

when the minister indicated what would happen as of November 3, that awful day in Canada on which section 34 of the act was to be removed. That brought frustration into the lives of all those who were trying to stay in Canada as a result of open visitor visas. We said that approach was wrong. We said you cannot possibly do that. We said, let us accept our losses.

But the government introduced a retroactive clause. Everybody who was on the boat, on the plane or in the country and who had not by a specific time, I think it was two o'clock of that day, complied with the regulations, was to be shafted by this government. When we pointed this out, some people said, "What is the member for Hamilton West trying to do? What is the Leader of the Opposition trying to do?" Because we questioned this method of handling the matter people asked, "Are you flip-flopping in your position?" I said, "no, this is no flip-flop. We just want to register our concern over what has happened." It seems, when we make any statement, it takes the government a little while to catch on, and in the end it steals our ideas. It stole this idea, and I do not mean that disrespectfully. I see the minister sitting there and smiling.

Mr. Andras: That was a good point.

Mr. Alexander: The government stole the idea we had raised and said, "We will not continue with that policy any longer." It saw the light. The minister, and I do not want to quote him out of context, indicated that people who were already in Canada and who wanted to regularize their immigration status could do so. He removed the retroactive part of the edict that was proclaimed as being effective from November 3. According to what I have read, the minister said that most people who came forward would qualify for landed immigrant status if they had no criminal record. I read that somewhere. I am not arguing about this, because it makes sense. However, when you go into other aspects involving the irregularity of immigrant status, it is apparent that the minister did say this, because he went on to speak about what could happen to people who came forward within 60 days of the proclamation of this bill, which we hope will be in one heck of a hurry, as we can see the urgency. The minister also said he would look at the length of residence in Canada, at the family relationship and at the employment record.

● (1630)

The minister has said the board will consider compelling, compassionate circumstances. I plead with the people who have gone underground to come out and test the credibility and sincerity of the minister. At this moment, I am all for the minister. We have had our disagreements, but I want this mess cleared up which this and previous governments have created. The only way we can do that is if the people do not remain hidden. The minister referred to the houses in which these people live, the fact they are married and their children are attending school. Although these people have made a significant impact on the community, they have always had the fear of being apprehended. Now is the time for them to declare their position because this is their last chance.

I wonder if the minister is going to be fair. Is he prepared to spend money to advertise the views of this

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government on the four or five criteria which I indicated and inform those who come forward they will not be prosecuted because of the way they entered Canada or the length of time they have remained? I wonder if he is prepared to advertise in the same way he did on January 1, which must have cost thousands of dollars, telling people to register and advising them of the fact they needed work permits. I do not see the minister looking or listening, but I know he listens well.

When we talk about spending money, and I have seen this government spend money in a ridiculous way, I think this would be a good approach to take, namely telling these people that they will not be prosecuted. I suggest a full page advertisement telling these people they will not be prosecuted because of the way they entered this country. Set out the criteria under which the minister is attempting to show mercy. In this way, a few will probably come out. I hope they do come out. If there is no incentive, how are we going to get these people out? Will they come out just because the minister asks them? There have been many complaints about over-zealous immigration officers arresting people in Toronto and in other areas. We must be very careful and show sincerity in this regard. Advertise in the papers so that these people will be aware of the attitude of this government.

How many of these cases are there? The minister, in all fairness, says he does not know. I have heard there are between 50,000 and 200,000 such cases in Canada. The minister cannot tell me the figure, but I would certainly like to know. If there are as many as I have heard, our problem is enormous. I want them to come out and advertising is one way of getting them to come out.

What if a person misinterprets what is now happening? The readjustment status provisions will not come into effect until this bill has been given royal assent. Supposing a person out of ignorance, and I know that is no excuse, comes out at this time? Will the minister have some sympathy for him? The minister is shaking his head in the affirmative.

Mr. Andras: Nodding.

Mr. Alexander: Yes, nodding. He will not say that because the law has not yet been passed, such a person will not come under the umbrella provisions of this law. That is very interesting. I thank the minister for his answer.

What about students? I was temporarily distracted when the minister referred to students. I hope something can be done for them. The minister said everyone will have to register within 60 days of the proclamation of the act. What about the students who do not have any financial commitments back home, those who are here on their own? Will they just have to register and hold back until after their graduation or do they have to register and then complete the procedure until landed immigrant status is conferred upon them? I do not want the minister to answer now. I throw out the question so the minister will know I am concerned about it. I hope the minister is right. I do not like to use the word "amnesty". I will not use it because it is not fair when there is nothing like it in this bill. However, in order to attract these people from underground, we may have to get into that area. The only way