

CANADIAN-AMERICAN CLUB CONTACTS

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BRITISH visitors to this continent have been much impressed by a resemblance of ways and usages which makes the transition from the Maritime Provinces of Canada to the New England States relatively so slight. The contrast of "East Canadian" with "American" practice is indeed apparent, but where—these visitors ask—does "America" begin? They are tempted, after travelling west, to wonder whether the eastern areas are distinctly American and distinctly Canadian at all; whether Massachusetts, for example, does not so differ from Oregon and Nova Scotia from Alberta as to prove geography a surer index of temperaments than either nationality or history. Are not the people of New Brunswick and the people of Maine indistinguishable in all that matters, so that the boundary which separates them in spirit is like that which divides the control of their respective governments and the legal jurisdiction of their respective courts—a convention needful for practice, but with no ground in the unalterable nature of things?

It is a plausible, and in great part a sound, analysis. Up to a certain point, the international blend does proceed unchallenged in the East. Periodically, however, there is a reaction and a vigorous resistance in Eastern Canada against its proceeding further: I recall in particular an article of twenty years ago, in the *Canadian Historical Review*, which created no small stir, under title "Canada as a Vassal State". In it that doughty champion of Nova Scotia, the late Dr. Archibald MacMechan, who contributed so considerably to make Nova Scotian life interesting to readers abroad, dwelt with no pleasure on the Canadian-American blend. The influence, he angrily exclaimed, had been one-sided. Canadians had been docile imitators of American practice. This critic noted how the great mass of magazines circulating throughout Eastern Canada were American, and all the local newspapers followed an American pattern; how the motion pictures were of the sort produced in the United States for United States consumption; and how the issues in finance, as well as in the relations of capital and labor, for the Maritime Provinces were determined at American headquarters. Slight perhaps, and yet the more suggestive because unintentional, were the coincidences in college life,

in sport, in miscellaneous custom. Dr. MacMechan bade us note with chagrin how remote from British practice, and plainly thus caught up through the prestige suggestion of a powerful neighbor, were the administrative routine of our Canadian universities, the "class organization", the Greek Letter Societies, the base-ball leagues, the chewing-gum habit, fashions in dress, slang terms, and recognized public holidays such as Thanksgiving and Labor Day.

The truth of this critic's picture is undeniable, and it was vividly drawn. Whether there is as much reason as he found to deplore this spirit of adoption by Canada is very arguable. I propose in this paper to set forth in one particular field of alleged "imitativeness" how much there has been not of loss but of gain. The field is that of Societies and Clubs. A still comparatively new case of American "penetration"!

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Within the last twenty-five years, the so-called "Service Club" has introduced a new factor, significant for Canadian-American relationship, into the life of the Maritime Provinces. Each club branch derives its charter from the parent organization in the United States, and has regular contact with other such branches in American cities through interchange of visits, participation in choice of international officers, and periodic district or international conventions. Of Service Clubs the largest and most influential in Eastern Canada for some years was "Rotary", but "Kiwanis" and "Gyros" have of late developed rival strength.

The whole movement began in 1913, and for some time lay under considerable suspicion of constituting an American inroad upon British usages. Complaint was heard of the obtrusively American manner at these gatherings, the familiarity required to be shown by members with one another's Christian names, the hilarious tumult of speech and song at luncheon meetings, the whole atmosphere as plainly borrowed from the United States as the *format* of a newspaper in the Maritime Provinces betrays its American rather than a British pattern. But more and more completely these reproaches have disappeared: especially since the stimulus which the World War produced and which the present war has intensified, this assimilation of spirit is held to be a merit rather than a fault.

Of the form in all these organizations, the dominant spirit is American. Rotary is the only one of the three above mentioned

which has passed the boundaries of this continent: a glance at the working of a Rotary Club in Britain will show at once how earnestly and how painfully its members try to develop there an exotic growth. The comparative ease with which it springs up in an Eastern Canadian city or town, despite the traditionally British character of Eastern Canada, is both a token and a furthering condition of North American solidarity. A "Service Club" has the great merit, too, of awakening this sense of kinship in respect of the finer social enthusiasms. There are specific differences, but all such clubs are alike in proclaiming it as their purpose to stir united effort for better citizenship, for unselfish promotion of one another's progress, to "give primacy"—as the Kiwanis official bulletin says—"to the human and spiritual rather than to the material values of life".

It is by no means of negligible importance that this project, be it practicable or be it visionary, is kept before the minds of young Canadian business men as a project of American origin, and as still American in respect of its persevering direction. A view altogether different of the whole spirit of United States business is so easily adopted abroad! No one who knows these Service Clubs in Eastern Canada can doubt the definite confidence with which the local branches believe in the good faith of headquarters direction. Opinions may differ as to the effectiveness of such a method for such a purpose, and it is easy to exaggerate the value of international contacts which for most of the club members must be very slight and very rare. But the contacts of leaders are frequent and intimate: it seems certain that such conference, exchange of views, and cooperative planning for a high ideal between Canadians and Americans will improve the relationship of each national group to the other. Not only does it make them know each other better, but it associates them at their best, making them in a measure to share one another's confidence on matters about which they are alike in earnest. And the members are representative men in their respective communities.

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A surprise for one enquiring into the manner in which Societies affect Canadian-American relationship is the absence of international action between American and Eastern Canadian Churches.

The Christian Science Movement, originating in Boston and still directed from "the Mother Church" there, keeps its

central organization in touch with distant branches, including those in the Maritime Provinces of Canada. But these last are too few to make any serious difference for international feeling, and the larger ecclesiastical groups do not seem to affect each other across the frontier, or to enter in any intimate way into each other's corporate life. They have no contact nearly so intimate as that of a Rotary Convention, nor do they apparently share at all in each other's corporate problems. My efforts to obtain, from those qualified to speak, any information or even guess regarding the effect of inter-Church relations on Canadian-American friendship elicited everywhere the reply that no such effect was discernible. At least, there was no such *direct* effect. There was, of course, fairly frequent interchange of persons, students from Eastern Canada resorting to American colleges, Canadians appointed to American professorial posts, ministers called to churches across the line. Of course, too, they were united by a bond not national, rather in the highest sense international, as sharers in their common Faith. But I was assured that churches as institutional organizations on different sides of the Canadian-American border enter into no connected activities which could be held relevant to my enquiry.

The indirect contact seemed indeed worth tracing a little more in detail. It quickly appeared that the Church of Eastern Canada in which it had been most conspicuous is the Baptist. One of the consequences of this, namely, American influence upon Canadian higher education, was examined in a paper presented fourteen years ago to the Royal Society of Canada by Sir Robert Falconer, then President-Emeritus of the University of Toronto. It is there set forth that *Acadia*, in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, is the most American of all Canadian colleges—a remarkable fact, when one remembers that the original settlers there were United Empire Loyalists. In religion they were Baptist, and owing to the absence of adequate academic opportunities a century ago in Nova Scotia for persons outside the Church of England this college in the Annapolis Valley was founded in 1838, with an educational atmosphere derived from the United States. American professors were secured; the President of Acadia from 1869 to 1897 was an American who never changed his United States citizenship; of the 68 persons on the teaching staff from 1879 to 1921 only 5 had not been educated at least partially in an American college. The percentage of Acadia graduates now living in the United States is about 35.5: in the sixty years prior to 1903 it was as high as 50.

Yet another channel of international influence lies in the College Fraternity and Sorority—those “Greek Letter” societies whose spirit is altogether of American origin, and whose headquarters are in the United States. These are to be found as yet in only one university of Eastern Canada, but they are well established there (in Dalhousie), including in their membership probably a great proportion of the students.

The movement began some twenty years ago, with one Fraternity, not as part of a United States organization, but rather formed after the same pattern. What its originators intended was a purely Canadian brotherhood, and for some years, as others were established, the national character was kept. But by degrees the very spirit of Fraternity, especially in an institution with students of different nationalities, seemed to forbid such a limit, and the fraternities progressively “went international”, until only one remained of the earlier type. They hold American charters, preserve continuous contact with the central American office, and send delegates to the Grand Chapter Congresses, where they share in election of officers and in the general government. A magazine keeps the local Chapter informed of the Fraternity or Sorority activities elsewhere, and its own activities are regularly reported. Visits at intervals from heads of the central organization help to maintain the spirit of unity.

Statements I have received from leaders in the Movement at the one Maritime university where it has yet appeared are full of enthusiasm for its value in improving Canadian-American relations. The response to my enquiry at other institutions was rather suggestive of thankfulness that the Fraternity and the Sorority are still unknown there. It is obviously easy to exaggerate the international possibilities, and one hears much disparagement, especially from the older generation. How far the profession of a wider interest is anything more than a pretext for forming a local club with more than local prestige, how far the mere impulse of college conviviality has thus sought a more impressive way of describing itself, is a point on which opinions differ. Students outside these social circles often declare that the “internationalism” is with some members but a name, and with others—though genuine—is quite incapable of being promoted by this method, which makes no appeal except to those internationally-minded already. They point out that only a very few officers of the local Chapters ever experience the much trumpeted international contacts of a Convention,

that the *Fraternity Magazine* though received is little read, and that far more conspicuous than the occasional public gesture across a geographic boundary is the exclusiveness of a narrow and a very self-conscious college group. Discounting, however, the exaggerations both of enthusiastic advocates and of cynical critics, one cannot miss the truth to which they alike bear witness, at least as much unconsciously as deliberately. This Movement has introduced to the reflective thought of students in the Maritime Provinces what most of them would without it have altogether lacked. Only a very small fraction take post-graduate courses abroad: for others, whether approaching one-third or approaching one-half of the whole student population, it is no slight gain to have even this stimulant of wider thought so long as better stimulants are lacking.

Yet another line of comment suggested itself to me as I proceeded with this enquiry, and compared answers, from the student population. The academic societies to which the name "college" or "university" is applied, have as yet done far less than they might have been expected to do for international goodwill.

A small minority of young Canadian graduates, with college teaching in view as a career, resort to an American Graduate School. The Rhodes Scholarship system has made in this respect comparatively little difference: not Oxford or Cambridge or London, but Harvard or Yale, Cornell or Princeton or Columbia, attracts most of them. They commonly return to Canada (though only a few of them to the Maritimes) with genuine respect for the United States, and in the communities in which they teach they thus serve, by virtue of their first-hand knowledge of American ways, as a valuable corrective against narrow nationalism. The personnel of the Faculty in most Maritime universities being thus largely American trained, here is a centre of unconscious international influence that has been of value to friendship.

But it is in general an *unconscious* influence. Nothing here indicates appreciation of college responsibility to promote actively and constantly a Canadian-American goodwill. It should be obvious that a place of higher education has both resources and opportunities to do this such as can be found nowhere else. It should likewise be obvious that the counter-acting of international antipathy and the removal of international prejudice by the spread of knowledge were never before quite so urgent as they are now. But the stereotyped habits of a past

age, whose problems were different, have shown the notorious academic tenacity. There is no apparent consideration of what might so well be done in a place of higher learning to deepen international friendship by unifying the cultural life of the continent.

A foreign observer, who examined the Calendars of Maritime universities and the programmes of courses given there, would see no sign that Departments of Government, of History, of Social Science recognize any obligation to study the common adventure of North America in those respects which make it to differ from that of Europe. Where noticed at all, American culture seems to be treated as an interlude, a somewhat tiresome interruption of the tale, a sort of romantic irregularity which marred for a time the sequence of classic order. "In the past", writes a Nova Scotian teacher of long experience, "we have taught only that part of American history which affects Canadian history". A like calamitous effort at isolation, divorcing interests which Nature had ordained to involve each other, has been the bane of university teaching in the same area.

Such knowledge thus withheld has supplied itself, as knowledge withheld so commonly does, in undesirable and misleading forms. For the pupil in common school or high school it has come through motion pictures, radio, and the cheapest sort of American magazine. For students in colleges, intellectually more sophisticated, it has come through the interpretation of these highly questionable data by the economics, the social science or the constitutional law they have acquired in courses to which Greek or Roman, mediaeval, modern French, and above all modern British experience are held relevant, but in which United States development is at most only an occasional illustration. Is it any wonder that the college student, so disproportionately acquainted with the significant facts, should thus drop into common follies to which he can himself contribute so often only an element of intellectual cynicism? Is it surprising that to the vulgar indictment of a great nation as one in which crime is rampant, justice for sale and all officials are corrupt, he should bring corroborative reflections from "the materialist doctrine of history"? Or that he should find constant cases in the sensational American press to promote that "disillusionment" about the nobility of mankind's endeavour in which the clever young graduate delights?

Canadians and Americans, plainly designed by Nature to cooperate, have been much slower than they should have been to follow Nature's behest, and if immediate necessities now render urgent what was always a somewhat avoided duty, the sooner we set about making up for lost time the better. Long ago our institutions of learning, our social groups, our churches, should have prepared the atmosphere for a scheme of Federal Union (the only one hopeful for preventing a Third World War, perhaps about 1960). As one who has taught for a quarter of a century in a Maritime college, and has in that period helped to illustrate the negligence here pointed out, I have thought it right to dwell with special emphasis on an academic fault. We have of late improved, but not fast enough. The advance has been by the slow but progressive introduction to each other of two peoples that desire and value fundamentally the same things. Here and there, through causes not hard to specify, but often hard enough to remove, this development has been arrested or diverted. There is a chance now to clear the sinister contrary forces away, more quickly and more thoroughly than ever before.

Will academic societies rise to the occasion? No one who knows their record will say "They always do": more probably we shall hear it said "They never do". But even if they have done so very seldom, they may do it now. For never has there been a challenge like the present, and even the academic mind may be roused.
