

*Immigration Act, 1976**[Translation]*

I commend him for the courage and generosity he has shown while defending the cause of refugees during the couple of years he was in our Committee.

[English]

I want to emphasize a point which has been made, that it is not reasonable to expect that a genuine refugee will always make his claim at the first moment. We have plenty of experience of bogus refugees making their claims at the first moment. That is the point; they have been coached.

I am told that there were 3,600 people who came from one country in Europe saying, "I am a Jehovah's Witness; if I go back there, I will be persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church". They would have no trouble with this clause. They would shoot right ahead and make their claim at the right time, because they paid somebody several thousands of dollars to coach them on how to do it.

Those are not the people I am concerned for. Those are not the people who will be caught by this clause if we do not amend it. They will not be caught by the clause if we amend it, but there will be people who will be unfairly caught by this clause if we do not amend it. Those will be the people, as the Hon. Member for La Prairie said, who come here nervous because of what they have gone through. In all or most cases they are in fact refugees, and what they have gone through to make them refugees in many cases also makes them nervous.

To tell them in effect, to borrow the words from another context, "speak now or forever hold your peace" is unreasonable. To marry people in our church, banns are called. We are notified that so and so will be married on such a day. When the day comes, everybody in the community has had that notice. When the officiant at the marriage is about to proceed with the act of making two people husband and wife, he says: "This is the end of the time for any objection or intervention. If anybody knows why they should not be husband and wife, speak now or forever hold your peace; don't interfere later if you don't interfere now".

Somehow or other that notion, which is quite reasonable in our marriage service, has been brought in here and turned upside down. This is not the end of a long inquiry and study. This is only the beginning of it, and it is the beginning of it only if the person knows what to say at that time. For some people there may even be a language problem. Not many refugee claimants come here speaking English as their first language. Of those few who do, many of them we suspect of not being genuine refugees.

These are the people who may have a language difficulty. These are the people who may have what we could call, in a very mild sense with great understatement, a culture gap.

Recently I met a group of refugees from a Latin American district. They were refugees from a country in which, in very recent months, the military has shot people demonstrating in the streets. Unarmed people, labour groups, or other groups

demonstrating in the streets for what we would consider to be normal human rights have been shot, very often beaten, and often arrested, for doing what we take for granted as normal action by citizens who wish to get together to make their point publicly.

They sought the help of my friend who made some of the arrangements which in our culture are the appropriate things to do, and who spoke their language—Spanish. When these people, newly in the country, refugees, for the purpose of this demonstration, asked my friend, "Will the police shoot at us?", she was more than a little startled by the question. When she assured them that they would not, they said: "Well, will they beat us or will they arrest us?" My friend assured them that they would not, and they asked: "How do you know they won't?" My friend brought out the police permit.

They had asked for help from people who know the ways in our country. One way is that if you are going to use the public streets for demonstration, you talk it over with the police to make sure that it will not cause undue disruption of traffic or perhaps a collision with another demonstration. That sometimes happens in Toronto streets. My friend had a police permit and showed it to these people. They were satisfied, and they came out for the demonstration.

• (1340)

I think those people at that point learned something about Canada, but I am glad they learned, and I believe every Member of this House is glad they learned, that in Canada demonstrators are not normally shot at, beaten or arrested by police. There may be incidents involving such things, especially arrest from time to time, but it is not the normal way that demonstrators, the police and the public conduct affairs in Canada. That illustrates the baggage that a refugee may carry with him when he comes to Canada. If I stick my neck out against authority, if I question or challenge authority, can I be shot, beaten or jailed?

I grew up in Canada. The only year I was out of town was when I was in Chicago. Sometimes Chicago has a reputation for violence, but I did not notice it because I was at the university. I have been fortunate to live in a very peaceful country. I was shocked, as my young friend was, to hear stories like that of the expectations or fears of people when they come here.

We are told by the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) that a humanitarian element is in the Bill through a recent amendment, which was proposed in the last few hours of the committee hearings, that is supposed to help the process. I am sure the Hon. Member thinks that that will be understood in the way he intends it by all concerned. What it amounts to is another prescreening. It seems that the Government, as far as possible, is adamantly opposed to letting people state their refugee claims. The Government has now introduced prescreening. It is on page 16—at least that is what I