

Inquiries of the Ministry

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): A communication has been sent by the federal government to the provinces, as I think I indicated in the house before the recess, dealing with the possibility of a conference to discuss this matter. I am not sure whether all replies are in, but I will inquire and possibly make a report when they all come in.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION**FARM LABOUR FROM JAMAICA
FOR SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration?

Does the minister remember the approximate number of Jamaican immigrants he says are needed to pick the fruit and tobacco crops in southern Ontario?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, when the agreement has been reached, those who want Jamaican workers will have to apply to the National Employment Service. I do not know how many will apply to that service under the conditions announced in the house.

[English]

[Later:]

Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration based on the statement he made earlier today. I should like to ask the minister whether he has considered or will consider applications from farmers in areas other than southwestern Ontario for additional farm labour if they should make application to him; for example, from sugar beet producers in southern Alberta.

Mr. Marchand: Wherever there is a shortage of labour we are ready to consider the same proposition.

Mr. Olson: A supplementary question. Can I ask the minister whether southwestern Ontario is the only place in Canada which is considered to be short of farm labour?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question is argumentative.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, you have suggested that the question is argumentative but I was simply asking the minister which areas in Canada the government considers to be short of labour at the moment. I think it

[Mr. Nielsen.]

would be helpful for farmers in other parts of Canada to know, for example, whether or not applications would be entertained.

Mr. Marchand: Mr. Speaker, I think applications have been filed by some Alberta agriculturists. These have been studied, and if they are ready to discuss them I am ready to meet these people and also to give the hon. member the reasons we have refused them.

Mr. T. S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): A supplementary question. May I ask whether the minister has had any official communication from the government of British Columbia with regard to bringing farm labour into that province from either Jamaica or Mexico?

Mr. Marchand: To my knowledge, not from the government of British Columbia. I can try to get some information about this matter. Perhaps the communication came to my department. It did not come to me.

[Translation]

[Later:]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, may I put a supplementary question to the hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration? Has the hon. member received requests, for instance, from the province of Quebec, for help with the blueberry crop in the Lake St. John region?

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. E. Nasserden (Rosthern): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Will the government or the department entertain applications for the bringing in of farm labour from other countries as well as from Jamaica?

[Translation]

[Later:]

Mr. Marchand: Mr. Speaker, we have limited our request for workers, or rather imports of labour, to the Commonwealth countries. Now, if there still was a labour shortage and we had to look elsewhere for workers, even then the principle would not be affected as it would be a matter of discussing each case and finding out what type of labour is required. For instance, someone mentioned a while ago that anyone could pick fruit. Because of certain aspects of that operation, the work cannot be performed by just anyone, the workers required must be skilled.