

legislation and which will likely be passed. The government changes the law from Wednesday to Thursday, and from Thursday to Friday, and Canadians do not even know it happens. It will happen while aliens are here with permanent status, and it will happen before they get here. If that is the way this parliament is going to operate, it seems to me we have reached a sorry day and a sorry state.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to have the opportunity to make a few comments in the second reading debate on Bill C-24, the proposed immigration act of 1977.

I want to say at the beginning that the first over-all impression I get from this legislation is that the manpower requirements for the evolving Canadian community are now to become secondary to the principle of family reunion.

I would like to draw attention to page 19, Volume 1, of the green paper on immigration which says that in 1966 the white paper on immigration set out more thoroughly than ever before the government's appreciation of the economic determinants of immigration policy. The white paper emphasized, and I quote:

Immigration policy must be consistent with national economic policy in general and with national manpower and social policies in particular . . . It must be related to the conditions of national and international life in 1966 and the years ahead rather than to past events.

Although this was written 11 years ago, according to the green paper, it capsulizes several ideas basic to sound thinking about immigration policy, and serves as a good introduction to an examination of the impact of labour market considerations on immigration planning.

The green paper states:

First, the statement is a reminder that immigration is intimately linked to economic realities. Immigration policy must be shaped by the same general aims as national economic policy of which, from the manpower viewpoint, it is a constituent element.

Second, it stresses that policy on immigration must be forward-looking. The international and domestic setting is subject to such rapid change that the relevance of past assumptions and the effectiveness of yesterday's techniques are continually exposed to obsolescence. Both demand constant reassessment to prevent policy from becoming outmoded, and to ensure that the immigration process as a whole remains a national asset. There is no room for entrenched doctrine or rigidity in managing a program that must be geared to economic and social change.

I agree with the principle that Canada needs immigration, and I subscribe to and support the reasons given in the second reading debate by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp). I also agree that a consideration of manpower requirements in our immigration policies is fundamental to the quality of life and the survival of the welfare system that makes Canada so attractive to so many people from other countries of the world. I therefore have to express my surprise that Bill C-24 seems to move away from this fundamental fact of life, contrary to statements in the 1966 white paper and more recently to the conclusions and recommendations of the special committee of this parliament which placed emphasis on a points system geared to our work and demographic needs and problems.

Immigration

Today in Canada we have some one million without work, and I note that the special committee of parliament, which held 50 public meetings, heard some 400 witnesses, received 1,200 letters and read some 200 briefs, recommended that the limit for immigration annually should be around the 100,000 level. I am therefore puzzled at the minister's continuous insistence on the figure of 140,000 to 150,000 immigrants annually. I remind hon. members that this figure does not include refugees who, by the way, have accounted for one immigrant in ten since World War II. I drew that figure from the green paper. I also remind hon. members that, with the trend toward increasing instability of governments throughout the world, this figure will increase drastically in the years to come. I agree with the rationale for the 100,000 average as recommended by my colleagues on the committee, and urge the minister to lower his plateau of 140,000 to 150,000.

● (2100)

If one can assume the accuracy of statistics contained in the green paper on immigration and population, then I refer the minister to page 26 which shows that at a fertility rate of 2.2, and with an annual net international migration of 60,000, the population of Canada in the year 2001 will be 30.6 million. I also urge the committee of the House to hear the call of my colleague from Provencher, and insist that the quota for immigration be brought to the House each year for approval and discussion by the Standing Committee on Manpower and Immigration.

Although our joint committee of parliament favoured special treatment be given to families and refugees, it also recommended that the nominated category be dropped. It is on this point that we now find the minister and his advisers playing political games, to their everlasting shame.

As I understand it, the parliamentary committee recommended that the nominated category be dropped and that the family category, formerly the sponsored category, be expanded to include parents under 60. This recommendation reaffirmed the principle of "reunification of families", with which we all agree. However, the committee also recognized the need to protect the independent category which brought in the skills and attributes important to the economy of Canada. Paragraph 56 of the immigration committee's report to parliament lays out this concern in very clear and precise terms. I quote from it:

The committee is concerned that over time the present classes of sponsored and nominated immigrants, given substantial advantages because they have relatives in Canada, would absorb an increasingly larger share of places available each year in Canada. To ensure that this does not happen and that "new seed" immigrants continue to find a way to enter Canada, all committee members except one recommended that the present class of nominated immigrant be dropped and that the ties between members of the non-dependent extended family be recognized in a different way.

Then it went on in that paragraph and the last sentence said:

Of course such persons could still come to Canada but they would have to be assessed on a more equal basis with independents.