

• (1640)

I suggest it would be very prudent for us to pay close attention to these three amendments, particularly Motions Nos. 29 and 34 which speak to the commitment which we have as a nation to the Geneva Convention. I do not think we would be very well advised to move away from those commitments and support the orbiting of individuals as though they were pinballs in a pinball machine. No one wants to go through life that way. No one appreciates being bandied about, unable to find a home.

As a privileged society we have a responsibility to ensure that these people do not become the pinballs of the international community. If we play pinball with refugees, the problem will not go away. We will not make life easier in our country for coming generations. The problem is an international one and the solution, therefore, is also an international one. If we play pinball with refugees, in the year 2000 the Member of Parliament for York West will still be dealing with this unsolved problem.

Let us take this opportunity, keep in mind the international commitment under the Geneva Convention, and do what ought to be done. Let us give leadership to other countries. Let us not send the message to other countries that Canada has enacted Bill C-55, thereby giving them cause to say that if Canada did it they can do it. If they do it as well, we will have an international corridor of locked doors, all sending refugees to the next door down the hall where they will receive the very same response. At the end of the corridor will be one hell of a frustrated and desperate human being who will resort to anything to save his or her life and who will give more business to the immoral immigration consultants who wish to reap immoral profits from human desperation.

Let us hold our heads up high. If the Government wants to break the Geneva Convention, let it do so in a courageous way rather than through the back door.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Madam Speaker, it has been a long time since I have had a sense of uncertainty and unhappiness in speaking in the House of Commons. I still cannot believe that the Government is going to do what it intends to do. Over the past three years I have come to know that the members of the Government are, for the most part, honourable Members of this House committed to thinking issues through and considering them with rationality.

I cannot believe that those same Members are pushing through the House of Commons a major and fundamental change in the way in which our country will treat some of the poorest and most unfortunate people in the world. They are pushing it through with no deference to the many people who would have liked to have made contributions to the committee discussions but were told that these measures had to be rushed through because we were dealing with a national emergency brought upon us by 174 Sikhs.

Immigration Act, 1976

There will be a reckoning in the country for what the Government is doing. That can be foreseen in the words of the woman from Nova Scotia quoted in the *Globe and Mail* this morning who said that they decided that they would make peanut butter sandwiches and try to act like human beings. That is what the House of Commons, in one of the most fortunate, richest, and largest country in the world, should be doing. We should be looking at the desperate plight of people throughout the world. Instead of trying to create a very difficult system for refugees to penetrate, we should be looking at the circumstances which face people throughout this world and exercising charity, humanity and openness.

I can tell Members of this House about things I have seen in this world. I have seen refugee camps in Somalia where people are forced to eke out a bare subsistence for families far larger than the average family in this country on an acre and a half of land. I could talk about the plains of Nepal where people have been forced onto the most difficult agricultural lands imaginable to try to provide for themselves the barest necessities. I could talk of people throughout the countries of western Africa who live in a claustrophobic closeness which makes it almost impossible for them to get the barest of necessities. I could talk about people in the Kisumu area of Kenya where the average land holding of a family of 20 is two to three hectares. It is no wonder that throughout the world people are trying to better their lives, just as my ancestors tried to find a part of the world for themselves where they could see a future rather than nothing but desperation.

• (1650)

One could talk about Ethiopia and Namibia and what has been created there by government oppression. One could talk about the devastation created by South Africans in southern Angola.

The point is that ours is a country of tremendous opportunity and potential. We should be welcoming many of the people in the world who are facing the kind of desperation which we can barely imagine. It is the kind of desperation which we saw in Ethiopia and which made my constituents weep and help to send boatloads of grain to those refugees. The spirit of this country is not reflected by the miserly, Scrooge-like attitude brought to the House by the Government.

Rather, one sees in this country a tremendous generosity of spirit in the ordinary person. It is a generosity of spirit which leads us to give great contributions to development, to missionary efforts and to provision of food whenever there is disaster in any part of the world. That is the real Canada. That is the Canada which the Government has forgotten to the point where it is lost in a fog that leads to this kind of legislation, which proposes tricky, sneaky and nasty ways of keeping people out of this country.

At the very least, these people should have a chance to apply to a refugee determination board. At the very least, those who