

*Adjournment Debate*

I regret that the Minister allows staff whose work is so sloppy to draft letters for him. He of course knows perfectly well of some examples on which I have corresponded with him. I can give three examples, all of which have been the subject of correspondence between myself and the Minister. One is a case in the Philippines. The application of a woman for landed immigrant status had been delayed for many years. Finally, when she was accepted, her children were over 21 and were no longer eligible to accompany her. When she had been here for some months the children wished to visit her and they were refused visitor's visas.

There was a similar case in Islamabad. A man had been coming to Canada as a visitor each year. He spent his holidays with family here. He applied for landed immigrant status and when he next applied for a visitor's visa it was refused.

I could go on with other examples but the point is that the officials do have this practice of automatically refusing visitor's visas to people who have recently applied for immigrant status. It may not be the Department's policy, but it is certainly a practice at many of our overseas offices. I suspect it has become the practice because it is simpler to assume that anyone who has recently made an application for landed immigrant status is trying to get into the country with the intention of staying. It is simpler to then refuse the application than to sit down with the person and see what the exact circumstances are.

● (1805)

It is this laziness or passivity that I am objecting to. I say this with some sympathy for the officials. I understand that immigration officers generally have a very difficult job. I would rather see them exercise some judgment in that job than try to protect themselves with simple rules. I appreciate that if an officer overseas is required to exercise judgment, there will be times when that judgment is wrong. I would rather see some tolerance of error and have the occasional person come to Canada who is not a *bona fide* visitor, than have this blanket system which is harsh, impersonal, and does not fit with the goals of our Immigration Act which is meant to be human, responsive, and respectful of people.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Guy Dubois (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for taking the opportunity provided by the late show to raise this question concerning the refusal of visitors' visas to applicants who have been denied landed immigrant status.

Mr. Speaker, I can say very briefly that further details can be added to the reply given by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Roberts) to the Hon. Member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson) on May 18 last. Pursuant to Immigration Act Section 9, every visitor shall make an application for and obtain a visa. Still in accordance with Section 9, the decision rests with the visa officer who considers each case.

Accordingly, it would be against the legislation to refuse automatically visitor visas in some circumstances, for example when the same applicant has recently applied unsuccessfully for landed immigrant status. There is no such policy. I must add that the law requires the applicant to prove his good faith, and that was the basis of the Minister's answer to the Hon. Member. A recent application for permanent residence might indicate that the applicant intends to stay in Canada permanently.

However, in many instances, a visa can be granted to someone who applied for an immigrant visa if the application is still being processed or has been rejected. The Hon. Member may rest assured that each application is dealt with objectively, as it should be. I understand she would like the officials of the Department to be more humane or sensitive when reviewing the applications.

As the Minister indicated in his letter to her and as I said today, each case is reviewed objectively according to the law, and the Department of Employment and Immigration does its best to respond adequately to applications from immigrants. Canada has one of the most open and liberal immigration policies of any country, and I feel confident the Hon. Member will be reassured by my brief answer.

[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS—OIL DRILLING IN LANCASTER SOUND—GOVERNMENT POLICY INQUIRY. (B) MINISTER'S ADVICE

**Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic):** Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Caccia) a few days ago was a very simple one. All it sought was a simple statement of Government policy with respect to Lancaster Sound. I wanted to know whether the Government was going to proceed with oil and gas drilling there. Needless to say, I did not get a very satisfactory response.

● (1810)

What prompted my question, and why I felt it was necessary to ask what was government policy, was the public squabble that had been going on for quite some time between the Minister of the Environment on the one hand, and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Munro) on the other.

I am always at a loss to understand why it is that the Liberal Government insists on washing its dirty linen in public. Let me give a few quotations from the media. The first one is from the CBC *MacKenzie Regional News* on May 4. The item reads:

The Federal Environment Minister is urging a permanent ban on oil and gas drilling in the Lancaster Sound area in a proposal to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

An article in *The Gazette* on May 3 states:

A permanent ban on oil and gas drilling in the wildlife-rich Arctic region of Lancaster Sound is being urged by Environment Minister Charles Caccia.