

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 14, 1966

The house met at 11 a.m.

[Translation]

FINANCE, TRADE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Second Report of Standing Committee.

Mr. Herbert Gray (Essex West): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table the second report of the standing committee on finance, trade and economic affairs, in English and French.

[Note: Text of the foregoing report appears in today's Votes and Proceedings.]

● (11:10 a.m.)

[English]

IMMIGRATION

TABLING OF WHITE PAPER ON GOVERNMENT POLICY

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table today a white paper on Canadian immigration policy. It is bilingual and probably multicultural. In doing so I would like to express my sincere appreciation to those who have worked on the preparation of this document; some have done so not only this year but also during 1965 under two of my predecessors.

No one who understands the immigration problem will be surprised that this white paper could not be produced quickly and easily. Immigration policy depends on a complex interrelationship of economic, social, humanitarian, legal and international considerations. There are few issues, indeed, that bring into play so comprehensively all the delicate balances and tensions of our Canadian society.

Our problem is to avoid the ill consequences of these inevitable complexities. Immigration policy and procedures have to adjust to changing circumstances. The natural tendency, when the issues are so difficult, is to make the adjustment by small, partial, ad hoc modifications. And as these accumulate, immigration procedures tend to become complicated, confused, uncertain, even contradictory.

I hope we can all recognize this problem without partisanship. The difficulties I am talking about have been at work under all governments, irrespective of party label.

We will cure them only if we are prepared from time to time to take stock, to reassess our policy and sort out our procedures, to develop a new synthesis as the basis for an immigration policy suited to contemporary needs.

The white paper is an attempt to do that. I do not expect it to be accepted without criticism. Immigration touches too many emotional issues to be clarified without dispute. I believe, nevertheless, that most people will find that the synthesis we have developed in this white paper meets the main needs of Canada today while taking reasonable account of all legitimate special interests.

I would like at this stage merely to draw attention to three main features of the policy I propose. First, it is expansionist. It seeks to establish the basis for a steadily active immigration policy adapted to our manpower needs, a policy that will assist Canada's growth by bringing here every year a good number of people able to adapt to our society and qualified to contribute to our economy.

Second, it is non-discriminatory. It establishes principles and procedures that can and will operate entirely without regard to race, colour or creed. I do not mean that it is in our power to ensure that geography will make no difference at all to people's chances of coming to Canada. We have to take account of the differing attitudes to emigration among other governments and peoples. There are practical limitations on our side. We cannot afford to establish the same facilities to assist immigrants in countries where the facilities will be little used as we have in countries where they are in heavy demand.

These, however, are practical problems, to be treated as such, to be overcome as much as possible. There will be no discrimination by principle and no practical differences that are within my department's power to remove.

Third, the white paper policy establishes, for the future, a new balance between the claims of family relationship and the economic interest of Canadians as a whole, which is that immigrants should generally be the well