

Immigration

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There are a million Paproskis.

Mr. Brewin: I underestimated the Paproskis, it seems. I do not know how many there are exactly, but there are a great many of them. Most of them have come here in fairly recent generations, and most of them want to be consulted and to be recognized as citizens with a status equal to that of other Canadians. In my own city of Toronto there is a real multicultural fact. People from many different parts of the world have come to make their homes in the city, and may I say they have immensely improved it. They want to feel they were consulted, that they were part of the pattern, that when we speak about the purposes of this legislation we are not speaking just about French and English Canada.

We are fully justified, of course, in making reference to our French and English heritage, but I do not think we are justified in omitting any reference to that other fact of life, the multicultural nature of Canada. I cannot understand the minister's objection to doing so. I would have thought it would have been wise for him to have included such a reference if only for political reasons. The government of which he is a member has spent money on multiculturalism. The hon. member for Parkdale (Mr. Haidasz) was the minister in charge of the multicultural program. We recognize the right of people to be different and to cherish different cultures.

It seems to me this is a most inoffensive amendment; it is hard to conceive of one which should meet with less objection. Perhaps the minister and his advisers decided at one point that they would make no concessions whatever. I would say that his refusal to make a concession on this point is equivalent to a slap in the face to citizens who have their origins in various countries.

The minister reproves me for having introduced too many amendments. I can tell him that every amendment I have introduced has been suggested to me by organizations and that many of these organizations represent particular ethnic groups. Does he think they are not entitled to be consulted? He shows a great deal of complacency about these matters. If he would only show an ounce of common sense he would accept this amendment.

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words about all three of these amendments. The hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) has raised a crucial issue, one which was brought forward time and time again during the meetings of the special joint committee as it travelled across the country. It is at the heart of the reason for having an Immigration Act in the first place. The reason is, surely, to regulate the flow of people who come here either as visitors or to seek landed immigrant status. The whole question of why they come and where they go is as crucial as any other aspect of the bill.

● (1740)

It is interesting that in this bill, as in no previous immigration law before it, we have a clearly stated set of objectives,

which I know the minister feels quite keenly about and for which I think he and his staff should be commended. It is fundamentally important that we have stated in very clear and ringing tones in the objectives the purposes of the immigration bill. We should indicate the non-discriminatory character of our immigration policy and the basis on which our immigration programs and Immigration Act will operate.

It is therefore important at the outset, in the very first clause of the bill respecting the fundamental purposes of the legislation, that we have stated that it is for the attainment of demographic goals. I suppose I share a bit of the feeling of the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) who said that he is not quite sure what "demography" means. All kinds of people who pass themselves off as demographers or demographic experts might have trouble agreeing, but if we slip away from that technical word or from a word that smacks of some kind of jargon we recognize that what it really says is where people live, and asks what kind of settlement, what kind of community building, what kind of evolution in human terms, will take place in this country.

I suppose in a previous generation this was all caught up in a kind of laissez-faire situation. One did not talk about demographic goals 25 years ago when the last Immigration Act was passed. At least if we had talked about it I do not think we would have received a very good hearing. There was a pretty general feeling that people simply lived where they chose to live. Communities developed almost willy-nilly as a sort of unseen hand in events took control. Yet because the complicated and sophisticated society in which we move has become very apparent, certainly in terms of a much more complex immigration bill this time than the one we had 25 years ago, we have to be concerned with the way in which communities, provinces and regions develop.

All of us are reminded, almost on a daily basis, of the problems which arise when we suffer urban congestion or rural depopulation or regional disparity and housing problems. There are any number of social and economic problems which confront us. Quite frankly, one of the difficulties in trying to resolve immigration policy is that we have concluded that by dealing simply with the subject of immigration we were going to affect in a fundamental and total way all of the economic and social problems that we are facing in this country. I think that most of us who have become involved in this subject for a while realize that this is not the case. However, Mr. Speaker, we do know that increasingly, perhaps primarily because of a declining birth rate, the phenomenon of immigration is going to become critically important.

Much of the evidence which was placed before the special joint committee very often came from urban areas which had strong views about the impact of immigration on their particular community. This was particularly so in the larger urban centres across Canada. What was not nearly so obvious, but which became obvious, when we moved into regions which had not experienced on a per capita basis the same amount of immigration, say over the past half century, was that there were also problems there respecting what I call a shortfall in