

*Immigration Act, 1976*

Michael Schelew, Amnesty International said:

It's an about-face on Canada's humanitarian record, that may place people fleeing persecution in jeopardy.

Elie Wiesel, the winner of the Nobel Prize, said:

"I believe that a society can be measured and judged by its attitude towards strangers . . . I would hope that Canada would like to be measured according to these lofty rules. I say Canada should lead by example.

Lorne Waldman, of the Canadian Jewish Congress said:

The long-term aim of the immigration department is to eliminate all refugee claims within Canada. The Government has spent millions of dollars and innumerable hours consulting on this problem, and everyone's recommendations have been ignored altogether.

And Gunther Plaut, the author of the Government Commission Report, had this to say:

It does not do justice to our international obligations to protect refugees. Nazi Germany would qualify as a safe country under Canada's proposed new refugee rules. I don't think I would have been let in. I came in the 1930s from Nazi Germany. The Government is building a Berlin Wall around the country.

Mr. Speaker, those organizations and those individuals have fought, and continue to fight, for the plight of refugees. They have looked at Bill C-55, and that is their verdict. I suggest to the Minister that, on behalf of the Government and of Cabinet, he has the responsibility to defend and promote that constituency. He has an obligation to stand up in Cabinet and fight for those constituencies.

Certainly we cannot have the ideal, a piece of legislation that is perfect for every single one of the 25 million people in this country. That is impossible. I agree with that. But it is also irresponsible to push ahead stubbornly with a piece of legislation that every major constituency group—every individual involved, every church leader, every community group leader—describes as unfair and unbecoming in the traditions of Canada.

He has a responsibility to listen to his constituency as well, rather than hide behind a poll that can be interpreted in 101 different ways.

Canadians believe in the integrity of a Government to give it a fair system. They do not believe in a Government that says one thing and does another.

Mr. Speaker, we have tried to do our part. We are only 40 in the Liberal Party. We know that we are going to lose every single vote, until 1988. Canadians know that. But what we are not prepared to do is to lose the debate. What we are not prepared to do is to lie down and allow this Government to introduce a piece of legislation that Canadians do not want.

We have tried to be responsible. That is why we have used Question Period and two Opposition Days to focus on the immigration policy over-all and specifically on Bill C-55.

The communities have tried to do what they can. We start the debate on the motion for the second reading of this Bill at the end of a major one-week national campaign by church groups, by community groups, by volunteers, to try to mobilize and sensitize Canadian public opinion and Canadians as to

what is contained in Bill C-55—something that the Government does not have the courage to do outside this Chamber.

In every city, people have collected petitions, people have gone on hot line shows, and people have written letters. With deep emotion, we had re-enacted, at Harbour Front in Toronto, the arrival of the St. Louis in Canada. The refugees were in a boat, and we met them in a boat—all in an effort to bring this issue a little closer to the people of Canada. That is the sort of effort that has been made by people across this country, and by the Opposition. But what has the Government done? What has been the role of the Government? The role of the Government has been to try to create and fabricate a crisis. It has tried to create the impression that Canada is being swarmed by refugees. It is doing so in parallel with what it has tried to do in the capital punishment debate, that being to use one issue to climb the political ladder of popularity. Well, that is something that is not working very well in either instance. I suggest to you that that ladder will crumble; that the Tories and the Minister will take a fall—because that ladder is built on quicksand. It is not built on Canadian tradition; it is not built on what the people of my riding and the people of Toronto, and elsewhere in this country, want to see come about. It is not built on the foundation of what has been achieved by past Governments, with the concurrence of Canadians, in terms of refugee policies.

There is a backlog of refugees. I readily admit that. But it is a shame that this Government is trying to use that backlog to suggest that there is a crisis and that in light of that crisis, this legislation is required. It is trying to legitimize what is essentially a regressive piece of legislation.

In past years, Canadians supported Governments in accepting refugees into this country. In 1947, the Government of the day permitted 186,000 in as part of the post-war European movement. In 1958, 37,000 Hungarians were allowed in; in 1968, 11,000 Czechoslovakians; in 1972, 7,000 Ugandans; in 1973, 7,000 South Americans, following a purge on that continent; from 1975 to 1979, 9,000 Vietnamese/Cambodians were granted refugee status; and in 1982, following the Polish uprising, 9,000 citizens of Polish descent were granted refugee status. And the list goes on, and on, and on.

Canadians have accepted refugees in the past, and they are prepared to accept refugees in the future. That is the type of policy that Canadians have supported in terms of government leadership.

Trying to fabricate a crisis out of some 50 Chilean individuals in Argentina is not only wrong but borders on being scandalous, given the numbers that Canadians have accepted with open arms in past years.

Is it any wonder that Canadians are losing confidence in the policies of this Government, when we have a petition signed by 7,000 employees of the Immigration Department, 7,000 individuals who work for the "big boss"? The representatives of that group appeared before the Standing Committee on Employment and Immigration and essentially said: "We don't