

*Government Orders*

coming into our community as well as many people of Chinese origin.

This is what makes my city one of the most exciting cities in the world. All of us on all sides of the House welcome these people because we need their expertise, we need their skills. They give us a trading advantage when they go back to their countries, because they have the facility of language and they can open doors for us. I do not think there would be anyone in this House that would argue that point.

I want to make one point here. The one point I want to make is that our public servants in the department of immigration, with the best intentions, do not really implement the act because there is too much coming at them all at once.

I really do believe that if these amendments are going to have a shot at putting our Immigration Act back on track, which can also be an instrument of pulling this country together, then I beg the minister to make sure the necessary person-years are there so that those of us who are MPs in urban areas do not have to spend 90 per cent of our time looking after 5 per cent of our community.

If that is done, we will then be able to serve some of the other people in our community that are just as important to us and need our services just as badly as those people who are immigrating here.

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, I have a few comments and I would like to ask the hon. member a question.

The first point he made was about the lack of resources in the department. I think it is quite telling to Canadians to refer back to the year 1957 when we welcomed into Canada 282,000 people with fewer resources. At that time we had a less cumbersome and complicated system which was not as much judicialized. What we are attempting to do here is give the department the tools to manage effectively the influx of migration into Canada.

The hon. member referred to specific cases in his riding that call for humane and compassionate considerations. Sometimes people do not fit the refugee criteria, they do not fit a category of immigrants. They would have to go back. The minister does have the discretion to accept people on humane and compassionate grounds.

• (1700)

However my experience in the few months I have been in the department is that you get thousands and thousands and thousands of people who want their case considered on humane and compassionate grounds by the minister. That is just impossible.

In section 6(3) and 6(5) of the proposed act, and 114(2)—these are the agency considerations—he will find that I am proposing that we establish by regulation criteria that will allow us to determine and grant to officers in the department the power to make that determination on humane and compassionate grounds. It will not be a decision that is made out of thin air, there will be criteria that we will ask them to apply in order to exercise that discretion which I submit shows the real face of Canada to the world, which is a face the world has come to trust.

I would like his comments and his views on this transparency because the cases he referred to are examples in my own mind of situations where, if there were transparent criteria, an officer could exercise in favour of this Bulgarian he spoke about.

**Mr. Mills:** Madam Speaker, in 1990 I wrote a letter to the then minister responsible for immigration talking about an idea where members of Parliament could act as quasi-deputies of the minister of immigration. If I took the time to hear an hour or two or three of a constituent's case, subject to the departmental approval, I could write a letter to the department asking it to please allow this person to work or please take this person off a deportation notice.

The minister is missing the fact that by giving all of this power to the officials, by taking the political culture out of it, he has not relieved the burden of the member of Parliament. The workload will not be less for the official, it is just that he has more power. But now at least the constituent has access to a member of Parliament and so the member of Parliament can be lobbied by church groups, by the immigrant's employer: here is a person who is working, here is a person whose daughter is getting good marks in school, and on and on.

Right now, as a member of Parliament, I have no power to help these people. A lot of them are good people. I am as opposed to abuse as much as the minister, but there are many people who are good people and my hands are tied. The minister has just admitted something I have known for months, he is getting thousands and thousands of cases. I am almost embar-