

(November 27th, 1911.)

Prince Edward Island.

BY DR. ANDREW MACPHAIL.*

AT a meeting of the Canadian Club held on Nov. 27th, 1911, Dr. Macphail said:—

I beg of you to believe that I am not insensible to the high privilege of addressing so important an audience as the Canadian Club of Toronto, composed as it is of several hundred business men and tinged with a remnant from the University, the law, the church, and other professions,—so different from my more customary audiences of students looking up and hungering to be fed. And yet, when I see so many business men here present I am disposed to think that you cannot be so busy as you pretend to be, and that you are willing to have an occasional respite from your queer trade of making money. For I suppose that not all of you engage in business for sheer love of it as the lawyers take to the law, ministers to the church, and professors to their chairs.

It would indicate an excess of confidence on my part if I were to assume that so many and so important persons came here for the main purpose of hearing me speak. I do not underestimate the attracting power which there is in the hope of a good luncheon. But if, on the other hand, any considerable number of you should feel disposed to exercise that privilege inalienable from auditors of going to sleep, I shall be free to divide the responsibility between the gentleman who has provided the luncheon and myself who am to provide the speech. I hasten to add that all other purveyors of refreshment will obviously be blameless upon this occasion at least, a testimony which I am glad to give on behalf of an oft-maligned class of business men.

My commission, as I understand it, is to give the first of a series of addresses upon the nine provinces of Canada, a series undertaken to enlarge your knowledge of the country in which you live. This zeal for knowledge, in a place where it

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is not commonly looked for, is most commendable, as it indicates a growing belief in your minds that Ontario which is a part is not greater than the whole. I commend you also for having begun at the east with the province of Prince Edward Island, and I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, upon the excellent choice of speaker which you have made. No one could speak with such fulness of knowledge, and none with a wider sympathy than I can, for the Hillsborough and the Orwell, rivers of the Island, are more precious to me than all the waters of Canada. As the Palmist said of another famous place, "I was born therein," and the dust of which we are is the dust of the place in which we were born.

Also I was educated there, according to a system which none of you would understand; and we ourselves have nearly lost the memory of it. We heard that you in Ontario had a wonderful system which had been let down from heaven and was delivered to the people by the hand of Dr. Egerton Ryerson,—one of your own has said it. A year ago we sent a Commission to study that system. A report was issued at a cost of thirty-six hundred dollars, but I am glad to say the matter has gone no further, because we have a vague feeling that the best system of education is worse than no system at all. Education, like religion, is an inner experience, and the more you organize religion and education the less of the spirit remains. Also, like religion, education has been found useful for "getting on in the world"; and that is the genesis of the twin vices of religious hypocrisy and educational veneer.

Of course I do not mean that there were no schools in those days. There were plenty of them and much education of a kind which must seem very queer to those of you who have had no experience of an education which was designed solely for its effect upon the character of the pupil.

I have in mind such a school, which was based upon the theory that it was the master and not the system which made the school. We called him "master" because he was master, not "teacher," because teaching was the last thing he thought of doing. He had no appliances to make study amusing or interesting. His only piece of apparatus was a short stick of good grain and sound heart, or a dichotomous piece of leather properly tempered by smoke and fire. To temper this instrument was considered as necessary an accomplishment as the mending of a pen. A master who could not manufacture his tools was as ill considered as a blacksmith who should forge an ax which would not hold its edge.

In those days there were very few professors, but there were plenty of schoolmasters, which is in singular contrast with the present state of affairs, when the universities are crowded with professors who hold classes for two hours a day, five days in the week for five months in the year, and the schools are left to the tenderness and mercy of immature girls and celibate women. To be a professor was easy. To be a good schoolmaster was given to few. The breed appears to be nearly extinct. How they were created no one knows. Possibly they were professors who were spoiled in the making by developing too fine and hard a temper. Occasionally they were scholars who had fallen from their high estate by some infirmity of the flesh, but they were extremely competent to exorcise folly from the young especially at times when remorse for their own infirmity was strong upon them.

The principle upon which this old master proceeded was that all boys could be improved by being confined in a school-house. All could learn obedience just as the most ferocious animal could be reduced to submission, if only the penalty for obstinacy, sullenness, or disorder were made heavy enough. But by anything which could be learned from books only the few were expected to profit. Education was free, that is free to all who had the resolution to seize upon it and make it their own. Like the kingdom of Heaven it must be taken by violence. It was free in the same way as the elements are free in the soil, the fish in the sea, and precious metals in the earth,—free only to those who are willing to endure the toil of making them their own.

To cajole, or even to force, an unwilling or incapable boy to learn from books, was considered a piece of stupid outrage upon the boy and a waste of the master's time. His business was to maintain order, enforce discipline, and exact obedience, to create an atmosphere favorable to the development of the mind in those who had minds to develop. The only escape from this rigid discipline was into the realms of fancy, and those who were unable to rise to those heights were forced out into the world again and quickly found their place as craftsmen and as toilers upon the land or upon the sea. After the hateful tasks of the schools, the severest bodily labor on farm or in the workshop was regarded as the highest luxury by all but the few who in some way, perhaps on account of laziness, had become infected with the desire for learning. Upon these few this old master would lavish his affection and learning. No pearls were too precious and no solicitude too laborious. After having been duly punished for such gross

vices as lying and fighting, these chosen few were reserved for the precious privilege of being whipped for pronouncing a Latin word with a false quantity. That was a distinction to which none but the few could aspire.

And yet I have seen upon those rude benches boys of thirteen who had mastered the six books of Euclid, and were not insensible to the wide humanity of Horace. How it came about also that a year later they were reading the Gospels in Greek, it would be difficult for me to explain or to make understood. I think that the success of this school was due to the master's belief that education should serve no practical end, and that the moment it strove to be useful it became useless for any purpose whatever; that the end and aim of his ambition was the training of taste and the development of character. He was also quite clear upon this, that he could do nothing for a boy who had no mind. He could not do more for him than God had done. With the making of craftsmen he had nothing to do: he was concerned merely with the making of men.

At any rate all persons agree that your present system of education is unsatisfactory, and the remedy which is proposed is, that more money shall be spent upon it. I am disposed to think that the people pay very handsomely for what they get, or are likely to get. Although the people of Prince Edward Island devote one-third of their revenue to purposes of education, they pay less than any other community in Canada. I consider this a mark of their intelligence since they appraise most correctly the value of what they are getting.

Also, we had amongst us in those days, a spirit of religion, and a Church sufficiently organized to give it a refuge. Most of us, as you may be aware, came from Scotland, and were not likely to underestimate the value of the ministry, and yet the Church in which I had the privilege of being brought up was without the services of a minister for fourteen years, because, try as we might, we could not find one to suit us. We were not, however, entirely deprived of the ordinances, because we had elders who made their own hymns, and developed a fine liturgy, because, as you are aware, one of the peculiarities of the Scottish race is that amidst all its hardships and deprivations, it has never been deprived of the gift of extempore prayer.

Also in those days we created an organized industry. We made our own machinery, wove our own cloths, built churches, houses, and schools, without a vestige of help from the outside world. Without appliances, without advice, we worked

out a complete system of civilization. Any well brought up woman who was in possession of some flax-seed and a sheep could, in the course of time, elaborate a suit of clothes and white shirt, which appeared to me at that time to be much more handsome than any I see before me to-day. But in my own lifetime I have seen all this pass away. Older persons who are yet living saw the beginning of it. They have indeed witnessed the whole history of the human race.

Bear with me whilst I give you a few figures in proof of what I say. In the year 1871 the population of Prince Edward Island was 94,000 persons; in 1881 it had risen to 108,000; in 1891 it rose to 109,000 and then began to decline. In ten years it fell to 103,000; and by the last census which, so far as it deals with that province, I believe is correct, the population is given as 93,000. That is to say there are fewer persons there than there were forty years ago. Let me put the facts in another way. By actuarial estimate taking account of the natural increase,—and the fertility of the individual family is greater than in any other part of Canada, not even excluding Quebec,—the population should be 165,000. Accordingly there is a deficiency of 72,000 persons. It would not be so depressing if we were sure that this flower of the flock was migrating to other parts of Canada for the up-building of a nation, but unfortunately this is not the case. By a careful calculation Inspector McCormac has demonstrated that, in a series of school districts which are under his care, 88 per cent. of these emigrants have found homes in the United States.

A new light has dawned upon the people. They have discovered that political affairs are managed not primarily in the interests of the people but in the interests of the politicians themselves, and this observation is not confined to Prince Edward Island alone. For several years government by party has come to a state of vicious perfection. The system works well if one party is strong enough, and the other is weak enough, but unfortunately both the parties are so strong that government, which at first was difficult, soon became impossible. Originally we had all the paraphernalia of an Imperial Government, namely, a Lieutenant-Governor, a Legislative Council, and a House of Assembly. Within recent years these two Houses were incorporated in one which contained thirty members. For several years there have been sixteen persons on one side, and fourteen on the other. When a speaker was chosen, the government had a majority of one. Two bye-elections have just been held with a curious result, that the people who called themselves Conservatives now hold fifteen

seats. The persons who called themselves Liberals hold fourteen seats; and there is one independent member which makes up the thirty. Government under such circumstances is impossible, and I hear that a general election is shortly to be held. This independent member,—but it would not be in good taste if I spoke of him too particularly,—met with such extraordinary support in the bye-election that people are beginning to ask themselves if it would not be well to make an extension of the principle. During the course of what the politicians call a campaign, this independent candidate urged the people to end the divorce between politics and business, and take the management of their own affairs into their own hands, and to have, instead of ministers of politics, ministers of industry, because the province had been too long blighted by a political system which became all the more rigid because it was intertwined with Dominion politics. With a new and strong government—whether Liberal or Conservative, it is immaterial which if they do not put partizanship before duty—the situation must be faced.

The first business of a community is to discover the situation in which it finds itself, and then proceed to adapt itself to its environment. The early settlers in Prince Edward Island understood their situation perfectly and knew how to profit by it. They found themselves in possession of the most fertile part of the earth's surface and a climate above it, which permitted that fertility to come to its full fruition. They cleared away the forests and tilled the soil. They sent their products into all the markets of the world in ships hewn out of their own timber, and brought back in those same ships such goods as they required, bought in the best markets of the world, and admitted for consumption at a rate of duty which was less than one per cent. in advance of that which is charged in England to-day. As a result of this adjustment to environment the population increased from three thousand at the beginning of the century to 108,000 in eighty years. With this rapid increase of a sound and homogeneous native population social life became organized. Schools and churches reflected the general prosperity by a generous education and a profound religious life.

But about that time something happened. That was the Confederation of the Canadian Colonies, under which the people of Prince Edward Island handed over the power of taxing themselves to others whose interest was that they should be taxed as heavily as possible. This new power immediately utilized the opportunity by increasing the customs duties from

five to nineteen per cent. First it prevented the people from buying in the markets of the world. As a result it prevented them from selling in the markets of the world, and the ruin was completed by a chain of other evils.

Part of this money which was collected as customs duties was returned as subsidies and for the construction of public works; but these amounts were expended not for the purpose for which they were intended but to entrench one government or another in power. When the people saw that the taxes which they paid were used to construct wharves on dry land, to build breakwaters where there were no harbours, and light-houses for the guidance of ships which never came, then they knew their money was being used for their own corruption.

Transportation with the upper Canadian provinces was slow and expensive. Rates upon goods bound westward were higher than upon goods going to the east. It was hard enough to buy: it was impossible to sell. To this day there is no competition in railway or steamship rates. The railway service is in the hands of a monopoly, the worst of all monopolies, namely, the government, since whatever business a government does it does badly. At the present moment it costs 26 cents a hundred pounds to carry freight from a mid-Island point to Sydney, a distance of 300 miles, whilst it costs 16 cents a hundred pounds to carry the same class of freight from Montreal to Sydney, a distance three times as great.

Instead of facing the situation as it existed the people indulged in vain dreams of the day when they could again trade with the States, and convey their products to the mainland through a hole under the sea. Now that dream is at an end, for the present at least. The people of Ontario decreed on September 21st that this tunnel, even if it were built, should be merely a horizontal hole in the ground with its ends in a field.

What now is the remedy? The remedy lies in accepting the situation instantly and profiting by it until a new situation can be created, by applying to that part of Canada the protective system which is declared to be so good for the whole, by refusing to buy from the other provinces of Canada any commodity which can be produced at home by cultivating the home market.

For forty years the people of the Island have pushed to an extreme the economic doctrine of exporting their finished product, namely, their sons and daughters. The time has now come to keep them at home by employing them in the manufacture of those articles which are now purchased abroad.

And these goods are to be made not in factories but in the homes, not in cities by machines but in the villages by hard work.

The machine-myth is at an end. Men long ago realized that the factory is a curse socially and politically. They are now coming to understand that economically it is a failure as well, since factory-made goods in spite of their apparent cheapness are the dearest in the end. None but the very poorest amongst the people can afford to buy the product. People of means never use articles which are made in a factory, because they cost too dear by reason of their very cheapness and consequent rottenness.

A factory is based upon co-operation, that is by the co-operation of a few to reduce their employees to a condition which has many evils from which a system of frank slavery was free. It is a perfectly easy matter to seize upon the benefits of co-operation and apply them to hand workers in their own homes. The extension of industries depends upon capital, and in Prince Edward Island there is abundance of that. In the banks there are seven million dollars on deposit at three per cent. This money is sent to Montreal and Toronto where it earns six, and is used for financing those combines which in turn are used for exploiting the very owners of the money.

The first thing then that is required is a system of co-operative banking, by which a man who has saved a few dollars will lend them to his neighbor on the guarantee of the community in which they both live. There is nothing new in this principle. It is a strict application of the methods of all public finance. If the local carpenter; shoe, harness, carriage, or furniture maker, blacksmith, weaver, miller, or farmer, had access to even a small amount of capital, to purchase stock and pay apprentices and employees, he could compete on more than equal terms with the largest manufacturer who must pay enormous city rentals, taxes, and salaries, and provide in addition dividends upon his grossly watered capital. He would provide gainful employment and keep his supply of goods up to the demand. The reason why people buy ready-made articles is just because they are ready. They would buy hand made articles just as quickly if they could be procured, and the cost of transportation would be largely eliminated.

But most of all is co-operation required among farmers. It is twice blessed. It ensures quality and a fair and uniform price from year to year. Farmers only succeed when their crops are sold before they are sown. Then they work with a

certainty of profit and they have a standard of attainment ever before their eyes. Few farmers can afford to experiment with new crops. They have not the time, and they have too much sense to assume the risk. In a community where all are certain to receive the profit each member is willing to share in the cost of the experiment. For lack of transportation, through the habit of looking to the government which takes all the taxes and returns only a part, through the uncertainty of prices, and through the dishonesty of some in marketing produce of an inferior quality the farmers of Prince Edward Island have suffered as a whole. They can solve all difficulties of transportation by not using it, that is, by making for themselves what they now import. They will produce products which are uniformly good, when all guarantee the quality and penalize those who persist in lowering the grade.

Many crops must be abandoned and others introduced. Of this I shall cite only one or two instances. One is tobacco. Every year there is imported into Prince Edward Island tobacco at a cost of two hundred thousand dollars from Ontario and Quebec, when it can be produced as cheaply and as good at home. With a little instruction and enthusiasm this industry alone would stay the outflowing tide of population. No country in the world is more favorably situated for the growth of strawberries. They ripen at a season of the year when all other supplies are exhausted. A few farmers are making a profit of three hundred dollars an acre; and yet if one purchases a bottle of strawberry jam in a shop he will find that it was manufactured in England. The same experience holds true for all other small fruits.

At the moment there is a cry all over the world for hand-made articles of daily use from those who are tired of the rottenness and barbarity of the product of the factories. The remotest regions are reached for honest cloth, leather, and furniture. All these things, along with the choicest foods can be produced in Prince Edward Island, and if the present depopulation is allowed to continue it will be due to the grossest neglect upon the part of the government and of the people themselves.

It was of the history of Prince Edward Island I was to speak to you, and I have by no means forgotten my subject. There is a theory of history of which my friend, Professor Wrong, is an exponent, that the life of the people is the chief material of a historian. In any case that is all the history we have. We have no records of wars and massacres; we have nothing to compare with Queenston Heights and Lundy's

Lane. Charlottetown was never burned to the ground as Toronto was. We cannot boast even of a rebellion or of an "Orange riot."

I do not think you would be much interested if I were to discuss whether it was Jacques Cartier, or Stephen Gomez, or John Cabot who first saw those lovely shores, but certainly Cartier has left it upon record that he sailed by an island covered with trees which was the loveliest a man ever set his eyes upon. This enchanted land by inference could only have been Prince Edward Island. There is one fact, however, in which you might be interested. This is the only place in the new world which ever enjoyed the advantages of a complete feudal system. The Island was divided into sixty-seven townships, and persons who had claims upon the English court—some of them not of the best possible validity—were allowed to draw lots and thereby become owners of a township. There were, of course, certain obligations attached. A number of persons had to be settled upon the land and a quit rental paid from year to year. This system lasted until 1867 when compulsory purchase was introduced by means of a sum of money advanced by the Imperial treasury.

For about ten years Prince Edward Island suffered the humiliation of being annexed to Nova Scotia, but its most serious history dates from 1758, the year in which Louisburg fell. By the Treaty of 1763 this province was transferred from the French and became the centre of the trading posts in the Maritime Provinces. Even at that time the ship-building industry had made it famous. For many years the inhabitants were a sea-faring people, and there were few families in which a ship-master was not included on the roll. Even in my remembrance these men would come home from foreign parts bringing strange animals, wearing strange clothes, all of which gave to the country an extremely interesting character. Many of these relics still remain, but they are disappearing fast. By means of the ship-building industry in the Maritime Provinces Canada obtained the fourth place in the world in respect to shipping, but within the last forty years it has declined to the eleventh place.

I have one further admission to make. Prince Edward Island is not in superficial area the largest of the provinces, although you might think it was if you took account of the number and intelligence of the people who have issued from it. I have persuaded many people of its fertility and its beauty, but I cannot persuade even myself of its great size.

Some humorist has just handed me a card on which the enquiry is written, "What about the oysters?" Without being drawn aside from my main theme I shall take time to say that this industry will not escape attention; and if in future you should have to pay more for oysters than you do now, you can comfort yourselves by reflecting upon the days when you did not pay enough. Our trouble in the past has been that the government held power by so frail a tenure that they were unable to enforce proper regulations lest they might lose a few votes. The people are strongly in favor of closing the beds against indiscriminate fishing, since those who live in the vicinity can always get enough for their own use. The Orwell river, for example, has been closed,—that is where I live,—and, as a neighbor said to me, "that will keep off foreigners from Pictou, yes, and from Murray Harbor too." You will understand that Pictou is in Nova Scotia; but you will hardly know that Murray Harbor is a place not more than twenty miles away. The *genius loci* is strong amongst us.

I am not here to expose our minor difficulties or to relate the sorrows which have come to us by reason of our failing population. There is a fundamental law of nature that amongst a people which is failing numerically the individuals themselves deteriorate. Therein is the sadness, the tragedy of it. And it is not as if this depopulation were of the country districts only, the same as in Ontario; here they are going to your cities; but with us the one city is declining in population quite as fast as the country is. Now the fact we have to face as Canadians is, that we cannot live by cities alone; if the country districts decay, the whole of Canada is bound to decay as well.

If we are troubled about our own census returns, you may well be troubled about the census returns as they apply to Canada. You have heard so much bombast about our progress that you cannot believe the truth; and the truth is that we are not holding our native population. In the last ten years 1,700,000 emigrants have come into the country, and that is about the increase which the census shows. I ask you where have our own native-born gone. I ask you also, what will it profit a people if they gain the whole world and lose their own sons.

Our fiscal policy for the last thirty years has favored the cities at the expense of the country; but I think I see signs of the end. Men are getting tired of noise and machinery, tired of living the life of parasites and pamperers. They are spending more time in the country, and in the summer the

cities are deserted by all who have means enough or sense enough to get away.

I am sure that many persons here present were born in the country. You can do much for those who still live there and more for yourselves. I adjure you then to do something for the country districts, because if it is not well with them it cannot be well with Canada as a whole. I give you my thanks for this patient hearing, and I congratulate myself that none of you have found it necessary to avail yourselves of that inalienable privilege which I mentioned in the beginning,—a very long time ago as it must seem.