

Immigration Act, 1976

way they are. However, I think the responsibility of this House is to ensure that we have a system that works, a system that is efficient, generous and fair, in the way most Canadians want their system to work.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to interrupt the debate but I just wanted to point out to Members that this was the maiden speech of the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain. I want to compliment her on it. I may not agree with everything she says, but I do compliment her on it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 66, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The Hon. Member for Cochrane—Superior (Mr. Penner)—Indian Affairs—Post-secondary education assistance program; the Hon. Member for Surrey—White Rock—North Delta (Mr. Friesen)—External Affairs—Nicaragua—reported banning of Conservative Party. (b) Access to political prisoners; the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Ms. Dewar)—Employment—retraining of laid-off older workers. (b) Request for ministerial commitment.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

IMMIGRATION ACT, 1976

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Bouchard that Bill C-55, an Act to amend the Immigration Act, 1976 and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, let me begin my remarks on Bill C-55 by recalling once more the chain of events which led to the recall of the Parliament of Canada from recess. Going back to August of 1986, Members will recall the arrival of 150 so-called Tamil refugees off the coast of Newfoundland. When that event happened, most Canadians were prepared to give the benefit of the doubt to the new arrivals and in that connection they were allowed to come into and remain in Canada. But what surprised a great many Canadians was the process by which these people entered Canada.

They were shocked in many cases to recognize and to understand, and to be told, that there was no real way these people, the so-called Tamils, could be prevented from coming into Canada or could be not allowed to stay here. This quite understandably led to a review of the refugee provisions. I think it is fair to say that that led the Government to construct the legislative provisions now contained in Bill C-55. It was introduced in the House of Commons in May, 1987. Some people say that it took too long a time, but who can judge the process? Sometimes legislation takes months, sometimes it takes years. The fact is that there was a Bill introduced in the House of Commons in May of 1987. It was debated and brought before the Members of the House of Commons on June 18, 1987. The representative of the Liberal Party, the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi), introduced an amendment at that time which would give the Bill a six-months hoist which would put it into oblivion. That amendment was supported by the New Democratic Party. We just voted on and defeated that amendment a few moments ago in the House of Commons. That is why we are here. It is because the opposition Parties did not want Bill C-55 processed.

That is what we are talking about in relation to refugees. We are talking about legal process. We are not talking about the status of individuals. We are not talking about the fear and pestilence that pervades many countries in the world. We are not talking about people escaping from persecution. We are talking about the legal process. This Parliament of Canada, this House of Commons, is responsible for the legal process in this country. However, what has happened is that we as Members of Parliament have abdicated that responsibility by moving amendments like the six-months hoist for legislative measures such as Bill C-55 instead of coming up with constructive legislation to deal with what is the real problem in the process.

That brings me to July 12, 1987 when there arrived on the coast of Nova Scotia 174 East Indians who entered Canada illegally and said: "We are refugees", and our system collapses because our system does not handle that situation. Why does it not handle that situation? Because once one is in Canada claiming to be a refugee then the legal process no longer works.

• (1620)

It was said that we were faced with our obligations under the UN Convention respecting refugees. I think Canadians were shocked and outraged to learn that under that UN Convention a person in Canada claiming to be a refugee is entitled, for example, to access to the courts and to legal counsel in connection with that access. They are even entitled to public relief. Article 23 of the convention states that the contracting state shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the same treatment with respect to public relief and assistance as is accorded to its nationals. Not only do we have to accept refugees under certain circumstances, we have