

Immigration Act, 1976

As a Canadian, I do not want to be seen as repressive and attempting to shut out people who are in fear of their lives while others can apply by jumping the line.

Obviously, the House was recalled on the basis of 174 Sikhs landing on our shores. An article in today's *Ottawa Citizen* dealt with comments from immigration workers who would be implementing these policies if they were passed. We should also be concerned that we are asking these employees to carry out some rather reprehensible tasks, including boarding boats and turning people away. We should consider if that is the way we want to operate in a free, democratic Canadian society.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The question and comment period is over. Debate. The Hon. Member for Saint-Léonard—Anjou (Mr. Gagliano) has the floor.

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou): Mr. Speaker, I want to take part in this momentous debate because the future and life of Canada are on the line. Anyone familiar with certain polls or certain comments in the media and listening to this debate would get the impression that Canadians do not take kindly to refugees. That is where I beg to differ. Canadians are not against refugees, but they have no sympathy for any individual or group resorting to illegal tactics to enter this country.

• (1340)

Indeed, Canadians are against bogus refugees. Canada is now in a dilemma, Mr. Speaker, and in the 20 minutes I have I will attempt to explain why we have this phoney refugee dilemma. Precisely because our immigration policy makes it impossible for refugees to qualify, those who could very well qualify and contribute to the development of our country, it does not offer them the opportunity to settle here and become good Canadian citizens.

The Conservative approach to immigrants and refugees might be described as selective. Here is what I mean, Mr. Speaker. I would point out from the outset that the total number of immigrants who entered Canada in 1974 was in excess of 200,000, whereas only 86,000 arrived here in 1986. That is a significant difference, Mr. Speaker.

This Government gives greater priority to business-oriented immigrants than the previous administration did. For example, the number of such immigrants rose from 3,555 in 1984 to 5,369 in 1986. In addition, the Government lowered the eligibility criteria for this category.

When the Liberals were in office, business-oriented immigrants had to have more than money, they also had to have the kind of skills which would enable them to make a significant contribution to Canada's economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, we should not throw our doors wide open to these people simply because they bring money with them. I have nothing against money, and it stands to reason that any foreign capital entering Canada and invested in our economy

should be welcome because it creates jobs and spurs economic growth to some extent.

Mr. Speaker, one thing to which I object is making money the sole criterion. When someone wants to come to Canada, apart from having some capital to invest, he should also have some ability, something which will allow him to create a new market, develop new products or services, so that we may develop our economy and create jobs without Canadians losing anything by it.

If someone enters Canada with some money and buys an existing store, he will compete with a Canadian business. In selecting immigrant investors, we of course have to look at financial considerations, but we must also look at some rather important criteria, such as their qualifications, capacities, knowledge and the new markets they could create if they came to Canada.

In contrast to the figures I quoted earlier for immigrant investors, the number of family class immigrants decreased by 10,000 between 1984 and 1986, falling from 51,981 in 1984 to 42,798 in 1986.

It should also be emphasized that the Government often refers to the number of immigrants who apply, which is substantially different from the number of immigrants accepted in fact. Many people apply to our immigration offices asking to immigrate to Canada, but they are not necessarily accepted.

Canadians complain increasingly about the system and the fact that the authorities do not allow them to sponsor immigrants. Mr. Speaker, I represent a constituency where 40 per cent of the people come from minority ethnic groups, mostly Italian, of course, but also Polish, Haitian, Greek and Portuguese. The Saint-Leonard—Anjou constituency reflects the Canadian mosaic, with all ethnic groups being represented. Not too long ago, we held a multicultural youth festival. The weather was not very pleasant, but we were there anyway.

It is therefore normal, Mr. Speaker, that, as a Member of Parliament, I often have that frustration. And there lies the dilemma, when Canadians tell us they are against refugees. Not that they are against refugees, simply they do not understand how it is possible for groups to get to our borders. Those people who are good Canadian citizens, who have things of their own, who even have businesses, who are ready to give up their homes, everything they own to have their relatives come to Canada, have to wait a given period of time and in 95 per cent of cases, Mr. Speaker, their relatives are not even allowed entry. So they have to use that illegal way, to claim refugee status. Perhaps this honourable House would be amazed to hear that there are even refugees of Italian origin. It has come to this. Why? It so happens that the doors have been shut so tight in Canada that people who want to come here have to claim refugee status. There is no other way, unless you have money. In order to come to Canada, one must have loads of money or be a refugee.