

Human Rights

claims to abhor. Yet we were doing it because the Government opened a loophole in the export legislation.

I am sorry that this particular centre will have to pick up where the Government has left off. It is pure folly to suggest that the establishment of this centre could have any ripple effect on human rights development around the world with a \$1 billion budget. Who are we trying to kid? We are kidding ourselves with that miniscule budget. After having cut back on our commitment to foreign aid, and cut back on our promises of tying increases in foreign aid to increases in the Gross Domestic Product, we are failing in the area where Canada used to be a leader.

I do not particularly know the best location for the international centre for human rights and democratic development. Perhaps Montreal is the best location. However, it seems to me that that decision was made in the same manner as many other decisions are made by this Government, and not on the basis of building upon an extremely valuable body of expertise and knowledge. Canada is the only country in the world to have received a human rights award for the work that we collectively did as a nation when we opened our arms to the boat people fleeing from Vietnam. We are the only country in the world to be so honoured.

Certainly, we have a background and a record, but that is not to say that the centre should be put in Montreal on an arbitrary basis when perhaps there are equally good arguments to say it should be located in Ottawa. The Human Rights Institute, where I certainly drew much information when I was acting as critic in the area, is based in, attached to, and has a strong association with the University of Ottawa.

[Translation]

I really cannot say whether Ottawa or Montreal is the best place for the centre. When we consider human rights, we should at least consider where the centre would have the best resources to prepare a sound policy on international human rights, instead of having a situation where the Government, and that is what it is doing today, doesn't decide on the basis of the facts but of political gain, which is a form of blackmail.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that once again, when human rights are at stake, rights that are deeply cherished by all Canadians, the Government still wants to play politics.

I really can't say whether Montreal would be better as a centre. But at least we should look at the possibilities, otherwise we will just have one more organization, one more international centre that will operate with a budget of one million dollars. This is incredible, it is ridiculous and it is just one more Conservative promise that doesn't mean a thing.

So in that case, I wonder whether there are any New Democrats who could tell us how Montreal was chosen. I would like to ask the Conservatives whether they can justify this decision. I am the first to support the decision, but not for the same reasons. They will give the Centre to Montreal

because otherwise they will lose votes. That is not enough, Mr. Speaker, that is bribery, and Canadians will not be bribed.

• (1720)

[English]

That is what I would like to find out from the Government. Has any analysis been done relating to the location of this human rights centre? Human rights are fundamental and we are just tossing this around like a pre-election pebble, throwing it where it will get the widest ripple. Unfortunately, that has characterized the approach of the Government on too many issues. As far as I am concerned, the fundamental issue of human rights is too important to be just a pre-election pork-barrelling gesture.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is always interesting to listen to, and usually very consistent in her logic. She condemned the Government for its cynical approach in dropping an institute here and an institute there for political reasons. I wonder if she would apply the same logic to the Canadian Institute for Peace and Security created in the dying days of the Trudeau Government in 1984 when the Liberal Party realized it was in serious trouble in Ottawa? The former Leader of the Ontario NDP, Michael Cassidy, was coming back to run in Ottawa Centre. The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) ran to the Prime Minister and said "Look, with Cassidy back we are going to lose". They lost the seat.

Would she say the same thing happened then, that it was a cynical move by the Trudeau Government in 1984 because it happened to drop an institute here and an institute there? Does she apply the same logic to Trudeau in 1984 that she applies to my friends across the way today? I would be very interested in knowing the answer to that question.

Ms. Copps: What happened to the Liberals in 1984?

Mr. Nystrom: They went down.

Ms. Copps: Obviously people were getting a message and they wanted to make a change and they made a change. I do not think Mr. Trudeau has to take lessons from any Member of Parliament about the issues of human rights and peace and security. When he was Prime Minister of Canada we were respected around the world. We were not wimps on our knees constantly begging the President of the United States to give us a little crumb here and there to survive in this worldwide economic mayhem.

No, I will not take a lecture from the NDP about the Liberal record on human rights prior to 1984. However, I do think that in the dying days of the Liberal Government some actions were taken that were not consistent with the long-standing record of strong human rights policy. That is why we were thrown out.

The thing I cannot understand about the NDP is this. A few minutes ago the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr.