

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I had anticipated that the committee would ask for an explanation of this item and I can give the departmental view on the matter. The intergovernmental committee on refugees, of which Canada is a member, was organized in 1938 with the primary object of facilitating the emigration from Germany and Austria of persons who were victims of nazi persecution. The scope of the committee's work is defined in article 2 of the rules for the constitution of the committee:

The mandate of the committee extends to all persons wherever they may be, who, as a result of events in Europe have had to leave or may have to leave their countries of residence because of the danger to their lives or liberties on account of their race, religion, or political beliefs.

The outbreak of war and consequent military operations drastically limited the activities of the committee, yet vastly increased the problems for which it had been created. By the summer of 1945 the United Kingdom government, in particular, came to the conclusion that the intergovernmental committee, even as reconstituted in 1943, was inadequate to deal with the tremendous problem of refugees and that the establishment of new international machinery was imperative.

At the recent meeting of the united nations in London, therefore, the United Kingdom government urged that the refugee problem should be referred to the economic and social council for "thorough examination in all its aspects". This resolution was adopted by the general assembly on February 12, 1946.

On February 20 the economic and social council established a committee to examine the problem of refugees and displaced persons "of all categories" and to make a report thereon to the council at its second session, in May of this year. This committee was to be known as the committee on refugees and displaced persons and was to consist of one representative from each of twenty member nations, including Canada. On March 2 the Canadian government was advised that the first meeting of this committee would be held in London on April 8. Mr. J. G. Turgeon, as representative, and Mr. R. G. Riddell, as alternate, have been appointed to represent Canada at this meeting.

In establishing this new committee on February 20, the economic and social council decided that the director of the intergovernmental committee on refugees should be invited to sit with the new committee in a consultative capacity. Pending the establishment of new machinery for dealing with the refugee problem by this committee, the intergovernmental committee will carry on with its functions.

[Mr. Graydon.]

Then, in regard to the moneys which are required, on September 17 last it was approved that a contribution of £11,368 be made to the intergovernmental committee on refugees as Canada's share in the operational expenses of that organization for 1944. It was subsequently decided that Canada should not be asked for a contribution for 1944, but that our share of the 1944 budget should be included in a contribution for 1945.

The operating expenses of the intergovernmental committee on refugees for 1945 have been estimated as £1,100,000, and the Canadian representative at the plenary session of the committee has suggested that we base our contribution on this estimate. On the assumption that we should meet the same proportion of the operational expenses as we do of administrative expenditures for this organization, our contribution on this account for the year 1945 would be £48,263, or \$214,770.35 Canadian. An amount of \$215,000 was submitted. This amount may be compared with a contribution of £350,000 which is made by France.

As my hon. friend is aware, the whole matter is in the state of transition at the moment. I cannot say to him any more than that the new organization is being formed to take over the work of the old one. In regard to what the hon. member for Davenport has said, I would tell him, as he is aware, that the whole question of refugees is about the most difficult problem with which any administration is faced at the present time. So far as Canada is concerned, the one pressing feature is the question of transportation and what is involved there, as well as the number of cases which, so far as Canada is concerned, must be carefully examined in relation to the existing situation. We have at the present time a committee of the cabinet specially charged with going into the whole matter of the position of refugees but up to the present time we have not been able to admit any large number. Transportation difficulties, as I have said, would of themselves prevent that, but as the situation in the world changes we hope to take a more liberal attitude than it has been possible to take in the past.

Item agreed to.

Canada's Contribution to the maintenance of external organizations—

657. Contribution to the united nations organization working capital fund to provide working capital for the operations of the organization pending assessment and collection of regular contributions, \$1,205,302.50.