

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Administration service.

1. Departmental administration, \$121,925.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: This item is not to be carried. As I said last night, we wish to call items in one or two departments, so that on Thursday or Friday, if we so desire, we may take up the estimates of those departments.

Item stands.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

87. Departmental administration, \$154,440.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): This item will stand.

Item stands.

Progress reported.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

REVISION OF REGULATIONS, INVOLVING CLOSING OF CERTAIN OFFICES

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, before the house adjourns, I should like to give certain information with respect to the revision of Canadian passport regulations, involving the closing of certain offices.

In view of the heavy falling off in applications for passports it has been decided to close the branch offices at Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and St. Stephen, New Brunswick, which were opened in July of last year to relieve the congestion due to the avalanche of applications which suddenly descended on the Ottawa office. These branch offices will be closed on March 15. A considerable financial saving will thus be effected without inconvenience to the public.

Unless there is a further drop in applications the branch passport offices at Vancouver and Windsor will be kept open for a further period and an office opened at Moncton to replace the office at St. Stephen which was less conveniently situated to deal with applications from the various parts of the maritime provinces.

All applications for passports made after March 15 should be addressed to the Canadian passport officer, Ottawa, or if the applicant resides in the Windsor district, in British Columbia or in the maritime provinces, to the acting passport Officer at Windsor, Vancouver or Moncton.

New Canadian passport regulations will come into force on April 1, abolishing the present special passport valid for travel to the United States and making certain changes in the

regular passport which will thereafter be the only passport issued.

The special passport for travel to the United States only was issued last summer when it was thought the requirement might prove to be a temporary one. As, however, there is no present prospect of a relaxation of the regulations and as under war-time conditions the strictest care must be taken in the issue of passports to avoid them being granted to improper persons, it has been considered advisable to discontinue issuing the special passport for travel to the United States. Other factors leading to the decision to discontinue the special passport were that the system of issuing two passports—a regular passport and a special passport for the United States only—gave rise to considerable confusion in the public mind and complicated considerably the keeping of records. Moreover, it represented a departure from the recognized international practice, Canada being the only country to issue two passports.

The changes in the regular passport cover two points—the period for which the passport is issued and the fee. The unsettled conditions and stricter supervision of international travel arising out of the war have made it advisable to reduce the period for which passports are issued, thus enabling more frequent checks to be made. It has been decided to make the initial period of validity two years instead of five years as at present. Passports will be renewable for four periods of two years each instead of for five years as at present. The passport fee will be reduced from \$5 to \$3. The fee for each renewal will be \$1.

It will be noted that these modifications do not change the maximum duration of the passport or the maximum fee that is paid, maximum duration remaining at ten years and the maximum fee at \$7.

The new passport will be valid for travel to the United States and any other country or countries to which the applicant desires to travel, except, of course, countries with which Canada is at war.

Passports already issued will, of course, remain valid until the date on which they expire.

A day or two ago the leader of the opposition asked me if I would hold up my announcement respecting passports, in order that consideration might be given to the proposed closing of the office at St. Stephen. The hon. member for Charlotte (Mr. Hill) is similarly interested in that particular office, and would like to see it continued.

May I say the business there hardly justifies keeping it open. These are days