

*Government Orders*

I am more upset though with how undemocratic the entire committee process has become. In black and white, the Liberals promised to give the Commons committees more leeway as well as the power to be more than just lap-dogs of the ministers. Committees are supposed to be the eyes and ears of the House, ensuring that average Canadians are heard on important issues.

• (1630)

Over the past several months the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration heard from numerous witnesses who came at taxpayers' expense to share their concerns about Bill C-44 and to offer their suggestions about how it can be made more effective.

The standing committee heard from a wide range of groups and individuals: lawyers, refugee advocates, police officers, labour groups and international organizations. Not one of these groups had kind words for the government on this bill. Yet clearly the Liberals have turned their backs on Canadians and followed the beck and call of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

For the record, and to jog the memories of the Liberal members sitting opposite, let me state what some of these groups had to say on this piece of legislation.

Amnesty International believes:

Measures contained in Bill C-44 potentially violate rights guaranteed by the charter and in international treaties concerning refugees and the prevention of torture.

The Quebec Immigration Lawyers Association, after outlining 14 series concerns, concluded: "Bill C-44 must be withdrawn".

The Canadian Bar Association is concerned that "the express goals of saving money and reducing delay are not likely to be advanced by the provisions of Bill C-44".

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Canada believed that Bill C-44 violated sections 30, 58 and 1(f)(b) of the Geneva convention.

The Canadian Labour Congress stated:

We believe C-44 in fact violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There are numerous other warnings from groups all across the political spectrum. I wonder what my Liberal colleagues across the way remember of these concerns.

In summary, these and other groups accused the government of breaking sections 11, 7 and 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as numerous international conventions dealing with refugee treatment, torture, execution, war zones and disappearances.

The bill would not stand up five minutes against a charter challenge and would be condemned by the international commu-

nity if passed. It is hard to believe that the government would refuse to deal with these serious concerns or even at least acknowledge that they exist.

On the issue of enforcement, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and I had a rather heated discussion when he appeared before the standing committee. I asked him bluntly: "Can you enforce Bill C-44? Yes or no?" His response was: "Yes, we can". That was a strong pledge in my opinion, but fortunately for the minister he is not the one who will be enforcing the bill. What about the people who will be enforcing the bill? What did they have to say?

According to the Canada Employment and Immigration union, "Additional staff is needed to process applications and help integrate new entrants in a timely fashion". They do not have the staff needed to fulfil their current duties, let alone any new duties.

The customs union said:

What benefit can be derived by the amendments proposed by Bill C-44, if we currently do not have the resources or the capacity to enforce even the existing legislation?

Finally, Canadian Police Association President Neal Jessop said:

It reminds me of putting a band aid on the Hindenburg. The problems are not going to go away.

What else is there to say? Whom should I believe? The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, a politician with little or no background in policing issues, who claims that Bill C-44 can be enforced? Or, shall I believe the people on the front lines who admit that they cannot enforce the laws now and that Bill C-44 will not make enforcement a more realistic possibility in the future? Whom should I believe?

The hon. member for Calgary Northeast, Bloc Quebecois members on the committee and I have pointed out each and every one of these flaws to the committee. We have brought them to the attention of the Liberals through questions, statements and finally a motion last December calling for an inquiry into these concerns.

• (1635)

Liberal members struck down the motion. When asked why, the Liberal member for Elgin—Norfolk responded: "We don't need to tell you".

The member for Bourassa cautioned the Liberals that they were being disrespectful of their fellow MPs. I was shocked at the response from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. She responded: "If the shoe fits, wear it".

Is this the new form of government the Liberals promised? Is this how the Liberals listen to Canadians? Is this how our country is going to be governed for the next three years?