

Immigration Act, 1976

the other hand, that those who are not bona fide or are attempting for the purpose of monetary gain to violate the spirit and the law of the land are not allowed to do what they do—a balance, Mr. Speaker.

What have we had through the whole process? We have had the all-Party committee. We have had the Plaut recommendations. We have had the spirit of this House in terms of the two opposition Parties and individual members of the Conservative Party. We have also had the other place. Conservatives, Liberals, and those with an independent label in the other place have come together and said that the Bill must be changed. The primary thing is to make sure due process is followed, that individuals are not turned away on the high seas or left to the whim of the master of the vessel and those who pull his strings. They should be given a chance for a legal and fair hearing so that we in Canada under the powers we have assigned to our bureaucracy can judge them according to merit to determine whether they are bona fide and to determine if for some reason they are coming to Canada under pretences which would show they would not be good citizens.

• (1630)

We are quite willing to take somebody who has a little bit of hard cash so that he or she can start a new business.

Mr. Heap: Like half a million.

Mr. Angus: Like half a million. I come from the area where the phrase "What's a million" was coined by C. D. Howe many years ago. Up North it is like pocket change.

Seriously, Mr. Speaker, we are quite willing to take those who can buy their way into the country, but we are not as willing under this legislation to take those who find themselves for political or religious reasons having to escape a country. That is what a refugee is, someone who is seeking refuge. He or she is doing it because of the kind of Government he or she is living with and in a lot of cases Governments tend to be dictatorial.

Then there is the problem of violence. If you happen to be a labour leader in Central America, you are not exactly the most loved person. In the case of Canada people will complain about the Bob Whites, the Dennis McDermotts or the Shirley Carrs because of their involvement in society and with workers striking for legitimate rights. In Central America labour people fear for their lives because of the undemocratic nature of the Government of the day. There is documentation to confirm it. A lot of evidence about labour leaders being shot, tortured and beaten is available. No matter what the Conservatives think about Shirley Carr, they would never go that far—and I am not even suggesting they would even think about it. As a comparison to other societies where things happen, that is very real. People need refuge. Sometimes we do not quite understand the politics of a country.

Do any of us really understand the politics of India between the various groups with religious overtones and geographic

relationships? I know from my trip to Israel this summer that the fundamentalism of the Jews in Israel, the fundamentalism of the Arabs in Israel, of the Arabs throughout the Arab world, is part of that volatile nature of the state. Who are we, predominantly a Christian society, to pass judgment on why people may feel they have to leave a country because of oppression? How difficult is it for us to judge specific merits if the authorities of a country we have to go to are the very people from whom people are running and who are forcing people out of the country if they want to remain alive? We need a process that will ensure that the laws of Canada apply and that the rights of individuals apply.

I agree that the current situation of five years to get some kind of decision is intolerable. Of course, there can be abuses. We on this side want to see that situation changed. That is why my colleague has argued for the implementation of the standing committee report based on Rabbi Plaut's report. We want very speedy process, one that will allow a reasonable period of time for determination, not giving the would be refugee a foot in the door that he or she has now in becoming totally involved in society, but one that allows for fair process.

This is a very important Bill. It is a Bill we want to see debated because we believe that the more people understand the specifics of the legislation and the specifics of the problem the better chance there is of the Government not turning the refugee clock back to 1938 or to 1909. We need to move forward and in a way to ensure that those who are forced to flee their countries can find refuge in Canada according to our laws, laws which should be just and fair. It should not be trying to play off refugees against immigrants as has been happening over the last four or five months, suggesting that people are queue-jumpers and they have to be dealt with. We know there is no queue. We had not even met our immigration targets in a number of years. Nobody has been displaced.

Mr. Friesen: What are you saying?

Mr. Angus: If there is any responsibility on the Government, not just the current Government but the previous one, it is the allocation of resources to ensure that staff are there to do the processing to ensure that all of those who apply as immigrants can have their requests processed fairly quickly within reason. The same thing should apply on the refugee side.

I would encourage the Government to reconsider the amendments which the other place has offered. They are printed for all to see so I will not go through them. I have made my points on this Bill.

I thank the other place for its careful consideration of the legislation. I think what the Senators have done is to give added strength to the work of the two opposition Parties in this House, reflecting a concern over the kind of refugee policy which the Government seems determined to implement even if it does mean lengthy court challenges and possible violations of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Quite frankly, I think it will be a sad day for Canada should this Bill pass.