

Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Jonquière (Mr. Blackburn), on a point of order.

Mr. Blackburn (Jonquière): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the interpretation system has been out for several minutes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will ask to have the system restored as soon as possible.

[English]

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): As I was saying a moment ago, Mr. Speaker, in various parts of the world we find political situations which are producing refugees. Some of those situations we may not be able to do anything about. I suppose we can do precious little to change the Government of General Pinochet in Chile. We might be able to have some influence on other parts of the earth. I look to the Government of Canada to do its part in these areas, drawing on our Canadian experience with the federal system in which we have not always been brilliantly successful, yet we have retained a peaceable society. We have managed to absorb dissent. We have managed to overcome even violent dissent in this country. Perhaps that gives us some reason for acting in some of these areas to encourage federal solutions, if you will, perhaps a redrawing of boundaries. I do not mean to dodge the question at all. I recognize the world-wide nature of these difficulties. However, I think there are possibilities of going beyond our national defence-based role in providing peace-making forces to certain areas and trying very actively to deal with the political difficulties and to encourage solutions. If we were to do that then the Canadian people could see our activity here as an indication that we want to enable people who want to stay where they are in the world to remain there and to live in peace and security. On the other hand, those who are not able to stay, or those who do not want to, should be encouraged to come here.

● (1650)

I think a Canadian initiative through the United Nations which would come to grips with this situation is what is needed. The suggestion I have made is designed to keep the global problem within manageable dimensions. Without such manageable dimensions we cannot end repressive regimes, and wars cannot be brought to their end. From such situations we need to challenge other western countries, if they are to be the prime recipients of refugees. I suppose those are the countries about which we are aware in terms of refugees. I suppose that refugees end up in all parts of the world far from our borders and we are hardly aware of them. However, if they are confined to refugee camps in Thailand and Cambodia or in the Middle East that will never be satisfactory. We need to do something about that situation. A United Nations initiative on the part of the Government would be a splendid step to deal with that.

I thank you for your indulgence for allowing me this extra time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, in their book entitled *None is Too Many* which addressed the question of why Canada was closed to the Jews of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s Professors Irving Abella and Harold Troper wrote as follows in their preface:

To the condemned Jews of Auschwitz, Canada had a special meaning. It was the name given to the camp barracks where the food, clothes, gold, diamonds, jewellery and other goods taken from prisoners were stored. It represented life, luxury and salvation; it was a Garden of Eden in Hell; it was also unreachable.

They go on to state that the barracks at Auschwitz symbolized what Canada was to all the Jews of Europe throughout the 1930s and 1940s—a paradise, enormous, wealthy, overflowing and full of life, but out of bounds—a haven totally inaccessible.

You might think that it is perhaps inappropriate to draw a parallel between what Canada's policies were in the 1930s and the 1940s, Mr. Speaker, and what they are today. However, I will defer perhaps to a higher authority than myself, namely, Dr. Rabbi Plaut, who authored the report on Canada's refugee policy which was presented to the Government about two years ago. In an article in *The Canadian Jewish News* of Thursday, March 12, he states:

We have instituted measures which are effective practically, and defective morally. We have signalled a return to former practice which made Canada all too often inaccessible to those most in need of succor.

Last February 20 will go down in Canadian history as a day of shame, for it is the day that our Government closed its doors to refugees.

[Translation]

It was the day when this Government announced a series of cruel measures that go against the humanitarian tradition established in Canada about 40 years ago. It was on February 20 that the Government erected a barrier, not just on the U.S. border but across the world. From now on, refugees who knock on our door and ask for Canada's protection will get the following answer from the Conservative Government: Do not disturb. Don't call us, we'll call you.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) tells us that our policy is unambiguous, and I quote:

We offer asylum to all *bona fide* refugees arriving in our country.

The Minister does not say that the Government has just erected a barrier around Canada to ensure that no one will be able to enter the country. The Minister does not say either that the true objective of his policy is to discourage refugees from knocking on our door. The Minister does not say that the message transmitted throughout the world is that Canada's doors are now closed.

[English]

It has been made abundantly clear in recent weeks that the Minister of Employment and Immigration and a bunch of mean-spirited Tory back-benchers call the shots when it comes