

Immigration Act, 1976

Motion No. 18 is an attempt to do away with sending off the problem to someone else. It is saying, "Let us allow that human being who has a story to be told to appear before the refugee board and allow the board to make its determination rather than hide behind this safe country concept saying that some other countries of the world have already done it, why should we not do it?"

It was Canada which won the Nansen Medal, not other countries. It was Canada that was awarded the Nansen Medal for the first time in the history of the award. It was awarded to a country and to a people rather than to an individual. That says something about Canada. It says that we have been offering leadership to the world until today. If that is the case, then why should we take second-best? Why should we follow the worst instincts or the mediocre instincts of societies rather than improving on our record by offering leadership and inspiration to other countries? If the safe country concept were adopted by other countries which subscribe to the Geneva Convention then we would render that Convention null and void. In the end it is the actions and not the rhetoric that will speak to whether we support as a community the Geneva Convention.

I tell you, Madam Speaker, in all seriousness, that if countries such as Canada, Great Britain and the United States of America were to legislate safe third country concepts, then the Geneva Convention on Refugees will not be worth the paper on which it is printed. It will be but an agreement on paper written in the fifties with no relevance, strength or morality for the eighties. That is the reality.

Let the members of the Government come out from behind the curtains of the safe third country concept and tell us what they are really doing. It is synonymous to making the system more efficient by limiting the number of people within it. It is analogous to a hospital saying that it will become more efficient by limiting the number of patients that it treats. Of course that can be done. If there are fewer patients then there are more beds. If there are fewer patients then they will receive more attention from individual doctors. But in the case of a hospital, if a patient is sick and requires attention there is no way that efficiency can be maximized by excluding the sick from the hospital. Either a bigger hospital is needed or more hospitals are needed. That is how we make the sick healthy. In this system if a person is a legitimate refugee or wishes to make a legitimate case, then let us take our responsibility seriously rather than putting the problem off on someone else.

Motion No. 21 states that if the Government is to have a safe country list then let us have the refugee division formulate that list based on its knowledge and credibility. Let us depoliticize the drafting of such a list. Cabinet will be receiving international and diplomatic pressures from a host of allies and friends to be put on the list regardless of whether or not their human rights record merits such a place on the list.

• (1720)

Therefore, we are saying that if there is to be a safe country list, let the refugee division suggest that list. Let them live according to the standards of those lists. Let them change the list accordingly, rather than having Cabinet in some room on the third floor decide among our friends and allies who should and should not be on that list.

I venture to place a bet with the Speaker of this Chamber that the United States, Great Britain, and many other countries that do not deserve to be on the list for a number of classes of individuals will be on the list if this legislation becomes law.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, I wish to respond to the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi). I think it is a bit presumptuous to say that all of the witnesses were against the safe third country concept. It is especially presumptuous when the Hon. Member attended 10 per cent of the hearings, given the hours we spent in committee, and there was no substitute replacement. It is a lot of reading, and I doubt very much if the Hon. Member has had the time to read the 55 hours' worth of testimony.

Mr. Marchi: That is pretty presumptuous of you.

Mr. Hawkes: It is simply not true that all the witnesses rejected the concept. Certainly, the standing committee's report in November, 1985 went out of its way—

Mr. Marchi: Name names.

Mr. Hawkes: The record has been read in earlier today. The UNHCR is very concerned about the orbiting phenomenon of refugee claimants. There is a certain absurdity to people having claims in two, three, or four countries at the same time. There is a certain absurdity in a person being rejected by a country with high standards, whether or not that person is a refugee, and that person keeping going in a series across approximately 100 countries that are signatories to the Convention.

I hear hollers across the Chamber to name names. The Chairman of RSAC and a professor from York University, were not happy with the drafting. The Mennonite International Committee, Amnesty International, the UNHCR were before the committee. None of them were happy with the original drafting of the concept. The committee listened and probed and brought forward substantial amendments which were adopted in committee. In looking through the motions that we are in the process of debating one will find more. The House just approved Motion No. 17, which further modifies the original drafting of the concept. Intuitively and in a common-sense manner, it is a very important concept which lies at the heart of the Bill.

There are some 12 million plus refugees, and some estimates suggest there are as many as 80 million economic migrants in the world today. The generosity of Canadians has been