

From: MR

Date: 28 March 2011 5:08:12 PM AEDT

To: jcsm@aph.gov.au

Subject: Submission to the Migration Committee:

the Migration Committee, phone 02 6277 4560 by April 8 2011

Re: ¶ The role of multiculturalism in the government's social inclusion agenda

¶ The effectiveness of settlement programs for new migrants and refugees

¶ How Australia can better use the skills of migrants...and incentive into small business ...

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SUBMISSION to the Migration

Committee

I would like to submit an opinion of the effectiveness of settlement programs for new immigrants—in fact the absence of easily accessible English learning material. Any judgment on the ability of the migrant to adapt to our Anglo culture comes down to his/her ability to use English properly, and yet only a small proportion of our expenditure on settlement goes to this crucial element. The factor should be promoted with energy. The English language is the aspect of our heritage which above all lies at the base of our resources, and its acquisition (indeed its spread!) should be at the top of our concerns.

INTRODUCTION

Australians are often heard lamenting the tendency of ethnic groups to prefer mixing with their own kind. Little evidence is needed to show that this is largely due to lack of language skills which would allow and encourage access to new roles, socially and in employment.

NEW APPROACH

Much of the above is statement of opinion which I take as evident. Much more widespread acquisition of English sounds like a huge goal. I do have a suggestion that has not been tried, and which should go a long way to improving relationships between newcomers and native speakers. It is the point of this submission to your committee.

TELEVISION

There should be a television channel dedicated to English learning. As far as possible it should operate around the clock seven days a week. Its content should be largely visual, with highly professional graphics, including animation, such as became, from the U.S., a world-noted series called Sesame Street. There has been, recently, a large proliferation of new

channels dedicated to special audience segments — children, sports, news, and others, but absolutely no channel dedicated to the learning of English.

AVAILABILITY

Included in most migrant groups are stay-at-home members who would find through a dedicated channel an opportunity to reduce their isolated status. I can foresee a channel which caters for different degrees of mastery, so that broken work hours and routines can be catered for whenever the learner has vacant time. It ought ideally to be a free-to-air channel, but other models should of course be considered.

MASTERY OF ENGLISH

The important thing is a useful learning experience

- at home,
- free,
- regular,
- continuous,
- for both oral and written language,
- high quality graphics — conceived by experts in education and visual aids.

POTENTIAL

The above proposal suggests the possibility of expansion of Australian programming of English learning in S.E.Asia. The major source of English teaching has long been the British Council and latterly the BBC World Service. The BBC has also offered a safe and trustworthy forum for users to share material (in the mode of social networks - a fast developing novelty) which is now being curtailed by conservative government in the UK. The BBC World Service has had its budget slashed 16% as part of budget austerity. The organisation is now in the process of shedding 650 staff — closing down five language services and withdrawing from much radio distribution. A great opportunity for Australian enterprise to step into the vacated roles. The growth of social media and the British withdrawing from their wide spread of influence seems a great opportunity for Australian programming in English teaching, both for use domestically and internationally.

CONCLUSION

Expanding English learning should become a national goal. That is not an attempt at coercive assimilation, but of strengthening capacities of migrants to compete more efficiently in this host culture.

from University of Colorado, 1974. (Prior degrees BA and B.Ed from Uni of Melbourne)

I have been retired for 20 years from the position of Head of Department of Applied Sociology, Caulfield Institute of Technology Melbourne. My PhD was in the area of multicultural immigration into a (then) monocultural Australia.