

I urge that the representations of these excellent Canadian citizens of Chinese origin be sympathetically considered by the minister and his department.

Mr. Dinsdale: Mr. Chairman, it would appear that the committee is endeavouring to complete today consideration of this extremely important department. I therefore will not hold up matters unduly. However, I think it is unfortunate that we are pressed for time in considering such an important subject as the one that is before the committee at the present time.

The whole problem of immigration is one of the most complex ones that could be considered today because it deals with the subject of population movements. The movements of population have a vitally important bearing upon the delicate and difficult question of international affairs. Immigration is a matter that is extremely vital to Canada because, with the exception of a few North American Indians and Eskimos, all of us in this country are either immigrants or the descendants of immigrants.

Since the war there has been an increasing emphasis on the necessity for increasing our human resources just as rapidly as possible. In the discussion today other hon. members have referred to the present change in attitude with regard to immigration arising from the unemployment situation of the past winter. As a result of the changing economic circumstances as our post-war boom tends to settle down, we find that there have been extremes of optimism and pessimism expressed in regard to the problem of immigration. We still see rather extravagant prophecies as to the population potential of Canada for the immediate future. On the other hand, there are those who recommend a severe tightening up on the influx of new citizens by the process of immigration.

Coming as I do from the western part of Canada, I tend to side with the more optimistic viewpoint. Perhaps that is because we in the west are continually faced with the wide open spaces and it becomes almost inevitable that the westerner leans toward an optimistic attitude with regard to population prospects for the future.

In a newspaper comment which dealt with the observance of 40 years of political activity in this country by the Minister of Agriculture I was interested to read that, in summing up that long experience in the public life of his country, he stressed—and stressed it strongly—the need for a larger population. Then yesterday the hon. member for Rosthern, speaking on the subject of the Saskatchewan dam, also dealt with

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the population problem from the western point of view. In Manitoba we have reached a provincial population of 790,000. In that vast geographic area a population of 790,000 is merely the proverbial drop in the bucket. I can understand why the Minister of Agriculture and other hon. members on the government side of the chamber are leaning strongly towards the need for a rapid increase in population resources within the restrictions of the ebb and flow of the economic situation. The only final solution for our western problems, of course, is an expansion of the domestic markets by means of population increase.

All that is merely by way of introduction. We could spend a long time in discussing many of the points that have been raised. The fact that they are so numerous and so complex merely indicates that there is a great need for a comprehensive consideration of this important subject of immigration. Such a comprehensive consideration of the subject is not going to be possible today nor, unfortunately, has it been possible since I came to the House of Commons in 1951. Perhaps some time in the not too far distant future there might be provided an opportunity to come to more realistic grips with this subject which has so many facets and which has such great significance for a young, developing and expanding country such as is our Dominion of Canada.

I have endeavoured to look back into the record of Canadian immigration in the past since confederation. So far as I can see, there has never been an aggressive policy carried out in this regard. Since we became a nation, the tendency has been to drift with the tide and to proceed on the basis of a stop-and-go policy. As far as the historical record indicates, there has been a general lack of imagination and vision. The immigration influx from time to time has been determined more by circumstances outside of Canada than by vigorous action from within. There is a possible exception to that statement in the movement of immigrants into the western plains when they were first opened for settlement. But the other great periods of immigration have been largely the result of circumstances beyond the shores of Canada. An example of such a period is the post-world-war I period when, owing to disturbed conditions in Europe, there was a large influx of new citizens into Canada. Then along came the depression and up until 1947 or 1948 immigration remained comparatively static. In the report of the minister of mines and resources—under which department immigration was handled in those days—for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1938,