

protection against discrimination are needed for the hard cases that cannot be settled.

But it lies in our hands to lead by example, to support our community groups, to promote the educational efforts that will make tomorrow's society one that is tolerant, not merely tolerable.

**Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth):** Madam Speaker, the issue before us today in this opposition day motion is one that I think every member of Parliament takes seriously, and one that I hope all Canadians take seriously.

Racism is a scourge upon our society. It is easy for me to say that as somebody who is white and Anglo-Saxon in a country that is primarily white and Anglo-Saxon. But if you sit back and listen to the cries and the stories of individuals in Canadian society who have been stung by the burr of racism, you will know that there is probably not one single other issue that we as parliamentarians face whereby with a combined effort we can have a more positive effect on the lives of tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of Canadians who find themselves members of minority groups.

In the last few years as our society has developed and we have become much more sophisticated—at least we think we have—a disturbing trend has emerged. That disturbing trend is the increasing intolerance to those amongst us who are different. We hear about it linguistically and we hear about it in reports such as the Marshall inquiry from my home province of Nova Scotia. We hear it from some segments of society when it comes to the wearing of turbans in the RCMP by Canadians of Sikh origin. We see it all around us. Sometimes, because it is there but it is never quite at the surface, we neglect to take it as a very serious issue, and by our inaction we become an accomplice to the sin in our society of racism and intolerance.

In my riding in Nova Scotia there is the largest native black community in Canada, in North Preston, East Preston and the Cherry Brook area. The forefathers of the individuals who live in those communities came to Canada over 300 years ago, well before my ancestors came to this country. Yet I am lucky, because my family, my children, myself and my parents had benefited from

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the wealth that is Canada. I wish I could say the same for those families that have been here a lot longer than my family that live in some of the minority communities in my home province, in my own riding.

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The original peoples of Canada, the indigenous peoples have suffered for hundreds of years from racist attitudes and at times the complete ignorance and lack of concern for the contribution that they make and want to make to Canadian society. Many times we deny them the right to participate.

Last night while trying to put some notes together for today I thought about racism. Unfortunately, many of our views about racism come from watching television from south of the border. We look at what is happening in the United States. Most of what I knew before I became the member of Parliament for the riding of Dartmouth unfortunately was influenced by the American experience with minority groups.

Many Canadians do not understand that there was overt racism practised in Canada, in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Indeed, there was a case in Nova Scotia in the 1940s where a lady by the name of Viola Desmond was charged in court because she did not sit in the black only section of a theatre in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. That was in the 1940s.

Then some of us wonder why members of minority communities talk about the discrimination that has been inflicted upon them by society. We must understand that the history of the treatment of minority groups is nothing we should be proud of.

In my community in Nova Scotia there have been a number of recent reports. The Marshall inquiry issued a scathing indictment of the justice system in the province of Nova Scotia. I am hoping that parliamentarians in this place and in other legislatures across Canada and Nova Scotia particularly will take that report seriously and look at the flaws that have been identified to ensure that our justice system is open and equal to every Canadian.

In September Dalhousie University issued a task force report on the responsiveness of the post-education system in Nova Scotia to the needs of native and black Canadians, and again issued a scathing indictment.