

the case as stated by my hon. friend there is practically no question. There are already in the prairie provinces several settlements of negroes from Oklahoma. When these people came to Canada they get the same rights as anybody else. Any person coming from another country into Canada and having the necessary qualifications is entitled to a homestead, and negroes get free homesteads the same as any other people. So far they have been treated exactly the same as other people have been, both in their admission to the country and in regard to taking up land in the country. They will have to be continued in that treatment until parliament authorizes some other action on the part of the government.

Mr. FOSTER. Would the minister give the House information as to the number of negroes in these colonies, where they are situated, and how long they have been accumulating? I think it is fair to say that the House has only within the last few days understood that there was any movement of this kind.

Mr. OLIVER. I cannot give my hon. friend a comprehensive answer at the moment; but I am aware that there is a negro colony at or near Paynton, in Saskatchewan, on the Canadian Northern line midway between Battleford and Lloydminster. I should think there are upwards of 100 families.

Mr. SPROULE. I saw a statement of a reverend gentleman that there were over 17,000.

Mr. OLIVER. My hon. friend is mistaken. At the census of 1901 there were something like 17,000 altogether in Canada. There is another colony of 20 or 30 families on the Grand Trunk Pacific 75 or 80 miles west of Edmonton, around the shores of Chip lake. There is still another colony, and it is to this that the present movement is being directed, near Athabasca Landing, about 100 miles north of Edmonton, with 30 or 40 families. The movement of this spring is the first large, organized movement. Those who came previously drifted in casually. No special attention was paid to their arrival, they passed inspection and got their land the same as other people. There have been objections raised against their being so dealt with, but it did not seem possible for the Department of the Interior to take any other action until parliament had made provision in the law that some other action should be taken.

Mr. FOSTER. I think this matter is a little more important than the words or the action of the Minister of the Interior would seem to indicate that he thinks it

to be. I would be very sorry indeed to see any colour line drawn in the Dominion of Canada. We have quite a large negro population in Canada, some of whom came over, but most of whom are descendants of those who came in the old days, when slavery flourished in the United States. We gave them a hearty welcome and a hospitable one. They have retained generally the respect of the people of Canada, and they have enjoyed all the rights and privileges of free men here. We are glad that they are doing so. But I think the government should recollect that there are some ten millions of a coloured population in the United States of America, in many districts under conditions which are not at all agreeable to the coloured people.

There is a feeling in that country that we in Canada know scarcely anything of, and attempts have been made there to solve that difficulty in various ways so as to assuage that feeling if possible; but now, if an organized effort is made, and if it becomes known that every adult negro in the United States may take up 160 acres of our best land, a migration may be formed, the extent of which, and the result of which we have not the least idea at present. It seems to me that the matter is one of such importance that the minister can hardly say he cannot do anything because parliament has not legislated on the subject. The matter is one which the government ought to take under its immediate consideration and concerning which it ought to define a policy and submit that policy to parliament. The Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver) has not been backwards in defining a policy with reference to British subjects who are not of the same colour and nationality as ourselves. He has not been at all feeble in preventing in a most effective way the settlement of our country of inhabitants of the empire who are loyal to us and have fought for British rule in all quarters of the world. If the hon. minister has any intention of meeting this question he can find a way of carrying out that intention; but if not it seems to me he scarcely sees what may come as a result of this movement which has now been started. I do not want to criticise, but I submit that this is something worth thinking about and having a policy about.

Mr. OLIVER. I would impress upon my hon. friend the distinction between legislation and administration. We are at present administering the immigration law as enacted by parliament.

Mr. FOSTER. But my hon. friend is also the author of the law.

Mr. OLIVER. I am quite prepared to admit that, and accept the situation, but