

Government Orders

minister stood before the Canadian people and said: "See, I am doing something", when in fact he or she was doing nothing but avoiding real action.

That is what is going on here. That is what the current minister of immigration is doing. That is what the government has done in so many areas. An overwhelming deficit and high taxation threaten to relegate this once great country to third world status. The response to this crisis is that the government wants to raise taxes and to make some non-offensive cuts to government spending. Then it says: "We are doing something", when in fact things are getting worse.

Crime threatens the security of our neighbourhoods and the tranquillity that Canadians have long taken for granted and considered their birthright. The government says: "Let us pass a gun control law. See, we are doing something", when in fact nothing is being done about the real problem.

We have an immigration system that is out of control. The government gives us Bill C-44 and says: "See, we are doing something", when in fact it is doing nothing at all. It is all smoke and mirrors and more of the same. It is cynical politics designed to fool the Canadian people into thinking that something is being done.

There is something that can be done. There is a way to clean up our immigration mess. The Reform Party has led the way and has put itself on the line. We have taken the high road by offering real solutions.

The IRB is a large part of the immigration problem. We have offered a solution. Disband the IRB. Subsume its functions under the minister. Take more refugees from abroad. Tighten up our inland process so that it is more in line with the determination systems of other countries and is not driven by special interests. We have offered 13 proposals which, if enacted, would make the refugee system work better for both Canadians and refugees. It is a win-win situation.

• (1325)

We have told the minister to exercise his powers to stop those that abuse the system by making appeal after appeal and to stop refugee hearings that are manifestly unfounded. We have told the government to cut the total number of immigrants to levels that are internally proportionate, numbers that the immigration department can handle, numbers that would still make Canada the world leader in immigration. We have told the government to increase the percentage of immigrants who come from the independent category.

C.D. Howe, as reported in the *Globe and Mail*, agrees with this proposal. Raising the number of independent immigrants would have the effect of making immigration a net positive for Canada. It would cut the \$700 million bill for family reunification and cut the number of people who would come to Canada unchecked with questionable backgrounds.

The minister claimed to have done this but anyone able to read a column of numbers knows that he was not on the mark. The numbers of family class immigrants under the minister's most recent targets actually goes up, not down. Smoke and mirrors, more of the same.

We have offered real solutions, not bogus solutions like Bill C-44. We have said that the government and the immigration minister must be accountable. He must do more than just introduce faulty legislation that gives the impression of action without addressing any of the real problems or resulting in real benefit. We have offered solutions and they have been ignored by the government.

I urge my hon. colleagues, through you, Mr. Speaker, to vote no on this bill. Members, like the people of Canada, may have been talked into believing that the bill will solve some of the problems plaguing immigration policy today. I am here to tell them, with all sincerity and with partisanship aside, that it will not. I am here to tell them that the bill is just an excuse for inaction. It is an excuse for a minister who does not want to exercise the power already available to him, a minister who wants to pass the buck.

For those on both sides of the House who want to represent their constituents, who are truly concerned about making a difference, making government work and making government accountable, I urge members to read the bill and discuss it with people in the know from either side of the ideology fence. Once they have had their concerns validated from their own trusted resources I urge them to do the right thing and vote no on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Following the minister's intervention and that of the two critics, members during the next five hours will be allowed up to a maximum of 20-minute interventions subject to a 10-minute question or comment period.

Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Norfolk, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with honour that I rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill C-44.

Leaving my prepared text for a minute, I want to say that many of the concerns brought forward by the Reform Party relating to enforcement and the resources in the department are also shared by the minister, all Canadians and myself. We live in difficult fiscal times and budget constraints are a reality for many departments. I know that probably the finance minister was listening with real interest when people said that we should spend more money in the immigration department. The minister of immigration would probably support that.

Let me begin by talking a little about my riding. I come from an area where immigration is an important issue but certainly not one of the main issues. My riding is on the north shore of Lake Erie. It has been settled by wave after wave of immigration, like many parts of this country have been. Originally it was settled by people from Britain, primarily by Scots. More recent-