

*Government Orders*

I must again stress that the increasing anger of Canadians over immigration policy is not with the immigrants themselves. It is anger with the system that administers this policy in a way which is not in the best interests of Canadians as a whole.

A big part of the problem is that Canadians see a large and rapidly increasing sum of money being spent on immigration programs at a time when funds are being cut back for health care and education. They are asking if this money is being spent unnecessarily. They have every right to ask without being called racist or small minded. I say this because proponents of the current approach to government policy often refuse to enter into a debate about these issues, preferring instead to attempt to sully the reputation of those who raise the issues in the first place.

• (1330)

Does Canada really need the immigration industry we have built up over the years? About 15 years ago Canada, along with other countries in the western world, was asked to respond to the plight of Vietnamese boat people. These were genuine refugees who because of their political situation were forced out of their homes.

Canadians opened their doors wide to these people but in a very different way than we do today. Community groups and churches took it upon themselves to sponsor individual refugees and families. They made sure they had a place to stay, taught them English and French, and helped them integrate into the fabric of society. These immigrants in turn laboured to quickly adapt to their new home, learning English and French and furthering themselves through education and hard work.

Today instead of community groups and churches we have subsidized housing and government sponsored language training. Instead of inviting immigrants and refugees into our social circles we stick them in downtown high rises and housing projects and ask why these groups have so much trouble adapting to the Canadian way of life.

The only explanation is the growth of the immigration industry. It is a well intentioned and highly paid group of individuals whose own self-interests are reflected in the decisions they make for everyone. Proper enforcement of immigration policy and curtailing the growing immigration industry could go a long way toward re-establishing the faith of Canadians in our immigration system.

A third and equally important consideration is ensuring the admission of immigrants to Canada is done with the best economic interests of the country in mind. Current statistics vary on how many immigrants come to Canada based on their ability to contribute to the country economically.

In his column in the July 14 *Globe and Mail* Michael Valpy said: "Immigration policy used to be selective. Now only 15 per cent of it is selective. The rest is determined by family

reunification and a policy of refugee acceptance that is the most liberal in the world".

The Canada immigration facts and issues publication put out by Citizenship and Immigration Canada noted: "About 15 per cent of immigrants are evaluated for their potential economic benefit to Canada". The same publication noted that over half of all immigrants, 55 per cent, were admitted either as family class immigrants or refugees.

Quite frankly the government is giving too little priority to admitting immigrants to Canada based on their potential economic benefit to our country. This is especially disturbing because, as the government has often pointed out, we are now a part of a global economy and this is changing the nature of our economy at home.

There is currently little demand for an abundant supply of unskilled labour. Education is now the key to the success of individuals. There is little opportunity for employment and advancement for anyone with less than a high school diploma.

A good example of this point can be seen in my riding of Cariboo—Chilcotin, specifically in my hometown of Williams Lake. When I was growing up jobs were relatively abundant in the area as there were many mills, ranches and mines. A capacity for hard physical labour was often just as important as any type of education one might have.

Today the area is much different. Employment is hard to come by if one does not have a proper education. The jobs once performed by a large payroll of semi-skilled labourers have now been replaced with machines and technology. On the positive side this has meant an increase in well paying jobs for highly skilled workers such as engineers, agriculturalists and technicians, and a better quality of life for those employed in these industries.

In the past immigrants were drawn to Williams Lake because of the economic opportunities provided by resource based industries. However over the years less and less of these opportunities have been available.

• (1335)

The lesson to be learned from this experience as a parent and relevant to the debate we are having today on the topic of change to the Immigration Act is that the government must place more of a priority on attracting immigrants to Canada that have the necessary skills and education. I would suggest this be accomplished by reducing the number of individuals admitted to Canada as family class immigrants.

A confidential report prepared for the immigration minister and leaked to the media suggests this very idea. It has recommended family class immigration be redefined to grant automatic acceptance only to spouses and children sponsored by Canadians or landed immigrants. I would suggest the shortfall made by reducing this category be replaced by immigrants that