

# Canada's Immigration Problem

THE MARITIME PROBLEM—RAILWAYS AND POPULATION—SALVAGING BRITISH AGRICULTURE

By C. W. Peterson

It was clearly brought out at the last Dominion Board of Trade Convention at Winnipeg, that Canada's key problem centres around the population question. Whatever difficulties confront us are directly traceable to an inadequate agricultural producing and consuming population compared with our industrial, business and governmental machine. We suffer from a lack of economic balance—the almost universal complaint. In Canada's case, however, we have the power and opportunity to apply corrective measures, which the older nations have not. They find themselves in a cul-de-sac from which they are unable to emerge.

It has always been a popular superstition in Canada that the immigration question is a purely western one. Nothing could be further from the truth. The highly developed province of Prince Edward Island is probably not specially interested. The same may also apply to the self-contained Province of Quebec, whose virile, agricultural population is multiplying at a rapid rate, furnishing ample recruits for the development of the vast hinterland and of the very finest pioneer type, used to hard work and following a standard of living in line with the requirements of this arduous task.

Ontario faces a particularly difficult and pressing colonization problem in her northern areas, which so far has never been seriously attacked. At the convention above referred to there was a large delegation from the Maritime Provinces which told in eloquent terms the calamitous story of a century that has befallen that part of the Dominion since Confederation. The drain of population to the United States was referred to. The stagnation of industry, owing to Ontario and Quebec competition, was acknowledged. But there was a deplorable absence of constructive, remedial suggestion. The development of maritime ports and the like would apparently have little or no effect on removing the fundamental causes of distress, nor a clear horizon, openly suggested by many influential men, could materially alter the present unfortunely predicament.

## DECADES FARMING

The real reason for the prostration of the Maritime Provinces lies in the stagnant agriculture. The reduction in crop area between 1901 and 1925 of nearly half a million acres tells an eloquent story, amply explained by a loss of 50,000 in rural population. No other part of Canada can produce so lacking a record, and there is not the least necessity for any further explanation of the existing situation. If the Maritime Provinces could have

England States and staged a great industrial renaissance, all would have emulated the example of the New been well, but for geographical and economic reasons this measure of relief is denied them. The real and only sound remedy lies in an intelligent colonization and agricultural development policy with a complete recognition of the fact that these provinces present a special and difficult problem in colonization which cannot be met by the indiscriminate immigration effort of the past and the present.

## TRANSPORTATION

No country in the world depends so abjectly and completely upon the highest degree of efficiency in transportation as Canada does. Our great exporting area, contributing the bulk of the railway tonnage, lies far inland and presents a unique problem. Canada's whole future development in agriculture and industry will be absolutely limited and controlled by the skill and ingenuity of our transportation leaders and the expedition with which we may succeed in augmenting our population, so as to eliminate the terrible handicap we have created when we embarked on our spectacular railway expansion program some years ago.

Canada has 22,692 miles of railways to serve a pitiful nine million people. In 1900 we had only 17,467 miles of railway. This enormous expansion program, based on the confident expectation that the stream of immigration would continue unabated, or even at a greater rate than prevailed during the earlier years of the present century. In this we have been woefully disappointed. We have today more miles of railway than any other country, except the United States, and more miles per thousand inhabitants than any country on earth. This is very impressive, also very expensive. Our transportation plant is apparently about twice as large as it ought to be, but it will be needed one of these days.

## RESULTS OF RATE CONTROL

Canada now enjoys the lowest freight rates in the world's transportation history. Europeans look upon this creditable achievement with envy and admiration. But our geographical handicaps render such a high standard of efficiency absolutely impracticable. The Canadian public is in intimate business partnership with all its railway systems, whether corporately or publicly owned. The impartial hand of rigid public control rests upon them all, equally and effectively. But this safeguard against excessive rates naturally creates certain unavoidable responsibilities. In point of fact, Canada must either provide a sufficient volume of traffic to yield her railways a satisfactory net return on capital invested, or submit to increased rates. That seems to be the inevitable choice and logical consequence of rate control.

So we cannot apparently afford to regard our transportation problem with any such unconcern. Until such time as increased population more nearly balances our railway facilities, we must pay for the present uneconomic situation either through taxation or through increased carrying charges. Our transportation leaders in their utterances are unanimous in the conclusion, that, having now almost completely exhausted the possibilities in the way of operating economies, further relief must come through a vigorous and successful national immigration policy.

## HERCULEAN TASK

If, for the time being, we are prepared to accept the crude theory that increased population more nearly balances her population in order to reach an economic position where her citizens may be usefully employed and derive the greatest possible reward for their labor, we have before us a definite goal towards which to strive.

The United States contained Canada's present population in 1820 and reached 75 million in 1925, largely by natural increase. There is, however, no longer any possibility of rapid natural increase in Canada today or, for that matter, in any other country of advanced civilization. To bring Canada's population within a reasonably brief period to the level of the highest order statesmanship of the highest order. In summing up the problem before us, we find that it has taken 80 years of natural increase and an immigration effort involving a total population of 50,000,000, in addition to the much larger amount of our railways and other agencies have contributed to add 5,000,000 to our population. In this connection it is interesting to note that our annual immigration has been 18,000 since 1900, over 100,000. In the light of past experience, and the fact that we can no longer offer the strong appeal of the free homesteads and in face of a constantly falling birth rate, it should be fairly obvious to most anyone that the task of adding a possible 5,000,000 people to our present population may well be regarded as one of herculean proportions. It should be abundantly clear that past methods will not secure

such a result within generations. The question for the people of Canada to decide is, whether they are prepared to wait for an untried period before the country is put on an even keel economically. If they are not, they should, with unmistakable emphasis, indicate their wishes in the matter.

## UNPROMISING OUTLOOK

Largely for political reasons the governments of Canada, past and present, have officially adopted an immigration policy solely designed to promoting immigration from the United Kingdom. It must, however, be regretfully conceded, with little success, which causes no surprise whatever to those who possess even a superficial knowledge of conditions there. It is obvious that the effect on migration of the various schemes of social insurance in Great Britain is bound to be disastrous. The security against the fear of unemployment, incapacity due to sickness or death of the provider, etc., afforded by this legislation at once removes any burden due to break away from the home land and face the unknown overseas, where none of these consoling guarantees are available. The psychological effect of this on the laboring classes is clearly recognized in the United Kingdom.

In addition to this we find in Great Britain a very important body of opinion determined to end the present discreditable, agrarian situation there. Lloyd George has recently stated his political future upon a scheme to expropriate and subdivide the great estates and enormously extend the small farm holdings throughout England and Scotland. We will, therefore, in all probability, soon be confronted with a domestic colonization problem in Great Britain with far-reaching consequences to our immigration prospects there. That this will be the most important development in British internal policy admits of no doubt whatever. The agricultural situation there has long been a byword and a reproach in the eyes of the outside world and is centuries behind most advanced European countries. The agricultural population of Great Britain—the world's greatest source of food for the continent—during the last 60 years 4,000,000 acres of arable lands have gone down to grass.

## TWO PERTINENT QUESTIONS

Including gardeners, florists, agricultural machine proprietors and seedsmen, the total rural population of Great Britain is probably not over 4,000,000. A bare 10 per cent of the population. The census statistics do not clearly segregate the bona fide rural population. That of Holland, just across the sea, is also 4,000,000, but it includes over half of the population. England may justly be regarded as one of the most fertile agricultural countries in the world, enjoying an unlimited and remunerative home market. All the conditions are present for spectacular agricultural prosperity. And out of this modest 4,000,000 of more or less fertile inhabitants she has now about to endeavor laboriously to create a real national agriculture.

We in Canada must well ask ourselves two pertinent questions. First, is it patriotic—or is it ethical or even deplorable—to enter away against the strenuous protest of British farmers, any of this pitifully small remnant of rural population? Second, in view of our urgent need of longer term immigration, population in Canada, could any policy be more insane than to focus our entire attention on a country so completely industrialized that its skilled agricultural population consists of only a mere handful of people? These considerations have, of course, no significance whatever in the minds of our Federal immigration leaders. Political expediency and paramount importance and the traditional policy of following the lines of least resistance has its irresistible appeal.

## EXPERT OPINIONS

Where are we to get people for Canada's vacant spaces in the immediate future? Dr. Black, the director of colonization for the National Railways, recently summed the situation up as follows:

"We can't get Germans by any encouragement. The German farmer is enjoying unprecedented prosperity. The Scandinavian and Dutch people, who are so anxious to have, are not easily induced to leave home. In some of these countries it is a punishable crime to make a public speech urging a man to leave his fatherland for citizenship under another flag. In Holland all applicants for emigration must pass before an old army officer whose word in this respect is law. France and Belgium have colonies of their own to accommodate their surplus of population. Indeed, France is today drawing immigrants from other European countries to replace war wastage. That leaves Central Europe as the only recruiting ground."

Colonel Dennis, chief commissioner of colonization for the Canadian Pacific, is, if possible, even more emphatic in his statements regarding the difficulties in the way of considerable Northern and Western European immigration. He also looks to Central and Eastern Europe, where the great human reservoir of the white race is at present located. He sees no hope for

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any satisfactory movement of suitable people from any other quarter. These are the considered views of the two men best qualified to give an intelligent opinion on the subject in Canada. So we must conclude that the days of easy accomplishment in the field of immigration are over. The economic situation in Europe is such that people with capital are no longer available for settlement on our lands in any large numbers. The social revolution in the old European civilizations—for it has been nothing less—has made the lot of the "under dog" vastly better than it ever was in so far as elimination of the fear of the consequences of sickness and unemployment is concerned. Steamship fares have been trebled. Canada must wake up to the uncomfortable fact that to obtain results anywhere near approaching those of former days—and even those must be considered absolutely inadequate in view of our present urgent requirements—it will be necessary to pursue policies vastly different from those of the past and present.

Our doors should, of course, remain wide open to every normal Britisher who wishes to make his home in Canada. We should also welcome acceptable, agricultural settlers from Northern Europe and other preferred countries. But those who are actively engaged in immigration work will tell us, without the slightest hesitation, that when all the available people from these countries have reached our shores, the total will only represent a fraction of Canada's obvious and pressing agricultural requirements. From whence are we to obtain the balance of agricultural settlers we need? This pertinent question has not apparently interested our Department of Immigration.

The sixth article of this series will appear in next Wednesday's issue. ALREADY THERE BY REQUEST FT. LEAVENWORTH, Kan.—The one hundredth anniversary of the outpost which grew into the city of Ft. Leavenworth, will be celebrated within a few months. Plans are already under way to make the celebration a mammoth affair. Invitations will be extended to prominent civic, state and national officials to visit the city during the centennial.

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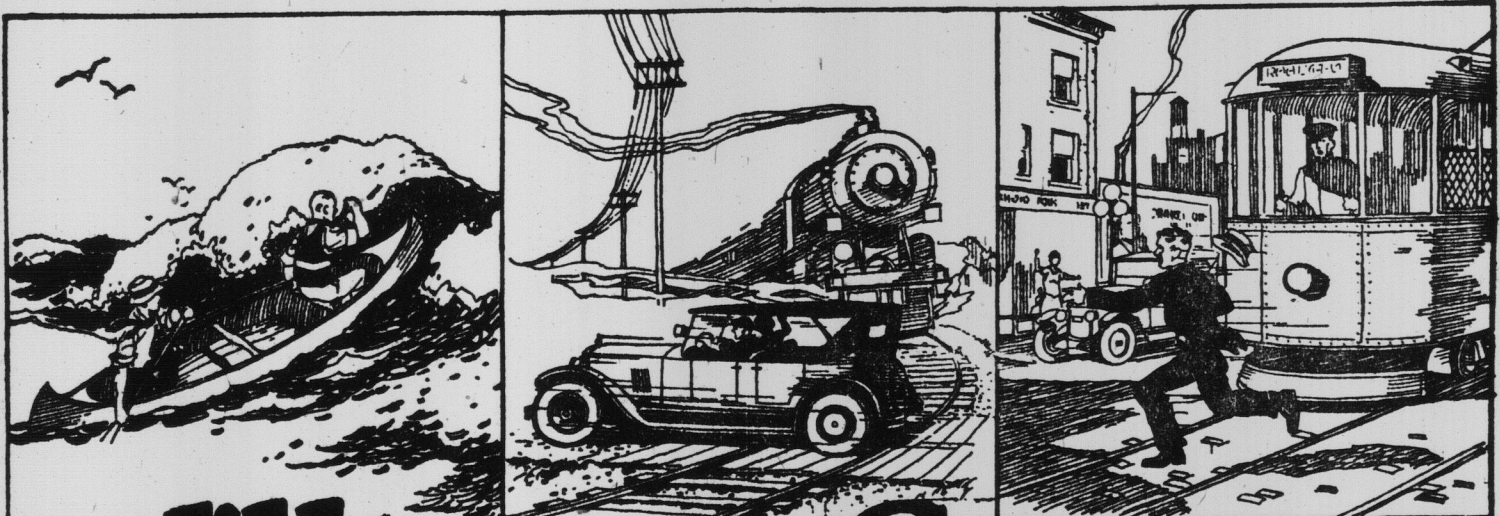
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