

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, September 17, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

IMMIGRATION

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NATURE OF REVIEW, PUBLICATION OF GREEN PAPER, AND NATIONAL CONFERENCE— TABLING OF STATEMENT

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, during the consideration of the amendments to the Immigration Appeal Board Act I informed the House that the government was continuing its review of the whole field of immigration policy with an eye to Canada's long-term needs. I wish now to inform the House of the steps the government is taking to intensify work on these questions and of the schedule it has set for its completion.

The task, as I think we all recognized during recent debates, is enormous and urgent, and the government intends to proceed without delay. The first step must be to identify all the options, and for this purpose I have appointed a small group of people to deal with this task. We will need a great deal of help. I am writing today to provincial governments and to over 100 organizations enclosing a statement of the problems under study and inviting them to tell us about their particular concerns and to give us their advice. With your leave, Mr. Speaker, I am tabling copies of this statement in both official languages, pursuant to Standing Order 41(2), in each official language.

The target for the completion of this first stage, which will also involve a series of special studies, is next spring. The results will be published in the form of a document, a "green paper", which I am confident will provoke further national discussion. I want to emphasize that we will be seeking the widest possible spectrum of public opinion on the green paper. In addition to seeking the views of the provinces, the territorial governments, members of parliament and briefs from interested groups, I am proposing that a national conference on immigration and population be convened, sponsored by my department.

The green paper will, I hope, provide a good focus for debate. It will do three things particularly. First, it will identify the problems and analyse policy options in terms which will relate immigration to the kind of Canada that we might want. Second, it will review the techniques and procedures by which immigrants are recruited. Third, it will review the whole legal framework within which new policies should operate.

The end result at which we are aiming is a comprehensive policy, to be expressed in new immigration legislation for submission to parliament. Our goal is an up to date instrument to shape Canada's future immigration policy which will crucially affect and determine Canada's economic, social, cultural and demographic growth.

With leave, I should like to table the further statement in both official languages.

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my party I certainly welcome the minister's statement. I should like to re-emphasize the intent of his last sentence, which we share and accept. He said:

Our goal is an up to date instrument to shape Canada's future immigration policy which will crucially affect and determine Canada's economic, social, cultural and demographic growth.

I would only add one rider. We on this side of the House, and I am sure all hon. members, suggest that the goal should be an up to date instrument based not on race, creed, colour, sex or national origin but on the ability of the person who comes willingly to Canada in freedom in order that he may ultimately share in the great destiny of this country.

I am pleased to note that the government now realizes that immigration policy cannot be implemented by regulations but should be instituted by legislation. In order to get away from regulations in terms of the Immigration Appeal Board we have found that it was necessary to bring in legislation. Legislation has had to be introduced to deal with certain decisions made by the Immigration Appeal Board that have embarrassed the government.

I should also like to say we should never forget, though some may find fault with this view, that this country was built by thousands of unskilled and uneducated people who came to this country believing in the work ethic. Many Canadians have forgotten this. Many Canadians have cast aside an appreciation of the work ethic. When we think of the new policy that must be introduced through legislation I hope we will not forget that if this country has reached any greatness it is as a result of the efforts of those who did not have as much education or possess the skills of people today but were sincere in the belief that they were coming to a land of opportunity where they have made their mark. There are many such success stories.

● (1410)

Let me further emphasize the need for consultation with the provinces. I am glad to see there is to be provincial consultation because it seems to me the federal government has abdicated its responsibility in regard to the social services needed by many immigrants. There is a very great need by many immigrants for language training in order to increase their ability to become integrated into