

Mr. Heap: Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend my colleague for his comments which have opened up some aspects of this discussion which are not possible for everyone to deal with in a 20-minute speech. I think it is very important that he has opened them up. One aspect particularly that he developed is the situation of trade unionists, co-operative leaders and other community leaders, school teachers and so on in El Salvador or Guatemala, Central America. The operation of the death squads subsided a little for a while but it is now on the increase again both during 1987 and into 1988 in both countries. Because of that terror, organized with guns provided by the United States, many of the people of both countries have fled, and particularly those who could be identified as grass-roots or community democratic leaders. He has made that point. However, I would ask him to extend the point a little further, if he will, as to how it is that those people, if they attempt to enter Canada, fall afoul of Bill C-84 or the other legislation which is the companion piece to it, Bill C-55, because many of them may arrive at Fort Erie, at ports of entry nearer to Thunder Bay or to Winnipeg or wherever, without a Canadian visa, a visa permitting them to enter into Canada. This is particularly important because of that clause in Bill C-84 which the other place sought to amend with the support of all the public representatives except, of course, the immigration officials.

• (1640)

These people who come to a port of entry with any assistance from a Canadian are considered to be entering illegally under the Minister's interpretation and therefore the Canadian is subject to a couple of years in prison or a bigger penalty if there is a larger group involved. I would ask the Hon. Member to comment on why it is that last year we did have thousands of such people coming to our border, the U.S.-Canadian border, without adequate documentation, or perhaps people in similar situations coming by air or even by boat without adequate documentation.

The question is, how does the Hon. Member respond to the position taken by this Government and by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary that those people must be kept out and that Canadians who help those people are penalized, even if it just means bringing them to a port of entry and saying to the immigration officer at the port of entry: "Here is a Salvadoran without a visa but who is in danger in his own country and is not allowed to stay in the United States and therefore is claiming refugee status"? How does the Hon. Member justify the person coming without a visa to Canada?

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the question and it is very apt because there is a very active Central American support group in Thunder Bay. Lloyd Jones who has been working very hard for many years providing support for refugees has raised this matter with me.

If for some reason you, Mr. Speaker, were a resident of El Salvador and thought that the death squad was about to show

up at your door, usually in the middle of the night, you would take off. You would try to get out of the country.

It is a little difficult, when fleeing a country, to go by the Canadian Embassy in order to get a visa. When a refugee has escaped his country, he faces a catch-22 situation. He cannot go back to get a visa because someone will be watching the compound and noting who goes there, and if he is on a list, he will not be seen after he comes out. Because of the involvement of the United States Government in sponsorship, funding and weapons procurement, it is difficult to follow the suggestion of stopping off in Minneapolis and going to the consulate there to try to get a Canadian visa. The United States is not necessarily a safe haven. There has been at least one case in the last three or four months of an individual being refused at the Canadian border, sent back to the United States, a so-called safe haven, and then being deported by the United States back to the Central American country.

The intention of the amendment from the other place is to provide for a process whereby someone coming to a Canadian border, whether by car, on foot or by plane, can get documentation and have a review to determine whether or not he is a bona fide refugee. The amendment seeks to provide for that rather than having someone arbitrarily saying to a refugee: "No, you go back, we do not want you". Sometimes the answer depends on what side of the bed the border guard got up on that morning. We must have a legal process that is very quick in its response but is also very humanitarian.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the scenario the two Members from the New Democratic Party have drawn of a person who fears for his life in El Salvador wanting to come to Canada. Perhaps the Hon. Member could tell me if it is not true that the U.S. Government has agreed with Canada that any Central American in the United States who has applied for transit papers to Canada or has an application in process to come to Canada will not be acted on by the United States. I think he will find that that is true, and since it is indeed true, why would it be more advantageous for someone coming to Canada to apply for refugee status—I will wait until the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap) has finished coaching the Hon. Member from Thunder Bay. Since the Hon. Member made such an informed speech on the subject, I am surprised that he needs coaching from the Hon. Member for Spadina.

Be that as it may, why would it be necessary for a refugee to come to a Canadian border point to see an immigration officer? What service could he get there that he could not get from an immigration officer at any consulate in the United States, and there are about a dozen or more consulates?

As a matter of fact, when the Mennonites appeared before the committee, they testified that they do not bring refugees to the Canadian border if they can possibly help it because they prefer to go through a consulate in the United States since it is better for the refugees. If it can be done at an office in the United States, the refugees can complete the process and be