

*Immigration Act, 1976*

body may review a claim by reading the transcript rather than going by hearsay.

In the time allotted to me on third reading stage I want to reiterate our concerns about many things. We are concerned about the message this Bill will send to the international community and to those countries which subscribe to the United Nations Convention. There are essentially three concluding remarks I would like to leave with the House.

First, we must play a role of international leadership. We cannot look to other countries with substandard refugee protection laws. We won the Nansen Medal for a good reason. For the very first time, the Nansen Medal was won by a people as opposed to an individual or an organization. That suggests that Canada has set the trends and standards by which countries should be measured. Therefore, it is very important that we maintain that leadership, inspiration and encouragement to other countries to stay the course. We do not want to lead the international community in the wrong direction. If we do, we will not help provide an international solution to what is an international problem.

We do not want to be the architects of an international corridor of locked doors. By the time a refugee gets to the end of a corridor of locked doors, he is a desperate individual who is fighting for his life and liberty. When a human being is in a desperate state of mind, he fights back. That opens up opportunities for manipulators and smugglers who feed off human misery and desperation. Rather than encouraging people to come through the front door, this piece of legislation will encourage refugees to believe that the only way their claims will be assessed is if they come through the back door and try to rough it out. That is the wrong message. While there may be a short-term gain the Government wishes to sell, the long-term viability of the policy will be under attack.

The second part of my conclusion is that the Government owes Canada a clear vision of its immigration objectives and goals. It needs to trigger an enlightened and mature national debate. It needs to articulate a national goal for immigration. It needs to talk about immigration as a national building block and to talk about it in a positive and constructive way. It should not do something reactionary as it did when it introduced Bill C-84 at a time when some 300 individuals came to Canada while there is a backlog of thousands upon thousands lined up.

The Government must take into consideration our dwindling birth rate and our aging population. Some 50,000 people leave the country every year and we have a small population of base of only some 26 million people. We have a large land mass and great economic needs. We must still go abroad to find those with education that is not provided here. The Government must take cognizance of these factors and trends and ask how immigration can address them. It must ask how immigration can help Canada build a newer, better and more improved country. It must ask how many immigrants this country can absorb.

What is the reality of the refugees who have been in Canada for five years? Are they milking the system or is the vast majority just as productive as every other Canadian citizen? Some of the studies which are available but are not promoted offer a very rosy picture of the refugee experience in Canada.

The vast majority of the 106,000 Vietnamese boat people whom Canada accepted as refugees are now Canadian citizens and are doing very, very well. Many of them have jobs or have opened small businesses. They have integrated into the community. In many cases, their children are doing better than their peers in the educational system. These people are doing well. They are tomorrow's leaders and tomorrow's Members of Parliament.

That is the reality of the majority. I know that we cannot have an ideal world in which there is no abuse of workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, CPP disability payments and the like. There is abuse by immigrants and non-immigrants, young and old, people who have been here for many years and those who are here only a few weeks. You strive to eliminate that abuse, but what is the over-all picture? If it is positive, if it contributes to this country we call Canada, then let us show it to other Canadians. Let us remove the fear and pacify the critics among us. If the picture is positive, then the Government has a responsibility to demonstrate that and promote it rather than manipulate public opinion and fabricate a crisis which does not exist except in the imagination of government Members. That is the responsibility of a progressive Government because this country was built in partnership with immigrants.

● (1550)

Immigration is the most emotional area of federal public policy. When I go back to my riding office there is nothing more emotional than an immigration problem. People cannot understand why a relative cannot come here. A person cannot understand why his or her cousin, a refugee, cannot come here. Someone cannot understand why someone else was refused a visitor's visa. On and on and on. We must be very careful how we deal with an emotionally charged issue like this.

The Government must define the number of refugees in this program. It must define the number for family class immigrants. Is that the most important? If not, why? How many business immigrants should we encourage? Many? Few? Somewhere in between? How many visitors should we allow in? Should they all have visas? How many visas should we provide for foreign students? What about the people who complain that their son or daughter is bumped from school by some foreign student? What is the story on student visas? Many reports show that those people, when they go back to their own country, become ambassadors for Canada. If one of those foreign students ends up as the marketing director of a company in his own country, then you can bet your bottom dollar that Canada will be one of his markets.