

The Assimilation of the Coming People and the Restriction of Immigration

Missionary Topic for November 28

FOREIGNERS in large numbers are in our midst. More are coming. How are we to make them into good Canadian citizens?

First of all, they must in some way be unified. Language, nationality, race, temperament, training, are all dividing walls that must be broken down. Proper distribution may do much. There is a very natural tendency for people of the same nationality to settle in large colonies. We have Mennonite, Doukhobor, Galician and Mormon colonies. Some contain 10,000 people in almost a solid block. Isolated from Canadian people, they are much slower to enter upon Canadian life. Such colonies are really bits of Russia or Austria or Germany transplanted to Canada. Not only are they less open to Canadian ideas, but, closely united, they can control the entire community. The social, the educational, the religious, the political life is dominated by alien ideas. It would seem a wise policy to scatter the foreign communities among the Canadian, in this way facilitating the process of assimilation.

In the cities even worse conditions prevail. Already we have the Chinese quarter and the Jewish or Italian settlements. In the United States this tendency toward segregation is more manifest; within the foreign section everything is foreign. Hunter writes: "To live in one of these foreign communities is actually to live on foreign soil. The thoughts, the feelings and traditions which belong to the mental life of the colony are often entirely alien to an American. The newspapers, the literature, the ideals, the passions, the things which agitate the community, are unknown to us except in fragments."

How are we to break down the walls which separate these foreigners from us? First of all comes the Public School. Too great emphasis cannot be placed upon the work that has been accomplished and may—yes, must—be accomplished by our National Schools. It is most unfortunate that in Canada we have Separate School systems, and, in some provinces, what is worse than a good Separate School system.

In addition to the work among the children, the school boards in several cities have been experimenting in work among adult foreigners. Last winter, in Winnipeg, about four hundred were instructed in English and other branches three nights in the week. The results were very gratifying, and the night school will be permanently established.

It is not in the school, however, but on the street and in the shop that the foreigners acquire their knowledge of Canada. One of the most effective agencies for breaking down national differences is the labor union. Men of all languages and creeds band themselves together to maintain their "rights" against employers. Every strike reveals the strength of trades and labor unions. Few think of the education that has been going on for months between the united cities is possible. Whatever its faults, the union is doing an immense amount in breaking down, at least, certain national prejudices and educating the foreigner to think.

Then the press wields a mighty power. The first English the foreigner reads is the headline in the evening paper. Even before he reads English, the questions of the day are discussed in the papers published in his own language.

Then we have political clubs and organizations. The political parties are not slow to recognize the importance of the foreign vote; we have our Hungarian, Jewish, Syrian and Polish societies and a dozen more. There are discussions and organization and canvassing; how intelligent the discussion, how disinterested the organization, and how clean the canvass is a matter of question.

In this making of Canadian citizens the Churches should take a greater part than they have hitherto done. The language is a difficulty, but business men and politicians readily overcome this difficulty, and why not the Church? The Churches to whom has been granted a vision of the Kingdom of God cannot ignore the presence of such large numbers of foreigners. "Difficult to reach them?" Of course it is, but this is the problem of the Church in Canada.

We must in many ways meet these people half way, seek to sympathize with their difficulties, and to encourage them in every forward movement.

Only those who in the past have taken their place as worthy fellow-citizens should be admitted to our Canadian heritage.

Phillips Brooks has stated the ethics of a policy of restriction: "No nation, as no man, has a right to take possession of a choice bit of God's earth, to exclude the foreigner from its territory, that it may live more comfortably and be a little more at peace. But if to this particular nation there has been given the development of a certain part of God's earth for universal purposes; if the world, in the great march of centuries, is going to be richer for the development of a certain national character, built up by a larger type of manhood here, then for the world's sake, for the sake of every nation that would pour in upon it that which would disturb

that development, we have a right to stand guard over it. We are to develop here in America a type of national character, we believe, for which the world is to be richer always. It may be the last great experiment for God's wandering humanity upon earth. We have a right to stand guard over the conditions of that experiment, letting nothing interfere with it, drawing into it the richness that is to come by the entrance of many men from many nations, and they in sympathy with our constitution and laws."

When it has become necessary in the United States to form an Immigration Restriction League, it is surely high time that we examined closely the character of our immigration, and shut out those whose presence will not inake for the welfare of our national life.

According to our Immigration Act in Canada, provision is made for the appointment of immigration officers, regulations are drawn up for the protection of immigrants, and restrictions are made re-immigration of certain classes.

No one will quarrel with the provisions of this act, but it should go further, and provision should be made for more strict enforcement.

The trouble is that we are working at the wrong end. The examination in every case should be not at the ports of entry, but at the ports from which the immigrants sail—or, better still, at the homes from which they come. Such a course would be at once kinder to the immigrants and much safer for our country. The present mode of deportation is necessarily cruel. Poor people are sent back and forward across the Atlantic, often suffering great hardship; children are torn from their parents and sent back among strangers. A scant living in the old land is sacrificed in the hopes of the fortune in the new land. After failure here comes deportation, but not always the old position at home.

Again, the examination where the people are known is the

Father, we deplore our awkwardness in serving. We so easily do and say and hurt people even when we are trying to help them—or think we are trying. Our lives are so barren because we only talk about love and do not practise it. God forgive our clumsy behaviour that discredits thy gospel instead of recommending it! Make us less unseemly in our ways. We would no longer misrepresent thee, when we are commissioned to reflect thine image and do thy work. How can a weary word be lifted up and brought into fellowship with these, unless thou hast poured larger tides of thy life into it through us? Thou hast called us to this task—Oh, equip us for it and sustain us in it, that thy kingdom may come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, thy name hallowed, and a sad and wicked world be renewed and transformed and blessed forevermore in Jesus Christ.—From "How to Talk With God."

only effective method. Diseased, paupers, criminals, prostitutes and undesirables are generally known in their home neighborhood.

But there is a larger question—the advisability or the justifiability of excluding not merely certain individuals, but certain classes. There is the live question of the Orientals on the Pacific coast. The Chinese, Japanese and Hindus are—or the majority of them are—physically and mentally inferior. They are in no sense paupers or incapable. Indeed, one of the most frequent and serious charges against them is that they are able to drive out other labor. Should they be excluded—if so, on what grounds?

Needless to say, the economic aspects are those that really divide men on this subject, for, generally speaking, capitalists and employers are ranged against the labor party. Perhaps in the early stages of development Chinese labor was necessary. Perhaps for some time the presence of a limited number of Orientals may be advantageous. But it does seem that the exclusionists are right in their contention that laborers, working and living as the Orientals do, will displace European laborers. It is generally agreed that the two races are not likely to "mix."

Ultimately, then, the question resolves itself into the advisability of a white caste and a yellow or black caste existing side by side, or above and below, in the same country. We confess that the idea of a homogeneous people seems in accord with our democratic institutions and conducive to the general welfare.

We in Canada have certain more or less clearly-defined ideals of national well-being. These ideals must never be lost sight of. Non-ideal elements there must be, but they should be capable of assimilation. Essentially non-assimilable elements are clearly detrimental to our highest national development, and hence should be rigorously excluded.—From "Strangers Within Our Gates."