

*Adjournment Debate***PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT
MOTION***[English]*

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

IMMIGRATION—REFUGEES IN ARGENTINA—CO-OPERATION
WITH AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, two of my colleagues and I addressed questions to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Cullen) yesterday having to do with the situation of refugees in the Argentine.

The Canadian government in June promised to increase the number of refugees to be admitted from South America from roughly 4,500 already admitted to a total, including that 4,500, of 6,000. In other words, another 1,500 persons were to be admitted.

The three members I have mentioned in September visited the Argentine and Uruguay under the auspices of the Canadian churches and accompanied by Mr. George Cram, a representative of the Canadian churches. They directed their attention specifically to the question of Canada's contribution to refugees and to the question of fundamental human rights in the countries they visited. They presented a detailed memorandum to the minister, asking that the refugee situation be treated as a matter of urgency and that steps be taken by way of appointment of a special commission to deal promptly with the cases.

The minister replied in a memorandum furnished to us on December 16. The effect of the memorandum is to suggest that the situation is by no means urgent, that the Canadian embassy in Buenos Aires has reported that the Argentinian government is taking a more humane approach toward refugees and human rights, and that present regulations are quite adequate.

We interviewed the embassy officials, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and many of those in the churches and elsewhere who are responsible for refugee programs, and we talked to many refugees as well. We find it necessary to reassert that our statement that an emergency exists is indeed correct. The only evidence which might justify the statement of the more humane approach was the statement that the Argentine authorities have shown a greater willingness to co-operate with the UNHCR and such other organizations as Amnesty International.

This view, Mr. Speaker, is totally rejected by Amnesty International itself, which speaks in a recent interim report of kidnappings, including the kidnapping of the person who a few moments before had been interviewing the Amnesty International group. Father Drinan, a member of the Congress of the United States, says the situation is almost as bad as that in Chile at the height of the repression there, and indeed the situation is worse than in Viet Nam when thousands of prisoners were imprisoned and tortured. Amnesty International

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

al speaks of the killing of ten clergymen and the disappearance of many people as a result of "actions by unofficial security personnel." It is also clear that Amnesty International representatives were not in fact granted freedom to move throughout the country. We ourselves can attest from very many interviews we had that a situation of lawlessness does indeed prevail. There are at least 10,000 detained without trial on political charges. All of this has created grave uneasiness on the part of refugees.

It is apparent from the minister's memo that he has got his information from our embassy staff. When we were there, two junior officials were looking after immigration matters for the Argentine and six other countries. We understand that one more has been added. However, it was quite apparent to us that they took routine views of their duties, and we find it strange that the minister should prefer the opinion of these officials to that expressed by three members of parliament, all experienced and quite familiar with the situation. We think it is somewhat derogatory of our parliamentary system that representations from members of all major parties should be treated by the minister with such scant respect.

I urge the minister to reconsider the whole matter and to get in touch with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees through well qualified and independent personnel in order to get at the real facts. This is a matter of human beings and their lives, and Canada should not base its policies on a garbling of the facts.

[Translation]

Mr. Arthur Portelance (Parliamentary Secretary to minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, even though we first consider the information provided to us by our embassy in Buenos Aires, we also take into account the information that might be given by organizations such as Amnesty International. Our embassy indicated to us recently that Argentine authorities showed a greater desire to cooperate with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and seemed more concerned about the international opinion. We were informed by our embassy that in early November two representatives from Amnesty International met with Argentina's foreign affairs under-secretary and were allowed to visit a few prisons and interview some inmates.

IMMIGRATION—REQUEST TO ACCELERATE ADMISSION OF
REFUGEES FROM CHILE AND URUGUAY

Mr. Louis Duclos (Montmorency): Mr. Speaker, first I want to point out the non sectarian nature of the short debate we are having tonight about the political refugees of Chile and Uruguay who are presently under the protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Argentina.

I should also say that this is as it should be since we are dealing with a transcendental issue, an issue which goes far beyond the electoral interests of the political parties of hon. members of this House who are concerned with this problem. Indeed it is quite out of question, Mr. Speaker, to play political games with values such as respect for human rights or promo-