

If one reads the United Nations convention, page 103 of the green paper entitled "The Immigration Problem", one can see that it would be all but impossible to control the refugee status or category other than on an offshore basis.

I am told that traditionally we have processed refugees abroad. They were examined outside of Canada and this assured Canadians that basic criteria for entry were met and that the applicants had a chance of fitting into the Canadian mold.

Due to the very complicated and extensive appeal system contained in the new act for refugees, and the fact that they can apply from within Canada for refugee status and can only be deported if they have committed an extremely serious crime, we are losing our selection control, and risk a complete jamming of our appeal system. As I look at the critical path of the appeal chart, this could become constipated in a period of months.

I support the refugee status and intent of the act, but seriously question the mechanics that are being set up under Bill C-24. I would urge the minister and the committee to examine the hazards and re-examine the possibility of returning to offshore processing in order that we may retain a degree of selection control. Why has the minister ignored the two-year recommendation of the committee of parliament and opted for six months' service in areas in Canada that are labour short? How can a person get established or be meaningful in six months? I can remember when I was in the farming community and involved on the farms. We had people who were grateful to come to this country and remain on the farm or in the area of need for up to three years. These people today are the landowners and farmers of this country. What is this six months' business? It serves nothing. It is just one more of the minister's games.

On this point I would remind my colleagues again that if we keep the nominated category over and above the new expanded family category, there won't be enough room in our immigration quota to serve the work needs of Canada with immigrants from the independent category to whom this demographic work demand applies.

I also note that the act makes provision for entry-exist card controls, which I think are a great step forward, and, which make me wonder where we have been all these years. However, I have been informed that there is no rush within the department to implement this, and I suggest the committee examine this point.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I commend the minister on removal of restrictions on epileptics and retarded people. This is a very much needed and humanitarian situation. Both the minister and I have seen examples of the great relief his compassion in this area has given families.

I have dwelled on what I have considered to be serious shortcomings within Bill C-24. I urge both the minister and the committee of the House to give these points very serious consideration.

Immigration

There is a balloon in the Canadian labour force that will pass through their productive work period and who will consider themselves entitled to the welfare and retirement benefits that they have paid for and supported for others. This expanded call on our tax resources will have to be carried by the productive work force of the future. Unless we enhance the skills of tomorrow's work force by protecting the independent category, we will have a welfare burden that will crush tomorrow's taxpayer.

We must have a balance in favour of productive work in our immigration policies and laws. We should do everything possible to clean up our act so that people will have respect for, not play games with, the laws of our country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stan Schumacher (Palliser): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-24 is one of the most important pieces of legislation that has been presented to this House since I became a member of parliament, and that says a lot for a Chamber filled with crises from unemployment, inflation, separation, and scandal. In all of these other areas we are dealing with matters that can be changed later. In all but immigration we have a second chance.

In immigration there will be no turning back. What we do today will, for better or for worse, determine what we will become in the future. It will determine the kind of Canada we will pass on to our children, and the standards and the culture under which they and their children will live.

If there was ever a time for statesmanship, this is it. The members of this House must put aside their narrow personal interests, stifle their natural political instincts, and place the nation first. If we fail to do this we will have misplaced the trust that the people have given us. We will have become the self-seeking politicians we are sometimes labelled.

How many times have we heard the backroom boys tell us to go easy on immigration or we may lose those precious ethnic seats in Toronto or in other areas? I have always thought that such advice was spurious and false, but even if not, it is better to lose such seats than to compromise the nation and its future.

Members on all sides of this House should put aside party politics, personal interests, and other narrow, partisan considerations. Let us make sure that what we do here with this bill in the weeks ahead represents our best effort. In the years to come, let it be said of this parliament that they were honest men and that they did their best. After all, legislation like this does not arise very often. The last amendments were made in 1952. This time we must be very careful about getting on the right track. The last time we got off the track and this caused serious problems to the country, something we have been aware of for the past five or six years at least.

First, let me say a word about the way this bill has been written and presented. I do not want to belabour points that have already been made, but the real meaning behind many of the clauses is obscure, and unless we gain access to the regulations we really won't know what we are being asked to