

delegates at a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference that certain Bermudians coming to Canada as visitors were detained for a number of hours by immigration authorities and deported.

Quite apart from individual cases, is the minister aware that cases of discrimination are all too common at certain airports, such as Toronto, and cause deep resentment among members of the Commonwealth and Caribbean countries, contrary to the policy of parliament and the department's own policy? Will the department take active steps to ensure that immigration officials are adequately acquainted with Canadian policy against discrimination on the grounds of race?

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, my deputy minister and I myself have visited the airports to indicate the government's policy in this regard. I am satisfied that there is no discrimination. That does not mean people are not going to cry discrimination every time there is a finding against them.

As far as the individual cases are concerned in which the hon. member says he is not interested, these people came in as visitors, one of them had a criminal record which he freely admitted and was put in a detention centre until transportation back to his home could be found; the other individual came here as a visitor and did not have a penny in her pocket or anyone to contact in Canada—hardly a bona fide visitor. If the individual who made the criticism had taken the time to contact our office and find out what the facts were, we would have made that particular statement.

Mr. Brewin: Mr. Speaker, may I say to the minister, in passing, that I was not asking about individual cases; I was asking about a practice which I know to be common and which he should look into.

My supplementary question is this: Has the minister or the government received a request from the high commissioner of the United Nations for refugees for Canada to accept a larger quota of political refugees, as distinguished from economic refugees, a matter which I think he discussed with the hon. member for Provencher? Will the government take positive action with respect to the commissioner's request, especially in light of the rapid and substantial decline in the flow of immigrants to Canada?

● (1502)

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I want to dissociate myself from the comments made by the hon. member's saying that he is personally familiar with discrimination at various airports or any particular one. If he has specific cases, of course I want to root them out and find out about them. However, to make a blanket condemnation is a disservice to people who have a very tough job to do at our borders. When the answer sometimes comes back no and we get the criticism that it is because of race, I check into those cases. I will be happy to look into any which the hon. member has to raise.

With regard to taking prisoners, in so far as Chile is concerned we had 100 political prisoners and their families.

Privilege—Mr. Dinsdale

We doubled that quota. We have also indicated that in so far as Brazil is concerned we will do what we can in that area, taking at least 100 prisoners and their families for starters. That is being negotiated by the United Nations high commissioner for refugees in co-operation with us and other countries.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. DINSDALE—DELAY IN TABLING POST OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Speaker: I indicated last week that I would endeavour to rule today on two outstanding questions of privilege, the first raised by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) on June 8 relating to the late tabling of the Postmaster General's annual report.

At the time the hon. member raised the question, he made certain other complaints concerning the alleged illegal increases in postal rates and the lack of an adequate number of copies of the annual report for use in committee, procedures followed in committee for examining the estimates of the Post Office, and the making of an announcement outside the House concerning the creation of a committee to examine the advisability of transforming the Post Office into a Crown corporation. The hon. member made an argument that this series of complaints, taken in total, constituted a contempt of the House. The minister replied to those complaints on Wednesday, June 14, 1978.

Members will be aware, however, that in our practice the Chair has never allowed itself to be drawn into committee proceedings. Therefore, the procedures followed for examining estimates and the number of copies of documents available in committee are matters to be determined by the committee.

Similarly, there have been other occasions when members have complained that certain announcements ought to be made in the House rather than outside, and again the Chair has ruled consistently that is not a matter which can be determined by the Chair. These complaints have therefore been treated as grievances rather than as breaches of privilege.

The hon. member also alleges the government acted illegally in the manner in which postal rates have been increased. Hon. members will be aware that I have a duty to decide questions of order, not of law, and furthermore, I understand that this issue is now before the courts. In my opinion, therefore, it is an issue to be settled by the courts, and the Chair should not intervene.

That leaves us with the main issue of the hon. member's complaint, namely, the late tabling of the report of the Canada Post Office for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1977. Again, however, I feel that the hon. member is raising a grievance rather than a question of privilege. I do not see how, under the guise of privilege, the Chair can be drawn into determining a question of law. I would, in this connection, refer hon. members to a ruling of my predecessor on a related matter.