That, perhaps, is the crux of the issue and the crux of the position that has been taken by the government in response to the committee's report. As hon. members may know, at the time the report was published I and a number of other members identified ourselves in the publication of a minority report. In addition to that, I issued a kind of minority comment of my own with respect to the work of the special joint committee, not in any way attempting to downgrade much of the work done by the committee but to point out some of the weaknesses of the process and some of the shortcomings of its final report.

What we have had over the past two years—and this has been supported by a number of volunteer organizations who have been extremely critical of this process—is a kind of illusion of full participation. There was the publication of the green paper with its extensive supporting documents. There was the intensive and extensive series of hearings across the country, some of them verging on violence with the kind of confrontation that took place. Finally there was the published report, and now the bill.

What the minister and many of the officials would have us believe is that there has been the widest kind of participation and consultation possible. Yet I do not think it takes much penetrating analysis to realize that there was not really an adequate consultation or an adequate probing beneath the surface of previously held prejudices and false assumptions. I said in my own minority comment on November 6, 1975, in terms of the work of the committee of which I was a member:

● (1650)

From the outset, the committee did not fully understand or agree on what a meaningful consultation on immigration involved... As well, by allowing extremely little time, serious-minded and extensive national organizations had insufficient time to consult their membership and stimulate a worth-while, educational and thoughtful response.

I went on to say:

The committee, perhaps without realizing it, became a sounding board for extremist groups and had little opportunity to balance the hearings in favour of those who were more thoughtful and did not have an immediate axe to grind.

If there is any doubt about the willingness of the government to engage in full dialogue with the people of this country, let alone the members of this government, it should be in the shocking reluctance of the minister to present to this House the regulations that have already been drafted with respect to this particular bill.

Mr. Cullen: Not true.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): If the minister indicates that it is not true, I hope he will be able to explain it to his senior officials who some weeks ago provided him with a packet of fairly well-defined draft regulations that would accompany this legislation. If it is not true, I would like to know how he expects, as he said in the debate, to discuss the substance of the more important regulations. The minister cannot have it both ways. If they have not been drafted, it will be impossible to discuss them. If they have been drafted, the only reason I can conclude he is not willing to present them to the House and the Canadian public is that he is not willing to trust their judgment, not willing to state the full ramifications of this new immigration policy on which we are being launched.

I would like to know why the minister is reluctant to take the Canadian people into his confidence. Why is he not willing to trust the people in their ultimate judgment, particularly on a matter which will so profoundly affect the unfolding development of this country?

I will be delighted to hear the hon. member speak and state his position with respect to the importance of these regulations. I will be very surprised if any member of this House, on either side, believes that the bill before us for debate this afternoon in any way adequately states or defines the basis on which, or the practices by which immigration policy is going to be followed in this country. While the minister may be accepting congratulations for the fact that a number of anachronisms are being removed from the legislation of 1952, a number of aspects of this bill strike me as the classic example of taking one step forward and two steps backward. I hope members on all sides will think very carefully before giving the minister and his department any more power than that which they presently enjoy.

Let me give a couple of examples of the way in which this bill seems to be, at best, a poorly-drafted document. I said on Wednesday last that this bill is particularly important because it deals with people. It attempts to regulate the comings and goings of people in and out of Canada. It is a major operation, when you think of something like 70 million crossings that take place with respect to our national borders each year. It is perhaps more than 70 million now: that statistic is likely out of date. I look at the bill and the statement of principles. While this may seem like a semantic quibble, surely it is a profound criticism with regard to the human quality of this legislation. Clause 5(2) reads:

An immigrant may be granted landing if he is not a member of an inadmissible class—

Clause 5(3) reads:

A visitor may be granted entry and allowed to remain in Canada during the period for which he was granted entry—

Clause 6(1) reads:

Subject to this act and the regulations, any convention refugee, member of the family class or other immigrant may be granted landing if he is able to establish—

I would like to know why immigrants are referred to throughout this bill as "he". Maybe I missed something along the line. I have looked at other legislation. It seems we have moved beyond the kind of sexist definition in legislation and refer to people as "persons", "individuals" or some other non-sexist definition. To provide a new immigration act in the seventies which has a sexist language base certainly is most inappropriate. Even the definition of the minister refers to him as being "he". I suspect that future governments might well want to question whether the Minister of Immigration should always be male. Of perhaps more profound concern with respect to this legislation is the general definition in clause 8, where it reads: