

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, September 22, 1987

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board)): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 106(8), I have the honour to table in both official languages the Government's response to petitions Nos. 332-2953, 332-2954, 332-2956 to 332-2958 inclusive, 332-2960 to 332-2963 inclusive and 332-2965.

[*English*]

OPPOSITION TO BILL C-55

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour this morning, perhaps quite appropriately since we are debating Bill C-55 at report stage, to present a number of petitions which come basically from across the country. I have petitions from London, Ontario, and Medicine Hat, Alberta. I have another one from the City of North York. The next are from the Vancouver and Edmonton areas. I have a petition signed by over 100 people from the City of Victoria, British Columbia, and the last petition originates from my own riding of York West.

Essentially, the petitioners call upon the Government to delete the prescreening stage of Bill C-55, together with the deletion of the safe third country provision. The petitioners feel that these two mechanisms should be deleted, and they are petitioning for a stronger mechanism for appeal so that Bill C-55 will be in line with the Canadian law and justice system. In fairness to the refugees who are deserving of our protection, the petitioners humbly pray that this House of Commons delete the pre-screening, safe third country provisions and beef up the appeal system.

• (1110)

UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO FAIR ORAL HEARINGS BEFORE REFUGEE BOARD

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by over 100 residents of Canada who oppose Bill C-55. They urge Parliament and the Government to withdraw it on the grounds that it will in fact keep away or send away many real refugees because of the defects in it.

Although the petition was written prior to the Bill being presented, it is still relevant after the amendment process. The petitioners point out the error of the safe third country concept and the lack of an appeal process. They state that there was a better system proposed two years ago by the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration.

They therefore request withdrawal of the Bill and replacement of it by a Bill that would provide fair, quick oral hearings of claims of refugee claimants before a refugee board independent of the Immigration Commission, universal access to such a hearing and the right to appeal on the basis of fact.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to present a petition pursuant to Standing Order 106 with regard to a matter which is before the House of Commons today. The petitioners are from eastern Canada, western Canada and central Canada.

They remind the House of Commons that the standing committee of Parliament dealing with immigration has proposed a new procedure for refugees. They suggest that if it is adopted it would fairly and effectively solve the problems of back-logs and the unsubstantiated claims. They indicate that it has the support of a variety of groups, including the Canadian Council of Churches, the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Jewish Congress and a whole set of other groups, as well as individuals who are knowledgeable on the matter of refugees.

Therefore they are asking the House of Commons to withdraw Bill C-55 from discussion and substitute it with legislation embodying the principles of fair and quick oral hearings of claims of refugee claimants before a refugee board that is independent of the Immigration Commission, universal access to such hearings for every applicant in Canada and, of course, the right to appeal on the basis of fact.