

tee, but perhaps not sufficiently, and a chance to consult with his officials to see if there is any aspect of this redefinition which would create other problems—and I have not heard of any from the minister or his officials so far—I hope the minister will accept the amendment as being reasonable and sensible. Quite frankly, I think the Canadian people would expect no less.

What we are really trying to do this afternoon is reform the law in terms of present practice. I am sure the minister does not want to say to us this afternoon that in the years to come we are not going to be able to be in a position from time to time to respond to situations in which people will be, for all intents and purposes, refugees within their own home countries. People whose lives are in jeopardy, who have to flee and find residence in another country, will be looking for a homeland, and we should be able to provide a homeland for some refugees. Of course, under UN designation at the present moment I suppose millions of people are categorized as refugees. We are not talking here about any increase in numbers we are talking specifically about having the law defined in the clearest possible terms so that all Canadians can be proud of what is now the current practice and responsibility of the government.

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, first I should like to commend the hon. member for Montmorency (Mr. Duclos). I believe he attended practically every one of the 33 meetings of the committee. He has been consistent in his representations, and we held many discussions both privately and at the committee stage. I thought perhaps my arguments would be more persuasive than they have been but notwithstanding that, the hon. member has brought forward his amendment.

I also thank the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) for his comments on many of the items in the bill, which are excellent. The bill is a very marked improvement over the legislation which is presently in existence. The establishment of objectives in the bill is a good move. Our responsibility to refugees is at long last incorporated into legislation. There is a myriad of improvements in this bill. We removed some of the more objectionable words which appeared in the former bill. As I read it, the former bill seemed to indicate that we were endeavouring to do everything we could to stop immigration, whereas in this bill we are indicating why we want immigration, why it is good, what Canada's obligations are, and what objectives we are hoping to meet through our immigration policy, so that those who come here and those who welcome them will know what the objectives are.

I think it is important that we get on with this legislation. My information is that almost every minister of immigration since 1952 has been endeavouring to bring forward an immigration bill. They have got to various stages only to find that sessions ended, elections were called or there was more important legislation. I think the time to move ahead is when there is a good feeling in the country about a bill and about immigrants. We have a good bill, and it is time to press on and get it passed.

Immigration

At the committee stage we spent some 70 hours going over 99, or perhaps in excess of 100, amendments. We looked very carefully at the amendments. Some of them were accepted, some were changed, and some were rejected. When I look at the amendments which have been put forward, particularly those put forward by the hon. member for Greenwood, I am reminded of a good friend of his, I am sure, and a man I knew mostly by reputation, Mr. Justice Walsh, when he was counsel practising before the court of appeal. On one occasion when he was before the court he handled five appeals. A judge asked him if he appealed all his cases. He said, "No, My Lord; just the ones I lose". That seems to be the precedent followed by the hon. member for Greenwood who has, once again, introduced ten of the amendments which were voted down at the committee stage.

This amendment purports to remove from the internationally accepted definition as contained in the convention the stipulation that a person must be outside his country of citizenship or normal residence before he can claim refugee status. Although the United Nations High Commission does not object to nations extending refugee-type benefits to classes beyond the convention definition, it does oppose any wholesale broadening of the definition itself, as being likely to cheapen the concept of "refugee" and thus impair its ability to secure assistance and protection for true refugees.

● (1600)

From a purely Canadian standpoint, as I said time and again in committee, the proposed amendment would enable literally millions of people to claim treatment as refugees when seeking admission to Canada, which would be an intolerable situation for the administration of the immigration program and would work to the detriment of true refugees.

The bill, however, does not preclude sympathetic consideration being extended to oppressed minorities, expellees, etc., in particularly urgent and meritorious circumstances. This is precisely the reason for clauses 6(2) and 115(1)(d) and (e), which will allow the government, taking into account people's need for resettlement and Canada's current ability to provide settlement opportunities, to recognize certain groups for refugee-like treatment. These are the provisions that would have been invoked, had they been in force, at the time of the troubles in Uganda, Chile and Lebanon. The bill will, in fact, achieve the end sought by the hon. member for Montmorency, but in a more orderly and effective manner.

What could be the result of accepting this amendment? If we expand the definition to include the majority of the world's population, surely we might have to stop giving refugees priority and processing them next to the family class. Second, we might have to apply reduced selection standards when dealing with refugees. So on that basis it could have an effect opposite to that which the hon. member intended.

I suggest the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) is not correct when he suggests that acceptance of the motion would give the sanction of law to the present practice. That would not be the case. Bill C-24 as presently printed would