

PARLIAMENT

DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRANTS.

House of Commons, Hansard Report, June 8, 1908.

Mr. Alcorn—I notice in the auditor general's report the sum of \$92,614 paid for bonuses. This, I presume, is the sum of the details of which are given on 1-24 and 25, for bringing immigrants to this country. On 1-25 is a sum of \$19,728 under head of grants made to various corporations and associations. Would the minister give some explanation of this latter sum, and state why those grants were made? They are apparently made to associations connected with immigration, and are expended in part at least upon immigrants after they reach Canada. How does that explanation fit with the grant of \$2,000, for instance to the Quebec and Lake St. John Railway company? I notice that nearly \$20,000 goes to associations in the province of Quebec. I understand that Quebec was in the same position as Ontario with regard to immigration agents, who are posted for the location of immigrants in that province. For what reason is the grant of this very large sum made to associations, and in what way would the Quebec and Lake St. John railway get their grant?

Mr. Oliver—I am glad my hon. friend has asked this question. We have had several attempts made in the House, both this session and the previous session, to make it appear that there was some undue discrimination by the immigration department in respect to securing and distributing settlers. The department of immigration is interested in securing desirable people to settle in all parts of the Dominion. Its efforts and its expenses are directed in the first place to inducing the settler to come, and in the next place, to establishing him in the country to the best advantage. The one great difficulty before the policy of the present government and that of the late government, was that the late government rather confined its efforts to inducing people to come and did not proceed further to help them to establish themselves. In the present session the policy of the government has been to induce the settler to come, and to help him to establish himself. It is for that reason that our immigration staff in Winnipeg is so large. We have a commissioner of immigration at Winnipeg with a large and expensive staff, an immigration hall with a great many apartments for different kinds of people, and immigration agents and immigration hall at many other points throughout the country, and lastly, at many points. All this vast expenditure made for the purpose of locating the settler where he desires to settle after he has reached Canada. In the province of Quebec we have taken an interest in placing immigrants by establishing different agencies in different countries. The agents work on a commission basis, and receive \$2 for each immigrant that they place on a farm in their respective countries. Mr. Alcorn—That policy it seems to me has resulted in the appointment of an employment agent of partisan supporters of the government who work almost solely for the \$2 a head, and the system does not seem to me to be very successful. If people of a higher standard were employed, such as we had formerly in other countries, I think the results would be very different. The results from that system in the country which I have the honor to represent have certainly up to the present been anything but satisfactory.

Mr. Oliver—I was not the moment discussing that side of the question. I was saying that we were making certain efforts in Ontario as well as in the west to place immigrants satisfactorily after their arrival. The expenditure my hon. friend has quoted from the auditor general's report, as being made in Quebec are for the same purpose and to the same end. They are made on a different basis from that employed in Ontario, just as the method in Ontario is different from the method in the province of Quebec. Mr. Alcorn—Are there any employment agents in Quebec paid in the same way? Mr. Oliver—Yes, but that is a very recent development and, in fact, can scarcely be considered to be an office measure as yet, because, as my hon. friend knows, a large part of the population of Quebec is of the French language, and the immigration from immigrants who come and are available to be placed, there is very little of that to be done. There has been little placing of immigrants in actual practice in Quebec except in the English countries. We have made extensive efforts in Quebec with a view to having the immigrants whom we induced to come to the country satisfactorily placed in the positions which would be of advantage to them and to the country. The payment to the Lake St. John railway is one of these payments. The Lake St. John railway is a colonization railway. It gives communication with points reached by it in the Lake St. John region where there is some agricultural development and where there is industrial development of various kinds. It seemed reasonable that the Lake St. John railway, being especially interested in the colonization and development of that country, should be considered and dealt with as an active and effective agent for handling and dealing with people desirous of going into that country. There are several societies in the province of Quebec looking to the development of the hinterland of that province, and we have made certain payments to those societies with the same object of having the immigrants on their arrival placed satisfactorily so that both he and the country will be benefited. The payments in Quebec are for the same purpose as in Ontario and the west, but they are made on a different principle because of the different condition of the country.

Mr. Alcorn—In what way do the Lake St. John railway do the work? Do they place immigrants on their own land or how do they distribute them and find them employment? Mr. Oliver—The railway company have no grant of land. The unoccupied land in that locality is owned by the provincial government. In consideration of this grant the railway company gives free transportation from Quebec over their railway.

Mr. Alcorn—Are these French immigrants who are brought there? Mr. Oliver—Some are French, but there are some Belgians and other nationalities as well. Of course, it is natural that a settlement in that province will attract French immigrants, but the settlement is not confined to French. There is a Danish as well as a Belgian settlement there.

Mr. Alcorn—Do the society of colonization and repatriation, the Quebec and Lake St. John Colonization society deal with the same class of immigrants? Mr. Oliver—In the estimates of the current year we are not asking for money for the Lake St. John Colonization society. We now continue our grants to the railway.

SALVATION ARMY IMMIGRATION

House of Commons, Hansard Report, June 5, 1908.

Mr. Alcorn—What other grants are made to the Salvation Army as a body in Canada with reference to immigration work? Mr. Oliver—We are paying the Salvation Army a special grant with a view to a consideration of their placing immigrants in the four western provinces. The Salvation Army sees to the placing of their immigrants after their arrival in this country. They are very complete and successful in their organization, and as they have recently developed their work very largely in the west, we have thought it not unduly to recognize their services to the extent I have mentioned. West of Lake Superior we have our own staff on salary to look after the placing of immigrants and we do not pay a commission per head as in Ontario, where the Salvation Army has its staff and we pay it a lump sum of \$750 a year work done in the four western provinces.

Mr. W. J. Roche (Marquette)—Has the minister any information as to the character of the immigrants brought by the Salvation Army? The Army officers claim they have brought out suitable immigrants and that none of them have become a public charge. Mr. Oliver—The Army officers are of an inferior class and of suitable to the requirements of our country. Have any of the Salvation Army immigrants reported to you as being a public charge? Mr. Oliver—Considering the large number of people who have come out under the auspices of the Salvation Army the failures are very few. There have been instances where some have had to be deported, but at many points others in which the immigrants might be considered undesirable, but they are not a public charge. They are brought out by the Army in the same way that generally speaking the Army immigrants are perfectly desirable. We have had practically no complaint with regard to these immigrants. We find the Army a reliable institution, and the care of the people they bring out and if they find they have made a mistake they are as ready to rectify it as we could be.

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Mr. Oliver—It is possible to place such construction upon the grant, but after all it is hardly so different from the same as I have given in the case of the question put by the hon. member for Alton. The grant has progressed to such an extent that it was not necessary to keep the sub-agency. There is no doubt that the sub-agency is a very great convenience, but we have to draw the line somewhere. The House would not justly us in establishing a sub-agency everywhere or in keeping them established where they have been established. The sub-agency is particularly a convenience in the newly settled sections. A great deal of the work that my hon. friend has mentioned by office holders with the land office, whereas entry must be made by the letter in the vicinity of the land. So, there is a reason for the sub-agency in that respect. It does not exist in the case of an old settled section.

Mr. W. J. Roche (Marquette)—If the business had fallen off in this sub-agency, there would be force in what the minister has said. But I am informed that more business was done here last year than was done the year before. I know that the sub-agency said—I have had no direct communication with him, but judging by the business of 1907, there was more reason for maintaining the sub-agency ever before. It is hardly necessary on the ground of economy to close the sub-agency, as the saving would be only \$25 a month. I have had complaints from a number of residents of the district concerning the closing of this office. A charge has been made that part of the business of the office in February last. There were six entries for homesteads—proceeds \$60—and implements, \$15; three inspections were made; there was one abandoned homestead, and there were thirty-two applications for patents. I think that this volume of business would compare favorably with that of any other sub-agency in Manitoba. Information with reference to the closing of this office has reached me as follows. The sub-agent, who in former years was a very active politician, following the last provincial election, remained neutral. This did not please the Liberal candidate, who was defeated and who attributed his defeat not so much to the efforts of his political opponents as to the efforts of the sub-agent. And it is not secret in that part of the country that the sub-agent was charged for having had this agent discharged because of his inactivity in the election. If the information I have is correct, the business has not fallen off, but increased.

FOREST RESERVES ALONG THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

Hansard Report, June 8, 1908.

Mr. M. S. McCarthy—What new reserves have been made on the eastern slope of the Rocky mountains within the last year? I saw it stated in the newspapers in the west supporting the government that the minister of agriculture (Mr. Fisher) has said, at a meeting of the Forestry association in Montreal, that all the east slope of the Rocky mountains from the national boundary to the northern limits of the country have been set aside as a forest reserve. Had the government made up its mind as to that? Mr. Oliver—There must be some error somewhere, there has been no such reservation. There is of course the Waterton reservation.

Mr. McCarthy—What is the size of that? Mr. Oliver—One or two townships. It is an old reservation set apart many years ago, and was never withdrawn from the departmental reservation, and there is the Banff park reservation, and there is also a large reservation at the Jasper House on the line of the Canadian Pacific railway. This is about fifty miles in length from the southeast to the northwest, and extends to the foothills of the mountains. It will not be as large as the Banff park in area, because the Banff park, in its northeastern portion, extends out far beyond the foothills of the Rockies. The railway will intersect it at about the centre. There are a set of reservations that have been made on the eastern slope of the Rocky mountains. But at some future time further reservations may be made.

Appointment of Land Agent. Mr. Laks—I would like to ask what the policy of the minister is in regard to the filling of vacancies in the different land offices of the Northwest and the outside service generally. I asked him a question the other day with regard to filling a vacancy in Edmonton and, from the answer given, I understand he brought a man from the outside, a gentleman who would not possibly have any knowledge of the details of the work and who would have to rely upon the juniors, the men whom he went to superintend in that event, to coach him and make him familiar with the work that he was going to do. I do not know whether the same policy is being carried on in other parts of the Northwest, but I would imagine that it is an extremely bad thing for the whole outside service, that no matter how good their work is, they have no chance of appointment to the best positions going. I would like to know what the general idea of what his policy is in regard to promotion in the outside service.

Mr. Oliver—I think the committee will agree that the volume of business stated by the hon. gentleman (Mr. W. J. Roche) is hardly sufficient to justify the maintenance of this office. And, if there was an increase over that of previous months it is pretty good evidence that instead of being wrong in closing the office when we did, it was closed it sooner it would have been better in the interests of economy. It is evident that, once an office is established, it is difficult to get it closed. There is a certain amount of convenience to the public in having the office there, and there are always people who are offended and complain to the minister. I do not wonder that there are complaints about the closing of this office any more than about the closing of a number of other offices. I have no hope of ever closing a sub-agent's office without complaints being made, and yet I feel that we must close these offices from time to time as settlement progresses.

Grand Trunk Pacific Townships. Mr. Laks—I notice that a number of townships have been set aside for the Grand Trunk Pacific for townsite purposes at \$1 an acre. Does the minister intend to give the preference to the English grammar in the case mentioned, or is it a gentleman who had hitherto been outside the service but who believed that by reason of his opportunities he was able to bring to the service ability and advantages that no person could be expected to bring and we had need of all the men who might be secured to be of equal standing at other points where they were employed.

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Mr. Oliver—It is possible to place such construction upon the grant, but after all it is hardly so different from the same as I have given in the case of the question put by the hon. member for Alton. The grant has progressed to such an extent that it was not necessary to keep the sub-agency. There is no doubt that the sub-agency is a very great convenience, but we have to draw the line somewhere. The House would not justly us in establishing a sub-agency everywhere or in keeping them established where they have been established. The sub-agency is particularly a convenience in the newly settled sections. A great deal of the work that my hon. friend has mentioned by office holders with the land office, whereas entry must be made by the letter in the vicinity of the land. So, there is a reason for the sub-agency in that respect. It does not exist in the case of an old settled section.

Mr. W. J. Roche (Marquette)—If the business had fallen off in this sub-agency, there would be force in what the minister has said. But I am informed that more business was done here last year than was done the year before. I know that the sub-agency said—I have had no direct communication with him, but judging by the business of 1907, there was more reason for maintaining the sub-agency ever before. It is hardly necessary on the ground of economy to close the sub-agency, as the saving would be only \$25 a month. I have had complaints from a number of residents of the district concerning the closing of this office. A charge has been made that part of the business of the office in February last. There were six entries for homesteads—proceeds \$60—and implements, \$15; three inspections were made; there was one abandoned homestead, and there were thirty-two applications for patents. I think that this volume of business would compare favorably with that of any other sub-agency in Manitoba. Information with reference to the closing of this office has reached me as follows. The sub-agent, who in former years was a very active politician, following the last provincial election, remained neutral. This did not please the Liberal candidate, who was defeated and who attributed his defeat not so much to the efforts of his political opponents as to the efforts of the sub-agent. And it is not secret in that part of the country that the sub-agent was charged for having had this agent discharged because of his inactivity in the election. If the information I have is correct, the business has not fallen off, but increased.

Mr. Alcorn—I think the committee will agree that the volume of business stated by the hon. gentleman (Mr. W. J. Roche) is hardly sufficient to justify the maintenance of this office. And, if there was an increase over that of previous months it is pretty good evidence that instead of being wrong in closing the office when we did, it was closed it sooner it would have been better in the interests of economy. It is evident that, once an office is established, it is difficult to get it closed. There is a certain amount of convenience to the public in having the office there, and there are always people who are offended and complain to the minister. I do not wonder that there are complaints about the closing of this office any more than about the closing of a number of other offices. I have no hope of ever closing a sub-agent's office without complaints being made, and yet I feel that we must close these offices from time to time as settlement progresses.

Mr. Laks—I notice that a number of townships have been set aside for the Grand Trunk Pacific for townsite purposes at \$1 an acre. Does the minister intend to give the preference to the English grammar in the case mentioned, or is it a gentleman who had hitherto been outside the service but who believed that by reason of his opportunities he was able to bring to the service ability and advantages that no person could be expected to bring and we had need of all the men who might be secured to be of equal standing at other points where they were employed.

I may say generally that while it is very desirable that employees in the land office should have accurate knowledge of the routine of the office and of the department generally, inasmuch as they are from time to time placed by homeosteaders, the land office should not get so much in touch with the people for whose convenience and benefit those offices exist, it is not necessary that they should be so well acquainted with the man at the head of the office and of the questions that are brought before the department, and the general public which they are in contact with in the course of their duties. We may be able to get men who are perfectly competent to transact clerical work, but they should not touch with the routine of the office and of the department, who are in charge of the business, and who are in touch with the people, and who are in touch with the questions that are brought before the department, and the general public which they are in contact with in the course of their duties.

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