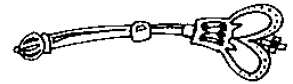


Activity Sheet 1.1

THE IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM ACT (1999)



THE PROBLEM.

The last government severely restricted the benefits and support asylum seekers could claim, we need a new law.

The number of asylum seekers waiting for a decision is unacceptable, we should make decisions faster.

We are far too harsh—these people have rights!

We are a soft touch.

Despite recent legislation many people were still unhappy.

THE WHITE PAPER - 27th July 1998

It's time to make immigration and asylum law FAIRER FASTER AND FIRMER

The government presents its ideas on how to improve the situation.

FIRST READING - 9th February 1999

We've listened to the people's opinions and now we're ready to put our ideas into law.

An announcement is made that the Bill is coming.

SECOND READING - 22nd February 1999

The Bill represents the most fundamental reform of immigration and asylum law for decades.

Jack Straw

A debate on the Bill takes place in the House of Commons.

STANDING COMMITTEE 2nd March - 18th May 1999

We should take account of the fact that many people store their wealth in jewellery.

Are you suggesting that asylum seekers should sell their jewellery, perhaps wedding rings, instead of the government providing enough support?

I certainly am suggesting that.

Is the minister going to strip rings from their fingers?

Michael O'Brien

Diane Abbott

A smaller group of MPs takes time to look in detail at the Bill. (93 hours in this case)

THIRD READING 15th - 16th June 1999

She ought to learn the lessons of the failure of the 1996 Act and start engaging in sensible adult discussion about the issue.

Ann Widdecombe

Michael O'Brien

The House of Commons discusses the Bill again and the committee's suggestions.

Activity Sheet 1.1 (continued)

MEANWHILE, outside in the real world...

The Refugee Council is starting a big campaign, lots of our supporters are writing and phoning politicians, asking them to make the Bill fairer.

THE REFUGEE COUNCIL

Imran Hussain

Campaigners used the internet to keep in touch over what was happening

In The House of Lords...

We want to ensure that fairness has not been sacrificed in favour of a firmer or faster policy.

We have a long tradition of giving shelter to those fleeing persecution... The number of asylum applications has increased 10 fold in the past 10 years.

Lord Dholakia

Lord Williams of Mostyn

They passed over 300 amendments!

Including: Restoring benefits to people waiting more than 6 months for a decision (one of the Refugee Council's main aims.)

The Government Consideration of the Lords Amendment - 9th November 1999

Groups that work with refugees have passed information to me expressing their extreme concern.

We are being asked to pass in a few hours 367 government amendments, which had to be tabled at this late stage because the government have not managed to get the Bill right.

Ann Widdecombe

Graham Allen

Some MPs shared the concerns of the Refugee Council but in the end some of the Lords amendments were scrapped, including the proposal to restore benefits after 6 months.

Lords Consideration of Commons Reasons - 10th November 1999

I believe your Lordships should take all the credit.

Lord Bassam of Brighton

Royal Assent - 11th November 1999

The Queen signs the Bill- it is now an Act of Law.

Back in the real world...

The new law included some of the changes demanded by the campaigners- e.g. a new £10 weekly cash allowance.

10,000 PEOPLE WAITING IS TOO MANY!

CUT THE BACKLOG

STOP DISPERSAL

REFUGEE RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!!!

But there were still issues to campaign about when the Bill came into force.