

*Government Orders*

them in a rational, professional way of giving due process, this government, and this Prime Minister, called it "a national emergency" and then called an emergency sitting of Parliament to deal with 157 people.

In 1980, we—and I say we—government and Canadians, accepted 100,000 Vietnamese boat people just as one single movement, apart from all the other classes of immigration during those years. That is in the best interests of trying to educate a country, of trying to bring Canadians along to accepting these immigrants and the positive things they will be doing for our country. Yet, only a few years later, this same country, this government, said halt to 157 people because it is a national emergency.

What really happened was the government was very low in the polls, some Canadians were excited and traumatized by these 157 boat people, and the government took full advantage, exaggerated the situation, blew it out of proportion, and gave the word refugee a black eye in this country, a black eye they have still not recovered from and a black eye that is getting darker by the day.

It is easy for the government to bring in a bill and say that it wants to control the situation, it wants people to respect the laws. Who is saying anything different? We have told successive Tory ministers of immigration the very same thing and they promised an expedient, fair system that would not weigh upon the Canadian government or the Canadian taxpayers. We have been waiting almost seven years for that better mousetrap to begin to work.

It is particularly easy for this government to try to give the impression that it is acting tough, particularly during tough economic times. Why? During tough economic times, as we are going through right now, there is always the vulnerability among Canadians who are unemployed to look at immigration in a negative fashion, to say that rather than bringing in new immigrants, why do we not allow unemployed Canadians to get their jobs back first, and when times are better we will think about opening the doors a little wider.

That is why the timing of this bill is no coincidence. The government is trying to project a sense of professionalism and of concern, yet over the seven years it has had ample opportunity to act and it has not taken the opportunity of doing so. We have to be very careful not

to give in to the myth that just because we are down in the economic cycle we should not invite new Canadians to join in the rebuilding of the economy and of the country. Most studies that have been done during good times and bad, particularly the latter, show consistently that net migrations of people to Canada, at the end of the day when all the factors are put into the equation, is a net creator of jobs. At the end of the day there is a net number of immigrants who become entrepreneurs, who establish businesses, who take risks and who give jobs to other people. They become consumers and therefore consumer spending and consumer demand goes up. Last, those people, quite frankly, also take jobs that perhaps you and I do not wish to do.

Therefore, in the fine line between myth and reality, when we talk about the most sensitive and emotional areas of public policy, namely immigration, we need to be very careful about the messages that we as a Parliament are sending out. Immigration to this country has played a very significant and over-all a very productive and positive force in building the country that we have built thus far.

What we also have to continue to strengthen is the view that we are not asking people to come to Canada because we feel we have to do that for various cultural communities, but we have to strengthen the idea that immigration is one of those building blocks that we need to continue to rely on if we are to enjoy the standard of life that we have come to know as Canadians. The Canadian population is relatively small and it is an aging population. The birth rate is dwindling. The economy needs people that sometimes our schools and academic institutions are too slow to produce. Therefore, immigration is not the be all and end all, but it is clearly one positive answer to the needs of a country and the future of a country.

While we have to be stern and disciplined in having our immigration laws respected, we must be very careful to create laws that are not based on perception or myths. Unfortunately, this government, when it has come to the whole public policy of immigration, I believe as one member of Parliament on this side, has preferred to base its rationale on perception and myth rather than promoting the reality of this situation and giving Canadians a law that responds to those realistic attributes of immigration.