

*Government Orders*

The government is all too willing to throw funds at communities to sponsor dances and events that are little more than costume parties. The attitude that the real problems of discrimination and racism can be avoided as long as money is supplied for costumes is a mistaken one. This is an ignorant and patronizing policy.

New Canadians want to preserve their culture, but more importantly they want to become full partners in Confederation. This has in reality been denied in the past. Multiculturalism has evolved to mean culture, different from French and English. Multicultural policy has regrettably acted as a barrier, preventing full integration, and one by-product has been the development of second-class citizens. The policy has exaggerated the differences rather than the similarities. It has encouraged ghettoization.

Ethnic Canadians who have been here even longer than many non-ethnic Canadians are still considered foreign. A country cannot progress if 40 per cent of its population is made to feel alien.

Lamentably there is a feeling among many Canadians that racism is once again on the rise in our country. The tolerance that was espoused in the 1960s and 1970s is evaporating. More and more Canadian cultural insecurity is reflected in the mounting attitude of many who feel threatened by new Canadians. Sadly we find that a growing number of Canadians do not like the "kind" of immigrant coming into this country. Perhaps it is simply the case that tensions that were previously submerged are now rising to the surface.

These tensions have now taken many forms, whether it be the painting of a swastika on a synagogue in Toronto last summer, a campaign to deny Canadian Sikhs the right to wear turbans as part of their police uniforms, or charges by native and black Canadians that they receive harsher and different treatment from police than other Canadians. All these examples are symptomatic of problems that cannot be conveniently packaged as multiculturalism.

Giving money to community groups to promote heritage events is fine for government public relations, but it does nothing to address the real problems that we will continue to experience as a result of Canada's changing demographics.

Multiculturalism, unfortunately, has become the catch all phrase for everything that is culturally different. There is a real danger if the term "multiculturalism" is used to pigeon-hole immigrants or those with foreign names. This is the reason why I can only agree with the bill in principle.

As a person who would be called by many an hyphenated Canadian as in Italian-Canadian, I have difficulty in accepting that the culture of my parents is a culture apart from mainstream Canadian culture, that it is something secondary, something not quite first-rate Canadian. In fact, the culture of my heritage is no different from main stream cultures other than it has a smaller audience in this country. Nonetheless, to ghettoize my ancestral culture by funding it through a special multicultural branch seems at best a little patronizing.

I can think of a number of organizations in my own riding that survive quite nicely without the benevolent patronage of government multicultural funding. For example, the Croatian Committee for Human Rights has promoted annual community elections that drew over 3,000 members in Mississauga. This was organized without a penny of government funding. I cite this as an example of a community evolving and maturing into political and cultural self-sufficiency within the Canadian mosaic.

Perhaps a more real alternative would be to place these programs under the Minister of Communications along with other Canadian cultural programs. I believe in a cultural policy of one Canada. As our Charter of Rights states, a Canada where no matter the race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability, we are equal.

Canadian social scientists have debated for years an absolute definition of Canadian culture. The reality is that an absolute definition is impossible because culture is always changing with the influx of new people. Canadian policy must reflect this evolution.

Today, the reality is that Canadian culture is multicultural. This new department must go beyond merely institutionalizing the ghettoization of various Canadian groups. We must take precautions to ensure that we will not have a nation where non-English or non-French Canadians will be considered foreign, even if their families have been here for three generations. This is not the way to build a strong Canada. At the same time it is my hope and the hope of many of my colleagues that this new department will be a forum for educating Canadians to more understanding and more tolerance.