

Committee Reports

in Europe during World War II, there have been calls for a focusing on other victims and other victimization and on the fact that in other parts of the world, in Asia, Africa, Afghanistan, Angola, Viet Nam, horrible tragedies and brutalities have been committed, and that possibly there may be perpetrators of those crimes among us. There is, indeed, the Communist invasion following World War II. After the defeat of the Nazis, an additional series of atrocities were committed as the Communists took control of country after country. Something should be done about these facts as well. While I approve and support on behalf of my Party the amendment of the Immigration Act and the Citizenship Act so that from now on there will be a very good filter system, I am not satisfied that the past has been sufficiently addressed. I would urge the Government to deal with that problem as well.

I want to suggest even that if a royal commission has done us such a service in connection with war criminals from World War II, a royal commission could be the solution and other Canadians who were victims of foreign atrocities could bring their case against suspects in our country and receive the same attention and investigation which has been given to the case of the Nazi war criminal.

My final thought was that the report, and it is really the point I made at the outset, is a great opportunity and that the Government's response is also a great opportunity for a healing process to take place in our country, a healing process which is needed because of tensions among some communities in Canadian society which became regrettably worse during the process of the Deschênes Commission. This is an opportunity to strengthen national unity and to reinforce our commitment to fundamental justice for all crimes which must be punished, as the commission of war crimes must be punished.

I want to lend my support to the Government in this purpose and to warn that, having made a commitment to action and Criminal Code amendments, a commitment to supply RCMP officers and officials from the Department of Justice, three months is enough time for us to have a report and not simply a statement, if it is the case that the Government is still looking into it. I am pleased on behalf of my Party to offer these preliminary comments.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to respond on behalf of my Party and my caucus to the announcement made by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) today with respect to the Government's response to the recommendations of the Deschênes Commission. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that in February of 1985, the former Minister of Justice of the Government of the day announced the establishment of the Deschênes Commission. I welcomed that announcement and commended the Government for taking the first real and concrete action to deal with the concerns of Canadians with respect to the possible presence in our community of Nazi war criminals. We welcomed the announcement of this commission to be chaired by such a distinguished judge as Judge Deschênes in February, 1985, and I believe it is appropriate now to say that Judge Deschênes

has done an excellent job. He has approached his daunting task with care and diligence.

It is not insignificant that it was also in 1985, some 40 years after the conclusion of World War II, that there was a historic gathering here in Ottawa of Jewish holocaust survivors and their children. I had the privilege and honour to attend that gathering. Certainly, for those of us who were present, it was a profoundly moving event. I remember Elie Wiesel, who addressed so eloquently that gathering of the Jewish survivors of the holocaust. He spoke of the importance of not forgetting. He said:

The fear of forgetting remains the main obsession of all those who have passed through the universe of the damned. The enemy counted on people's incredulity and forgetfulness. How could one foil this plot?

And if memory grew hollow, empty of substance, what would happen to all we had accumulated along the way? Remember, said the farmer to his son, and the son to his friend. Gather the names, the faces, the tears. We had all taken an oath: "If, by some miracle, I emerge alive, I will devote my life to testifying on behalf of those whose shadow will fall on mine forever and ever."

Those words spoken by Elie Wiesel must surely guide us in our response to the presence in our communities of those who allegedly participated in these atrocities. I want to commend particularly those in our community in Canada who have particularly taken the time and energy to draw to the attention of the Government our historical responsibilities in this area, whether it be the Canadian Holocaust Remembrance Association, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the B'nai Brith, and many others. As we know, and as has been clearly documented, Canada has a history of shameful inaction in this area. As Judge Deschênes pointed out, unfortunately, we were not alone in this inaction.

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Before the war not only did the Government close the doors to Jews who were seeking to flee persecution from Nazi Germany, but afterward those doors were opened. Those doors were opened to far too many people who, in fact, were perpetrators of the atrocities that the Jews were attempting to flee. Canada had one of the worst records in admitting Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust from 1940 to 1945, and a tragic record of keeping survivors out in the three years after the Holocaust. Surely, this imposes upon us even greater obligations at this time to reach out and take whatever steps are necessary in our community to bring to justice those who were responsible for the obscenity of the Holocaust.

This is particularly important as well in view of some recent attempts to deny the reality of the Holocaust. We have seen the obscenity of people who would refuse this reality, the reality of the murder of millions at the hands of the Nazis, millions of Jews, homosexuals, gypsies and others. We must not be blinded to the horrors of the Holocaust. We must not continue what Irwin Cotler has described so eloquently as the bureaucratization of horror. He said:

Rather, what one finds throughout is the reduction of the Holocaust to a footnote and the concomitant bureaucratization of horror into a technical rationalization of why nothing can be done—a bureaucratization of evil that emerges as a blueprint for government inaction.