

Private Members' Business

It is up to today's generation to determine how to recognize the wrongs done to victims of past racism, in a spirit of sympathy and consultation.

Despite all our good will, we cannot rewrite history. However, the government will continue to examine this question, determine the facts and pursue its consultations with Chinese Canadians.

The government will never again allow policies of the kind that made Chinese Canadians suffer be adopted in this country.

That is this government's firm commitment to Canadians, a commitment that forms the basis for our considerations on this very important question.

[English]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before recognizing the next speaker, I would like to rule on the amendment that was presented by the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

Unfortunately, I will have to rule it out of order. The hon. member may want to look at citation 437 of Beauchesne's fifth edition. I can understand the good intentions of the proposition, but it does raise a new question. It could be considered a distinct motion after proper notice. It is not acceptable as an amendment to the motion now before the House.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Madam Speaker, first I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River on the leadership role he has taken on this issue in the House.

I raised the issue some time ago, right after the 1988 election with the minister of multiculturalism and citizenship. At that time, he told me that discussions would start taking place with the representatives of the Chinese community. It is approximately two years since he said that, and discussions still have not taken place as they should.

There is communication back and forth between the office of the minister and representatives of the Chinese community, but we have yet to see some sort of action plan put in place.

I am very discouraged by what I heard this afternoon from a member of the Canadian-Chinese community who happens to be one of the people who arrived in Canada in 1923. Among other things he indicated that besides paying \$500 to enter Canada, he had to pay \$50 in

order to get quicker entry, even though after paying the \$50 he was held for approximately two weeks eating plain bread with sugar at noon, having two actual meals throughout the day, and sleeping on beds without proper mattresses. It is quite discouraging.

When a reporter asked him about his feeling for Canada, he was almost in tears and was saying: "I love Canada, I love Canada. All I want before I die is to see some sort of recognition of the fact that what had happened in the 1900s and thereafter was wrong. The government should admit that".

I have in my hand copies of articles which are quite encouraging. There is a statement made on behalf of the Prime Minister or by the Prime Minister himself wherein he said that his government was considering extending the principle of compensating victims of government heavy-handedness during World War II—Italian, Ukrainian Canadians, and others—as it compensated Japanese Canadians who were held in internment camps. That is very encouraging. I congratulate government members because they are talking about dealing with the issue.

Around the same time the Minister of State for Housing clearly indicated in Toronto to members of the Chinese community that he too would like to see the federal government move fairly quickly on the issue.

Here we have two members of the government saying that we have to move fairly quickly. I think personally that it is time we acted on it. Members of the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the NDP have already called on the government for action. It is time for the government to set up an all-party committee in order to address the issue, not only the issue of the Chinese community but also the issue of the Italian community, the Ukrainian community, and all those who feel that they were subjected to some mishap during World War II, thereafter or before.

It is fairly urgent when it comes to the Chinese Canadian community because many of its people who were hit personally by the head tax are dying. We cannot wait any longer for some kind of action.

Again I congratulate the hon. member.

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Madam Speaker, I also congratulate the member for Scarborough—Rouge River on this motion and would like to speak in favour of it.