

Government Orders

This decision affects many agencies that receive funding to offer immigrants certain services such as programs for immigrant settlement and adoption and language training programs for immigrants in Canada.

This decision will create a lot of problems for these agencies which are doing very good work, and for employees whose social benefits will be reduced.

On Monday, the minister tabled another bill, Bill C-44, to amend the Immigration Act, the Citizenship Act and the Customs Act. Under this bill, persons convicted of a major crime will no longer be able to claim refugee status to gain entry into or postpone their deportation from Canada.

We agree with these principles, but we want to look very closely at each and every one of Bill C-44's provisions. If necessary, we will move the appropriate amendments.

At this time, however, we would like to make some preliminary comments.

First of all, in my view, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has overly reacted to a very real problem, albeit one that is marginal and nowhere near as widespread as the Reform Party and the press would have us believe. I think the minister caved in too readily under the pressure and the sharp criticism voiced by certain Reform Party members.

To my mind, some of the provisions in this bill run counter to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The bill also gives immigration officers the power to intercept and hold mail from abroad which could contain documents related to a person's identity, when the officers have reason to believe that these documents could be used for fraudulent purposes. Madam Speaker, do you not think that this provision clearly violates the principles and rules contained in the charter?

• (2055)

It is our duty as elected members to fight prejudice and discrimination against refugees. As the people's elected representatives, we must show compassion and generosity, which are fundamental values of Quebecers and Canadians. With all due respect, I think that my colleagues in the Reform Party who sometimes make inflammatory statements are encouraging public intolerance towards immigrants.

I am extremely pleased that the vast majority of people I met in Alberta—I made two trips and visited Calgary, Edmonton and Banff—including lawyers, ethnic leaders and church members, do not share this approach of the Reform Party, which I consider anti-immigrant and anti-refugee.

I want to pay tribute to Edmonton's ethno-cultural association and to Calgary's multicultural centre for the wonderful work they are doing to integrate newcomers.

[English]

Twice I visited Calgary and met with a young Salvadoran who took sanctuary in the basement of a church. I showed my solidarity with this refugee. Unfortunately the refugee did not get shelter from the Reform Party. Fortunately now an understanding took place and this young Salvadoran is free.

[Translation]

I thank the pastors, university professors and professionals, as well as the Latin American community, for having helped this young Salvadoran who can now stay in Canada. I am proud of this Latin American community, which did such a marvellous job in Calgary for one of its brothers.

In closing, I want to emphasize, on the 125th anniversary of the first immigration program and of the first Immigration Act passed by Canada, the outstanding contribution made by the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who have enriched Canada and Quebec.

I also want to mention that I participated this past weekend in two very important ethno-cultural events in my riding of Bourassa, in Montreal North. First, a special event organized by the multi-ethnic community centre of Montreal North, which gave diplomas and honourable mentions to students who passed their French course. What a fine example of harmonious integration.

The second event I participated in was the gala organized by L'Ouverture youth centre, which gave awards to the best students of ethnic origin in each of the schools in my riding. Most of these students were of Haitian, Latin American and Vietnamese extraction. I commend L'Ouverture youth centre and particularly its director, Félix St-Élien, for this initiative and for excellent work promoting closer intercultural links among young people in Montreal North.

I take this opportunity to point out the efforts made by the Haitian community to solve problems and smooth their transition into Quebec society. Finally, I want to acknowledge warmly and express my deep gratitude to the thousands of volunteers and hundreds of organizations throughout Quebec and Canada that work so hard to provide settlement and integration services to our new fellow citizens.

• (2100)

[English]

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and contribute to the debate surrounding Bill C-35 on third reading. As members know the bill's intent is to establish the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, but in fact this bill is simply standard housekeeping material and no real meat.

My colleagues and I in the Reform Party would rather this government bring forward legislation that deals with some of the numerous problems our misguided Department of Citizen-