

Immigration Act, 1976

Mr. Crosby: Mr Speaker, the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre asked me my view of the entry of the 174 East Asian migrants into the Province of Nova Scotia. I am unalterably opposed to that entry in that way. I will explain why. The migrants violated Section 95 of the Immigration Act by seeking to enter Canada through a place other than a port of entry, knowing well that had they entered through a port of entry they would have run into the formalities of our immigration laws and would have been required to identify themselves, state honestly under oath from whence they came, and meet the other requirements. Therefore, I am unalterably opposed to their entry into Canada because I believe that they purposefully avoided the immigration laws of Canada.

I resent, and I think the people of Canada resent, the remarks of the Member for Ottawa Centre attributing, not to me and not to Members in this House of Commons, but to all Canadians the attitude that they are concerned about the entry of these East Asians because, in his words, "they look different and wear turbans". No one said to me, "I am against these people because they look different and wear turbans". I take Canadians at their word. When they tell me that they do not want law-breakers to enter the country, when they tell me that they want everyone to observe the laws of Canada as they seek entry to the country, I take their word. I do not attribute malice or racial prejudice to honest Canadians who believe that all our laws should be respected. Canadians are law-abiding people. They pay income tax, they stop at red lights, and they resent people who do not abide by our laws. I am shocked and amazed that the Member for Ottawa Centre would attribute to law-abiding Canadians a racial prejudice that only exists in his own mind.

• (1330)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will allow a very short rebuttal.

Mr. Cassidy: I thank the Hon. Member for his contribution and his assurances that that was not in fact the intention of the Government in its statements at the time of the entry of the Sikhs, and that it was not attempting to build up any kind of support in that way. If that is the case, I am glad to hear it.

I simply say that the concerns of Canadians about the refugee process were concerns to which the Government should have responded a long time ago. Sure, they were heightened and sharpened by the arrival of the Sikhs, but they were also heightened by the arrival of the Tamils a year ago. One must ask why the Government failed to act at the time of the Tamil arrival or when the House resumed in October of last year? Why did it not get on with the job at that time?

Mr. Crosby: You obstructed it.

Mr. Cassidy: There was a bad Bill which we are opposing. Why was there no Bill at all until May 5? Why was there no debate at all on the Government's response to more expeditious

handling of refugees until June 18 when there was effectively no time—

Mr. Crosby: You were obstructing then and you are obstructing now.

Mr. Cassidy: It is hardly obstruction when the Bill was not even before us between September and May.

Mrs. Mary Collins (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be here today to have the opportunity to debate Bill C-55, unlike my colleagues opposite who seem to decry the recall of Parliament to debate this issue. I believe it is perhaps one of the most important issues that has faced Canadians in the past two years. Members of Parliament from all Parties have a responsibility to deal with it. The Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) indicated that he does not believe it is important to return at this time. The Member from the Liberal Party, the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi), indicated that he felt the Government was trying to whip up hysteria on this issue. While I do not like leaving British Columbia, I returned from my riding of Capilano because I believe it is important to be here to deal with this vital issue.

I am very pleased that in addition to debating Bill C-55 today, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) has introduced additional legislation, Bill C-84, dealing with the deterrent and detention aspects of the refugee claimant situation. We will debate that legislation as well during this recall.

Let me trace what has happened in the past month. On July 12, 174 people arrived on the shores of Nova Scotia claiming refugee status. This particular event touched the nerve of Canadians and caused an outpouring of response like none other I have seen during the past three years I have served my constituency. Indeed, it reminded me somewhat of a movie which I am sure many recall seeing when, after reaching a certain level of frustration, the character said, "I am mad as hell and will not take it any more". That is what Canadians are telling us as their elected representatives. They are tired of being abused and having our borders abused by those who would seek to enter this country illegally.

That does not mean that Canadians are not generous. While we know that Canadians are generous, we also know that Canadians share a fundamental sense of fairness and will react if they feel they are being dealt with unfairly. We have seen such a response over the past three weeks because Canadians believe there are people trying to come into this country unfairly, by jumping the queue ahead of legitimate refugees and those who would come here through the regular immigration process.

Let me refer the House to a few of the comments I have received in letters and phone calls which number well over 1,000. These are the views of individual constituents who are concerned enough to call or write their Member of Parliament. While people may stop on the street to discuss such things as