Canadians we recognize that fact enough or that we do enough to capitalize on it. We are starting to address that and this government hopes to make it a key priority.

The fact that we can draw from people around the world to come and visit their friends and family who are living in Canada ought to make us a leader in world tourism if we are prepared to

see our multicultural character as a strength and not somehow as a liability, which I hear far too often in this House. It disappoints me to hear it no matter where it comes from.

Of course all of these changes are to be pursued within the ambit of fiscal responsibility. Canadians know that this government is committed to fiscal responsibility in all areas of federal endeavour. They can be assured that Bill C-53 is consistent with that objective and therefore with the comprehensive review of the federal government programs now underway.

Our government appreciates that there are some concerns about the decision to divide responsibility between broadcasting and telecommunications, between Canadian heritage and Industry Canada. There are valid reasons for that. The inclusion of telecommunications in the Department of Industry's portfolio recognizes the increasing role of the economy.

On the other hand, broadcasting has a tremendous impact on a country like Canada with the enormous geography we are blessed with and yet with a population only 10 per cent the size of that of our American neighbour. Broadcasting is vital in this country. We have to be very vigilant to make sure that it promotes Canadian culture at all times and that we not allow it to be dominated by the American broadcasting networks. Therefore it rightly belongs in the Canadian Heritage Department where this bill will have it housed.

The department is active in promoting Canadian identity in several major areas: natural and physical heritage, official languages, amateur sport, community support and participation and also the management of cultural development and means of communication.

We have 36 national parks in this country, many of them beautiful parks in our western provinces, but also in every province one would care to name. Surely we want to promote that. We have nine historic canals and four marine areas located throughout Canada. We are a nation with three oceans.

We will soon be celebrating the 75th anniversary of Parks Canada. Canada's parks generate an annual revenue of over \$1 billion, providing jobs for roughly 30,000 Canadians.

In the area of official languages, amateur sport, community support and participation, that in itself is a mouthful to say. Obviously one can see what tremendously important areas that encompasses. We are a nation of tremendous cultural diversity, of multiculturalism. It is a strength and it ought to be built on.

I will refer to the area of sport with which I am most familiar. When we send Olympic athletes to represent this country, they represent this country. They are not hung up on whether they are French Canadian, English Canadian, whether they are from Alberta or Ontario. They represent Canada and they win medals as Canadians. That is seen very clearly in the sport of ice hockey where we have tremendous excellence and really lead the world in that.