

Government Orders

If the government is not looking for ways to support the needs of people, it does not matter if we set up a foundation for public education. People are looking for reinforcement in their community, that we are there for them. At this time I just do not see how this particular foundation, unless strengthened immensely, is going to contribute to that need.

Recently the director of the race relations group within the city of Winnipeg requested that the city of Winnipeg now provide additional funds. The city of Winnipeg is still considering this request. I raise that with you as another example of the underfunding and the need, not for a central foundation, but, in each individual community so that people have the opportunity to talk with each other about the problems they are facing in the area of racism.

The establishment of a race relations foundation can become a hallmark of the commitment of Canadians to a better justice system that accommodates all Canadians. The public education components and the money available can be used wisely to ensure that we all understand each other's perspectives. I hope that in the choice of the board of directors the government is able to bring to bear all these perspectives which are so necessary to broaden our horizons.

This is also an opportunity for us to encourage academics and research organizations to think of race relations not as a peripheral problem, a minor problem to be dealt with by a few sociologists and a few political scientists, but as one of the mainstream problems of our society requiring a tremendous amount of energy to research and rethink how we should approach these problems. From that hopefully will come suggestions to this House in future years that will enable us to respond more positively and perhaps with more sensitivity to the needs of these new Canadians.

From the annual reports of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, from the reports coming out of the Donald Marshall Commission and from other inquiries across the country we hear how frustrated people are in trying to get this House to respond. Through the different committees of the House of Commons we all know that a race relations foundation could go a long way to marking a new beginning.

Thus, in the context of the government not doing very much in the past and making many mistakes in the last two years, I wish the new foundation the independence and the wisdom to contribute to this debate and to help us as legislators see better ways of serving new Canadians.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Madam Speaker, it is pleasant to have an opportunity to speak on Bill C-63, a bill to establish the Canadian Race Relations Foundation which, it should be noted, is a result of the Japanese redress settlement in 1988, one of the significant events in race relations in this country.

As you recall, Madam Speaker, as a result of the settlement signed with the Japanese Canadian community, that community received an acknowledgement of the injustice perpetrated upon Japanese Canadians by virtue of their incarceration, loss of property and loss of rights; compensation for those victims; a rectification of government records; a commemorative farm for the Japanese Canadian community and the creation of a race relations institute.

Of the \$24 million provided for the initial endowment fund for the institute, \$12 million is provided on behalf of and in recognition of the struggle of the Japanese Canadian community and its horrendous experience as a result of World War II.

I must confess that it is with a lack of enthusiasm that I approach this legislation for the creation of this institute because I am one of those who, over the last half century, have been involved in a struggle to eliminate discrimination in this country. Quite frankly, I thought we understood racism. We certainly understood, and I think we still understand, how we can eliminate in a nation the effects of racism. The latter is far more important than anything else because what people feel and think about other peoples, other races, can be changed if we change the way in which they treat members of minority races.

It is not too long ago that I stood in this House and noted the significant progress that had been made in this country over that 50 years. I said at one time that I could hardly have believed that I would stand in this House, an elected member of Parliament, given the experiences that I had as an Afro-Canadian boy growing up in southwestern Ontario. That we are now again faced with a variety of manifestations of racism in this country