

Immigration Act

applications which have increased over the past several years, we realize that the proposal of our hon. friend from Spadina (Mr. Heap) would only bog the system and would not help in any way those who are claiming refugee status.

The fact is that these delays are detrimental to bona fide refugees. The unfounded claims which create this jam are depriving authentic refugees of the priority they are entitled to and causing great distress. Moreover, the support organizations within the community and the various levels of government which are providing financial assistance are called upon to contribute for long periods of time by true refugees and the others, while all of them are waiting for the committee to hand down its decision.

Many initiatives have been taken these past few years to deal with the ever increasing number of claims and shorten the delays without jeopardizing the process itself in terms of equity and fairness. Thus, it is important to note, given the number of claims, that the Department is taking every possible step to process them as fast as possible and to ensure that on behalf of people who really fear to return to their own country, the Canadian Government take the appropriate steps to solve those problems as soon as possible and to bring about justice, equity and fairness for all citizens.

Therefore, a pilot project of hearings has been implemented in May 1983 in Montreal, and in Toronto in June of the same year. It is a pilot project because first of all, the legislation does not provide for that procedure and also because one knows whether in such a large country as ours, an effective hearing system along those lines could be implemented at a reasonable cost.

There are many reasons for putting to the test this kind of hearing. When a particular claim is to be examined and when the decision is to be based on the very facts of the case, on their consistency with known events and, more important still, on the credibility of the claimant, the best procedure is to submit the claimant to a hearing during which the validity of his claim can be assessed.

The fact that the claimant was not personally heard has always given rise to criticism from the very moment Canada started considering refugee status claims. Unfortunately, this criticism has not subsided during the recent years. And considering the number of people involved, certainly a great number of Canadians, Mr. Speaker, would like the process to be accelerated even more.

Finally, various interest groups as well as a working group set up by the Minister concluded in 1981 that, within the appropriate framework, some kind of hearing could prove more effective than the present system, which involves a great amount of paperwork.

Mr. Speaker, here are the objectives of the pilot projects commissioned by the former Minister . . . May I point out that it is now five o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Order. The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. It being five o'clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday next, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 2(1).

At 5 p.m., the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.
