

the Official Opposition in the House of Commons, Lucien Bouchard. Thanks to his courage and determination he was able to survive a terrible disease and win a very tough fight for his life. He will soon be back in this House and in the political arena. I wish to say to him how happy and proud of him we are. Quebec needs Mr. Bouchard.

I rise to participate in the debate at third reading on Bill C-44, an act to amend the Immigration Act and the Citizenship Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Customs Act. This bill was introduced and read the first time in the House of Commons on June 17, 1994. It passed second reading on September 27 and was then referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The committee tabled its report after hearing many individuals and organizations interested in this bill. Bill C-44 was debated at report stage in this House on December 12, 1994.

According to its authors, the bill has the following objectives: prevent a person convicted of a crime punishable by a term of imprisonment of 10 years or more in Canada or abroad from claiming refugee status; give immigration officers the authority to seize documents sent by international mail that could be used for fraudulent purposes; remove from the Immigration Appeal Division appeals based on grounds of equity, when the minister believes the appellant to be a danger to the public—from what I just heard, he will use this power very often—; take away from a person affected by this the right to appeal, on the grounds that they represent a security risk.

As I have said time and again, we in the Bloc Québécois say that the state and the government have the right and the duty to protect Canada and Quebec against criminals whatever their origins.

• (1220)

We agree that entry should be denied to immigrants and refugee claimants who have committed major crimes against persons in their country of origin and decide to flee to Canada, given our reputation as host country. While recognizing that there are problems with the criminal activity of refugees and immigrants, we suggest that the government already has all the legal and administrative means to deal with this situation.

For example, under the present legislation, Bill C-86, the minister has the power to have war criminals and anyone who has perpetrated a crime against humanity removed. But the government is taking no action against criminals in this category. Several Nazis still live in Canada. Léon Mugesera, said to be a Rwandan criminal by his own community, has not yet been expelled, in spite of the questions I have put to the minister in this House.

Government Orders

The law presently states that persons convicted of an offence outside of Canada are inadmissible to the refugee claim determination system when there are reasonable grounds to believe that the offence of which they have been convicted may constitute an offence punishable under a Canadian Act of Parliament by a maximum term of imprisonment of ten years or more and when the Minister of Immigration is satisfied that they might be a threat to public safety in Canada.

This is good enough for me, but I must point out that the Canadian Council for Refugees wants this clause that I just read to be deleted. Needless to say, they object to it being expanded to include permanent residents.

This bill is an excessive and disproportionate response to the two murders committed in Toronto in the spring of 1994 by foreign nationals. It was produced hastily, without any prior consultations, in spite of the fact that the minister promised when he took office that national consultations on the immigration policy would be held, at a cost of over \$1 million.

Even the counsels and groups who work with immigrants and refugees were surprised. This bill is this Liberal government's response to the drastic and reactionary positions endorsed by the Reform Party. This bill, and several statements made by the minister, reflect a shift to the right by the Liberal Party of Canada.

It is very unfortunate that the government rejected every amendment moved by the opposition. The Liberal majority had already rejected the Bloc Québécois proposals during the clause by clause study of the bill. Moreover, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration took, at the report stage, the same inflexible stance as his Liberal colleagues in the legislative committee, rejecting over 20 amendments I personally moved on behalf of the Bloc Québécois as well as those put forth by my colleague from Laval East.

One of our amendments, for example, was designed to exclude from the application of the new legislation landed immigrants who have resided in Canada for ten years or more, as is currently the case in Australia and several other countries. Some of these people have no emotional ties with their country of origin. As it stands, there are people who have been living in this country for over 40 years who could now be removed. The minister and the Liberal majority have rejected this perfectly valid amendment moved by the Bloc Québécois.

• (1225)

Many organizations testified before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, including: the Canadian council for refugees, which is a very well-respected organization in that sector; the national immigration law section of the Canadian bar association; the Canada employment and immigration union; the United Nations high commissioner for refugees; the Canadian section of Amnesty International; the national action