

*Immigration Act, 1976*

what happened, Mr. Speaker. But that did not gain very much footage on the television or in the newspapers.

A confidential report of the Task Force on Security and Enforcement of the Department suggesting problems in recruiting clearance of immigrants was leaked to several papers showing that there were difficulties handling the number of immigrants who were waiting at the door. At the same time, the Government began talking about the use of refugees as queue-jumpers, ignoring the fact that there are two queues, one for immigrants and a separate, quite different, procedure for those claiming refugee status.

• (1140)

During this period of time, information was released on another Sikh in a totally different case, a Mr. Kulbir Singh Yirk, dating back several months. This information was received in confidentiality but leaked by unidentified sources to *The Globe and Mail* which reported on it. Other false information on that 174 claimants was leaked to *Maclean's* magazine. This information was to the effect that 33 claimants had criminal records. It was subsequently proven to be false, but the record stands. People have read the article in *Maclean's* and retractions tend to be missed.

Throughout that time, the 174 individuals were not called refugee claimants at all but rather were referred to in the press and by some departmental officials as illegal aliens, illegal immigrants, migrants, Asians, Sikhs and East Indians. The term queue-jumpers was used when we all know it was inaccurate as there are two lines, one for immigrants and a separate one for refugees.

This approach was used by some people to stir up immigrant communities and to stir up resentment between ethnic groups. One of the saddest developments of the whole so-called emergency was the kind of racial clashes that were being precipitated by some people, for whatever reasons.

By the end of July, rumours persisted that there was yet another refugee ship carrying no one knew how many people to Canada. The Canadian Navy, the Air Force and the Coast Guard were dispatched to try to intercept this ship. The hysteria came to a climax. However, it was found that the ship for which people were looking was actually docked somewhere in Great Britain. It was a private ship that had been converted to a yacht by a Canadian of Haitian origin. I think the whole process was capped by absurdity when it was found that, in spite of all this sudden searching for all these people who were suddenly going to invade our shores, they were looking for one Canadian of Haitian origin who was trying to move his personal boat from Europe to North America. He had been delayed and was in fact sitting in Great Britain.

About this time, Parliament was recalled, creating an atmosphere of a national emergency. To be fair, I think that a sense of national emergency did not seem to penetrate this Chamber very thoroughly. Less than half of the government Members were here for the first votes and less than half of the

Opposition showed up. Members did not really consider it to be a national emergency and I think Canadians never perceived it as a national emergency either, in spite of it being so portrayed by some Members on the government side.

To their credit, some Hon. Members on the government side did see this farce for what it was, and to his credit, the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration made his views known and attempted to further the cause of a more clear-cut procedure for handling refugee claimants and a better method of dealing with immigrant claimants. Unfortunately for the House and for Canada, his proposal seems to have been overrun by this so-called sense of urgency and by the Government's attempts to put this Bill and its companion Bill, Bill C-55, through the House post-haste.

The procedure the House normally follows has been complied with on this Bill. We did have a debate on second reading at which time Hon. Members posed their opposition, or support in some cases for the Bill. It did go to a legislative committee and amendments were offered and routinely rejected by the government side. There were one or two small exceptions to that. The one exception that I recall is the acceptance of the amendment to the sunset clause.

Some Canadians may be surprised to know that this Bill, which was so necessary to protect us from illegal aliens and refugees, actually contains a sunset clause. This means that it will no longer be in effect after a certain period of time. The original Bill had a five-year sunset clause and that was amended to four years. I think some progress was made by doing that, but amending the sunset clause to a matter of weeks would have been equally effective.

I am concerned that by the introduction of this Bill, the Government has attempted, knowingly or otherwise, to precipitate some racial feelings that need not have been heightened at this time. More important, I am concerned that it has raised questions about our role as a nation that complies with the rules agreed to under the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. The Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has made some conclusions which point out that this Bill runs counter to its recommendations. The first relevant paragraph of that conclusion is as follows:

It is recalled that there is a fundamental obligation under international law for ships' masters to rescue any persons in distress at sea, including asylum seekers, and to render them all necessary assistance.

Seafaring States should take all appropriate measures to ensure that masters of vessels observe this obligation strictly.

Yet this Bill proposes to give the Government the power to turn away such vessels. I think that is contrary to the recommendations of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

A second relevant paragraph is paragraph No. 3 of the Executive Committee's report which reads as follows: