

*Government Orders*

credit for its savvy. I have to give it credit for being able to write a bill that sounds like so much while delivering so little. It is a bill that appeases the majority without offending the ever so important minority who have the ear of the minister.

The third major part of this bill would make someone inadmissible for a claim before the IRB if it is discovered they have been convicted of a major crime in or outside Canada. That is great. Superb, as a matter of fact. That is exactly what the Reform Party has been demanding all along. Let us look a little closer at what Bill C-44 would really do.

• (1310)

Experts appearing before the committee have told us that Bill C-44 would have the perverse effect for example of allowing people who are caught with illegal guns in the trunks of their cars to remain in Canada while those who write bad cheques will no longer be able to stay or to make that claim. If you ask me, neither of these people deserve to be heard before the Immigration and Refugee Board. Clearly this bill uses an arbitrary measure of criminality to determine who is bad and who is not.

There is something much more insidious about this section of the bill. For those who want to do their homework before voting on this bill, and I encourage all my hon. colleagues to do just that, this section of the bill is absolutely unnecessary. It is unnecessary because the minister through his representatives already has the power to stop refugee hearings for people who would constitute a danger to Canada.

I have a list of individuals or at least one individual here for whom the minister has already signed an order to remove him from the country. He has done so. He can intervene at any time. The minister would have an opportunity to intervene in any of those claims that would constitute a violation of the Immigration Act.

The minister already has the power and it has been legislated again into Bill C-44. The minister can already intervene and make ineligible for a refugee hearing people whose presence in Canada would constitute a danger to the public interest.

Bill C-44 is not necessary legally. It is only necessary politically. It is necessary because the minister of immigration does not have the political will. He does not have the guts to intervene personally to stop refugee hearings for people who do not deserve status in Canada.

He says that he cannot intervene. That is simply not true. The minister just does not want to intervene and that is a fact. He could have intervened on Mendoza or Inthavong. Rather than sticking his neck out and possibly offending the special interests, the minister is passing the buck to the IRB. Believe me, the IRB is the last group of people with whom we want to entrust the safety of Canadians. Bill C-44 is just a way for the minister to pass the buck.

As another side bar, compare Bill C-44 with the Reform Party's refugee determination proposals. In those proposals there is a recurring theme. That theme is that the minister should use the power already available to him under the Immigration Act to toughen up on refugee determination and stop dangerous and undeserving people from making claims. We have the guts to do it. I think the majority of government backbenchers would have the guts, but this minister does not. Think about that before raising your hand in favour of this bill.

The final major clause of Bill C-44 deals with people applying for citizenship who are convicted of serious crimes or who are guilty of serious crimes outside Canada. The bill would temporarily halt the processing of applications for citizenship for those who have been found to have criminal backgrounds. That ignores a very serious question, a question that we have posed to this minister again and again over the past year. When exactly are the backgrounds checked and how thoroughly? According to the minister all backgrounds are checked.

I do not need to tell you about the multiple and frequent cases of people who have been allowed into Canada. They have been given status and then because of tips or information on the side have been found to be serious criminals, even war criminals.

Our immigration department is simply not able to thoroughly and adequately check the backgrounds of the quarter of a million immigrants Canada accepts each year. It is just not possible given the numbers. In order to stop a citizenship application a background has to be discovered but we have neither the ability nor the manpower to do it. It will not work.

Even assuming the best case scenario in terms of Bill C-44 if it is implemented and is used effectively, what then? Many more deportation orders would be issued. Good news you say. Wrong. Perversely and as a direct result of the inaction of the current immigration minister and the previous immigration ministers, it is bad news. It is bad news because of the sheer number of deportation warrants that are currently on the books.

• (1315)

Estimates, and that is all the immigration department has been kind enough to give us, suggest that there are up to 40,000 deportation warrants outstanding and unaccountable.

We have heard that in the city of Toronto there could be as many as 25,000 people who have deportation orders against them. Are they being rounded up? No. Are those numbers being substantially reduced? No. Can they be substantially reduced? Not given the priorities of this minister. The priorities of this minister are keeping the levels at the highest ever for Canada and the world, stressing family class immigration over independent immigration, keeping our inland acceptance rate of self-proclaimed refugees up to 50 times higher than other refugee accepting nations at a cost of over a billion dollars per year to the Canadian taxpayer. These priorities have not allowed the