

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

Item agreed to.

Citizenship—

57. Citizenship registration branch, \$221,654.

Mr. Fulton: I was under a misapprehension. I thought the minister had risen to reply.

Mr. Harris: I had.

Mr. Fulton: I did not intend to let this item go by without asking a few questions. I understood the minister wanted to make general observations in reply to comments on the first item.

Mr. Harris: Perhaps anything I might say now might help my hon. friends to pass the rest of the items with dispatch. I would like to have a few moments. I realize that one should not add to the burden of the committee on his own estimates. However, there have been a few things said that require explanation and perhaps defence.

Before I make these remarks may I thank hon. members for their kind references to myself and especially for those which are directed to the officials of the department. I quite realize—and I think every hon. member does—that the immigration branch, devoted as it is to a wholly personal problem, is bound to be the subject of anxiety, irritation and at time disagreements on decisions which have been made. Anybody listening to the debate today would fully appreciate the balance of opinion that there is in the house about immigration.

We have had I think only one speech that could be described as anti-immigration, and we have had one or two who professed to support immigration but who were dubious about its value at this particular moment, or at least dubious about some of the matters involved in it. I think I can safely say that all the rest of the remarks were directed to supporting the policy of immigration, though perhaps disagreeing with particular details which were properly mentioned. In these circumstances I would be the first to agree that hon. members could bring before the committee many more cases than they have mentioned in which it would seem that the decision might not meet the approval of the hon. member himself, and might be made differently under a different minister. That is fully appreciated.

I am grateful for references to those cases, and I shall look at them again, though in many instances I have already seen them myself. Before I mention in detail what has been said, I do want to suggest that the aspersions cast upon me about holding my estimates to the final day are wholly unfounded. This is only the second occasion on which it did occur. Far from not having

(Mr. Macdonnell.)

a full debate on this subject at various times, we had quite a lengthy debate last session. At any rate we had such a debate as met the approval of hon. members opposite.

Mr. Fulton: One full day.

Mr. Harris: One full day plus an hour and a half on another day, but that full day was on April 24, and we did not rise until May 14.

Mr. Fulton: On that occasion we had only one item before us.

Mr. Harris: If my hon. friend wanted to debate longer than the seven or eight hours that he took I am sure that he could have done so.

Mr. Fulton: You did not call them again until the end of the session.

Mr. Harris: Then, sir, on June 28, 1951, we had two and a half hours, which seemed to be sufficient for hon. members, because we did not adjourn until two days later. However, this is only quibbling about detail. I am sure that if hon. members wished to debate this subject at greater length they would have done so.

May I make particular reference to many of the problems which have been raised, first by the hon. member for Kamloops and then the others. Each year we have a discussion about the Chinese, the negro and the East Indian cases which come before us, and each year we attempt to ascertain whether it would be desirable to extend the classes of those admissible in those groups. Each year we have cases brought to our attention which are borderline cases; but since I have been in charge of this department the numbers of Chinese citizens coming forward have steadily risen until the year before last they reached the figure of 2,300, I think, settling back to about 1,929 last year and at the moment they are running ahead of that again this year. There would, of course, be more if circumstances permitted them to come out of China, but for the information of hon. members may I say that it would appear that more of them are coming out of China now than were doing so a year ago.

I have not a brief to offer for the validity of the examination of these people by the X-ray method except to say that it has been in use for many years here, and it is not the only ground on which an applicant is refused entry. I have made that clear on other occasions on which I have spoken, and I have pointed out that if the X-ray is the only evidence we have that this person is not likely to be the person we are considering in the application the chances are that he would be admitted. As I believe hon. members know, we are using a variable rule of two years one way or another in the reading of that X-ray plate, and I am satisfied