

Nazi War Criminals

earned the admiration and respect of all those who know him and his work. He has already rendered many years of service to Canada through his work in the Court of Appeal of Quebec. The Government is grateful that he has accepted this important challenge represented by the mandate that he is about to undertake. I am certain that all Members of the House will join me in wishing him well in the discharge of his responsibilities. We shall all anxiously await the results of this historic inquiry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, like the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie), I have very great respect for Mr. Justice Jules Deschênes. I am sure that he will conscientiously do the job assigned to him by the Government.

I am bound on behalf of my Party to express the concerns I feel about the course of action proposed by the Government at this time. In the statement which the Minister just made he drew a conclusion. He said:

In so far as the Government's knowledge extends, we understand from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that there are relatively few persons living in this country alleged to have been involved in war crimes as described by some of the associations and groups I have referred to.

The Government conclusion to which he is referring is drawn from a very considerable amount of work already done by the Government of Canada under the direction of the former Government. I am concerned that this inquiry will be a substitute for action by the Government for one full year, to December 31. I know that during the time of the former Government only one war criminal was extradited; only one trial occurred. I would like to remind the House that although only one was extradited, as the Minister indicated, there was a very considerable amount of work done by the Government to carry out investigations and to examine all of the Government policies and past practices to which the Minister referred.

I would like to suggest to the Government that it would have been more appropriate to have action. It would be more appropriate to continue in the direction of the former Government and to make public the information which the Government already had that I have discussed with the Hon. Minister and that he knows was more or less in a shape that, with very little additional time and effort, could have been made public. That information should be made public now rather than simply being given to the Commissioner and delayed for another year.

In addition, there were a number of investigations under way. Any one of them might have resulted in a case of extradition. Those should be continued. I do not think there should be a delay in extraditions during the course of this royal commission. I would like to remind the Minister and to tell the House that the former Government was prepared to begin a process, under the successive Citizenship Acts of Canada, of taking away the citizenship of war criminals who had come to Canada having misrepresented their pasts. I urge the Government not to wait until this royal commission is concluded to carry those matters forward.

There are other theories available for dealing with war criminals in this country and bringing them to justice. Last week a group sought to appear before the Justice Committee while we were amending the Criminal Code. They wished to propose to us a method by which war criminals could be brought to justice in Canada. The Government blocked the appearance of those witnesses before our committee on that question. I think they should have been allowed to appear. I think that the report of the Law Reform Commission should be referred to the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs now while we are amending the Criminal Code to enable us to do these things now. I would have welcomed a commission like this years ago when there was an absence of information and an absence of a strategy for dealing with war criminals.

In closing, I would like to remind Members of the House and the Justice Minister that the horrors of World War II, the holocaust to which this policy is addressed, is not quite history yet. It is not history as long as there are still fugitives from justice at large in our country. It is not history as long as there are still victims in Canada of the crimes that were committed during World War II. However, it is rapidly becoming history. There are not very many more years in which it will be legally possible to bring these war criminals to justice. The matter is urgent. I think that a year is too long for inaction. I think a year is too long for study.

I would urge the Government to continue the policies that have been begun, to continue the prosecutions, to continue the investigations, and to examine all of the amendments that have been proposed by eminent jurists and by the Law Reform Commission for improving the laws we have now so that war criminals can be brought to justice at this time rather than in 1986. In 1986 it will be too late for many cases that could be brought in 1985. That should not be forgotten. The Government should continue to press forward with policies that will bring war criminals to justice now.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, 1986 is too late, 1985 is too late, and I must say that 1984 was also too late.

I would like to begin by commending the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie) for taking the action he has announced today establishing a commission headed by a very respected judge to study all aspects of this very important and difficult issue. At the same time I would like to note that this opportunity must not pass without recognizing that it was the inaction of previous Liberal Governments which led to the admittance of Simon Wiesenthal on to Canadian soil. I need not remind the House as well of Canada's shameful record with respect to the immigration of Jews who were seeking to escape the tyranny of Nazism before and during World War II. I need not remind the House of who was in government at that particular time.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, that the commission which has been established by the Minister of Justice not be seen in any way as a substitute for speedy action by the Government. The Government must not put on hold the actions which have been started. Indeed, I would urge that the investigative unit of the RCMP, which has been established, be strengthened and that