

• (1210)

[English]

I challenge all Hon. Members, particularly from the government Party, to say how many Hon. Members have been able to get treatment for someone resident in their riding, comparable to what the Prime Minister's wife could get for her contact in her riding.

All of us become involved in these cases from time to time. I have a central city riding and deal with many immigration cases. However, these involve legitimate, humanitarian considerations when there has been a foul-up and red tape in the immigration process. The rules simply do not apply to this particular situation.

If Mr. Grossmann was a priest who was penniless in Canada and wanted consideration because he could not afford to go back to France to apply, it would be a different situation. However, he is a teacher with a salary on which he can afford to take a two-month vacation with his family in France during the summer. Surely, if he was that keen to become a Canadian, at the very least he would have been able to go to the embassy in Paris or the consular office in Marseilles to make the necessary application. Surely, one half day during a two-month trip is enough time for someone who wants to make a commitment to this country.

Mr. Jelinek: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been listening with great care to the Hon. Member's remarks. It strikes me that first, he is shifting significantly from the Bill that is on the floor of the House for debate. More important, he is making accusations that do not relate to the facts whatsoever.

If he is suggesting that any Canadian, including the wife of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) cannot make representations through her office on behalf of immigrants, then there is something wrong with the Hon. Member and those who espouse the views he is making on the floor of the House. I think it is a shame, because all of us make representations on a regular basis on behalf of Canadians, on behalf of our constituents, and certainly on behalf of legal immigrants. There is nothing wrong with that. I do it all the time, as a Minister of the Crown.

The Hon. Member makes similar representations all the time and I think it is time that he and others who are trying to blow this matter well out of proportion realize that he is taking away the rights of an individual, the wife of the Prime Minister of Canada in this case. They are saying she is not allowed to make representations through her office on behalf of immigrants.

Second, he is swaying from the discussion on the Bill that is before the House at this time. I wish he would get back to the issue in this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) has the floor on debate.

Immigration Act, 1976

Mr. Cassidy: I would be much happier if the Prime Minister's Office had a line item in its budget saying that it is allocating staff and certain amounts of resources to Mrs. Mulroney, since circumstances have changed from the days when the Prime Minister's wife was not a public personage at all. Alternatively, the Conservative Party could pay the expenses for Mrs. Mulroney. She is in a special place by virtue of being the Prime Minister's wife. I acknowledge that it is a very difficult situation. She is not a Member of Parliament, yet she had half a dozen interventions by the Minister and the Prime Minister's Office on behalf of someone who had not even made an application when she made her first intervention on his behalf.

When I must deal with a case of a person who has not gone through the normal process I suggest that the person go through the normal process because that is where they must begin. There is a double standard. There are thousands of teachers who are unemployed across the country. Perhaps some of them should have had an opportunity to apply for the job at Lycée Claudel. The Government's current policy does not seem to apply in this particular case.

Yesterday, the Minister indicated that there had been no intervention from the Prime Minister's Office. I want to put on the record quite clearly that the facts are not in accordance with what was said by the Minister of State for Immigration (Mr. Weiner). I regret that he apparently misled the House, perhaps unintentionally, because the facts appear to be otherwise.

Bill C-84 will be contested in the courts at great expense to everyone involved. The Bill raises many questions in terms of Canada's sincerity about welcoming legitimate refugees. Since the publication of the Plaut report two years ago, there has been a consensus on how to expedite the processing of people seeking to be refugees, and on how to assure that people who are making applications that are not justified will be returned quickly so that they will not try to use this as a device for avoiding the regular channels of immigration.

Our Party has made it clear that we favour that type of solution which has been supported by the churches and refugee groups. We acknowledge that problems exist, but the Government must not trample over human rights and create the kind of oppressive and offensive situation that will result from Bill C-84 and Bill C-55. These steps are not necessary in order to develop a better way to handle refugees.

If this was an urgent matter, the Government could have followed the recommendations of Rabbi Plaut almost two years ago. Yet, the legislation was not submitted at that time. When it finally introduced legislation, the Government suddenly said there was a major problem and the House of Commons must be resumed in order to deal with the crisis.

We believe the Government could have attempted to follow the procedure proposed by the churches for a couple of years. If that system did not work, it would have been justified in saying that another system was required. However, not to try