

An Educational Test for Immigrants

Should Illiterates be Allowed Free Entry into Canada, or Moral and Physical Fitness be Sufficient

By W. W. SWANSON.

At the close of hostilities Canadians are looking forward eagerly to receiving a great increase to the population of this country. It is essential, indeed, that our numbers be increased if the colossal debt that has been rolled up on account of the war is to be carried without imposing an undue burden upon the people. At the same time, however, much we may desire an influx of immigrants from the four quarters of the world, we cannot overlook the fact that it is essential to discriminate between the various races and stocks that may look forward to entering Canada as the promised land, the land where their hopes and dreams will come true. It is, therefore, of more than passing interest to note that the United States, which has been grappling with this problem, has determined to eliminate the literacy test in securing its share of immigration from Europe and the rest of the world. In recent years, however, considerable clamor has been raised in the Dominion against the admission of immigrants from the backward countries of Europe. A determined fight has been made, in some quarters, to restrict immigration to the countries of North and Northwest Europe, and to the United States. It remains for us, therefore, to consider seriously whether South and Southeastern Europeans shall be excluded from entering Canada because of their racial stock; or, whether if race origin be thought non-essential, a literacy test shall be put in its place.

It will be recalled that about a year ago the President of the United States vetoed a plan under which it was proposed to apply a literacy test to all immigrants seeking the shores of the Republic. Since that time there have been many critics of the President's action, who have complained bitterly of the policy that was then adopted; but on most of the fundamental issues raised it is likely that Canadians would find themselves in agreement with him.

Illiteracy and Social Conditions.

When one protests against the free admission of illiterates from Europe it is generally because of the fact that the ignorant section of these immigrants has given rise to most of the problems that have been raised with respect to sanitation in the cities of the new world, and the labor problems that have so disturbed feudalistic conditions in our mining camps, and in general, economic activities on the frontier. It cannot be denied that these immigrants have been largely responsible, in many localities, for reduced wages; and that they have proved refractory material for the labor union organizer. Indeed, contrary to what one might have expected of a class that has fled from oppression at home, the immigrant has, as a rule, sided with the capitalist in any conflict with the labor union. Nevertheless, the hope of democracy depends upon the free admission of these oppressed immigrants; and upon their education in enlightened political thinking. Our whole history, as well as that of the United States, proves that it is not only cruel but dangerous to deprive foreign immigrants of the right to enter the New World. Besides it is our traditional policy to offer all who are oppressed the opportunities that come with political and economic freedom.

Trend of National Development.

At the same time Canadians cannot be criticized for considering very seriously what the outcome of this almost unrestricted immigration is likely to be. It has been by no means established that the racial quality of the illiterate alien adds to the strength of the nation's life. Inter-marriage, however, has always taken place, and will continue to take place, between what some consider the inferior racial stocks of Europe and the native element. This must be so since no caste system has been developed in America, either in the United States or in Canada. It is important, therefore, to note that one hundred years from now the average Canadian will have more foreign blood in his veins than could possibly be given him through the influence of the graduates of our universities upon the population at large. This being so, it is well to take note of the trend of our national development, and to discover, if possible, what influence this foreign racial stock will have upon the future physical and mental capacity of the average Canadian.

It is undeniable that no educational test can determine the fitness of any individual or nation

to survive in the competitive struggle. Five hundred years ago the whole world was plunged in darkness and ignorance, with the exception, perhaps, of China and the priestly classes in civilized and semi-civilized states. If a literacy test alone were applied to those nations the conclusion might well have been drawn that no great state could have arisen from among them; and yet it is perfectly plain that the might and splendour of Western civilization have come from the despised and ignorant masses which existed in England, Germany and France, five hundred years ago. It is evident, therefore, that no educational test alone can decide what the future of a nation, or any individual within that nation, is to be. For practical purposes, however, it may be said that those illiterates that come from the Scandinavian countries and Scotland, should be excluded; since the educational systems in these nations is so thorough and efficient that only the absolutely incompetent can remain illiterate.

The Educational Test.

It is obvious, then, that the educational test, with respect to the worth of an immigrant, is fallacious; since whole races have remained illiterate and yet have been virile, strong and economically progressive. This is particularly true of Eastern and South-eastern Europe. There the Russian oppresses the Pole; the Pole the Ruthenian; the Magyar the Czech; and the Czech those with whom he comes into contact. The Serbs have for generations oppressed such Bulgars and Turks as have come within their power; and the Roumanians have met with equal oppression on the part of the Russians. All these races, in turn, have held down, and tyrannized over, the Jew. Nevertheless, if one fact has been proved above another as a result of this great experiment in nationality, and the right of races to exist as such, it is that the educational test alone cannot decide the value, or the worth, of a racial stock to the world. It has been largely through refusing to accept an education in a foreign tongue, and under foreign authority, that these several nationalities have been able to exist. It may, then, well be said that illiteracy has saved many a race from the process of denationalization; and that

ignorance in itself has saved many racial stocks for the enrichment of the whole world.

The Love of Liberty.

It is obvious, therefore, that races that have clung obstinately to their national customs, their traditions and even their superstitions, are not necessarily inferior to other stocks. One hundred years ago Serbia was an oppressed and despised nation—a nation that showed absolutely no sign of national consciousness or national life. But, nevertheless, in that despised people there was an unquenchable love of liberty, and the determination to preserve Serbian nationality against the whole world. And as a result we have to-day a Serbian race with all its own great gift to the world. The same may be said of the Ruthenians, the Slovaks, the Greeks and the Syrians—all oppressed peoples less than fifty years ago, but now well on the high road to attaining nationality. It cannot be denied that great potential ability exists among these oppressed peoples; and that, therefore, education in itself can never become a real test to determine whether individuals from these several races and stocks should be admitted to this country. On the contrary it seems to have been fairly well established that, while universal education does raise the social and economic status of the individual, it at the same time works for the destruction of the racial stock.

Race Suicide.

There are no figures available, up to the present, for Canadian universities; but statistics that have been furnished by Yale, Bryn Mawr, and other American colleges show that not half of the graduates marry, and that even when they do marry the average family consists of only two children. It thus seems clear that the highly educated classes, as well as those who are living in the same environment and enjoying like social status, are marked for elimination. The educated and the well-to-do classes in general must be continually recruited from below. It has become a well established fact that society tends to wither at the top, and that the more vigorous and the less cultured elements in the population survive when the highly trained members perish. For practical purposes, therefore, there is no reason for laying stress upon the educational test as a means of discovering what immigrants should be permitted to land upon Canadian shores.

There should, however, be a test for physical and moral fitness, to the end that high national ideals as well as national economic efficiency may be maintained. But let us have no snobbishness in our immigration programme. The man who is able, and willing, to work is an economic asset to the Dominion, and as such should be welcomed with open arms.

Thrift, an Unknown Commodity in Canada

Canadians Generally are Showing Little Disposition to Save, as Indicated by their Purchases. What is the Remedy?

(Special Staff Correspondence).

Canada is at this moment enjoying a period of unprecedented prosperity, in spite of, or rather as a result of the giant struggle being fought to a finish on the battlefields of Europe. Every incoming steamer brings gold in payment for the tons of munitions, produce and manufactures that are being carried over to Europe to supply the requirements of the armies of the Allied nations. For the first time in history with one exception, our exports are exceeding our imports, and to a large extent. The prosperous effects of the bumper grain crop of 1915 have gradually permeated every branch of our economic structure, until at the present time all classes are experiencing a period of easy money. Wages are everywhere higher, companies that suspended payment of dividends during the first two years of the war are paying up back dividends, with bonuses in addition.

To what extent these happy conditions will continue after the war it is not possible to predict. Post bellum conditions are the fashionable table topic, based largely upon the many theories being offered to the public by the thinking men of the country. Some writers contend that a sharp financial depression will be the temporary result of the signing of peace, inasmuch as the cessation of the manufacture of war supplies will throw large numbers out of employment just at a time when millions of released soldiers will be seeking re-employment. On

the other hand it is contended that in order to straighten out the complex national and industrial situations enormous physical effort will be called for and that it will be but a short time before everyone that requires work will find occupation of some kind.

Are We Spendthrifts?

Whatever may be the solution of these questions so difficult to answer, it is certainly in order for us to consider what provision, if any, is being made in Canada to-day, in our time of ultra prosperity, for this undefinable future. To what extent are we setting aside our surplus earnings? Are we as individuals putting something by for a rainy day, or are we spending our money as fast as we earn it? This is indeed a most important question to consider.

The Well-to-do.

During the first two years of the war the well-to-do classes felt the necessity of cutting down expenses, and even at the present time confidence has not been entirely restored. Purchases of super-luxuries were cut off entirely in August, 1914, and since that time the demand for them has shown but little improvement. The market for such articles as lamps, draperies, oriental rugs, paintings, bronzes, antique furniture, and so forth, has been lifeless in sympathy the lack of activity in the building trade.

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