

Government Orders

People of Nanaimo, immigrant and non-immigrant alike, are concerned about this fact. That is why I wanted the minister to hear directly from these people. Since that has not been possible, at least not so far, I would like to tell the minister and this House just what a group of Nanaimo immigrants feel must be done to correct the current immigration process.

First, a direct quote from one of the Vietnamese participants at a meeting I held in Nanaimo in this last year: "The government screwed up by allowing many immigrants into Canada without properly checking their backgrounds". Again, there is nothing in Bill C-44 that leads me to believe this situation will be addressed.

Second, the same Vietnamese Canadian participants said: "Those immigrants selling drugs have no fear of the law". That is because most of these immigrants know that even if they are ordered deported, it may be years before they are actually kicked out of the country, that is if they are ever tracked down by a grossly understaffed and overworked enforcement service.

• (1725)

Third, quoting again from this group of Vietnamese participants: "The government must get serious about toughening its immigration laws". These are immigrants telling the government what they believe should be done.

Legitimate law-abiding immigrants in Nanaimo do not fear the kind of tough measures Reform has advocated. In fact, they would welcome the kinds of proposals Reform has talked about knowing that our policies would only be detrimental to those who do not or will not abide by Canadian laws.

In short, Nanaimo's immigrant population wants to be a productive part of Canadian society and we want them to be. They want to contribute toward building a better and safer Canada. However they agree that this cannot be done without a strict immigration policy of zero tolerance toward immigrant criminals. This bill does not have the teeth required to implement such a policy.

It is with the views of immigrants within my riding in mind that I appeal to this government here today to abandon this nebulous piece of legislation in favour of meaningful and significant changes.

Those changes should include provisions for extra enforcement officers, a zero tolerance policy for immigrants convicted of serious crimes either in Canada or prior to their arrival, the addition of health provisions such as mandatory HIV testing, and a policy to refuse admittance or expedite deportation of those suspected of war crimes or crimes against humanity.

In his 1994 annual report the Auditor General also suggested changes to the way in which immigration responsibilities are carried out by different government departments. The Auditor

General has concerns about the lack of reporting either by the immigration department or the other departments that have some responsibility in this area. If the minister is looking for ways to save money, which he should be, he should consider making the necessary reporting changes advocated by the Auditor General a part of this legislation.

There are many more areas where this bill falls short. The minister has shown some courage in taking these first steps but he has also demonstrated a lack of understanding as to what Canadians want in a sound immigration policy. Either that or he simply lacks the intestinal fortitude required to make the needed changes.

The minister is fond of telling this House that the buck stops with him. In the sense that the buck is a dollar, I urge the minister to withdraw this two-bit piece of legislation and come back to this House with the entire dollar's worth of change needed to address the serious inadequacies in the current immigration process.

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was following the speech given by the hon. member. He always refers to new Canadians other than his own race as immigrants. I want to know, the people he was talking to, the Vietnamese Canadians, are they still immigrants or are they Canadian citizens who have the right to express themselves? Just because they look different, we should not call them immigrants for the rest of their lives.

He quoted the figure of 24,000 deportees and mentioned that we have only 20 investigators. I am sure he knows that of the 24,000, not all of them are criminals. Some of these people are missing papers or documentation. One cannot call 24,000 refugees waiting for papers to be in order as criminals and ask them to be investigated.

Can he clarify those two points for me? I would appreciate it.

• (1730)

Mr. Ringma: Madam Speaker, to respond to the first point, of course concerning people who are landed immigrants, we should stop calling them immigrants after a while. The group I was referring to was a mix. Some were immigrants without status, others have status.

We are all immigrants after all, as the hon. parliamentary secretary stated just a while ago. In this case there was specific reference to a Vietnamese community. Am I to go into the political correctness realm to try to skate around the fact that they are identifiable? It was a group to whom I spoke, identifiably with a Vietnamese background, whether they are immigrants or not. Let us not skate around things. Let us call them as they are.

Mr. Assadourian: Call them Canadians.