terms of refugee policies over the last number of years. They suggested that the Bill should be redrafted, that the Bill should go back to the drafting boards so that hopefully we would come up with a piece of legislation which did justice to our sense of fair play, compassion, and assistance.

The other side of the equation involved organizations and individuals who said that if we wanted to have Bill C-55 we must simply make movement toward substantial amendments in three crucial areas of the Bill, namely, prescreening, safe country, and appeal. Basically they said that for their approval and support they simply had to be met part way, that we had to show good faith and sincerity in the negotiations, and that those negotiations had to be reflected in the pieces of legislation which we brought forward. They said that the prescreening, the safe third country concept and the appeal mechanism had to be drastically altered if this piece of legislation could be supported. In the end, substantive changes on those three areas were not made.

• (1230)

My colleague from Spadina and I offered substantive amendments to those three clauses of the Bill, but those amendments were not accepted. That is why I initially spoke on the process. Many other amendments were moved. Some amendments which were moved by government Members to cross t's and dot i's were accepted. As well, a great many others designed to clean up the language of the Bill here and there were also accepted.

The position of my Party was in between those who wanted to redrafted the Bill and those who were in favour of it. We clearly articulated the need to change those three clauses of the Bill.

Our strategy when dealing with Bill C-84 was to move a great many amendments. We took care to draft those amendments so that they would be procedurally correct as well as acceptable, but not one of them was accepted at committee stage or in the House of Commons. Therefore, we took a different tack on Bill C-55. We did not move 60 or 70 amendments like we did when dealing with Bill C-84. We were not prepared to play charades by suggesting amendments that were not substantive. I say this not out of disrespect for those who chose to move a great many amendments in the hopes of trying to make this legislation better. Our tack was just different.

The Government wanted to have a prescreening stage that would prejudge refugee claimants, it wanted a safe country concept that would send refugees into orbit, bouncing them around like a ball in a pinball machine from one country to the other, and it wished to subscribe to an appeal mechanism that was poor, substandard and would not offer claimants access to it. We felt that if the Government was not willing to substantively change those three clauses, we were prepared to move other amendments which by comparison would be academic and insignificant.

If the Government was not prepared to accept amendments to those three objectionable clauses, we would not be pleased if the Minister told us that he listened because he moved six or seven amendments. The Minister did not listen where it counted. The Government did not move on these three clauses even though a great many people pleaded for it to do so.

I have never before heard witnesses in a committee actually use words like beg and plead. Witnesses came before that committee and actually said, "For goodness sake, if you are going to change something, then make a change that will have an impact. Make a change that will offer refugees some hope. Do not simply change those areas that do not count, add up the number of amendments accepted and brag about how many were accepted. Ask yourselves what is the impact of those amendments on the over-all legislation".

Members of my Party are embarrassed by certain clauses in this legislation. We do not want to identify ourselves with those who are happy with a mediocre piece of legislation. We believe that as a leader in the international community, we should subscribe to those interests that are above those that are mediocre, particularly when offering people protection in order to save their lives. We felt it was important to stand by those principles. We are perfectly willing to be judged by Canadians on our position as it affects the basic elements of the Bill.

Let us look at the prescreening provisions. The Government introduced in the legislation a new refugee board which would deal only with refugee claims. It would be distinct from the Immigration Appeal Board which could deal with appeals made by individuals who were not allowed to visit here or become landed immigrants. That is a very worth-while and significant step forward. However, the Government built a barrier around the new refugee board.

The Government built a brick wall around the refugee board by placing a prescreening stage before the oral hearing stage. At the border, two individuals would determine whether a claimant legitimately deserved to go to the next step or whether he should be turned back. If there is to be a refugee board that will make that determination, why has the Government included a prescreening stage? What does it accomplish? The answers to both questions are quite frightening.

The prescreening stage undermines the very reasons we established a refugee board in the first place. In his testimony on the prescreening stage, Rabbi Plaut said the following:

> This Bill has the wrong focus. It is not a Bill to determine refugee status primarily, it is a Bill on how to deport people primarily.

Rabbi Plaut, the individual who was mandated by the previous Government to study the issue and who submitted his recommendations to this Government, said quite clearly that the Bill is primarily about how to deport people.

Fred Zemans, a member of the Canadian Jewish Congress and a professor from York University who is very much active