

Immigration Act, 1976

Canada to increase by hundreds of millions of dollars annually. The poor, the sick, the handicapped, the elderly and low-income families will be worst hit by these price increases, and all because the Government caved in to the Americans.

The Prime Minister is of course hoping that with the uproar about the Government's bungling of the refugee question, Canadians will not realize that his real purpose in reconvening the House was to adopt this Bill. This is one of the most cynical and most desperate acts of a cynical and desperate Government.

[English]

Why then has Parliament been recalled? Does the public interest demand that the House of Commons sit merely to deal with the issue of the 174 Sikhs, particularly in view of the fact that there is already legislation before the House dealing with the issue? The Government had advance notice of this. It was given weeks of warning. It should have taken control of the situation. Instead, it allowed it to happen the way it did.

Why wait to declare an emergency session of Parliament when, in the previous three years, the Government failed to reform the refugee determination system despite the urgings of the commission under the chairmanship of Rabbi Gunther Plaut, despite the urgings of the Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, indeed despite the urgings of the two opposition Parties as well as NGOs and Canadian churches? Why did the Government wait until May of this year, almost a full year after the boatload of Tamils landed last summer, to introduce Bill C-55 before the House of Commons? Why did it bring Bill C-55 before the House for second reading debate only in the dying days of the June session? Why did the Government allow a total of only three hours of debate? Where was the urgency? Where was the crisis? Where was the need to deal with it now?

The Government's record and the Government's actions clearly demonstrate an indifference to and a low priority for the issue. Now, in a desperate attempt to cover up its inaction, as a pretext to recall Parliament, the Government is trying to send a message to Canadians that it is in control, when the very opposite is true.

• (1550)

Deep concern has been expressed to me by Canadians all over the country. In my own riding of Vancouver Quadra the phone has been ringing off the hook. When I was there for two or three days two and a half weeks ago, my constituency office received 190 phone calls on this subject on one day, July 24. I have confirmed with the other constituency offices in the Vancouver area that our situation was not unique. Capital punishment paled by comparison. Perhaps that is what influenced His Honour to recall the House. He shares the boundary of 41st Avenue across the centre of Vancouver.

Public opinion on the refugee issue has been manipulated by the Government. There have been selective leaks that there may be terrorists among the recent arrivals off Nova Scotia.

There was a massive phoney search for a mysterious vessel reputedly carrying more people to this country. It turned out to be not true and a farce. It reminded us very much of an old poem by Samuel Coleridge. We had the colourful rhetoric of the Prime Minister on his recent visit to rural Manitoba. I see the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) sitting here. He was the host to the Prime Minister in the Town of Steinbach, which I passed by yesterday.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Great reception.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): He got a great reception but he did not have the guts to go to Winnipeg. He floated around rural Manitoba because he wanted to be shepherded by the Minister and his colleague, the Minister responsible for the Wheat Board, to where he could be assured of a manicured, controlled and friendly reception. It was a miniature election campaign. As a personal note to the Minister let me say that he must have felt proud walking down the main street of Steinbach, the automobile capital of Manitoba.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Of Canada.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I have the Leader of the NDP (Mr. Broadbent) in such a buoyant mood today, I do not want to interfere with his domain of Oshawa.

Can we blame Canadians for being confused? The Government has bungled and mismanaged the refugee issue ever since it assumed power in September, 1984. Of one thing I am sure. Canadians are a reasonable, fair and tolerant people. They want a fair resolution of this issue.

[Translation]

A large majority of Canadians support a non-discriminatory immigration policy. We must welcome immigrants and refugees because we need them. Canada needs a bigger population to help develop this vast country of ours, to create new markets and new jobs.

We want to promote family reunification, and our generous immigration policy has enjoyed the support of Canadians throughout this century.

[English]

Canadians believe in an expansive, non-discriminatory immigration policy. It has made us the rich country we are today. It has given us the broadening heritage and spirit of tolerance we enjoy today.

Canadians also believe in an open and compassionate refugee policy. Historically we have received with open arms people from all over the world who are genuinely fleeing the threat of death, torture, persecution, intimidation or imprisonment. We have always given the benefit of the doubt to those who are genuinely seeking a haven and a new home in Canada. This was true of Hungary in 1956, Poland in 1972, people from Uganda or the boat people from Vietnam. Canadians have always opened their hearts, their doors and their homes when the issue is clear and beyond question. At the same time