

Government Orders

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Madam Speaker, in her remarks the hon. member from Saint-Laurent—Cartierville referred to the case of the Afghan family where the parents were accepted and the children were refused, leaving us with a very inhumane situation where the parents were expected to go back to their country of origin and the children would stay here. It was very ridiculous.

As my hon. colleague from Toronto said, in our offices we get similar cases all the time. I had a similar case where a Lebanese family of three brothers: two were allowed to stay in Canada and one was deported to Lebanon. They were all involved in the same political movement in Lebanon. The mother was allowed to stay but one brother was sent back.

There is no appeal on the merits in the Immigration Act, nor is there any provision of it in the bill. There is an appeal on law but none on the merits. Since no board is perfect, the only recourse for these people who were rendered these terrible decisions by the board was to appeal to the minister under section 114(2) on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Since this particular minister has become minister he has virtually closed that door. Even the two previous Conservative ministers used to use that clause for humanitarian and compassionate reasons and admit cases such as the ones we were just discussing like the Afghan family or the Lebanese family.

I want to know from the hon. member who does a lot of immigration work in her office and from her experience in her constituency whether she would confirm to me that this clause has been virtually closed down, this access for justice on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

I wonder if it is like mine. It is almost impossible now even to get the minister's staff or anybody in his office to consider admitting horrible cases like this to Canada—horrible in their outcome—as sort of an appeal to overcome the harsh decision or the ridiculous decision of the board. What is her experience?

Mrs. Maheu: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce for giving me this chance.

I have had cases in which even the minister's staff has said it wished there were something it could do. There is

a little bit of a point in the law that does not quite cover it. I am thinking of the young couple waiting for their baby and he has to go back to fight in a war.

There is room for a little bit of humanitarian consideration in this case and I wish the minister had stayed. I would have liked to have had him try and explain to us what he meant when he said he makes decisions on humanitarian grounds.

If he does would he please tell us where because we are not seeing it, not at our level anyway. I have one of the most multicultural ridings in the country.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to have an opportunity to address the House on the proposed amendments to the Immigration Act which have been introduced by my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

After a great deal of consideration and discussion by our caucus, a caucus which is representative of the entire country and not one particular area, it has been vetted with elected members, all of whom have experienced some of the problems which have been referred to in this House.

I am quite satisfied it will ensure that Canada's immigration system continues to contribute the unity and prosperity of Canada.

[Translation]

Several of the proposed amendments deal with security and enforcement issues of particular concern to me as minister responsible for CSIS and the RCMP.

[English]

Before addressing those provisions in the legislation I want to make a few comments as to the over-all thrust of the legislation. I think it is important we note that in this bill we are going to streamline the refugee determination system.

References have been made this afternoon to delays and hardships. I do not think it is in anyone's interest to delay the determination of whether a person is a true bona fide refugee fleeing from political persecution and persecutions in other countries. There is no question Canadians want to open their doors to legitimate bona fide refugees.