

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—MULTICULTURALISM

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Kaplan:

That this House condemns the intolerance and prejudice in Canadian society that damages the fabric of the nation and urges the government and all members of Parliament to play a role in strengthening understanding and respect among Canadians.

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to speak on this motion today. It is a good motion and I commend the member for York Centre for having introduced it. The motion is:

That this House condemns the intolerance and prejudice in Canadian society that damages the fabric of the nation and urges the government and all members of Parliament to play a role in strengthening understanding and respect among Canadians.

I wish to deal only with certain aspects of this subject as it is a very large one. I want to concentrate particularly on the problem of certain long term and unresolved racisms in Canada. I would like to deal with, in particular, the bias against blacks and indigenous people.

My point will be that the basic problem is organizational rather than individual, although there may be complaints about an employer making improper advances toward a female employee, and those may be justified. There have been complaints about the shooting of certain people. In both cases we find that it is too often a person of one of the visible minority races.

The problem, in my opinion, does not arise from an individual quirk. It arises mainly from the low economic and social status of those racial minorities and in particular the low economic and social status of our indigenous peoples and of our black peoples. These things have historical roots and they cannot be got rid of solely by preachments and declarations of how kind and just and honest Canada and Canadians really are.

Supply

We have to take account of what we have done in the past and figure out what we need to do to change it. With regard to black people, I refer to a study from our parliamentary library called *Canada's Treatment of Black Immigrants* by Michael O'Neill. He points out among other things that early in this century as the prairies were opening up, there was quite an increase of black immigration from the United States. There was hostility to this among the white settlers.

• (1220)

In fact, in 1911, the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier prepared, but never proclaimed, an order in council which would have effectively prohibited black immigration. Instead, and I quote:

Unless the overt course of action was adopted, agents were sent into the American south to discourage black immigrants. Medical, character and financial examinations were rigorously applied at border points with rewards for officials who disqualified blacks. American railways were influenced to deny blacks passage to Canada. Continued under the Conservative government after the 1911 election, these efforts eventually succeeded in stopping black immigration into Canada by 1912.

Those who are familiar with complaints in our immigration system know that these practices did not stop in 1912 merely because for a time they stopped some black immigration.

I refer to another study on the legality of slave marriages because an immigration question often involves a question of family relationship and identifying a family relationship. I personally heard, and I know of others who have heard of comments by immigration officials who seemed to believe that because people are of a certain race, they have a standard of morality that is lower than the general Canadian standard of morality in marital matters.

Therefore, I would point out that in the United States, and also, of course, in the British Empire up until 1834, whites were allowed to own black slaves of both sexes. In fact, marriage was legally prohibited to black slaves because they were slaves. In all the southern states before the Civil War, they were not allowed to have the right to stay together if the owner chose to sell the father one way, the mother another way, and the child another way. They had no civil rights, and therefore no rights as a family. Husband and wife had no rights as husband and wife.