

*Supply*

country will probably have the effect of substantially reducing the numbers that would have come to Canada.

When I was in Plattsburg, representatives of local social service agencies told me that rumours had been circulating for weeks that Canada would bring in tough new refugee rules. If this rumour had reached Plattsburg, is it not logical to assume that the unusually large numbers which we saw in the first few weeks of 1987 were people who were trying to get into Canada under the wire? I would remind the House that in the last few weeks before the Berlin Wall was put up in 1962, thousands of refugees crossed from the East to the West because they knew it would be their last opportunity to do so.

What evidence is there to suggest that Canadian society has reached its capacity to absorb or integrate refugees or immigrants? Have we reached that level? The evidence suggests that we are far from it.

Let us look at what our country was capable of doing for Indo-Chinese boat people. At that time the Government showed leadership. I am happy to see the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) present in the House today. He was the Prime Minister at the time the Government appealed to the better instincts of Canadians, to the generosity of Canadians, who sent up sponsorship groups in community after community across the country. We opened up our military bases and chartered aircraft. Since 1979 we have taken in over 100,000 Indo-Chinese refugees, with over 60,000 in 1979 and 1980 alone. Today, seven years or eight years later, all these persons are contributing to our country.

The question I would put to the Government today is: Why not act in a similar fashion in 1987? Why not, if we are afraid of a large number of refugees perhaps coming to Canada because of inhumane laws in the United States, remind President Reagan of his responsibilities? Why not call an international conference on Central American refugees where each country would agree to welcome a certain number of refugees? Such a conference was held in 1979 to deal with Indo-Chinese boat people. Why not show this kind of leadership?

Instead, we have a Government which has let the situation deteriorate. It has delayed bringing in legislation to deal with refugees for over two years now. The Government has also failed to commit adequate resources and has taken no action against fraudulent counsellors and travel agents.

[*Translation*]

In Quebec, some people say our province has taken more than its fair share of refugees. In fact, that was the conclusion of a poll published in *Le Devoir* a few weeks ago. It is just not true. We have ranked fourth for at least seven or eight years, coming after Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, some people insist that immigrants are taking away our jobs. I would like to thank Senator Rizzuto for suggesting the following argument: If it is true that immigrants are taking away our jobs, how come Ontario, which year after year has received three times as many immigrants

and refugees as Quebec, has an unemployment rate of only 6 per cent, while Quebec's unemployment rate is 10.5 or 11 per cent or more?

[*English*]

Canadians are a generous people. If presented with the facts, they will respond positively with generosity. Canadians are capable of rising to the occasion as they did with the Indo-Chinese boat people.

I have had occasion to work with some of the people who help refugees and immigrants—non-governmental organizations, church groups, and immigrant aid societies. I visited refugee camps in southeast Asia in 1980 at the height of the crisis. People who work with immigrants and refugees are extremely dedicated and committed. If we present them with the challenge, they will respond.

These groups are dismayed with the policies of the Government. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), who was here several minutes ago, shook his head when I drew some parallels and said that the doors of our country were closed to refugees. He seemed to disagree. I ask him to speak with the people in the Mennonite Church whom he knows intimately and to ask them what is their opinion of his Government's policies. These groups, Mr. Speaker, will not accept these policies and will not stop fighting until they are changed, until this Government adopts the recommendations of the Plaut report, the report of the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, and introduces a refugee determination process that is independent, fast and fair. Our Government is capable of better. Canadians are capable of better.

• (1710)

If I might just close my comments on what I regard to be a rather depressing situation, perhaps one can make a point better in a humorous fashion than one can in a serious fashion. A predecessor of mine in the Liberal Party, Sam Jacobs who was the Member of Parliament for Cartier district in the 1930s, which takes in much of the same area that I represent today in the riding of Laurier, once said that Jesus of Nazareth would be barred from Canada under current government policies. Why, Mr. Speaker? There are four reasons? One, he would not have a proper passport. Two, he had no relatives in Canada. Three, he would not be travelling to Canada by a continuous journey—the same thing could be said about the refugees who now require a transit visa. Four, he was a carpenter. Who needs carpenters? Mr. Jacobs also at one point said that the policy of the present Government on immigration is like the wisdom of God, it surpasseth understanding. The same thing could be said today.

I hope that the Government will review its policy introduced last February 20, read history and listen to what people like Rabbi Plaut are saying. Again, I would ask the Minister for National Health and Welfare to speak to his friends in the Mennonite Church and ask them what they think about these policies. He was part of a much more generous Government. I