



Speech by

**Hon. J. FOURAS**

**MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE**

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Hansard 5 August 1998

### **MULTICULTURALISM**

**Hon. J. FOURAS** (Ashgrove—ALP) (10.15 a.m.): One Nation has a policy of abolishing multiculturalism. Today I issue a challenge to any member of One Nation in this Chamber to a public debate on this issue. As a migrant, I understand that migrants come to Australia seeking a better future. They want to be new Australians, not be part of a bigger, brighter, wealthier new Britannia in the southern hemisphere. Migrants want to be accepted and to belong. As a result, they want to contribute and play a meaningful role in shaping the cultural, social and economic fabric of their adopted country.

During the fifties and sixties, the official Government policy for migrants was assimilation. That was generally accepted. It is because of that I became "Jim" rather than "Dimitri". During the 1970s, the policy of assimilation was replaced with one of integration. This led to bipartisan support for the policy of multiculturalism. For more than 20 years, multiculturalism addressed the issue of settlement, cultural diversity and social cohesion successfully.

Due to the appalling leadership of Prime Minister Howard, 1996 was a year of distressing social division focused on the issues of cultural diversity and race. This led to the wide questioning of the policy of multiculturalism. The detractors of diversity claim that it is not a role of Government to fund separate tribes—nor should it be. However, opponents of diversity need to understand that the aim of multiculturalism is to break down the "us and them" syndrome, rather than to divide. The role of multiculturalism is to create a strongly cohesive society that values unity in diversity, community harmony and a sense of belonging—a society committed to one Australia. A report by the Queensland Ethnic Affairs Multicultural Advisory Committee, received by the Borbidge Government in October 1996, states—

"In a world of closer trading and communication relationships and of open global markets the reality is that we will have to live and work in such a way that we find common ground with others whose life experiences have been different. That is unavoidable."

Culture is skin deep. Culture is related to people's life experiences and derives from those different experiences. It is time that we all accepted the fact that we need to encourage common commitment to mutual understanding, respect for diversity, tolerance and a great pride in being Australian.

Time expired.

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