

*Government Orders*

undesirables are slipping through? Is it any wonder that large numbers of deportable people are evading arrest, given these astronomical numbers?

One way we can make a huge dent immediately in stopping large numbers of undesirables from entering the country and one way we can reduce the incredible number of deportable immigrants is simply to bring the total number of immigrants down to a reasonable sustainable level.

This minister and this government—and I dare them to stand up and say differently—have not established quotas on the number of immigrants entering the country. They have not reduced the numbers. They are simply taking credit for a lower number of applicants in some categories. It is smoke and mirrors.

Bill C-44 is the same sort of smoke and mirrors, the same sort of cynical politics. Take credit for something that is not real seems to be the motto of this government and this immigration minister.

Bill C-44 is not real. It too is smoke and mirrors. It too is a shell game. It too is cynical politics. This minister has tried to fool the people of Canada into thinking that something is happening when nothing is happening.

Let us go through this piece of legislation to see what it purports to do, why it does not do what it purports to do and why all members of this Parliament, those who want to report to their constituents with good consciences, will vote against this bill.

As a side bar, I know that not all members have had a chance to read this bill. Reading all bills is simply not possible for a member of Parliament. That is why I urge members to listen carefully as I go through the major clauses of Bill C-44 so that they will know why voting for this bill serves neither the interests of their communities nor the country as a whole.

• (1305)

The first major thing this bill purports to do is to empower customs officers to seize identity documents that are fraudulent and sent through the mail. That is fantastic. I would love it if all fraudulent documents sent through the mail could be stopped and seized. Such a measure if implemented would take the heart out of the illegal immigrant industry and let me assure members that there is an industry out there.

The minister has included that clause to give the Canadian people the impression he intends to stop the flow of illegal documents, or at least curb it. What could be wrong with that? I will tell you. Mansel Legacy, the head of the Customs Excise Union, says that this measure is utterly unenforceable. He appeared before the standing committee.

Throughout the whole country there are only a handful of officers with the power and the job description to actually open and seize these documents. Further, law restricts officers from opening mail that is under 50 grams. Put a visa or an identity card in an envelope and weigh it and you will come up with the same thing I did. It weighs less than 50 grams. Even if someone were dumb enough to enclose a pound of fake passports in a single envelope there are only a handful of officers who would be able to seize them.

The minister wants to give the impression he is taking care of a serious problem in customs and immigration policy. In fact he is just introducing a clause that is a lot of talk but is utterly unenforceable. That is the first piece of evidence that this bill was introduced to do nothing more than pull the wool over the eyes of Canadians.

Another part of the bill that has been trumpeted by the minister as a serious get tough measure has been the limiting of immigration procedures for serious criminals. Bill C-44 promises to limit the appeals of serious criminals to the Immigration and Refugee Board. That is the board the minister so often defends which has developed a reputation for sending into the streets serious violent criminals and non-residents who have gone on to kill innocent Canadians. As he puts it, it is a great Canadian institution. I beg to differ.

On first sight it is a good move. That was certainly my first reaction until I heard from the various lawyers and others who appeared before us at the standing committee. I am no legal expert and obviously the minister is not either. It is important for both of us to turn to the advice of lawyers when a bill is discussed in the standing committee.

When the lawyers appeared before the standing committee they said that this bill would not stop criminal immigrants from making appeals, it would not even slow them down. Bill C-44 does not stop serious convicted criminals from making appeals; it only stops them from making one kind of appeal. Bill C-44 would stop the IRB from hearing appeals based on humanitarian and compassionate considerations only but it would still permit them to hear appeals on matters of fact and law.

The lawyers who handle immigration and refugee cases and have the knowledge and a vested interest here have told us that C-44 will do nothing more than make them change their paperwork a little. Instead of making an appeal on compassionate grounds, they will make an appeal on fact and law. The bottom line is that criminal immigrants stay in the country. They stay, we pay.

This measure, the second major part of the bill, will not work but it does sound good. It sounds good and it appeases the majority of Canadians who want tougher immigration laws without actually changing anything important. No vested interest will be offended. As such I have to give this government