

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

DEPARTMENT OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Loans, investments and advances—

653. To authorize and provide for a continuing special account in the consolidated revenue fund, notwithstanding section 32 of the Consolidated Revenue and Audit Act, to be known as the immigration revolving fund, from which interest-free loans may be made to immigrants, towards the cost of transportation to destination in Canada, including cost of meals en route, under conditions fixed from time to time by the governor in council; and to authorize the crediting to this special account of repayments by such immigrants and the readvancing of such moneys, and to extend and apply this authority to the amount of \$3 million provided by vote 648, Appropriation Act No. 2, 1951, \$6,000,000.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I should like a little more explanation of this item.

Mr. Abbott: The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is not in his seat at the moment, but, as the committee is aware, a revolving fund loan account was set up to provide for the recovery of loans to immigrants on the cost of their transportation to Canada under the assisted immigration scheme. By reason of the number of immigrants who have been coming in under the scheme, it was found that the amount in the revolving fund of \$3 million was insufficient, and the department asked for approval of an additional \$6 million, making the revolving fund \$9 million in all. That is what this item covers.

As the committee is aware, loans are made to these immigrants to enable them to come to Canada and get settled here, and the loans are recoverable from the immigrants out of their earnings after they arrive here.

Mr. Gibson: What experience has the minister in the collection of these funds?

Mr. Abbott: Well, taking an example from April to December, 1951, the number of loans made was 17,095. The total sum committed was \$3,162,575, and the actual recoveries during that period, \$216,208. I have not the data showing whether all the immigrants are fully up to date on their payments, but I understand in that respect the record has been very good.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What is the average amount loaned, and what is the basis upon which loans are granted? Are they granted to the applicant before he comes to Canada, or after he arrives here? I should like some general information on this subject, because I know of some cases in which applications which apparently could be justified were denied, while others were granted. I should like the minister to give an explanation of this item, which is a most important one; for it reveals a new policy of assistance to

Mr. Gardiner: You do not know anything about them. Why should you discuss them?

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I will be brief, because we do not know very much about them, except what he told us. As I say, the minister was absent on Friday; and it is not possible for anyone to believe that he was absent on Friday afternoon—

Mr. Howe: Mr. Chairman, this is absolutely intolerable; it is the greatest breach of the rules that I have ever seen in my whole seventeen years in this house.

Mr. Ferrie: Item 649 carried.

The Chairman: I would ask the hon. member to conclude his remarks as soon as possible.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Carroll: I rise to a point of order, Mr. Chairman. You have decided—and properly so, I submit—that no hon. gentleman in this house may discuss the foot-and-mouth disease under this particular item.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Carroll: Why allow the hon. member to go on and discuss it?

Mr. Fraser: It embarrasses the government.

Mr. Carroll: He is now attacking the minister on that very point.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Mr. Chairman, I am really not discussing the foot-and-mouth disease. I am rather afraid that there is a feeling here among some hon. members that they would like me not to go on.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Sinnott: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order—

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Sinnott: On a question of privilege, we will certainly appreciate the hon. member going on, on item 649.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I am not going to proceed any further. I will finish these remarks when we come to the item.

Mr. Abbott: If you will allow me, in fairness I must make my own position perfectly clear.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): We do not—

Mr. Abbott: I think in fairness—

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): On a point of privilege, if the minister is to reply, surely I have the right to finish my own statement.

The Chairman: Order. Item 649 is called. Shall the item carry?

Item agreed to.