

*Immigration Act, 1976*

• (1240)

The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) went on to say, among a number of things, that this incident needed special consideration. He indicated that these people were obviously breaking the law, that there was a need to recall Parliament because an emergency had been created in the country, and that people were abusing the refugee laws of Canada.

I looked at the facts and found, for example, that in 1985 thousands and thousands of people applied for refugee status or made refugee claims. In 1986, 18,000 people made claims. In the first five months of this year, there were 10,000 such claims. In other words, year after year the number was about the same, the number of people claiming that they were refugees, that they would be persecuted in their countries of origin and asking Canada for a safe haven.

The situation has gone on for at least the three years in which the Government has been in power. Suddenly, for some reason in July, 1987, there is a crisis or an emergency deemed by the Prime Minister. What made it an emergency? Was it the fact that 174 more people were claiming refugee status in Canada? No, it was not that. I think it was a very dark day for the country when the Prime Minister saw a political opportunity to inflame some of the most negative passions, some racist passions in people, and found some groups to blame for problems in terms of employment. The Prime Minister then decided to recall Parliament to deal with the so-called crisis.

Presumably we have dealt with the crisis for weeks and weeks, and all those people who are knowledgeable in these areas have told us that this was not the Bill which should have been introduced. I believe it was two years ago when a whole set of recommendations on how to improve the refugee claimant process in Canada was ignored by the Government. I do not think a single one of us here or a single Canadian would want to say that we are not in favour of supporting real refugees. Most Canadians, with maybe a handful of exceptions, are compassionate, decent people who feel that people fleeing death, persecution, torture, jail, and labour camps in their countries of origin are welcome in Canada. As I indicated earlier, our history proves that.

However, we are opposed to that handful of people who will abuse any system, including the refugee claimant system. All serious thinking Canadians are opposed to people using and abusing the system. I hate to mention this—as a matter of fact, I am reluctant to do so but I feel I must—but after the Prime Minister recalled Parliament to deal with what he called queue-jumpers, which of course was a misnomer, what did he do from his office? He queue-jumped; he made a request on his letterhead asking for special consideration to be given to the French teacher of his children. That is the ultimate in hypocrisy, and that is the kind of thing Canadians find so disagreeable. Once again we have been reminded in the last number of days that what the Prime Minister says on Monday does not necessarily determine what he does on Tuesday.

We have also been reminded, in what I think are some of the most thoughtful speeches I have heard in the House for a long time, about some incidents in the past which we do not want to repeat, incidents which we as parliamentarians recognize as black marks on our history, dark days in our country's past. I refer, of course, to the *Kamagata Maru* incident in 1914 when 376 Sikhs sailed to Canada from Bombay. They arrived at the Port of Vancouver and were refused entry. They stayed in the harbour for weeks and weeks trying to negotiate with the immigration people and the Government of the day. The Government said, "No, we will not allow you to land", and these 376 Sikhs were forced by Canadian gunboats to return to Bombay and the Punjab. I am sad to say that many of those people met their death when they returned home.

The most obvious incident in recent history occurred in 1939 with the *St. Louis* when we saw over 900 Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi terror in Europe. Immigration officials and the Canadian Government of the day said that they did not believe there was anything wrong with the Nazi regime or that they would be persecuted, tortured, or killed. In retrospect we know that what they were fleeing was in fact very authentic. Every one of the Jewish refugees who came to our shores and were forced back to Europe returned to certain death in the gas chambers of the Nazi terror. Again it was a dark day. In retrospect we regret that it happened, but there are people who are saying that we do not want that to happen again, that we do not want those events to be replayed.

However, a provision in Bill C-84 allows for something like that to happen. It says that a ship suspected of having illegal refugees on board can be stopped on the open sea by Canadian gunboats and forced to turn around and go back. The national president of employees working for the Department of Immigration has spoken out and said, "We don't want to do that". They think it is inappropriate to ask people working for the Department of Immigration to determine whether a boat is filled with illegal refugees without ever talking to them.

The Bill also makes the following an offence. If some unscrupulous person involved in smuggling people was to dump those people at sea in lifeboats or open boats, and if someone from Canada for compassionate reasons went out to rescue them, he or she would be subject to fine and/or imprisonment.

That is not the kind of country we have. That is not the kind of country we want in the future. This is why so many of us are speaking out. I say "so many of us" because certainly all my colleagues in the New Democratic Party caucus feel very strongly about the abuse of human rights embodied in this piece of legislation. I have listened to the speeches of those in the Liberal Party and assume that they will also oppose it. As well, I heard speeches from members on the government backbenches. In fact, the chairperson of the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, a Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament, stood in his place on many occasions and said that this Bill is wrong, that what the Government is doing is wrong, and that the legislation is inappropriate. One of the most knowledgeable people on the