

*Immigration Act, 1976*

I challenge the Government, which promised a more generous attitude toward family reunification, to live up to that promise and make it possible for relatives of Canadians to join their family members. If the Government were sincere in its approach to the whole refugee determination system, it would act expeditiously with regard to a more generous approach on family reunification.

I characterized the Government's approach to refugees as cheap politics. Tit for tat, the Government has characterized our position as a "do nothing" approach, an approach where we would simply stay with the *status quo*. In fact, some Members on the government side have suggested that we would not have any real control over the determination of refugee status and the entry of refugee claimants into this country, and it would simply be at the pleasure of the persons who decided to call themselves refugees. They have suggested that if anybody outside the country were to put on the hat and say "I am a refugee", given the position of the Opposition they would just waltz into the country; there would be no controls. That is the image which the Government has been seeking to propagate in terms of the position or posture taken by the opposition Parties.

● (1740)

Is the only alternative to the Government's hand-fisted approach to refugee determination a wide open, no control, *status quo* approach? I should like to suggest that it clearly is not, even though some government Members would like to convince the public that it is.

Rabbi Plaut, for example, has conducted a thorough and comprehensive study of the refugee determination system and has offered an alternative way of handling the whole question. A parliamentary committee studied the refugee determination system, found it wanting, and offered positive alternatives as to how the system could be reformed. Clearly there are alternatives to the hand-fisted way in which the Government is approaching the refugee determination system. It is not a question of either accepting the Tory way or no way. It is not a question of accepting the Prime Minister's way or there will be no controls with regard to refugee status. Clearly the Government has been seeking to propagate that false alternative.

The refugee determination system needs to be reformed. People on this side of the House clearly recognize that. When it takes up to five years for a decision to be made with regard to refugee status, there is something wrong with the process. Clearly the process becomes open to abuse and one which invites abuse. The refugee determination process needs a complete house cleaning. It needs to be re-thought from top to bottom.

I want to come to what I think is the central point of the debate on Bill C-84 to amend the refugee determination process. The Government is playing politics with the issue, is seeking to curry public favour, and is accusing the Opposition of having a *status quo* policy or a hands-off approach to

refugee determination. Those are not the only alternatives. In fact there is a middle way, a way of facing up to the challenge by providing genuine leadership which would reform the refugee determination system so that it combines human rights and fairness—fairness with regard to the process by which people enter the country and become Canadian citizens and respect for human rights, respect for the Canadian tradition of generosity when it comes to people whose lives are in danger. This is the balance which must be struck. On the one hand we must respect the human rights of global citizens who come to our shores and indicate that their lives are in danger, that they need sanctuary, protection, or a haven. We must respect their human rights and their right to a fair hearing. At the same time we must respect the sentiment of Canadians that nobody should be able to abuse the refugee determination system as a way of coming into Canada through the back door, as a way of jumping the queue, as has often been said on the other side of the House, or as a way of getting in here as a quick fix. Canadians have a right to demand that fairness apply with regard to entry into this country. We must combine those values and concerns, and that is a challenge of political leadership.

Governing a country is not an easy process. If it were, I guess the Conservatives would be in office longer than we expect them to be. Governing is a difficult art. It requires the balancing of legitimate concerns. If it were simply a one-way street in which all we had to take into account was one set of priorities, maybe the Conservatives would still be at 60 per cent of the polls. We recognize that running the country is a difficult process and that the concerns of people must be balanced.

The first thing the Government should do in turning around this legislation is to change its strategy. It should accept the challenge of political leadership and accept the challenge of combining a concern for human rights with a concern for fairness in the process of entering the country. If it did that, perhaps it would not have to worry about its position in the polls. In fact, Gregg, a famous Tory pollster, has said in public—and it has been printed in the newspapers—that what Canadians want is leadership based on principle and based on compassion.

The Government has also failed to live up to its own past history. When it came to the boat people coming out of southeast Asia, we had a very admirable program. Canadian families from one coast to the other were able to sponsor boat people and to assist in their settlement in the country. They made it a successful program. It solved a refugee problem and allowed all Canadians to live up to and participate in the humanitarian tradition of which the country is duly proud.

The Government has failed to live up to its own past behaviour and has sunken to a new low. It has also failed to meet the challenge of leadership on this planet in another sense: as long as we have great disparities in incomes, conflicts, and a lack of democratic procedures in the world, we will have a surplus of refugees. The Government ought to look at