

"multiculturalism" means that fundamental characteristic of Canadian society which recognizes the diversity and equality of all Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion.

This is the amendment proposed by the member for Vancouver East.

The government has said they reject it and if all the government members follow their bidding then, of course, this amendment will be defeated. I think it is very unfortunate that this government does not want to say that it recognizes the diversity and equality of all Canadians with regards to race, national or ethnic origin, colour or religion. I do not know what their objection is to saying that, but we were given some procedural hair-splitting arguments. I do not know what their real objection is to stating that as the definition of the purpose of this department.

There was no definition in the original bill, which I think was unfortunate. There would be no objection if the government wanted to reiterate the existing definition of citizenship which I think is well established in our legislation. But it does object, and therefore the bill has no basis in definition to which the public can refer. There may be some private meaning that the government will interpret or re-interpret from time to time, but no public meaning to the definition or basis of this department.

It means that the public will not have the opportunity to evaluate whether the department and the minister are doing their job and perhaps to criticize or make constructive suggestions if they are not doing their job. That will not be possible because it is impossible for the public to know, in law, what the job of this department and this minister is.

The idea of a multicultural department could be important. The riding of Trinity—Spadina includes a great many people born in other countries. To name a few of the groups, there are significant numbers of Chinese, Portuguese, Italians, blacks—some born in Canada and some born in other countries— Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latin Americans and so on. These groups are strongly interested in being regarded on a basis of cultural equality with other Canadians. These groups are becoming very well organized and have been for a long time. Many of them are reflected in the Canada Ethnocultural Council. There is potentially strong and democratic support in these groups and in the council, support

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for a real program of multiculturalism. That is, if multiculturalism means equal recognition of peoples of different cultures. We do not know what the government means by it although there are some clues that are a little bit disturbing.

Events in the last few months have indicated what the government does not want this department to be concerned with. When there was an attempt to point to the need to refer to racism, that was refused. Somehow or other multiculturalism is to be treated without serious regard to race, and yet the racial disputes in Canada are far more deadly than the disputes among people of the same race but differing in language or religion.

The killings that go on are more with regard to race. The starvation and the poverty enforced on Canada's first nations are according to race, not primarily according to some vague multicultural concept. But the government does not want racism specified.

It also refused the possibility of a monitoring entity, a commissioner. If the government means that it should be judge and jury in its own case, then it still has to answer to the kind of embarrassment that it fell into in the case of the Canadian Indian woman who had to complain to the Human Rights Commission about being mistreated by the Department of the Secretary of State. It would be far better if the Department of the Secretary of State would allow a commissioner of multiculturalism to examine these things directly instead of making it a more arduous sort of appeal.

However, we do get a few clues as to what it is about. According to Section 5 this will provide services for the acquisition and proof of citizenship. That means transferring citizenship from one administrative group to another—no particular gain but there will be an extra public expense because there will be more senior officials required.

It will promote among all members of Canadian society an understanding of the values inherent in Canadian citizenship and encourage participation in the social, cultural, political and economic life of Canada. Again, this is nothing new. It has been a function of the Secretary of State for years. We do not really need another department to do it.

It will promote among all members of Canadian society a greater awareness of their multicultural heritage and a greater understanding of human rights, fundamental freedoms and related values. Now they are