

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

Mr. Fulton: Good. I shall take up the rest of the matters in correspondence with the minister and his officials, because I have a number of cases.

Then with reference to the subject of immigration from the United Kingdom, what I said this morning was that not only did it seem to me that the assisted passage scheme was not being used to its fullest advantage in bringing out desirable immigrants from the United Kingdom, but that we had not completed any agreement with the British government under their empire settlement act. My information is that the assisted passage scheme is not of as much assistance to immigrants from the United Kingdom as it is to immigrants from the continent of Europe. Indeed that fact is borne out by what the minister said, namely that there had been more from European or continental countries taking advantage of it than from the United Kingdom.

The reason that is so is that the scheme does not extend assistance to dependents such as the wives and children of the husbands, and a far greater proportion of those coming from the United Kingdom than of those coming from the continent are married men with their families. The fact is that, owing to the impact of war on the continent, families are to a great extent broken up, and what we are dealing with there are displaced persons. For that reason it would be obvious that the number of people wishing to come as family units from the continent of Europe would not be as great as from the United Kingdom. Therefore the assisted passage scheme is of only limited assistance to the great majority of those who desire to come from the United Kingdom, according to my information.

That is why it seems to me regrettable that Canada has not made an agreement with the United Kingdom under this empire settlement act, under which the British government will pay a portion of the cost of the passage of a United Kingdom subject migrating to a commonwealth country. For instance, in the case of Australia I am told that the most recent agreement there provides that the United Kingdom will extend assistance to pay for the passage of emigrants to Australia up to a limit of £150,000 per annum. The situation you have there is that the emigrant pays £10 himself—that is all he is required to put up—the United Kingdom pays £25 per immigrant up to that over-all limit of £150,000, and the Australian government puts up the balance of the cost of the passage. As I said this morning, the result of that scheme is that substantial numbers of British emigrants have gone to Australia.

[Mr. Harris.]

I do not see why it is not possible for us to work out with the British government an extension of our assisted passage scheme applicable to people from the United Kingdom, under their empire settlement act, in order to ease the burden on the British family which wishes to immigrate to Canada as a unit. I should like to hear from the minister whether he has any really insuperable objection to concluding such an arrangement.

Mr. Harris: The government of the day between 1921 and 1927 had, at various times, agreements with the United Kingdom under the empire settlement act. We have not had any agreement since that time. That has been the policy since the war, and I think it was a carryover of the policy which had been determined some years before. I think the feeling is that this country should at all times retain absolute control over migration to Canada, and that we can best do that by financing migration ourselves if we feel we should spend money on it, or by admitting people if they choose to come.

We have had experience with the act. Without reflecting in any way whatever on others who use it, may I say that suggestions have been made that you do not necessarily get the best type of immigrant if he is almost wholly subsidized to come. In fact experience 20 years ago led to that conclusion at that time, in some cases. We have therefore, so far, not accepted the standing offer which is in the empire settlement act; and that fact does not seem to have adversely affected the migration to Canada.

If you compare the figures of those who went to Australia and those who came to Canada you will find that while they did run ahead—and you would expect that—they are not so much greater than Canadian figures as to indicate that the lack of this plan is a definite deterrent to migration to this country. My recollection is that to the end of 1951 something like 290,000 people left the United Kingdom for Australia, and while I cannot give the figures to the end of 1951 to Canada, I think to the end of 1952 it would be around 250,000.

Mr. Brooks: From what date; since the war?

Mr. Harris: Yes, since the war. But a very considerable factor in migration to Australia and New Zealand was of course the fact that the people could take their money with them. The hon. member for Brandon made reference to that this afternoon. Perhaps he did not give the credit to this government that he might have given. He recited the considerable sum of money that anybody in the United Kingdom could bring to this country.