

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

THURSDAY, March 8, 1928.

The Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization met at 11 o'clock a.m., the Chairman, Mr. W. F. Kay, presiding.

The CHAIRMAN: The reference made to us is in the following terms:—

That the Immigration Act and Regulations thereunder, and the general subject of immigration, including the work of the Department of Immigration and Colonization be referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Colonization for consideration and report.

What is your pleasure as to how we will take this reference up?

Hon. Mr. RALSTON: Mr. Chairman, I would suggest, if I might, that while the matter of the Reference itself is very brief, the resolution, it seems to me, involves at the same time a good many phases. I understand there was something said the other day about having some sort of agenda so that members would know that on a certain day a certain subject would be coming up. There might be some phases in which one member would be interested and some phases in which another member would be interested; and it would assist the administration of the department if something like that could be arrived at. Perhaps a sub-committee, or some members of the committee, could take that up with you, Mr. Chairman. It seems to me that would be a good way to proceed.

I do feel that some general intimation ought to be made to the officials of the Immigration Department as to the way in which this matter will be conducted. That is to say, we have had a certain amount of talk in the newspapers, and a little talk in the House of Commons, regarding matters affecting the Immigration Department; some suggestion of suspicion and all that sort of thing—and if this is to be conducted more or less—if I may put it without trying to use too strong a phrase—as an inquisition I think that the officials of the department ought to be told that in order that they may govern themselves accordingly. It is one thing to have officials of the department before you and ask them to co-operate with you and give the fullest suggestions in connection with matters of improvement and policy, and it is quite another thing to have them before you for the purpose of seeing whether or not they can be trapped, and whether charges can be laid against them; and it seems to me that the officials of this department should have some intimation as to whether this is more or less a round table conference, in order to ascertain what the policy and operation of the department is with the idea of improving it, if improvement is necessary; or whether, as I said before, it is an investigation into the good faith of the officials who have been running the department. I suggest that only because I think it is only fair to them. We do not have to be lawyers to know that people are not guilty until they are proved so. But, on the other hand, our sense of fair play tells us that when you ask people to disclose in the fullest possible way what their opinions and ideas are they want to know that they are going into an atmosphere of co-operation and general confidence, which I think probably does exist and will exist in connection with this committee. But I do feel that some intimation should be made to these gentlemen so that they will know exactly the atmosphere in which they find themselves. Let me