

Oral Questions

This government has been particularly sensitive to the issues of people from South Africa. I have said to the hon. member that if new information is presented to me I am always prepared to look at it.

The man in question has a wife and child in Germany who also must be given some consideration, and he has family in Canada who are in a position to sponsor him. So, while I have expressed some surprise that he has chosen to come to Canada by this route, I am quite prepared to look at the case again.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Thousands of immigrants from eastern Europe were sponsored to Canada under the designated self-exiled class. This is a very successful program with no cost to the government or to the Canadian taxpayer to settle these immigrants in Canada.

The minister has been approached on various occasions to clarify the continuation of this program. What exactly are the changes to this program and what is being done with those applicants that have already been accepted within the self-exiled process?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the assumption that there is no cost to the government for people who are settled this way. Even with private sponsorships the government pays a considerable amount of settlement costs for people who come under the designated class. We are always happy to do so because we believe that private sponsorships are an excellent way for people to be settled within communities in Canada. There is an open-ended demand for this which we have supported.

In response to the substance of the question, we have not reached any decision on changing the designated class. I think the hon. member knows that with some of the changes that are going on within eastern Europe, once it is determined as a foreign policy matter that those countries are becoming more democratic in a stable and permanent way, we would want to look at how we view immigration from those particular countries. But we are not in a position at this point to have reached a decision on it.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister to investigate then why the local

immigration officers are denying extension of visas to the cases that are being processed so that they cannot even be called for an interview but are asked to return to their country of origin.

My supplementary question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Given that the political climate in eastern Europe has moved toward democratic forms of government, as we have already heard from his colleague, and that people coming to Canada in the future from countries like Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary may no longer qualify under the designated self-exiled class, will the Secretary of State for External Affairs agree to establish full service visa offices in these countries without delay for normal processing of applications for immigration? As he knows, Canada has not one such full service office anywhere in eastern Europe or the Soviet Union.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows and as was discussed during the hearings of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade last week, we are now actively reviewing how we can move around manpower, persons employed in the Department of External Affairs in Europe. There is no question that we need to put more people into the Soviet Union and into eastern and central Europe. There is also no question that we have very little fiscal flexibility and we have to do that by moving people from another part of the world into those areas.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): Hire some more.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): The NDP suggests we should hire some more. Their solution to every problem is to spend money we do not have. That is not an option that is open to reasonable people.

We are going to be looking at the reallocation of our personnel. I hope that either the Minister of Employment and Immigration or I will be able to make an announcement in the near future that will satisfy him.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw to the members' attention the presence in the gallery of His Excellency, Sir Shridath S. Ramphal, Secretary General of the Commonwealth.