

Immigration Act, 1976

speaking in the House of Commons, I felt it was important that I share with Members of the House the experience I had when we called for our community to adopt and sponsor 4,000 refugees in 1979. While the Government of the day had a quota of 8,000, we challenged communities across the country to sponsor these refugees. There was an overwhelming response in the country and within a month the quota was changed to 50,000.

I believe all Canadians were very proud of the Indo-Chinese who came here, and I think the Government of the Right Hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) and his Minister of Immigration, the present Minister of Communications (Miss MacDonald), certainly deserve credit for their action.

It is a tragic and sad day for our country to be faced with the legislation in front of us now. It partly results from the generous action that was taken in 1979 because the number of refugees coming to Canada began to increase. Of course, the cumbersome method of defining a refugee was in place, a very cumbersome method which has not been able to respond to the need. I do not believe there is any disagreement across the country nor in this House, from what I have heard, about queue jumping. No one wants anyone to jump the queue. Certainly those people who arrive on our shores legally are not queue jumping. The real problem is that the present Government has cut back on family reunification by 10 per cent. Therefore, people who have applied and have been waiting for many years in the proper way, through the proper channels, are feeling bitter and angry because the numbers have been cut back.

• (1610)

I am disappointed when I hear some Hon. Members refer to things they heard from their constituents which do not always encompass the most altruistic kind of feelings. I can be a witness to some of the letters and phone calls I received when we put forth Project 4000. They were not always very complimentary. Some things that were said were less than what we would want to hear from people. However, I think we countered that reaction by showing that there was the other part of Canadian society who opened their arms and hearts, showing their generosity and proving we have a better country today because those 50,000 refugees came to Canada.

I feel that what has motivated many of us strongly is that we realize we are not proud of our fathers and mothers who allowed the kind of legislation to happen—and a lot of it was not legislation but regulation—that said many Jewish people had to go back and be murdered because we would not open our hearts and arms to them.

In examining this Bill we can recognize that it is just as cumbersome. We are not allowing people who are declaring themselves as refugees to have even full access to counsel. Because of this there will be people who will have to go back to

the country which will persecute them before we ever realize it what we have done.

I am sure some of that rationale was expressed in these very Chambers in 1939. I hope we will not be part of encouraging that kind of thing to happen again. Certainly reports that have come from non-governmental organizations, from the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration and from Rabbi Plaut have all recommended things which I believe Canadians can live with and be proud of. What is really being said in those reports is that we want to have a fair and efficient system. We want to have a system where people can be heard, where they can be seen to have universal accessibility.

I was quite shocked to hear yesterday that people did not understand what universal accessibility was. All we are talking about is that it does not matter what colour one's skin is or what part of the planet one comes from, we are all part of the human family and should have the right to be heard. That is all we are saying. At the moment there are about 20,000 refugees in this country who have been here for four or five years.

Mr. McDermid: More.

Ms. Dewar: Yes, and probably more, because the process, has been so cumbersome. Because of this cumbersome process what we are going to do is to punish people who are running for their lives.

I come from a riding which has some very strongly committed volunteers who work day and night to help save the lives of some people from Central America. It seems to me that as these volunteers help to get these people into Canada, not only will they be seen to be criminals but certainly the people whose lives they are attempting to save will not be saved. I think that is something that is very serious. I do not think it is something that anyone in this country wants to have happen.

Surely the Government will recognize, through all the presentations made to it individually and through committee, that there is an easier way to accomplish what it wants to accomplish. I think today, the day we are speaking on this legislation, is the day to say to the Government that there is another way. We agree with the goals it is trying to attain but it is doing it in a very punitive way. Surely to goodness we are talking about a global village where we all live as part of the human family. We are saying that within that human family there are ways of dealing with each other's problems without causing chaos. Without causing chaos we can save each other's lives if we have legislation that is efficient.

I would heartily recommend to the Government that it withdraw this Bill. I believe we should begin to have a parallel system, one which deals with refugee determination efficiently and quickly as well as one which deals with immigration separately.

Right now the Canadian public is very confused about the chaos the system is in. I do not blame them for reacting the