

Immigration Act, 1976

In accordance with established international practice, supported by the relevant international instruments, persons rescued at sea should normally be disembarked at the next port of call. This practice should also be applied in the case of asylum seekers rescued at sea. In cases of large-scale influx, asylum seekers rescued at sea should always be admitted, at least on a temporary basis.

The Bill's proposal that they be turned away runs contrary to that.

I see your signal, Mr. Speaker, and I realize that my time is up. I regret that this Bill has been proposed by the Canadian Government. In my opinion, it is not a good portrayal of the country in which I believe. The Bill does not attempt to keep Canada's doors open to asylum seekers and genuine refugees who have well-founded fears of persecution or death in their home countries. I think we have taken a very negative, backward step with the introduction of this legislation and I deeply regret it.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I had no intention of getting involved in this debate at this time but, because of some of the points raised by the Hon. Member for Humboldt—Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse), I find it necessary to tell the right side of the story about several things he mentioned. I want to deal briefly with those things.

● (1150)

The Hon. Member finished his remarks by talking about people being rescued at sea. There is nothing in this Bill that will stop us from being compassionate toward people rescued at sea. People sneaking into the country, having destroyed their documents, are not being rescued. They have sneaked into the country. Not one of those people, if they were genuine refugees, would have been stopped from applying properly.

The Hon. Member went on to say that the first newspaper stories about these people was that one had been deported before. A second one was a murderer. The press brought these things out. This Government does not control the press. Why is he complaining to the Government? Why does he not complain to CBC and the socialist press which publishes these things? I did not hear one Hon. Member from that Party say anything about the ridiculous way the press ignored 2,000 people demonstrating on this Hill simply because they happened to be supporting the Government. If he wants the press to be honest and fair to everyone, I am with him. I am opposed to it being slanted to the socialist side all the time. In any case, his point is not applicable to this Bill at all.

He also said there was no national emergency. I happened to be mainstreeting in my constituency starting the day after these Sikhs arrived in Nova Scotia. In the 52 or 53 towns and villages I visited, where I spent a half an hour to an hour on the streets, three-quarters of the people who came up to me said how much they resented these people sneaking into our country. They wanted to know what the Government was going to do about it—not next year but now. I was one of those who wrote to the Hon. Minister and told him how my constituents felt.

Then the Hon. Member talked about all kinds of things that were going to happen. Is he a mind-reader? Does he have a Ouija-board or something? This Government has no intention of turning down any genuine refugee no matter where they come from. The Hon. Member talked about different colours and nationalities. They are human beings and this Government recognizes that. They will be treated as human beings as long as they are honest and sincere. We do not want murderers from other countries coming to Canada. We do not want thieves. We do not want people who are determined to sneak into this country after having destroyed their documents, because if they are dishonest in one thing, they may be dishonest in other things.

How does the Hon. Member rationalize some of the things he said with what I have just said?

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, we have a good juxtaposition of our two points of view regarding refugees. The Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) says what we have here is a bunch of people who were sneaking in—

Mr. Taylor: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I never at any time said these people were murderers or sneakers. You are the one that put in the murder part. I said we do not want that kind in the country and we have every right to keep that kind out.

Mr. Althouse: There has never been any argument about that. The process is quite clear. Under the existing law, which has been very effective in screening people with criminal records, those people have not been permitted into the country in most cases.

The point I would make in response is that this particular boatload of people, and I thought he said his constituents used the words "sneaked in", all passed the initial scrutiny under the old Act. I suspect most of them would pass under the new Act. I do not see anything in the new Act that would have been effective at keeping these people out.

The Hon. Member's comments demonstrate the point I made initially in my remarks, that the perception of Government and government officials changes over time. It has been extremely difficult for Canada to set out procedures and definitions regarding refugees at any point in time. We apparently decided that Tamils were in danger of losing their lives in Sri Lanka. We have still not decided, apparently, whether they will be granted full refugee status in Canada. They have been allowed to stay here for a year. The peace plan in that country is still being worked through and it is apparently unclear whether those Tamils, even though they have all gotten jobs in Canada and some have even provided employment for other people, will be permitted to become immigrants.

The Hon. Member indicated there was no intention of turning people away. I am not a lawyer but I have had lawyers interpret this Bill for me. The language in the legislation seems fairly clear. The power exists to turn ships away. If it is not the intention of the Government or any future Government to