

details of all of them are accessible under the Access to Information legislation.

Senator Molgat: That is the problem, is it not? Recently, when requests have been made under the Access to Information Act, the government has been refusing such requests and saying, no, we will not release the details of such polls.

Senator Murray: No, honourable senators, that is not quite the case. The Access to Information legislation provides for exemption on certain grounds. With regard to polls, we have taken the position in very few cases that the release of—not the poll itself in most cases but of certain questions and answers would, for the time being at any rate, be prejudicial to the conduct of federal-provincial relations and, therefore, we have declined to release either those questions or answers on those grounds. In some cases, we have sought to delay the release of a whole poll until so doing would no longer be prejudicial to the conduct of federal-provincial relations.

[Translation]

Hon. Jacques Hébert: Honourable senators, on this same poll, could we find out whether it was available to the minister before he tabled his bill?

The surprising thing about the bill is that it tends to satisfy, shall we say, the rather wrong-headed reactions of a majority of Canadians, who according to the poll are starting to rise up against immigration and refugees, as is happening in other countries.

Obviously, the bill is completely along those lines. It is a very reactionary bill. We wonder whether it was not inspired by the polls, in order to flatter the least noble elements of public opinion.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I absolutely reject the hon. senator's statement that the immigration bill is reactionary.

On the contrary, the bill makes it clear that the government intends to keep the immigration levels as they are. The rate of immigration to our country will not go down, but we absolutely want to regulate it efficiently and fairly, both for immigrants and for the country.

I would draw to the hon. senator's attention that senior officials of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees strongly support the refugee provisions of the bill.

Senator Hébert: That does not answer my question, but since the Leader of the Government in the Senate, UN High Commission for Refugees, he might perhaps have referred as well to the dozens of witnesses less subject to influence, like the Canadian Bar Association and the Toronto Human Rights Association, for example.

I know that you raise your eyebrows when we talk about human rights and that annoys you! But what do you want, that's the way it is!

I also think that the government must not present such a reactionary bill to us by invoking the United Nations High Commission; indeed, we had a delegate from it who criticized many parts of the bill but of course, understandably, in a rather diplomatic way, since that organization is funded by developed countries including Canada.

That is not the best witness you could quote!

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I know full well that the Canadian Bar Association, expressed some reservations about the bill. The minister, Mr. Valcourt, tried successfully, I believe, to satisfy several of the Bar's objections.

I would also remind the hon. senator that the outgoing chairman of the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board, Gordon Fairweather, also strongly supported the bill that is now before the House of Commons.

Senator Hébert: You must not leave this House under the impression that you had extremely favorable witnesses. Mr. Fairweather was appointed by your government to do a job that he did well, I admit. I do not want to criticize Mr. Fairweather, but he is not a totally objective witness in the circumstances.

The reason you named those two is that there are no others! All the rest strongly attacked this bill.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I wish to remind the hon. senator that Mr. Fairweather was appointed Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission by the previous government, headed by Prime Minister Trudeau.

In any case, all I can say today is that the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology chaired by Senator Kinsella has just completed a pre-study of this bill.

Within a few months, the Senate will have an opportunity to deal with all the details of the bill because we will have it officially before us.

[English]

JUSTICE

SOCIAL UNREST—PROPOSED MEETING OF PRIME MINISTER WITH BIG CITY MAYORS AND FEDERATION OF MUNICIPALITIES

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, does the minister have an answer for me yet on the potential meeting of the Prime Minister with the mayors of the major cities in the aftermath of that unfortunate riot in Toronto? I have asked the question on many occasions and the reply has always been, "He is thinking about it, I think." Has he done it?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, Senator Lynch-Staunton is looking into that matter and will be reporting in due course.