

*Immigration Act, 1976*

question, but it is a different one. It would behove the Government not to answer that question and not to solve the problems by addressing the need for family reunification. Right now the percentage of family reunifications is much lower in percentage terms than it was under past Liberal Governments.

We must begin to debate whether we should not be giving more points to people who have family in Canada in order to come to Canada. We must begin to debate the expansion of the definition of family class. That is how we must do it. That is how we must begin to try to solve the problem for Canadians who cannot have their families join them here legitimately. Stepping up our refugee legislation does not provide an answer to them, a move which creates the perception that Canadians cannot bring in their family members because there are too many refugees coming in already. That strategy is wrong. It is morally wrong. I ask the Government in its marketing strategy to begin to deal with those two classes independently and responsibly.

With respect to immigration and, in particular, refugee legislation, we have a responsibility to the international community under the Geneva Convention. We cannot deal with refugee legislation in a vacuum. We cannot deal with refugees in isolation. We must recognize, as past Liberal Governments have recognized, that if we are to solve the problem, we will solve it in concert and in co-operation with other countries. We cannot deal with legislation as regressive as Bill C-55 in isolation and expect the problem to go away. It will not go away.

The Government also has a responsibility to educate with respect to the evolution of refugee legislation. It is simply too easy to say: "Well, the past Liberal Government left us with a mess. Here it is and we are trying to clean it up. What was there before and how did we select refugees?"

I submit that what we are dealing with is a new phenomenon in terms of refugees. In the 1960s and the 1970s we had the luxury of sending our visa officers to various postings to select refugees on the basis of certain criteria. The community then had a chance to sponsor refugees and lodge them within their own neighbourhoods in different parts of the country. That system was very orderly. It was very clean and effective. But then in the late 1970s and early 1980s, these refugees were not waiting in the camps for the visa officers. They were in fact coming to our country by various and different means and claiming refugee status. Therefore, we had to adapt from the old structure and the old system of doing things to a new one. That is where the problem originates. It was not in terms of any one Government leaving a mess for another Government.

I think that lending our support and our assistance to those less well-off is something for all Governments to undertake regardless of political stripe. However, I think that there is a transition in terms of the phenomenon of refugees that has not been expressed honestly and candidly by the Government. We are now into a different phase of the system which requires a different system and a different mechanism within the country to address expeditiously, fairly and humanely those who are in

Canada and those who are asking for refugee status. That is why the Plaut report was commissioned by our Government in the dying days of the previous administration. It was to try to come to grips with how we would move in this important watershed of world refugees.

Then the present Government came into power. The Plaut report was a very substantial and significant report suggesting a certain direction. It took three or four different Conservative Ministers of Immigration, after they had received the Plaut report, to make a pronouncement on it, to make a decision on it with respect to what they were going to do and what they were going to implement.

Therefore, there was a delay in the formation of this Government. There was the promise by different Ministers that the Plaut report, or the spirit of it, would in fact be translated into legislation very quickly. We were told that this would be done by 1985. We were then told it would not be until 1986. We are now into 1987 and we are just getting ready to give second reading to the legislation. I submit that there has been a procrastination within the Government to come to grips with the Plaut report, after the standing committee has laboured for long hours and with great effort.

What did we get at the end of this three-year consultation process? We got a betrayal of the consultation process. Not only did we have a long delay before the Government responded officially, but when it chose to respond it did not listen to the results of that three-year consultation process. The Minister spent 40 minutes this afternoon saying how fair the system was, how great it was and what type of leadership role he and the Government are taking with Bill C-55.

Where is the support within constituencies to support those claims? I ask the Minister to name one non-governmental organization that at the very least leaves an indication that it might be in support of this legislation. I underline the word "might". Where are those individuals who have been inherently involved in the process and who have congratulated the Minister? Sure it is great. He holds up Goldfarb and says: "Eighty-three per cent of Canadians support our legislation". But Goldfarb also said that 75 per cent of Canadians want a fair system. He knows and I know that perhaps Canadians have not had the time or the luxury to read through the Bill. If they did, then that 83 per cent figure would plummet like dead weight in terms of people thinking that this is a fair system. They have indicated through their vote that they want a fair system. The key question is: Is this Bill fair?

• (1630)

Those who have taken the time and trouble to read the Bill have given their verdict. And what is that verdict? What are people saying?

Tom Clark, a tireless worker for the Inter-Church Committee for Refugees, said:

Instead of access there is a screen, instead of bringing Canada a notch ahead of European countries, the immigration minister has brought it down to their level. It's despicable.