

Immigration

Since then the bill has had the benefit of a most thorough review by the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration. That committee invited to appear before it many of the organizations which had appeared during 1975 so that it could determine the degree to which the earlier expressed views had been interpreted in terms of legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret having to interrupt the minister but I do so for the sole purpose of asking hon. members who are not interested in listening to the speech of the minister please to leave the House quickly so that other hon. members who are interested can hear what is being said.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my attendance at that committee's sessions I was impressed with the depth of knowledge and the interest of individual members in a law which will have such an impact on the conduct of Canada's immigration program in the future. I was impressed too with the essentially non-partisan approach which the members adopted during their clause by clause review, in their efforts to formulate legislation which I believe is a model in this field. Members approached the subject with the same open-mindedness to immigration which I suggest the government has had since it originated the review of immigration policy in 1973.

To underline the constructive attitude which members of the committee adopted toward the bill, one should note the sources of the amendments. A number were proposed by both opposition and Liberal members of the committee and were accepted by the government. Others were accepted in part by the government and were either modified by the proposer or by a government spokesman. Still others were moved on behalf of the government. Taken as a whole, I believe that these changes have resulted in an even better piece of legislation.

When I spoke on March 10 I described what I considered to be the major features of the bill. I would remind the House of what they are and how they have been improved by the amendments which were made in committee.

The first feature of the bill to which I referred last March was its establishment, in Clause 3, of the objectives which will govern future immigration policy. The committee endorsed those objectives but amended the preamble to the clause to declare "that the rules and regulations made under this act" would recognize those objectives. That, of course, is entirely acceptable and reinforces the government's intent when it drafted this clause.

The second point which I made at second reading was that the bill represents a new approach to the prohibited classes particularly by its removal of the archaic provisions of the present act concerning criminal and medical classes. I am particularly pleased that the unqualified ban against epileptics has been removed. The bill which has issued from the committee confirms this approach. Improvements have been made. For example, when dealing with persons seeking entry to Canada who have committed offences outside this country, it is now clearer that those offences must have a relationship to Canadian law.

[Mr. Cullen.]

I believe hon. members will find that the committee has improved Clause 19(1)(d) which is aimed at persons engaged in organized criminal activity. It describes more precisely than the original subsection the very sort of person and activity from whom we are attempting to protect the Canadian public.

The third reference I made related to the volume of the immigration movement. I stated that the bill removed the determination of immigration flow from the current practice of administrative decision. It provides for forward planning of the immigration program. In doing so it involves the provinces in the process. The amended bill fortifies the government's decision of adopting a new and open approach. It requires the minister responsible for immigration to table in this House not later than November 1 of each year a report which will indicate the immigration target for the following calendar year. That report will also indicate in which way demographic factors were taken into account when the annual target was determined.

On my fourth point, I dealt with the regulation making powers of the government and the minister. I indicated that the almost unlimited authority given in the current act was being replaced by a much more precise delineation of those powers.

While the bill was in committee I arranged for an amendment to be made to combine Clauses 115 and 116 which provided for governor in council and ministerial regulations respectively. While both sets of regulations are published in the *Canada Gazette* I considered that it would be less confusing to the public if only a single set of regulations were reported.

With respect to regulations, I was pleased to support an amendment in committee which would require certain of the regulations to be published in the *Canada Gazette* and the text laid before parliament 30 days prior to the coming into force of such regulations.

The fifth topic on which I spoke was refugees. I think it is true to say that it was a subject that concerned the members of the standing committee and the witnesses who appeared before it more than any other. There was a common feeling, in which the government fully shared, that Canada's refugee policy should not only live up to the obligations of the United Nations Convention to which we adhere, but that the bill should also reflect the humanitarian selection policy we have been following for more than 30 years.

In the achievement of these ends several changes were made to the bill in committee stage. An amendment to Clause 4 made it clear that a convention refugee who is in visitor status cannot be deported for minor offences. To underline what had been the government's original intent, Clause 6 was amended to emphasize that special selection criteria would be applied to refugees. I hope that this will finally clear up a misconception held by many groups that refugees will be selected under the same criteria as independent immigrants. That was never our proposal in the first place, and I am pleased to have our position clarified in this way.