

Immigration

This parliament, to its credit, has gone to a lot of trouble to obtain the views of the Canadian people toward a new immigration policy and act.

When a recommendation by the parliamentary committee on a matter as important to the manpower requirements and future economy of Canada can be overruled by a minority of one, and when the minister and his advisers allow this minority view to show up in Bill C-24, then one surely can be allowed the conclusion that the democratic parliamentary system in Canada is not only degraded but its very survival as a meaningful arm of government is threatened. I urge the minister and the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration to give urgent priority to this point in their deliberations.

At this time may I ask why the bill mentions nothing about the sickening abuse of our concepts of family life through marriages of convenience for the purposes of circumventing the immigration laws. By allowing sponsorships based on non bona fide marriages we are, as a result, allowing prostitutes and the financially destitute to select immigrants for Canada's future. Mr. Speaker, on this point I am aware of a document outlining 102 cases of what appear to be marriages of convenience in the city of Toronto. In 70 out of 102 cases the sponsors were women of questionable reputations in that many had been convicted of prostitution or other charges and/or were considered mentally sick or retarded. In many cases large fees were paid. The married couples spoke different languages, and there are examples of 40 to 50 year age gaps. There are examples where the couples are divorced as soon as the sponsored person gains landed status. In most cases that were investigated, the couple never lived together.

In the Saturday, March 19, edition of the *Ottawa Citizen* I note that the 102 cases that I have been aware of have now expanded to some 250 such investigated cases in Canada, where bigamy has also been alleged. A Crown attorney, Dave Gorrell, told the court that so-called marriage brokers recruit Canadian women and pay them \$1,000 to \$1,500 to marry illegal immigrants to gain them permanent admission to Canada. The husband and wife in these situations do not live together. They do not intend to do so. They have no idea of each other's lifestyle, and usually the marriage is not consummated. He points out that there were more than 250 such marriages in Canada since January 1, 1976.

In these cases I know of, there was one where the registrar of marriages in the city of Toronto overheard the argument of a couple as to how much was to be paid. The woman was age 36. She was Jamaican and English speaking. She did not speak Hindi. The man was age 18. He was Indian and spoke Hindi, and could hardly speak English. Many are admitted illegally because the act does not provide for the discretion of immigration officers to deny entry in such cases.

I have another case that illustrates the problems that the immigration officials are facing. I will call them S and M. S was landed and married M. M received immigrant status on January 14, 1976. M was sponsored. M got a divorce on March 31, 1976, 2½ months later. M's lawyer handled the

[Mr. Huntington.]

landing, handled the divorce, and S's sponsorship. All this happened in less than a year.

In committee consideration of Bill C-24 I urge that the following points be given serious consideration with regard to marriages of convenience:

First, that the minister allow immigration officers to refuse to approve sponsorships of questionable bona fides.

Second, where a bona fide marriage is doubtful, that the person be placed on a minister's permit for five years. In five years the department could again check if it is bona fide and, if it is, landing can be granted at that time. In the United States and in New Zealand sponsored people must wait a considerable length of time before they are granted landed status.

Third, that sponsorships be refused if either party is of poor character, i.e. has a criminal record, is a public charge, or made previous sponsorships where the marriage was not considered bona fide.

My fourth point is that an index of maiden names of wives who sponsor should be kept at every Canadian immigration centre and at immigration headquarters. At the present time women can make an infinite number of sponsorships using a legal name each time, because every time a woman marries she has a different legal name.

My fifth and last recommendation is that if a confession is made that it is a marriage of convenience, immigration officials should be allowed to proceed with enforcement action immediately. Under the present system, immigration headquarters approval must be obtained for withdrawal of sponsorship, which takes approximately eight weeks. Where a confession has been obtained and they have waited for immigration headquarters approval to proceed, in almost 100 per cent of the cases the applicants have disappeared before approval has been received. What a spinning of wheels this exercise is!

● (2110)

I would now like to offer some comments on the refugee aspects of Bill C-24. As I mentioned before, one out of ten immigrants enters as a refugee, and the numbers are increasing. In the 20 years between 1947 and 1967 there were 45,267, which averages out at about 2,260 per year. In the five years between 1968 and 1973 there were 16,327 refugees, plus 7,000 Ugandans, or a total of 23,327 which averages out at 4,665 per year.

The point is that due to government instabilities in today's world, it is reasonable to expect that these figures are going to accelerate. The terms of the U.N. Convention on Refugees are such that it is almost impossible to prove that those entering under this category are in fact refugees. This leaves our immigration procedures open to abuse. Under the new act they can apply for refugee status from within Canada, and it has come to my attention that many people are now applying for refugee status after having their visitors' visas renewed several times.