

The Budget—Mrs. Fairclough

TRADE

PETROLEUM PRODUCTS—REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT SPONSOR MEETING OF INDUSTRY

On the orders of the day:

Mr. G. J. McIlraith (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, on Monday last in the absence of the Minister of Trade and Commerce I directed the following question to the Prime Minister:

—has the government received a request from the Canadian Petroleum Association to sponsor a meeting of the industry to consider present market problems? If such a request has been received, is it the intention of the government to sponsor such a meeting?

In reply the Prime Minister stated:

Mr. Speaker, I will bring this to the attention of the minister and have a reply as soon as he returns.

I wonder if I could have a reply to that question?

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, the reply is that such a brief has been received from the Canadian Petroleum Association within the last few days, requesting that the government sponsor a meeting of the Canadian domestic oil industry in order to consider solutions to certain marketing problems. The implications of the proposal suggested in this brief appear to be both far reaching and complicated, and will be given appropriate consideration.

THE BUDGET

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The house resumed from Tuesday, April 21, consideration of the motion of Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance) that Mr. Speaker do now leave the chair for the house to go into committee of ways and means.

Hon. Ellen L. Fairclough (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take this opportunity to deal with a matter that has become somewhat controversial in the last little while, concerning recent changes made in the immigration regulations and various statements which have been made in this house and out of it with regard thereto.

At the very outset I should like to state that I have been very deeply disturbed about the misunderstanding which has gone abroad with respect to these regulations and the intent of the government in that regard. First of all I propose to deal with the remarks of the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill), who had some rather harsh

things to say in the house the other day during the course of this debate. Referring to the changes in regulations, he termed them at one point as cruel and inhuman. At another point he called them stupid, cruel, silly and inhuman. Mr. Speaker, I have sat in this house now for quite a few years, during which time changes have been made in the Immigration Act and in the regulations which pertain thereto. I should think hon. members would agree that if we are going to talk about cruelty and inhumanity we could very well look at some of the things that were done under the former administration.

Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert): Stupidity, too.

Mrs. Fairclough: I think the stupidity could be taken for granted with regard to the operations of the former government. I am sure hon. members will agree with me that nothing much could be more cruel—if we are going to deal with cruelty to immigrants and prospective immigrants—than to promise and not to fulfil. Yet this was the policy of the former Liberal government. If we need any testimony to that effect all we need to do is look at the mounting backlog which testifies to the cruel and inhuman policy which led to the acceptance of applications which could not be handled for two years or more.

The backlog, Mr. Speaker, has now grown from some 77,158 at December 31, 1955, to 131,785 at February 28, 1959. In Italy alone from some 12,000 at the end of 1954, and 23,000 at the end of 1955, to about 63,000 at February 28, 1959. I have a small table, Mr. Speaker, showing the backlog for five years. May I have the permission of the house to have this placed on *Hansard*?

Mr. Speaker: Has the hon. lady leave to have this table placed on *Hansard*?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[*Editor's note: The table above referred to follows*]

Immigration—Backlog
(all countries)

	Sponsored	Unspen- sored	Totals
December 31, 1955 ..	26,332	50,826	77,158
December 31, 1956 ..	47,178	69,957	117,135
December 31, 1957 ..	63,659	88,962	152,621
December 31, 1958 ..	73,540	47,774	121,314
February 28, 1959 ..	75,847	55,938	131,785

Mrs. Fairclough: Probably because the largest backlog was in Italy this country has been seized upon by the hon. member for special mention. I should like to say, Mr. Speaker, that the constituency I represent in the city of Hamilton has many thousands of people of many racial origins. The largest single group is of Italian origin, quite likely, I would think, the largest Italian group in any constituency in Canada. I have grown