

*Immigration*

know, and no democratic government should withhold such information.

Now I wish to turn to the ugly questions which surround appeals, deportations, and illegal immigrants. I am seeking the minister's advice and assistance. I have trouble understanding the functions of the Immigration Appeal Board. I am told that it reviews appeals against deportation orders issued by the department. But what is the extent of its authority? It has been said it may not only quash deportations, but that it can also instruct the minister to give the appellant permanent residence in Canada without further immigration or medical examinations. If this is true, and I want the minister to put his cards face up, then the Appeal Board has taken over a function which belongs to the government and parliament. To have a quasi-judicial board review these cases is one thing, but to have it make management decisions outside of the law is quite improper.

The minister should tell us whether he, or any member of his staff on his behalf, has ever instructed his officials to accept these appeal board directives without question. He should also explain what happens in cases where it is later discovered that the immigrants in question have communicable diseases that would otherwise have barred them from entry. When we, as members of parliament, decide that people with highly infectious and dangerous diseases should not be permitted to enter the country, no Immigration Appeal Board should have the authority to overrule us.

If what I suspect is true, then this appeal board system is really designed to assume political responsibility and shift the onus for decision-making in awkward cases away from the minister and the government. It is a neat trick, but it is hardly consistent with the national interest.

The minister should provide the House with a list of all cases handled in the last five years where the Immigration Appeal Board has quashed deportations and instructed the department to grant permanent residence without further examination. The list should include the names, backgrounds, criminal records, dates, names of authorizing officers, and details of representations that may have been made on behalf of these undesirables.

It would also be helpful for the minister to provide us with the names and locations of the Immigration Appeal Board members. I hear that some are former secretaries to ministers, some are the widows of deceased Liberal politicians, and some are simply out-of-work politicians. To avoid any misunderstanding it would be useful for the qualifications and backgrounds to include details of any judicial experience these people may have had before being appointed to the appeal board.

● (2130)

The hon. member for Dauphin, (Mr. Ritchie) has asked some important questions about illegal immigrants. I endorse what he has said and urge the minister to answer his questions promptly. But there is another aspect of this terrible situation which requires explanation. There have been persistent stories

about the possibility of immigration officials being directly or indirectly involved in illegal immigration activities. I suppose this is not very surprising as many of the illegal entrants are connected with criminal syndicates and other forms of crime. But it is of paramount importance that the immigration officers who handle these cases be clearly above suspicion. Will the minister tell this House if there have been any cases of this type in the department during the last five years? If so, what has been done about them?

I am not suggesting that the officers who may have been involved be named, because I am sure that we would all wish to protect innocent members of their families. Nor am I calling for some kind of a witch hunt, so let me give the minister a few leads that might help him to seek the answers to my questions.

We have heard about illegal immigrants being apprehended by the police as they attempted to jump bail while they were awaiting trial for criminal activities, and in connection with these cases there were indications that the actions of the bail jumpers had been known to immigration officials and had not been reported to the proper authorities. We have also heard about cases where immigration officials may have been blackmailed. There were others where police documents may have been found in the improper possession of illegal immigrants awaiting deportation proceedings, and it has been suggested that these documents were given to them by departmental officers. There have even been rumours that some illegal immigrants, while incarcerated in Canadian jails, have received official correspondence from immigration officials that may encourage them to think they will obtain permanent residence in Canada after they have served their sentences. I will not go on, to avoid becoming repetitious, but this does give the minister a sample of my concerns and I hope I receive prompt and satisfactory explanations.

There is one other thing that concerns me deeply. I have heard that the minister has deferred deportations for a number of people with criminal backgrounds and later it was decided that he could not reverse these deferments after it had become obvious that the deportations should be carried out. Perhaps in this case I should give a more specific example. Was Paolo Violi or any member of his family—and I mean his real family, not his criminal associates—ever given ministerial permission to remain in Canada, and later provided with permanent residence in spite of his criminal record? And in this connection, was there ever a time when a deputy minister of immigration was issued a permit to carry a revolver for self-defence after being threatened by any member of the Violi family?

The purpose of these questions is to determine how the present act has been administered so that we can have a better appreciation of the advantages and disadvantages of Bill C-24. We must be able to judge whether it will be wise for parliament to give this government a blank cheque to continue in the same pattern.

I am very uneasy about the entire immigration situation, and although I have dealt with only one or two aspects of the