

Supply—External Affairs

The Deputy Chairman: Order. Before the discussion goes farther I must point out that this item of \$6 million is to authorize and provide for a continuing special account in the consolidated revenue fund to make loans to immigrants toward the cost of transportation to their destination in Canada, including the cost of meals en route. If we are to confine our remarks to the item, I do not think it would include a discussion as to the condition of immigrants after they have been placed. That would be my interpretation of the item. I am not making a ruling, but I am asking hon. members to keep what I have said in mind.

Mr. Green: I am afraid, Mr. Chairman, that you have missed the point entirely. The hon. member for Lake Centre is trying to find out how many of these immigrants have lost touch with the government before they have repaid the money lent to them.

Mr. Abbott: The hon. member has been promised the information.

The Deputy Chairman: I understood the hon. member for Lake Centre was developing the point as to how many had left the farms after being placed. However, if the discussion is related to the repayment of the money, I stand to be corrected.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am trying to find out, in anticipation, how much of this \$6 million we lost because of the disappearance of immigrants in this phantom fashion.

Mr. Fulton: I believe it was the Minister of Finance who gave information that there was a commitment of \$3,162,000.

Mr. Abbott: Less cancelled warrants of \$142,655. These are for the current year 1950-51, leaving a total of \$3,023,000. The information I have is that the actual recovery to date amounts to \$216,208. And there is a free balance in the revolving fund of \$195,897.

Mr. Fulton: Was there ever any advance beyond the \$3 million?

Mr. Abbott: No.

Mr. Fulton: What was the figure the minister gave, then?

Mr. Abbott: Those were total sums committed; but there were warrants cancelled.

Mr. Fulton: The minister gave a number of figures: I understood that at one time there were actual moneys advanced, by reason of these loans, in excess of \$3 million.

Mr. Abbott: No; it is a revolving fund. My hon. friend will appreciate what that is. You make commitments for, let us say, \$3 million. Before the final commitment of the \$3 million comes due, some money has been

paid in by the people to whom we lent the first million. The difficulty we have at the present time is that the revolving fund of \$3 million is not sufficient. We need a larger revolving fund.

Mr. Fulton: The previous fund was a revolving fund, was it? I understood that initially it was a straight vote.

Mr. Abbott: No, it has always been a revolving fund.

Item agreed to.

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Loans, Investments and Advances—

655. To provide, subject to regulations of the treasury board, for working capital advances in the current and subsequent fiscal years to posts and employees on posting abroad, and to authorize the creation of a special account in the consolidated revenue fund to which shall be charged such advances and to which shall be credited expenditures made by and advances recovered from the said posts and employees, the excess of the amounts charged over the amounts credited to the account at any time not to exceed \$600,000. Vote 566 of the Appropriation Act No. 4, 1951, is hereby repealed, \$600,000.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Would the minister explain this?

Mr. Abbott: In last year's estimates we authorized a working capital advance fund in the Department of External Affairs, which is the type of fund contemplated by the act, amounting to \$300,000. This was to provide for working capital advances in current and subsequent fiscal years to maintain cash and cash balances of Department of External Affairs posts abroad. As the wording of the vote makes clear, it was limited to financing cash and cash balances abroad, but it did not enable the department to make advances abroad on behalf of individuals or to provide for other cash requirements in the agencies abroad.

The Department of External Affairs suggested that the amount should be increased to enable them, for instance, to provide their foreign offices with what is a standard departmental policy by way of making allowances for such things as clothing for employees abroad. These are paid for by 34 monthly instalments. When they are sent to certain posts, particularly in the tropics, they have to have completely new outfits of clothing. The junior employees in particular are not able to finance this, and the departmental practice has been to make that advance to such employees, which they repay in 34 instalments.

Mr. Fraser: It is a revolving fund?

Mr. Abbott: Yes, a working capital fund is a revolving fund, with a top limit. They