

Government Orders

come in with no documents. They have no means of identification and no support systems per se to assist immigration officers in determining who they really are.

I am wondering if the member really understands the importance of determining who these applicants really are who come through because there is no identification, because it is an unknown quantity. What does the hon. member have to say about that when it comes to this background check that he alludes to and that the minister should not have the power to remove someone if they are determined to be a danger to society?

Could the member please describe to me how he would get around this aspect once the individual is here and has gone through his claim and his appeals when there is no means of really determining who the individual is?

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, I will respond to my colleague's question but let me say this. The guts of what this bill is about—

Mr. Mayfield: You cannot use that word here.

Mr. Knutson: The pith and substance. I do not want to be too high falutin because as my colleagues have said they are not legal experts. I use the vernacular instead of using a term that might have been used in the Supreme Court of Canada.

The pith and substance of what this bill is about is really taking an appeal process that has been dragged out to three years to non-lawyers, non-judges, the Immigration and Refugee Board, an appeal process on humanitarian and compassionate grounds and saying in some very narrow circumstances where someone has committed a serious crime that will get them more than 10 years in jail maximum sentence and they are considered a danger to society, taking that appeal process and reducing it to virtually 30 days, narrowing the terms where they can only appeal to the federal court. That is the pith and substance of this bill and that is what the Reform Party should be supporting.

● (1350)

My colleague is absolutely right. I have never been to a border crossing and looked at the refugee determining process and what happens when someone shows up without documents. My view is that we should hold them in detention and should not let them go until we know who they are. I would certainly be happy to sit down with my colleague and look at the Immigration Act and look at the system that is in place and try to work something out that is reasonable. I agree, we should not be letting just anyone in. If they do not have documentation or cannot prove who they are then we should be concerned about that.

However, to re-emphasize my point, that is not what this bill is about. This bill is about people who apply on humanitarian and compassionate grounds to the refugee board and Canadians

do not want to give them the right to do that. They have said: "You are a danger to Canadian society and we want you gone from our land".

Mr. Hanger: Mr. Speaker, I have an outline here from an individual who was removed from the country after the minister issued a security certificate to have him removed. The power is already there for the minister to do something about it.

In Calgary alone six foreign criminals have been deported. Their backgrounds include cocaine dealers, pimps, weapons charges, assault, you name it. The power is there to remove already. The minister is not exercising his powers to remove.

I would like the hon. member's comments with regard to section 46 of the act where it states we can remove. Why are we going through this?

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, we disagree on that one fact. The member is saying that the appeal to the refugee board does not stay that proceeding and I say it does. However, I will get a reference and send it to him.

Clearly this act takes power away from the refugee board and puts it in the minister's office. If he was not responsible before, Canadians can now look to him and say that he is the one they are relying on to deport dangerous criminals who are not Canadian citizens. That law will narrowly focus it on the minister and on the government and they can take responsibility for that.

[Translation]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the hon. member why the current law is not being implemented in its entirety. Why does the minister not use all the legal and administrative means at his disposal? Does the current law not allow us to deport war criminals, Nazis or people who have violated human rights elsewhere?

Why is the minister not taking such action now and why does he need a new law? Why does he not make more effective use of the officials, local police and RCMP officers on the working groups he has created in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver? Why does he not make more of an effort to motivate officials who are very disappointed?

As a result of the cutbacks and office closures at the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, morale is very low. People are likely to face even more staff cuts in the upcoming budget. It has been said that 100 jobs will be cut at the IRB alone, where there are not many jobs to start with. Why not motivate staff, why not use all the available means and eliminate the need for a piece of legislation as drastic as Bill C-44?

[English]

Mr. Knutson: Mr. Speaker, in another form that is the same question the Reform Party is asking. It is saying the minister has the power and that he should just use the current act.