

Immigration

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): In my opinion the nays have it. Pursuant to Standing Order 75(11), the recorded division on the motion stands deferred. We will now move to motion 52.

Some hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion? All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): In my opinion the nays have it. Pursuant to Standing Order 75(11), the recorded motion on the division stands deferred.

Mr. Ian Watson (Laprairie) moved:

Motion No. 51.

That Bill C-24, respecting immigration to Canada, be amended in clause 115 by striking out lines 45 to 50 at page 68.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I move this motion to draw the attention of the House and of the people of Canada to what I consider to be another example of the government renegeing on its commitments with respect to urban priorities. It is several years now since the government indicated that among its priorities for the long term there would be a move, through whichever vehicle it had at its disposal, to encourage less growth of the larger metropolitan areas of Canada and greater growth of many of our smaller cities. The objective is obvious. There are too many people concentrated in too few urban areas, and the quality of life in some of those urban areas is diminishing rather than improving.

● (1610)

At the trilevel conference in which the federal government participated, through the Department of Urban Affairs, in 1973 the federal government took a tack which recommended elimination of regional disparities, which elimination would be nullified if Canada continued to accept a pattern of urban growth that concentrated people and activities within a few small areas of the country. At that time the position of the government appeared to be that if we continued to accept that the present trend toward highly concentrated and rapid urban growth is undesirable, we must as a government seek an alternative pattern of urbanization through the recognition that Canadian towns and cities are not in competition with each other but are closely linked in a nationwide system of cities.

At that time, the position of the government appeared to be premised on the conviction that the degree of concentration then being experienced—and certainly it has not diminished today—was unacceptable and that a better alternative to the existing pattern was not only feasible but desirable. The

conference agreed that there was a role for all levels of government to play in trying to achieve this long-term decentralization of population. Among the levers mentioned at the conference as being available to the federal government were those of monetary and fiscal policy, immigration and migration, transportation, regional development, land use, housing, social welfare, resource management, industrial promotion, and one or two others.

As I have said, Mr. Speaker, this was the position in 1973. In 1975 we had a new urban affairs minister who was still on the same wavelength basically. In referring to the earlier trilevel conference, he said that all three levels of government had agreed on that occasion that the trend should be shifted in favour of a more regionally balanced pattern of growth. The conference also agreed to examine ways and means of doing this and had indicated a readiness to co-ordinate selected relevant policies and programs. The urban affairs minister at that time, the present Minister of National Defence (Mr. Danson), said he was going to involve all provinces, and through them the municipalities, in the consultation process, and he was confident that through this dialogue we could evolve an urban strategy for Canada, a strategy to which all governments would lend their support and within which we could co-ordinate our various policies and programs. The minister then went on to say:

I will also take every opportunity to discuss these issues publicly with Canadian non-governmental organizations concerned with the future of our cities. Out of this process, I believe that a consensus on a national demographic policy and a Canadian urban strategy will emerge.

When this bill came along, Mr. Speaker, I thought that something was emerging which made a bit of sense. I thought we were going to use one of the levers which was referred to in 1973 to help discourage the tremendous population growth in Toronto particularly, as well as on the west coast. I was unhappy when the committee decided to remove the particular clause from the bill which would have required a new immigrant or person applying for immigrant status who required a few extra points to live in a designated area of Canada away from the larger metropolitan centres for a period of six months. Hopefully, that person, after remaining for that length of time, would then have planted sufficient roots to stay.

In committee, members felt that this would not be a very effective route, that somehow it did not accord with the proper attitude to be taken toward human rights. I would take issue with this latter argument, though I think from the practical point of view some of the committee arguments may have been valid. It seems to me that the argument of interference with human rights is based on a view of immigration which I do not accept. I contend that the granting of immigrant status is a privilege accorded by this country and is not, as some would assert, the right of any person coming to this country. Our immigration policy remains the most liberal in the world. The assertion that requiring people to live in areas outside concentrations of population so as to achieve a better demographic balance is somehow an interference with a person's human rights and a reflection upon Canada's reputation in this regard