

Immigration Act, 1976

coming to Canada before the late 1950s or the early 1960s of people who were non-white.

But we changed our approach in the late 1950s and early 1960s and permitted a large number of immigrants to come here from eastern and southern Europe, Africa, Asia, South and Central America. One has only to travel around any city in Canada to see the changes that have taken place because we permitted large numbers of refugees and a much broader group of immigrants to come here. After all, we reacted to events in Poland, Hungary, Uganda, Chile and more recently El Salvador and Guatemala in a relatively generous way.

On my way home from Ottawa a couple of weeks ago, I stopped to make a few purchases at a supermarket which happens to be located in the constituency of Winnipeg North Centre. As I stood waiting at the cash register I could not help but notice that among others who were waiting to pay for their purchases were people who came originally from Asia, either Chinese or Vietnamese, from India, the Philippines, Africa and from Central or South America. Canada has changed in a major way and that change will continue and accelerate.

Why suddenly do we get this Bill and these very restrictive proposals that are contained in it? The Minister of State for Immigration (Mr. Weiner) said earlier today that there was widespread support for Bill C-84. I do not know where he comes from but I know in my City of Winnipeg that this Bill has been met by universal opposition. I am certain that for every letter I have received indicating support for this Bill, I have received 25 expressing opposition.

● (1700)

Ethnic organizations, labour organizations and all of the major church organizations have expressed their opposition to what is contained in this Bill. I must ask why the Government brought this Bill forward. Is it based upon some kind of principles it has adopted? I cannot believe that. After all, just over a year ago when a boatload of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka who had apparently spent some time in Holland and Germany arrived on the East Coast, they were greeted and welcomed by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) who said that Canada would always welcome genuine refugees. A year later, there was a similar situation. The only difference was that instead of Tamils from Sri Lanka, there were some 150 refugees from India who arrived on the East Coast. This time the reaction of the Government was to bring in this very tough, regressive Bill.

What has changed? Nothing has changed except that the Government now perceives itself to be in a great deal of difficulty with the Canadian public. It has read the polls and has realized that after the people gave them the largest majority the country has ever seen, it is now and has been for some considerable time in third place according to the polls. That is why we have got this Bill.

Mr. Jepson: Temporary insanity.

Mr. Orlikow: The Hon. Member has said that it is temporary. If the Hon. Member wants to keep on whistling in the dark, he is welcome to it. When a Party has been in third place for almost 18 months, it will take some pretty drastic changes to get it back on top.

Let us look at some of the things for which this Bill provides. Let us remember that legislation dealing with refugees could have been brought in long ago. It could have been brought in a year ago or more. Let us remember that without changing the legislation, the regulations could have been changed.

A year or so ago, several thousand phoney refugee claimants came to Canada, not stealthily by boat but by plane from Portugal, Turkey and Brazil. Everyone who was interested in immigration and refugee problems knew that these were phoney claimants. Everyone knew that there are not thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses in Portugal, to take just one example of the people who came here claiming refugee status, and that Jehovah's Witnesses are not persecuted or prosecuted in Portugal. These people came here because they were told, probably by people who made a substantial amount of money for giving this advice and making the arrangements for them, that by coming to Canada to claim refugee status, they would probably be permitted to settle here and to stay as landed immigrants, whereas they would not be permitted to do so if they applied to come as immigrants in the normal and legal way.

The Government could have and should have dealt with that situation immediately by requiring people coming from those countries to get visas to come here. However, the Government dithered and delayed so several thousand, not 150 like the Sikhs or the Tamils, phoney claimants were permitted to come here and to stay, if not permanently, then certainly for some considerable time, because the Government could not get its act together.

That Bill gives public servants the power to turn back ships without permitting those on the ships who would like to claim that they should be permitted to stay in Canada because they are refugees to do so. I am certain that this power is a violation of our obligations under the agreements made by and through the United Nations. I think that this kind of provision is absolutely unacceptable. Even if it is legal, and I believe it is not, it is certainly morally inexcusable.

Let me deal with another clause which I find hard to understand. In fact, I cannot understand how any Government in this day and age would include in a Bill this kind of provision. I am talking about the provision in the Bill which makes it an offence punishable by fines and by prison if those found guilty refuse to pay fines for anyone to help a person to come into Canada without a visa, a passport or a travel document. I could understand that kind of clause if the people who would be liable to arrest, trial and conviction were only the people who did that sort of thing for financial gain. Undoubtedly there are unscrupulous, dishonest individuals, ships' captains, lawyers and immigration consultants—not