

How to Make True Canadians

(By J. S. WOODSWORTH.)

SECOND INSTALMENT.

What can we do to make our foreign immigration into good Canadian citizens?

Each neighborhood has its own peculiar problems, but the following lines of work could be advantageously followed in most communities:

1.—The more adequate protection of the Immigrant from exploitation at the hands of his fellow, countrymen or of Canadians. This involves personal interest, a stiffening of administrative officials and often more adequate legislation.

2.—The promotion of the welfare of the Immigrant:

(a) By the bringing into operation of existing government machinery, e.g., sanitary regulations, the securing of roads and drainage, or the organization of school districts.

(b) By making special public provision for the peculiar needs of the immigrant, e.g., night schools for the teaching of English and Civics to adults.

(c) By organizing, when necessary, private agencies, or establishing private institutions to provide for pressing needs, until such times as the community makes suitable provision, e.g., settlement activities such as classes, clubs, playgrounds, etc., or in rural district boarding schools for children from outlying districts or hospital accommodation in remote settlements.

3.—The interpreting the viewpoint and the ideals of the immigrant to Canadians, and the interpreting of the new Canadian life to the immigrant. A sympathetic understanding is necessary in order that the immigrants may be able to appreciate the best in our civilization, and that we may conserve the contributions which they bring.

The carrying out of such a programme means personal intercourse, community co-operation, systematic promotion and social legislation.

Nothing can take the place of personal friendship. Why not make the effort to meet and become acquainted with some of our newer Canadians. One literary lady of my acquaintance discovered an unworked gold mine in the nursery rhymes of her Ruthenian maid. Language and social customs, of course, are formidable barriers, but even these can be overcome, and indeed in spite of these a medium may be discovered by which soul may touch soul. A most successful worker among our non-English immigrants knew no language but English (and that had a strong Irish accent), but her very presence seemed to inspire confidence and almost intuitively she seemed to know the needs of her foreign friends?

What are the social conditions in the ordinary little prairie "town"? All are strangers from every part of Eastern Canada and the United States, and from every county in England, and often from half the countries of Europe. Each brings his own peculiar ideas and customs, which are often quite foreign to those of all the others. Established social institutions there are none. Opportunities for social intercourse are very infrequent. If it were not for the post office and the general store and the hotel, the men would rarely get together. And as for the women—an occasional funeral is their one "day out." There for once the community is united.

Instead of the parish church there are half a dozen denominational institutions. Sometimes there are three or four church buildings within a block. Each denomination is struggling for an existence. The field is so limited that growth is possible only at the expense of some other denomination. Each pastor jealously watches every aggressive move on the part of the other pastors lest some superior attraction should induce some member of his particular flock to stray into another fold. Religion, instead of being a unifying force, is the most divisive force in the little community.

The business organizations are gradually learning to co-operate and we have local boards of trade on the one hand and farmers' organizations on the other. But these two groups remain "on the one hand" and "on the other," and frequently regard each other with distrust, even though their interests are fundamentally identical. The biggest business of all—that of home-making—is hardly recognized as such.

In matters of public policy the community is almost hopelessly divided along party lines. There are good men and bad men in each party. If the good men—the decent,

thoughtful citizens—in both parties could only get together, they could dominate the situation. But we are rounded up into two opposite camps pledged to party loyalty and bidden to fight over trumped up "issues." The real welfare of the community is sacrificed and the sole beneficiaries are the camp followers. Why not hold frequent public meetings between elections?

The school is perhaps the most distinctively "community" institution we have developed. The children from every home meet on common ground at the school and through the taxes all help to support the school. The pity is that the activities carried on ordinarily are so limited in scope.

Perhaps more than anything else we need in each western town is a community centre — some place where all can get together on common ground. But how is this work to be started and fostered. Conditions have changed rapidly; local initiative is often lacking; established institutions adapt themselves with tantalizing slowness, frequently community apathy and petty jealousies have not yet given way to public spirit and co-operation. Under these circumstances it would seem that there is need of some disinterested agency that can organize, direct and stimulate the resident forces, that lacking such assistance, often remain dormant or ineffective. (Such is one of the objects for which the Canadian Welfare League was formed and which through this organization or some other, must be attained.)

The functions of the State must be extended. If the protection of property justifies "state interference" much more the safeguarding of the welfare of men and women and little children. Our Governments have bonused industry, subsidized steamship lines, and railway companies, and encouraged immigration. Is it too much to ask that the Government care for the worker and the immigrant? Labor Bureaus, Vocational Training, Unemployment Insurance, Regulation of Women's Work, Factory Inspection, Workmen's Compensation, Prohibition of Child Labor, Minimum Wage Legislation. Such measures are in the line of progress.

The problem of the immigrant is inextricably bound up with, and complicates all our social problems. Our industrial development would have involved serious difficulties if our own people alone had been concerned. Add the introduction of armies of European peasants, and the situation becomes acute. The congestion of population in our cities would be bad enough without the cumulative effect of interpenetrating Ghettos, Little Poland, Little Italy and China Towns. Our civic administration and political machinery required modernizing even before the advent of the Ward Boss and political heeler; now reform is absolutely imperative. Our educational ideas and methods, which long ago sorely needed revision, become absolutely grotesque and impracticable and the whole system breaks down under the task of training a heterogeneous population for efficient citizenship.

In Canada we have a Commission of Conservation whose work is to foster the care of our material resources. This is neither a political nor administrative body, yet its influence has already been of great and far-reaching importance—why not extend the work of this commission to include our human resources as well as the resources of our forests and mines and fisheries.

Or a special commission could be appointed charged expressly with the promotion of the welfare of the immigrant. The work of such a commission would be analogous to the work of the Children's Bureau in the United States. It would not decide upon politics nor interfere with the work of the departments, nor trespass upon provincial rights. Its duty would be merely to investigate and report, but the educational value of the facts, effectively presented, can hardly be over-estimated. Some such action as this appears to be a necessary preliminary step in the working out of a rational and wise immigration policy.

The care of our immigrants is at once good business, true patriotism and applied religion.

(Next month will be published another article by Mr. Woodsworth on "The Immigrant Invasion after the War. Are we ready for it?")