

Immigration Act, 1976

It seems a light matter to Conservatives across the country, and to those whose prejudices are pandered to by this legislation, to deny our international commitments. What can we say of a government which is committed to observing the law and upholding it, when it sets out to deny the statement of the Supreme Court of Canada, and to flout the decisions of the Supreme Court of this country which has declared that anyone who is within our borders has the right to have a claim to refugee status considered? What can one say of a government that will do that? What right does it have to make law when it does not know how to observe the law, and when it finds new devices to raise barriers, play to prejudice, and create the worst tendencies in this country?

If there is any question of that being rather strong language, surely those who scanned the half page of an advertisement in *The Globe and Mail* last week know that it is true. The questions asked and the argumentation put around those questions by this so-called Immigration Association of Canada were attempts to incite the prejudices that exist, and those feelings that immigrants who are coming to this country, particularly refugees from the southern hemisphere, are changing the nature of our society and we should do something to end that.

It is often forgotten that this country is, in a particular sense, a country resulting from the arrival of refugees. Canada is bilingual because after French-speaking settlers and immigrants from France had settled for more than a century and a half in the St. Lawrence Valley, the colony of Upper Canada was created in response to the arrival of refugees who had lost the war for the British Empire in North America, and those who had been defeated by the American colonies' assertion of their own independence. The arrival of refugees in what became Upper Canada, later Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, was the first of many experiences of the arrival of refugees.

In fact, in a sense I am here because in 1926 my father and his family came to Canada as refugees from Soviet Russia. They were fleeing a system of government which had threatened the lives of members of the family, and others of the community. In Canada they found a safety for which they were devoutly grateful, and for which I am devoutly grateful.

With those Canadian traditions, I find it profoundly offensive that the Government should raise barriers and pander to prejudices which exist in some Canadian minds. In the era of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms we have been doing our best to remove them from Canadian public life and lessen, if not end entirely, their impact on employment, services to individuals, and so on. The Government which did all too little in the way of achieving progress in employment equity is here in the immigration area explicitly playing to those prejudices.

On the one hand we may say that this is something that bureaucrats in Immigration have been seeking, because they

have been talking to their opposite numbers in other countries of the European community, and countries where similarly grim attitudes have come into play. Those countries have often experienced far more in the way of population movement, and the appearance of refugees than Canada. At this point Canada may be the last country that still wishes to maintain principles of humanity. At least, many of us in this country do, whatever the Government thinks. Surely, it is not fair to blame those in the Immigration Service who have been listening to others and thinking about ways in which the Canadian system could be tightened up. In our system of parliamentary government, it is never fair to blame the officials or the bureaucracy for what is happening. The buck stops on desks on the other side of the House.

Quite explicitly, I wish to say that last January when the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) made comments about his home district of the Lac-Saint-Jean area and spoke of it as untouched by immigration and other realities, the controversy aroused a good deal of noise in the House and little attention in the country, because there were people who did not believe that the Minister of Employment and Immigration actually meant that. Since I made the charge at the time and asked him to withdraw those comments, I have long since been convinced that he did mean what he said.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration is quite happy with what is happening these days, and he is encouraging this Immigration Association of Canada, led by someone who had a leading role in the immigration service in years past and who is now out of the Public Service. The Minister is quite happy to encourage attitudes opposed to immigration, opposed to the appearance in Canada of refugees—having some type of a lily-white Canada in which people from the southern hemisphere are not wanted, particularly those from Central and South America where too many countries still have repressive regimes threatening people with danger and forcing them out of their borders. The Canadian Government does not wish to respond to that situation, and it is giving us this type of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): On a point of order, the Hon. Member for Calgary West.

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, it is quite inappropriate in the Chamber, and one of our long-standing traditions, that Members do not deal with the issue of motivation. I feel that the Hon. Member is being particularly sleazy in dealing with the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard), and ascribing motivation to that Minister. It is totally inappropriate behaviour in the Chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): It being one o'clock I do now leave the Chair until two o'clock.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.