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CANADA AND THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ORGANIZATION

Based on an address delivered by Mr. Hector Allard, Chief of Mission (Canada) of the International Refugee Organization, at a Meeting of the Joint Planning Commission of the Canadian Association for Adult Education, in Ottawa, on November 15, 1949.

...I am expected to speak to you about the impact on Canadian organizations of the arrival of displaced persons into Canada. It will be impossible in one short address to cover all aspects of this vast subject because the problem of making a good citizen of a newcomer without making this new citizen lose his personality is a delicate one and one which would require not one but a series of lectures. I will, therefore, have to dwell in generalities, but if you will bear with me I shall do my best to be brief and will attempt to give you my own views on the problem which Canadian organizations have to face and, with your permission, indicate perhaps some general approach to this problem, keeping in mind that the sooner the newcomers can be made to feel at home in this country the easier the task will become and the richer Canada will be.

It is, I presume, commonplace to state before this gathering that almost all immigrants arriving in a new country are in need of some kind of help and the fullest possible co-operation of all federal, provincial or voluntary social services is, therefore, absolutely essential if the integration of the newcomers into the life of the community is to be accomplished within a reasonable period of time.

What is said about immigrants generally applies more particularly to displaced persons, innocent victims of the last world conflict, who have suffered persecution both mental and physical and are, consequently, beset with a number of complexes. These complexes are many and, in order to deal with them adequately, they must be analysed and fully understood. At this point you will no doubt want to know something about the displaced persons who have so far arrived in Canada.

The more important national groups which have come to this country under the mandate of the International Refugee Organization since 1947 are already represented in Canada, and, consequently, will not be new to you. In the order of importance of their numbers they are Poles, Balts, (Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians), Ukrainians, Yugoslavs and representatives of a score of other nationalities. About one quarter of the total of the displaced persons were Jews, 35 per cent Roman Catholics, 7 per cent Greek Catholics, 14 per cent Greek Orthodox, 14 per cent Protestants, and 5 per cent fell under various other denominations.

Canada's contribution to the solution of the displaced persons problem has been second to none and the co-operation which the I.R.O. Mission in Canada has received from the Canadian

Government and the Federal Departments mostly concerned - Mines and Resources and Labour, and particularly the Deputy Ministers - without forgetting my own Department, has been unique. No praise would be worthy of their untiring efforts in connection with the fulfilment of the task assigned by Geneva Headquarters to the Canadian Mission. Let facts speak for themselves.

The original commitment made by the Canadian Government was to admit 5,000 displaced persons. Up to the end of October, 1949, the number of displaced persons who have been admitted into Canada and who have been brought forward either by the I.G.C.R.^A or I.R.O. are as follows:

1)	Worker's scheme-bulk labour	-	40,019
11)	Nominated scheme	-	24,596
111)	Worker's dependents	-	5,877
1V)	Individual migrants	-	<u>1,173</u>

Total: -- 71,665

The Immigration policy of the Government of Canada in respect to displaced persons, is regulated by the nomination of relatives by Canadian residents or former displaced persons and, in general, by meeting the occupational needs of individual or group employers.^{AA}

So far, most of the displaced persons who have come forward have been manual workers, as they had to comply with existing immigration requirements. We are now coming to the point where we have to deal more and more with family units and with a particularly hard problem to solve - that of the "hard core".

The "hard core" is made up of:

- a) Intellectuals,
- b) Persons too old to earn a living,
- c) Persons medically unfit,
- d) Uneconomical groups i.e. families with many children.

The booklet which is being distributed to you, "The Forgotten Elite" tells the tragic story of intellectuals and professionals. We have recently launched a scheme to bring 500 of these specialists through Rotary Clubs. This has been made possible by the broad interpretation of immigration regulations by the Deputy Minister and the Minister of Mines and Resources. The International Student Service has also made it possible for some 25 displaced person students to attend Canadian Universities and we earnestly hope that

A Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees

^{AAV} The total number of displaced persons admitted to Canada for the period ending November 30, 1949, was 90,253. This includes the displaced persons brought forward under the International Refugee Organization and those brought forward who are not under the mandate of that Organization. Of the above total 47,696 were admitted to Canada on the applications of their first-degree relatives in this country. A total of 41,330 were brought forward under the various group movements of displaced persons to Canada. Included in this figure were over 3,000 dependents of garment workers, furriers, foundry workers, and handicraft workers who accompanied the head of the family. Also included were a number of farm family groups consisting of the head of the family and his dependents.

these students can be assisted to remain in Canada and that more will be brought forward by this Organization.

The C.C.R.U. - The Canadian Committee for Reconstruction through UNESCO - which is doing very laudible work in granting scholarships and fellowships to specially selected students of Western Europe to come and study at Canadian Universities and to return to their respective countries as messengers of good will, is doing excellent work. It is hoped that their terms of reference may be broadened to help displaced person specialists to get fellowships which will enable them to resettle in Canada.

Coming back for a minute to the Rotary scheme, it was felt that the International Refugee Organization should work through a well established and well organized service club organization in Canada, and if any of you should know of possible openings for any of the various specialists whose professions are listed at the end of "The Forgotten Elite", I am sure that you can arrange with a Rotary Club or a member of a Rotary Club to sponsor such a person. The procedure to be followed is given in the leaflet which accompanies the booklet.

These displaced persons come from countries where they worked extremely hard, on the land, in the factories and in professional and commercial enterprises. The fact that they have suffered under totalitarian rule has made of them a group of freedom loving people and convinced enemies of totalitarianism of any kind. Their arrival amongst various ethnic groups, if properly followed up, would in this connection, be of great importance. While they intensely dislike anything that smacks of totalitarianism and are, therefore, ready disciples of democracy, Canadian democracy is something which has to be not only explained to them by lectures, but democracy in action in daily life in a Canadian way will have to be shown to them; and its merits will, we hope, soon be impressed upon these future Canadian citizens.

In lending a helping hand to newcomers I should like to stress the importance of being patient, and would ask for a great deal of patience coupled with sympathetic understanding and tolerance towards displaced persons. They are human beings who have lost all of their worldly possessions. They have, in many cases, lost many members of their families and their homes and countries. In spite of all this they are resolved to make a sincere new start in life; but to accomplish this they must, to a great extent, rely on your help and understanding.

In all walks of life, let them be workers or intellectuals, their way of thinking may be different from ours. They come from countries with many centuries of traditions and culture and the contribution they can make in this respect to our Canadian way of life should not be passed over lightly; on the contrary, it should be welcomed. If we wish, therefore, to assist them to achieve happiness, for which all human beings have a natural craving, they should be welcomed with open arms, and we should do for them what we would like to have done to ourselves if we were in the same position. Further, we should be prepared to give this welcome without any expectation of even gratitude, as Canadian organizations should for their own sake, that is for the sake of Canada, give and expect nothing immediate in return except for the eventual gratification of having helped human beings to become an integrated part of this country by having assisted them to develop into good Canadian citizens.

What is being done by Canada to achieve this, i.e. to help the newcomers become part of the Canadian family, you no doubt know better than I do, but it might be useful to review the excellent organizations - federal, provincial or otherwise - which have been set up to this end. Beginning with the federal organizations, I might mention the work of the Settlement Service of the Immigration Branch, of the National Employment Service of the Department of Labour, and of the Citizenship Branch of the Secretary of State's Office. These three federal services prepare the initial welcome of the newcomers. In close co-operation with the Canadian Citizenship Council a limited list of materials has been carefully selected which is to be placed in transit camps for displaced persons who have been given visas for Canada and, also, on board the ships which will bring them to this country.

....The first need of displaced persons is housing and employment. This in most cases, as mentioned before, is supplied by the conditions of entry and, in this connection, the work of the Immigration Branch and of the National Employment Service is to be highly applauded. As soon as the displaced persons are landed at a Canadian port of disembarkation, the financial responsibilities of the International Refugee Organization come to an end. The displaced persons are met by representatives of the Department of Labour in the case of Labour groups. Sponsored cases are met by Port Officers of the International Refugee Organization, who supply them with rail transportation to their final points of destination in Canada together with a certain amount of subsistence money - a per diem basis. The Travellers' Aid Society, the Red Cross and various other church organizations meet displaced persons either at the boat or at centers such as Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg, and supply comforts and reading materials for children as well as grown-ups.

But the newly arrived persons need to know many practical things about house furnishing, the use of money, budgeting, business practice and schools. More important still they must, as soon as possible, acquire some knowledge of the language of the community to which they go. At this point, provincial authorities and voluntary organizations enter into play. The Department of Education and the Department of Welfare of the various provinces provide language training in night classes and, also, health and welfare services.

Human nature being what it is, the first few weeks and the first few months will naturally be the hardest. At the same time, the first impressions of anyone coming to a new land are bound to be most profound, and the initial work by either federal, provincial or voluntary organizations has to be done with particular care and handled with the utmost of tact if it is to give the newcomers the impression that they are welcome and that they are wanted in their country of resettlement.

Beginning with the need of language training, which is provided by the provincial Departments of Education and by voluntary organizations, it is felt that the voluntary organizations should encourage the provision of classes by provincial Departments of Education instead of attempting to give these classes themselves. Voluntary organizations can assist in practical language problems such as helping an intellectual who is preparing for an examination. The International Y.M.C.A. in Montreal is reported in the Gazette of November 12 as having started classes in English engineering terms for a group of European engineers and to give them advice concerning their professions in Canada. Besides that, the displaced persons are taught to make curtains, ties, aprons, table-mats,

tapestries, etc. One student who demonstrates looms at a local department store made her trousseau at one of the Y.M.C.A. looms. They make their national costumes for folk dances displayed at universities, exhibitions, feasts and weddings. Sometimes they make small private sales and it helps their slim pocket books. Others do leatherwork, knitting and metalwork design; they listen to cultural talks on music and dance; they form choirs, play the mandolin or guitar in small string orchestras; play badminton - and use the building as a meeting place with friends.

Most of the girls who go to the "Y" in Montreal find their first year here a lonely one. Many are sad and homesick, but in the atmosphere of a gathering someone sits down to an organ or piano - something they know - and gradually they start to sing as they work. This indeed is most excellent work and the same thing should be repeated not only for displaced persons but for all immigrants - first in large cities and also in any centre where there is a community hall. Films can be shown, discussions organized on various points of interest to the newcomers, under the guidance of well trained Canadians. This is the sort of work which we hope is being done from Charlottetown to Victoria - not necessarily by the Y.M.C.A. but by any other well-established Canadian voluntary organization.

The crucial moment comes during the process of taking the first hurdle, that is, learning the language, at least enough of it to make oneself understood and to understand others and in accomplishing the initial adjustment in Canada. It is at this time that Voluntary Organizations, such as the Catholic Women's League, the Y.M.C.A., the Canadian Welfare Council, the Y.W.C.A., the Canadian Federation of University Women, the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, the I.O.D.E. and many others are expected to contribute advice and assistance working in close co-operation with the National Employment Service.

The Canadian Citizenship Branch of the Secretary of State Department and the Canadian Citizenship Council, whose functions are to co-ordinate the work of the voluntary organizations, do, I presume, provide information through these voluntary organizations or direct about the process of naturalization and especially about the eligibility of newcomers to make a declaration of intention with all this implies. Excellent books and pamphlets have been printed on this subject and I understand are being distributed to all newcomers. Ethnic groups can also be a great asset in helping to make the new Canadians feel that they are members of the community.

But, above all, the cultural integration of the immigrant is one which requires the kind, generous, continued and closely co-ordinated assistance of all organizations - federal, provincial or local from the day of arrival until the immigrant feels that he does belong. This does not end after the first year. It would be easier for any newcomer to become an integral part of the community if he can know Canadian individuals and take part in some group discussions or activities. Professional and University groups can help by inviting the intellectual individuals to lectures and open discussions. These people are hungry for spiritual food and will make some effort to find it. But it is equally important that the less educated person who is also a potential Canadian citizen should be assisted to find his way into groups with common interests. These may be church groups, ethnic groups or discussion groups in the community and this applies equally well to urban and country people. Films and discussions in community centres would seem to be the most happy medium to

reach them. But cultural integration in its broader aspects requires at least as much effort on the part of Canadians as from the immigrants. A cultural background of the immigrants is necessary. It should be remembered for instance, that persons coming from central or eastern Europe where thinking as well as action has been moulded by authority, must make a great adjustment to life in a community where authority to a very great extent is self-imposed.

Displaced persons will have some training in this respect because in the displaced person camps they have been used to electing their leaders and conducting their own policing service. They also provide and staff their own medical, educational and religious services, but now they are in new surroundings separated from those with whom they lived in camps and they have to be helped to take part in the life of the community in every form. In this connection I should like to refer to the excellent article which appeared in the Social Worker of October, 1948, written by Joseph Kage, on the services provided by Jewish Immigration Aid Society of Canada. The work they do is actually a model from which other Canadian Organizations should derive a lot of benefit. If various other religious, ethnic or voluntary organizations were to do likewise with different groups there would be no fear of failure in making newcomers useful and happy members of the community.

In our co-ordinated efforts to help displaced persons become an integrated part of the Canadian community, Canadians should be ready to accomplish this task without superiority or discrimination. This work should be approached in a spirit of complete sincerity, unselfishness and deep human understanding. In this respect it might be useful if all of us made it a point to understand the real meaning of humility - the purely intellectual importance of humility, not that humility which is the fascination of saints and good men, but that cold humility which is a mere essential of intelligence. In so doing we will ourselves acquire a better comprehension of the rights and duties of a citizen which is to be helpful to others not for the sake of gain but for the sake of the community and of our country as a whole. In this way we should become better Canadian citizens and thus promote better understanding between newcomers and ourselves, and make them feel in the least possible time - without any undue hurry - that they have really become part of the Canadian family.

January 19, 1950.
R.P. /C.