

Immigration

make our present practice the law. Therefore, for the reasons given I oppose broadening the definition as suggested in the amendment, especially given the changes we have made in the bill in clauses 6(2) and 115(1) (d) and (e).

I now come to the motion proposed by the hon. member for Greenwood, dealing with the definition of "family". From my reading of it, the apparent intention is to enshrine in the act virtually all the classes of relatives who can be sponsored or assisted, meaning nominated, plus all illegitimate children. Like the hon. member, I do not like that term, preferring to call such children natural children. Taken with the hon. member's proposed amendment to the definition "member of the family class", it would make all these relatives permanently sponsorable, with no possibility of addition or subtraction except by way of amendment of the act.

I wonder if the hon. member for Greenwood has failed to notice that the definition "family" is not intended to govern admissibility provisions but, rather, serves the purposes of several other provisions of the act, most of which concern removal from Canada, for example sections 19(2)(c), 27(1)(f), 27(2)(l), and 33. His amendment would expose all the relatives named to removal because of the removability of a person to whom they are related. The proposed amendment is thus unacceptable from both the admission and the enforcement standpoint.

In clause 4, which stands in my name, I propose to include a new definition of the word "family" or, more appropriately, the old definition. I do this because of apprehensions expressed to me by some members that the original definition or the amendment passed by the committee would be seen by some as evidence of severe restriction in immigration policy.

The definition of "family" in the 1952 act uses the words "father", "mother" and "dependent children". This has always been open to the misconstruction that it covered three, rather than two, generations, although only the latter interpretation has ever been applied. The intent of Bill C-24 was to clear up the ambiguity. Nevertheless, I am given to understand that some people would take disappearance of the words "father" and "mother" as confirmation of an unfounded suspicion that sponsorship privileges are to be reduced, although the definition has nothing to do with the admissible classes. To avoid this appearance, if it is the wish of the House I am prepared to revert to the wording of the definition in the 1952 act, given that it has not caused any legal difficulties. The proposed amendment would restore the 1952 language, with the addition of the new optional power to extend the definition for specific purposes of the act and regulations.

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, this bill, now being debated at report stage and soon to be passed at third reading, hopefully, is the culmination of a number of years of hard work. Even before the green paper on immigration matters was made public, members of the parliamentary committee and those concerned with immigration called for the appointment of a special joint committee which would travel across the country to gather the views of Canadians on immigration. That committee was appointed; it travelled across the

country and heard the views of many. In one or two areas, because witnesses found it difficult to attend, it did not hear quite so much testimony.

The spirit which animated that special joint committee has also animated our standing committee which has been chaired so ably by the hon. member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson). I say this because the committee behaved in a non-partisan way, and serving on it has been one of my finest experiences since being elected in 1972. It considered all questions relevant to immigration and what will be best for Canada's future and for immigrants. We considered 99 amendments and spent 71 hours trying to improve the bill.

Mr. Alexander: Thank God for you, sir.

Mr. Epp: Some may argue the committee did not go far enough. Yet unquestionably the bill reported to this House represents the consensus of the committee. Its members tried to introduce amendments which would result in fairer immigration laws and reflect the reality of modern-day Canada. The point is this: it does not matter if members of parliament want to go home in July. We spent so much time considering this bill that it deserves consideration at the report stage and passage on third reading.

No one can say we did not spend enough time on it. The special joint committee considered it at length. We debated it on second reading and in committee, and we are considering it again at report stage. Here let me raise an important point. Certain amendments brought forward during the committee stage have again been brought forward at the report stage. I think the House leader should consider this practice carefully, since I do not think it was contemplated when our Standing Orders were revised.

● (1610)

I want to mention, with regard to the refugee clauses, that members on this side feel that Canada's international reputation in the area of accepting refugees is second to none. Throughout our history that has been the case. I believe all of us can point to certain times when we were perhaps not as forthcoming as we should have been. But when you consider countries that are internationally touted as being leaders in refugee matters, they fall well behind Canada on their total flow. That is over a period of years.

The definition in the bill is one to which Canada agreed as a signatory to the United Nations convention. As I understand it, the definition would allow Canadian immigration officials, refugee officials or whoever they might be, to intervene to the point of where a person is a prisoner of conscience or a political prisoner imprisoned in his or her own country, to say that that person is a refugee. Surely that is as far as we can go. If you look at the turmoil in the world today, you see we have a situation which we would simply not be able to control. The definitions which the signatories and members of the United Nations have agreed to, fit our purposes adequately.

I now come to the question of family. The hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) brought forward the amendment. I