

*Government Orders*

I do not think there is any question also that Canadians realize the strength of what immigrants have brought to this country and I will make some references to that at the end of my remarks.

We are a country which has grown in stature over the last 125 years and that is because of the strengths which refugees from various countries have brought to Canada. We intend that they continue to come and continue to provide our country with the asset of effort and determination that immigrants bring to a country.

At the same time, and I think this is important in this day and age, one of the over-all thrusts of this bill is to better protect Canadian society. There is no question from time to time individuals who would not have been selected for immigration try to test our laws, our regulations, our openness and our generosity as a country.

• (1550)

Quite frankly, Canadians are fed up with people trying to beat the system. This bill addresses that frustration in Canadian society. We want to provide an immigration program which is fair, balanced and effective.

It is fair to say that refugee determination is a world-wide problem. I visited the Trevi meeting of European security ministers two weeks ago in Lisbon, Portugal. The question of asylum was a major topic of discussion; what constituted appropriate asylum. There was the question of the Dublin convention. The question of visas and the abuses of visas is a very major political issue as most western countries are facing growing pressures from migrants seeking political and economic stability. Others were: the conflict and political instability in many countries; the economic disparity that exists; increasing availability of transportation that resulted in unpredictable flows of people toward western Europe, Australia, the United States and, naturally, Canada.

This unplanned and large-scale movement of people presents a challenge to Canada and to other industrialized countries. It is a multi-faceted issue that cannot be solved by any country on its own. We need international co-operation to address the root causes of this mass migration and also to address those who would tend to abuse the system.

Countries such as Canada have to take steps to maintain effective immigration policies which ensure that persons are treated fairly and equally but also to ensure that the country's interests are protected.

I believe there is a tradition in this country to respect the queue and Canadians understand that we have to have rules and regulations for immigrants. Canadians become annoyed at those who want to beat the system. We have a long-standing tradition of welcoming persons in need of protection but quite frankly, we are concerned about those who try to beat the system.

As well, there is no question of the rising costs of the immigration program. If that immigration program is skewed by illegal refugees, people who take advantage of our openness, people get annoyed at the whole immigration program. That is what we are trying to prevent with this bill. We are trying to prevent people from circumventing immigration controls, plain and simple. The integrity of our immigration program cannot be maintained unless we as a government address the problem which is represented by those who abuse the system.

I believe that the legislation addresses the concerns of Canadians and will ensure that persons who endeavour to abuse the immigration process are not successful. That is why, as Solicitor General with the responsibilities that I have, I am especially pleased to give my full support to the entire bill and especially to those legislative amendments that relate to the security and law enforcement aspects of the immigration program and therefore the responsibility of CSIS and the RCMP.

One of the things that the bill does is introduce legislative changes that strengthen the inadmissible provisions of the act so that we are not going to become as a country a safe haven for retired or active terrorists. Over the past several years there has been a growing concern within the national security establishment about persons with terrorist backgrounds who are seeking entry to Canada. Quite frankly, the legislation is going to close the door on those individuals. It is going to increase our capacity as a government to close that door.

As well, we are going to increase our capacity to exclude persons with criminal backgrounds or who are associated with criminal organizations. This will assist