

*Immigration Act, 1976*

his own church and other organizations in British Columbia that are opposed to this legislation.

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Speaker, I hope the Member will not presume to instruct me about the Mennonite Church. I have a fair degree of familiarity with it. As a matter of fact, I will be speaking to a group of them in a few weeks and will raise the matter with them, just to clear the record.

I suspect that the Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry recognizes the names of many of these organizations that the Member has listed, because I am sure he met them either in groups or individually when he was Minister of Immigration, and was opposed by them just as much as they oppose this Government now. This tends to underscore what I said before, that there are groups that oppose the Government simply because it is the Government. If they are not drafting the legislation, it will be bad legislation.

The Hon. Member says that these organizations represent millions of people. I am sure they represent many people, but I can tell him as well that they do not necessarily represent the rank and file of the people whom they purport to represent. Simply because they have official positions in a particular denomination or a particular organization does not automatically mean that they represent the rank and file of those people. For example, I know that almost 50 per cent of the Members of the New Democratic Party across Canada support free trade, but that does not matter when the New Democratic Party speaks of free trade in the House.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin my remarks by recalling for a moment the short exchange that took place between the Member for York West (Mr. Marchi), our immigration critic, and the Parliamentary Secretary, about the movement of refugees in the early part of the 1980s.

The common popular term or expression to identify those 100,000 people was "boat people". The reason they were called boat people is that they fled in small boats, such as sampans and other flimsy vessels, a country where there was violence, torture and intimidation. They crossed the China Sea to Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and other islands. They crossed the borders. They did not have documents, they did not have visas and they were not certified by a Canadian embassy office in Hanoi. They were escaping with their lives in the hope for a better future.

One of the most important issues raised by the Canadian Government at that time, at the United Nations and other places, was the support of a convention against countries like Malaysia and others stopping the boats from coming in. We said that this contravened the entire principle of the refugee system, which is that people should not be prejudged and turned away simply because they are on a boat. They should be given the right to land, to have their claim examined, and then to be moved on. One of the trade-offs, I remind the Hon. Member from Surrey, was that those countries said, "Yes, we

are getting all kinds of people and we cannot handle them". So countries like Canada, the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany said they would help take the load. That began the movement of boat people.

• (1600)

In principle, what is different between the circumstances in 1979 and 1980 and what we are facing here? There is one difference. They are coming directly to our borders rather than stopping on the way, but they are still boat people. They are still fleeing terror and intimidation and they are still arriving without support and visas. But they are coming here for exactly the same reasons. How can the Hon. Member from Surrey say with pride that that is what our Government initiated when his Government of today is rejecting exactly the same principle?

He made another comment. He said that the initiative by the Government of the Hon. Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark) was a great example of partnership between the church, service clubs, communities and the Government. I agree. The very same groups who were partners in 1980 this Government wants to charge with a criminal offence in 1987. How can the Government justify that contradiction? How can the Government say with any kind of honesty that the groups it encouraged to work with it, helping to settle refugees in 1979, all of a sudden are now "special interest groups" who are trying to flaunt the law? The groups who were successful in working with the Government, co-operating to find a humane way of dealing with a vast movement of people, are now all of a sudden nothing but fraudulent manipulators trying to beat the system, according to the Hon. Member from Surrey. They cannot have changed all that much in five years. The Member knows they are the same people. I worked with them. They opposed the Government to begin with because they dealt with the Department of Employment and Immigration which was continually opposing their interests. One of my objectives as a Minister was to try to turn that attitude around, to help make them partners, as opposed to having a Department of Immigration with its prime interest being to keep people out rather than bringing them in.

I want it to be said on the floor of this House that I respect the Inter-Church Committee, and the B'Nai Brith and the various refugee organizations, because they are doing something that is very much in the tradition of Canada. That is, to reach out and give of one's self without any ambition for personal redress.

There was an interesting time lapse of seven months since the emergency crisis of last summer. The Senate played a valuable role in exercising its responsibility as a Chamber of sober second thought. It took the legislation and gave it the time this House was not allowed to give it because of Government closure. What did the Senate find? It found some very important things. First, and I want to emphasize this, it found that this legislation contravenes the Charter. Let us recall the