

### *Immigration*

September. It seems to me that would have at least allowed for some responsible democratic participation in the key elements—and I think there are a number, as evidenced by the 55 amendments we are dealing with now at report stage—on which the Canadian people would like to register their concern either directly to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Cullen) or to each and any of us as individual backbenchers.

Having said that, I would like to say a few words with respect to the specific motion No. 1 put forward by the hon. member for Montmorency (Mr. Duclos). I am very pleased to support this motion and I congratulate the hon. member for putting it forward. Obviously, it arises from his own experience and the experience of some of the rest of us in trying to understand and, to the degree possible, to suggest effective reforms with respect to the way in which we deal with refugees. I want to make it quite clear at the outset, because I think there is often a misunderstanding when it comes to dealing with amendments to the whole structure of procedures for refugees, that the concern which all of us have with respect to the refugee amendments is not in terms of Canada not accepting enough refugees. As the minister has recognized, we have had a commendable record, in terms of responding to situations of great human peril and anguish. Certainly this is so with regard to refugees coming from Europe, Africa, South-east Asia and Latin America. Canada has gained a worldwide reputation for being ready to respond and to take seriously the great problems that exist for people who become exiled either within or outside their own country.

One thing we have discovered is that because the whole phenomenon of refugees is an increasingly important one, both in the world sense and in the way in which we as Canadians respond, procedures that may have been adequate 20 or 30 years ago are no longer adequate, and that our approach has been either of an ad hoc nature, which makes it difficult to determine whether or not we are handling the situation fairly and equitably, or we have been faced with a situation in which there is no legal framework at all, as in the case of the motion moved by the hon. member for Montmorency.

● (1550)

The interesting thing about this amendment is not just the fact that it was recommended by the special joint committee, which I believe is significant, but also that it really would put into law what is the current practice of the government. This is what makes it very difficult for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration to say that it is not a worth-while amendment. In a sense, we are suggesting to the minister that we want to give him, in legislative terms, the kind of role which has been exercised both by himself and by his predecessors in recent years. If that is not a reasonable proposition, for the life of me I do not know what is.

As has been referred to already this afternoon, increasingly there are situations where there are breakdowns of civil rights or human rights in various countries and where there is oppression, whether it comes from an ideology to the left or to

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

the right. We know—and we have responded on a humanitarian basis—of situations where thousands of people have been caught within their own countries, suffering all the things which are defined under the UN convention on refugees, and because of the fact that those people are not actually physically outside their countries they cannot be regarded in traditional terms as coming under the refugee category.

We recognized this a few years ago when we faced a situation which was difficult and deplorable in Uganda, and we recognized it, after that, in Chile. There were situations in which tens of thousands of people were suddenly subjected to massive persecution from the authorities in control of those countries. They did not come under the refugee definition of the United Nations. This situation was recognized by the special joint committee. So the department, in its wisdom—and I think it was wise—introduced the category of oppressed minorities. It does not exist in this particular statute, but that was a regulatory way for the department, the government and the Canadian people to respond to these very real human crises and tragedies.

We did respond, and I do not know—perhaps the minister can tell us—of anybody who has objected to the minister responding in this way. However, we have to recognize the fact that even though we handled those people as refugees, referred to them as refugees and established them in Canada on a refugee basis, and even though they were not legally situated as refugees, we participated and went along with it. I suppose it was really to save us going through an enormous debate here and having to amend the immigration law. Here we are, now trying to make our immigration law modern and relevant, and that is why I think the amendment of the hon. member for Montmorency is reasonable and sensible. In fact, I think it would not be sensible not to accept his amendment. The special joint committee recommended, at page 53:25, in recommendation No. 93, the following:

The committee regards the United Nations definition of "refugee" as too narrow and not adequate to accommodate the present-day variety of circumstances and emergencies confronting citizens of many countries. One difficulty is the stipulation that the person be outside his country to qualify as a refugee. Canada has eased this requirement to accommodate Chileans and Ugandans, but the committee sees a need for firm criteria to reflect contemporary refugee situations in which persons must leave their home countries because they have been stripped of citizenship and denied the right to remain. The definition should also include persons living in their homeland who face persecution or punishment for political reasons, provided their governments allow them to leave.

The hon. member referred to that, and there are a number of hon. members in the House this afternoon who sat on the special joint committee and who will recall this, but I think it is useful to have it on the record when we are dealing with this particular motion. That recommendation states the case as succinctly and as reasonably as I think it is possible to do. One of the things which was uppermost in the mind of the minister, his predecessor who worked on the drafting of this bill, and departmental officials, was that they wanted to try to reflect the wisdom and insight which was accumulated by the special joint committee.

The amendment brought forward this afternoon is eminently sensible. Having had a chance to consider this in the commit-