

*Government Orders*

100,000 Vietnamese boat people Canada received. She was one of those. She has now opened four restaurants in Toronto and employs over 20 people. Kim was a refugee and is now a Canadian entrepreneur.

What about Shan Chandrasekar? He came from India. He overstayed. He obtained permission years ago to be able to stay legally in Canada and in the process founded a television network to serve the Canadian-Asian community.

What does that say? It says that for every criminal named in the press with an immigrant tag we can give 10,000 cases of immigrants and recent Canadians who are anything but a problem for or a drain on the country and who despise the antics of troublemakers and the lawlessness of hooligans as much as anyone in this Chamber.

• (1235)

Are we courageous enough to say so? How about the guy who coaches your kid's little league? Some of our Nobel prize winners have been immigrants. Our novelists, opera stars, painters, politicians, teachers and even some of our best journalists were not born in this country.

When we hear the word immigrant we should not automatically think crime. We also should not automatically think superstar either. Instead we should think of a neighbour, of a colleague, of a husband or a wife.

When I met with the Canadian association of chiefs of police last month, I told them I expected speedy passage of this legislation. I reiterated that this morning because we must act decisively and expeditiously. The law must be changed quickly in light of the public concern for the well-being of our immigration refugee system.

I am convinced that this legislation will go a long way in protecting those so close to us from the stigma of criminality brought on by a tiny minority who have slipped through the cracks. Madam Speaker and colleagues, let us get on with it and seal up those cracks.

[Translation]

**Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa):** Madam Speaker, this is my first speech in the House today, after the summer recess. Before speaking to Bill C-44, however, I would like to congratulate the Parti Québécois on its splendid victory on September 12, and also the new Premier of Quebec, Mr. Jacques Parizeau, a man with the stature of a true statesman.

I also want to congratulate the 77 members elected for the Parti québécois, the 47 members of the Quebec Liberal Party and Mr. Mario Dumont, leader of Action Démocratique. Some, like myself, belong to the ethnic community.

I will now speak in this debate on second reading of Bill C-44, which proposes to amend the Immigration Act, the Citizenship Act and the Customs Act. These amendments, according to the authors of the bill, concern 14 specific points. For instance, some changes will have the effect of stopping a person convicted of a major crime—that is, punishable by a maximum prison term of 10 years—in Canada or outside Canada, from claiming refugee status to delay his removal from Canada. Immigration officers will have the power to seize from international mail documents that could be used for fraudulent purposes. In the case of serious criminals, the Immigration Appeal Division will no longer have the power to allow appeals on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Grounds for appeals before the Immigration Appeal Division will from now on be limited to questions of law and fact. A person for whose arrest a warrant has been signed by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Solicitor General of Canada, because he represents a threat to public safety, will lose the right to appeal.

• (1240)

Processing of an application for citizenship may be suspended, pending the outcome of immigration proceedings. A person convicted of two summary conviction offences—a minor offence punishable by a prison term of not more than six months—whether the offences were committed in Canada or outside Canada, may be prevented from immigrating to Canada. The minister, instead of the Governor in Council, will have the authority to approve requests for admission on the basis of rehabilitation, and the minister may delegate this authority to employees of the department. The obligation to conduct a new inquiry in the case of a person who has been ordered to leave Canada has been removed, so that a person loses permanent resident status as soon as he is ordered deported.

We in the Bloc québécois agree with the general, underlying principles of Bill C-44, that is to say, the government has the right and a duty to protect Canada and all Canadians against criminals. We agree with preventing immigrants and claimants from taking advantage of Canada's reputation as a host country to leave their country of origin where they have committed serious crimes.

We must eliminate or at least reduce the ways in which immigrant refugee claimants who have been convicted of serious crimes can stay in Canada legally.

We agree with restricting the admissibility of convicted criminals. We must ensure that serious criminals who manage to escape removal are deported as soon as possible. In 1993, Immigration Canada deported 1,200 criminals; between January 1 and May 31, 1994, 600 criminals were deported. This effort