

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 14, 1983.

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1105)

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 21

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

IRAN—PERSECUTION OF BAHAI COMMUNITY

Mr. Lee Clark (Brandon-Souris): Madam Speaker, the latest reports out of Iran remind us that the systematic genocide of the Baha'i community in Iran continues. Sadly, the reports have an all too familiar ring—imprisonment, torture, beatings, and executions. One estimate puts the death toll at well over 5,000 since February of 1979. These shocking reports ought to jar us all into the realization that the Iranian Government continues to torture, with shocking regularity, innocent people who only desire their religious freedom. The Baha'is' only crime is their refusal to renounce their faith.

Women of the Baha'i faith have, as of late, faced increased danger. Because they are regarded as equals within their faith, the Iranian Government, which does not share that belief, has begun to arrest, torture and execute Baha'i women in much greater numbers than before.

Here in Canada it is perhaps difficult to imagine a land where people pay for their religious beliefs with their lives. But in Iran the persecution against the Baha'i community has neared the point of a holocaust.

I urge Canadians, and indeed the entire international community, not to become complacent. For as long as the persecution continues, we must continue to express publicly our utter abhorrence of these horrible acts of violence.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

THEFT OF PETROGLYPHS—PROTECTION OF ARTIFACTS

Mr. Stanley Hudecki (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, recently on a remote site along the Pacific coast, north of Vancouver, stones decorated with prehistoric Indian carvings, known as petroglyphs, and weighing several tons, were stolen. These petroglyphs which have been in existence for thousands of years are among Canada's major archeological treasures and their seizure

represents a great loss not only to the Canadian archeological community but to Canadians in general.

These petroglyphs provide vital information on man's ancestral beginnings in Canada. According to the director of the National Museum of Man in Ottawa, new archeological techniques make possible more accurate interpretation of information contained on these stones which date back 10,000 years. These records give evidence of cultural cross-ties with the Soviet Far East, suggesting people crossed the Bering Strait from what is Soviet Siberia. It is a shame that, as new skills are being developed to understand our distant past as recorded on petroglyphs, these pages of ancient history are being ripped out and senselessly destroyed even before being read.

It is my concern that this site and similar sites in Canada are vulnerable to treasure hunters and vandals who have little concern about our nation's past. For this reason I urge the federal Government, in co-operation with the Provinces, to co-ordinate activities to ensure as far as possible that artifacts of Canadian historical significance are protected from vandalism.

* * *

TOURISM

IMPACT OF TAX INCREASES

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Madam Speaker, taxes, like death, may be inevitable, but Canada's tourism and hospitality industries say they are tired of bearing the burden of too many tax hikes. The latest dose of bad news is the 13.3 per cent hike in the federal excise tax on liquor, with all the concurrent increases in provincial and sales taxes. Not only do consumers feel the pinch of price hikes but the effects ripple across to the airline industry, hotels and restaurants, all of which make up the tourism and hospitality industries.

It has already been said by me that the tourism industry is the largest employer in Canada, providing jobs to 11 per cent of the work-force, and represents 5 per cent of total gross GNP. When everyone speaks of recovery, need I remind everyone that this industry only faces tax increases, decreasing revenues, and less demand, particularly applicable to alcohol and tobacco.