

Oral questions

An Hon. Member: —who was a provincial Premier who was successful in getting re-elected.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Hon. Member to put his question.

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Hon. Members for making me feel right at home. Their behaviour is as poor as that of the “Zalm” Socredits.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member will put his question, please.

Mr. Barrett: Is the Prime Minister aware that Mr. Lougheed is on the board of directors—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nystrom: Don't heckle a new Member.

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister aware that Mr. Lougheed is also on the board of directors, and is he aware that the current president of Northern Telecom is the second Vice-President of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, in which capacity he played an aggressive role in campaigning for the free trade deal; and how can the Prime Minister expect—

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I was not aware of that shocking conflict of interest situation, and I thank the Hon. Member for bringing it to my attention. He may be interested to know that, along with all of the other nefarious types who are on that commission with Mr. de Grandpré, is Dr. Wagner, the President of the University of Calgary—

Some Hon. Members: Oh no!

An Hon. Member: Shocking!

Mr. Mulroney: That is shocking in itself; but worse still, an immediate cohort and collaborator of Mr. de Grandpré's is James McCambly, President of the Canadian Federation of Labour.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Member: You are safe, Ed. You need not fear, Ed.

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REFUGEES**BACKLOG IN PROCESSING REFUGEE-STATUS APPLICATIONS**

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Immigration.

If there is one policy area that was grossly mis-managed by the Government in the previous Parliament, and which continues today, it is that of Canada's refugee policy.

The backlog has increased from 9,500 in 1984 to over 70,000 today, and during all of that time the Government failed to take the necessary measures to alleviate the backlog problem.

Given the lack of concrete action on the backlog itself, irrespective of reforming the over-all refugee system in Canada, I would ask the Minister to inform the House—and, through the House, Canadians in general—when and what action the Government will take on the refugee backlog, a backlog that has grown to an alarming number and one which now threatens the viability of the entire refugee processing system.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, if there has been an increase in the backlog over the past couple of years, there isn't one person in this Chamber who doesn't know whose fault that is, given that it took two years to get the appropriate legislation through Parliament.

I am getting a little tired of the rhetoric from the Hon. Member about the refugee backlog, a backlog which began to build before we arrived in office and which continued to build as a result of opposition-caused delays in the passage of the appropriate legislation through Parliament.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. McDougall: I can report to the House that, with the procedures that will be in place on January 1 next, the process will be a much improved one. My departmental officials have worked very hard on this problem, and I feel certain that the procedures which will be put into effect on January 1 will be exemplary.