

PLUMPT

NATION BUILDING

BY

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Reprinted from "The University Magazine."
February, 1917

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“LAST century made the world a neighbourhood; this century must make it a brotherhood.” During the last century we entered upon the era ushered in by what has been termed the “Industrial Revolution.” Narrow neighbourhood boundaries were broken down. Trade was no longer confined to the village or the market-town. Manufactured goods were sent across the seas, and, in return, products were imported from the ends of the earth. The community circle was enlarged. Men no longer thought of themselves as belonging to the parish or county but as members of the nation or the empire. Large groups of colonists migrated to distant lands and even transferred their allegiance to nations hitherto foreign or even hostile. Our poets and reformers had begun to dream of “the Parliament of Man; the Federation of the World.”

Then came the war. The nations had been drawn into a world neighbourhood before they had learned the principles or caught the spirit of international brotherhood. Whatever the issue of the war, we cannot retreat to an isolated life within the boundaries of a contracted community circle. We cannot re-erect the narrow neighbourhood boundaries. We are citizens of the world and must face the problem of world organization. If the world is not again to be plunged into war, this world organization must be worked out on the principles of justice and in the spirit of love. Permanent peace can come only through the development of good-will.

Here then is our task. In this world-task Canada, though one of the youngest of the nations, may be destined to take no unimportant part. Canada, as one of the sisterhood of nations which form the British Empire, has already world-wide interests. As a country in which two races have for a century lived side by side, she has received a discipline in tolerance

that ought to fit her for the larger and more difficult duties that now confront her. As one of the great American democracies, she must attempt the unification of the diverse peoples who are filling in the vast unoccupied territories of the New World. Canada with her heterogeneous population is a sort of microcosm. Canadian problems are epitomized world problems—hence their difficulty and their importance.

Fifteen years ago, the Dominion had a population of only five million souls. Of that population, only some three millions were of British origin. During the fifteen years there has been an immigration of over three millions, so that for every Canadian of British origin who was here fifteen years ago there is now an immigrant.

Of the 3,000,000 immigrants 38% were British—largely English; 35% were Americans—a mixed group containing many of Scandinavian and German origin; the remaining 27% were non-English speaking—a medley of peoples from every country in Europe as well as from some countries in Asia.

In the formative period of their history, the United States had no such flood of immigration as this. At the beginning of last century the United States with a population of 5,000,000 received during the first decade only about 70,000 immigrants. At the beginning of this century, Canada with a population of 5,000,000 received during the first decade some 2,000,000 immigrants or twenty-eight times as many as the United States during the corresponding period. Further, up till 1869, less than 1% of the immigrants to the United States came from South-Eastern Europe. Of the recent immigration to Canada almost one-quarter is from South-Eastern Europe.

Before the English and French in Canada had become thoroughly unified, a great wedge of foreigners has been driven into our community life. Race animosities, religious prejudices, language jealousies and social cleavages are already forcing us to realize something of the delicacy, the complexity and the difficulty of the problems which face us.

Ruthenian peasants just emerging from serfdom; Russian Doukhobors bent on maintaining their community life and ideals; sturdy Scandinavians from the remote valleys of Iceland or the quiet hamlets of Sweden; colonies of German Mennonites trekking from the Russian mirs in another effort to obtain religious freedom; Italians and Greeks from their sunny valleys and vine-clad slopes; Jews seeking to escape the persecution and disabilities under which they labour in the Old World; Mormons gathered up from two continents and welded together in Utah; Chinese, Japanese, Hindus—and a score more strange groups are being “dumped,” so to speak, into our Canadian communities and left to sort themselves as best they may.

What will be the outcome of this intermingling of races, languages, religions, and customs? How far shall we blend? Which element will predominate? Surely these are important questions for the eugenist, the ethnologist, the statesman, the sociologist, the churchman and not least of all, for the ordinary Canadian citizen and his children.

The coming of the immigrant has intensified and complicated the serious problems that would in any case have had to be solved in a young and developing country. Conditions in Canada are not static. Institutions have not yet been firmly established. The rapid expansion of business, the extensive construction work, the enormous influx of capital, the wild speculation, are all closely related to the immigration problem.

The shifting of the population from the rural districts to the cities, with the consequent danger of the creation of congested areas, called for wise and vigorous action. When thousands of immigrants from the slum districts of London and Liverpool, reinforced by hordes of European peasants, crowded into the poorer districts of our ill-planned and inefficiently administered cities, the situation, both from the sanitary and the moral standpoint, became intolerable.

The transition from the agricultural to the industrial stage has not been easy in any country. The presence of

hundreds of thousands of newly arrived immigrants—the majority of them men in the prime of life—each in his anxiety to get a start in the new land willing to put up with any conditions however unfavourable, or to accept any wages however low, has made it extremely difficult to secure proper industrial standards. Sanitation, housing, safety, hours of labour, regularity of employment, industrial insurance and similar matters which are now acknowledged to be essential to the general welfare, have received scant consideration in Canada.

The “rural problem”—the overcoming of the isolation of rural life, the provision of greater social opportunities, the general adoption of the principles of scientific farming, the organization of co-operative enterprises, the adjustment of the agricultural industry to the demands of the modern commercial world, the re-direction of education—this many-sided and far-reaching problem becomes very formidable indeed when the country is being settled by newcomers who have not even a common language.

The establishment of sound and suitable public institutions, the development of high political ideals and a “social conscience” would not have been easy in a country which consisted of scattered communities of people trained in individualistic habits of thought and activity. The presence of alien and unassimilated elements has aggravated the difficulty and tended to retard the development of a sense of community fellowship, or corporate responsibility, and of devotion to a social ideal. The general indifference to the conduct of public affairs, the lack of adequate means for the expression of disinterested public opinion, the difficulty of united action, has afforded an opportunity for the baser elements in our public life to gain a position of influence that has degraded the public life and service of Canada.

Undoubtedly the immigrant has thus helped to create our problems—as, it should not be forgotten, he has helped to create our wealth. It is not so clearly realized that the immigrant must help to solve these problems and may indeed take a foremost place in the bringing in of the better day.

The immigrants bring greater assets than we sometimes realize. Many of them have small financial resources but they are endowed with a capacity for patient industry. Not a few of them have skill and training in various crafts and show boundless ambition.

The members of each nationality bring with them a rich and varied culture. Many a peasant, clad in sheep skins, possesses artistic abilities of no mean order. Our literature, our music and our art, let it not be forgotten, we owe largely to Europe. The immigrant comes to enrich and re-vitalize our cherished store.

Further, the immigrants are imbued with a reverence and a patriotism which we need in this new and commercialized country of ours. Through the centuries they have struggled for the liberty which we have largely inherited. They have kept alight the fires which in our materialistic American civilization burn but feebly. Perchance the immigrant has come to reinforce some of those institutions which were in danger. His coming is undoubtedly compelling us to make deeper and broader the foundations of our national life.

The problem after all is possibly not so much the problem of the immigrant as the problem of the Canadian.

There is a danger that the immigrants may accept the lower rather than the higher things in our Canadian life. The immigrants as a rule come into contact with our least worthy institutions. They meet Canadians who, to say the least, are far from representing Canadian ideals. Canada, it must be remembered, is for the majority of the immigrants nothing more than the factory, the low-grade lodging house, the cheap show, and a narrowly restricted circle of interests.

In the case of the children of the immigrants there is an added danger which is not generally recognized. The boys and girls, catching the prevailing attitude of contempt for "foreigners," come to despise their foreign-born parents. They fail to appreciate their excellent qualities. As far as possible they withdraw from and repudiate everything not Canadian—as they know Canada.

Just here is the tragedy of many an immigrant household. Here is the beginning of that irresponsible and unguided life that so frequently ends disastrously. We in our ignorance have done little to help. Too often our "Canadianizing" efforts have contributed directly to the undermining of the foundations on which alone true character is built. Destroy filial respect and reverence and love of the homeland, and what have we to work on?

We have in practice taken for granted that our standards were the only and final standards. If the immigrant has not in all points measured up to our standards we have considered him as an inferior. We have then attempted either somewhat arrogantly to assert our own superiority or set about with missionary zeal to make him conform to our type.

Some of the immigrants have been more concerned in making homes than in making money and we have called them unambitious. Some have given considerable time to participating in musical and dramatic performances and we have called them shiftless and lazy. Some have clung to the religion of their fathers and to the associations of the homeland and we have called them superstitious and unpatriotic. Some have wished their children to retain a knowledge of their mother tongue and we have denounced them as reactionary and un-British.

This attitude, which has too frequently characterized the patriotic and religious efforts which we have made on behalf of the immigrant, accounts in no small measure for our failures. Let those who set out to "Canadianize and Christianize" the immigrants remember that there is room for other and perhaps higher Canadian types than those which predominate either on our streets or in our houses of parliament; that there is reason, too, for other types of Christianity than those which prevail in Canada in this year of our Lord nineteen hundred and seventeen.

"God has many bests" as a wise teacher once put the truth which we are emphasizing. In the garden of Allah grow many varieties of flowers—each perfect after its kind. All

cannot be judged according to one standard. If ever we in Canada attain a national ideal, it must be big enough—Catholic enough—to give a place to the highest and best which each class of immigrant brings to this country.

More than missionaries we need interpreters—those who can mediate between the Canadian and the newcomer, who can present to the newcomer in an attractive light the best which we have developed in our social and national life and can, on the other hand, sympathetically present to the Canadian the needs and possibilities of those who are casting in their lot with us.

In our nation-building, plenty of good material lies ready to hand. We need the wise master-builders who, understanding the value of each class of material, can fit each piece into its place in the ever enlarging structure.

Of the forces that are moulding the immigrant the unorganized and undirected are probably the most potent. In his daily work the immigrant is influenced by "the boss," by his fellow-workmen and by the conditions under which he must live and labour. In his free time the immigrant receives his education on the streets, in the moving picture shows, at the dance-hall or in other places of amusement. His training in citizenship comes largely through his contact with the police and with the political agents who at election times are sent to solicit his vote.

The organized and directed forces which are working for the welfare of the immigrant are entirely inadequate. In some places night classes in English are provided by volunteer efforts, in a few cities by the School Boards. Technical classes are open in the larger cities. Instruction in civics is not yet commonly given, either to children or adults. Libraries in the language of the immigrant and educational pictures are provided in perhaps three or four cities in Canada. The churches have as yet failed to meet the situation. Those to which the immigrants belong cannot adequately cover the whole territory, and as they have not adapted themselves to the New World ideals, frequently lose their hold upon their

adherents, especially the younger generation. The Canadian churches, even when they are altruistic in their work, meet with prejudice and opposition.

Probably the most effective work among our foreign immigrants has been done by the public schools, institutional churches, Young Men's Christian Associations, the social settlements and other agencies which have worked along broad social lines.

Immigrant communities as found in industrial camps, in the rural districts of the prairie provinces and in our larger cities constitute three fairly distinct classes. In the methods adopted in the successful experiments in each of these fields, we can, nevertheless, trace the same general principles of work.

Large numbers of newly arrived immigrants are employed in more or less isolated industrial camps. Here they are largely separated from the institutions and influences of stable civilized life. In the cities, under competent leadership, the State can in time be induced to provide educational and social opportunities, but in these semi-civilized communities there is no body of public opinion behind the man who is heroic enough to "tackle the job." Drunkenness, gambling, immorality and lawlessness are as yet prevalent. In some of the mining camps efforts have been made by the local churches to establish institutional work. The difficulty is that these efforts are so poorly supported and so pitifully inadequate. In these neglected and socially unorganized districts, if anywhere, the churches should lead the way in the establishment of institutional agencies. Such conditions call for capable, well-equipped men, not for a succession of inexperienced students.

In the railroad and lumber camps a most interesting work is being carried on by the Reading Camp Association. University students are sent out during their summer holidays. They work side by side with the men during the day. Then in the evening they preside over a reading room, conduct classes in English, write letters for the men and, as far as possible, provide for some of the most pressing social needs. Unfortunately, since they are absolutely dependent upon the courtesy

of the companies these students are often unable to do anything to remedy some of the worst evils with which the men must contend. It would seem as if there is a line of work here which should be greatly extended and supported by public funds and public authority.

The outstanding need of our rural communities is recognized to be that of better organization. The physical isolation of the farmer has given him no training in co-operative effort. Numerous institutions and societies exist in every community, but these work more or less independently and are self-centred rather than "community centred." No state church having been established, there exists no parish machinery for initiating and maintaining those activities which provide for the higher needs of the community. Each religious denomination has planned and carried on its work with little regard to the work of other denominations.

In the newer districts settlement has been so recent and the settlers are so diverse in character that a normal social life has not yet had time to develop. There are often not enough people of any one nationality to form a group for social intercourse or religious fellowship. If groups are formed the groups are mutually exclusive if not antagonistic. The problem is how to unify our rural communities.

Probably the best work is that which centres about the public school—frequently the only neutral, common meeting place in the district.

The work, for example, carried on in Teulon, Manitoba, is very suggestive of what might be accomplished by well organized effort. Teulon, a few years ago, seemed a most unlikely place for the development of any progressive experiment. It was a dreary little village situated some forty miles north of Winnipeg in rough scrub country. To the north extended backward Ruthenian colonies occupying what might be termed swamp land.

Into this village, a few years ago, went two men of vision and ability—a medical missionary and a school teacher. Now the whole district is changed. There is a good consolidated

school which draws its students from the surrounding districts. Boarding homes are provided for those who live at too great a distance to be driven to school. The school is adapting its curriculum to the needs of the district and the children are being instructed in manual work, gardening, farming and housekeeping. Some of the "foreign" children are being specially trained so that they may go as school teachers to the remote non-English communities.

A small hospital provides for the physical needs of the people, and the missionary doctor is in addition doing a broad work not unlike the well-known work of Dr. Grenfell of Labrador.

Steps are now being taken to establish in close connection with the school a demonstration farm that will bring agricultural training to the very doors of the settlers and lead to a great economic advance.

A Social Service Club maintains various activities, among the most popular of which is a natural history club.

Surely a story like this is a challenge to our Canadian young men. Through such efforts as these our country life will be redeemed.

In the cities the tendency is for the various immigrant groups to be more or less segregated according to nationality. They frequently occupy the least desirable districts, either in the slum areas or on the outskirts of the city. Housing and sanitary conditions are usually deplorable. In the winter there is much overcrowding and unemployment. There are, as a rule, fewer opportunities for the development of a high type of social life than in other parts of the city. Sometimes the larger colonies develop their own social institutions and then there is a distinct alien community within the larger Canadian community. Not infrequently the helpless foreign district becomes the resort of the lowest classes in the city and the preserve of the corrupt politician.

If better-class Canadians venture into the district it is in the role of "uplifters." They come as outsiders to impose their particular brand of religion or patriotism or social

institutions upon an alien community. Obviously the real need here is for the breaking down of the separating walls, for the establishment of a better understanding and for the provision of those social opportunities of which these newcomers are now deprived.

It is in meeting these needs that the Social Settlement has done its best work. It has not only opened the door to a richer life but it has been a veritable House of the Interpreter. It has succeeded where the mission has failed—not because it left religion out of its programme, but because its religion found expression in other than credal or ceremonial or ecclesiastical forms. In trying to discover points of contact the views of the social workers have been broadened and their faith deepened until they have become able to touch the lives of their neighbours. The ultimate religion must surely be universal in its appeal.

Gradually many of the activities of the settlement are being carried on by the public school, and the school building is coming to be recognized as the "Social-Centre." This is as it should be; but in its widened social programme the school must not forget the spirit of the Settlement. Elaborate equipment and organization is valueless without the presence of broad-minded, large-souled men and women. The work of the interpreter can never be delegated to mere hirelings.

In line with the work of the Social Settlement is that of the People's Forum. An account of the Forum in North Winnipeg may perhaps best illustrate the possibilities of such an institution. In connection with the work of All People's Mission, an effort had been made to help the various classes in the community. Kindergartens were provided for the younger children, gymnasia and classes and clubs for the boys and girls, and mothers' meetings and councils for the women. The needs of the men remained unmet. It was therefore decided to experiment with an open forum. This, from the first, was placed under the control of a committee representing the various sections of the community.

After six years of successful work the Forum is now a well-established and highly valued institution. It has become entirely independent and is incorporated under Provincial Statute. For the past three seasons the meetings have been held in the auditorium of St. John's Technical Institute which is granted rent free by the City School Board.

The People's Forum aims to provide opportunities for the discussion of civic and social questions by citizens irrespective of nationality or creed, to popularize science and art by arranging for lectures and addresses, illustrated whenever possible by lantern views, and to provide good music, especially by encouraging the musical talent latent in our diverse population.

The Forum breaks down the artificial barriers that so seriously divide our communities. It takes people out of their own little circles. It broadens their interests and makes them sympathetic toward those who hold views different from their own. It helps to create a common interest, to develop a community spirit and thus to prepare the way for a more disinterested and efficient citizenship.

The Forum proper—around which are developing other activities—is conducted on Sunday afternoons from three to five o'clock. After a presentation of the subject by one or more speakers there is an opportunity given for questions and, later, for discussion. The subjects discussed cover a wide range, including anything relating to civic or social welfare. An illustrated scientific lecture is given about once a month. The programme usually includes one or two musical items. As many as fifteen different "foreign" musical organizations have assisted in a single season.

Christmas Sunday is usually observed as Peace Day and New Year's Sunday as International Day. This practice has been maintained even during the war, and these meetings are perhaps most typical of the work and spirit of the Forum. Last year the theme on the first of these days was "Factors *which have made the World a Neighbourhood.*" Addresses were given on "Commerce and Industry" by a labour member

of the Local House; on "Literature and Art" by a Russian Jewess; on "Migration and Travel" by the first Ruthenian to be elected in Canada to a Legislative Assembly; and on "Science" by a public school principal. The theme on the following Sunday was "Factors *which will make the World a Brotherhood.*" Addresses were given on "International Law" by a well-known barrister; on "Freedom of Trade" by an Independent Progressive Member of the Local House; and on "Social Ideals" by a leading member of the Polish Society, "Oswiata." The music was contributed by the Ukrainian Choirs, Ivan Kotlarewski and Maria Zankowetski.

Surely such community gatherings week after week must have far-reaching effects.

From every side of the question we are driven to a recognition of the need for a constructive immigration policy. We have a Federal Commission on the conservation of our natural resources. Who will deny that the care of the immigrant is of sufficient importance to demand the continuous study of a group of experts?

The problem must be attacked all along the line. There must be an extension of State activity. We profess to be afraid of "paternalism" yet we have, through the tariff, bonused industry; we have subsidized railway and steamship companies; we have encouraged immigration. Why then should we hesitate to safeguard the interests of the worker or provide for the needs of the immigrant?

We must stand guard at our gates. In the past numbers of undesirable immigrants have been permitted to enter Canada. We have every right to rigidly exclude those who would lower our standards. It may be necessary to apply this policy in the case of certain groups or nations. It is ultimately in the best interests of all that the welfare of the Canadian people should be the deciding factor in determining Canadian policies.

We must maintain certain minimum standards with regard to health, housing, wages and conditions of living and labour. Such standards would probably serve, as one writer has suggested, as an effective "immigrant tariff."

But the State must be prepared to go still further. The lack of organization and public control in industry has meant unemployment, poverty and crime. Labour bureaus and industrial insurance are but the first steps in a necessary programme of social legislation and reform.

Canada, which is essentially an agricultural country, must adopt a policy of land settlement which will enable our immigrants to settle and remain in the rural districts instead of crowding into the cities. In the case of European immigrants, at least, some form of the village system might with advantage replace the present checker-board system of one hundred and sixty acre homesteads. Such a scheme, which would involve the provision of financial assistance and expert advice, could be easily financed by a tax on the unused lands which now so seriously retard community development.

Along these lines the immigrant would be most effectively protected against the exploitation to which he is now subjected by employment agents, machine agents, real estate agents, and the scores of other parasites that batten on his ignorance of conditions in the new land.

Our schools must accept wider responsibilities. They must educate all prospective citizens—immigrant adults as well as Canadian-born children. They must adopt curricula which are closely related to the past, present and future life of the child. They must give a definite training in citizenship. They must extend their functions, providing, in the cities, for a wider social life and, in the rural districts, becoming centres for the entire life of the community.

Our universities ought to provide trained leadership. Opportunities should be given to every undergraduate to obtain an intelligent knowledge of our outstanding Canadian problems. Special courses should be offered that would give men and women a professional training for public service and social work.

The patriotic organizations must not attempt to make of the immigrants Canadians after our own pattern, but rather

to mediate between the old life and the new and to express emerging Canadian ideals.

The voluntary agencies must become more intelligent, more sympathetic, more disinterested. The churches must learn not to be ministered unto but to minister.

We need a new conception of citizenship, possibly a new conception of religion. More than all, we need men of vision who can point us the way and men of devotion whom we can follow.

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