

Immigration Act, 1976

say that currently, today, British Columbia citizens are more racist. He was not talking about 1942 or 1932. Could he give some proof of that?

The trouble I have with that type of interpretation is that if we take the attitude as Canadians that, yes, racism exists in Canada but it is off in British Columbia or somewhere else, we tend to neglect looking in our own backyards. I did understand the Member to say that the citizens of Vancouver specifically were potentially more racist than citizens in other communities. I would like the Hon. Member to clarify that point.

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Madam Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for the question she put temperately and with care. What I said was one of those asides. It came in the course of observations about reactions of various persons, specifically the Right Hon. Leader of the Official Opposition who, for some days anyway last summer, left us with the impression that he was in support of sending shiploads of Sikhs back to wherever if they arrived on our coasts. I find that troubling. I speak for Canadians, we do not want any Party including the governing Party to be committed to any such view. Having expressed concern about what seemed to be his acceptance of the kind of campaign being whipped up by the Government, a concern I will say from which he did withdraw—he did not hold with that stand in the long run, it was just that period of time—what I said in passing was in recognition of the fact that he is of course the Hon. Member for Vancouver Quadra.

Given B.C. traditions of the past, this perhaps was not quite so surprising given whatever he may have been hearing in his constituency office, but it might be worth recognizing that even in these days the maintaining of human rights in the Province of British Columbia is difficult and it is made more difficult by reason of the Government's lack of support for it. After all, the Human Rights Commission in that province has been abolished. If that does not suggest in the ruling Social Credit Party circles some kind of lack of respect for human rights of varying sorts—I recognize the commissions do not just deal with complaints of racism—then I do not know what would.

I do know from conversations with Mr. Azis Khaki, who heads the Committee for Racial Justice in British Columbia, that that committee is currently making an effort to ensure that all of us are sensitive to ethnocultural and racial diversity and that our actions reflect those needs in the Province of British Columbia. That is a task for all of us and one in which the New Democratic Party in British Columbia joins, having of course in its membership a black member, a south Asian, and a native member in the caucus to reflect the province and to ensure that the New Democratic Party recognizes the need for action.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps).

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, the reason I asked the specific questions of the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp) is that we have to get back to the main point, it being Bills C-55 and C-84. I see this not on the basis of a particular political philosophy, but it bothers me when I hear Canadians say we have racism, but it is somewhere else; "We have racism but it is not in my community. It is out in British Columbia" or somewhere else. It is quite clear that racism exists in every community. As Canadians I think all of us have to recognize that the existence of racism is not isolated to a particular part of the country. It is not isolated to British Columbia, albeit there may be certain government policies of the B.C. Government that may not work to reduce racism. But it disturbs me when a Member suggests that a particular part of the country is more racist than another part.

Mr. McCurdy: There are all kinds of studies to confirm that.

Ms. Copps: If there are studies that confirm it, maybe the Member can table them. That is the question I asked the Member from Thunder Bay—Nipigon. Specifically, he referred to Vancouver when he said that Vancouver was more racist than other communities.

Mr. McCurdy: That is not the question at all.

Ms. Copps: The Hon. Member over there was not here. I heard it. I wondered whether there were some specific studies referred to today to outline that. I am not familiar with them. Maybe I should reconsider my position. I do not think any community is blameless.

Mr. McCurdy: He did not say that either.

Ms. Copps: Unfortunately, when we tend to point the finger at somebody else we reduce the capacity to look within ourselves as Members of Parliament. Every person in this room is probably carrying a certain amount of prejudice—

Mr. McCurdy: Table those documents.

Ms. Copps:—either prejudice against other persons whether they be on the basis of race, creed, religion, colour, gender, et cetera. Many of the people in this Chamber probably face potential racism themselves whether they be Francophones working in an Anglophone atmosphere, women working in a predominately male atmosphere or men working in a predominately female atmosphere. For us to tackle the problem of racism, we have to look within ourselves.

I say that because by looking within ourselves we have to look at the content of this legislation before us today. In particular, in dealing with Bills C-55 and C-84 it is pretty clear that the Government has responded to concerns in a racist way. We recall that last summer there was supposed to have been an emergency going on because a couple of hundred refugees were seeking solace and refuge on our shores.