

Immigration Act, 1976

Canada will remain true to the remarkable reputation it has built up since World War II in the area of help to refugees by allowing more than half a million refugees to relocate on our soil.

We will continue to do so because we are aware of our heavy responsibilities. Because we respect the commitments we freely undertook under the Geneva Convention, which to us is neither a condition binding us to admit refugees from certain countries, nor a set of restrictions applicable even to refugees we accept, denying them for five years the right to work, restricting their freedom to move and forcing them to live in camps even though they have parents in the same country.

We will keep on showing our traditional humane attitude in our will to put an end internationally to political agitation and economic depression, injustice and intolerance, racism and persecution.

And we will maintain the same attitude in our personal commitments aimed at improving all our mechanisms and institutions which make it possible for us to govern and enforce the law.

Bill C-55 is part of this process. It is not an end in itself. It is not a universal remedy for all ills, under any circumstances, something which would be immutably and forever engraved in stone.

[English]

But within it there lies that fundamental commitment upon which we should and must agree.

Almost two generations ago the fledgling United Nations issued a proclamation which began with the following words:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.

As we approach the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we can number the world's refugees in the millions; 10 million, 15 million, perhaps even 20 million.

In this age of cynicism there is no great difficulty in finding grounds upon which to distrust the world's commitment to the refugee and to human rights.

But I say to Members of the House and to the people of Canada that they will not find such grounds within the actions of this Government.

[Translation]

As we were able to see last week or the week before at the Venice Summit, a voice continues to place human rights at the top of all agenda.

Our Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and our Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) continue to fight

against tyranny and injustice wherever they show their ugly heads. They made every effort to convince their opposite numbers that there is no room for compromise when human dignity is at stake.

Under their guidance, we are seeking solutions, whether abroad through our diplomatic action and development assistance, or even here in Canada, through our settlement programs which have never been so successful.

But we should have no illusion. Whatever its refugee status determination policy may be, Canada cannot solve this problem all by itself.

Yet, our first concern should be to help all those who need our assistance and protection.

As far as all the other people are concerned, whether they are recognized in other countries as refugees or economic migrants, Canada will always be prepared to entertain applications from those who meet our immigration criteria.

• (1610)

[English]

We hold that possibility open to all peoples of all races, all colours and all religions. We want new people, we need new people, and this Government is actively working to find those people. We have already increased immigration levels from what they were when we took office by almost 50 per cent. We are now working to see that actual landings correspond to those levels. For the future, we are seriously considering raising both levels and landings. These are not the policies of a Government which is anti-immigrant or anti-refugee. They are the policies of a Government which welcomes both and is committed to both.

Bill C-55 is an integral and honourable part of this commitment, a part which will work swiftly, fairly and justly. To the refugee in genuine need of our protection, it will say but one thing, welcome.

What have we actually done by bringing forward this refugee process? What is it that our process will do?

Mr. Berger: Bring shame on Canada.

Mr. Weiner: I am sure the Hon. Member does no justice or service to the real refugees, the people whom he and I would like to help, by his very unhelpful interventions.

The purpose of this Bill is to provide protection to those who need protection, a safe home to those who have no home. For people who already have a home, a roof over their heads, indeed, there is less priority and they should be applying as regular immigrants to this country. We have brought forward a process which is fair, quick and which balances reason with compassion. It is a very practical solution because in a very decisive manner it identifies and welcomes real refugees. However, abusers will be kept out. There is no room for fakes in this particular system. We are managing our resources