

feeble objection. That does not arise from any cowardice on their part, but they believe that all international questions can be settled without recourse to arms, a belief in which we agree to a very great extent. However, the Mennonites settled in southern Manitoba, and although their habits and peculiarities were repulsive to a number of our people, yet those who supported them pleaded that they should have a chance to improve, and to-day we find the Mennonites among the most prosperous farmers of Manitoba. Their old habits and customs and peculiarities have passed away, and they have largely assimilated Canadian customs and Canadian modes of life. Formerly, they used to live in villages, but now they are scattering themselves, as the Canadians do, over the farms they cultivate. The young men and the young maidens who have grown up in these Mennonite settlements are Canadians in every sense of the word. As it was with them, so I expect it will be with others who come from Russia. But, what about the Doukhobors? During the session an hon. gentleman on the other side spent quite a number of minutes condemning the government for encouraging the immigration of the Doukhobors to Canada. The hon. member for West York (Mr. Wallace), spent a few minutes in denouncing the government for encouraging this class of immigrants, no less than 7,400 of whom have come to this country and been stationed in colonies in the North-west. Although some people object to them on the same grounds that they object to the Mennonites, namely, on account of their refusal to take up arms and their peculiar customs, dress and manners, the same causes, I believe, will operate on them as have operated on the Mennonites, and by the strong forces of assimilation, in less than a generation, they will have acquired the habits and customs and ideas of Canadians, and will be as good Canadians as if they had come from Ontario. The question to consider is not whether their habits or customs are repulsive, but whether they are honest and industrious; and if they possess these qualifications, we are safe in giving them homesteads in our country.

In searching out the evidence both for and against them—for I was not looking for the one more than the other—I came across reports given of these people by men who have personal knowledge of their character. The first is the evidence of Mr. Stevens, the British consul at Batoun. Writing to the Home Office, London, on May 27, 1898, he said:

The Doukhobors belong to a community known to be the best farmers in Russia. They are thrifty, steady, and law-abiding, and have by good behaviour, diligence, sobriety and hard working qualities, brought nothing but prosperity to the barren localities of Russia in which they are originally settled.

Mr. MACDONALD (Huron).

No higher recommendation than this could be given of any people. If this be true—and we have no reason to believe it is not—these people will be of great advantage to our country. But I have further testimony, which I think will be satisfactory to all who are willing to judge by the evidence and are not governed by prejudice. In a letter dated Moscow, August 20, 1898, addressed to Professor Mavor, of the city of Toronto, one of the professors in the provincial University, by Count Leo Tolstoi, I find the following:

The Doukhobors are the best farmers in Russia. They would use land and seeds given to them in the best way. They live the most chaste family life. They would adapt themselves to any climate. They would send their children to the public school, if their children were not obliged to receive religious instruction.

From an analysis of that letter of Count Leo Tolstoi, I gather that these people are skilled in agriculture, that they are honest and industrious, that they are chaste in their social life, that they are liberal and broad-minded in educational and religious matters, and adaptable to our climate and conditions. We could not have any higher recommendation of any class of people. But I have still further testimony. From a letter of October 17, 1898, addressed to the superintendent of immigration, by Mr. J. G. Colmer, secretary to Lord Strathcona, the High Commissioner of Canada, I quote these words:

From all the High Commissioner can ascertain he believes the Doukhobors consist largely of agriculturists, and that they are a thrifty, steady, and law-abiding people. They appear to be somewhat similar in many ways to the Mennonites, and if they go to Canada in many numbers it is hoped they will prove to be successful settlers.

Again, in a letter addressed to the Minister of the Interior, dated October 20, 1898, by Lord Strathcona himself, I find the following:

From all I can learn, these Doukhobors are steady, hard-working and thrifty, and are likely to be an acquisition to the country.

These two last quotations are from Lord Strathcona, who represents Canada in England, and who has always taken a very deep interest in the welfare of Canada, which he so ably represents, and who must be in possession of reliable information, or he would not have written about these people as he has done. That testimony is very important. It must be borne in mind—and I mention this, because there is a false impression that the government assist these people very largely, and are doing more for them than they would do for our own people—that the government do not assist these people to come to this country and have not paid a cent to bring them across. But what the government has done, is this: It has been customary for both governments,