

Government Orders

and reasonable granting of work permits to refugees after they come into the country. What does this mean?

We had municipalities from Ontario appearing before the committee saying that because the federal government will not grant these work permits quick enough and will not provide for a quick granting of a work permit, many of these people have to rely on welfare. This great number of refugees has to rely on welfare whereas many of them could be working. By the way, many refugees work in the most menial of jobs. They take jobs that many Canadians will not take. But they could be doing that kind of work if we provided for the granting of work permits.

What is suggested in this amendment is that the work permit be granted after the completion of the medical examination. The government has said that the medical examination must take place within 60 days. We are saying in this amendment that we should put into the law that the work permit should be granted after the medical has been completed, which is after 60 days.

The government says that if that is done, people will come to Canada as refugees just to get a work permit within 60 days. What nonsense that people are going to leave Yugoslavia, people are going to leave Bangladesh, people are going to leave countries in central America just to come here and work after 60 days. They are coming because they are legitimate refugees and they are being driven from their countries by violence, by fear, and by persecution.

• (1250)

We should allow these people who want to work, if there are jobs available to them, to work after 60 days, as they can now after the first stage hearing. We support the abolition of the first stage hearing and we believe that the provision to grant the work permit at the end of the first stage hearing is a good thing. However, to leave it open-ended with no provision in the law for the granting of the work permit until the person is fully recognized as a refugee is not only stupid but is inhumane.

In committee the government accepted a certain number of amendments. This is the kind of amendment I thought it would have appreciated and would have agreed to. Under the new system it says that people will

fully complete the process in five or six months, if it is contested. However, that is not assured. That is a hope. What is wrong with putting the provision into the law, such as we done under the present law, that a work permit could be granted after 60 days, after the completion of the medical examination?

As I said, the government agreed to certain amendments in committee and that was good. It showed some reasonableness and the bill was improved in committee. Unfortunately, many oppressive sections still remain and in our amendments before the House we hope to deal with those oppressive sections. This is one of them.

I am now doubtful whether we will even have a chance to debate many of these important amendments coming from the opposition parties. There is this closure motion. It is going to be voted on at 6 o'clock tonight and there are 60 some amendments to deal with. It is totally ridiculous.

I am urging the government to reconsider and accept this amendment or one like it.

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the amendment that has just been moved by the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. I wish to add a little to his opening remarks about the shortness of time for this very important debate.

The government put in 70 amendments at almost the last minute before the committee hearings. The government put these 11 amendments in at the very last minute before the deadline last Tuesday. The government knew what it was doing. It told us that it took eight months to prepare this bill before it was tabled in June and then there were two days to study it. Staff lawyers take two weeks to study it and there is only a day and a half for debate.

Committee reading was during the summer when most of the people who could advise committee members were on vacation and when committee members also needed some time with their families. Now after committee hearings there are further amendments from the government and one and a half days to debate the amendments in a long bill—128 pages. It is clear the government does not want to have debate. We will not be able to do justice to the necessary amendments after I, and perhaps other colleagues, have eliminated some of