

VISIBLE MINORITIES

INJUSTICES DONE TO JAPANESE CANADIANS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I listened with interest to the Leader of the Opposition's question concerning the West. I am pleased he read the questions asked by three members of the New Democratic Party as recently as yesterday.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: My question to the Prime Minister concerns a matter which is not on the Order Paper, but which thousands of Canadians wish were there.

Mr. Epp: He does not know where Yorkton is, and they do not know where he is.

Mr. Broadbent: It concerns the important redress of the injustice which was inflicted upon more than 20,000 Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. On Monday a Member of the House asked the Prime Minister if the Government would commit itself to redressing these terrible wrongs, to use the words of the Prime Minister himself, that were inflicted upon Japanese Canadians. On Monday the Prime Minister said, I hope in a premature way, that he was expressing the personal view that it would be inappropriate to redress wrongs that were inflicted upon our ancestors.

Considering the people who are being discussed are not simply ancestors—more than one-half of them are still alive today, considering the injustices are real and that the Government of Canada should do something about them, I would now like to ask the Prime Minister if he would, not personally, but on behalf of the Government, say, first, that there were injustices inflicted upon Japanese Canadians, and we ought to acknowledge that wrong-doing, and second, will he commit the Government to some compensation for such past injustices.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member asks two questions, Mr. Speaker—first whether there were injustices and, second, would there be compensation. I believe my answer the day before yesterday indicated quite clearly that, in my view, there were injustices. I have said that in the House. I have said that publicly. I have said it in writings. I have said it even in Japan when I was there on an—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Member: Injustices.

Mr. Trudeau: I understand. But I also said it in Japan. Did the Hon. Member say Japan?

An Hon. Member: What for?

Mr. Trudeau: Because, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important in order that the people over there realize that the Government

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of Canada, today's Government of Canada, has regret, and expresses regret about what has happened in the past when it is unjust. And also, as I answered, we had taken specific measures in the Constitution to ensure that there would be a Charter of Rights to prevent this kind of thing in the present and in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: There is no question that justice has been denied, Mr. Speaker. But what I went on to add on the question of compensation is that I did not feel it necessarily followed that compensation should necessarily be promised and paid to all those who, in the course of our history, have suffered some form of injustice. That is all I said.

There is a report of a parliamentary committee. It will come before Cabinet in the usual way, and we have an undertaking to state the Government's view on it and to table it in Parliament, in a specified time. I believe it is three months. Obviously we are going to have to state views on it.

But I repeat my personal view, which I will argue in and out of the House and in and out of Cabinet, that Government's main function is to be just in its time. It is not to try and correct the injustices that have been done to everybody in the past. If it is possible, well, that is fine. But as I said to a colleague of the Hon. Member from Oshawa, if we have, say, millions of dollars or hundreds of millions of dollars of compensation to pay to all those who have been somehow unjustly treated in the past, we should begin by perhaps using those hundreds of millions of dollars to help those who are below the poverty line, to help those who are on unemployment insurance. Those are the kinds of priorities that we have, Mr. Speaker. If the Hon. Member wants to go back once again to the deportation of the Acadians, I will make a case that they should have better lands in Nova Scotia and in New Brunswick than they have now—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: —because when they came back from deportation they were given the rotten land.

Mr. Nowlan: It is a different situation totally. Tell them the history, Gerry.

Mr. Trudeau: What about the NDP standing up for that justice? I know the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead does not like this because he is always interested in politics.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Order.

Mr. Trudeau: If he were more interested in thinking, he might be sitting here instead of over there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Epp: Order.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!