

Immigration Appeal Board Act

bad enough, there is added distortion created by the fact that units given for occupational demand reflect national averages. This means that zero demand for, say, waiters, machinists or carpenters in Yellowknife or Moosonee could virtually wipe out even a strong demand for the same category of people from employers in an urban or metropolitan region of this country.

To me, Mr. Speaker, this hardly makes sense and it does have some bearing on the number of people who received an insufficient number of points and therefore chose to follow the route to the Immigration Appeal Board. Points for occupational demand in this day and age of instant communications should reflect the demand of the present and not that of the past. Further, they should reflect regional demands instead of national averages which are unrealistic.

The bill, it seems to me, comes to grips with this so-called backlog, which indeed is a human backlog, consisting of thousands of people who have come here and who otherwise would not have undertaken to come to this country had it not been for that generous provision for visitors which went by almost unnoticed in 1967. The result has been that we have witnessed in these past years a perhaps unwanted yet fascinating experiment in quasi-free immigration from all corners of the world.

People have come to Canada from the poorest regions of the world where we do not have immigration offices. People have come to Canada because they did not want to wait, or because they knew they would not make it in terms of points. People have come to Canada because they felt that, despite limited education, they had enough drive and vigour to happily resettle in this land. To them, circumventing the law to come to Canada was either a non-existing factor in their set of values or it was just irrelevant, considering the odds that they were facing in their own country. To them, it meant a chance to break the vicious circle of poverty in their own country. To them, Canada meant the country of promise and hope that would provide them and their children with a decent future. We find in this category of men and women the peasant from Peru, the stevedore from Guiana, the fine looking women from India, the incredible Punjabis, the strong-backed Portuguese, the Greeks, the Italians—you name it. It was perhaps naïve for Canada to believe that people facing the spectre of hunger and misery or the lack of opportunity would not avail themselves of every possible means at their disposal to come to this great country.

So, Mr. Speaker, in years to come perhaps we will think of this period in Canada's history of immigration as fascinating years of significance in our understanding of the phenomenon of immigration, years that have enriched Canada with new cultures, with new types of immigrants that have made us aware of how strong the motivation of men and women can be when they decide to break away from poverty and know that there is a good land to reach and to settle. The 1967-1973 period has, therefore, provided positive facets, some interesting patterns and some lessons that could lead us to useful conclusions in the revision of the present Immigration Act that hopefully will soon follow the bill before us today.

From this perspective the fact that the government has waited so long before introducing this bill does not disturb

[Mr. Caccia.]

me in the least. We have now in Canada a number of women and men who otherwise may not have been able to be here. They may not be those who abroad would have made the necessary number of points because of their education or because of their low age or because of their good knowledge of English and French. But that does not mean they would not make good Canadians, and since we know very little really about the history of immigrants who come from the ranks of this category of visitor, we need to find out about them, about their ability to settle and to integrate into Canadian life. If we do so, we might discover some useful criteria and perhaps new guidelines for the development of an immigration policy for this country in this decade. It may be that we will discover further approaches to a humanitarian immigration policy for Canada, a natural extension to Canada's generous attitude vis-à-vis refugees.

Another feature about the people who are in this so-called backlog is that they have readily found employment when permitted to do so by the department. They have followed others who have come here before them. Either by word of mouth or by letter through a simple system of communication established within their own communities, one person has followed another, one finding employment in a certain industry and drawing another after him, and so forth, in rather quick succession after a timid and hesitant beginning. And this, Mr. Speaker, without the help of sophisticated and expensive "occupational shortages surveys" and "job vacancy surveys", but simply by sheer word of mouth. In a way this is a remarkable feat.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation. I thank the minister for his extension to November 30 and for his 60-day provision. Both are fine liberal measures and demonstrate Canada's goodwill and tremendous sense of fairness. When qualities like these prevail across a land which displays the generosity and potential of Canada, how can one blame people for wanting to come here at all costs, regardless of uncertainties and hardships. The Minister of Manpower and Immigration has expressed his intention to produce a bill creating a new Immigration Act which will follow this bill in the near future. I support the minister's announcement because it will mean that we will have a fine opportunity to come to grips with demographic objectives for this country, to redefine the points system, to review our position vis-à-vis developing countries and their need for well-trained human resources, to give a humanistic imprint to our screening of people with handicaps. But this, Mr. Speaker, is another story and will be the subject of another debate.

● (1440)

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, the reason we are so far past even the 11th hour in respect of the provisions of this bill, with the administration now trying to hurry up in putting it through, is the God-awful mess that has developed in respect of immigration. I find it rather odd that this minister now comes forward asking us to cure these ills in a hurry. The government is trying to take drastic action in spite of the fact that the symptoms and these problems were pointed out to them not last year, not the year before but the year before that. If the minister and the Cabinet had been wide awake to what was developing, we would not be in this situation today.