

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke in response to my question accused me of making statements that were emotional or based on no evidence whatsoever.

I do have evidence to back up the statements I made. I would like to ask—

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but that is a matter of opinion. There are other members who are waiting for a chance to speak, and I will now recognize the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

[English]

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt): Mr. Speaker, in 1984 when this government came to power, it said that it would redress and apologize to a number of communities: the Chinese community, the Japanese, the Italians.

We followed the Prime Minister in 1988 when he apologized to the Japanese, in 1990 to the Italians. There is the Sikh community, the Ukrainians and the Chinese waiting.

I am wondering. There is a very short, precise question that I have for the minister. We said about rhetoric and truth—

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): You're talking to backbenchers. Way back.

Mr. Karygiannis: Well, to the hon. member.

What will it take for this government to realize the mistakes of the past, come forward and say: "Look, we were wrong. Successive governments have not done it. We apologize." It will not cost a darn penny, so why can we not get on with the dealings and actually realize that what we did in 1953 was a tragic and a big mistake, and apologize to our native people?

Mrs. Dobbie: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member has a lot of nerve suggesting that this particular government should apologize for things that have gone wrong in the past when most of those incidents occurred during the time when the hon. member's party was in power.

In fact in this particular instance, as I have just said and as we have heard spoken this morning by the Minister of State, the independent study found that there was no wrongdoing by the government of the day. It would be a contradiction to apologize in an instance

where it was found by an independent study that there was no wrongdoing.

As I said before, and far be it from me to apologize for anything the government of that day did, it appears that the evidence says that the government of the day was acting on what it considered to be the best interests of the people at Inukjuak.

Mr. Ray Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, a surprising situation occurred in this committee when a number of adults presented testimony to the committee. They were in tears, reliving the emotional experience that they had been put through in the area. They talked about exchanging sexual favours for food and necessities. They talked about rape, forcible confinement, slave labour and their mail being rifled. They gave an enormous amount of direct evidence to that committee. It is interesting that members of the RCMP were accused of wrongdoing. I would like to use a short parallel.

Some time ago in the community of Gibsons, an individual was beaten in the cells. He was beaten to the point where the individual almost died. The RCMP were accused of assaulting the individual and failing to provide medical evidence. The RCMP investigated and found no wrongdoing. They found that the individual had somehow come to a very bad end by his own desserts. That was the RCMP internal investigation and it took some time.

When it was turned over to the RCMP public complaints department, a completely separate organization, they investigated it thoroughly and found out that yes, indeed, the RCMP had assaulted the individual. They had failed to provide medical evidence and in fact, found them guilty of a grievous wrongdoing. Once an independent body is involved, where an internal job is not being done for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development or the RCMP or the government, then there is hope to get at some justice.

This committee, on a point of almost honour in this House, has submitted a report in which the facts are laid out and recommendations are made. A previous Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs is prepared to go along with this idea. The government is now compelled to support some old-time Liberal government of years ago. The documents from the Indian Affairs department absolutely admit that this was an experiment. It is a sad commentary that for some reason there is a reversal of policy on the part of government that absolutely denies reality.