

Immigration Act

Mr. NEILL: Yes.

Amendment agreed to.

Section as amended agreed to.

On section 7—Medical treatment.

Mr. GUTHRIE: Section 7 provides as follows:

Section thirty-four of the said act is repealed and the following is substituted therefor:—

A passenger or other person seeking to enter Canada or who has been rejected or is detained for any purpose under this act, who is suffering from sickness or physical or mental disability, may whenever it is so directed by the deputy minister or officer in charge be afforded medical treatment on board ship or in an immigrant station, or may be removed to a suitable hospital for treatment—

And so on. The whole cost may be charged to the transportation company. Now the present law provides as follows:

If, in the opinion of the Superintendent of Immigration, or of the officer in charge, the transportation company which brought such person to Canada failed to exercise proper vigilance or care in so doing, then the cost of his hospital treatment and medical attention and maintenance shall be paid by such transportation company—

There is a vast distinction between the section as it stands in the act to-day and the amendment which is now proposed by the minister. The amendment simply provides that if any passenger reaches a Canadian port and happens to be afflicted by any mental or physical disability all the cost of his hospital treatment or nursing, if such is necessary, shall be charged to the transportation company whether that company has been at fault or not. Let me draw to the attention of the minister the case of a man landing in a perfectly healthy condition at the port of Halifax and suddenly being taken with an attack of appendicitis. Why should the transportation company be put to the cost of medical treatment, hospital treatment, or nursing treatment of that patient? The law as it stands to-day provides that the transportation company shall be liable if they have not been vigilant, if they have been careless in permitting a passenger to come on board their ship; but the amendment simply imposes upon the transportation company the full obligation of caring for these people no matter what the ailment may be. Why, if a man breaks his arm on board ship under this clause the transportation company would have to pay for everything. If a man contracts pneumonia by exposing himself in inclement weather the transportation company, under this clause, must bear the whole cost of that patient's treatment, notwithstanding the fact that these patients when embarking or going on board ship in the first instance were perfectly healthy,

[Mr. Robb.]

were perfectly well and had no ailment that could be ascertained by medical or other examination. I think the clause as it stands to-day should remain in the statute books. If a shipping company has been careless, if its medical officer has been careless, if it has been imposed upon, if it has been neglectful then I think it should pay and that is the law to-day. But to render it liable in every case is going beyond the realm of reason in my humble opinion, and I would ask the minister if he can give the committee some reasonable excuse for the proposed change. Why should the transportation company—having acted vigilantly and carefully, having had its passengers medically examined—now be asked to pay for the medical, hospital and nursing treatment of a man who takes sick after the voyage say from an attack of appendicitis or pneumonia, or who suffers a broken arm or a broken leg?

Mr. ROBB: My hon. friend is a clever lawyer and he is building up another straw man for the purpose of knocking it down. He knows that in actual practice cases of appendicitis and pneumonia, or broken arms, are very rare among the immigrants. Now in order to get business the companies go out and sell transportation to Canada, and we are adopting these restrictions as a warning to their agents so that they will be a little more careful in the selection of the people they send to Canada. If the agent gets a commission of £1 10s. and shuts his eyes to the medical unfitness of the person to whom he sells transportation, why should the people of Canada be called upon to pay for the maintenance of such persons while they are here? Let us look at the experience of the past. In 1922-23 these payments were made:

Transportation companies.. . . .	\$40,832
Government.. . . .	2,917
Immigrants.. . . .	6,795

In 1923-24 there was a little more business. The payments were as follows:

Transportation companies.. . . .	\$68,865
Government.. . . .	3,980
Immigrants.. . . .	2,577

Under this law all we are proposing to place upon the shipping companies is the addition of the amount that was previously paid by the department and by the immigrants which would be in 1922-23 \$9,712, and in 1923-24 \$6,557, on a considerably increased business. The total cost—not the additional cost—paid on the passengers they carried was less than twenty-five cents a head. I think it is quite fair that the transportation companies who are making profits out of the business should pay for it.