

Government Orders

If he is found to be a true refugee, then under international law his use of a false visa is not to be held against him. That is part of the United Nations convention on the status of refugees. The United Nations convention does not find him the \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$15,000 to buy the false visa.

We have delays built into both the new system for refugee determination and the old system for dealing with the backlog. Most of the groups in Canada who sponsor refugees and who are concerned about the status of refugees in Canada belong to an umbrella group known as the Canadian Council for Refugees.

• (1220)

The Canadian Council for Refugees passed a resolution at its semi-annual conference which ended on June 2 of this year. I want to acquaint members of the House with this resolution. It is a resolution regarding the backlog clearance process. It states:

Whereas:

(1) In December 1989, the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on Labour, Employment and Immigration issued a Report on the Backlog Clearance Process which found the process to be seriously flawed and predicted that, without major changes, it would take four to six years to clear the Backlog;

(2) In May 1990, the Minister of Employment and Immigration delivered the Government's response to the Standing Committee's Report, a response which side-stepped all major issues raised in the report;

There are certainly some of us on the committee who agree heartily with the Canadian Council for Refugees that the minister's response did side-step the major issues we raised. She did not really convince us that her program will be finished in two years, as she has always insisted, even though she changed the date of starting.

The resolution further states:

(3) By mid-April 1990, only 26,711 of over 85,000 Backlog cases were in process, and less than half of those had received a final answer on their eligibility to remain in Canada;

(4) The artificially imposed temporary status of persons in the Backlog results in tremendous and undeserved anxiety and suffering due to lack of certainty about the future and prolonged separation from family, and is cruel and unusual treatment and a gross violation of fundamental human rights;

There are families being broken, marriages broken because the husband is here and the wife and, perhaps,

children are over there. After a year, two, three or maybe four years they begin to lose faith that the husband is really trying to bring them here. He writes and tells them: "I am trying. I am waiting and waiting to get my landed status. I cannot do anything until I get my landed status". Sometimes they do not believe him. They think he has found a better arrangement here. So a family is broken up and children are perhaps left without their father because of the delays in this program.

To continue with the resolution. It states:

(5) The Minister of Employment and Immigration's resolve to undertake this deliberate and calculated action against asylum seekers has exposed all asylum seekers in the Backlog to grievous harm; and

(6) Allowing the unresolved situation of those in the Backlog to continue constitutes an abuse of human rights and is just cause for due concern regarding equitable treatment of asylum seekers under the laws of Canada;

I would add "under the laws of the United Nations".

The resolution is this. It is not a new idea, but one that is gaining support in Canada.

Be it resolved that the Executive of the Canadian Council for Refugees and its member agencies:

(1) Express to the Minister of Employment and Immigration our disappointment in her flagrant disregard of the serious concerns raised in the Report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration which, if addressed, could have made a significant, positive impact on the processing of the Backlog.

Again, the minister took the full five months to respond to our report. I can understand why she did it, because I think she did not have a very good answer to give us. She gave us, perhaps, the best she thought she could, but certainly not the sort of answer we were looking for, let alone the answer the public is looking for.

(2) Remind the Minister of Employment and Immigration of the Canadian Council for Refugees' previous calls for special measures to deal with the Backlog which would allow those in the Backlog to proceed immediately to landing, subject to admissibility criteria, and once again urgently request her to do the same in accordance with her discretionary powers and in accordance with Canada's domestic and international obligations with regard to human rights; and

(3) Include in the aforementioned those asylum seekers who were in the country before May, 1986, but were not granted permission to stay in Canada under the Administrative Review Program, (ADR).