

hurt the reputations of many. Logically we must respond to the few so that we may protect the many and uphold our laws. Bill C-44 accomplishes that twin goal.

There can be no equating the words criminal and immigrant. Immigrants helped build this country and are the men and women who have made history and the men and women who will help us build Canada's tomorrows. Criminals are only the riff-raff of society who are not even a footnote in the history of our proud immigration tradition.

Members on all sides of this House are to be congratulated on the speedy work in getting this legislation, Bill C-44, before the House of Commons at third reading. A special thanks to my very able parliamentary secretary, the member of Parliament for Halifax, as well to the committee members of my caucus who went well beyond the normal working days on this important piece of legislation.

The bill comes back with a number of amendments that will clarify timeframes, technical points and a transition period. This is very much a case in point of how this government first listens and then acts. Quite simply, the amendments to the immigration act that we are dealing with today in Bill C-44 will move us a significantly long way toward restoring integrity to our system.

• (1205)

The bill is an enforcement tool set. It allows us to fix some worn equipment without shutting down all the machinery.

[*Translation*]

I know there are those who would use criminal behaviour by a few as an excuse for draconian law. For those people, we have not gone far enough. To them I simply say, this government was not elected to shake a chainmail fist or wield a big stick.

[*English*]

Then there are those who say that we have gone too far, that we have reacted too strongly against the actions of just a few wrongdoers. To those Canadians let me say that although the criminal element that has intruded into the immigration process is tiny, it is at the very same time very destructive.

As a result the government has struck a middle course between those extremes. A balanced, realistic middle course is often the wisest course, for it takes us away from the rocks of extremism and reaction while steering us clear of the dead waters of those who would do nothing.

This legislation is a central component of our ten-year immigration strategy. It is not the most important part, but it is one of the two underpinnings that will make it successful. Fair access and the rule of law are the two principles embodied in our plan which was tabled on the floor of the House of Commons last November 1.

### *Government Orders*

Those who abuse our nation's hospitalities and laws will not be given the privilege of access. It is simple: play by the rules or face the consequences. Canadians do not want any more queue jumping, any abusing of the system or any manipulating of the system. Most certainly we on the government side will strive to prevent criminals from taking the places of both legitimate refugees and legitimate immigrants to Canada.

The tools being provided here through Bill C-44 will allow law enforcement officials to get the job done. While I am on the subject of tools and law enforcement, let me pay tribute to the special police, RCMP and immigration task force that was recently established. It is making steady progress at removing foreign criminals from our midst. While the task force does not have any direct linkages with the legislation before us today, it is very much part and parcel of our resolve to restore integrity to the immigration and refugee process. That task force was also a response to our citizens' demands and needs and that task force is very much getting the job done. My government colleagues and I are very appreciative for those professional efforts.

[*Translation*]

I want to say in a straightforward, non-partisan way, that past governments, and that is governments in the plural, simply let too many people in the door without proper legislation in place to stop criminals.

[*English*]

Let me recap quickly for our colleagues in the House today the main points in this legislation.

First, serious criminals deemed to be a danger to the public will not be allowed to claim refugee status as a means to delaying their removal from Canada. For instance, we will not tolerate any longer those cases that we have read about in our newspapers or watched on our television sets in which a convicted murderer serving time in Kingston penitentiary now is able to compel the Immigration and Refugee Board to travel to that penitentiary to listen to an obviously unworthy refugee claim.

Second, appeals against removal orders by persons convicted of series crimes will be decided by the minister or the minister's designate and not by the immigration appeal division.

[*Translation*]

Third, senior immigration officers will be allowed to terminate refugee hearings because of criminality.

[*English*]

Another common sense application is if once the refugee process has started and subsequent to that starting information comes to the fore that the individual has committed a serious offence, we will now be able to stop that refugee hearing, move