

*Government Orders*

making sure they are welcomed. At least that has always been the position of the party I am associated with.

I want to return to some of the minister's remarks last Friday when he started speaking. He referred to the fact that an immigration policy of a country is really a mirror of the country's value system. I believe that. I have always believed that Canada was a country that had and still has to this day an image of being a caring, approachable, compassionate country. When we travel abroad, very few people say negative things about our country. We are in an enviable position.

The legislation we are putting through the House today concerns me. Bill C-86 has some 113 pages. I can honestly say that I have not had the time in the last three or four days to read every line of it. As much as I am in support of streamlining and improving, pushing this bill through the House in a couple of days is really playing a little fast and loose. I am a bit concerned about it because part of the amendment gives departmental officials of the Public Service of Canada a lot more power to judge.

I asked the minister last Friday—and I have asked it of a couple of other government members in debate today—what happens when this legislation is implemented? What happens when all that judgment ability is passed on to the Public Service?

I am in no way, shape or form knocking the Public Service of Canada. We have a lot of great officials in the Department of Employment and Immigration. However a reality exists in the department, that these public servants are overworked whether it is on the international end, visas abroad, people coming here, or even departmentally. I had no idea of the amount of work of this particular sector of government when I became a member of Parliament. I can honestly say being a member from downtown Toronto—and I know all my colleagues in urban areas have the same experience—that the immigration issue takes 90 per cent of our time. We cannot walk down the street, we cannot go out to a ballpark or a hockey arena, we cannot go and buy a dozen oranges without someone approaching us about an immigration problem in the city of Toronto.

Invariably our constituents come to us with problems because they say that the department is backlogged or cannot seem to process their applications.

When I asked the minister the other day about adding some person-years I was not asking him to do so to put an added burden in terms of cost to the taxpayer or raising taxes or to make life easier *per se* for the public servants who are already in his department. If he is to have a shot at making these amendments work he is going to need proper staff.

The Minister of State for Finance said earlier that the volume has gone up and that is why the public servants cannot process. He is absolutely right. The volume has gone up. Yet the support staff to handle that volume is not there. Somehow we cannot seem to make the point.

What happens when people are caught in terms of waiting for two, three and four years and the system starts to break down is that they start to cheat and to abuse the system. What they will do is encourage friends abroad to forget the queue, to come over as visitors, to throw their passports in the toilets on the planes and once they get here to declare refugee status and they are covered off. A lot of these cases are as a result of the system breaking down because it does not have the proper support staff. I really believe that.

When the Solicitor General talked earlier he referred to the fact that the government side of the House was opposed to people who abuse the system. Everyone in this country is opposed to people who abuse the system. We on this side are as fed up with people who abuse the system as any member on the government side.

However, we can too quickly put people in the category of abusing the system and the next thing we know we have developed a very callous attitude. In the process of public servants taking a signal from the government that it is going to be much tougher in the name of fighting abuse, I am afraid there may be a lot of good people who get caught. The very mirror he referred to in his remarks, that our immigration policy was a mirror of our country, may get some marks on it in the process of them getting caught. I think that would be the beginning of a tarnish which could affect us in many