

Oral Questions
IMMIGRATION

SUCCESS OF PROGRAM FOR REGISTRATION OF ILLEGAL
IMMIGRANTS

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration with regard to the "last chance" policy of the government. Is the minister satisfied with the rate of registration by illegal immigrants?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the response so far has been positive. There were 700 persons who registered yesterday. This brings the total to 27,756 persons who are taking advantage of the act. I might say that 6,549 of these registrants have already had an assessment interview, of which 6,490, or 99.1 per cent, have conformed with the regulations and can be landed. The remaining 0.9 per cent are subject to further review. I would, as the hon. member would, encourage all those who have not yet come forward to take advantage of this program. However, I think the pace is quickening and I hope that all those entitled will come forward to be registered and landed.

Mr. Alexander: Is the minister aware of the fact it is reported immigration officials have indicated that many illegal immigrants, because of fear and distrust are not coming forward as rapidly as all of us would like to see? If the minister is aware of this, has he taken any steps to alleviate this situation and reduce the fear which I believe does exist?

• (1510)

Mr. Andras: I join the hon. member in recognizing that we have felt this possibility of fear and mistrust existing from the beginning. To overcome this, however, we have carried on a very active information and publicity campaign, and special attention has been paid to many of the pockets where more precise indications of concern have been expressed. As a result, we have seen an increase in trust, an increase in the numbers coming forward. I hope the hon. member and all other hon. members will join me in underlining the sincerity and integrity of this program and in seeking to remove distrust wherever it exists in order that the program will meet with success in the final analysis.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day. Is the Minister of Justice rising on a point of order?

Mr. Lang: Yes, Mr. Speaker. There have been the usual discussions and I believe there is general agreement to call the report stage and third reading of Bill C-220 which was reported out of the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs yesterday without amendment. There is an understanding that it will be dealt with fairly quickly in the House at this time.

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreed?

Mr. Bell: We agree.

[Mr. Drury.]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

**STATUTE LAW (SUPPLEMENTARY RETIREMENT
BENEFITS) AMENDMENT ACT, 1973**

PROVISION FOR REMOVAL OF TWO PER CENT LIMIT ON
ESCALATION, REDUCTION OF ELIGIBLE AGE

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board) moved that Bill C-220, to amend the statute law providing for the payment of supplementary retirement benefits to certain persons in receipt of pensions payable out of the consolidated revenue fund, as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: When shall the said bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. Members: Now.

Mr. Drury moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak briefly on third reading of this bill I wish to say at the outset to the acting government House leader that it is my intention to be the only spokesman for my party at this final stage, and to expedite the passage of the measure.

The bill is a very important one for the public servants of Canada who sometimes, unfortunately, are maligned, criticized and ridiculed in a way they ought not to be. I think we ought to remember, especially in the national capital, that if there is a proliferation of public servants in terms of numbers it is because the country is prepared, at this point at least, to accept a proliferation of government programs.

In the speech which I made on second reading I expressed regret—and this regret still stands—that the government had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the point at which it would at least acknowledge the pleas which have been made for many years by public servants, their staff associations, their families and others, that the concept of linking pensions with the cost of living index be recognized. It has now been so recognized and I think this is an important landmark for public servants and those who have served their country in other capacities in the public realm.

We do not want to say, however, that we have come to the end of the road with respect to public service matters and matters dealing with the armed forces generally. We still have ahead of us the whole concept of collective bargaining in the public service and the position of those members of the armed forces who decide to serve their country in the public service after their term of duty in the armed forces is completed. We still have before us the whole question of the age at which public servants ought to retire—whether that age ought not to be lowered. It still remains for us to consider the position of widows in the context of public servants' pensions and superannuation plans.