

Province of British Columbia. Some of them have done extremely well in the lumber trade and now own their own forests and lumber mills. Others are doing well in business, most of them being engaged in the business of supplying fuel, wood and coal, to the cities of Vancouver and Victoria.

The whole story of this Indian emigration into Canada is a fascinating one. It is one of great courage and enterprise, of many hardships suffered in the beginning, of many difficulties overcome. Now they have earned for themselves a real place among the various communities in Canada and are accepted as full citizens. The first emigrants were mostly young farmers. Weary of the back-breaking struggle in their own country, many of them mortgaging their all—their small land holdings—to pay for passages, they migrated to this new land. They were strong and tough and they worked in labour camps, on the road-gangs and on the railroads. I asked one of the first pioneers how they fared in the beginning and I said to him: "I suppose it was easy for you to get work because you were prepared to work for lower wages than the European emigrants." His reply astonished me. He said: "Oh, no, we worked for the same wages and indeed we claimed higher wages than the Europeans because we worked harder and on one occasion we struck for higher wages, on this ground we got higher wages."

Co-operative System

Naturally in the beginning their resources in a foreign country were limited and they were wise enough to adopt a co-operative system of living. They pooled their wages, bunked together and took turns at cooking and other domestic tasks. Of course it must be remembered that in the beginning they did not have their womenfolk with them. Living in this way they were able to save some money and indeed there was established in this way the beginnings of a co-operative system. This system was the basis of the comparative prosperity of Indians who settled down in Canada. This co-operative system was built up on a remarkable mutual trust which was established among the members of the community. They invested both money and labour; irrespective of the size of his financial investment each investor was an active participant in the common business enterprise. In addition the community lived co-operatively with their stores, housing and food arrangements and in most cases the members of the community worked without pay as shareholders in the common enterprise.

Today when you meet our Indian folks settled in Canada, you are struck by the success that they have achieved but this success story has not been an easy one. The demand of these people has always been that they should be treated in the same way, should have the same rights and responsibilities as other Canadian citizens. This fight for equal rights has been very real and at times heart-breaking—a chapter in the battle against racial discrimination. They have faced and overcome both bitter economic and political opposition as well as racialism. But all that is past history. The traditional friendliness, and sense of social justice of the Canadian people has helped and is helping to solve all the problems that stood in the way and today they live freely and happily, proud of their exciting vital new country—the country they have helped to build but proud too of their mother country and ever aware of the old civilization and traditions which are their inheritance, and of the place of honour and respect that the new independent India has built for herself among the great nations of the world.