

# ANTI-AMERICANISM

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IT is impossible in Canada not to be struck by the co-existence of two apparently contradictory phenomena,—a network of intimate friendships between Canadians and Americans, and a widespread distaste for Americans in general. Every family established for any length of time among us has relatives in the States; we are constantly moving forth and back across the border, visiting friends, transacting business, attending conferences or taking holidays. But if one has an American guest at dinner, it is a prudent thing to drop a discreet word to the table. Who has not witnessed the polite but painful consequences following neglect of this simple precaution? The fact is that we constantly indulge in acrimonious criticism of things and persons American—a habit so ingrained in us that it passes without comment or justification.

The causes are, as usual, historic and actual, and that is probably the order of their importance. Despise George III and laud the Boston tea-party as we may, we have never quite forgiven the Americans for casting loose from the Empire and setting up their own circus. The Englishman, passing down Lake Champlain and the Hudson from Montreal to New York, has a sort of physiological difficulty in reconciling himself to the fact that that magnificence was once, and is no longer, British. This initial grudge has not wanted successive irritants to keep it alive. Among them, oddly enough, we can scarcely count 1812, which is a source of enduring satisfaction to us. Not the wars which have occurred or threatened, so much as the measures taken to avoid war, are numbered in our discontents. Maine and Alaska, little understood and grossly exaggerated, recur in every Canadian discussion of relations with the United States, and in this field of arbitration we appear to have forgotten our victories. Most people have never heard of the Behring Sea and North Atlantic Fisheries decisions. The Ashburton-Webster Treaty and the Alaskan boundary settlement serve two opposing purposes. The imperialist, old-style, uses them to prove the unscrupulous greed to which we should be helplessly exposed if we were independent, while the nationalist cites them to illustrate Great Britain's habit of betraying our interests to gain her own ends. History is as easily perverted as statistics. The advantages, real or alleged, which the United

States have been able to gain before some arbitral tribunals, figure as steps towards that "manifest destiny" which an occasional American publicist has been unrestrained enough to foresee. An unfortunate reference to this country as an economic annex, made by President Taft—who was afterwards to become one of our best-loved American friends—echoed from East to West in 1911, and added strength to a campaign of exaggerated suspicion and vilification. Many a Canadian, duped then, has come in the sobering interval to rue his vote against reciprocity. So easy has it been to blind our eyes with a cloud of resentment over fictitious American ambitions! The truth is that such real impulses as there have been since 1814 towards annexation have come from our side. Talk of union will probably continue to be heard among us when and where the economic shoe pinches hardest. The idea is one of those fanciful and untested panaceas the thought of which may bring momentary alleviation to the sufferer. In the United States it would be difficult to muster a corporal's guard of annexationists.

Of the present causes of dislike, some are general and some special. The American *panache* offends us more than it offends other peoples, not merely because we see more of it, but because it aggravates our consciousness of an enormous disparity in numbers and power. We acknowledge reluctantly that most things are done on a grander scale across the line, and resent being reminded of it. The fact that we owe a large measure of prosperity to that very expansiveness of the tourist which galls us in the form of boastful self-confidence is no acknowledged consolation, though it is a safe surmise that if we had to choose between aloof immunity and summer trade we should publicly swallow our pride. But may we not hope that the habit of travel, broadening down from the rich and cultivated to the humblest disciple of Ford, is modifying a primitive national characteristic? The puerile squabble as to who won the war may still perhaps make battles in the back streets, but it is disappearing from the clubs. Along with it goes at least one occasion for conning over the list of accumulated grievances.

The fear that American capital is buying us out body and soul should recede before the figures of increasing Canadian ownership of resources and industries. And if, as the economists inform us, we are passing from the necessary stage of capital-import into that of capital-export, we are doing so because of a development largely conditioned upon American investment in this country. Safety from financial annexation ought to go some way to cure the "inferiority complex."

As for the process of cultural and spiritual Americanization against which so many patriots rave—often in the best Yankee accent—that is destined to go on, despite all the efforts of neo-Anglicism. Much of it indeed is purely native response to identical conditions. There has undoubtedly, however, been extensive conscious imitation, and the worst of that is that we have imitated experiments before the result was known. To mention only one vital thing, our whole educational system is dominated by methods taken over bodily, and without examination, from a country which is now abandoning them. We lagged, as an imitator must, in the adoption; and we are lagging in the discard. But America is advancing towards sane methods of education and finer standards of culture. Can anyone who moves about the universities, attends the professional conferences and reads the new literature of the country, honestly deny this? Henceforward, Americanization may be anything but deleterious. Even that religion of trade which swept us away, making us regard obstacles to commerce, whatever their social justification, as by definition evil, shows signs of change. The creed of “service” and the practice of profit-sharing, however material their aims, are less selfish—and apparently not less profitable—than the older dogma of exploitation. Not that we can now safely follow the States in all their institutions, manners and ideals! In the administration of justice, for instance, they have more to learn from us than we from them. In domestic relations it may well be wise for us to preserve our greater reserve and stability. Conceivably we may profit by the errors they have committed in a building process which, with due proportions guarded, we must probably repeat. What is wanted is neither slavish imitation nor prejudiced rejection, but clear-eyed discrimination, a faculty difficult but not impossible of attainment. In any event, it is not inevitable, as some foreign observers insist, that economic and social assimilation must be followed by political union. That is a matter which will depend upon future sentiment and expediency. There is little support in history for the doctrine that similarity in language and modes of life must result in political fusion; and certainly a change of feeling so complete as to take years in maturing would have to precede any such development here.

The most violent repugnance to Americanism is often expressed by the very people responsible for the over-hasty adoption of American models. They have thought good to appropriate much of the detail of a system which, as a whole, they believe themselves to loathe. The contradiction is to be found in the universities, in the professions, in business. It is the result of an inherited and

unquestioningly accepted generalization which is becoming yearly less sound. Those who know the United States best know how impossible it is to label American civilization with any common character. The spread of liberal-minded cosmopolitanism is obvious to the frequent visitor. There is no people whose intelligence is more given to self-criticism, and more tolerant of outside criticism. That is why so much remodelling is going on in American institutions. The combination, or rather juxtaposition, of grim materialism and evangelical "uplift", which constitutes the bogey of Americanism, is passing away; or, at least, is being leavened by a new humanism. The change is broadening down; if it goes far enough, it will make for a national character worthy in its moral and intellectual aspects of that admiration which we have long accorded to its practical adroitness. Surely the knowledge of this evolution, as it spreads in Canada, must make less popular the present common attitude of assumed superiority. It would be well for us, however, to realize immediately at least this, that we—who ourselves have only begun to build a national character—have to deal with one to the south of the line which is not yet fixed, but in process of formation.

Among the special causes of animosity, what looms largest is undoubtedly the tariff. Mentally we are ready to admit that this is a matter in which every nation has the right to shape its own course, but the admission is no calm to our sense of injury. Nor does the familiar fact that no country has ever fixed duties on imports with any consideration of their effects on foreign industries help us to accept philosophically the heightened barriers. Amid the outcry over the callous greed of American producers and manufacturers, practically nothing has been heard about the causes of the increase and the measure of justification upon which it could rely. Little mention has been made of the hardships of the mid-western farmer, and no visible sympathy has been evoked by the tale when told. There is no arguing with wounded pocket-books. The protests screamed from Halifax to Victoria have, it is true, been little more undignified than those ascending from a dozen other countries. We are anything but alone in our righteous indignation over the turpitude of a country which has been able to surpass us. There is no hope of a cessation of this kind of irritant, unless the world turns back towards free trade. But it may give us some satisfaction to read the condemnation of their Government's economic policy by American Chambers of Commerce and Academies of Political Science. Apparently the Hawley-Smoot law was not the best remedy for agricultural distresses, and it may be that the

economists will in time so convince the politicians, unless indeed we shall have carried retaliation so far meanwhile as to give new ammunition to the ultra-protectionist school.

Next to tariffs, perhaps the Chicago "water-steal" has been the highest recent producer of anti-American sentiment. The facts are that the United States have been for years unable to prevent Chicago from abstracting more than twice the quantity of water from Lake Michigan that the Secretary of War's certificate authorized, and that Canada, apart from a few mild protests and reminders to the Department of State, has been content to hold a watching brief while the riparian States and Supreme Court tried to make the windy city do as it was told. We are still watching, with such promise as a decision of the highest American tribunal holds, to see a fixed and moderate limit set to the diversion. Why did we not insist that the question go to arbitration? Possibly for the good reason that putting in our oar too strongly might not have helped those State-members of the Union who were already moving all existing machinery to put an end to the abuse. Possibly because we were afraid that the Government at Washington would refuse. Meanwhile one of those providentially recurring high-level periods has removed the question from practical navigation. There remains, however, the doubt. What embitters us at every incident in the annals of rum-running and general law enforcement along the border, as in all cases of territorial dispute, is fundamentally this doubt whether, in conflict with Colossus, we shall get justice. It is one of those misgivings which will probably always assail small entities in their dealings with great ones. The record of the United States in their relations with the smaller nations of this hemisphere is neither much better nor much worse than the imperialistic records of Great Britain and other major Powers. Every intelligent Canadian will watch with the keenest interest the progress of arbitration, and of all anti-war machinery in which the United States participate. Our best guarantee is there. In the meantime we must, with all willingness to go to court, stand firmly against any high-handed disregard of our rights. There is obviously one price which we cannot pay for friendship with the States, though that friendship be a condition of our national growth, namely the habit of surrender. But as to that, no one familiar with Canadian temperament has any fear. Our tendency is rather to relieve our feelings in provocative vituperation—a practice not without its dangers for a small country.

One thing we might do to mitigate the effects of "incidents". We might conclude with the United States an all-inclusive agree-

ment of arbitration. It is a noteworthy fact that our complicated equipment of treaties leaves many types of possible dispute unprovided for. The nearest thing we had to a general arbitration treaty came to an end in 1928. So much has been heard of the International Joint Commission that it is commonly, but erroneously, regarded as universally competent. The truth is that its compulsory jurisdiction extends only to questions concerning the obstruction or diversion of boundary waters. If we had a simple agreement covering all kinds of dispute, and that agreement were known to everybody, it seems probable that less anxiety and animosity would be aroused by apparent violations of our rights. The public would have a little less doubt of the outcome if it knew that machinery existed for dealing with the matter. Would the United States be willing to enter into such a treaty with us? It can only be answered that they have now a series of new conventions with other countries which provide—with reservations touching the Munroe Doctrine, domestic matters, and the interests of third parties—for the peaceful settlement of all disputes of a justiciable nature. That would be a distinct improvement on the present position; and, in view of the special relations of these two countries, we might succeed in eliminating the reservations in so far as they really restrict the scope of the existing treaties.

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These reflections have been prompted by the belief that Canada has no more important business than the conduct of her relations with the United States. It is not assumed that we have a lamb to deal with. The Yankee is a clever advocate; and when it comes to bargaining, is no sentimentalist. But neither is it to be assumed that where he cannot get what he wants by legal process he will take it by force. In considering the prospects of peaceful development as a British nation alongside this powerful neighbour, it behooves us to examine our own attitude. There are those among us who proceed on the theory that our autonomy and our British allegiance can be preserved by fostering anti-Americanism. That is bad policy for ourselves, and bad policy for the Commonwealth. In addition to impeding our own social and economic development, it would impair our real usefulness in the somewhat over-vaunted rôle of "interpreters". Worst of all, it is lamentable stuff to weave into the texture of a forming national spirit and make a part of Canadianism.