

Immigration Decline

this year is greater than the 12-month total for nine of the last 20 years. When it is considered that last year's figures included some 9,200 Czechoslovakian refugees, the extent of the absolute decline in year to year terms is less significant.

As members will have noted, the major variations in immigration from Europe include a decline of some 8,000 from Italy, 5,800 from the United Kingdom and 2,500 from France. Immigration from the United States at the same time rose 1,500 to 15,400 in the nine-month period—

An hon. Member: Draft dodgers. You let them in.

Mr. MacEachen:—and immigration from the Caribbean rose to 10,500 compared with 7,500 for the entire 12 months of 1968.

I wish to assure hon. members that the modest over-all decline has not been the result of a restrictive attitude on the part of the government. Events and conditions in Canada, as well as developments in Europe, have had a significant influence on recent trends in immigration to this country.

The decision to emigrate is the result of a host of what I might term push and pull factors, the majority of them outside the purview of immigration policy. That there has been a lessening desire on the part of Europeans to emigrate to Canada is indicated by a drop of 20 per cent in total applications from Europe; there were 324,000 in the first nine months of 1969, a decrease of 85,000 from the same period last year.

Looking at a few traditional sources of immigrants, applications from residents of Italy were down 33 per cent in 1968. This decrease in applications last year is being reflected in the reduced flow of immigration in 1969. The number of people wanting to come from Britain in 1968 was 24 per cent below 1967; in Germany the drop was 52.9 per cent. The decline in applications is showing up in a reduced flow of immigrants this year.

In Asia and the Caribbean countries, on the other hand, the number of successful applications has continued to increase. This has led to an increase in the number of persons from those countries settling in Canada. This increase, coupled with the decrease in immigrants from European countries, is producing a perceptible change in Canada's immigration pattern. The new pattern is highlighted by an increase in the proportion of arrivals from Asia and the West Indies which four years

ago represented only 10 per cent of total immigration into Canada. In the first six months of this year the proportion of immigrants from these areas had increased to 23 per cent.

As hon. members know, immigration criteria introduced in 1967 have an occupational content. A rating, in terms of points, is given for various occupations according to the demand in Canada at the time the application is assessed. When demand for an occupation lessens, the number of points which an applicant is awarded decreases. In 1968 and 1969, when demand lessened for certain occupations, ratings were diminished in consequence.

As an indication of our interest in encouraging immigration to Canada, I should mention that earlier this year we took various administrative steps which we hope will offset the external factors tending to discourage immigration to Canada.

These steps include increased promotional activity, the sending of teams into the field to stimulate applications through personal interviews, easier assisted passage loans, and so on.

I might mention that in material tabled in the House on December 10 members will have noticed a variation in refusal rates as between various countries. There are, of course, a number of complex factors bearing on the success or otherwise of applications and it is not possible to enter into detailed explanations in all cases.

However, taking France as an example, while it is a fact that the approval rate has been low and, conversely, the rejection rate relatively high, one of the reasons for this is that a very high proportion of applications came from non-nationals of France, many of them transitory or migratory workers with low skill and educational levels. Preliminary indications are that when non-nationals are abstracted, the refusal rate for French nationals approximates that of the United Kingdom.

In conclusion, let me make it clear that Canada needs immigrants and we are continuing our efforts to encourage them to come to this country. To this end the selection criteria are and will continue to be applied without discrimination as to race, colour, class, origin or creed. In the categories of sponsored immigrants and refugees not subject to the standard selection criteria, the exercise of compassion will continue to be a major consideration.

[Mr. MacEachen.]