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Immigration to Canada in War Time

THE DOMINION *Has Received 300,000 Immigrants Since the Struggle Commenced—New Population from United Kingdom Naturally has been Small—United States Has Sent Us Many Citizens—What is the Outlook after the War?*

By CHARLES W. STOKES

IN the matter of immigration there is a tendency to allow the possible phenomena of the future to overshadow the *faits accomplis* of the present. It is the most monotonous of bromides to predict an enormous immigration into Canada after the war, sometimes with very superficial consideration of the very complex problems involved, very often as a panacea for all the abnormal circumstances that will demonstrate themselves at the cessation of hostilities, and occasionally as a probable menace to industrial conditions. But what is most often overlooked is that immigration is going on at the same time, and has, indeed, shown a very marked revival.

War, theoretically, should terminate immigration. On one hand is the difficulty of leaving belligerent countries; on the other is the patriotic aversion to seeking material advancement (for that is what immigration means) during a period of national stress. Habituated, as we are in Canada, to considering immigration in the mass, most of us fail to remember its unit origin; or, to put it in other words, the reason why we have immigration at all is because a number of men and women in other countries have, separately and individually, resolved to seek their fortunes here. There is every theoretical argument why this class should disappear during the war; but the fact remains that social dissatisfaction, as expressed in the process of emigration, has not been stifled, even in the clash of arms.

Whether or not the result is in the best national interests of the various countries concerned is a matter for debate, but it is still remarkable that Canada, during the three years and more that it has been at war, has received about three hundred thousand immigrants, and that the last fiscal year witnessed a 50 per cent. increase over the previous year.

War, in fact, has failed to stop immigration. True, it has greatly reduced its volume; but, as a compensation, it has improved its quality. Instead of the 402,000 immigrants who entered Canada during the fiscal year 1912-13, only 75,374 entered in the year 1916-17; but there was an evident difference in the composition of the immigrating class. Instead of the four hundred thousand assorted human beings who clamored at our gates, of every nationality, trade, and condition of life, physique and mentality, we had last year seventy-five thousand who exhibited their faith in Canada by braving the dangers of reaching it, and—in the case of American immigrants, for the United States was not then at war—by leaving the haven of neutrality for the uncertainties of a country at war.

An organized campaign of mendacity, it must not be forgotten, was conducted by unseen interests in the United States previous to the entry of that country into the Allied ranks with the object of preventing American migration into Canada. It took the form, generally, of the dissemination of "reports," chronicling the imposition of heavy war taxes, the confiscation of land, the conscription of Americans, and the oppression of neutrals not openly sympathetic with the Allies.

There is a great amount of credit due to the two hundred thousand sturdy Americans who refused to accept such puerile detraction, and, between August, 1914, and April, 1917, crossed the border to make their homes on belligerent soil.

War eliminated the curiosity seekers and revealed the really serious in intent, thereby purifying immigration of much that was inimical to progress, but was difficult to avoid without recourse to absolute mandatory prohibition. With the exception of 1915-16 (48,537 immigrants) immigration in 1916-17 was the smallest since 1903; but, nevertheless, it comprised 22,715 farmers, a percentage of 30. In 1912-13 the percentage was 28—only 2 per cent. difference, it is true, but sufficiently encouraging in a change that takes years to accomplish. In 1916-17, only 31,440 declared their occupations as being general laborers, mechanics or clerks as against 218,582 in 1912-13—42 per cent. against 54 per cent. An upward tendency manifested itself, even in the westernization of immigrants. In 1916-17, 27,539 (37 per cent.) stated upon arrival, or showed railroad transportation proving, their destination as the prairie provinces, against 137,033 (34 per cent.) in 1912-13. It is the prairie provinces that need the immigrant, not the East, and to see him on his way there instead of being stranded in Montreal or Toronto is not the least remarkable happening of the present unusual condition.

As would have been expected, British immigration has been very small in volume. The following table shows the decline from the bumper year, 1912-13. It is a little misleading, perhaps, in regard to the first year of war, owing to the fact that, the fiscal year beginning April 1st, the major part of the immigration season—the spring and early summer months—is not separated from the period of collapse from August 1st; but it will illustrate how the war has reduced British immigration to the lowest since 1899:—

Year ending.	Total.	British.	American.
March 31st.			
1913	402,432	150,542	139,009
1914	384,878	142,622	107,530
1915	144,780	43,276	59,770
1916	48,537	8,664	36,937
1917	75,374	8,282	61,380

Of the British immigrants in the last year, 1,803 declared their occupations as agricultural; of the Americans, 20,822. Of the other nationalities, the greatest immigrant class has been Newfoundlanders (1,243) and Italians (758). To bring these figures down to date, to illustrate the marked revival in American immigration, it can be added that during the first ten months of 1917, 33,134 United States immigrants entered western Canada—an immigrant being a person who states his intention of living permanently in a country—bringing with them \$4,932,190 in cash and \$1,488,898 in effects. These totals are more than double those of the same period of 1916 and nearly four times those of the same period of 1915.