

(December 19th, 1938)

## "The New Canadians"

By JOHN GRUDEFF, B.A.

MR. JOHN GRUDEFF:—Mr. Chairman, guests and members of the Canadian Club, this is a great pleasure and a great honor to me. You have not only done honor to me by inviting me to talk to you on the subject but you have also done honor to all those new Canadians throughout the Dominion.

There are about 2 million people in Canada who came from Europe and they are not, therefore, of British origin. In Toronto, alone we have about 114,000 of these people and of the population of Winnipeg more than one-third consists of new Canadians. In Sudbury, Timmins and Kirkland Lake more than half the population are new Canadians. In the Province of Ontario more than a quarter of the population are new Canadians. And in the Dominion of Canada one-fifth of the population are new Canadians. Now I wish I had at my disposal at least one hour to tell you something about these people and their problem. You may not like to hear about anybody else's problems but when I say I would like you to know them it is because their problems are problems as Canadian citizens and they are therefore problems of the Canadian people. In the short time that is given to me I cannot say very much. In my profession as a lawyer I have had the unusual experience to meet people from Europe. I have on my books about 20 nationalities. I have been doing work for nearly 20 nationalities in Toronto and some years ago when I was a student at the University I taught English to these people at the Y.M.C.A. There I began to inquire the reasons why these people came to Canada, what they thought of Canada, were they pleased with Canada and the people and did they find what they expected; did they have any grievances? I began this inquiry about 18 years ago

and I have continued this ever since. I have this unusual experience in my business of studying these people and feel proud to be able to stand before you and tell you something about it.

I stand before you as one who came to Canada 25 years ago, a foreigner who has long ceased to be a foreigner.

These people came as foreigners. They have long ceased to be foreigners. They are good Canadian citizens, have established themselves, have children in Canada, and have no intention of ever going back to the country from which they came and native Canadians should find out what they can do for these people. Their problems are of national importance and their problems therefore are your problems. Now many of you would like to know why these people came to Canada. Why didn't they stay in the countries of their origin. It doesn't take long to convince you and show you why they came. When you consider there are 38 separate and distinct national states in Europe and the area of Europe and the area of Canada where we have only about 10 millions. The countries of Europe are exhausted. They are overcrowded. There are no opportunities for the people there. They therefore look around to see where they can emigrate and find a better country, and today there is no country like Canada. If any of you happened to be born on the continent of Europe and wish to emigrate the only two places are the United States and Canada. When these people came here they came to stay. They have connected themselves with the Canadian people. The prosperity of the Canadian people is their prosperity, the happiness of the Canadian people is their happiness. In their former home there was no prosperity, no happiness and this being so there is no reason why these people cannot be good Canadian citizens. They have seen other countries with no opportunities and have seen the opportunities in Canada, the great wealth of the Canadian nation, the great privileges and freedom they have. As soon as these people came to Canada they endeavoured to find how soon they could obtain nationalization papers. They are anxious to become British subjects. And once they become British subjects they feel proud. There is nothing in this world that will make anybody as proud as when one was born in a small country in Europe and

comes to Canada and becomes not only a Canadian citizen but a British subject. They value their British nationality very highly and I myself regard nothing else as of such great value as my British nationality in Canada and I consider myself very fortunate. When I say this I am voicing not only the opinion of myself but all these people whom I represent and for whom I speak today.

Now these people have no intention of going back. It is about time the Canadian people found out what they could do for them. One thing they resent very much is this term foreigner. Canadian people are apt to speak of us as foreigners and we resent this very much because we feel once we have become British subjects and have been entitled to all the privileges and advantages of born British subjects and are true to all the obligations of natural born citizens we feel we no longer are foreigners. Now in our endeavors to become good and worthy Canadian citizens and British subjects, we read in the papers that these foreigners are undesirable, and do not make good subjects, that they are responsible for all the crime and evils in Canada, we resent that very much because we know this is not the cause. People who make statements of this nature are people who do not inquire to find out whether this is so or not and I can assure you these people are good Canadian citizens and they desire to be 100 per cent. British subjects, but when we read of what is being said about us, that we are not Canadians, that we cannot be Canadians, that we are foreigners and we are undesirable, we resent it. These people prevent us from being what we want to be, good Canadian citizens and worthy British subjects. You cannot expect these new Canadians to fully appreciate the advantages they have in Canada of the freedom of the great British institutions under which we live unless these people are in a position to understand the English language. It takes a long time for anybody to accomplish anything unless he sets for himself a purpose and plan to accomplish. It takes a long time for these people to learn English if nobody attempts to help them and to learn something about the great possibilities we have in Canada. In the past very little has been done to help them learn English. If they can be put in possession of an adequate knowledge of English undesirable

qualities will vanish. The least native Canadians could have done for these people is to attempt to teach them something about Canadians and the British Empire. They will be still prouder of being British. We have started classes in the University and I would like some of you to come and see the impatience of these people to learn English. They are very eager to learn English. You will be proud to see how eager they are to learn. There is a problem in the homes of these people. Two civilizations are met, the old world and that cultured civilization of the new world. Children who came here when they were babies and know they have acquired the English language, they have learned the English language to perfection. They have acquired Canadian culture and customs and they sometimes feel embarrassed when their friends find out their parents are not Canadians. These young children, second generation children, are 100 per cent. Canadian. The first generation not knowing English well enough they could not speak to their children properly. In the homes of these people the children always speak the English language. I have visited these homes and everywhere I have gone I have tried to hear what language they speak and I discover that the language spoken is the English language. The children speak English, the parents unfortunately cannot understand English sufficiently well, and there we have an unsatisfactory and unfortunate situation. We have the superiority complex on the part of the children and the inferiority complex on the part of the parents. The parents feel they are inferior. They cannot understand their children. The children feel they are superior and their parents not clever enough to learn English. This is not a good condition. As we all know a nation is composed of families and if the family unit is sound the whole will be sound, and as long as this condition exists the unit in very many cases is not as sound as it should be. The parents should know something about Canada. They should know something about the English language. They should be in a position to advise their children and the children should take advice. You cannot expect children to grow up as good citizens except under the influence of their parents. The influence of the parents is not just the most desirable because there is not very much

influence and the parents have remained with the old culture. In the schools the second generation are often met with this problem. In the public schools they are often looked at as foreigners, children who were born in Canada, and that is undesirable because these children know nothing else about the country from which their parents came. They know all about Canada and if they are looked on as foreigners by classmates it is undesirable and not good for Canadian citizenship. If I had time I could enumerate a number of instances which have been brought to my attention and then you would understand what I am talking about and what I am telling you is first hand knowledge and actually the facts.

In the schools we would like to have school teachers sometimes tell these people who are of foreign parents that they come from a world race and their parents are good people and their parents can have influence over them. They should not be referred to as foreigners who had a chance to come to Canada and who should be sent back. The second generation are 100 per cent. Canadians but with the attitude of some of the Canadian people their attitude reflects itself on the second generation. When the father comes home and tells his wife he cannot find work because he is a foreigner and the boss at the factory calls him a Dago he tells his wife in the presence of the children and the children feel there is some injustice done their parents and as long as that continues they cannot be expected to have the right attitude toward Canadianism. Now Canada is a vast country; no country in the world is like Canada, no country has ever been blessed with the climate, fabulous wealth of Canada. The Canadian people should consider themselves extremely fortunate being in Canada and being neighbors of this great republic to the south. No other country has the opportunities, the wealth, the material, to build the greatest nation the world has ever seen. We have all the material and while I say a great country Canada is a great country but not a great nation, yet we have all the material to make Canada the happiest and most prosperous nation in the world. To build up this country, with its 3,700,000 square miles, as much as the continent of Europe, and in Europe there is over 500,000,000 people, we must work hard. The task is not simple but is a great task and we need men of broad

minds, men with big hearts. Canada is big and can produce big men, men who can think not only of this country. You cannot expect small men to build up this country. And we must handle the situation from different angles. We must try to coordinate all the Canadian people. There must be harmony between the new Canadians and the old Canadians of British origin. The new Canadians should feel they are welcome and that in their attempt to build Canada they are being recognized and are looked on as worthy citizens. Since this task of building Canada is a large task we cannot accomplish this without asking for Divine guidance and wisdom. We must pray because this is an exceedingly large and difficult task and while praying let us not forget suffering humanity but let us transcend the boundaries of this Dominion and pray that men the world o'er shall "brithers be for a' that."

Immediately following Mr. Grudeff's address the members were entertained by groups of New Canadians who rendered Ukranian Folk songs.