

Supply

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the member, who I believe sits on the Immigration Committee, has failed to recognize in the last two and one-half years the very fundamental requests that have been coming from the Standing Committee, the Plaut Report, from non-governmental organizations and churches across the country, and Members of the House. They have requested that we make a distinction between immigration and refugee related requests.

While the desire of someone to seek landed immigrant status in this country is legitimate and completely acceptable, it is very different from the forces that drive genuine refugees to flee their countries. Given their choice or opportunity, those refugees would stay in their country of birth. However, those forces of persecution have forced those people to pack their suitcases and seek a new and better world. That has been the central theme of all submissions before our committee.

I cannot understand why an honourable Member, particularly a government Member who may have more access to the levers of power, cannot understand that it is not a criticism of public servants who do a good and honourable job. It is simply a request that within our system and under a new refugee process bureaucrats should deal with immigration and a different group of individuals and experts should deal with refugees.

According to this legislation the Government has, once again, mixed refugees with immigrants and has missed a golden opportunity to distinguish between the two and thereby educate many Canadians about the difference between those two groups arriving on our shores.

If the Government is genuinely concerned about dealing with the refugee claims, I suggest it could have retained its two officers at all border points and could have had as members of refugee boards two people who are competent in refugee and geopolitical events around the world, rather than appointing one immigration officer who is only concerned about immigration control.

● (1200)

The Hon. Member then went on to say what was our policy, in place of that screening process. We have proposed, supported once again by the committee and all the NGOs, to allow those individuals an opportunity to come before the refugee board. That is where the decision would be rendered, not at some discretionary point at the border. This is suggested not because the country is on the so-called "safe country" list. A person would come before the board and state his or her claim, and at least the decision, whether negative or positive, would be seen as fair and humane. That is the important step the Government is precluding.

What the Government is doing is trying to suggest it has improved the new refugee board, that somehow that is the jewel of the legislation. However, very craftily it has then drawn a barrier around the jewel and challenged refugees to try to get to it.

The Hon. Member then went on to ask how do we curb abuse. The Hon. Member should pay close attention to the fact that with every single restrictive measure announced by the Conservative Government, the number of fraudulent schemes and scams has risen. With each step in making the system more rigid and inflexible, refugees are becoming more desperate. When one is facing life and death, and one's back is against the wall, one will resort to anything, and there are careers built up by fraudulent and unscrupulous consultants who earn hundreds of thousands of dollars from individuals who simply wish to escape the tortures they and their families are facing.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I was not going to ask a question or make a comment because the presentation of the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi) was excellent. However, when a Government Member rose to ask a question which somehow inferred we were taking a position against civil servants, I decided to ask the Hon. Member for York West if he would elaborate as to what happened to a civil servant who in fact did come forward with information with respect to abuses which were taking place. This particular individual lost his job. The Government complains that the Liberal Party does not believe in civil servants at the same time as the Deputy Minister of Employment and Immigration saw a civil servant fired because he did his job, because he believed so much in his job that he was prepared to come before the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration. I would like to ask the Hon. Member for York West to elaborate on that matter.

Mr. Marchi: The Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) is absolutely right. Through the Hon. Member's suggestion, the Government was again trying to have it both ways. It was criticizing me unfairly and inaccurately for trying to taint its Public Service and, at the same time, Ministers responsible for immigration are guilty of, in effect, firing a civil servant who brought valuable information to the attention of the Government that criminal elements were being invited to participate in the refugee determination system.

That officer, together with myself and other Canadians, knew, of course, that that was completely absurd, that the refugee determination system should not be encumbered by such elements. What is the price, under this Conservative Government, for trying to flag an issue? What is the price paid by an officer who is trying to do his or her job? What is the price paid by an officer who tries to educate the Government by bringing to the attention of the standing committee and Hon. Members something which is very wrong, that an invitation to criminal elements was being sent across the country? The price is that that person does not have a job today. But the Government did change its regulations and format. It did recall those letters and sent out a new letter. That action by the Government is an admission that John Quigley was right, yet it still had the temerity to fire him and he is still looking for a job.