

criteria include the human rights record of the country and its record in protecting all refugees as well as any nationals who can be excluded from the safe third country denomination we may place on the country.

In addition, there will be the widest consultation. We will seek the advice of all credible sources including NGOs, church groups, international humanitarian organizations and our own External Affairs people who serve us with distinction around the world. Indeed, there will be a new documentation centre that will serve this independent refugee board.

All of this is intended to provide us with the kind of up-to-date information Hon. Members want to have to ensure that before one individual can be returned to a country, there would already be an *ad hoc* arrangement between the countries, an arrangement which in some cases may have to be formalized. We would have to guarantee that the country to which we are sending a person has a record that is as good as ours in the protection of refugees and that that country will indeed not risk our reputation and our international obligations by returning the individual to his country of origin from which he has escaped.

I would have some difficulty with an individual who had fled his own country and was living in a second country in which he may have legal status for a period of time. It would appear to me that if such a person has been in a second country for a reasonable period of time, he would not continue to be a refugee if he were to begin looking around for a new home. He would definitely fall into an economic immigration category. A refugee is a person who finds the first safe haven and tries to make a go of it there with the protection it affords him.

Last week, proposals for a new refugee determination system were tabled. This is a system which reinforces Canada's commitment to refugees who have a well-founded fear of persecution.

[Translation]

The new process includes a number of provisions that guarantee some refugees major rights. These rights are compatible with our obligations under the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Above all, the process guarantees that no genuine refugee will be returned to a country where he fears persecution.

[English]

I have repeated throughout that a real refugee will never be sent back to face death or torture. Our system will always be open and will always guarantee that protection.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weiner: Canada is and will continue to be a place of safe haven for genuine refugees who need our protection. This system upholds our commitment to these people, a long-standing commitment which is a vital element of a policy

Supply

which, since World War II, has enabled some 500,000 refugees to settle in Canada.

A good many people have commented on the Bill tabled by the Government. Most of those comments have been made by people with genuine concerns for whatever positions they have supported. Some comments have been favourable while others have raised the spectre of bigotry and prejudice, if not of racism, within our society. Other voices, including those of people who ought to know better, have suggested that these impulses are what motivated the Government to act as it has. Now the Opposition is putting forward a motion suggesting that we have failed to uphold Canada's humanitarian record.

By being firm, we are creating a hospitable environment. We are creating an environment that would allow our generosity to refugees to go unabated. We have heard about the 15 million refugees in the world and there is no limit to the contribution we can make by bringing real refugees to Canada if those resources are found either by Government or the private sector, public or non-governmental organizations or churches. Our generosity is clear through our contributions to international humanitarian agencies and our contributions to those who come to our country and receive fair and quick hearings at which they may tell us their stories. That generosity must go unabated.

On the other side, my officials, my staff and I have had extensive consultations across Canada in order to determine how we can raise immigration limits in the years to come. Recent studies have made clear the benefits immigrants bring to Canada, the jobs they create, the increased demands for goods and the greater tax share that new immigrants and refugees pay, even out of proportion to that paid by longer-standing Canadians. We have heard that in the very first year, new immigrants and refugees earn more than the national average income. These studies are available and have been conducted by universities and our own Department. That kind of data must be spread across Canada.

Some time in the month of June when I rise to tell of immigration levels, I am looking forward, with the consent of the Government and the Cabinet, to seeing those levels rise. If they do rise in a controlled and moderate fashion, we will be able to allow the limits for all categories of immigrants to rise, including independent immigrants, business investors and entrepreneurs and family-class immigrants. There has been considerable discussion over that class of immigrants. Indeed, we may also want to look at refugee limits. By doing that, we will show Canadians that we are being fair and just.

When criteria can be met, people will be welcomed. Let us not continue to send out the signal that if an immigrant does not meet the criteria, he can come through the back door and will be allowed to stay. That kind of unfairness has a very negative connotation and does not help in the management of immigration.