

*Immigration Act, 1976*

of personal opinion. We in the north, for example, may have a different view than those in southern Canada. We have had a number of refugees in the north, in the Yukon, and they have been extremely important contributing members of our society. It is certainly not the most hospitable environment for some, perhaps, but I can say unequivocally that these people have contributed a tremendous amount to our society.

About 50,000 people emigrate from Canada to other countries every year. We do have our own out-migration. As other speakers have mentioned, while immigration increased to some extent, we have not reached our set limits. For example, the Government set a target of about 115,000 immigrants this year, and in 1986 there were slightly over 99,000.

The third comment one hears, which really has not been discouraged by the Government, is the suggestion that terrorists use the refugee system to get into Canada. That really does not make much sense because most modern terrorists are well-trained and well-funded. They can easily obtain counterfeit passports and visas, and it is not likely that a terrorist will go through the very uncomfortable process of passage in an overcrowded boat to land in Canada in the middle of the night when they could quite easily come here through more legitimate means.

I would like to address one other area of this Bill and its emergency nature that is, the impression that the Canadian people have been calling for the Government to do something about this problem. I agree, as other members of the NDP have agreed, that there is a need for better refugee legislation. I do not think anyone in this House can accurately say what all Canadians think. We have to form our opinions based on those who contact us, and the media, and so on. Therefore, I would like to share with the House the thoughts of Canadians who have contacted me. I have a number of letters but I will just read some excerpts from a few of them to give the tenor of what they are saying to me. I have not been selective in any way. Being a new Member I have not received a lot of mail on this subject but these do represent the general tenor of the letters I have received.

I have one from Whitehorse, Yukon, and the person talks in some detail about the refugee. She says there has been a lot in the news about the ship people who came to Canada illegally. She says we cannot turn away people who are in danger of losing their lives. There must be a way to control this so the system is fair to everyone concerned. She imagines that people who are trying to come to Canada legally are frustrated, but we cannot deny the refugees at the same time.

I also have a letter from Winnipeg, Manitoba, from someone who writes to express deep concern about the Bill to curb the flow of refugees coming into Canada. If passed, this law will result in thousands of legitimate refugee claimants being deported to the countries from which they fled, where many of them will face unjust imprisonment, torture and death. This person does not believe the Government's assertion

that only bogus claimants will be turned away. A look at the provisions of the Bill makes that clear. All refugee claimant applicants will be given only one chance to make a claim when they arrive in Canada. The person goes on to describe some other concerns and summarizes by expressing great concern that we will be denying entry to people fleeing persecution in violation both of our commitment under the UN Convention and of Christian and humanitarian principles. The person is not at all concerned about the few would-be immigrants who might make false refugee claims in order to bypass regular immigration channels. If Canada's immigration laws were liberalized, there would be no need for these persons to attempt such desperate measures. It is ironic that even our present low immigration quotas are not being filled, while thousands around the world are waiting anxiously to come to Canada. He asks as both a Christian and a Canadian citizen that we cause this Bill to be withdrawn, defeated or amended.

I have another letter from Whitehorse, Yukon, again. *Bona fide* refugees should be able to find a safe haven in Canada, it says.

Another letter is from Quebec. Briefly stated, the concerns are as follows. Refugees who may arrive in desperate circumstances and without documented evidence of persecution in their homeland will be required to make a credible plea for refugee status within a very short period of time. If they are denied refugee status, if they give the determination panel the wrong answers out of fear of authority or because they are confused, their grounds for appeal are severely limited. This person goes on to express some other concerns and sums up by asking the Government to withdraw the Bill in order that it be replaced with legislation which will end current abuses.

I have another letter from North Bay, Ontario, which says that the ships landing refugees on our shore, the futile attempts of our Navy to intercept incoming refugees, all bring to mind what happened earlier in our history. It summarizes by saying, "Let these people in. These are lives we are talking about, not just written statistics. Do not let history repeat itself."

While I do not purport to speak for all Canadians, I have tried to reflect what some Canadians are saying, those who have contacted me. They are saying what the NDP is saying. We need good legislation. We do not need abusive or repressive legislation.

There are two concerns I would like to highlight and then speak briefly to some points which we believe would improve the legislation. The present law allows the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) and the Solicitor General (Mr. Kelleher) to sign a certificate saying that someone is a security risk without saying what the evidence against that person is. It is evident to anyone who might be in that position that this is obviously unacceptable in a free society. People have a right to know why they are being turned away.