

Immigration Act, 1976

be confused by those who would use the misfortune of others for short-term partisan gain. Even those who still have genuine concerns about Bill C-55 realize that it is brought forward by a Government which has reaffirmed, not foreshortened, Canada's commitment to the world refugees. Our policy is clear. Both in terms of assistance here in Canada and overseas we have a refugee policy of which we are proud.

Last year the Government sponsored the resettlement in Canada of 12,000 refugees, an increase of 20 per cent over the last Liberal Government. Our actual immigration intake in 1987 will be 50 per cent higher than that of the last Liberal Government. We provide over \$115 million a year in federal funds for the successful resettlement here in Canada of federally sponsored refugees and for the training of those refugees sponsored by private groups in the community. We give \$16 million a year in food aid for refugees. Our financial contributions to international relief agencies including the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees are the fifth highest of all nations. Our total financial contributions to international relief on a per capita basis are second only in the world to the United States.

[Translation]

In no way does the Government have to seek justification for its commitments towards refugees of the world, nor for having introduced Bill C-55.

When the Bill was tabled the policy it advocated was already effective, constructive and equitable. It is even more so today.

Mr. Speaker, when the Government first introduced Bill C-55, a day marked by the virtuous indignation of Opposition Members, I stated here in the House as I did everywhere else from coast to coast that it was not a document carved in stone.

• (1130)

[English]

Time and again I called upon all Members of Parliament and members of the public as well to participate in making this Bill even more effective in its stated purposes. I am pleased and grateful that so much has been done to accomplish that goal.

Today, thanks to the amendments this House has accepted in committee, Bill C-55 is a stronger Bill. It is stronger through clarifying its intent, stronger in affirming its safeguards, stronger in its commitment to the genuine refugee. It has been further strengthened and improved during the course of the report stage. Your many hours of work—55 of them in public hearings alone—have brought significant improvement to the Bill. Let me quickly outline some of them.

The Bill now specifically states that the evidence to support a claim is in no way restricted and that each claimant has the right to testify on his or her own behalf. It spells out exactly what is meant by passing through a country while on the way

to Canada, and states clearly that individuals in transit are not affected by the safe third country rule.

[Translation]

The Bill explains what a safe third country is: a country which honours the provisions of the Geneva Convention concerning the non-return of refugees.

If the claimant agrees, a representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees may now be present at the inquiry as well as at the board hearing.

When the services of counsel must be provided by the federal Government, the Bill now makes it quite clear that it must be a lawyer.

[English]

The amended Bill will distinguish between claimants who are arriving with no documents by air from overseas and those arriving with no documents at our border with the United States. Only those arriving by air without documents will be subject to a presumption of law regarding the country of departure. We will not make any presumption of law as to where those arriving by land may originally have come from.

Amendments also provide safeguards of another kind, safeguards against the manipulation of a new determination system by those who clearly do not deserve its consideration.

They bring the Bill into line with Bill C-71, guaranteeing that war criminals will be treated the same as claimants found to be security risks. Suspected war criminals will not be permitted to use the system to delay their removal or prosecution.

[Translation]

As a result of the report, other amendments have been adopted these past few days, particularly the addition of still more safeguards for persons who might not have an opportunity to submit a claim.

Even in that case, from a humanitarian standpoint obviously it would still be our duty to make sure that this person is not being threatened or is not likely to be persecuted. Therefore we did accept without reservation the recommendation of certain Members and private individuals that claimants whose case will have been rejected at the inquiry stage will be expelled only to a country where, pursuant to the Geneva Convention, they will be protected against return.

[English]

To achieve this, we have specified any deportation order made against the person coming from a safe third country can only be executed to that country unless the claimant himself waives that right. Such amendments will, I believe, greatly reduce, if not eliminate, any possibility of human error or oversight which might result, however remotely, in the deportation from Canada of a claimant to a place where he or she might face real danger.