

Monday, January 30, 1939

The house met at three o'clock.

VACANCY

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR THE ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CALGARY WEST

Mr. SPEAKER: I have the honour to inform the house that I have received the resignation of Right Hon. Richard Bedford Bennett as member for the electoral district of Calgary West. I have accordingly issued my warrant to the chief electoral officer to make out a new writ of election for the said electoral district.

IMMIGRATION

PETITION OF LA SOCIÉTÉ ST-JEAN-BAPTISTE PROTESTING AGAINST ALL IMMIGRATION

Mr. WILFRID LACROIX (Québec-Montmorency): I have the honour to present to this house a petition from La Société St-Jean Baptiste of the Quebec diocese, bearing the signatures of 127,364 persons, vigorously protesting against all immigration whatsoever and especially Jewish immigration; demanding with all the energy inspired by the instinct of self-preservation that we maintain a rigorous policy of forbidding immigration; asking also that certain ministers do not permit the entry into this country of even a few immigrants by allowing them special permits or privileges which give access to Canada even when immigration is officially forbidden; and finally pleading that the Canadian government take all necessary precautions to prevent all immigration to this country.

The petition has been laid on the table of the house.

IMMIGRATION ACT

AMENDMENT OF PROVISIONS RESPECTING DEPORTATION OF PROHIBITED OR UNDESIRABLE CLASSES

Mr. A. W. NEILL (Comox-Alberni) moved for leave to introduce Bill No. 14, to amend the Immigration Act.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Explain.

Mr. NEILL: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill might be very briefly and vaguely expressed by saying it is a bill for the protection of certain political refugees and of people on relief. The sections of the Immigration Act concerned are sections 40, 41 and 42, under which any immigrant who has not been in Canada long enough to establish domicile is liable to be deported under very summary proceedings if he has been guilty

[Mr. P. J. Rowe.]

of certain offences or crimes, some ten or eleven of which are enumerated in the sections. I might refer to one or two of them: polygamy; living on the avails of prostitution; being an inmate of an asylum, reformatory or gaol, and a number of other offences. These people are not liable to be deported; they must be deported, and the procedure is very precise. The clerk of the municipality must give information to the minister, who orders a board of inquiry. If they find the facts as stated the man or woman is deported forthwith. It is true that there is an appeal to the minister, but if the minister does not happen to be interested or if he is away the decision very often will be made on the advice of the very officials against whom the appeal is being lodged.

I have no particular complaint against the deportation of men or women who have been guilty of the crimes to which I have alluded, because they generally know what they are doing. But among the offences enumerated one was slipped in which I did not mention. The house will be surprised to learn that included amongst these crimes for which people must be deported is that of having been, at some time since 1910, guilty of having been on relief, or in other words a public charge. It might apply to people born in the old country and who, coming out here, have met with sickness or misfortune. They and all their family are liable to be put in gaol and to be deported, along the lines I have indicated.

The purposes of the bill are twofold. The first is to give the board of inquiry permissive power—not compulsory power—to recommend against deportation of a person against whom the only crime, if one must call it that, is that for a period of perhaps only a few weeks he has been compelled to be on relief, through sickness or other causes. The other feature of it, which is perhaps even worse, relates to political refugees. It is bad enough to be arrested and put in gaol for no other crime than being hard up—because they are kept in gaol until the court of inquiry is held, and then they are deported forthwith. But there is worse, even, than that. A man may not be a British subject and may come from one of those countries of Europe where freedom is getting to be almost unknown. He may have expressed political views against the government of the day, or he may even have gone so far as to slip out at night in order to escape some penalty imposed upon him by reason of perhaps nothing worse than the racial origin of his grandmother or his grandfather. He may even have been guilty of the heinous offence of