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Canadian Mind in Formation and Expression

By Rev. G. Stanley Russell.

Chairman A. E. Arscott:—Gentlemen, before proceeding to introduce the speaker I should like to say that this is the first occasion I have been required to take the chair since my election as one of the vice-presidents of the Club, and I should like today to express appreciation of the honor conferred upon me.

We have as our guest of honor today the Rev. G. Stanley Russell. Through the function of the Club over the course of the year we have opportunities of hearing many outstanding men address us, men in various walks of life and from every part of the world, but it is a great pleasure to us to have the privilege of listening to an address from one of our own citizens.

The Rev. Mr. Russell is of Scottish parentage. He is a graduate of Aberdeen University and received his theological training at York United College. He achieved a rare measure of distinction in important posts which he held in England before coming to Canada. He was Chairman of the London Congregational Union, an association covering over two hundred churches in London and vicinity. Among his other distinctions he was honorary chaplain to the Tower of London, and honorary chaplain to King George Hospital from 1916 to 1919. He also took special interest in Queen Alexandra Hospital for paralyzed soldiers, where his ministries will be long remembered by many paralyzed Canadians who passed through that institution. He has chosen to address us today on "Canadian Mind, in Formation and Expression," a subject to which he has given considerable study and I am sure we will all

enjoy it. I have great pleasure in introducing the Rev. Mr. Russell.

REV. G. STANLEY RUSSELL:—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I am very grateful indeed for the kind way in which the chairman has introduced me but I do not think I should have had the impertinence to take such a subject as I have chosen today if I could only speak to you on the basis of four years' residence as a citizen in your midst, I think perhaps that in my connection with Canada it is always well for me to remind any audience when I am going to speak on the country that I have been a Canadian by marriage for twenty years, and that perhaps a son-in-law is not the least observant or the least sympathetic in his connection with family affairs, and that before I drew my chair up to the hearth, so to speak, and became fully and entirely, in spirit at any rate, a son of this country, I had had a close and constant connection which enabled me to exercise a certain amount of kind and friendly observation.

In these days of supernational thinking (and I prefer the word supernational to the word international because it conveys my meaning better), we are inclined somewhat to discount the reality. I think perhaps one reason for that, especially at the present moment, is an almost dominant enthusiasm which seems to have taken possession of many of the countries of the world and yet we should be unwise as well as inaccurate if we forget that the national contribution to the common world mind is of immense significance and that the national contribution of the Canadian mind to that larger intelligence is becoming of very great and indeed increasing importance. It is a mind which, of course, has not yet reached its full naturity. It would be impossible in a nation which has had such a comparatively short history for that mind to attain its full development. And yet those of us who have followed the amazing growth of Canada and have been following Canada in her intellectual and artistic life over a long period of years, well, we stand amazed at the development that has taken place! We look forward in anticipation of delight to the still greater development that the future holds in store.

How this Canadian mind is bound to be determined by

a number of factors, first of all by the geographical situation of our country, by the very fact that it is placed in the strategic centre of human intercourse, right, as you may say, in the very middle of all that is happening, not only in Europe but in the Orient as well! And our geographical situation and the contacts which through it we are able to effect, and, indeed, are compelled to effect, is bound to have a very great influence on the particular lines that our national thinking will assume.

There is, of course, a further factor in the formation of the Canadian mind and that is the various elements which go to form the Canadian people. Anyone, who like myself has come from outside and from a nation in which the population has been more or less homegeneous, is bound to look with admiration and expectation upon the strange getting together of so many races and of so many influences, aye, and so many religious outlooks that are bound in process of time to fuse themselves into the Canadian people.

I find as I read my Canadian history that for ten years after the Treaty of Quebec there were some two hundred English Protestants to some seventy thousand French Catholics, and that that French Catholic element, which today is perhaps largely concentrated in Quebec, is descended from a stream of European culture which is different from our own. I do not think perhaps any Canadian can do better than read what I believe to be Sir Arthur Canon Doyle's most masterly historic novel, *The Refugees,* in which the influence of old Versailles and the Court of Louis XIV, not only its mere decorations, still less its unfortunate sides, but the real greatness of its personalities and the real value of many of its ideals, are shown in the second half of the book, translated into the French Canada of Frontenac and Labarre.

And in addition to that element, it is impossible, of course, to traverse all of them, there is continually blown upon this land, constantly, although with varying strength, a breeze which has come from the south. While it is recognized by all of us that the closest and most friendly relations with a great people who are not only our neigh-

bors but our kindred, and not only our kindred but our friends, is essential to our development, we cannot escape, nor, I think, do we entirely wish to escape, the influence that their national life and national thought will have upon us.

Then we have another element in our life, an element which today is attracting a good deal of the world's attention. I refer to the Jews. Now in England, in which word, being a Scot, I include Scotland; we leave them the name, gentlemen; we have not left them much else. In England we have a proverb about the Jews and that is that every country as a rule receives not only the government it deserves but also the Jews it deserves, and in England they are very proud of the fact, and justly proud, that the Jew has become a citizen of real value, that he has made a great contribution to the political, intellectual and artistic life of the nation, and that such names, not only as Disraeli, but also that Marquis of Reading and Sir Herbert Samuel, stand out amongst those most conspicuous in their value as citizens of the old land.

And then we have in Canada also a vast number of smaller representations of different peoples. I have been reading just a little the story of those fascinating people the Doukhobors and I find they arrived in Halifax Harbor in the year 1899 and were received with immense delight by the inhabitants who welcomed them heartily, and the Doukhobors replied by uniting in the singing of a great Christian hymn. They had, so I am told, been handed over to the tender mercies of the Tartars with the idea that the Tartars would exterminate them as Christians, but the Tartars replied that the Doukhobors were certainly not Christians because a Christian they discovered, would fight upon the slightest provocation and the Doukhobors refused to fight at all and therefore could not possibly belong to the number of adherents to the Christian religion. We have the Doukhobors with us; we have, I believe, one hundred thousand Hungarians, and if I may bring it down to personal experience, I find that my barber is an Italian from Naples; that my laundry goes to a Chinaman, who does it exceedingly well. I find just around the corner from

where I live there is a fruit store occupied by a Greek. I discovered that in a restaurant I know very well there are Frenchmen and Germans both acting as waiters. If I travel on a train, I find I am courteously attended by a negro; if I go to the town of Picton I find in Picton, if I enter a cafe, I am served by two Japanese, and that every one of these is standing equally before the law as a Canadian citizen, forming part of that Canadian mind, contributing, perhaps unconsciously, something to it, that Canadian mind of which the foundation and the balance must be supplied, and will, I trust, always be supplied by the culture and calm deliberate thinking of those whose traditions are deeply rooted in those little islands that are washed by the North Sea.

Now, sir, it seems to me that the first task that we have as Canadians, is the welding of all those elements into one in such a way as not to destroy them but in such a way as to elicit from them that which they have to give to our common national life. I venture to suggest to you that there are two ways by which this may be done. The first is by allowing every individual to stand on his own merits, by refusing to admit amongst ourselves prejudices against any individual because of the race from which he springs or the color of his skin, or the traditions that are associated around his particular national culture. Let a mar have a fair deal. Let him have a chance whether he be Jew or Gentile, whether he be Italian or Scot. Let him have a chance of proving himself a good citizen and a good comrade in the great march of the Canadian people towards maturity which still lies before us.

On this particular I can speak feelingly as a Scot, for I have discovered that there is a tradition in the minds of a number of people as to what a Scot really is. The typical Scot's portrait exists in the minds of a number of our inhabitants, for example, south of the Tweed as that of a gentleman with somewhat rosy complexion, habitually garbed in a kilt, sitting on a barrel of oatmeal, holding in his hand a bottle of whiskey, reciting almost perpetually Robert Burns's poetry, and his foot is touching the ground covering an elusive "bawbee." No one, of course, who is

a Scot will ever admit the authenticity if that portrait, and yet, over and over and over again, very largely due to the activity of the professional Scot, that portrait, in one form or another, is shown to exist in the minds of those who do not share our nationality. And therefore I plead for all those different constituents of our common Canadian citizenship, no less for the Gentile than for the Jew, no less for the Catholic than for the Protestant, no less for the Italian than for the Briton, that in the life that is being formed and developed so marvelously every single individual shall be given his full chance to stand on his own feet and prove his own worth.

And the second means whereby I think this welding may be accomplished is by the establishment, which is bound to come sooner or later, of a common care for the unfortunate, that will be expressed through the wise and careful inauguration of social services. Those of us who have lived in Great Britain have seen a strange sight. We have seen a man endowed with what was almost dictatorial power fall politically like Lucifer, never to hope again. And the thing that we remember about that man, much as we criticize him, much as we may in some respects differ from him, much as we may politically be separated from him, the thing we remember about that man is not his political career in recent years, not even his contribution during the great war, which was undoubtedly considerable, but the fact that in the face of obloquy and derision, in the face of vested interests, in the face of party political and class prejudice he carried through, with the help of Lord Oxford and others, the greatest scheme of social service possessed, I believe, today by any nation under the sun, a scheme of social services which considers the health, the unemployment — every conceivable contingency that may fall upon the unfortunate and arouse the conscience and resources of the whole nation to take care of those particular cases, leaving it not merely to, though not taking it entirely away from, the generosity of those so minded, but laying the great business as a charge upon the minds and the resources of those who are able and who as citizens ought to contribute.

And therefore, sir, it seems to me, that in this great land of Canada we shall be wise to profit somewhat by the experience of older nations. We shall not imagine that in order to secure the care of the unfortunate it is only necessary to destroy one *ism* and replace it by another *ism* and we shall resolve to refuse to be stampeded either to right or to the left, but to take our way along the middle road, forming a care in the national conscience for the unfortunate, which will bind together by great human cords which cannot be snapped, all those who dwell in this land upon whom the vicissitudes of life are apt to fall. I cannot imagine anything that would make a man feel more kindly towards the citizens of any other race, perhaps even of any other language. I cannot imagine anything that would make a man feel more indebted to the country to whose citizenship he has been admitted than the knowledge that these fellow citizens in that country are united in one great purpose, and that is to see that human suffering shall as speedily and as far as possible be eliminated from our Canadian life and that it shall be done not merely by the efforts of the generous here and there but by the great onward sweep of a whole people who have set that thing as a purpose in their hearts.

Now, sir, this Canadian mind will express itself in a number of ways. It will express itself, it has already begun to express itself, in a literature and an art and other directions which are entirely its own. Upon those I cannot pause except to say that such a book as *Marie Chapdelaine* and such another as *Our Daily Bread* could not possibly have arisen from any life save the life of this country of Canada. They are not American. They are not English. They are completely and fully set against the background of Canadian life and Canadian experience. I am quite sure that this mind will express itself along the lines of a great concern for the well being of the world at large and nations so constituted and so composed cannot be indifferent to any conditions that may arise throughout the great wide world itself.

Canada has already begun to express herself in that direction. I think I am right in saying that a Canadian

was President of the Council of the League of Nations before ever a representative even of the Motherland attained to that position. And that concern for the affairs of the world is bound to lie upon our hearts and to lie upon them not only as an incentive but also as a restraint. He is a very bad friend to the world and by no means a good citizen of Canada who talks or writes war at the present moment. There ought to be in this land, and I am certain there is, a preponderance of moderate and deliberate opinion which will look out upon the affairs of the world with calm steadfast eyes and will refuse to be flung into hysteria on the one hand or to be terrified into inaction on the other. If it is true that the League of Nations is to be destroyed, if it is true that it can no longer be maintained, then, sir, let us remember that this dream that it represents has come to the hearts of men no fewer than twenty-five times, and twenty-five times has receded; that this is the twenty-sixth attempt to bring the life of the world into some kind of federated operation, and if this twenty-sixth attempt should end, as I believe it will not, in chaos and catastrophe, it is only that it may make way for the twenty-seventh, the twenty-eighth, the twenty-nineth, the thirtieth, and the final attempt and triumph of an idea which is so completely necessary and so completely rooted in human conscience that to fight against it is ultimately to fight against God himself.

In that there is no finer leadership for the world than the leadership of the Canadian people, a people that can hold out a hand to Europe on the one side and to Asia on the other, and that has actually on the same soil with her all the nations of the American continent, south as well as north. Such a nation is strategically placed to give the world the very finest and richest leadership that is possible, a leadership drawn from her own situation and from her own human position.

And I think the Canadian mind will express itself in the resolve that while these great resources of ours have already been tapped — I do not think they have been any more — by the pioneers and their successors, there lies before the Canadian people a new era in which pioneering

has to be done, an era of the mine and the soil, and I believe, and I think you will agree with me, that one of the things that we hope to find is that when these present dark days are over and we can once again turn to the increasing by immigration of our population, I hope the day will come then when we shall be able to welcome from the islands across the sea a still greater reinforcement of the British element in our population. Unfortunately, sir, if that is to be with success there must be a change, a certain change, in our Canadian thinking. It is possible at this moment for an Italian — I use the Italian simply as an illustration — to come to this country, or having been in this country to register himself as a Canadian citizen after five years. That done he is one of us. He shares our good fortune and our bad. He has thrown over him the mentality of protection of the Canadian flag. But, sir, one coming from the old country is not thus protected. And at the end not only of five years or of ten years, if he be unfortunate, he may be deported, even with his Canadian born children, back to the land from which he came. These deportations have been taking place in these unhappy times through which they have lived. They have created a very unfortunate impression both in England and Scotland and if we are to obtain from the old land in the days that lie before us the kind of settler and citizen we desire, indeed the only kind we can tolerate, we must lay it down very definitely that having accepted them on their entrance we thenceforth become responsible for them, or that at least we extend to those who are of our own flesh and blood and national traditions the same facilities which today are possible to an Italian or a Frenchman or a German, but are denied to those who come from Great Britain.

I am perfectly certain, sir, that the mind of the Canadian people does not assent to any such discrimination as I have suggested, that the mind of the Canadian people will express itself very definitely in the wholehearted acceptance of any who come to us and who show eager and earnest desire to become part of our life and contribute to our national well-being. I am not arguing for one instant that an unsatisfactory immigrant from Great Britain should be

given preference over a satisfactory immigrant from any other country. Indeed rather the converse, but I do suggest that the deep and passionate attachment which Canada undoubtedly feels for the Motherland, an attachment which surrounds those of us who have a love for both countries, which surrounds us with an atmosphere of warmth and encouragement every time we venture to speak, I am perfectly sure that deep and passionate attachment will at least demand that for those who come to us from the old land there shall be the same standards and the same opportunity and the same interest as for those who come to us from elsewhere.

That I think is all I have time to say. The only other thing I would lay upon your conscience is the thought that this great heritage that we have, and it is a great heritage, is a heritage which now beckons to incite us not merely to the making of roads, not merely to the building of cities, not merely to great buildings and public works, not merely, that is, to make a place in the wilderness in which we may dwell, but that it incites us rather to the appreciation and the occupation of the great spiritual values which alone can make us a mighty people, and alone enable us as a mighty people to bless the whole world. It is here that one would see the great dream that Tennyson held before the minds of this generation:

> A land of settled government,
> A land of just and fair renown,
> Where freedom slowly broadens down
> From precedent to precedent.

And I remember that it was one of the fathers of Confederation who, when asked what title should be given to this new country when it was being formed out of the various provinces, turned to a page in the Book of all Books and placed his finger at the words: "His Dominion shall be from sea to sea." Federation, sir, now lies behind us, something accomplished, something in which we are living, something which is a foundation from which to develop all those great things that challenge us Canadians. But that great hope of the Fathers of Confederation is not

behind us and I believe with all my heart that whether it be through Catholic or through Protestant, whether it be through Jew or Gentile, through the spiritual conscience of the Canadians, that great hope of the Fathers of Confederation will still remain the highest and noblest expression of the Canadian mind.

CHAIRMAN ARSCOTT:—We have enjoyed very much your very excellent address, sir. I think the applause is quite indicative of the impression you have left with us. You have brought out a number of points which demand thoughtful consideration and I should like to take this opportunity of expressing to you on behalf of the Club our thanks for coming here today, and also expressing the hope that we may have you again with us.