

*Supply—Citizenship and Immigration*

So far as the officials are concerned, Mr. Chairman, their files are bulging so full of material that they could produce a white paper in a fortnight. But no minister, and certainly not the cabinet, has taken the time to decide on policy; and so our immigration policy merely drifts.

A further by-product, of course, is the delay in revision of the Immigration Act itself. The former government enacted the new regulations as long ago as January 1962 and decided to postpone a general revision of the act itself until some experience with the regulations could be gained. There has been ample time to observe the new regulations in operation, and the time has come for the minister to proceed with a full scale revision of this obsolete, antediluvian Immigration Act.

This committee will be indulgent, of course, with the new minister today, but I say to him that it expects from him before the next year's estimates are considered the formulation and enunciation of a dynamic but stable long range immigration policy. Dynamic and forward-looking it must be. The development of this nation has suffered greatly from our timidity and vacillation in both immigration policy and immigration programming. In my view we must establish targets and objectives and refuse to be diverted from those targets and objectives by any or every economic breeze.

It is not enough, Mr. Chairman, for this country simply to pursue passive policies on immigration, and as and when our economy creates vacuums for jobs in the labour market which cannot be met internally to seek immigrant workers for such purposes. In terms of the present supply situation for immigrants, this approach tends to be self-defeating. A passive attraction of immigrants—a negative policy—simply does not enable Department of Citizenship and Immigration to compete for immigrants.

Canada has been built on the strength of immigrant people. Therefore, I say let us not be afraid to adopt a positive approach. I have said before in this house, and I will repeat it many times, that I believe the planning of our immigration policy can no longer be formulated on an annual basis. The "feast or famine" approach to immigration, the "tap on, tap off" approach, has been the curse of the department. These approaches will not produce a satisfactory flow of immigrants to Canada, particularly not from our traditional sources. What we need to do—and I earnestly

[Mr. Bell (Carleton).]

hope that the white paper will advocate this—is to set long range targets and objectives and to stick with them whatever the temporary domestic economic climate.

I have often stated publicly, and I now reiterate, my personal belief that our immigration policy should be based on an average flow equal to one per cent of the Canadian population per annum, with deviations therefrom in any year of not more than one quarter of 1 per cent. If we are to adopt this as a long range policy, then there is something to fight for in the department of immigration.

There is one further factor I should like to put before the minister as he takes over this portfolio. In my view it is the task of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to bring a warmhearted understanding to the cold print of immigration laws. Humanitarian and moral considerations are basic considerations to be respected and to be applied in the immigration administration. I think the fundamental task of any minister of immigration is to maintain a fair, impartial and non-discriminatory administration, coupled—and I emphasize the word "coupled"—with a warm and sympathetic understanding of the basic human problems which are involved.

I hope that as one of the factors in achieving that objective, the minister will seek to extend greatly the authority and prerogatives of the immigration appeal board. In many ways an appeal to that board is now simply a farce. It should be made a real and genuine appeal with proper discretionary authority vested in the board. Unlike some people, I do not advocate the complete abandonment of ministerial discretion. At least a residuum of discretion should be maintained by the minister, for the simple reason that I have never seen any board, commission or civil servant, no matter how senior, who is prepared to stick its or his neck out as far as a politician frequently must and will do. I say that the total abandonment of ministerial discretion would lead to a more rigid, inflexible administration.

● (6:00 p.m.)

One further matter relating to staff, Mr. Chairman. In my view the "on again, off again, gone again, Finnegan" nature, of our immigration policy has had a highly deleterious effect upon the morale of the department. Just as plans are prepared and ready, they are scrapped. It is a tribute to the dedication generally of the staff that wholesale departures of staff have been avoided.