

• (1355)

I would like to point out that under the current act, under the current law, if somebody is convicted of a crime after they have served their time in jail they can apply to the Immigration and Refugee Board on humanitarian, compassionate grounds to defeat their deportation from this country. That process now takes three years. There is a three-year delay. Under this new law the process will probably be reduced to about thirty days. There are about 1,200 people the ministry or the department has, at least on first glance, determined could be dangerous criminals we want removed. This bill will do it.

With regard to the issue of the immigration department being understaffed and needing more resources, I will not dispute that with anyone. I will not dispute it with my colleague. I will not dispute it with the Reform Party. I am not responsible for that decision. I would suggest that you make your argument to the finance department or to the finance minister. I am sure the minister of immigration, if he were here, would be quite happy to be getting extra resources for his department.

The last issue is that he used the word draconian. I do not think the measures are draconian at all. First of all, the person has to commit a crime that will get them a maximum of ten years in jail. That raises one threshold. The second threshold or test that they have to meet is they have to be considered a danger to society. Clearly we are not going to be throwing out the person who simply steals a television that is worth more than \$1,000. Clearly we want to go after the people who are committing assaults or murders or rapes or a whole bunch of other types of crimes for which Canadians have no appetite to have these people kept in our country.

Mr. Hanger: Mr. Speaker, a concern that is on the minds of many Canadians is the fact that when we do have violent criminals under deportation orders they are never removed because of a lack of being able to obtain a travel document. From this member I would like an explanation as to why or how Bill C-44 is going to address this concern.

I have a list of probably a dozen very violent criminals, some of whom have been convicted of murder, who are walking our streets because travel documents cannot be obtained to get rid of them. I want this member to explain to me how Bill C-44 is going to deal with that.

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I acknowledge that it is a legitimate concern and that the hon. member has raised a legitimate point. The short answer is that I do not know. That is not what the guts of the bill are about. It is not about sorting out the technicalities of travel documents.

Let us say we have someone who came over when they were six years old. They grew up here. They are not a Canadian

citizen. Then they commit a very serious crime. The country we are going to send them back to does not want them back. It considers them to be Canadians and is not going to give us the travel documents to send them back. We have a policy in this country of simply not putting someone on an airplane, sending them off to somewhere and simply leaving them there. Then we get into a game. We send them there, they send them back, we send them there. Who knows where the person disappears to. We cannot kick someone out of the country if we are going to make them stateless.

There is a mechanism that we have to follow. There is a process. If the country on the other side does not co-operate, I agree it is a problem. I do not have the answer.

[Translation]

Mr. Nunez: Mr. Speaker, about the expression "danger to the public in Canada", the minister will be able to prevent an appeal by saying that the person constitutes a danger to the public in Canada. This is very ambiguous and subjective. Who will decide who constitutes a danger to the public in Canada? Will it be the minister, his officials, the RCMP, CSIS? Who? This is a very dangerous concept, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague's point. It is something we have to be very concerned about. I would remind him though that it is not the only threshold; it is not the only test. The first thing the person must have done to get into the problem is to have committed a crime where they would have received a maximum of 10 years in jail or more. Then the department would make its finding that they are a danger to Canadian society.

I appreciate the member's worries and concerns and we will have to watch the system as it develops.

The Speaker: It being 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. John Murphy (Annapolis Valley—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the month of February marks the occasion of Black History Month. It offers an opportunity to acknowledge the important role played by black Canadians and African Canadians in the development of this great nation.