

Immigration

the motion of the hon. member for Montmorency (Mr. Duclos), the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald), and the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin). If there's a will, there's a way. The minister set forth some of the administrative difficulties he foresees if the motion moved by the hon. member for Montmorency is accepted.

● (1620)

Mr. Speaker, if we had the will to accept the up to date definition given by the hon. member for Montmorency, I am sure we could find a way to deal with the difficulties the minister has outlined. If we wish to remain in the forefront in dealing with refugees, it is not sufficient to say that if we accept an up to date definition there will be administrative difficulties. If the up to date definition offered by the hon. member is correct—and there was a feeling throughout the committee that this is the case—we ought to accept that definition and then put in place the necessary administrative machinery to meet the situation. We ought not simply to accept the excuse offered by the minister.

There is another area to which I should like to refer. In motion No. 3, my hon. friend from Greenwood wants to make sure of the definition of "family". He wants it in the bill, not just in the regulations, so he sets forth in strict terms what he means by "family". I have spoken to the hon. member. His motion says that for the purpose of any provision of the act, "family" shall mean any person being a husband, a wife, natural son and natural daughter. I asked him whether this included adopted sons and adopted daughters.

My experience before the Immigration Appeal Board is that difficulties arise in the case of adopted children because many of them are adopted in countries which follow procedures different from our own and at times it is difficult to determine whether a youngster has been adopted legally. I should like the minister to give us some assurance that the words "any children" in motion No. 4 include not only natural children but adopted children. I am well aware of the problems which arise with respect to certain adoptions, but I am sure such problems can be taken care of by regulation. However, it should be said that young children, whether natural children, in the words of the hon. member for Greenwood or "any children," in the words of the minister himself, should include adopted children. These are the main comments I should like to make with regard to these motions.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will not continue at any great length, and I may say it is not my intention to speak very frequently on this bill. First of all, it seems to me, on the basis of what I have been able to observe since I came to parliament, that the question of refugees and the question of immigration are to a large extent separate issues. I am not as concerned about the volume of immigration, the numbers who come here as a result of the legislation, whether amended or unamended, as are some members of parliament. I say this because I have watched immigration rise from 100,000 to almost 250,000 in some years, and then decline again by 20 per cent or 30 per cent, as

[Mr. Gilbert.]

it has done in the last year and a half, all without any changes in the act and without many changes in the regulations.

These fluctuations to a large extent reflect the economic situation in the country. When there is prosperity, we let more people in, and when there is large-scale unemployment, as there is at the present time, we let fewer people in. Somehow, the officials of the department get a message and they are able, certainly without any instruction from parliament—what instructions they get from the minister, I do not know—to regulate the flow. This is done chiefly through changes in the regulations. At one time a person wishing to immigrate to Canada was required to produce a firm job offer. But as unemployment grew there was a change in regulations and suddenly the job offer was not good enough. The applicant was required to produce a job offer in respect of a job which no Canadian wished to take. I am not saying this is wrong, because I am one who believes that in times of high unemployment there should be less immigration, and I do not expect this situation to change very much no matter what the act or a new set of regulations may say.

I am concerned, though, about the question of refugees. We have a good record, probably one of the best in the world. We have permitted large numbers of refugees to come here. I might mention some of the countries from which we have received refugees. At the time of the revolution in Hungary we relaxed our rules and admitted large numbers of refugees from that country. At the time the Asians were ordered out of Uganda we permitted large numbers to come to Canada. When the Viet Nam war was approaching its climax and many people wished to leave South Viet Nam, we relaxed our regulations in their favour.

I have the impression, though—and it is shared by many people—that our generosity was somewhat less toward refugees from Chile after the military junta took over. I have the impression we were much more selective in our treatment of refugees and that the authorities, whether they be in the immigration department or the RCMP responsible for security clearance, were much tougher in the case of Chileans who wanted to come to Canada than they had been with respect to those admitted from the other countries I have mentioned. This attitude, to put it mildly, does not enthuse me. If the people of Canada, correctly or not, have reason to believe that their government is picking and choosing the types of refugees it allows to enter, there is likely to be much less acceptance of the idea that we should be generous in our treatment of refugees. We are living in a world in which citizens of any country may be tomorrow's refugees. This being the case, we ought to be as generous as possible in our definition of what is a refugee and in the provisions under which refugees are admitted here.

It was interesting to hear the minister suggest that as a result of the green paper discussions, the production of this bill, and then the hearings before the committee, a great deal of consensus had been reached. I find this hard to believe. Firstly, in view of the fact that there are over 50 amendments to the bill, many by members of the Liberal party, there does