

Immigration

These are the operative words.

The committee urges that this proposal be approached imaginatively, and that consultation with the provinces be undertaken about the various ways of applying the principle which the committee wishes to promote that one of the goals immigration can help to serve is regional development.

Section 85 reads as follows:

The committee is under no illusion that its proposal would solve the problems of regional development or urban congestion. It recognizes that incentives must be available to attract Canadians as well as immigrants to areas where people are needed. However, a proposal along these lines could go a little way toward meeting these objectives, and the committee urges that such a change be implemented on an experimental basis, and carefully monitored.

Our amendment would obligate the federal government to develop long-term demographic goals. In the amendment we placed before the committee we set a time period of every five years. We have removed that in order to make it more feasible, because of the difficulty the time period might create. However, longer term demographic periods should be provided, because all we have in 7(b) is a yearly basis of landed immigrants subject to demographic considerations. There is no obligation to give long-term projections.

It is vital that there be an obligation in the legislation to consult with the provinces. Everyone on the committee paid lip service to consultation with the provinces. During the special joint committee hearings there were numerous representations to the effect that it is the provinces, municipalities and school-boards which are faced with large financial obligations because of an immigration policy in which they have had little, if any, input. It is the federal government which puts the policy into place and lands the immigrants. There should be a consultative process to determine the impact on the communities and the need for the services these people will require.

One of the recommendations of the task force the western premiers established is that an ongoing consultative process be put into place. If my amendment does not carry, this will not take place. That is why we believe it is necessary. Further, there is the question of regional needs. It has been brought forward, especially by the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald), that a whole new approach for maritime Canada will have to be viewed with respect to immigrants in order to get entrepreneurial skills into the maritimes and somewhat alleviate the chronic unemployment in those areas. That is a valid point. It holds true for other areas as well.

The provinces would have a much better tab on their input into regional needs. Their information could be put into the consultative process, not only so that immigrants will benefit Canada but, which is more important, so they can establish themselves successfully in Canada. This amendment will force the federal government to put into place and follow the consultative process.

The amendment goes further and opens up a consultative process with any group interested in demography. I will not go into that in great detail. However, it has been stated many times that immigrants will play a larger role than heretofore with regard to population increase. That is only half of the argument. The other half of the argument is this: by all economic factors we need to create 400,000 to 500,000 jobs in

[Mr. Epp.]

a given calendar year in Canada. At the present rate the government is creating only some 200,000 jobs a year and the consultative process will help us decide how immigrants fit in and how sufficient jobs are to be created for Canadians coming onto the labour market, whether they be young Canadians or women who have not been in the labour market but are now entering at the rate of some 150,000 a year.

• (1730)

Surely it is apparent that Canada is in need of a demographic policy, a consultative process. All my amendment does is to go further than the minister has already decided to do. It merely puts into place a consultative process and stresses the need for a demographic policy.

I say quite openly that this is a new area for Canadians and we have a long way to go. But I believe it is apparent that we must lose some of the attitudes we have had about Canada—that Canada is a vast land and that we can accept people without any further view as to the distribution of the population, the demand on natural resources, housing, transportation, education, you name it. It is for that purpose I would like to see something in place which would finally create a small committee or group of persons who I know have the expertise to put into place a demographic policy which is definitely needed in this country. I therefore commend this amendment to the House.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): I do not intend to speak on the amendment moved by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp). I have never found “demography” to be a very useful word. I have read some books about it and their authors, like all experts, disagree with each other, so I am not at all sure I am as enthusiastic as is the hon. member about these demographic goals. However, he has had his say. He may be perfectly right, and maybe he has persuaded me, but I am not quite sure, yet.

The amendment to which I propose to call attention is motion No. 7. I would remind hon. members that Clause 3 sets out a Canadian immigration policy. It says:

—the rules and regulations made under this act shall be designed and administered in such a manner as to promote the domestic and international interests of Canada, recognizing the need . . .

Then the clause goes on to list various things, including

(b) to enrich and strengthen the cultural and social fabric of Canada, taking into account the federal and bilingual character of Canada.

This is the paragraph to which I should like to draw particular attention. I say “Amen” to it as a very sound statement of purpose, but I believe it falls short in one important particular. It is true we have a federal and bilingual character: I pay full tribute to that and to the necessity for it. But it so happens we also have a multicultural fact. There are many different peoples in this country. I have not counted them all up but there must be at least a million people whose roots are not in the French or English speaking areas.

Mr. Paproski: Three and a half million.