

the opinion that such a method of approach to the refugee question would eliminate any fear of political advantage to one party or the other.

It has been stated further that labour is hostile to the admission of refugees to Canada, but I believe that generally speaking the assertion is entirely erroneous. First of all let me quote from a statement that was submitted to the dominion government on January 6 by the All-Canadian Congress of Labour. At page 15 of their submission this is what they say:

In the meantime, however, the plight of the refugees in Europe is forcing itself upon public attention, and, if only because the problem has become intensified by the invasion of Czechoslovakia, which was permitted by the Munich agreement and which at least postponed the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of young Canadians, the waste of enormous material wealth, and the piling up of an unbearable burden of debt, Canada is believed to be under a moral obligation to cooperate fully with all international bodies which are trying to relieve the situation, and also to provide a place of refuge within her own borders for an appreciable number of these refugees.

Even if it were necessary to maintain these immigrants, the cost to the nation would be infinitesimal in comparison with what war would have cost. The Congress therefore joins with the many Canadian citizens who have given this question careful consideration in urging that the government present to the forthcoming session of parliament such amendments to the Immigration Act as will permit the admission of refugees, under adequate safeguards as to number, occupation, or other conditions, and that it will assist in every possible way in the attempts which are being made to lessen the suffering of these unfortunate victims of inhuman and relentless persecution. It is felt, however, that any efforts to assist refugees should not involve trade or financial concessions to governments which hold refugees for ransom.

Let me go a step further.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Before my hon. friend goes any further, may I ask whether he has what the dominion trades and labour congress had to say on the same subject?

Mr. HEAPS: I was going to refer to that, and I am glad that the right hon. gentleman has asked the question. So far as the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada is concerned, in the last year it has taken identically the same stand on the question of immigration—

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: What is that?

Mr. HEAPS: —but it has not made any pronouncement at all on the question of refugees; and knowing as I do, the members of that congress and those that are affiliated with them, knowing their sentiments as I do—and I do not speak from mere hearsay—I can tell the government from my place in

this chamber that I do not believe there would be any objection from that organization if the government permitted a reasonable number of refugees to enter Canada.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I was present at the time the congress made their representations to the government and my recollection is that in their presentation they stated emphatically that while there was unemployment they did not wish to have any immigration of any kind into Canada.

Mr. HEAPS: But I have had this question under consideration more recently with many people closely associated with the congress.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): It is only three weeks ago that they told us that.

Mr. HEAPS: The Prime Minister is mixing the question of immigration with the question of refugees.

Mr. REID: They are immigrants just the same.

Mr. HEAPS: There is a difference between the two. The appeal on behalf of refugees is made on purely humanitarian grounds to allow people who are fleeing from persecution to come in, to give them the right of asylum, that old historic Liberal principle vindicated by men like Gladstone and Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman. I remember when certain refugees found it necessary to flee from Russia and obtained asylum in Britain. This was in 1905, and who was it that welcomed them? None other than the prime minister of Great Britain himself. And to-day, if I make a plea in this chamber for refugees of all races and creeds, I am at least appealing to the same liberal sentiments on the part of hon. gentlemen who now occupy the treasury benches.

In this group over here we are as well acquainted with the labour movement in Canada as are hon. gentlemen opposite. I have been associated with it for a considerable number of years and I still have the support of the members of these organizations. In fact, ninety-five per cent of the people in my constituency are working people, and I know that no working man or woman of any race or creed would object to the influx of a reasonable number of refugees as a humanitarian act at this particular time. I venture to assert that if reference were made to those people who to-day are functioning as the executive of the trades and labour congress and other officials of the trade councils across the country, there would be found, generally speaking, no objection to refugees being