

parliament at Westminster take up matters which are frequently not the subject of debate in those respective assemblies. If a committee of this house were set up it could have power to call people such as General Crerar or Doctor Solandt, and other experts and instead of defence matters becoming the subject of controversy, in the house, political and otherwise, they could be studied as scientific and vital matters, as indeed they are.

I would ask the government to consider my suggestion. Our status has changed. Despite our relatively small population, we are now an important nation. We may become a buffer state, and in a future war might find ourselves in the front line. Therefore in all seriousness I suggest that the government set up a defence committee of the house so that this whole matter of defence may be considered from that point of view.

In my opinion the bringing down of the estimates of the Department of National Defence in the last days of the session, so that they must be hurried through in hot weather, does not afford sufficient opportunity for discussion by parliament of these vital matters.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported, read the third time and passed.

IMMIGRATION ACT

REPEAL OF CHINESE IMMIGRATION ACT—BONDING OF PERSONS IN TRANSIT THROUGH CANADA

Hon. J. A. GLEN (Minister of Mines and Resources) moved the second reading of Bill No. 10, to amend the Immigration Act and to repeal the Chinese Immigration Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a bill of only four sections, involving several amendments to the Immigration Act. While it is not the custom, I believe in this instance I might deal with the sections as they appear in the bill, because they are somewhat interlocked.

The first section deals with a matter of departmental administration. There has been considerable difficulty in providing for the identification and transit of groups of people who may cross Canada. This is to give that protection so that they may be identified in transit.

The second section of the bill repeals section 80 of the act, which will be inapplicable if this bill carries and the Chinese Immigration Act is repealed.

Section 3 is to take the place of the present order in council dealing with dependents overseas of members of the armed forces. It makes the provisions of P.C. 858 applicable to these

dependents. Already 63,000 dependents have been brought to Canada, and there are approximately 5,300 still overseas. The order in council was passed in order to give the right of admission to Canada of these dependents and to give them the same immigration status as the service men. The order in council will expire on March 31, and this section will enable arrangements to be made whereby these dependents may come to Canada. The provisions of the section are in exactly the same terms as the order in council. It is thought that the movement of these dependents will be rapidly completed. A committee has been appointed to look after the arrangements and see that these dependents are brought to Canada to take their places in our community life.

The other and most important section of the bill deals with the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act. Since the war ended there has been considerable agitation in the minds of many people in Canada, editorial writers and the like, and organizations of various kinds throughout the country who have made representations to the government for the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act. They contend that the act is discriminatory, that it singles out a nation which has been a friendly ally in the war, that the provisions of our Immigration Act work a hardship on the Chinese who reside in Canada, and that certainly is not a matter that Canada can lightly overlook. Since the war, in the deliberations of the united nations, principles have been enunciated and the Canadian delegation have put themselves on record with regard to matters such as are contained within the Chinese Immigration Act.

On this whole question I find so many opinions expressed throughout the country that I feel we ought not to make hurried proposals in this regard. There are as many opinions on the subject as there are writers and commentators, but all do not seem to realize the responsibility involved. Our law is of a most complex nature, and the subject is so important that we must proceed surely and steadily and not allow ourselves to be hurried in dealing with the matter. There are so many factors involved that at the moment I simply make this statement to the country in general terms, that the whole matter of immigration is under review daily at all times, and we hope that as a result of these deliberations such amendments may be made to our policy that it will not only commend itself to the people of Canada but be consonant with the best interests of our whole economy and the destiny of this nation.