

Adjournment Debate

Canada is not selecting the neediest refugees overseas, contrary to what the Hon. Member for Calgary West has suggested. The Hon. Member for Calgary West took part in the discussion in committee, not only with the Mennonites but also with the B'nai B'rith. At that time, the Hon. Member made this same moving plea about helping the neediest, but the witnesses present who had been working with refugees contradicted him. He forgot to tell us that when he made his speech. The witnesses said that our policy as now applied is not helping the neediest.

The policy for selecting refugees overseas that is being used at the present time is not to help the neediest. If we were helping the neediest, we would not have turned down the Chileans who were in Buenos Aires last February. These Chileans were found by reputable witnesses to have been the subjects of persecution, imprisonment and torture by the police in Chile for union activities. I do not refer to the entire planeload of Chileans, but some of those people who were turned down could show strong evidence of a strong need for refugee protection.

Argentina is not a completely safe country for Chileans for two reasons. First, we have to read the papers every day to see if the Argentine Government still exists or if the generals have taken it over again. Second, the Chilean secret police operate in Argentina and not for the health of Chilean refugees.

When I asked the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) in the House if he would look at the evidence provided by a reputable Canadian lawyer from Montreal in that matter or if he would meet with him, he said to have him send the evidence down to Buenos Aires. He knew that those in Buenos Aires would continue to turn those people down because need on the part of a refugee is not the chief criterion at which Canada looks. In choosing refugees through our overseas offices, Canada now looks at economic benefits or maybe political benefits for Canada.

While I agree with the Hon. Member that we should help the neediest, I do not agree with him that the Bill does that. The Bill leaves us with a great uncertainty about what will happen when we send a person to a certain country because the Government has taken away even the slim guarantees that existed in the original Bill about the right to return and the right to have a claim determined. The policy of the Government is not to shut out western Europeans in order to help the Asians, but to shut them both out.

• (1800)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 66 deemed to have been moved.

EMPLOYMENT—JOB CREATION IN TORONTO AREA

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Madam Speaker, like many of us who were elected for the first time to the House of Commons in 1984, I ran for Parliament as a result of the great recession of the early 1980s. You will recall those times very well, Madam Speaker. Those were the times of 20 per cent interest rates, record inflation, record bankruptcies, and national unemployment rates of an average of 12 per cent. Of course, there were pockets of higher rates of unemployment in various regions of the country, but the national average was a horrendous 12 per cent.

I believed at that time that there was no reason a country like Canada should have such unemployment levels. I believed that I had to try to do whatever I personally may be able to do. It was for that reason that I decided to stand for Parliament, to put aside the position I then held and try my best to do something about the horrendous levels of unemployment with which we were faced at that time.

You will remember, Madam Speaker, that other Canadians felt the same way as I did. The issue in the election campaign was the economy and jobs. That issue has not really disappeared. It has been with us ever since the early 1980s. It has been a constant theme. Public opinion polls indicate that unemployment continues to be one of the major issues in the country.

What has happened to the unemployment situation since September 4, 1984, when the Government was elected? As you know, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Canadians employed and in the number of jobs in the country in the past three years. We have had an increase of almost one million new jobs, 907,000 to be exact. National unemployment levels have fallen from near 12 per cent to 8.8 per cent in August. In the Province of Ontario, where I am from, unemployment is now down to 5.8 per cent, which is very encouraging to say the least.

I am sure that when you ran for office you were concerned, as was I, about the national picture, but were even more concerned about your own local community, as was I. I am pleased that the unemployment situation in Metropolitan Toronto has improved dramatically. The unemployment rate has fallen to below the 4 per cent mark which would traditionally be considered full employment in any economy. Fortunately, at the moment we actually have jobs going looking for people even though everyone cannot find the exact job they would like to have.

It is because of this improving job situation that I was most disturbed when I heard the Leader of the NDP indicate that 95 per cent of all jobs created in Canada since September, 1984, had been created within a radius of 160 kilometres of Metropolitan Toronto. I ran for office because I was concerned about unemployment in my own community. However, I was certainly concerned about unemployment across the country and wanted to see full employment throughout the country.