

Immigration Appeal Board Act

An hon. Member: They did, but it would not lie down.

Mr. Mackasey: In conclusion, let me say that the department should stand on its own. We should make it easier for people to come into this country. We should not go the other way and eliminate the provision which permits people to apply from within the country. I think the new Immigration Act—and I may know what is in it so I am not going to hint or suggest what should be in it—must pay close attention to the Sedgwick report.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Oh, no!

Mr. Mackasey: Maybe the hon. gentleman from Alberta does not agree, but that is what parliament is all about. I agree that the basic concept of applying for immigration status from within the country is sound; what is unsound is the ridiculous appeal system that permits a backlog of 17,000 cases to build up only to have them dismissed or considered by 5, 6, 7 or 9 people, or whatever this bill calls for. The minister has wisely cut off further immigrant status from within Canada until the backlog is cleared. He has very wisely limited the categories of people who may take advantage of the appeal system by eliminating the criminal element who come here to hide from justice. He brought it down to tolerable levels. If there were no backlog the Immigration Appeal Board, properly constituted in panels, could travel across the country and handle the number of appeals that come to it under our normal immigration procedures.

I think the criteria have been wrong. There has not been enough room for judging people for initiative, for desire, for character, for determination to appreciate this country and to do the jobs that Canadians do not want. We blame welfare, unemployment insurance—we blame myriad reasons. Last night the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) finally discovered what I have been telling him for two years; that it is not the high level of unemployment but the low level of minimum wage that is making it difficult for some people to find workers. I am simply saying that there are people who are prepared to do these jobs. They are new Canadians, and we are making it very very difficult for them, because of restrictive policies, to come into this country.

There is no reason to cut immigration from 230,000 to 110,000. It may make sense as it relates to mechanics, machinists and electricians because there is a surplus of workers in those trades. The hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) had something to say in this area. He himself is a perfect example of what this country can do. He came here as an immigrant, is now a citizen and I think is destined for greater things one day. I think we should realize that there are jobs in Canada which Canadians are not prepared to fill.

If hon. members opposite do not agree, they can go back and review the debates on immigration between 1958 and 1961 when their party was in power. When people could not find jobs the blame was eventually traced to immigration policy. What about the Common Market countries? What do they do in Switzerland, Germany, France? Do West Germans, Swiss or French people fill the menial jobs? No, they invite people from southern Italy, Greece, Spain and countries with a lower level of income. We do

not happen to be located next door to those pools of inexpensive labour. We can, however, make these people welcome and tailor our immigration policy so that it is humanitarian and not police-like.

Mr. Speaker, since this may be the last time I have a chance to speak on immigration for some time, I want to say a word about the people who work in the department. The growth of air travel, which has been phenomenal in the last couple of years, has increased their workload in screening people who enter the country and in handling immigration requests. The workload of our civil servants is an intolerable one, and instead of being criticized they should be praised; their numbers should be increased; the attitude toward them should be changed; the uniform should be changed; they should be made goodwill ambassadors; the menial jobs should be transferred to some other department.

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I shall be very brief—I am sure that will meet with the approval of the House—because most of the points I wanted to make have been covered. I refer to the shambles of the immigration system, the 17,000 backlog of appeal cases, accruing at a rate of 1,000 a month, and so on. I should like to second those hon. members who described this bill as long overdue to correct what was obviously a loophole of which many unscrupulous people have taken advantage.

I want to say a word about the Immigration Appeal Board because I have had the opportunity of appearing before it. It is to the credit of that board that it did not attempt to solve the problem by speeding up the appeals. It is the tradition of Canadian justice that the board continued to hear every appeal on its merits, to weigh the evidence carefully and to act in a proper judicial manner in spite of the increasing pressure of the public and the backlog of cases. The board has acted with a happy combination of justice and compassion for a long time. I am very pleased to say to this House that we have a first-class Immigration Appeal Board, and I should like to emphasize its compassionate nature.

I cannot say the same about the special inquiry officers and the manner in which they have conducted their inquiries. In fact, when I read the inquiries they have made I compare them with the inquiries of the benefit-control officers in another section of the department. The same kind of compassionate and judicial approach may, of necessity, not be possible because of the great administrative area, but nevertheless necessity should not overcome justice. I think legitimate criticism could be levelled against the special inquiry officers in the immigration department but for the fine nature of the Immigration Appeal Board and, to its credit, the government's own compassion and attitude toward appeals. Those injustices at the special inquiry level were largely overcome by the Immigration Appeal Board.

● (1530)

Canada is not a melting-pot. Thank God for that. That is one of the unique and nice things about this country, a quality that sets it apart from the United States. We are a rich mosaic of a multicultural nature. In the constituency which I represent there is a significant community from