

major revision of our immigration procedures in a quarter of a century, as the minister well knows. In the process of, first, the green paper, subsequently the special joint committee which travelled to about 45 different centres throughout Canada and had a great many meetings here in Ottawa and elsewhere, and finally the bill itself, there has been realization of the tremendous amount of interest which exists with respect to the whole question of immigration. In fact, a newsman this morning, in commenting on the issue of immigration, said that this is one matter on which everybody has an opinion. Unfortunately, sometimes there are situations wherein we get opinions off the tops of people's heads, and not the considered view that Canadians are capable of giving to the matter of immigration.

I suppose that one of the reasons immigration touches people in every walk of life so deeply is that it goes to the heart or the essence of community itself, the essence of the nation. Certainly, as a country that is still relatively new, we realize that we have been fundamentally dependent on immigration. Also, we can observe that in the past decade public opinion has gone through wild swings and gyrations with respect to immigration. As I think I mentioned during the second reading debate, it is most instructive to realize that when we last dealt with immigration in a major way, which was in the white paper on immigration produced a little more than a decade ago by Mr. Pearson's government and Mr. Marchand when he was minister, the attitudes among the general public and in the media, and certainly as reflected in speeches in the House, were such that one faced the subject of immigration with exhilaration and with a sense that immigration was one of the important characteristics, one of the really hopeful aspects, of the unfolding history of this country.

Unfortunately, during the last four or five years, particularly as the economic and social situation has become uncertain and difficult for a great number of Canadians, with internal problems, some of them affecting the integrity of the country, and with questions related to the future evolution of the province of Quebec, immigration has become a difficult subject for many people. It has tended to be treated—this is one of the unfortunate aspects—in a rather pathological way, with the idea that somehow immigration is now rather like a genie out of the bottle; that we must look upon it as something that is perhaps somewhat dangerous for the development of Canada. I know that the special joint committee said in its report, and the minister, as well as his predecessor who was connected with the special joint committee and the green paper, stated that immigration is significant and important to Canada. This has always been said with, "Yes, that is the situation—but." That is what made difficult the work of our special joint committee.

I am delighted that the co-chairman of the special joint committee, the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell), is here this afternoon, because he did a difficult job and he did it well. Perhaps it means more for me to say that than some other members, because he and I at times were not in agreement. But I can say that he gave important and

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constructive leadership to that committee in a most difficult situation.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** All of us who served on the committee won our spurs, in a sense, because we had to go through a great deal of trial and tribulation as we tried to make ourselves available to public opinion and public participation. We had a further aspect of public participation, to a degree, in the work of the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration, because some briefs and submissions were heard there. I would like to go on the record as commending the very capable work that was done by the hon. member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson). I think she was most fair and helpful in trying to produce a most constructive piece of legislation in that context.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** Of course, perhaps we did not happen to suffer as much the kind of "road show" exposure in the standing committee as did the special joint committee a couple of years ago. I say all this because, as hon. members will know, I have not been entirely happy with the process because I think there were times when we did not consult public opinion adequately or effectively. I am really quite shocked and seriously disturbed at the fact that the government House leader and some members on the government side seem to be fanatically obsessed with having this legislation become law in the shortest possible time.

They seem to want to use some kind of pressure or steam-roller tactic to push this bill through in a few days during a period when most people would recognize that anyone with any sense would not want to sit or stand in this legislative chamber, but would rather enjoy the all too brief summer that comes to this country. I feel it is unfortunate, and it is no credit to the government that they have committed themselves to rushing this bill through so that they can take whatever credit is due to them by having this legislation become a new statute on the books.

It would have been exceedingly valuable for the Canadian public in general had they had a few weeks to reflect upon the work that was done in the standing committee. It is significant that the minister, in writing a letter of thanks to the various members of the committee, recognized the fact that some 99 amendments were passed and made as amendments to Bill C-24. That is not to mention a number of other amendments made from both sides which were not accepted but merely served to give an indication of the complexity and importance of this piece of legislation. We are here, after all, not acting on our own behalf; we are acting in some sense as the representatives of the whole of Canada, trying to put on the statute books of this country a reformed immigration act which will presumably stand for a number of years to come.

I cannot for the life of me understand why the government or the Liberal caucus would want to pass the bill this month, rather than in a few weeks, perhaps in the early part of