

Oral Questions

the goal of a post-secondary education, for fear of incurring an uncontrollable personal debt.

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member claims that we have been insensitive to students' concerns.

I would remind him that in this year alone we have allocated over \$700 million for student employment strategy which is providing spaces for thousands upon thousands of students to get work experience. We are signing agreements with business to bring new private sector investment into our colleges and universities. We have increased by 20 per cent the amount of money going for student summer employment. We have provided for a youth service corps which will provide employment post-secondary education.

We have substantially increased today's student loan program. We have doubled the loan limit. Today I announced a series of amendments to that program that would enable and allow students to get access to those funds on much easier terms.

• (1425)

We listen to students, respond to them and we want to have debate and dialogue. We do not urge them, as the hon. member has done, to go with barricades and protest when what we really need is a serious debate about something that concerns us all.

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IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister of immigration spoke in glowing terms about the quality of his recent appointments to the immigration and refugee board.

However, some of these appointments have been high priced advocates of the employees of the immigration industry, people with a vested interest in high immigration and refugee levels and complicated administrative procedures. Coupled with a patronage based appointment system, this creates the potential for continued and systemic conflict of interest.

What if any guidelines are in place to protect the IRB process from conflict of interest on the part of IRB members?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only does the IRB have guidelines with respect to its own board members but it also has the Immigration Act concerning which the chair of the board has recommended certain action to me and on which I will render a decision this week.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that the board has guidelines.

I would like to follow this up. We are not concerned just about conflict of interest but also whether these guidelines cover influence peddling.

I have a 1992 memo written for Mr. Schelew and other members of the refugee lawyer's association by Greg James in which sitting IRB members are tracked and rated on the basis of the percentage of refugee claims they have accepted. This is the type of raw material required for influence peddling and both Mr. James and Mr. Schelew are now on the board.

What guidelines, if any, are in place to protect the IRB process from influence peddling by immigration insiders?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Criminal Code of Canada takes care of influence peddling and if you have any information, you should put it to the right authorities.

The Speaker: My colleagues, I would remind you to please address your questions and answers to the Chair.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister likes dealing in facts. Here are some facts and a question.

The first fact is the minister appointed an illegal immigrant to the IRB. The second fact is the RCMP is investigating influence peddling in immigration. The third fact is the IRB has dissolved into two warring factions based on whether they were Tory patronage appointments or Liberal patronage appointments.

Will the minister face the fact that the IRB is in an absolute mess and order a judicial inquiry into its conduct?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those are not facts. Those are rumours and innuendo. That is what you are dealing in.

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. minister to please address his answer to the Chair.

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, if the member has any information that anyone on the IRB is influence peddling, then the onus is on him to provide our relevant officials under the Criminal Code with such information.

Second, with respect to the allegations of the conduct of one individual, a process is in place. The chair has given me a report. The person in question has been asked to respond and he has.

We are weighing both sets of documents and under due process this week a decision will be rendered. Those are the facts. They are open and I am afraid to disillusion the member but we do not deal in innuendo and slurs or any other empty attacks.