

While the great majority of overseas immigrants come from the British Isles and the continent of Europe, immigrants also come to Canada from many other countries. To deal with these, inspection facilities exist at the offices of the Canadian High Commissioners in the principal Commonwealth countries and at Canadian missions in other non-European countries. Immigrants from the Far East are examined at the immigration office in Hong Kong.

Duties of Officers

The duties of immigration officers stationed overseas involve, in the main, answering enquiries regarding migration to Canada, handling applications for admission, examination of prospective immigrants to ensure that they come within the admissible classes and granting of visas for travel to Canada.

In carrying out these basic duties, however, immigration officers must adapt themselves to conditions that vary from country to country. For instance, throughout 1951, teams operating out of Karlsruhe made regular trips to Ludwigsburg, Bremen, and Lubeck, interviewing would-be immigrants from among Displaced Persons who had not yet been able to take advantage of the International Refugee Organization programme. In Italy, immigration teams made regular calls at Naples and Genoa. Special teams were also despatched temporarily to Berlin and Rastatt, Germany, to Bordeaux and to the free territory of Trieste.

Officers stationed permanently at the offices and missions on the continent were swamped throughout the year by applications for admission to Canada. When they opened their offices in the morning they would be confronted with long lines of people hoping to be accepted as immigrants, whom they would spend the day examining.

They had to satisfy themselves that the applicants, in addition to meeting the standard of character required, would be able to make their way in Canada in some field of employment in which the Canadian supply was not sufficient to meet the demand, or, alternatively, had sufficient funds to maintain themselves until they should be established or had friends or relatives who would guarantee to support them when they arrived in Canada.

In the United Kingdom, specially trained officers, in addition to holding many office interviews, travelled extensively, speaking to groups of people interested in migrating to Canada and showing films and film-strips outlining life in Canada and indicating opportunities for employment in various skills. In several other countries, it was not possible for this extension work to be carried on, and consequently the full burden of describing Canada and answering the many questions about such varied topics as income-tax rates, social services, education facilities, climate, and cultural activities fell upon the visa officers. These were, of course, helped considerably by the supply of literature made available to them from the Editorial and Information Division of the Department, but they had, nevertheless, to devote much of their time simply to answering questions asked by prospective immigrants.

Working in close co-operation with the immigration officers were medical officers posted to overseas duty by the Department of National Health and Welfare to ensure that immigrants who could otherwise comply with the regulations of the Immigration Act measured up to the high standard of health demanded of prospective new Canadians. Eighteen of these officers, including four administrative officials, were stationed in the United Kingdom, with 27 others located in the various other overseas offices. In several offices, including those in the United Kingdom, immigrants could undergo complete medical examination, including X-rays of the chest. Medical officers, too, accompanied the various teams processing Displaced Persons and made the necessary examinations on the spot.