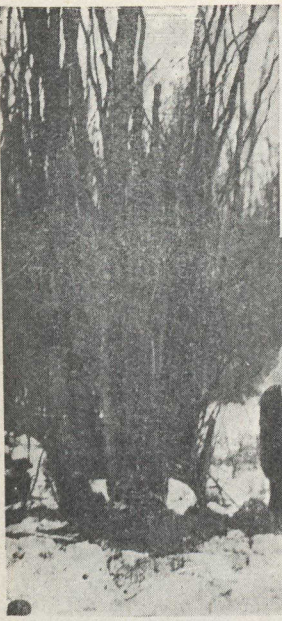


Dark Corners in Manitoba

A Problem For Common-Sense Reformers, Not For Party Politicians

By A. VERNON THOMAS



Ruthenian Children in Manitoba on the Way Home From School.

THE dark corners portrayed in Mr. Vernon Thomas' article and partially illustrated in the photographs have nothing to do with mere party politics. The conditions are such as concern the interests of the whole community. The article is the work of an impartial investigator. The cure for any such evils, whether in Manitoba or Saskatchewan or in Ontario, lies in the hands of the people altogether outside of politics.—Editor's Note.



Enterprising Ruthenian Settler With His Wife and Family, Mother-in-Law and Hired Man.

NOT very long ago a Manitoba newspaperman put on a suit of old clothes and a pair of heavy boots and betook himself to the principal foreign settlements of his province. His commission was chiefly to inquire into the school conditions obtaining amongst the foreign settlers. His visit was made in the middle of a school term, and was, of course, unheralded.

The story which the newspaperman brought back to civilization was a startling one. He reported that out of some 3,500 Slav children, principally Polish-Ruthenian children, of school age in the

three settlements he visited, only 400 were at school at the time of his visit. These figures, of course, took no account of the large Slav population of Winnipeg and other Manitoba cities and towns, where compulsory education is unknown, as it is unknown throughout Manitoba.

Nor did the newspaperman visit all the foreign settlements of Manitoba. He estimated that throughout the province there were, at the time of his investigation, not less than 5,000 Slav children, future citizens of Canada, growing up not merely in ignorance of the English language, but of all common-school instruction. In the foreign rural settlements it was not so much a case of non-attendance as of an entire absence of schools. The newspaperman brought back abundant evidence to show that the Polish-Ruthenian settlements of Manitoba had been a matter of total unconcern to the English-speaking portion of the province.

Signs loom on the horizon, not only of Manitoba, but of the wide Dominion, that a different spirit towards the Slav immigrant is being forced upon us. I say "forced" because our opportunity voluntarily to treat these strangers with Christian decency has to a considerable extent slipped away. A different spirit is being forced upon us because the peril latent in such conditions as were found to obtain in Manitoba is too great for any modern community deliberately to nurse.

Again, it is being forced upon us because the number of Slav immigrants to Canada is constantly increasing at the expense of Scandinavian and other foreign immigration. Some figures published recently by the Dominion Department of the Interior illustrate this change rather startlingly. These figures showed that whereas in 1909-10 the immigration from Austria and Russia to Canada was 29 per cent. of the total foreign immigration to the Dominion, in 1910-11 it was 39 per cent., and in 1911-12 fifty-three per cent. Significant, also, is the fact that the Canadian Pacific Railway has recently established a direct line of steamships between Austria and Canada. It is also announced that the steamers of the Austrian-American line will call at Canadian ports.

When the Slav peoples, the Poles, the Ruthenians, the Bukovinians, the Russians and many others began to arrive in Canada many of us, in our selfishness and shortsightedness, sent up an angry howl. This howl, while it was, of course, to a considerable

extent, prompted by political feeling, had, nevertheless, a pronounced vogue amongst Canadians. A section of the press referred bluntly to these immigrants as the scum of Europe, and used other similarly choice expressions to describe them. The public, in turn, considered that it had made a final analysis when it referred to the garlic-eating propensities of these people and to their comparative unfamiliarity with certain amenities of civilized life.

The advent of these immigrants revealed our imperfect sympathies. Like the Pious Editor in the Biglow Papers, we were prepared to "believe in freedom's cause, as far away as Paris is."

Time passed. The despised Slavs were discovered to be excellent wielders of the pick and shovel. We found it profitable and economical to set these strangers to work digging trenches for sewers and watermains, opening up streets, building railways and performing other tasks requiring physical strength and endurance. Within a decade of their arrival the despised Slavs had become in a very real sense the builders of Canada.

Canadians began to look less glum and the angry howls died down perceptibly. When, in due course, the Slav immigrants began to get on the voters' lists, press and politicians dropped the scum-of-Europe talk for good, changing it to the language of flattery and ingratiation. But the only real initiation into Canadian politics and public affairs vouchsafed to the Slav immigrants has been the whiskey bottle and the money bribe.

THIS degrading conception of our duty to the foreign citizens has been applied with particular brutality in those country districts where they have formed thickly-settled communities. In the towns and cities, as for instance in Winnipeg, the foreign citizens have been able to send their children to the public schools. They have been able to form literary and dramatic societies, national choirs, etc., through which they have kept in touch with the culture of their homelands.



One of the "Good Roads" in the Polish-Ruthenian Settlements of Manitoba.



A Polish-Ruthenian-German Bilingual School in Manitoba, Whose Pupils Know Practically No English.



A Young Ruthenian and His Bride.