

Immigration Act, 1976

refugees from wherever they may come, those persons who want to work in the Canadian tradition that brought us the Nansen Medal, those who have been waiting for some evidence that the Government has changed its mind, will not be impressed by more spending on race relations. They want real action in which this Government will arrest the feelings of racism that exist in the country and return it to the traditions of openness about which my colleagues, the Hon. Member for Spadina and the Hon. Member for Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands (Mr. Manly), have already spoken so very well earlier this day.

Ms. Copps: Madam Speaker, I was a little surprised to hear the Member saying that the citizens of British Columbia for some reason are more racist than citizens of other parts of the country. I wonder if the Member could give us his reasons for stating that?

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Madam Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for her question. This is the sort of thing that should never be done easily or loosely. It always deserves to be done carefully. I speak, of course, from my background as a teacher of Canadian history, Associate Professor of History at Lakehead University, on political leave, and also as someone who has lived and taught in the interior of British Columbia. I want to be very careful because the feelings of prejudice and racism have existed in many parts of Canada. I respect the desire of my colleague from southern Ontario not to have anything said unfairly. I think the fact remains, perhaps because British Columbians live across the Pacific from Asia and because Japanese immigrants and, before that, Chinese workers who built the railway, settled there, may have had more experience with Asians on the Pacific coast. I think of a man who was one of British Columbia's Lieutenant Governors, James Dunsmuir, whose family owned large coal mines on Vancouver Island. The Dunsmuirs were capable of bringing in labour that could be discriminated against, as in law one could in British Columbia. They used that labour to break strikes by British-born workers in those communities, and that, of course, built up terrible feelings of resentment. So there are these factors in the history of the province to be noted.

If there is any question about the validity of suggesting that British Columbia may be more racist, it would surely be seen in the laws of the province that apply to citizenship and voting rights and so on. After all, these were laws that, for a long time, were left to the provinces to establish. The Canadian Government has not always filled areas of its own jurisdiction very well, and in matters of voting, when a province discriminated deliberately against Asians, denying them voting rights and citizenship, in those professions where one could not enter unless one were a citizen able to vote, this exclusion actually closed doors. This was discrimination in law, British Columbia style.

• (1250)

The last thing anyone wants in these areas is to have any possibility of having an attitude of being holier than thou. I think one can quite fairly recognize in British Columbia's history the whipping up of feeling against Japanese Canadians particularly that led eventually to the action in 1942 of uprooting a community, seizing property, selling it off for whatever and relocating people into detention and work camps et cetera. Japanese Canadian redress is one of the final expressions of the racism that prevailed in B.C. to which a Canadian Government tragically yielded in the midst of war, or which, in retrospect, we would surely say was against racism, first of all the racism of the Nazi system.

Mr. Manly: I have a brief comment on the same subject, Madam Speaker. I remember once when Robin Sears, who at the time was the federal secretary for the New Democratic Party, and a grandson of Colin Cameron, a distinguished Member of Parliament for Nanaimo—Cowichan—The Islands, asked his mother what happened when his grandfather had opposed the expropriation of Japanese property and the expulsion of Japanese from the coast of British Columbia. She described how she and her sister were spat upon by other children in the community and that their father, Colin Cameron, lost the next election. There was a price to be paid at that time for standing up against racial intolerance. That is certainly not exclusive to British Columbia. I think it is probably a fact that people are most intolerant of those next to them.

I was brought up in a situation where there were no blacks. I never learned to be intolerant of blacks. There were very few Asians on the Prairies where I grew up. I did not have that kind of prejudice. We tend to have prejudices built into us when we are face to face with a situation. I think what the Hon. Member is saying is that we have to stand up against it.

Mr. McCurdy: I am here!

Mr. Manly: We have blacks next to us now, Madam Speaker, but not in sufficient numbers, I might add.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Manly: We have prejudices that have built up. We have to learn to overcome them and have policies that stand against them rather than go with the flow of prejudice.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Does the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp) want to respond?

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Madam Speaker, I will cheerfully accept someone else's question or response. I appreciate the comments from my colleague.

Ms. Copps: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the historical perspective which the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp) has given, but I understood the Member to