

Immigration

That is not good enough, Mr. Speaker. The arguments expressed in the Senate as to whether or not the present immigration laws and the Criminal Code are sufficient in order to gain a conviction of these people—I am not a lawyer so I will not go into this question—convince me as a member of this House that Canadians are demanding a better system.

Since I have been in this place Canadians from right across the country have asked me time and time again why it is we cannot keep undesirable elements out of this country. This is not to imply that these people are against immigrants or that, as I stated in my reply to the minister's statement of October 22 this year, they are opposed to immigration. They want immigrants to come to Canada, take jobs and make a meaningful contribution to our way of life. There are job vacancies in many parts of the country that could be filled by immigrants. The point we are making, and which we have made before in this House, is that all too often our immigration laws have not been strongly enough applied against those immigrants who are undesirable.

In this respect I contacted a corporal of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to ascertain his views on the kind of enforcement powers they require in order to deport those whom they thought were undesirable or were members of the criminal element of our society. I should like to quote a section of his letter, which is dated November 18, 1974:

● (2040)

Since my initial take-over, there have been eight persons who were ordered deported from Canada for various reasons, who had been deported before from Canada and, of course, there are many others who have not been surfaced through investigation. The majority of these persons are travelling criminals who are involved in organized crime, kiting or prostitution. One such person that I dealt with had been deported twice from British Columbia and she advised me that there is no deterrent and she got a free trip home anyway, at the expense of Canadian taxpayers if caught.

This is the type of situation with which our law enforcement officers have had to deal. Part of the problem would be eliminated by the tightening up of our immigration laws. Much of this difficulty is due to the fact that in past years we have not had control over immigration. For example, there are many people in this country who came as visitors, were allowed to apply for landed immigrant status from within Canada, but have never done so.

This party supported the minister's readjustment program last year under which people who had come to Canada as visitors could apply for landed immigrant status within a specified time. I believe we still have a lot of people here who came in during that time, but who have not come forward and regularized their status as landed immigrants. These people who are here without right should be forced to leave. I say that because there are many people who would like to come here as immigrants but are prevented from doing so because of the action taken by the government to deal with people who are here without legalized status. This is a situation which has caused us a great deal of trouble. We are now reaping the whirlwind of those lax immigration laws.

Another aspect of Bill S-12 that is of interest to me is that part in respect of student visas. For many years now

[Mr. Epp.]

Canada has accepted students from other countries who wish to study here. Many of them obtain skills and knowledge and return to the countries from which they have come, to the benefit of their countries. We have no quarrel with this, but we do quarrel with the situation that allows students to come to this country to obtain an education, and who have no intention of returning. If they want to stay in this country they should go through the regular steps and apply for immigrant status like everybody else.

It seems to me that our law enforcement officers virtually have had to play musical chairs in dealing with these people we have been trying to deport. It is time the government showed leadership in immigration, and tried to bring in people who have the ability and the desire to make a contribution to Canada. I would impress upon the minister that it is high time the government vigorously enforced our present immigration laws.

The point was raised during the Senate debate on Bill S-12 that the Department of Manpower and Immigration cannot provide specific statistics on the number of deportations that have taken place in the last few years. The explanation is given that there was a new system and the statistics were just not available. Before this bill is passed I would appreciate it if the minister made these figures available for the last several years. If they are not available to the minister now, perhaps he could provide them at some convenient time.

In closing I should like to say that we support Bill S-12 and its spirit, because we want to have laws that are fair and enforceable. On that basis we endorse this measure.

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, there are two reasons why we have Bill S-12 before us tonight. The first is related to the fact that law officers of the Crown have stated there is a loophole not covered by the act which must be closed in order to maintain control in respect of persons deported. The second reason is that police forces have brought this matter to the attention of the authorities across the country. About a year ago the metropolitan Toronto police brought it to the attention of the minister.

Many individuals who are arrested and subject to deportation have been found, on investigation, to have been deported once, twice or more times before. The same situation prevails not only in Toronto but in Montreal and Vancouver. We in the NDP welcome the bill because of this loophole. The provisions in Section 115 of the Criminal Code and Sections 46 and 48 of the Immigration Act do not cover persons who have been deported from Canada and return without the consent of the minister. This situation is causing a great deal of consternation.

Let me give some of the background to our immigration situation in Canada. Back in 1966 we made changes to the regulations as a result of which we had many immigrants coming to Canada as visitors, and permitted to apply from within Canada for landed immigrant status. Many people in Canada welcomed this change and, as a result, we had a great inflow of new regularized immigrants. But also as a result of that change we had visitors, some of whom when they applied for landed immigrant status were refused on the basis that they could not meet the criteria. Many of them appealed, and were finally given deportation orders.