

## Open Letter to Sir Thomas White, Acting Prime Minister of Canada.

8 University Crescent,

Toronto, 1st May, 1919.

Sir,—

I desire to appeal to the high-minded public of Canada to prevent, as they can, if they will, the perpetration of what appears to me to be a monstrous national crime. It is well known that between 7,000 and 8,000 Doukhobors emigrated from Russia in 1899. The oppression they endured from the Government there was well known and they applied to be allowed to come to this country. They made two conditions, both of which were accepted by the Minister of the Interior of the time. The first of these conditions—exemption from military service—was embodied in an Order-in-Council. The second condition—freedom to settle in villages—was as fully accepted, although it was not embodied in so formal a document. When they came the people were received with open arms. The immigration was the largest which had ever come to Canada in one mass. The fame of Canada as the refuge of the unfortunate was spread and even trumpeted throughout the world. Other circumstances, no doubt conspired, but the Doukhobor immigration represented the beginning of a great movement from Europe which was looked upon at the time as of the utmost importance in building up this country. The European immigrants built the railways in the North-west and contributed enormously to the increase of production. Had this immigration not taken place it is doubtful if the North-west would now have been in the economical position in which it finds itself.

Whether the disturbance to their village and family life due to the frequent harassing conduct of the Russian Government affected their minds or not, it is the fact that for some years before and for some years after their arrival in Canada, the Doukhobors were subject to outbreaks of religious fanaticism. These outbreaks did not, however, affect more than from one-fifth to one-quarter of the people and in no case were the outbreaks of long duration. There have been no outbreaks for several years.

When the arrangements were being made about their settlement, I was invited by the Department of the Interior to make some suggestions; and I suggested that the land allotted to the Doukhobors should be on the outer limit of what was considered by the Government surveyors, at that time, as suitable for practicable settlement. I pointed out that the fact of their being a "hard knot" in a country otherwise occupied by farmers cultivating individually, would not be so inconvenient as it might be if the settlement were in the heart of the country, and that the area intervening between the existing settlements and the Doukhobor lands would fill up all the more