

*Immigration Act, 1976*

is not a substantive change and it might make things go a little bit quicker if that were to happen.

• (1520)

**Mr. Speaker:** I want to thank the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes). I will consider, shortly, what the Hon. Member has proposed and perhaps come back to the House in a few minutes. I want to look carefully at the motions referred to. I think Hon. Members will understand that the Chair, perhaps not the Table officers, and perhaps not even all Members, cannot remember the details of 77 motions off the top of the head. Considering the complexity, I know the Hon. Member would give the Chair several minutes at least to reflect on the suggestion.

The House will now resume debate on Motions Nos. 11, 13 and 14.

**Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the amendment presented by the Member for York West (Mr. Marchi) which I think is a fair and sensible recommendation. It considers the barriers to refugees being granted true access to a fair system of hearing in this country.

The danger we are facing, through a tightening of the screws, is that we will not permit legitimate refugees, who are coming here to seek a safe haven access to the system. Under this proposed streamlining we will require applicants to deal first with two people, an immigrant adjudicator and a member of the refugee board.

I think we are asking the member of the refugee board to take on a burden which is unfair to put on any human being, that is, to say yea or nay in a potentially life-threatening situation. The Government cites the independence of these gatekeepers. I think the refugee board should determine what kind of safeguards should be put in place for Canada. How much responsibility should rest on the shoulders of one person?

Canada has enjoyed growth and development, economically, socially, politically and culturally, because we were open and hospitable and accepted refugees who came to our shores and were able to grow and develop away from the lifestyle of terror which they fled. No one flees without good reason.

Canada has had a very proud record. We have shown compassion toward the plight of refugees seeking haven in Canada. Canada accepted 37,149 Hungarians in 1956-57, 11,943 Czechoslovakians in 1968-69, 7,069 Ugandans in 1972-73, 700 Cypriots in 1975, 9,000 Vietnamese in 1975-78, 9,000 Poles in 1982, and thousands of others from Iran, El Salvador, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Guatemala since then.

Canada has taken in over 360,000 refugees since the 1950s with yearly quotas of about 12,000. In 1986 we admitted 12,146 government-sponsored refugees and 5,067 privately sponsored. In August, 1984, the refugee backlog was 11,538 cases. It grew to over 20,000 in May, 1986, and stands currently at approximately 23,000 cases. I recognize that that is why we are studying this situation.

We were awarded the prestigious Nansen medal as a people who were open and receptive. We are now faced with a very difficult situation. I think it is a good idea to make changes, however, we must look intelligently at the amendments which are being moved.

When a refugee states that he desires to claim refugee status, who does the initial interview and says yea or nay to him? There are two people standing at the gatepost, acting independently of any refugee panel, saying that they can or cannot come in.

What are the restrictions? If there is any question, that is the end of the story. If he says that he has come from the United States he is immediately judged as having come from a safe third country. Are these safe third countries truly safe in all instances? Should we be demanding that another country take up our own responsibilities to these people? Are we responsible for the administration or a change of heart of a safe third country? I think that would be interfering with their right to manage. Who will determine whether a safe third country is still safe at the last moment?

I think the Cabinet has taken unto itself a very dangerous responsibility. It will make a list of countries to which claimants may be returned. It will seek the advice of the U.N. High Commission in drawing up that list. What will happen to these people whose lives are put in jeopardy if that list becomes outdated? I do not think this is what Canadian people want. It is not what refugees should expect and it is not what immigrants who came to this country and helped to build it think is right or fair.

I hope that we will give very serious consideration to a proper refugee system. There should be a first appeal to the refugee board on points of fact. The Federal Court should hear the appeals, not only on points of law but on points of fact. We will then have a truly fair and open hearing of the concerns of refugees who come to our shores. We must not only choose from the refugee camps those people whom we wish to integrate into our society. We must also be open to those who arrive on our shores and those who arrive on planes, trains and buses at our frontiers across the land. I urge the support of this amendment.

**Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, I would like to respond to a number of the representations which have been made. The Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) said that one of the things he has not been able to understand is that the Government would bring in a measure which contravenes—and I emphasize the word “contravenes”—the Convention. I listened carefully to that because the representative of the United Nations Human Rights Commission was before the Committee.

Knowing that that charge had been levelled at the Government a number of times I asked Mr. Van der Veen the