painful because the world-wide issue of human suffering is too important and sensitive to be dictated because of purely partisan political needs; painful because the problem of refugees is not merely a domestic Canadian challenge only. It is, rather, a challenge for countries of the world to deal constructively, equally and collectively in sharing the burden of assisting those less fortunate than ourselves. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I invite the Government once again to put an end to this strategy.

No political Party or Member of Parliament in this House has a monopoly on virtue. Certainly I do not. It is recognized and accepted by all Members of Parliament, all three political Parties, and every Canadian, that Canada cannot possibly absorb all of the world's homeless. There are some 15 to 20 million refugees around the globe searching for a home. No Member of Parliament, no political Party, and no Canadian wishes to legitimize or reward fraudulent refugee claimants.

However, this does not absolve the Government of responsibility. It cannot wash its hands of refugees, act as a modern-day Pontius Pilate, and turn away genuine claimants from our borders and push them aimlessly adrift. That would act as a trigger for other nations to do likewise, and only serve to aggravate the human crisis facing refugees. It would limit their options and make them all the more desperate. Yet that is what the Government has effectively done by its announced policy statements in Bill C-55.

The policy is not tolerant, it is not fair, wise or compassionate. Instead, it is a policy rooted in inflexibility, rigidity and restrictiveness. The Government's refugee policy is fatally flawed in a number of key areas which I would like to examine and evaluate.

The first difficulty is that the Government has chosen to establish a pre-screening stage at all border points. Two officers would decide, virtually on the spot, whether the claimant has an arguable case to proceed before the new refugee board. In effect this would act as a huge barrier to the refugee board, a wall which would seriously restrict the number of claimants who would receive a fair hearing. Merely looking at the origin of the claimant and the country from which he or she arrived is an irresponsible solution which ignores individual circumstances.

It is therefore absurd for the Ministers responsible for immigration to guarantee, as they have, that no genuine refugee will be turned away under this policy. How can they possibly say that, when those refused during pre-screening will have been denied any meaningful and serious consideration? The Ministers simply cannot have it both ways. Pre-screening is a most disturbing development that undermines the principle of full accessibility which has been advocated by every non-governmental organization, every church organization, and the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration.

As well, as a first reaction to the refugee claimant the implication left by pre-screening is one that views the refugee as a major problem and favours returning the problem to someone and somewhere else. It is, in short, an irresponsible stance. Furthermore, one of the two pre-screening officers will be a member of the refugee board, while the other will be an immigration adjudicator; in other words, an official of the department.

That raises some obvious questions. Why is it necessary for this person, who will be clearly enforcement minded, to be there? Whose interests will he be serving? Why is the Government confusing immigration and refugee matters when one of the crucial exercises was to clearly distinguish between these two very different areas of public policy? If the Ministers were genuinely concerned with the authenticity of refugee claims, why are both officers not members of the refugee board? Regrettably, that immigration adjudicator represents the hand of the immigration department within this all important first step.

The second major shortcoming is that this pre-screening process is based on the concept of a "safe third country", meaning that Cabinet will draft a list of so-called safe countries which will largely dictate who can or cannot access the refugee process. This is also a worrisome and alarming initiative and represents a complete and unfortunate reversal of government philosophy.

Past Liberal Governments had established and respected a B-1 list of non-deportable countries. That was a statement that we as a nation were not prepared to deport people to certain parts of the world because of their poor record on human rights. The emphasis in this equation was clearly in favour of the individual's protection and safety.

Under the Conservative Government not only did they abolish the B-1 list on February 20 of this year, but now the Government is prepared to reverse direction by drafting a list of countries that the Government is fully prepared to deport individuals to. Consequently, if a refugee arriving in Canada had previously stopped in a country on that list, the pre-screening officer would have the person returned to that respective country. Given that criteria under this legislation, there is no discretionary authority provided to the two officers. Thus there is no basis for them to consider the individual's circumstances and the merits of his claim.

In addition, important unanswered questions abound. Where are the safeguards? Where are the legally binding agreements between Canada and those countries on the proposed list? Will Canada give in to fierce political and diplomatic lobbying by other nations wishing to get on Canada's safe country list? Will there be trade-offs? Will there be countries which for complex reasons will be on the list, but should not be, given their human rights violations? Will the power game between countries supersede the life/death situation of individual refugees?