

NATIONAL HARMONY IN CANADA

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SEVERAL newspapers in Toronto have recently been discussing the reasons for the alleged unpopularity of that city throughout Canada. A number of journals in other places have been helping Toronto, in ways more vigorous than kind, to discover these reasons. I believe that the discussion was first precipitated in Halifax, and I observe that the press of the western prairies has shown a lively interest in it. Obviously, a resident of Toronto is handicapped as a protagonist in such a quarrel, and might conceivably involve himself in trouble with his neighbours. I shall be prudent, and leave this particular controversy alone.

However, a bigger problem is suggested. This minor and local antipathy leads one to think of the question of an harmonious national life for all parts of the Dominion. Unity is necessary for nationhood. If Canada is to endure and flourish, her people must in some real and effective way be one people.

Here is a vast tract of the narrow earth, possessed by a population which averages scarcely two to the square mile. That small population is most unequally distributed. More than one-seventh of it is crowded into two big city communities. One half of it lives in urban municipalities. Thousands of unpeopled miles separate the inhabited areas of east and west. One populous central province is of another race and language from the great mass of the remainder. Other racial groups, still more widely different, have developed during recent years, so that both the newer agricultural lands and the growing cities are now dotted with tiny colonies where foreign customs and standards prevail, and which resist, more or less sullenly, the pressure of the surrounding Canadianism. Add to all this diversity of race and speech the familiar conflicts between city and country or rich and poor, the instability and ferment of the growing-period of the national life, the imminence of a wealthy rival who lures our youth away and reaches out for the control of our industries, and the western outlook upon the overcrowded Orient. It is apparent that the problem of national harmony is one which deserves notice. It is not an easy problem and it presses for solution.

common press and the constant interchange of conversational and platform dialectic. Yet it is a grave error to suppose that the whole matter begins and ends with language. The fact is that a common language is no pledge of unity, nor is the lack of it an insuperable obstacle. England and Ireland speak the same tongue, yet have quarrelled for centuries. Switzerland, on the contrary, has obtained a high degree of national unity in spite of her population being divided into three parts, speaking French, German and Italian respectively.

It is a condition of success, however, that the several languages concerned shall be of the same rank and quality. Each must be capable of ministering to the same degree of intelligence and the same range of experience. The three languages of Switzerland are alike vehicles of high culture. A person may share the world's best through the medium of any one of them. A race speaking the Cree or the Bantu tongue could not be fitted into the life of the citizens of the Swiss Republic. Thus there is no reason for alarm at the prospect of the English and French languages continuing side by side in Canada. Each of them can do all that the other can do for its possessor. Each inherits a rich literature, is adapted to thinking processes of every sort, and is equipped with words for every modern situation. This is not true of many of the languages imported into Canada by recent immigrants, which close the door upon modern knowledge by their lack of the requisite words and appropriate forms of expression, while the few ballads which constitute their literary inheritance make a poor substitute for Shakespeare or Molière.

Much the same thing may be said about race. The advantages of racial uniformity in a world avid of race dislikes are very obvious. Yet national unity can comprehend several races, if not too dissimilar in type. Every country in Europe illustrates that fact. Where antagonism has developed among several races within the same State, the reason may be sought in external political ambitions or in the different planes of culture they possess. In the defunct Austrian empire the Germans and Hungarians were in friendly alliance, while the "subject" peoples were those of a less advanced and enlightened type. Thus in the Canadian nation we may anticipate no inevitable clash between the British and French temperaments. There is nothing to forbid the most friendly co-operation. If they quarrel with each other, it will be on grounds other than race, though it is quite possible that the character of the strife may be determined by racial qualities. The missiles used in a battle, however, tell us little as to the origin of the war.

Further, it is the same with religion. Without question, uniformity of religion promotes national unity. One can appreciate the dream, common to all European statesmen three hundred years ago, of one Church for the entire State, engaging the love and loyalty of all its citizens and blessing with solemn ceremonies every notable occasion in the nation's life. When a people are bound together in common reverence and awe, a fervour of unity is created of exceptional warmth and persistence. So these statesmen strove, sometimes in very dubious ways, to preserve religious uniformity. They failed, as it was right they should fail. Religious divisions came, and tolerance. We have since learned that fellow-citizens may worship apart, and reject the intermarriage of their children on religious grounds, and yet be very cordial neighbours, friends and fellow-partizans in politics. All through Canada are to be found communities where Catholic and Protestant co-operate freely in industrial and political affairs. This harmony in race and religion is not to be looked for, however, between peoples whose racial inheritance or religious outlook is widely different. As in language, there must be fundamental similarity. Where Asiatic or African races impinge upon the European, no such harmony is found. Nor will a Christian people regard with complacency such a religion as the Turks practise.

If this argument is sound, we are justified in deprecating the fears based upon the larger divergences of race, language or religion. We need not reduce all races, languages and religions to one. Oneness of feeling and purpose may be achieved without such narrow standardization of citizenship. Rather is the problem seen to be one of standards, which may be displayed in diverse forms. Let me offer several illustrations.

If the Dominion is to be an harmonious whole, there must be a similar social composition in all its parts. Sympathy will not flow freely between communities whose organizations are naturally antipathetic to each other. The North and South of the United States before the civil war inevitably disliked and distrusted each other because the plantation system of the one and the free agricultural system of the other were irreconcilable. The one tended towards a set of manners, customs and ideals radically diverse from those of the other. There was little in common between a tobacco-grower on the Charles River and a farmer or merchant in the Mohawk Valley. Each type of character had its own worth, but they did not understand and could not appreciate each other. So, too, if the estate of a typical old-time English squire were set down in the midst of a typical Canadian countryside, it would be

a human misfit. The stately manorial home of the reigning family, the lowly cottages of the labourers, the force of bailiffs and game-keepers, and the unequal distribution of wealth and culture would all be alien and distasteful to the surrounding families living in independence and toil on their own holdings.

Something of this kind exists between the city and the country. The factory unit is of a different sort from the farm unit. In the city only a few men give orders, and the rest obey; in the country every farmer does his own planning. The family is a working unit on a farm, but in the city it is dispersed among as many employments as there are earning members of the household. In the city success is known by the scale of consumption, while in the country production is the test, so that the city house has the same significance as the country barn. Thus a national policy which builds huge and impressive cities while agriculture languishes, tends to open a chasm between the rural and urban halves of the population, with unfortunate results upon national unity.

Thus, again, the development in different provinces of different types of social organization will be more disastrous than will variations in race, religion or language. If the entrance of Orientals is permitted, we shall see British Columbia conform to the tropical form of social composition, where a few whites live in wealth and power, and a mass of labourers of other colours live in subjection and poverty. Democratic institutions cannot flourish in such conditions, nor will there be much comradeship between the people of the Pacific Coast and the rest of the Dominion.

Caste distinctions are social forces of great magnitude. The status of a man is likely to mean more to him than income. One of his most imperious instincts demands recognition by his fellows. While he lives, this demand persists. Unless Canada remains approximately homogeneous in respect of the satisfactions granted to this instinct, it is vain to hope for national unity. Ceremonial despotisms are peculiarly irritating in democracies, because they represent a subtle treason against the democratic ideal.

Closely akin is the requirement of a common intelligence level. This is largely, though by no means entirely, an affair of the public schools. A people cannot cohere of whom one half are educated and one half illiterate. The outlook upon the world of a class which reads and thinks is radically different from that of a class whose ideas are determined by nothing more than a narrow personal experience.

Most particularly, in any land where universal suffrage prevails, the necessity of a general minimum of learning is peremptory.

The misuse of the ballot by the "foreign" voters is a matter not so much of bribery as of trickery, the hoaxing of ignorance by unscrupulous knowledge. A walking boss can inflame the gang he rules by telling them that a certain candidate intends to cut down their wages. An agricultural group can be swayed by the lying story that some one threatens their language, or their customs, or their ownership of the land they till.

There are sections of this wide Dominion, with its sparse population, where the pocketing of small communities makes the dissemination of knowledge an expensive and difficult task. It is there that personages are found wielding autocratic powers in small realms—political, religious and industrial—whose interest is to forbid the assimilation of their subjects to the Canadian type. The will of a proud Canadianism should regard such personages as traitors to the freedom and light which are the birthright of every Canadian.

Still more important is a common minimum standard of living. I must not lengthen this article by a discussion of the basic significance of this conception. It is the under-pinning of the social structure, and supports the health, the morals, and the happiness of any community. To have a generous standard of living is one of the most valuable of social assets. Public sentiment as to what is decent and wholesome is defined in terms of this conception. Aberrations from it and the sinking below it immediately excite pity, aversion, anger, shame,—all the things which are the opposites of sympathy. If harmony is to prevail throughout Canada, there must be essential agreement as to what constitute the primary requirements for proper living, and a common enjoyment of at least the staples thereof.

A home sufficiently spacious to give room and privacy to all the members of the family; some comforts and ornaments within the home; a diet which allows meat and fruits; clothing in line with accepted fashions; the continuance of children at school until at least their teens;—these items, and such as these, make up the minimum standard of living as accepted by the native-stock Canadians. Who will say that it is too high? Hovels, rags and illiteracy are and should be counted a disgrace to the community in which they are found. There will be no comradeship between even the poorest who maintain the standard and those who sink or are driven below it. Here, also, we are brought face to face with sinister forms of industrial rivalry, labour unrest, and predatory wealth. I am of the opinion that the maintenance of a Dominion-wide

minimum standard of living is the very sheet-anchor of national harmony.

We are fortunate in our inheritance of the British tradition of freedom. Indeed, we are more fortunate than our brethren in the British Isles, for a new land provided us with a freedom of opportunity which was impossible in Britain. The individual stands high in the English-speaking world. It is vital that we should continue to cherish the value of personality. After all, the real wealth of any land is its people. All our energies should be used to support and improve the quality of Canadian manhood, womanhood and childhood. We must protect it against foolish paternalism on the one hand and avaricious exploitation on the other. It should be both defended and stimulated. This is a task for study, planning, deliberation, compromise and courage.

LOUISBOURG

J. E. A. MACLEOD

O ruined city, called by kingly name,
Where once the golden lilies proudly flew,
Your casemates crumble where all else is new:
You were a helpless pawn in War's high game.
From France, with hopes high set, your founders came
And reared your walls beside th' Atlantic's blue.
Your youthful years of peace were all too few
'Til War's red banner blazoned far your fame.
On you New England fleshed her virgin sword;
Old "Heart of Oak" his battle standard raised;
There knightly Wolfe first showed his glowing soul.
Oh, may your grass grown ramparts sign afford
That War, by heroes fought and poets praised,
Gives place to Peace which makes the scarred world whole.