

AN INTERESTING ADDRESS ON IMMIGRATION AND LAND SETTLEMENT BY R.J.G. STEAD

Following is the full text of an address delivered by Robert J. C. Stead, director of publicity of the department of Immigration before the Moncton Rotary Club on Monday.

"Land settlement is and always has been, the most important factor in the material development of the Canadian nation. In view of the comparatively small attention which is given to this subject my statement may seem to be rather sweeping but it will stand examination. One has only to make a mental survey of our history in order to realize that practically all development has arisen out of land settlement. Our cities, our railways, our great financial and mercantile institutions, even our centres of education and culture owe not only their prosperity, but in most cases their very existence, to land settlement.

A Long Story

The history of the French occupation of Canada is a long story of land settlement under almost insuperable difficulties. There were the struggle with the Indians, the struggle with the wilderness, the struggle with the English colonists to the south, struggles attended by all the fervor and heroism of the French race, but frequently attended also by failure, and sometimes by disaster. After more than 200 years of effort the population of Canada at the close of the French regime was still less than 70,000 souls. I shall draw your attention in a few minutes to the fact that in the past three years more settlement has been placed in the land in Canada than survived all the 200 and more years from the discovery of this country to the treaty of 1763.

Under British control the object of the governing powers continued to be the settlement of Canada. Time does not permit even the most cursory sketch of that settlement, but one or two high points may be noted.

U. E. Loyalists

The movement which more than any other determined the future of Canada was the influx of the United Empire Loyalists at the close of the American Revolution. These settlers, saturated with British sentiment and indignant over the treatment they had received in the revolting colonies, swarmed along the St. John River and other localities in the Maritime Provinces and into various sections of what are now the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. In their new homes the Loyalists in many cases suffered severe privations, having lost nearly everything they possessed by confiscation. They were dependent upon the government

for food and supplies and a total of about \$30,000,000 was spent by the British government in providing for their establishment and maintenance. They numbered almost as many as the whole population of Canada at the time of the battle of the Plains of Abraham, and their view-point has coloured the whole course of Canadian history. The point I wish to make at the moment, however, is that they were land settlers, and it was their settlement and the settlement of disbanded soldiers after the Napoleonic Wars, and other movements which I have not time to enumerate, that provided the foundation upon which the later prosperity of the nation was built.

After Confederation the Canadian government carried on the work of immigration. At times the movement was small; at times it rose to large dimensions, reaching its crest in the fiscal year ended March 31, 1913, when not less than 402,432 immigrants were admitted. It is not suggested, of course, that all these immigrants settled on the land but the practice of the time of granting free homesteads in Western Canada no doubt was the principal inducement which brought floods of new settlement to our shores. There was a lull during the war period, and afterwards a revival of the movement, which reached its last high peak in 1928-29 with 167,722 immigrants.

Getting Immigrants

During the period from confederation to 1930 it must be said, however, that the objective was more to get immigrants, than on the whole to supervise and encourage the actual settlement on the land. The theory apparently was that there was plenty of land available and the immigrants could be trusted to use their own initiative to the best advantage. But the arrival of a great period of industrial expansion rather upset these calculations. The movement everywhere was from the country to the city and in this respect Canada proved to be no exception to the rule. How far this movement has gone is indicated by the fact that in 1871 more than 80 percent of the population of Canada lived in rural districts, but every census since has shown that percentage shrink, until, according to the census of 1931, only 46.3 percent are rural dwellers. This situation has, of course been made possible by the appliance of machinery and mechanical power to agriculture, which enables a smaller proportion of the population to raise the food required for all.

Then suddenly came that period in

our experience which, for lack of a better name, has been called depression. The price of farm products slumped to a figure which was almost unprecedented, and the volume of unemployment in the industrial centres took on ominous proportions. Obviously policies which had been considered sound under conditions quite opposite of those which now became universal, could no longer govern our immigration movement.

Just about this time direction of the Department of Immigration and Colonization came into the hands of Hon. Wesley A. Gordon, who had been Minister of the Department since the autumn of 1930. Mr. Gordon promptly decided that such opportunity for employment as remained in Canada should be reserved for persons already living in this country. A policy of very strict selection with respect to immigrants from the British Isles and the United States was therefore adopted, and immigration from other countries was practically limited to wives and children under eighteen years of age of settlers already established in Canada and able and willing to support their dependents. The result of these changes in policy has been that the stream of immigration has now shrunk to a mere trickle, although there is ample evidence that there are many in other lands who would gladly enter Canada at the present time if they could. There is no prohibition against immigration of British subjects from the motherland or the United States, or American citizens from the United States, but such immigrants must now, in addition to being of good health and good character, be equipped with sufficient capital to establish and maintain themselves on farms in this country.

Coordination

Co-incident with the introduction of these policies, Honourable Mr. Gordon set on foot for the first time a co-ordinated movement between his own department and the two railway companies to use their staffs and machinery, which would otherwise have been engaged in immigration activities, in the placement of Canadian families on the land. The co-operation of the two railways was most whole heartedly extended under the direction of the presidents of the two companies. The undertaking was based on the assumption that there were in Canadian cities many families with farm experience who had been attracted to the cities in periods of industrial prosperity, who were now unemployed or in danger of unemployment, but were still in possession of some capital and who would be glad to return to the farm where the opportunity made available to them. The three organizations therefore set about to gather information as to farms which could be bought with modest capital; the attention of families desiring farm settlement was attracted by means of classified advertising, and free services in placing such families in contact with land owners and guiding them to successful settlement were given by either the land settlement branch of the Dominion Government or the land organizations of the Canadian Pacific or Canadian National Railways, whichever was most convenient, the cases being freely transferred from one to another when it was advantageous to do so.

A Good Showing

From October 1930 to September 1933, the three organizations were instrumental in placing 12,326 families formerly resident in Canadian cities and other centres of population on farms, and in placing 27,596 formerly unemployed men in farm employment. On the basis of five members to a family this represents a movement to the land of nearly 90,000 persons, and these figures are exclusive of very effective work carried on concurrently by a number of the provincial governments. It will thus be seen that in three years these three interests, working together, have placed on the land considerably more people than the whole population of Canada in 1763.

Back to the Land

This settlement scheme, in operation, revealed that, aside from families who, had capital with which to establish themselves, were a great number of others less favourably situated with respect to capital, but equally anxious to go on to the land. Families on relief in the cities were gradually eating up a sum of money which would provide for a modest establishment on farms. It was not and is not suggested that farming, under present conditions, offers any large return for either capital,

or labour, but these are people concerned with gaining a subsistence rather than earning what might be described as commercially profitable returns. Convinced that it would be better for all concerned if such families were enabled to work on the land rather than remain unemployed in the cities, the Dominion government developed a plan for co-operation with the provincial governments and the municipalities concerned for the application of relief expenditures to farm settlement purposes. The plan is, briefly that each of the three parties—Dominion, province and municipality—undertakes to advance up to \$200 for the settlement of a selected family on the land. No part of this sum may be spent in the purchase of land or the payment of rent. Crown lands are being extensively used, and in some localities other lands owned by municipalities, investment companies and individuals are found to be available without any cash payment. Expenditures are extended over a period of two years, a certain proportion being held back for subsistence if necessary. The management of the scheme devolves upon the provinces but they are guided by committees of which are representatives of the Dominion Government, the two railways, the province, and the municipality concerned. Under this scheme there had been settled up to December 29th last 2,490 families including 13,165 persons and representing 25 nationalities. The area settled amounted to 312,155 acres. The two types of settlement to which I have referred have resulted in the placement of more than 100,000 persons on the land in Canada in about three years, and this is quite aside from the other activities of the provincial governments and the considerable settlement which has taken place by families acting entirely on their own initiative.

A Potent Factor

I have ventured to occupy your time at this length in a discussion of land settlement because, as I asserted in my opening remarks, land settlement is and always has been the most important factor in the material development of the Canadian nation. A number of our national problems—our railway problem for example—seem capable of solution only by a steady and continuing stream of settlement towards the land. The admitted fact that farming in many localities under the conditions prevailing for the last two or three years has been unprofitable does not alter the larger fact that all wealth comes from the land, nor should temporary conditions too greatly discourage activities which will find their fruition over a long period of years. If it be argued that there is already a surplus of farm products it may be answered that the settlement I have been describing will not for at least several years become a noticeable factor in excess production, as the families concerned will themselves consume most of their products, and their settlement on the land is meeting an immediate and urgent need.

N. B.'s Population

We have in Canada one of the largest and most sparsely-settled areas in the world, and he must surely be neither a prophet of the future nor a student of the past who believes that some 10,000,000 people will continue indefinitely to occupy this huge and rich territory. I am sure there are few in my audience who would say that New Brunswick, for example is over-populated, and perhaps it is not generally appreciated that New Brunswick is one of the most thickly populated provinces in Canada. For instance, if Ontario had as many persons per square mile as New Brunswick has, Ontario would have nearly 6,000,000 people instead of the three and a half million which she now has. If Alberta were populated on the same basis as New Brunswick, Alberta would have more than 3,700,000 persons instead of the 731,000 which she now has. Similar comparisons can be drawn with all the other provinces except Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. And if New Brunswick is not over-populated what shall be said of these other provinces? I bring these proportions to your attention merely to emphasize the field which still awaits development in the long range of time embraced by the history of the nation. Canada is not at the end of her career; she is almost just at the beginning.

The Chinese revolt is reported near collapse, the Nineteenth Route Army having apparently changed into a rout army.

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Did you give your boy a tool chest on Christmas and now make the discovery that he would rather have had "Stanley's 'In Darkest Africa'?" All boys don't like to hammer.

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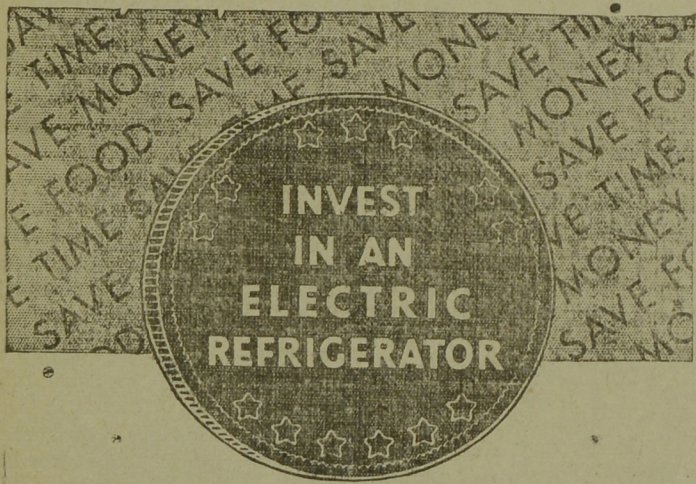
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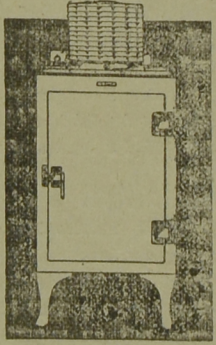
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