

*Supply—Citizenship and Immigration*

everyone has said, we have to observe our absorptive capacity, and we must try to determine that capacity not only from year to year but in fact from month to month. We bear in mind what the hon. member for Cape Breton South said, namely that there may be a scarcity of labour at a given time and that by the time we have found the people to fill that scarcity, it no longer exists.

So in supplying the labour market we must pursue a cautious policy. But at the same time I do not think we should allow our caution to overcome the natural optimism which all Canadians have as to the future of this country. I noticed that every member who spoke about the mechanics of immigration did say that consideration should be given to the winter season and the seasonal unemployment we have at that time, and that we should not have many immigrants entering the labour market during those months.

With a certain amount of modesty I can say "Thank you", because we introduced that policy last summer, and I believe it was quite successful this winter. As I said last night, we have had no confusion, no conflict, and no surplus number of workers in any given community. That to some extent restricts the number of people who can be admitted to Canada in any twelve month period, because if to a considerable extent you shut off migration in late October, or at some such time, and presume to open it in late February or early March, you then shut off four months of the year which otherwise could be used to bring in people at a time when perhaps they could be absorbed.

There has been considerable discussion as to whether or not we had more immigrants in 1951 than we should have taken into the country. I suggest that that was not so, although I do not want to engage in any argument with hon. members on the point, because I realize that everything they have said today has been helpful. Every suggestion they have made will be followed up. But 1951 was the beginning of the expansion in this country of industries connected with preparations for carrying out our commitments with NATO. There was a greater demand than we could meet for both skilled and unskilled workers in almost every line. Therefore we did our utmost to meet that necessity.

As I said last July, and repeated last night, it would appear that that met the requirements of the day, and that perhaps there was not going to be a continuing demand for skilled and unskilled labour for that particular purpose. I think I did point out last night that, in particular, there was little

demand this year for persons to go into the mines, the logging industry and the like; and my recollection is that the hon. member for Kootenay West spoke about that this afternoon. Looking at the figures I find that we took in only about 900 loggers during the whole of last year, which is away down from what it had been at any time prior to that. This indicates that we can operate immigration to fit conditions as we see them, according to the information we receive.

It was suggested by the hon. member for Kamloops and the hon. member for Cape Breton South that we should have recourse to other departments of government, and should have interdepartmental committees studying migration. It was said that we should co-ordinate our efforts along those lines. I say with all respect that we have had similar committees since I became minister, and I believe they were in existence for some time prior to that. The whole policy is made up as the result of information available to the government in all its departments, and as a result of the opinions expressed by those on our staff and on the staffs of other departments who can best form opinions as to the likely requirements in the foreseeable future.

We never go beyond twelve months; and for that reason one may say that we do not plan for the distant future. We do not. We do not claim to do so at the moment. We merely say that from month to month and, at the most, up to a year in advance, we have certain plans and certain expectations of what can be done by way of migration.

Something was said about consulting provincial governments. We do that as well. Their opinions, along with the opinions of other groups in Canada, are taken into account when we arrive at conclusions as to what should be done.

I believe that is all I need say about the general debate. I would repeat, however, that all the doubts and all the hopes expressed this afternoon by every speaker are constantly in our minds. Migration should not at any time displace Canadian workmen. Migration should only be a means to add to our population in such a manner that we will grow in numbers, and grow as well in our standard of living, not reduce it. On the other hand we should not, because of too much caution, miss the opportunity which most of us believe this country has in the next few years.

Specifically, there was a general discussion about matters having to do with those Canadian citizens of East Indian origin, and of certain Chinese-Canadian difficulties. Some