

*Immigration Act, 1976*

spoken on this Bill has spoken against it. I believe that within a day or two the Canadian Bar Association will say that officially and collectively.

It is a little ironic that the Government praises the private sector, calling it the engine of recovery, and brings private sector accountants and lawyers into a privileged position in the budget process. Yet, when lawyers from the private sector criticize this Bill, the Hon. Minister, contrary to his statements of respect for them, attacks their motivation. I heard him in Montreal a couple of weeks ago accuse his opponents of being "street-corner lawyers", whatever that means. He obviously did not mean it in a favourable sense.

It is reported that when he was in Winnipeg he attacked a leading refugee and immigration lawyer there, accusing him of being concerned merely with the revenue he gets from refugees who usually arrive penniless. The Minister had the effrontery to make that accusation, and he repeated it in Montreal a couple of days ago, according to the *Gazette*. He said that the lawyers who criticized the Bill are simply looking for fees for defending refugees.

What a contemptible piece of slander the Minister indulges in by condemning all the lawyers in the private sector who have spoken against this Bill as being only interested in private profit! It is a strange philosophy for a Conservative politician to condemn lawyers for doing their work because they might be paid by someone for doing it.

This Bill has no credibility with those in the public who have studied it. If you ask people on the street whether they want to admit real refugees, they will say, yes. If you ask whether they like the Minister's Bill, they will say, yes because the Minister has put out tens of thousands of dollars worth of false propaganda which says that this Bill does what this Bill does not do. Of course he has succeeded in deceiving the public to some extent, but not for long.

*Le Devoir*, which was originally willing to buy the Bill, published a second editorial two weeks ago which called it *une loi de refoulement* and said that this Bill is not what it first appeared to be. I heard Mr. LeClerc speak to this last Friday night. He believed that he had been taken for a ride after first consideration of the Bill, and he is now solidly opposed to it.

I want to illustrate the Canadian response, not only to people who have been proven to be refugees but to people who come to the doors of our country asking for a chance to prove that they are refugees. Two days after the Minister introduced those harsh regulations on February 20, I attended a rally at Fort Erie spontaneously organized by the people there who had been helping refugees.

These were not "street-corner lawyers" making a fortune on the backs of refugees, as the Minister would like to suggest. These were the townspeople of Fort Erie who, in the last two years, have billeted 500 refugees. They had put them up at their expense, fed them, clothed them, and given them shelter for a short or a long time. They helped them after they came across the bridge.

These 500 people, through that rally, were telling the Canadian Government not to be afraid of the welfare system for refugees breaking down because they are looking after them. That is the kind of attitude there is in Canada, not only at Fort Erie but in Quebec and other places as well. Residents of Quebec sent a truckload of clothing and food to Plattsburg for refugees who had been turned back from Canada. At Thunder Bay several dozen people are engaged in meeting refugees at the border and helping them to make their way to and through immigration officials. On the Prairies and in British Columbia the same things are taking place.

Canadians are helping these refugees. They are presently doing it legally, but I know they are studying the sanctuary movements in the United States and respect the heroic clergy of those movements who will go to jail rather than send a refugee back to torture or death.

Canadians have been learning compassion. We have had our faults in our immigration policies over the past century and more. There are some things of which we are not proud. I do not want to take time to go into those today. However, support for refugees from the Canadian people primarily, not from this or the previous Government, was what won the Nansen Medal Award.

This law will not go with the Canadian people. If it is passed, the Canadian people will ensure that it is overturned. The basic sense of justice of Canadian people was reflected in the Singh decision two years ago which the Government has done its best to ignore. The Supreme Court of Canada said that when a person's life is at stake, the people who are to decide whether he or she is or is not a refugee must be competent people and must look him or her in the eye. He must stand in front of them so that he can judge their credibility, because nine-tenths of a refugee's case is based on the story he or she has to tell and their ability to convince the judges that the story is true.

The Supreme Court said that it cannot be done on paper or by intermediate officials. Those who are to decide whether to send a person back to possible death must do it face to face with the refugee. That was the Singh decision and that is what is backed by the Canadian people and the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, the reports of which the Government never answered. The report on the refugee system and that on the backlog have been shamefully ignored by the Government to this day, as it has ignored other reports since then.

• (1720)

There are several fundamental faults with this Bill which the lawyers who have looked at it say cannot be reformed by amendment. That is why we asked for withdrawal.

First and foremost is that the Bill begins with the principle that a person is guilty until he proves himself innocent. Furthermore, it does not give him much time to prove it. He is