

Human Rights

It is true that on the original debate on second reading we questioned why the centre was called the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development because when one reads the original Bill, it seems the substance of the Bill is more directed to human rights and not to democratic development. Of course, the Senate now has come forward and included some further wording with respect to democratic development. All I say is there is some danger in that and I would like some assurance from the Government that this will not be the imposition of our strict interpretation of what democracy means on other countries or to proselytize in a very aggressive way our concepts of democracy.

There are some, of course, I would not accept. I think they are phoney and foolish. On the other hand, we have just settled the Japanese question. One could question whether during the Second World War we were acting as a proper democracy when we did what we did as Canadians. If it is possible, I would like some further explanation from the Government with respect to this amendment and the matters I have just raised.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): I just have a few words to say on the human rights centre, Mr. Speaker. It is rather appropriate that the human rights centre is going to be established in the City of Montreal. I was one of the Members of the House who were here in 1970 when the War Measures Act was invoked by the Liberal Government of the day. Of course, that was all centred in the City of Montreal and the Province of Québec, but particularly in Montreal as the biggest city in the province. At that time, of course, all the rights of individuals, human rights and other rights, were taken away with the implementation of the War Measures Act.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, I am sure, that it was invoked on that day by a Liberal Government supported by the Progressive Conservative Party. I was one of 16 Members of the House who stood up and voted against the invocation of the War Measures Act. It was very interesting to note that a few years later, the Hon. Robert Stanfield said in a major television program that perhaps the biggest mistake he ever made in his political career was to support the invocation of the War Measures Act.

Some 18 years later, as it will be pretty soon, it is rather interesting to note that this centre is going to be located in the City of Montreal. It is not only what happened in the Province of Québec in 1970 that makes a centre like this so important. The other day we did what we did to redress the problems of Japanese Canadians and apologize for what was done to them during the Second World War. In addition, there have been all kinds of other examples of discrimination not only outside this country, as my friend, the Hon. Member from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East said, but also within this country. I think of the example of the Chinese head tax.

I think of the discriminatory action taken against Ukrainian Canadians many, many years ago. Many of these Ukrainians

reside in my riding in the Province of Saskatchewan. I can think of many examples in Canadian history when there has been rampant discrimination and violation of human rights in this great country of Canada.

I think it is very symbolic that the centre is being established partly because of the invocation of the War Measures Act back in 1970. It is rather interesting to note that it has been established in the City of Montreal.

• (1700)

Mr. Prud'homme: I said that if anyone would speak on the War Measures Act and not give the facts exactly as they were, I would always stand up in the House.

My hon. friend was there, I was there, and many of us voted for it on the information that we had then. In case the Party of my hon. friend is more virtuous than they are, I would like to remind him that some of his colleagues of the New Democratic Party voted for it. I know that we are on the eve of an election, where my hon. colleague was an excellent friend, I may say, and I do not abuse that too often in the parliamentary system. I would not like Quebecers—

[Translation]

... men and women, to believe that the New Democratic Party is so virtuous, because several NDP Members also voted for the War Measures Act. I understand that something may be coming and that they would like to fight as the great defenders of virtue, morality and all the other fine things... Well, I say to him that several of his colleagues at the time, with the information they had, voted for the War Measures Act. I do not want to get into a debate on the War Measures Act... If he wants to, I will, but I have already had the opportunity to take part in such a debate and I said how much I regretted what was happening, how I would spend the rest of my days apologizing if we had committed an injustice. However, I think that we could end the debate by concentrating more on what has just happened rather than by re-opening what could be a longer debate. Let us do that somewhere else.

[English]

Mr. Nystrom: In response, Mr. Speaker, I was not trying to mislead the House.

[Translation]

... when I said I was one of the sixteen Members who voted against the War Measures Act. At the time, there were twenty-three NDP Members in our Caucus. Twenty Members voted, sixteen against and four in favour. A Member from Ontario and three Members from British Columbia voted in favour of the Act. As I said before, I was one of the sixteen who voted against invoking this appalling legislation in our country eighteen years ago, one of the vast majority of the Members in our Caucus.

[English]

I was very, very proud to be one of those 16 that stood up at that time. I can tell you that at that time it was not easy.