

Routine Proceedings

moral point, this vote to now come to fruition in this House and not simply permit the government to talk it out?

Mrs. Blondin: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree that it would be morally indefensible not to have a vote. It would be morally indefensible to put forward this kind of a report that totally refutes everything that those people testified to. It shows that it is totally insensitive that the government would not consider the concerns of those individuals, who I believe came forward with a very compelling and very sensitive case. I believe that we should not talk out the motion but that we should put it to a vote. I feel strongly about that.

• (1220)

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to clarify one fact that the member from Vancouver Island mentioned. He said that this was a unanimous decision in the committee. I should point out that two government members voted against this motion in committee, so it was not a unanimous decision of the committee.

The other thing I would like to mention is in regard to the speech of the hon. member for Western Arctic. The hon. member made quite an issue of the fact that the Inuit were issued with numbers and this was a depersonalization, degradation, dehumanization, whatever you want to call it.

However, if we look at our system, anyone who served in the armed forces during the war or in peacetime was given a number. When we went to university we were all assigned numbers. That does not mean that our names were not valid, that people recognized us just as an object. It was for particular reasons we were given numbers. As a registered physician, I have a number given to me by the College of Physicians and Surgeons which is used for particular purposes. I do not feel that by being issued a number that I am in any way depersonalized and a lesser person for that.

I would just like to hear the hon. member's comments on that. I understand that it could be taken as an insult, but this happens all the time in our society and I feel it was perhaps misconstrued by some people.

Ms. Blondin: Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence. I was busy conferring with one of my colleagues from the party opposite and did not get the last part of my hon. colleague's question. So if you would not mind repeating that last part, I would be very happy to answer it.

Mr. Wilbee: Mr. Speaker, I had just pointed out that many times in our society we are given numbers for identification purposes, or for other reasons, and it does not mean that we are depersonalized or dehumanized. It is not a sign of contempt in any way. I used the examples that every soldier has a regimental number and university students have student numbers. As a physician, I have a number submitted by the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

These numbers are valuable assets that can be used in certain circumstances to identify me as different from other people. It could be taken as an insult perhaps, but our society demands these types of things. I feel that this has been overrated and that many people have felt unnecessarily that they were being looked down on or looked at with contempt because they were assigned numbers. I would just like to hear the hon. member's comment on that.

Ms. Blondin: I would be very happy. I have a close colleague by the name of Mr. Abe Ookpik from Frobisher Bay or Iqaluit who worked for years on this whole issue.

I must say that by getting a number at university you do not forfeit your name. By getting a social insurance number, you do not forfeit your name. By going into the military, you are given a number, but people still refer to you by name, Private such-and-such, Private Smith or Private Jones.

Mr. Dingwall: Dingwall.

Ms. Blondin: Or Dingwall. Or Wilbee, Private Wilbee. But when you have been given a number under the numbered process with regard to the Inuit people, it was very degrading. The reason for that is because the people who came to their land did not have enough respect to find a way to learn their names. The Inuit people have very beautiful names. I can think of a number of names. I lived in an Inuit community. I am of Indian extraction and I learned these names. Mangalaluk, Nasagaluak. Those are names that anyone could learn. So, I am saying that yes, there is a stigma attached to it and, yes,