

OUR NEED FOR IMMIGRATION

SIR JOHN WILLISON.

There are vital differences of opinion in Canada on the subject of immigration. Generally the leaders of organized labor have opposed admission of industrial workers from other countries. Naturally in such a period of depression as that through which Canada is now passing there is general support for labor's position. On the other hand there is grave scarcity of farm labor and room for hundreds of thousands of people on the unoccupied lands of Western Canada. Indeed in all the older Provinces there are farms for purchase at reasonable prices in the best agricultural countries. It is not true to say that these farms have been abandoned but they are available for purchase because the sons have left the old homestead for the West or have chosen to follow other pursuits. Quebec absorbs few immigrants in the rural sections. The French-Canadians are thrifty and prosperous and there are always local purchasers for farms that come into the market. But no farmer from the Old Country needs to go into a pioneer community if he has a fair amount of capital, and if he consults the Provincial Departments of Agriculture before purchasing he need not fear for his future.

There is developing in the Dominion a new attitude towards immigration. Owing to the need of settling the West the immigration policy of the Federal Government has been sectional rather than national. There has been no adequate co-operation between the Provincial Governments and the Federal Department of Immigration. Still perhaps we should give our chief attention to settling the prairies but there is a greater disposition to emphasize also the advantages of the old Provinces for classes of settlers who desire the conveniences and comforts of more finished surroundings. It is recognized, too, that we have never had any adequate organization for handling immigrants. We have admitted people who never should have been allowed to leave the ships or, better still, should never have been allowed to embark for Canada and then have been content to exercise the brutal power of deportation. In years past we assisted people to come to the country but neglected to select and approve. The money test is not always a satisfactory test of fitness nor if there is careful selection are assisted passages wholly to be condemned. The Salvation Army has brought many thousands of people to Canada and few have ever become a charge upon the country. The officials of the Army saw that they were guarded against mistakes by themselves and against the cupidity of other people. What the Salvation Army has accomplished it should be within the power of trained officials of the Governments to accomplish.

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There are sections in the West which should never have been opened to settlement. Possibly over such great areas it was difficult always to direct settlers wisely but with the knowledge of the West that we now possess mistakes in location can be more easily avoided. If settlers are wisely placed there will be few failures on the land and the drift back to the cities of which Labor complains can be measurably

prevented. It is certain that few of those who settle in the best agricultural sections fail to realize the expectations with which they came to Canada. Possibly a higher average of success has been achieved by settlers from the United States than by those who have come from overseas. This was because most of the Americans had experience in Western farming. The knowledge which they have acquired by experience we should endeavor to give to people from the Old World through the sympathetic guidance and instruction of agricultural experts and other organized private and public agencies.

We have a greater responsibility, too, than we have ever fully discharged to the foreign elements which tend to cluster in the cities. Many of these people were farmers in the countries whence they came and if we had made it our business to know more of their experience and aptitudes they could have been turned to agricultural pursuits in this country. All over the continent there has developed a new sense of obligation to those who are so commonly described as the "foreign elements." It is recognized that they should be encouraged to assume all the responsibilities of social and political citizenship. In too many cases they have been the sport of political bosses and excluded not so much by deliberate design as by sheer neglect from the general activities of the communities in which they live. The result is to lower the general average of citizenship and endanger the social and political fabric. But we begin to have a newer teaching. We see or partly see that a wiser thing is to draw these people into the affairs of the community, to make them understand that they are not isolated groups, to show friendliness and confidence which they should enjoy by virtue of their Canadian citizenship.

Yet I am glad that I was courteous to them.

For are they not, likewise, children of God?

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In short we are learning that our duty to people who come to Canada is not fully discharged when they are landed at Quebec, or St. John or Halifax, that they have a right to guidance and counsel until they are satisfactorily established and that just in degree as they are well treated they will develop affection for Canada and strengthen the social and political structure. Naturally we all desire that people who leave Great Britain shall come to this country or go to one of the other Dominions of the Empire. The war forever vindicated the Briton in Canada. One thinks of an Old Country Club in one of the Presbyterian churches of Ontario of which every member who was eligible for war service enlisted and of whom 70 did not return. There were like examples of patriotism and sacrifice all over the Dominion. If one still hears the whisper now and again that the Englishman is unmanageable there is an answer in what he did in the war that compels silence and reverence. Besides the pioneers who laid the foundations of this country were English and Irish and Scottish and French and no other races have such a claim to its opportunities and privileges. One does think that there could be closer co-operation between the Imperial and the Dominion Governments to keep British people within the Empire. When all is said there is nothing Canada more sorely needs than a greater population and it is supremely in the interest of the Dominion that all Governmental agencies should co-operate to ensure that those who come to us from Great Britain and other countries shall be established under conditions which will give a fair prospect of contentment and prosperity.—Montreal Star.