

*Government Orders*

Canadians that we would allow these attitudes to be coming forth from this highest chamber.

Maybe one can explain it on the basis that older people were brought up differently, that the ethos was different when they were raised in Canada, that they were raised under different times when the role of women was different; when race was not an issue that people could bring forth in the way it has been, when race was even in law a basis for discriminating against certain members of our society. Those times have changed. The laws have changed. We have a charter of rights. I can say we have a charter of rights in Canada and therefore we do not need this type of law. They have a charter of rights in the United States. It took them over a century to recognize that blacks are people, even under that bill of rights. It is no panacea.

In a time when the economy is shrinking and people are becoming fearful, less confident of their own futures, with more people fighting for a smaller pie, people are genuinely worried about where we are going and their own futures in Canada. Maybe it is natural that people will try to step on the backs of other people or other groups in order to feel more secure themselves. This is a human reaction that takes place in many cases. We know it is not the solution because we know none of us can get ahead by stepping on the backs of anyone else.

We have to work harder in these tough times. When people see the cause for their own uncertainty, when they see that and perceive it to be lying with other people who may be getting ahead of them, people are going to tend to become less magnanimous in their view about the role of other people. This is, of course, what we must fight against.

Unless we are prepared to recognize the true and full worth on an equal basis of every person in our society, our diverse society, there is no discrimination based on sex, language, religion, country of origin, creed, unless we are prepared to recognize the full potential of every one of these people, we are not going to climb out of the problems that we face. Economically unless every one of these individuals is a full player, with full opportunity in our economy, we are not going to be competitive on a global basis. We do not want peons and servants. We want co-workers and partners if we are going to get ahead.

Getting back to what we have heard in this House that has provoked this legislation, the two individuals who made the comments either immediately realized themselves that they were wrong, or maybe they were told by their leaders that they were wrong and they apologized. That was the only action taken.

Maybe apologies are sufficient. Maybe the shame that these individuals brought upon themselves, not for the harm they did to two people on this side of the House, but for the harm they brought to all parliamentarians, and the shame they put us all in because we belong to a body. Would it even be perceived that this type of action was either funny or humorous or acceptable.

We are all diminished by what has happened. I would hope that we could all use this as an opportunity to renew our own sense of what it is to be a human being, to be a human being in a country which in law respects equality, but which so often in practice has fallen far short of that mark. I think it is an opportunity to look at those who may be different than the majority of us in this House who ask why there are not more of the others here. Are their voices being represented adequately here? Are we doing everything possible, in our own hearts and souls, to recognize the true worth of those in Canada who are different from the majority of us here in this House?

• (1450)

Maybe our record is not at the top of the list of Amnesty International in terms of worst performance, but we have a tradition much longer than other countries. We have had an economy. We have had the infusion of people from so many countries who left their own countries because of various values that we do not see expressed in full measure here in Canada. They did not have equality of opportunity because of religion, politics and sex. They came to the new world.

In many ways our nation benefited from the abuses of other countries because we got people who had the guts to leave the old ways and to find new equalities and opportunities in our country. But we have fallen far short.

Perhaps, more important than anything else, this bill can serve as a reminder to us that we have not achieved the objectives that we have placed in our laws, to which we have all paid lip service but which have not been there in our hearts.