

Government Orders

I do not want to stand up here in the Parliament of Canada and sound like I am complaining, but I can honestly tell the minister I have no problem with the spirit or the caring or the attitude of the officials in the Department of Employment and Immigration. However, quite frankly, I find that their workload is just crushing. It is crushing to the point at which it is inevitable that the quality of their work from time to time suffers. It is crushing to the point at which at times members of Parliament, who have constituents coming at them and begging them to respond, end up yelling in a minister's office and to your staff. It seems to me that we are trying to do a lot of good things and yet we do not have sufficient man-years, whether they be in the embassies abroad or in our houses or in your department here.

My question to the minister is, in this amendment package has he arranged with the President of the Treasury Board or whoever is responsible for man-years in this place to give the necessary resources so that those positive parts of this process that we are obviously going to adapt in the next little while can be implemented in a way that everybody wins?

Mr. Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, I think this is a fair question. I guess I could have asked my colleague, the Minister of Finance, or the Treasury Board to borrow more money on behalf of Canadians or to tax the people more to pay for increased resources.

What we have done here is look at the over-all situation and made conclusions on things such as our staff's having the tools it needs to competently manage immigration and our doing away with make-work provisions of the act. For example, if a student on a student visa in Canada changes his course of study he must go and reapply for another visa to keep a bureaucrat busy. Nothing is being accomplished.

We have done away with a lot of make-work provisions. We are giving ourselves tools that will result in a massive saving allowing us to reallocate these resources within the immigration envelope to better serve the public, to better serve our members of Parliament, and to better serve those people around the world who want to immigrate to Canada.

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question of the minister. It concerns the consultation that will be held on June 29 and 30 in Niagara-on-

the-Lake and will be hosted by senior Canadian immigration officials. They have invited their counterparts from western Europe, the United States, New Zealand and Australia to attend.

The purpose will principally be to further consider the regulations relating to the movement of refugees into these countries, largely from countries of non-white populations, largely from countries that used to be parts of the empires of western Europe or North America.

This consultation is one in a series that has gone on for several years now.

I have two questions of the minister. First, why is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees not represented in these meetings as a full participant? I understand that an observer from the UNHCR will be there but not as a full participant, yet this is part of the very essence of the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Second, is the reason for the time allocation, which the minister has moved, that it is a goal of the government to have the provisions of this act—especially relating to the port of entry, fingerprinting, the safe third country provision, increased fines for people who bring undocumented persons to the country and so on—in place so it can present it as a model to the other countries—western Europe, the United States, New Zealand and Australia? Or is it because it wishes to show those countries that we are just as tough as they are?

Is that the reason for the deadline? Second, what is the reason for excluding full participation by the United Nations?

Mr. Valcourt: The reason we are moving for time allocation is because this will ensure that the bill will get to a standing committee because there is a window of opportunity in late summer. This bill is not the result of any green paper or white paper. We have consulted, but we want the Canadian public, NGOs, lawyers and stakeholders to have the chance to appear before this committee and give their input to it.

That is why I insist that we complete second reading and send it to committee before we adjourn. That is the reason for the time allocation. It is important that by January 1, 1993 the real refugee person who is admitted to Canada and recognized as such benefits from the provisions in this act.