

Supply

Employment and Immigration Commission and the Department of the Secretary of State will review their language training programs, with a view to strengthening the Canadian Government's role, and more importantly, to establishing a program that will meet the various needs of people who have just entered Canada.

What about legislative measures for acknowledging refugee status, Mr. Speaker? Our commitment to refugees is as steadfast as ever. It will be strengthened when legislative measures for the recognition of the status of refugee are tabled in the coming weeks. The draft proposals are in their final stages, Mr. Speaker. This is an extremely important and complex matter which requires our undivided attention.

The growing number of claims, which went from 8,400 in 1985 to 18,000 in 1986, should reach 50,000 this year. Mr. Speaker, it is important that Canadians should realize this constant increase. I repeat that the figures—8,400 in 1985; 18,000 in 1986; and probably over 50,000 this year—have forced us to take temporary control measures in order to set up a new process without having to face an overwhelming number of claims.

However, Mr. Speaker, we must make sure that we have a fair and adequate system.

Our legislation will emphasize certain elements. It will make it possible for us to protect refugees while preserving our reputation all over the world as a compassionate country. The legislation will reflect also our moral, legal and international commitments.

The new legislation will reflect the contributions of many groups, including the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, and that of Mr. Plaut.

Particular attention has been paid to the opinions of sponsoring groups and ethnic organizations.

Here are some of the highlights of the proposals announced last May: First, the setting up of a commission of immigrants and refugees independent of Canada Employment and Immigration Board. Second, hearings by an independent tribunal which would give claimants the benefit of the doubt. Third, an impartial climate during the hearings. Fourth, an appeal authorization before the Federal Court of Canada and, fifth, an access which would not jeopardize the integrity of our immigration program.

These elements had to be reassessed in the light of the new events which have occurred since last May, but, as a whole, the characteristics of the new process combining justice and effectiveness, will be maintained.

The new refugee determination process will discourage the abuses which have prevented the process from being effective these last few years, and the Hon. Members know what I mean by that. For instance, we found out that Turkish nationals who

wanted to come to Canada were abusing the process. These abuses were eliminated. We have slowed down the rapidly increasing number of people crossing our borders, without however exposing a single one of them to being sent back to his country of origin. However, Canada will always ensure that genuine refugees have the best protection possible.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian delegate to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said the following on February 25: Canada was unfortunately the victim of such abuses, and it has unfortunately had to take a number of measures to protect itself. But even so, explained our representative to the High Commissioner for Refugees, the methods used by Canada are much less drastic than those applied by certain other countries to stop an excessive inflow of refugees.

We have to keep up our tradition.

At the international level, Canada has sponsored initiatives to organize to some extent the procedures used by various countries to face the refugee problem and prevent those who already benefit from a certain protection from bypassing the process at the expense of people who really need this assistance, that is people who really need our help. Various international organizations as well as the High Commissioner for Refugees have supported such initiatives, which will very soon have positive results.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would like to add that Canada was built by immigrants and refugees. They met their challenges with pride, integrity and success. We shall continue to be proud of their achievements because they are for us all the guarantee of a brighter future. Indeed, we believe immigration to be increasingly important for the future development of Canada for a variety of reasons. First, there are economic reasons, because we believe that immigrants create more jobs than they take away from the Canadian economy. They take part in the economic growth and development of this country by contributing to the creation of capital, by increasing the demand for Canadian goods and services, by providing needed skills and dynamism to our labour force and by contributing to the tax revenue of all levels of Government.

Also, socially and demographically, I might add that my Government is convinced that immigration is a major force which contributes to the economic and social prosperity of Canada and which has allowed our country to take the lead when international solutions have been needed to solve the problem of refugees and immigrants whose cases involve humanitarian considerations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being 5.45 p.m., it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 82(10), to interrupt the proceedings and to put forthwith all questions necessary to dispose of the Supply proceedings now before the House.