

Supply—Citizenship and Immigration

they are welcome in Canada, and also in the efforts the department is making toward giving them a sense of what Canada means and the opportunities and advantages which will be theirs when they acquire Canadian citizenship.

On reading the last annual report of the department I have been quite impressed to find an outline of the steps that have been taken in that connection. One thing which does concern me, and it was touched upon by the minister in his statement, is the extent to which the applications for citizenship appear to lag behind the number of immigrants admitted into Canada during the post-war years. The last annual report covers the fiscal year ended March 31, 1952. At pages 16 and 17 it shows that during the fiscal year 19,833 certificates were issued and 8,845 declarations of intention were filed. Since 1945, that is for the last five years, there have never been less than 66,990 immigrants admitted. It takes an immigrant five years to acquire Canadian citizenship; therefore I think it can be seen that these approximately 20,000 certificates represent a small percentage when compared with the 66,000 immigrants admitted annually. This indicates that there is a substantial number who have never acquired Canadian citizenship and who have not yet filed their declaration of intention to do so.

When you find that there are only 8,845 declarations of intention to acquire Canadian citizenship, and compare that with the figure of 66,990 immigrants in 1947 and 79,194 immigrants for 1948, it seems to me that the problem becomes one of major importance. The minister did touch upon the matter. He said the department was encouraged by the increase in the number of declarations of intention filed during the current calendar year. My information, of course, comes from the last annual report which covers only the fiscal year ended March 31, 1952. I would appreciate it if the minister would say a word or two more on this subject.

I believe my question is well founded. Is there not a disturbing shortage of applications for citizenship and declarations of intention to apply for citizenship being filed, in comparison with the number of immigrants admitted? What positive steps is the department taking to carry forward the work of impressing upon the potential new Canadians to an even greater extent the importance and desirability of becoming fully qualified Canadian citizens by obtaining certificates of citizenship?

[Mr. Fulton.]

Mr. Harris: The hon. member has pointed out that there were about 66,000 immigrants in 1947, but I think I would say there were 64,000 in that year. Of those about 38,000 were from the United Kingdom. Our experience has been that those people do not very often apply for citizenship certificates, that is the percentage is not as great as in other cases. This leaves something like 26,000, and of those it may be said that some 8,000 have applied. Of the 27,000 a good many would be infants, who would have to be taken into account in that figure of 8,000 declarations of intention. I am not suggesting that those who declared their intention during the last year were, in all cases, 1947 entrants.

We are concerned that we do not get into the position which was mentioned by one hon. member, of having people wait a good many years to take out their citizenship papers. We have no means of imposing any restrictions on them if they do not, and we have not any form of sanction that we could impose. On the other hand, it is our thinking that during the calendar year 1953 the 1947 group will have run over the five-year period. Of course many people put things off, and they do not apply at the first possible moment. We think that as a result of the experience we have this year we will be able to judge much better what people will be doing with respect to citizenship. If there are any steps that can be taken after this year to draw to the attention of a newcomer of 1947 or earlier that he has now had the opportunity and we should like him to take advantage of it, we shall certainly do so.

We feel that with municipal corporations, provincial governments and our own government contributing in some form, together with the voluntary organizations doing so much good work in welcoming these people to Canada and into these little societies, looking after them at night schools, and so on, these people should, in all conscience, take the earliest possible opportunity of applying for Canadian citizenship.

Mr. Fulton: In connection with that subject, what steps are being taken to impress upon the new arrivals the desirability of becoming citizens? I noticed in the annual report at page 10 a paragraph dealing with the distribution of film strips which are made available for citizenship instruction in either English or French. After giving a list of the titles, the paragraph concludes:

During the fiscal year 1951-1952, these strips were in wide demand, and 6,440 were sold to educational organizations and interested groups.

The titles which are given these film strips certainly suggest that they would contain