

Immigration Act, 1976

screening process is very discretionary and it prevents the full accessibility to the process.

As well, if you look at the Refugee Board, its proceedings are supposed to be non-accusatory, but it is the Crown Prosecutor who will put forward all the relevant facts. There will be an adversarial situation with an officer working for the Department. Where will he find those facts? From the pre-screening process? Why do we put together refugees and immigrants?

Of course, if you look at the appeal mechanism, that is the appeal with the agreement of the Federal Court, if the Court is unable to learn new facts, to re-evaluate the credibility of the claimant or to ask for the opinion of the NGO, it has no real power to review the procedure followed or the relevant facts. We believe that the quality of the system as a whole depends on that of the appeal mechanism. In addition, while the claimant asks for the right to appeal, he will be deported. This procedure is quite inhumane and could be unconstitutional under Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Canadians have been misinformed. Racist feelings are on the rise in Canada, and such a Bill will exacerbate the situation instead of educating Canadians.

I believe that this is also the opinion of many Canadians. It is time to review the refugee determination process and to initiate an extensive information campaign on refugees. The great majority of Canadians do not know the difference between a refugee and an immigrant.

In the case of immigrants, the receiving country is entitled to set criteria and to accept only those who meet them. It is quite different for refugees. Canada has international obligations. Under the Geneva Convention, the refugee claimant is entitled to assistance. It is not a privilege. Most Canadians and many Members of Parliament are not aware of this. Many forget the political difficulties faced by many people in their own countries.

When you think about apartheid in South Africa, the military dictatorships and police repressions in many Latin-American countries, religious intolerance in Iran, the foreign invasion in Afghanistan, and so on, you are more willing to welcome those who fear persecution in their own countries and seek refuge in Canada.

As emphasized by Rabbi Plaut, compared with the magnitude of the global refugee problem, the task of recognizing the status of those who claim refugee status here, in Canada, is relatively small.

The information campaign which should be initiated should emphasize the economic contribution of newcomers as well as differentiate between immigrants and refugees. We have to put an end to the myth that foreigners are taking away jobs from Canadians.

Many economic studies dealing with immigration have shown that it is impossible to establish a cause-effect relationship between the number of foreigners admitted in this country and the economic situation. A number of economists maintain, however, that by increasing the number of potential consumers in a market, immigrants contribute positively to the economy. In short, it is our whole approach towards immigration which must be improved by increasing this openmindedness and generosity which have characterized Canadian men and women for so long.

This enlightenment of attitude which is urgent should go hand in hand with the reform of the refugee determination process. I feel that its implementation should offer the perfect opportunity to set in motion a refugee awareness campaign from coast to coast. This bandaied solution which the Conservative Government is suggesting today with Bill C-55 seems to be both useless and harmful. If it were adopted, I believe that the government, unfortunately, would delay reforming the refugee status determination process, contrary to what a great many groups involved with refugees are seeking.

In this Bill, Mr. Speaker, we cannot find any recommendation put forward by the special committee created to deal with Bill C-55. Although several groups appeared before the committee, unfortunately, we have the impression that the committee never existed. I wonder why the Government creates such committees. Is it simply for window-dressing purposes, when we realize that not a single recommendation made by this three-party committee which submitted a unanimous report appears in this Bill? I will say, therefore, that I have great reservations about Bill C-55 and will certainly vote against it.

• (1600)

[English]

Ms. Marion Dewar (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, today I believe this country is facing problems at many different levels which will not be solved by legislation such as Bill C-55. Our concern is and certainly should be about the increasing international problem of refugees. We have a responsibility to have some input into an international solution and to seeing that the oppressive Governments that are ignoring human rights face international disciplinary action so that people will be able to stay in their own countries where they want to be, safe and secure.

I believe all Canadians are proud of our country which has been built from the different ethnic backgrounds of people who have come here in various ways, including the refugee and immigration process. I believe we have also been careful to ensure that people remain in contact with their own cultures so that they do not deny their roots. This has enriched the fabric of Canada and certainly made us stronger.

The kind of legislation before us does not help to maintain the international image we have had over the years. While I did not think this would be the first Bill to which I would be