

status their case can be determined by a member of the refugee determination board and a member of the Immigration Department. If, in certain circumstances, it is very clear there is no legitimate claim to refugee status, that person will be removed from Canada.

There are criteria by which cases would not proceed to a further hearing; "persons recognized as refugees by another country, persons who can be returned to a safe third country and persons under a removal order, those who have made repeat claims or those whose claims have no arguable basis", and there are lots of those. In fact we know that over the past few years the number of those coming to Canada who claim refugee status has increased from 1,600 in 1980 to 18,000 in 1986 and for the first seven months of 1987, they totalled 16,500. Seventy percent of these claims have been unfounded.

I believe we should look at this problem as reasonable men and women with a responsibility for making laws and think through how they should be implemented. A reasonable person would recognize that what we are trying to do is put in a system by which we can weed out that 70 percent or least deter them from coming to Canada in the first place because they will know they will not get through the system. With that in place, the legitimate refugees will be dealt with expeditiously, so they can quickly enter into the fabric of Canadian society. Those kinds of tools are available in the Bill before us.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre expressed a number of concerns which I believe are really not quite fair when we look at the situation carefully. I have talked to a number of people involved in refugee determination work. These people actually hear the cases. They have told me that once one is involved, one quickly can appreciate and understand the difference between legitimate and illegitimate claimants. There are people who claim refugee status who are very quickly known not to be refugees. It is not a big deal. That can be done quickly and safely and they can be sent back to the country from which they came.

At the same time we must have a system where there can be a fair hearing when there is any doubt at all that a person may be a legitimate refugee. Bill C-55 provides for the due process of law. Where either one or two of the persons receiving the information to begin with have any doubts, it will go on to the next stage. The new refugee determination board, will be able to hear the case in a matter of weeks so that possibly within a period of seven to 12 weeks there will be a final determination and the claimant will either be returned or will be able to stay in Canada to start to build a new life. In the present situation it can sometimes take a year, two years and even up to four years before a person's status is finally verified. As politicians we all know the problems that involves. Once a person has been in Canada for four or five years and has established ties, it becomes very emotional and very difficult to remove that person. It is really not fair to any of us.

Bill C-55, taken in conjunction with Bill C-84, will give us the tools and the system by which we can genuinely determine

the refugee status of those who would seek to enter Canada legally and deal effectively with those who would try to come here illegally. It will deal with the concerns of Canadians who want us to have that kind of control over our borders and our future.

There are other longer term issues which need to be addressed. Obviously much work needs to be done on the international scene in our role and responsibility in the movement of refugees around the world. Much work needs to be done in order to familiarize and involve Canadians in immigration policy in terms of its goals, objectives and numbers. In this way they can take a greater part in that discussion.

● (1350)

These are issues which my colleagues and I will work on over a period of time. I would like to ask now for the co-operation of all Members of the House in terms of moving quickly and expeditiously on Bill C-55 so that it can finally become law.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member but her time has expired.

It being 1:50 p.m., I will now leave the Chair until 2 p.m. After Oral Question Period the Hon. Member will have 10 minutes for questions and comments.

At 1:51 p.m. the House took recess.

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#### AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

### STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 21

[English]

#### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

##### ENVIRONMENT CANADA—GOVERNMENT POLICY

**Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport):** Mr. Speaker, the report that the Government is again withholding information about toxic chemicals and human health is only the latest in a series of events that demonstrates that the Government does not see Environment Canada playing an advocate role to protect the public.

It started with the St. Clair River "blob" in 1985 when the Minister criticized his scientists for being open and honest with the public. Then a pamphlet entitled "Storm Warning" was withheld from distribution for one year. Communication between Environment Canada and the public has been centralized in Ottawa in an attempt to avoid further embarrassment to the Minister. Scientists are no longer allowed to give opinions that differ from his. In 1986 the Deputy Minister