

*Immigration*

objective of the government is to secure what new population we can absorb, but not to exceed that number. The figure that represents our absorptive capacity will clearly vary from year to year in response to economic conditions. At the present stage, when Canada is returning to a normal situation after wartime disruption, it is impossible, with any degree of accuracy, to make forecasts as to our future power of absorption. For some time to come, no matter what special shipping arrangements we may be able to achieve, conditions of transport will limit the number of immigrants. When that limitation ceases to prevail, it will be necessary to consider further what measures will best achieve the adjustment of immigration to the numbers that can be absorbed into the economy of Canada.

With regard to the selection of immigrants, much has been said about discrimination. I wish to make it quite clear that Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. It is not a "fundamental human right" of any alien to enter Canada. It is a privilege. It is a matter of domestic policy. Immigration is subject to the control of the parliament of Canada. This does not mean, however, that we should not seek to remove from our legislation what may appear to be objectionable discrimination.

One of the features of our legislation to which strong objection has been taken on the ground of discrimination is the Chinese Immigration Act. This act seems to place persons from one particular country in an inferior category. The government has already initiated action for the repeal of that statute. Chinese residents of Canada who are not already Canadian citizens may now be naturalized. Once naturalized, they are permitted to bring their wives and unmarried children under 18 to join them in this country.

The East Indians legally resident in Canada are British subjects who have resided here for many years. They are therefore Canadian citizens. As such, their wives and unmarried children under 18 are admissible.

With regard to the Japanese, I stated, on August 4, 1944, at which time we were at war with Japan, that the government felt that in the years after the war the immigration of Japanese should not be permitted. This is the present view and policy of the government. It will be for future parliaments to consider what change, if any, should be made in this policy.

There will, I am sure, be general agreement with the view that the people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population. Large-scale immigration from the orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population. Any considerable oriental immigration would, moreover, be certain to give rise to social and economic problems of a character that might lead to serious difficulties in the field of international relations. The government, therefore, has no thought of making any change in immigration regulations which would have consequences of the kind.

I wish to state quite definitely that, apart from the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act and the revocation of order in council P.C. 1378 of June 17, 1931, regarding naturalization, the government has no intention of removing the existing regulations respecting Asiatic immigration unless and until alternative measures of effective control have been worked out. Canada recognizes the right of all other countries to control the entry or non-entry of persons seeking to become permanent residents. We claim precisely the same right for our country.

I wish to make it equally clear that the Canadian government is prepared, at any time, to enter into negotiations with other countries for special agreements for the control of admission of immigrants on a basis of complete equality and reciprocity.

Through the years of depression and war, and consequently of greatly restricted immigration, the immigration branch of the Department of Mines and Resources and its offices abroad were reduced to proportions wholly inadequate to cope with an active immigration policy. With the end of the war, and in the light of changed economic conditions, the government has already taken steps to expand and strengthen this branch of the public service. To carry out the government's policy effectively, immigration services will be further developed to meet expanding requirements.

Mr. GRAYDON: If the Prime Minister would permit a question with regard to the urgency of the transportation problem, has he or the government received any information as to the success of the reported plan of Australia which used an aircraft carrier or aircraft carriers to transport immigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The Department of Immigration has been following the activities of other countries, but I am not myself in a position to make a specific reply to my hon. friend's question. It might be brought up when the immigration bill is before the house.