

Supply

representations and phone calls to the minister's office. I looked at one letter tonight with respect to Anna Seawack, a young lady who came here from Poland. The family who brought her over wanted their child to learn Polish and Anna Seawack, a first cousin, was chosen. These people wanted to be very legal about the matter so they went to the employment office where they were told that a work permit was required because she was working as a babysitter or domestic.

The minister's office said that Anna Seawack would have to go to Detroit and do a Detroit shuffle rather than a Buffalo shuffle. Anna Seawack was a bank clerk in Poland so she could not possibly do anything like babysitting in Canada and certainly could not teach Polish to a young child because after all she was a bank clerk and—

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Would the hon. member like to finish his point because his allotted time has expired.

Mr. Blenkarn: Would the minister tell me why we must go through this red tape?

Mr. Hawkes: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I might have the unanimous consent of the committee to split the next round of the official opposition between the hon. member for Waterloo and the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka?

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: The hon. member suggests that on the next occasion when a Conservative member would speak, two members would speak for ten minutes each instead. Obviously, there would be no difference in the total time consumed. Is there agreement?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Parent: Mr. Chairman, I have a few points with regard to the refugee problem which I want to put on the record. I preface my remarks by saying that we in the Niagara Peninsula are very well served by the immigration officers there. I centre out the director in charge of Niagara Falls, Mr. Don Bandy, and one of his field workers, Mr. Carl Nauman, with whom we have been working for a number of years.

That being said, I take great exception to the former speaker's remarks in the sense that he would have a very preferred list of people who could come into this country. This is not the way in which the country was built or the way in which it came together. The criteria in place now for the admission of immigrants to the country is fair. It can be improved on in some ways but, by and large, it allows the greatest number of people the greatest chance to come to Canada and take part in our great country.

Last summer I visited Hong Kong. While there, I visited the refugee camps. In so doing, I obtained a first-hand view of the conditions in those camps. I had a chance to speak with the officers who were in place, and they informed me that the conditions from which these people came in Vietnam were virtually too abhorrent to describe and beyond anything we could imagine. As for the conditions in the camps for the

people who were scheduled to come to Canada, the camps were well run, clean and the people were well taken care of.

One might wonder why I bring this matter up. It is because I want to make a comparison between the conditions from which these people have come and the conditions of the surrounding area. These refugees have difficulty learning our language and adapting to our way of life, but if we were only to admit people who were exactly like ourselves, it would take away a great deal from the flavour and fibre which makes this country strong. It is for that reason that I encourage the minister to admit the number of refugees scheduled to come to Canada from Vietnam and southeast Asia.

By sharing what we have, Canada can show other countries that it is willing to open its doors and its heart to people who are less fortunate. There are those who would say that these men and women will take jobs from Canadians. The minister must consider that many of these people are willing to perform menial tasks which are not currently accepted by many of the workers in the country. I am not criticizing the general worker in Canada. I am saying that these people will do virtually any job because it is a chance for freedom. For us it is a chance to better ourselves and have the better things in life, but for them it is a case of life and death—no more or no less. It is for that reasons that these people who have taken a place in our society are welcomed citizens because they will help build this country in the years to come.

● (2300)

Some years ago a study was made of immigrants on the welfare and unemployment roles. It was found, in 1977, that .07 per cent of immigrants admitted to the country in the five years previous were on welfare—and not for the average length of time. In that respect they have taken their place as worth-while citizens.

I wonder if the minister could address himself specifically to the area of refugees who have come to this country or those it is proposed to admit. Maybe he could tell us if they have adapted and if they are contributing to the well-being of all people in the country.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, I should like to begin by recounting to members of the House an experience I had today when I met the Chong family representing the sixty thousand refugees brought to Canada under the special program. They are two brothers and their wives and each family has three children. They were on their way to Goderich, Ontario. The sponsoring family, from the Roman Catholic Church in that area, thought they would bring them here to symbolize the quite amazing partnership that has taken place in this country in the last two years.

I should like to pay tribute in part, to my predecessors, Mr. Atkey and the hon. member for Sarnia who in this portfolio were very much responsible for putting the program together. I certainly would not want to take the credit for it because it was through them that the special refugee program was initiated. We are now simply able to complete it.