

CANADA'S FUTURE

Just as in pre-war years the minds of thinking men everywhere were tortured by the question, "Whither are we drifting?", so today after five years of war a less gloomy problem confronts men, "In what ways will we make the new world better?" A lasting solution of this problem is a test of the genius of man indeed; thus, it is out of reach of discussion here. Rather shall we review in part the old to see whether any progress is being made in building more permanently the new.

Recent events in legislation prove that amidst all the chaos in thought there remains much straight reasoning. Those to whom has been entrusted the task of drafting a post-war reconstruction program in this country seem to have realized that Canada is primarily agrarian and that hand in hand with the increase of economic pressure, unemployment, and loss of security went a decline in agricultural employment. The extent of the program that has been outlined for a reversion to agriculture in Canada attests the fact that people now believe that much of the economic stress and social disorder were a consequence of the flight from the land. Much of the work of new departments of government and the time of new cabinet ministers are devoted to the task of the reestablishment of Canadian agriculture as a prophylactic against one of the greatest evils of modern times; namely, excessive urbanization, a trend in which Canada has kept pace, and with dire consequences, with much more densely populated nations like the United States. An examination of the latent facts concerning the extent of this city-ward trend is alarming.

Statistics show that in the year 1881 the population of Canada was 3 1-4 million rural and 1 1-4 million urban; in 1931 it was 4 3-4 million rural and 5 1-2 million urban. These figures are rather ominous when we consider the slow development of the natural resources of Canada and the suitability of much of Canada for agriculture. Moreover, with increase in percentage of urban population goes a decline in the birth rate. Economic conditions and environment are not conducive to large city families. The percentage of rural population in the province of Quebec decreased from 77.2 per cent in 1871 to 36.9 per cent in 1931.

If it were within the power of man to lay his hand exactly upon the causes of great crises in past human development successive calamities might have been avoided. Had the pilots of nations been convinced of the presence and location of the worm-ridden timber in the hold, discretion and foresight would have counselled its removal. But where should we seek for the roots of the cancers in the modern world organism? The most obvious cause of the present distribution of population is to be found in industrialization. But the Industrial Revolution must not be considered a false step in an evolving society. The abuse of it through contamination with economic liberalism has wrought havoc. Liberalism in economics was certainly to have a dynamic effect. It was the excess of principles like this that Plato found to be the undermining force of societies and civilizations. At any rate, the dawn of the era of industrialism marks the beginning of decadence in agrarian society. From that time there have evolved in succession destructive elements in doctrines of political economy. In the middle of the nineteenth century Ruskin condemned a system which he saw was converting society into a soulless mechanism. Other tributary evils have swelled the tide. Social and class distinction, unemployment, paternalism, and others in our day have combined to present a rather unpleasant and chaotic picture. Probably the great evil has been the decline of a rural culture. The agrarian has come to consider himself as the oppressed, the discredited, and the under-dog. Agriculture has become for many the most repulsive of occupations. "Don't be a farmer's wife," has been the cry. Excessive rural emigration kills the nation. The building up of a false set of values, the apparent ease of city life and the growing hardship of rural life left a sour taste in the mouths of young men who should have been leaders in agriculture. Such was the rift that occurred between the rural and the city way of thinking. The seller's culture in cities made rapid strides over disorganized and non-cooperative rural communities.

Congestion in city living conditions has many attendant evils which strike at the moral and religious foundations of society. Crime and delinquency are more prevalent in city life. Mass movements, uprisings, and revolts have invariably taken place where people are crowded together. During the French Revolution the great insurrections were those

of the Parisian proletariat. One writer even states that if it had not been for the dense population of the New England States the American Revolution might never have taken place.

Writing on conditions of his own day, Ruskin saw society as a growing mechanism where man was a mere machine or part of a great machine. In his book, *Democracy's Second Chance*, Mr. George Boyle sees rural life as an organism incompatible with a mechanistic society. In rural life is found the principle of life. In it man finds use for all the faculties with which he has been endowed. The mechanism lacks a soul; the organism possesses life. This to many is merely a feeble abstraction. It is, nonetheless, a principle for the refounding of agrarian society. Abstract principles are lasting. The objection really is, and this is valid by reason of necessity, that to the majority abstractions do not present themselves in clear-cut examples. Leaders are the men who have the insight required to bring before the minds of our people the application in the work-a-day world around us of apparently useless abstractions.

From the several evil effects of the desertion of the soil for city life it is not surprising that in legislation for post-war days provision is made for a wide-scale return to rural life. Make country living attractive and watch the pendulum swing, for the trek of man has ever been in the direction in which his desires are most fully realized.

AUSTIN MacKENNA, '45

MY FISHING TRIP

It was entirely my own fault. I cannot blame anyone else for causing me to go through the most harrowing experience of my life. It lasted for only a day, but what a day that was! The reason it happened was that I forgot the old adage: "Even a fish wouldn't get into trouble if he kept his mouth shut." I talked.

My little cousin came to visit me while I was home on vacation one summer. During our conversation, I asked if he liked trout fishing. He said that he liked the sport, but