

The Budget—Mrs. Fairclough

up with those people. Long before I was a member of the house I knew hundreds of them; they were my friends, and they are still my friends. What has happened to them and their applications for sponsorship of relatives has been just as frustrating for me as it has been for them in experiencing long delays and uncertainty, which has grown even greater and which has been the result of the increasing backlog.

I said I had known those people for a long time. I am sure anyone who has had the privilege of associating with people of Italian origin knows what a warm-hearted and loyal people they are. They have integrated well into our country and into our citizenship. I have great admiration for them, and the very last thing I would do, Mr. Speaker, would be to bring in any regulation which would injure them in any way. Therefore I must state as emphatically as I can that there is no truth whatever in the charges that this amendment was designed to curtail immigration from Italy. As a matter of fact it will eventually permit application to be accepted from a much broader range of persons in Italy and thus will achieve a more diversified and representative movement from that country, since it is the intention in any event to deal with all applications now on hand as conditions in the Rome office permit.

I may say that if we start now to deal with all the applications, or continue to deal with those applications which are now on hand, at a rough estimate it will take two and one half to three years to handle them. It is possible now to accept as unsponsored applications those which were formerly sponsored. Taking into account these two sets of circumstances I cannot see how the regulation can be called discriminatory, a word which has been bandied about quite a bit lately. I do believe though, Mr. Speaker, that discrimination existed in the past in that well qualified Italians who wished to migrate to this country had little or no chance of having their applications considered unless they were in the sponsored categories.

"Cruel", my hon. friend says. What is more cruel than deliberately to misconstrue and misrepresent the intention of the recent amendment? Yet that is precisely what the very highly efficient propaganda machine of the Liberal party is doing right now.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mrs. Fairclough: It is working on the natural emotions of persons of various ethnic origins, exploiting their sorrows and increasing their heartaches. I said it would take two and one half to three years. These long delays, as the hon. member well knows, lead to a breakdown of sponsorship, because the

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willingness to sponsor today may develop into the incapacity to do so in two or three years. I maintain, Mr. Speaker, that if there is cruelty it is in bringing to this country strangers who have neither the means to sustain themselves nor the opportunity for employment within a reasonable length of time.

I think the hon. member has a fixation on cruelty, and probably with good reason. The previous government knew all about cruelty. I do not think anything could ever have been more cruel than the treatment accorded by the Liberal government to Canadians of Japanese origin during the last war.

Mr. Pickersgill: It was supported by the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Green).

Mrs. Fairclough: It was a blot on Canada's history which will never be completely erased. There is cruelty, also, Mr. Speaker, in the exaggeration which has gone into those reports, an exaggeration in the propaganda which has extended even to the point that the press has been led to believe that the entry of such close members of the family as husbands, wives and children is forbidden. Last week end I noted also that one paper said that mothers and fathers would now be forbidden to enter this country.

Mr. Brassard (Lapointe): Who wrote that speech?

Mrs. Fairclough: Who wrote the speech? I am wondering who wrote the speeches and disseminated the propaganda from the moment the order in council became public. Even more insidious, though, than the press reports is the whispered propaganda which has been reported to us as circulating among the various ethnic groups alleging discrimination and restrictions, alleging separation of families. I have had letters coming into my office asking me if under the circumstances their applications must now be abandoned for brothers, for sisters, for children, for wives and husbands, as a result of those whispers which have been circulated among persons from other countries.

I deny these allegations categorically. It is the policy of this government to re-unite families. It is the policy to encourage the entry of the immediate family first and it will be noticed that the amendment has not disturbed that. More distant relatives, we believe, should follow as their capacity to sustain themselves is established. What the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill) had to say is very significant. Speaking of discrimination he said that it