

Statements by Ministers

disposal. We ask her to do this not on a group basis but on an individual case basis. This would allow the Government the ability to protect itself from those who perhaps are a security or a health threat or those who are not meritorious in terms of receiving humanitarian compassion. We would rest by the decision taken by the Minister after the application of such a humanitarian program, whether it be in the affirmative or in the negative.

Throughout the process we have recognized that it is not an easy one. We have recognized that there is a long-term viability to the system which must be protected by the actions of one Government. This Government in the past, as others have done, has stepped in when humanitarian considerations have required it to do so in order to reach a fair and humane solution.

This dilemma is a human dilemma. These individuals came here as a result of misleading information. We met with them this morning. We were told that they sold everything to buy their tickets and to bring their families here. They did not do that to undermine our country. They do not wish to stay here to subvert this country. They came here with expectations and dreams. They were misled, yes, but they are in a human catch-22 situation. All we have suggested and continue to suggest to the Government is that these people are not refugees and that it should not break the law but that there is a compromise here to consider. We urge it to consider that compromise because there is considerable confusion in the system.

People will see that the Government permitted over a year convicted terrorists to stay in the country. There was the situation involving Mr. Finkel who was convicted of several crimes in several countries. He was given permission to stay here. Contra rebels, who may have been involved in atrocities in their homeland, have been allowed to come into Canada as refugees. We saw the entrance of Professor Georges Grossmann under humanitarian considerations. There is legitimate concern for who gets in and who gets out.

I see that you are indicating, Madam Speaker, that my time is nearly up. I conclude by asking the Minister, who is a fair-minded individual and a colleague from Toronto, one who understands well the dilemma of a multicultural, multiracial society and the role that immigration has played in the evolution of our own city and, indeed, of our country, to search, not for ways of breaking the law or undermining the refugee program, but a human solution that will address a human problem.

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Madam Speaker, I also wish to thank the Minister for having provided us with good advance notice of her statement in both official languages. I commend her in the short time in which she has been Minister for having acted as she did to go to meet with the Turks a few days ago and to meet with them again today. I know that there can hardly be anyone in the House who has a heavier load of duties than does the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mrs. McDougall). I am very glad that she undertook that face-to-

face meeting with the people who are perhaps to be deported from Canada.

However, I cannot agree with her statement. There is much in it that is reasonable. But there are certain points that I feel at best betray a lack of attention on her part to what has happened in the last few years.

For example, the Minister spoke at the beginning of her statement about respect for the Immigration Act, yet her Government I would add, not of course in her administration of the Act but previously, and the former Government in some ways treated the Act without respect and set an example that, unfortunately, has been followed by many people, especially the racketeers who found a loophole and have made millions and millions of dollars out of it.

I am particularly concerned that the Minister should consider that her Government, while she was a cabinet Minister, although not in this portfolio, from the fall of 1984 delayed and delayed action on this Bill. After the Supreme Court decision early in April of 1985 her Government delayed action to bring in a new law. After the Plaut report was received, held for several months, tabled and published in June of 1985, her Government referred it to the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration and asked for comments.

That committee studied it, heard the officials, who were supposed to have the information about how they conduct the refugee matters, heard the public, and every person from the public who came asked for respect for the Supreme Court decision. The committee reported in October of 1985. On the backlog specifically it reported in December of 1985.

The Minister's Government ignored that report, violating the standing rules of the House, and neglected entirely to answer any of the recommendations. A year and a half later it still has not taken action either to correct the weaknesses in the Immigration Act or to put in any of the recommendations asked for unanimously by that committee. In fact, it has allowed the backlog to grow alarmingly, far bigger than it had been before.

In May, one year ago, the Government introduced a Bill that flies in the face of the Supreme Court decision of three years ago that requires an oral hearing with all the meaning that that carries in national and international legislation.

The Minister talked about respect for the law. Bill C-55 flies in the face of the convention that Canada signed 20 years ago with the United Nations. The United Nations representative in Canada pointed out inconsistencies between the Bill and the convention and asked the Government to make amendments. Of course it did not order that amendments be made. Of course it put its concerns in gentle language because it has no coercive power. It can only try to persuade.

Every public witness out of several dozen witnesses that came before the House to speak on Bill C-55 condemned it for that reason as well as for others. The only public witness who