

Members from her own Party, the Plaut Commission, the churches, and the refugee organizations, which say that with one or two amendments to Bill C-55 it would then be acceptable. There could then be a consensus in the country; the Opposition has said that it would agree to it. Would the Hon. Member also agree that those amendments should be made and that therefore we could give total, quick, and immediate passage to the Bill within the next 24 hours and meet the requirements she says her constituents want?

Mrs. Collins: Mr. Speaker, it is certainly my understanding that the United Nations Refugee Agency has not said that it would violate but that there is a possibility that it might.

I think one should look at the international comparison. If all these people are so upset by what we are proposing, in my mind it is far more fair and generous than the systems in place in Sweden, West Germany, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

We are providing for the initial screening. We are providing for the possibility of hearings, due process, and return only to a safe country, which is determined by Order in Council. There are lots of provisions to make changes to meet differing situations.

Good heavens, I cannot think of any more safeguards which need to be in a Bill like this one, while at the same time ensuring that we get rid of illegal immigrants, people who abuse the system and try to enter the country illegally.

I am satisfied with the Bill, and certainly a comparison with every other western industrialized country would show that we are doing a tremendous job.

Mr. Axworthy: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will recognize the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) after recognizing the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow).

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, in her remarks before lunch the Hon. Member indicated that she had written to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) some time ago, that she urged him to call Parliament together to deal with this question, and that she welcomed the fact that we had been brought back. If the matter is so important, if the issue must be dealt with so quickly, why did the Government not introduce the Bill before May 5? Why did we get one part of a day, three hours of debate on June 18, if it is so important? Why was there delay on the part of the Government?

I also want to ask the Hon. Member a second question. Just over a year ago a group of Tamils came to Canada in exactly the same way as the Sikhs about whom she and other people are so upset. When they came to Canada the Prime Minister welcomed them and said that they would be treated fairly, with compassion, and in a humane way.

Immigration Act, 1976

What has changed? We see here that the Government has no policy at all. It will go in any direction which it thinks the public will, because it is so concerned about doing what it hopes people will support.

Mrs. Collins: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that my colleague and some of his colleagues want to keep talking about the past when I am here to talk about what we need to do right now.

It would have been nice had the legislation come through more quickly, but I know there was a long process of consultation with all the groups my hon. colleague mentioned earlier and with the lawyers to ensure that it was legally correct and complied with the Charter of Rights. Obviously all this took time.

When it was introduced in May, as has already been indicated, the first response was a six-month hoist. It was evident that the co-operation of the opposition Parties was not to be forthcoming in the limited time we had.

In terms of the Canadian public, it was upset last year when the first boat load came. I remember it well. However, what has happened now is that they are even angrier. There is a fear that this can happen over and over again, that we do not have the tools in place to remedy the situation. They are demanding, as I am demanding, that we get those tools in place, that we get Bill C-55 and Bill C-84 in place so that we have control over the borders of the country.

• (1540)

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Hon. Member for Capilano (Mrs. Collins) that there was a time when Canada took pride in its leadership on refugee matters. Canada provided new standards to which the world would respond. For that reason, we were awarded a prize for exemplary conduct. To compare Canada with other countries does not impress us because there was a time when we felt Canada showed leadership in this area and did not follow.

The Hon. Member said that the Bill took time because of the consultation process. Does consultation not also mean listening and responding? If time was taken to consult with all the groups I mentioned, why were they not heard? Why were their objections not responded to? Why were the changes recommended by every single reputable organization involved in refugee matters totally rejected by the Government? Why did the Government take the perverse, reactionary way it has taken when the weight of opinion around the world and in Canada was that we could solve the refugee problem expeditiously within three months and still retain our rights and obligations under the covenant? Why did the Government go so wrong?

Mrs. Collins: Mr. Speaker, first, Canada does have a good reputation with respect to refugees and it will continue to have a good reputation.