

Private Members' Business

These facts have been confirmed in a recent study by Dr. Morton Beiser, a professor at the University of Toronto. He showed that only 8 per cent of the 1,300 refugees from Southeast Asia who were interviewed did not work in 1991, when Canada's unemployment rate rose to 10.3 per cent. One out of five had set up their own business. The study also found that 4.5 per cent of refugees collected welfare benefits compared with 7 per cent of all Canadians. My colleagues from the Reform Party should keep this in mind.

In any case, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River should not be too concerned, because Canada will not take in the 250,000 immigrants planned for 1994. Indeed, in the first half of this year, far fewer immigrants have come to this country than in the same period in 1993. Probably the total figure will not exceed 200,000 for 1994. The Liberal Party's program would increase immigration by 1 per cent a year, but the 250,000 immigrants that Canada should receive in 1994 are only 0.86 per cent of Canada's population.

We look forward to the document on immigration levels for the coming years which the minister is to table before November 1. At that time, the minister should provide us with all the studies and results of the consultations carried on in recent months.

I think that the Standing Committee on Immigration and Citizenship could then conduct a thorough study of this issue.

• (1755)

[English]

Any immigration policy must in the first place consider demographic factors. Currently most considerations are based on economics. One of the factors that has this last year justified higher immigration levels is the increasing preoccupation of many Canadians regarding the demographic decline in Canada for the coming years.

The projections indicate that if immigration numbers and birth rates do not increase then Canadians will be faced with a reduction in their numbers. Studies show that post-industrial nations will have a birth rate between 1.4 and 1.7 per cent. However, a rate of 2.1 per cent is necessary only to maintain the current population numbers. This difference must consequently be adjusted by the immigration policy.

In addition we must take into consideration the ages of the Canadian population. Young immigrants are needed to work and finance our social security system.

Finally, there is an increasing number of countries that find themselves in conflict situations. There are more than 100 million refugees in the world. Canada has a moral duty to do its share in solving this problem by welcoming refugees into our country.

[Translation]

The motion tabled by the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River is totally opposed to his own party's policies, the Liberal Party of Canada, as they are worded in that red book which the Prime Minister and the members opposite often quote as though it was the Bible. As I said, increasing immigration levels so as to reach one per cent of the Canadian population is a promise made in that red book.

The hon. member's motion is a barely veiled and disguised criticism of his party's policy. He told us that immigrants account for 55 per cent of the population in his riding of Scarborough—Rouge River. I think those people will not be very proud of their member of Parliament today, since he is squarely in favour of lowering immigration levels. In any case, let me tell you that, as a member of Parliament who came here as an immigrant, I am not proud of the member's motion. For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois opposes the motion.

[English]

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to address this reasonable motion. It is only a shame that this motion did not originate with the government. It seems that the government has a great deal to learn, at least as far as immigration policy is concerned, from its own backbenchers and especially from my hon. colleague, the author of this motion.

The fact that a motion like this even requires debate and is not already government policy is a reflection of the power that special interests have exercised and continue to exercise on government policy.

We currently have an immigration policy as outlined in the Liberal red book that is literally based on nothing. This government is allowing nearly 1 per cent of the population to come into the country this year as immigrants; 250,000 immigrants. At the same time Canada is experiencing a level of unemployment that is denying jobs to 1.5 million people.

The government can offer no rationale for this level of immigration. It is not derived from economic research, since the experts are agreed that immigration does not add to the wealth of Canada. Over the long term economic forecasts suggest that our current levels will actually lower the average income of all Canadians. There is no evidence that immigrants create more jobs than they take. At best the job and wealth creating effects of immigration are neutral.

There are data to back up arguments for restricting immigration during times of recession. There are data that clearly suggest that immigration should be tied to the economy. Moreover, it is only common sense that immigration should serve one primary role, to supplement our labour force to strengthen the economy and contribute to Canada's economic growth. That is not the agenda of this government at present and that is not the agenda of the immigration industry.