

Adjournment Debate

I know that from his past expertise, the hon. member is aware that the reserves have always been an integral part of the Canadian Forces.

I agree with you that the Auditor General's remarks were very timely last fall and DND does concur with a number of the suggestions he made. Reservists have been and will continue to be integrated into the Canadian Forces operations. They augmented our regular force during the Oka crisis and during the past year they have been on our missions in Bosnia, Croatia, Cyprus and Somalia.

A major effort is now being directed toward reviewing the equipment, recruitment and training in the Canadian Forces.

With regard to legislation which you raised in the House that day, we do not see any need at this time for legislation that would force employers to grant leaves of absence to members in the reserve. I am very pleased you raised this today and DND does agree with a lot of the issues the Auditor General brought forward.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): On September 15 I raised, with the Minister of Employment and Immigration, the need to allow Dularie Boodlal to stay in Canada rather than force her to return to Trinidad where, after years of many violent acts in Trinidad and Canada, her husband had threatened to kill her.

The minister's reply was: "If the hon. member knows of facts that ought to be brought to my attention in this specific case, I urge him to do it".

I thanked the minister for his proposal and pointed out that my information was copied from the Legal Aid Service of Parkdale brief which they had already sent to him. In fact, a couple of days later the minister decided to let Mrs. Boodlal stay. I am very grateful for that, partly for its own sake and partly because it constitutes another very valuable precedent in an important emerging matter of law in Canada, that is to say recognition that women sometimes have special causes to be recognized as refugees because they are women.

• (1810)

I want to quote from the speech given yesterday to the Ottawa Womens' Canadian Club by Nurjehan Mawani, the new chair of the Immigration and Refugee Board, who has taken this matter up in a very strong and constructive way.

She points out that in such cases most people would consider that this person is a refugee because she is fleeing for her life. She says: "Can it be fitted into the form of the law that the person belongs to a group that is persecuted?" She also says that in a recent trial division decision in the Federal Court of Canada the court stated: "Trinidadian women subject to wife abuse" could constitute a particular social group within the meaning of the refugee definition. I welcome that statement by the chair of the board.

I note she has gone much further than that. She is setting out guidelines in the board which in the near future will be available to all board members to give a standard or uniform basis for interpreting such decisions and, much beyond that, she says that women refugee claimants who are often understandably reluctant to talk about what happened, especially when they come from certain cultures, will be put more at ease by having if possible women on the board hearing their cases, women refugee hearing officers, and women interpreters. She is moving in this way to make it as practical as possible for a woman to state her case as a woman when she believes that she has been persecuted as a woman.

She further says: "We have also established working groups of women refugee claimants across Canada to help train and sensitize members and staff alike to the unique problems faced by refugee women".

I think this is a very strong advance in the law of our country and I thank the chair of the board and the minister for it.

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the minister has determined that Mrs. Boodlal and her two children will be allowed to remain in Canada while the processing of their application for permanent residence takes place. They will be required to meet the statutory requirements relating to health and back-