

Canadian Human Rights

Mr. Fairweather: Yes, that in itself is news. In any event, when we tested the committee's will, the minister said that an amendment to abolish the section of the Indian Act which continues to discriminate against the Indian people would be considered. If I interpret the minister's remarks correctly, in his answer to the Indian people he gave them a signal to get on with the matter of making suggestions to parliament for an Indian Act which would not continue what is one of the outrages of modern society, namely, the blatant, legislated discrimination against women who are Indian.

I hope that this warning is noted by those in charge of framing a new Indian Act and those in the Indian community. As my hon. friend from Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt) has pointed out, even the name "Indian Brotherhood" is in itself somewhat discriminatory, or is evidence of discrimination. I hope that the very eloquent cries of witnesses such as Mary Two Axe Early and others who came to the committee to tell of the injustices suffered by Indian women will be addressed very soon by this parliament.

A colleague of ours, the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin)—he will not like what I am going to say because he is innately a modest man—was honoured the other day by Canadians of Japanese ancestry for the contribution he has made to human rights throughout his entire career.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fairweather: I could not imagine a better opportunity for me to have parliament recognize his contribution than during third reading of a bill having to do with human rights.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fairweather: The hon. member can, of course, speak for himself when I am through, if he likes. Isn't that generous of me? He recognizes the innate paradox—we should keep this in mind with all legislation having to do with rights—that when the events for which he has been honoured occurred during World War II, namely, what Canada did to Canadian citizens of Japanese ancestry, we did not have a Bill of Rights. Our neighbours have an entrenched bill of rights in every sense of that word, but despite that they dealt just as shabbily with Americans of Japanese ancestry as did we Canadians.

I think we should regard this occurrence as a lesson that in times of stress governments can find excuses for overstepping the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals. This is why, although the members of my party welcome this legislation, we realize that you cannot legislate humankind to be just one with the other. I sincerely believe that a Bill of Rights and that human rights commissions are a signpost of civility placed in the statute books by those who hope to promote civility along with human rights. I recall, and I think it is well that the House recalls, that just because a bill is in place and has all the apparatus of royal assent does not necessarily mean that humankind is going, *ipso facto*, to treat others with civility. Nevertheless, it is an important signpost. I just want to repeat that I have been pleased to participate in this legislation.

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather) for referring to my colleague from Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) regarding the great contribution he has made toward achieving human rights for all Canadians.

Mr. Brewin: I am not ready for the Senate yet.

Mr. Leggatt: Indeed, no. On the subject of human rights, "exemplary" is the right word to describe the contribution made by people like Andrew Brewin to protect unpopular groups. Human rights legislation is not worth much if all we are going to do is protect people who happen to be very popular in a country at any particular time. I think it is to the great credit of the hon. member for Greenwood and others in the House that during the emergency of the Second World War, when clearly Japanese Canadians were one of the more unpopular groups in this country, they withstood as a matter of principle the unpopular decision they made to defend groups which were unpopular.

In the same vein, I want to give credit to the hon. member for Fundy-Royal for what he did to defend unpopular groups in Canada such as Japanese Canadians. The logic of what he said applies, as well, to legislation which does not include provisions having to do with sexual orientation. This group of people is also unpopular and it is not a popular move to bring forward legislation to protect that group. Nevertheless, sometimes there is a difference between what is right and what is popular. I would like to give credit to the hon. member who preceded me, because he has fought those kinds of battles in the past. He deserves credit for the work he has done in this field.

● (1250)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Leggatt: Human rights legislation at the federal level is long overdue. Our party will support this legislation. There are a couple of questions which I do not think the minister has answered properly. One of them was referred to by the hon. member for Fundy-Royal. What kind of human rights legislation is it in Canada when the rights of native women are not included? They are exempted from this legislation, as the minister knows full well. Under clause 63(2) a specific exemption is made for the sole purpose of continuing to discriminate against native women in Canada. That is a shame; it is wrong.

Human rights legislation has to protect everybody and must not provide exemptions here and there. I know the minister's answer is that it is premature and we are going to work this thing out. It is difficult enough to pass legislation in this House. When these amendments come forward they will be harder to pass than they are now. Human rights legislation, to be worth its salt, must include groups which are clearly discriminated against. The minister has missed several groups.

We have mentioned the question of sexual orientation. We have mentioned the question of native women. The minister has missed the broad group of people who because of their