

Supply

It is difficult enough for the average taxpayer on the street to understand the various ramifications of the three levels of government—municipal, provincial and federal—without our contributing to this confusion by using similar titles in CMHC, Manpower and some of the other ongoing programs. It contributes to the confusion and makes everyone's job a little more difficult. This might be something to take into consideration when we are thinking of titles for these programs; we should try to avoid similarities. As I say, Canada Works, for example, would have been just fine to carry on under the title that everyone was becoming familiar with, and then we introduced it as community development. As I said, I want to put these brief remarks on record in order to join in with other members in congratulating the minister on his handling of a difficult task. It has been a long day and I will be sharing the time with the member for Spadina. I would like to leave a few minutes so that we could get a response from the minister. I was discussing with him the other day the question of the balance of service in given areas. In my own constituency I have an area where they are complaining that they do not have adequate service in some of the villages and outlying areas. They do not feel they are being adequately served by one or two days service per week. They would like to have someone located right in their community. I think that is a fair request. I wonder if I could get your reaction to what I have said, sir.

● (2350)

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, I know we have only a few minutes left but I want to tell the hon. member for Restigouche that I agree with his principle that we should try to decentralize the services more directly. We have tried to do that through some of the new programs, as he knows. We have tried to do it through the community development program and by setting the priorities within each of the provinces and regions so that the work projects would reflect the interests of those areas. We have worked that out at the local advisory board level in the constituencies as well as at the regional level. As I have said several times today, we are revamping and reorganizing the department and the programs. That is one of the principles which is included in the idea of greater autonomy and decentralization, for making judgments at the local level.

Mr. Stollery: Mr. Chairman, I, too, will make my remarks very briefly. I know the minister would like to have a couple of minutes to wind up.

First of all, I would like to respond to the point which was brought up about the applications from Britain. Some hon. members may not be aware that Canada is a very difficult country to get into. We have a non-discriminatory immigration policy. This means it affects people from Britain just like it affects people from Portugal, China, South America and everywhere else. Because the policy is non-discriminatory it affects people from the United Kingdom and the United States just as it affects people from all around the world. We have a restricted immigration policy and I am personally happy that

it applies reasonably equitably to everyone from whatever area of the world they happen to come from. I think the minister and the department are to be complimented for taking this non-discriminating approach to our immigration policy.

I do a considerable amount of immigration work because of the constituency I represent. I would like to bring to the minister's attention one or two problems which have arisen recently in my constituency. The first is with respect to people who have been accepted for landing under the order in council procedures, usually spouses of landed immigrants or Canadian citizens. This difficulty has continued, but it started when the Conservative party was in government. It is the question of immigrants accepted for landing not receiving a work permit, which they should receive. In this case a person has been accepted by the system. He or she is a spouse, and has married a Canadian citizen for one reason or another. We are keeping them for up to nine months or a year in a kind of limbo where they are told that if they can get a job then they can have a work permit. But they go to employers and the employers say that if they do not have a work permit they cannot be given a job. I think this is something which should be looked into. I am convinced it is because the message has not gotten around that this kind of red tape is something we do not bother with.

My second question is with respect to Hong Kong where we have a real problem with local staff just processing all of the paperwork. I wish to compliment the tremendous work done by the immigration officers in these places. These immigration officers handle the applications of thousands of refugees plus all the normal immigration cases. They must also handle the immigration cases from the People's Republic of China, which pose a special problem.

● (2355)

They cannot do any more. What is needed is local staff to help the paper work. It is very important that we get this backlog cleared up. So the two points are with regard to (1) People being accepted through an order in council but not receiving their work permits and having to see members of parliament unnecessarily or hang around the immigration department and, (2) the employment of local staff, particularly in light of the pressure under which these men and women have worked with the Indo-Chinese immigration movement plus the normal immigration flow.

The third question is of a political nature, and I am still not clear if a process has evolved. It is the question of family businesses about which we all hear about from time to time, the particular difficulty faced by people who cannot meet the occupational demand requirements but who are required to help in a family business. I am sure members of Parliament on both sides of this House have faced this problem. I will not take any more time. I have dealt with a number of immigration cases under four or five ministers of employment and immigration and I can compliment the current Minister of Employment and Immigration on the immigration department. Under difficult circumstances, I think he has handled the department very well in this last little while.