

Private Members' Business

cost-sharing activities are addressing racism and promoting institutional change.

It is clear that the government is making every effort to address the human rights issue and to correct wrongs that have been done. We are anxious to have past injustices rectified. We need to recognize that this is a complex issue that happened several decades ago. The matter must be examined very carefully so that a fair and just resolution is arrived at.

The government is doing just that, not only with regard to the head tax levied on the Chinese immigrants, but with respect to the treatment of all groups as well. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to speak to this, Madam Speaker, and I thank you for that.

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to comment again on the matter of the Chinese head tax, a question that my party has raised a number of times over the last six years. The question is very lively in the riding of Trinity—Spadina where some of the head taxpayers and many of their descendants lived.

First, I wish to commend the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for his action in placing this motion before us. The motion has a good thrust and his defence of the motion was excellent and well spoken.

My party and I do not agree entirely with some of the details of the motion. We would rather the motion was more in line with the request of the Chinese Canadian National Council. It requested:

—that the government should acknowledge that the 1885 Act to restrict and regulate Chinese immigration into Canada which imposed a Chinese Head Tax and the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act which excluded Chinese immigration were discriminatory against immigrants of Chinese origin and contrary to the principles now adopted and reflected in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that the government meet with Chinese Canadian National Council to negotiate appropriate individual and community compensation.

If I may at the end of my remarks, Madam Speaker, I would offer that motion in amendment in substitution for all the words following the first line where it states "The government should".

The member for Scarborough—Rouge River asked: "Why did we do it?" He says he was not there when it happened. Even I was not there when it happened, although I have whiter hair than he has. We can get some idea why it was done if we look at some of the records. We find that there was open racism reflecting greed of employers and fear and competitive envy of workers.

For example, the following was said in the House of Commons—the House that was here before this one was built—on May 12, 1882, as reported in *Hansard*, Volume 12, page 1477, and I quote:

In fact, there is such a want of white labour in British Columbia, that if you wish to have the railway finished within any reasonable time, there must be no step against Chinese labour—At present it is simply a question of alternatives—either you must have this labour or you cannot have the railway.

That was said by Sir John A. Macdonald, our first Prime Minister.

In the same speech he explained his view more generally, and I quote from the same page:

I share very much the feeling of the people of the United States, and the Australian colonies, against a Mongolian or Chinese population in our country as permanent settlers. I believe they would not be a wholesome element for this country. I believe that it is an alien race in every sense, that would not and could not be expected to assimilate with our Arian population—

Obviously, this was written long before Hitler gave the word Arian a very ominous meaning in our lifetime. I continue:

—and, therefore, if the temporary necessity had been overcome, and the railway constructed across the continent, with the means of sending the European settlers and labourers into British Columbia, then it would be quite right to join to a reasonable extent in preventing the permanent settlement in this country of Mongolian, Chinese or Japanese immigrants.

Then he makes the statement which I have already read:

At present it is simply a question of alternatives—either you must have this labour or you cannot have the railway.

There are other things that should be said about what happened in those days. One final remark from *Hansard* in 1885, Volume 2, page 1582. Although I do not have the attribution of the Speaker, perhaps he can be generally identified by his words: "The Conservative party stands