

should be treated in that manner rather than with the kind of cavalier attitude that we have seen from the Government since last February 20.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Jonquière (Mr. Blackburn).

**Mr. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Jonquière):** Mr. Speaker, we have reached an exciting and significant moment in the history of Canada's refugee policy, and it is my privilege to speak to that part of the motion that is more specifically concerned with refugee issues. I am looking forward to seeing the development of a progressive policy in this area and to following the progression of that policy very closely with the Members of this House.

The Government's measures with respect to refugees continue to reflect a commitment to humanitarian principles. Canadians can be proud of what this country has achieved in the area of assistance to people who reach our borders after having been victims of oppression and persecution. I am looking forward to a debate on this policy by the Members of this House. Too often, such debates only take place when there is a crisis, and are then quickly forgotten.

The motion before the House today urges the Government to adopt a fair, humane and efficient refugee policy which would reinforce Canada's past proud tradition and honour Canada's international obligations under the Geneva Convention signed in 1951.

As far as our immigration policy is concerned, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the Nansen Medal was awarded to Canada on November 13 last year in recognition of its tireless commitment to refugees from countries around the world. It is the highest honour awarded by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to those involved in assistance to this group.

Mr. Speaker, awarding a prestigious medal to an entire nation is a rare event. That tribute was paid to us as a result of the co-operation and dedication of a great many individuals and organizations. We have every intention of remaining faithful to the commitment for which we, among all other nations, were found worthy of such recognition, and of maintaining our efforts on behalf of immigrants and refugees.

In 1987, for example, Canada will welcome more than 20,000 people under refugee and other humanitarian programs.

This is the kind of generosity which characterizes measures taken by Canada on behalf of refugees and which singled out our country as the deserving recipient of such a great honour.

More measures will be taken with respect to refugees. For instance, participation in the activities of international agencies abroad; settlement assistance for refugees; signing sponsorship contracts; intervention of action groups.

### *Supply*

We agree, Mr. Speaker, the Government does have a role to play but it cannot act alone. Religious groups and non-governmental organizations can participate actively by helping refugees and immigrants. Sponsorship and initiatives in settlement cases are so important that they are covered under the Immigration Act. Indeed, the whole process began in 1979 at the suggestion of a Conservative.

For all practical purposes, it was the official aim of new co-operation which included consultation, policy drafting and participation in resolving settlement problems, determining required services, and setting immigration levels.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a few words about sponsorship. The refugee program is a model, particularly because of strong sponsorship on the part of private groups. The best example is the Nansen Medal which was awarded to us last November. We now have in excess of 50 sponsorship agreements, proof positive that the Government and private agencies are working together to relieve suffering people.

In 1979-80, 32,000 people came to Canada under the sponsorship of about 7,000 groups encouraged, once again, by the dynamism and initiative of the Conservative Government. Over the past five years, more than 18,000 refugees were sponsored by private groups which helped them get settled in this country. Hon. Members of this House cannot but applaud such worthy efforts.

Let me say a few words, Mr. Speaker, about starting costs. Despite the increasing cost of dealing with the flow of refugees and the costs involved in the adaptation assistance program, we have in no way reduced funding in that area, quite the opposite. Three years ago, \$30 million were used as income support for 10,000 Government-sponsored refugees. In 1987, because we are aiming at 12,000 refugees, that amount should go up to \$50 million. Those monies have already been earmarked for that purpose.

In addition, this Government does not intend to reduce the amount of assistance offered. We will seek by all means to achieve a better control over adaptation assistance program funds.

Let me now refer to agency funding. We recognize the value of services offered to newcomers by private agencies. We are committed to supporting them. The funds allotted to the immigrant settlement and adaptation program for the coming fiscal year have been increased to \$4.9 million.

As far as language training is concerned, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission has launched a pilot project, the newcomers language training program. Immigrant women outside the labour force are an important target group. This is another example of this Government's innovation. We have recognized the need to implement a federal program to meet special language training needs.

Mr. Speaker, the project allows women to get out of language ghettos and to assume better their rightful place in Canadian society. During the coming months, the Canada