

• (1710)

I am very glad that the Immigration Department prepared an apology for the parliamentary secretary to read to the House with regard to what has happened. It is not that everything was wrong before 1967 and everything has been right since. If there has been anything wrong with regard to immigration, it has been since 1967. In 1967 the department warned that the change in the regulations affecting the rights or the privileges of visitors to apply for landed immigrant status in Canada was going to cause trouble, and nothing has come but trouble to the point where it is suggested in many areas that there is abuse. There is nothing in what the parliamentary secretary has said, nor has any evidence come forward from the department except tacit admissions that there is abuse, that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, who come to this country, presumably as visitors, apply for landed immigrant status and then disappear when they are turned down and turn up elsewhere, most of them in the United States. This country has become another avenue of illegal entry into the U.S.

What gets me is that in the Throne Speech of October, 1970, we were told we were going to get a white paper on immigration, an examination of the trend in immigration. Immigration has gone down from 200,000 persons per year to about 125,000. Ask any immigrant family what their attitude is toward the government. Let me say that the majority of those people are not a drag on the labour market. There are some casualties among them but the majority of them are hard working people. They do not have to conform to the artificially high standards that are set in the points game that people have to play with the department.

Never in my life have I seen anything quite so artificial as this rigid and arbitrary standard that has been set up with regard to the admission of immigrants to Canada. You have to go to school for 11 years or nine years as we do in Canada, but in the country from which the individual comes in six or seven years he may learn almost as much as in the nine years here. That is certainly true of the trades. I have never seen such an ostrich-like performance in the standards that have been set under a minister who did not care a whit about immigration. We know that the minister who was responsible at the time did not care a whit about immigration. As a matter of fact, his background is such that he would wish to eliminate as much immigration as he could.

Mr. Béchard: Who is he?

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): He is now Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand). That is the point.

[Translation]

And I told him that too, without beating about the bush.

Mr. Béchard: Yes, but he answered you too, did he not?

[English]

We know that the regulations were made by the officials, approved by the minister and were never submitted to parliament for examination. We are always told that

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they have been passed by parliament. Not on your life. Be that as it may, there is that great, running sore that we were to have the benefit of the government's views on this, according to the Throne Speech of 1970. I asked the former minister many times when we were going to get the white paper on immigration. "Soon," he said, but 16 months have elapsed. We have had a new Throne Speech in which nothing was said about this.

We were told we were going to get amendments to the Immigration Appeal Board Act, but nothing has been said about that. The replies were "Soon," but the net result has been that the Immigration Appeal Board itself is run into the ground. They are doing yeoman work. They deal with just under 1,000 cases a year, which is a lot, yet there is now a backlog of over 7,000 cases. If there were no further appeals as of today it would take the Immigration Appeal Board seven to eight years to deal with the backlog.

What happens to the people in the interval? I admit that some of them are acting in direct contravention of the law. I do not want to call into question any of those cases where there may have been fraud. But what about all those people who are now in the country awaiting appeal, working, getting married and having children? Are we simply going to leave them in a limbo and five years from now say, "But you have only 45 points. Out". What about the children? What about the prejudice to the individual because there is a blind and obstinate desire or insistence on fulfilling bureaucratic rules? This is the point that I am concerned about.

I will argue with the Immigration Department about their standards but that is not the point that I am trying to make today. The point is this business of the continuous pile-up. I am referring to the case where an individual, having come to this country, applies in a bona fide manner according to the law and the immigration official does not grant him sufficient points but does not tell him that he has only perhaps 35 or 36 points out of the required 50. The individual must then ask for a special inquiry and at the time of the special inquiry the information is disclosed, not beforehand. The individual cannot go to anyone who is knowledgeable. He is often a poor immigrant who does not speak too well in either of our two official languages. He is in a strange land, baffled by officialdom, row upon row of officials, a great big machine which absolutely terrifies and intimidates even those who come from countries where English is spoken.

I have seen Australian girls, competent computer operators, turned down because they were short of one or two years of their school education. They were told to ask for a special inquiry. They were petrified at the prospect of facing such a special inquiry. What is the lot of the individual who does not get a change of decision at the special inquiry and still there are grounds for dispute and there is a right of appeal? He gets a deportation order and is told to either go voluntarily or be deported.

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There are presently 7,000 to 8,000 people who have deportation orders hanging over their heads. They cannot leave the country to go to the United States for even 24 hours. They cannot cross the border. On occasion I have asked ministers and senior officials when they intend to