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IMMIGRANT APPEALS ACCELERATED

In a statement to the House of Commons on June 22 Mr. Bryce Mackasey, Minister of Manpower and Immigration, explained as follows new measures to expedite immigration inquiry cases for people who landed in Canada as visitors and have since applied for immigrant status:

In 1967, Parliament passed the Immigration Appeal Board Act and eliminated elements of the Immigration Act legislated 14 years earlier. At the same time as this new legislation came into force, new immigration regulations were passed by order-in-council.

These regulations for the first time allowed visitors to Canada to apply for landed immigrant status while in our country. At the same time, we reaffirmed the advantages, such as extra credits for pre-arranged employment and better preparation for those who applied while still in their home countries, the traditional method of immigrating to a new homeland.

The 1967 legislation refined appeal procedures, and included for the first time the right of sponsoring

Canadian relatives to appeal on behalf of people still in their home countries. The regulations provided objective selection criteria, based on education, skill, occupational demand, language capability, age and other factors. They eliminated what may have been unintentional discrimination under the earlier systems. A person's race, colour, creed or sex is not a factor in selection as an immigrant.

The 1967 regulations were based on recognition of the fact that an open immigration policy goes hand-in-hand with the economic and cultural growth of our country.

VISITORS WANT TO REMAIN

Our present problem in immigration is not the calibre of the thousands of persons applying in Canada to become landed immigrants. It is rather the unexpected volume of desirable and worthy persons from many countries who are caught up in what is, in fact, a very thorough and equitable appeals system. It is interesting to note that in 1971 there were 120,000 immigrants to Canada, of whom nearly 40,000 were landed while here as visitors.

Five years ago no one could have forecast the tremendous impact jet-age world travel would have on immigration. More than 38 million persons visit Canada each year and thousands of these visitors want to settle here permanently after becoming enamored with this land.

Whatever changes may be desirable in the Immigration Act, and these are being considered with care, are not relevant to solving the problems of today. Those problems must be met by coping with the situation we have. We have not had the administrative flexibility to clear, one way or another, the great number of cases requiring decision. In human decency, and fairness, decisions must be given and given soon. Legislative changes are for the future. They can wait.

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