

Statements by Ministers

international problems. This may prove to be especially significant as we begin to consider our own demographic situation in the years ahead.

If current below-replacement level fertility rates continue—and there is no reason to think they will not—Canada's population will begin to decline shortly after the turn of the century. Present net immigration levels—by that I mean immigration minus emigration—only slow and do not stop such an impending decline. A policy of long-term moderate and controlled growth in immigration established in the near future may deflect this outcome. It is something we must consider.

The growing complexity and urgency of this and other immigration issues, both national and international, underline the importance of the consultative process. It is my hope, therefore, that in the course of the coming year we shall find ways of broadening and expanding that process, new and better ways of communicating with our partners in the provinces, the non-governmental organizations, the legal and academic communities, and with Canadians themselves.

It has become fashionable to ridicule and belittle the words and phrases of political debate. That criticism, however, makes them no less valid, no less true. I should like to conclude this report with a reminder to all Members and all who may be listening of just how important immigration is to this country.

Immigration is one of the fundamental supports upon which Canada was founded and upon which we have developed ever since. It remains a powerful force in the lives of all Canadians. The benefits brought to the immigrant and the refugee, both economically and socially, can be seen in the kind of society we are—dynamic and industrious but compassionate and considerate as well. Respect—respect for one another, respect for the traditions we perhaps do not share in common, respect for the heritage we are creating together, and respect for the Canadian way is the gift of immigration.

The integrity of our policies is, therefore, absolutely vital. We have established ways and means, and they must be respected and upheld because it is through them that we stand ready to share our opportunities and the benefits of life in Canada, and to welcome them with a warmth unequalled by any nation. This is never more true than when it comes to the reunion of the family and the extension of sanctuary to the genuine refugee.

• (1240)

This report anticipates that Canadians will share this positive view of immigration, that they will be reassured by the steps the Government has taken to reaffirm its importance and, not least, that they will join us in realizing the importance of immigration to Canadian life.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, the Minister may rejoice and be pleased in tabling his report today, but that should be the extent of his pleasure because

whatever his Government says these days, be it on trade, drugs, environment, science and technology, fisheries, cruise missiles, you name it, it lacks credibility, and the same must be said about immigration. We on this side of the House believe that the Government once again is misleading Canadians, and I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker.

First, today the Minister announces the increase from 125,000 to 135,000, yet only a few months ago the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) proclaimed that Canada should let in up to 200,000 immigrants. A few months ago the Secretary of State (Mr. Crombie) proclaimed 175,000. Today the Minister deflates his own Prime Minister's figures. Which are we to believe?

I will give another example. We all know how anxious Canadians are to reunify their families. Last year the Minister for Immigration (Mr. Weiner) projected a total of 105,000 to 115,000. Yet he admitted only 86,000 people. The Minister today is promising 50,000 family reunifications, yet he knows deep in his heart that he does not have the financial and personnel resources that are needed to process these people. In addition, last year he promised, for 1987, 45,000 family reunifications and delivered only 35,000, which represents 20 per cent below that projection.

Another area where promises were not kept is in humanitarian immigration. Last year the Minister promised 5,000 to 8,000 people. This year he back-pedalled to somewhere between 3,000 and 6,000 people.

The Minister's statement also lacks credibility because it deals only with figures. It contains not one word about services for an increasing number of projected new arrivals. Immigrants are more than just numbers, we must remind the Minister. In his statement he does not devote one word to immigration adjustment or to the services which are needed upon arrival by an increased number of people. What a shame.

To be taken seriously, the Government and the Minister have to rebuild lost confidence. Church groups, volunteer organizations, minority groups and immigration and refugee aid groups sharply and understandably criticized the Government last summer for its regressive and ill-conceived policies. A Bill introduced in this House in August, you will remember, Mr. Speaker, as an emergency measure, is still waiting to become law.

The Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi) and I welcome the two promises made today. Persons selected to immigrate to Canada, or who are sponsored by family members already in Canada, will now be able to include their sons and daughters who are 21 years of age and over if these children have never been married. We welcome the promise made that the immigration selective system will be modified so that bonus points awarded to married sons and daughters and brothers and sisters will be increased from 10 points to 15 points. These are recommendations stemming from the standing committee and we now wait to see when and if these measures will be implemented.