

Immigration Act, 1976

part of the Canadian people to bear that same burden. We have here a potential for quite a shuffling of people or a business in human freight, sending people back and forth. Humane persons—and Canadians have demonstrated their humanity over the years and had that recognized in the awarding of the Nansen Medal for our dealings with refugees—would not want to see that happen.

Unfortunately, the reality of our time is that in the prosperous countries of the industrialized world—or at least we saw it that way not very long ago—there is this same kind of reluctance to allow refugees to arrive or to stay. Tamils came to Canada from Europe more than a year ago because they were afraid of losing their refuge in Europe. One does not have to read very much of the news out of Asia in the last while to know that they might have very real reason to fear for their lives in Sri Lanka. To cite only the incident of a year ago, the present Government handled it in a proper and humane way, as Canadian people wanted it handled.

Some northern European Governments, just like the American Government, are not Governments which have been very friendly to those who have been forced into fleeing their countries because of the actions of repressive regimes. When we have right wing Governments that are unhappy about the appearance of these particular refugees, we begin to see a situation, very clear in the United States, in which persons from Central American countries, particularly from El Salvador, are no longer necessarily safe in the United States. If the Canadian Cabinet is allowed to make this decision, surely it will be subject to all diplomatic pressures that operate on the Canadian Government. In the case of the United States, that is quite obvious as far as the pressure on the Canadian Government is concerned. We have a Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) whose heart seems half American and who is very, very interested in the warmest possible relations with the United States.

If in the defence of lives it becomes necessary to make a hard judgment which says that our nearest neighbour, this great power to the south of us, is not interested in protecting the lives and safety of people who have fled from Central or South America, what will the Canadian Cabinet do in making its assessment? Will it in fact make the tough assessment that the United States of America is not a safe third country? Similarly, with European countries, does one really want to come to those brutal assessments?

Economically, 1987 is far from the misfortunes we knew as Canadians half a dozen years ago with the interest rate depression of the early 1980s. As economic activity picks up thanks to stable interest rates, as economic activity particularly in some parts of Ontario brings us close to fears of demand pressures and the inflationary potential developing again, government private Members are ready to boast about the fact that Canada anticipates a higher growth rate than is true for other OECD countries. That is more a commentary on the misfortunes in which they live than an expression of how really well we are doing. These are differences of a few tenths of a

percentage point which have us ahead of the others. We know that Canadian prosperity in the past has often been based upon immigration, on large movements into Canada, on settlement developments, and so on.

To be bringing forward a Bill in which the safe third country proposal is part of trying to fend people off, to push them back to Europe, to the United States, or to wherever it may happen to be, just to keep them out of Canada at a time of such prosperity, such a response to the refugee situation is quite untrue to the best impulses in Canada and to the actions of past decades, initially with European refugees and then with other refugees which justified Canada receiving the Nansen Medal.

I speak in support of Motion No. 18 in particular, with perhaps less support in my own mind for Motion No. 21, assuming that earlier motions, particularly Motion No. 13 standing in the name of the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap), would take care of all this.

Speaking strongly in support of this motion is speaking for all the best impulses in Canadian life; is recognizing Canadian traditions, Canadian history, and Canadian potential; is wanting to take advantage of our economic strength; and is recognizing that refugees who drew themselves to the attention of repressive regimes in many cases are people with the fine sense of integrity, principle, and political freedom which would make them the very best kinds of Canadians if they were able to come here.

I speak very strongly in support of Motion No. 18 in particular. I call upon government Members, if they have any sense of these principles at all and want to build a stronger and better Canada rather than play to the worst tendencies which exist in some Canadian hearts, to support this particular motion.

● (1740)

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Madam Speaker, it is important in debating the motion that has been so eloquently explained to you and to the House a few minutes ago by the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi) to put on the record some views, not of Members of this House, but of individuals and organizations who appeared before the committee. I am doing so because it is important for the House to hear and to have on record non-partisan views by individuals who take the question of refugees very seriously. The subject is approached in an objective manner by people who have been in the field of refugee resettlement for years if not decades and who have come forward because of a deeply-felt and genuine concern for the manner in which the Government is approaching Bill C-55.

I will start with the Refugee Status Advisory Committee which appeared before the standing committee on August 28.

Mr. Friesen: Was this before or after the amendment?