

(April 24)

Canadian Clubs and Canadian Problems.

BY DR. J. A. MACDONALD.*

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club's closing meeting of the season, upon the subject, "Canadian Clubs and Canadian Problems," Dr. J. A. Macdonald said:

Mr. Chairman and Fellow-members,—My mind goes back to-night to the first year of this Canadian Club. That was the day of small things. We met, a dozen of us, in an upper room, and, over a frugal meal, discoursed on high themes. There was no one speaker for the day. Each man expressed his views without reserve. Opinions of all sorts were advocated. The one thing we had in common was our adoption of the Canadian point of view and our free devotion to Canadian interests.

From that small beginning has grown the club of to-day, with its membership of fourteen hundred. From the insignificance of a dozen years ago the Canadian Club idea has spread throughout Canada, and, from Sydney to Victoria, it is one of the most potent factors in the development of Canadian opinion and in the direction of Canadian life.

The remarkable success of the Canadian Club is due to its freedom from restraint or compulsion, except such as intelligence and good manners require. This is an open forum. Here are welcomed men of the most diverse views. The one thing desired is that a man shall speak the truth as he sees it, and shall have earned the right to speak at all. So long as the Canadian Club maintains this attitude of independence and toleration so long will its bow abide in strength.

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And the opportunity which has come to the hand of the Canadian Club is of the very highest importance. The fact that Canada is a democracy and that the worth and power of democracy depend on its public opinion gives to the Canadian Club its supreme chance. That chance is made the more significant because other organs and agents of public opinion in Canada show marked limitations. The Press, great as is its prestige and wide as is its influence, lacks the inspiration and the direct appeal of individual personality. Parliament is not so much a leader as a servant of public opinion. The Church has the message and the machinery, but the lines on which it too often moves are too narrow for large national leadership. These and all similar institutions need to be supplemented by other organizations freer in their movements, less hampered by traditions and with sympathies broad as the nation's life.

If the Canadian Club would measure up to its opportunity it must face the problems of Canada, and, not by resolutions, but through the individual efforts of its membership in their civic relations, work for the best solving of Canadian problems. Canada's problems take on many varying phases, but the more vital of them have to do with matters of citizenship, with the national ideal, and with international relations.

I. The Problem of Canadian Citizenship.

The problem of citizenship is fundamental in any democracy, and in Canada it takes on peculiar importance. The real worth of a nation and the efficiency of its government depend on the character of its citizens. In the reign of the common people it is the average man who rules. His character, his intelligence, his devotion to public interests, determine to a degree the power and prosperity of the nation.

In Canada we are at the critical stage where the opportunity of making a new great effort in democracy is face to face with the peril which thwarted and blighted the best hopes of all democracies known to history. We might here learn from the failures of other experiments, and in the north half of this continent we might illustrate to the world as has never yet been done the true meaning of government of the people, by the people and for the people. That splendid and unique chance for great achievement is offered to Young Canada to-day.

If we would be true to ourselves and to our country we must give ourselves seriously, hopefully, unselfishly, to the solving of the problem of citizenship in Canada as it looms

large to-day. And if we would do anything at all effective in this time of crisis we must face squarely the dangers which threaten the very sources of government, and which, if not averted, will cut the nerve of Canadian democracy.

i. First among the dangers to citizenship in Canada is the incoming of increasingly large masses of alien and undemocratic immigration. One of Canada's needs is population. The great vacant spaces of this country are calling for settlement. The resources of wealth are waiting development. Roads must be built, industries must be manned, the thousand services of half a continent must be carried on. But, more important than any of these, more absolute than all other considerations, the life of the nation, its purity, its freedom, its quality of endurance, stands supreme. True patriotism will not sacrifice the long and lasting life of the nation for the sake of the seeming and superficial needs of the hour.

It is with the nation as it is with the individual. A man may occasionally eat foods not up to the dietetic standard and, if his digestion is good, he may suffer no great harm. But let him eat foods that are poisoned, even though he does it ignorantly, the toxine goes into the blood, and his doctor will tell him he has intestinal toxæmia which may take months to eradicate. Let him try to work and the toxine will rupture the veins in the eyes, and his oculist will tell him he suffers from retinal hemorrhage. The poison in the blood destroys the red corpuscles, and makes it impossible for the eyes to see clearly and straight.

There is such a thing as poisoning the blood of the nation. A Mexican menu card is no more dangerous to a Canadian's digestion than is the immigration of alien and incompatible peoples a menace to the citizenship of Canada. The vitality of the nation may be reduced and its vision may be so blurred that it cannot distinguish between right and wrong.

And the most dangerous elements in immigration are not ignorance or poverty, or even physical disability. The ignorant can be educated, the poor may earn wealth, the diseased may be segregated and cared for. It is the political and moral unfitness that does lasting damage. Immigrants that belong to races whose whole history is a contradiction of democracy, no matter what their intelligence or alertness, are a danger to Canadian citizenship. The door of entrance should be safely guarded, not because the labor market is congested, not because of any theory of "Canada for Canadians," and not because Canadians are superior to Oriental or other races. The people of Canada dare not put up such bars. They would

not be recognized in the judgment hall of the nations. But the supreme right of a self-governing nation to protect the sources of its governmental authority and to maintain the foundations of its national life is recognized in every civilization, and the exercise of that right is without offence to any civilized people. Because Canada has gone the limit of manhood franchise and makes its citizens a vital part of its government, Orientals, who are by nature and instinct undemocratic, and who cannot forswear allegiance to their own emperor and nation, must not be allowed to colonize in Canada. The most vital interest of Canadian citizenship is against it. All experiences of other democracies forbid it.

The danger of our alien and undemocratic immigration is accentuated by the fact of our manhood franchise. It is bad enough when the individual voter goes up, in his dense ignorance, and marks his ballot pronouncing for or against some large policy or vital principle of government. Its true significance is seen when some ward politician rounds up his "bunch," for whom he has paid a price, or when some enfranchised foreigner whose claims have not been recognized calls out his entire colony and has his revenge.

In every great industrial centre are hundreds of foreigners who are aliens to the commonwealth of democracy, strangers to the covenants of free citizenship, ignorant of our history, unresponsive to our obligations, unable even to read the English language, and without pride in our British institutions. To give the right and the power of the franchise to these people is to sell our British birthright for less than a mess of pottage. It is to put weapons into the hands of the enemies of democratic self-government; and the politician who does the trick finds in the end the stiletto thrust between the joints of his own harness. But it is the country that suffers. Politics is degraded by the corrupt politician and the ignorant and corruptible elector. The franchise is a power for evil as for good. By it the glory of a free nation may be turned to shame.

If the tide from Southern Europe, which sweeps away so much that was best in the citizenship of the United States, is turned full and free into Canada the question of an educational test for Canadian citizenship must be faced.

2. More to be feared than all other dangers which threaten Canadian citizenship is the selfish disregard of political duties on the part of the intelligent and prosperous among our citizens, and their cynical distrust of honesty, integrity, and unselfishness as factors in the public service. Your prosperous

citizen whose attitude to a great public policy is determined by what of selfish gain there is in it for him is just one degree more dangerous than your ignorant foreigner who takes a dollar for his vote. Your master manipulator, who plays man against man and party against party, and in the end gets away with the spoil, is just so much more contemptible than the heeler in the ward. The superior person who talks loftily about the "best" people, but who abstains from all share in political campaigns, and denies all responsibility for the government of the city or of the country, is to Canadian democracy the worst type of traitor. Cynicism is at the root of most of our political evils, and cynicism is not cured either by wealth or by education. Because it is a moral habit, consistent with social respectability, it is the more dangerous to the life of the nation.

II. The Problem of the National Ideal.

If Canada is to make real progress and come to her best there must be before the minds and in the hearts of the Canadian people an ideal clearly conceived and consciously followed of what their nation ought to be. For the nation, as for the individual, progress is in pursuit of the ideal. That ideal may not be attained. Indeed, if it is worthy it must ever be in advance. New attainments in liberty and in achievement must ever reveal higher heights and worthier services. The ideal explains and gives meaning to the actual.

It was my privilege recently to fall in with the Hon. Dr. Findlay, Minister of Justice of New Zealand. "You cannot understand what is going on in New Zealand," he said, "unless you remember that all our effort in legislation and in administration is consciously directed to a clearly conceived ideal. The people and the Government aim to make life in New Zealand what in their deliberate and most intelligent judgment it ought to be. By that principle we legislate on the land question, on education, on justice, on colonization, on conservation, on insurance, on transportation, and on questions of moral and social reform. Our objective is to give to every citizen adequate access to opportunity, and to enable all the people to enjoy the rewards of honest lives and useful service."

I commend that ideal and devotion to it to all young Canadians who would give purpose and dignity to their political thinking and public service. Effort consciously directed towards that ideal would redeem politics from confusion and

inconsequence, and to such effort the best intelligence of the country would be drawn. What is wrong with us in Canada is that we have no national ideal—none clearly conceived and consistently followed. Our effort is spasmodic and piecemeal. Our governing bodies too often have no philosophy of government, no fundamental principle, no pattern in the mould of the nation they would build in the plain. They do not lead public opinion; at best, they follow. They yield to clamor here and to coercion there. They are subject to the strongest pressure, and move along the line of least resistance. That way never makes for freedom and stability. What is concerned for the people here is lost by giving away some franchise right there. Education of the people for useful service is thwarted by the access to opportunity being blocked with special privileges. Advantages which the God of Nature lavished without stint in the soil, in the mines, in the water-powers, in the forests, have been alienated from the people to make a few millionaires. Every special privilege is a special danger. Every trust that gains control of some necessary in foodstuffs or clothing or building materials, and takes toll of consumers, tampers with the rights of the common people. Every Canadian merger that unloads useless watered stock on the British market is an offence which no repudiation of American methods and no waving of the British flag will justify or excuse.

Canada is not in special danger of becoming a military nation. The day of military glory is gone. Our danger is, rather, that in the times of "piping peace" we lost the heroic out of our souls, and our one great god be the millionaire. The glorifying of wealth is a curse to any people. The honor paid to daredevil speculators who win is a little more sordid than contempt for them when they lose. The prayer Canada needs to offer with increasing fervency is the petition of the wise man of Israel: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." The question which needs to be put to men of wealth, and which will be put with heavier emphasis in the new day of just dealing will be, not "How much money have you?" but, rather, "How did you get it?"

And if Canada would follow the highest national ideal and not fail, the duty of breeding good citizens, educating them, securing for them just opportunity, and conserving their powers, as well as their chances, must be assumed as a high obligation of the nation, and not as a responsibility of private individuals alone. The culture of the children is essential to a virile national life. Education must be lifted from its low

estate and made the first duty of the nation to all its citizens. Whatever destroys manhood or betrays womanhood, or robs the child of a fair chance, must be brought to the death, not because it wrongs the individual, but because it robs the State.

So, too, the national ideal—the ideal of a nation in which the best is conserved and the fittest given a chance to survive, must range Canada positively and resolutely against war and in favor of peace. Two months ago President David Starr Jordan addressed this Canadian Club on the biological effect of war, as illustrated in the history of the war nations of Europe. He might have gone farther and indicated the reflex political and moral effects. He might have come nearer home and observed conditions in his own great republic.

What is wrong with the United States? How comes it that in a free democracy formally pledged to "government of the people, by the people and for the people" insurgency swells and protests against injustice to the people all the way from Maine to California? Why should it be that under the reign of the people predatory wealth robs the state, defies the government, and the guilty bribe itself buys out the law? Why should the strong men who loot be unmatched by an adequate number of equally strong men who defend? Has it any relation to the fact that a generation and a half ago 650,000 of the North and 400,000 men of the South, the best the American nation bred, fell in war, and left the unheroic and mercenary, the "skeddaddler," and the "bounty-jumper" to overbreed for the citizenship of to-day? Blood tells. Protoplasm tells. Heroes and patriots are not bred from cowards and grafters. The nation that kills off its best in times of war will find itself at the mercy of its worst in time of peace.

III. The Problem of International Relations.

Canada never would stand apart and alone. By history this country is made an integral part of an Empire that circles the globe and touches life on the Seven Seas. By geography Canada is the halfway house of that world-empire. And by both history and geography this young Dominion is the tie and the interpreter between the Empire of Britain and the Republic of the United States. At this moment there is not in all the world another young nation with so great a chance, commanding so strategic a position, and holding so distinctly the key to what is best and noblest in the life and civilization of the world. If Canada only measures up to the world opportunity now offered; if Canadians stand true to what is

best in the past and most inviting in the future; if with steadiness and courage we take the straight road marked out by events beyond our control, we need cover no nation's past glory, we need envy no nation's power or prestige, but with a sober sense of Canada's high destiny we may go forward confident of this, that for democracy "the best is yet to be," and that in playing her own part worthily Canada will suffer no loss, either in the sum of achievement or in the brilliance of glory, when the history of world nations comes to be written. Canada to-day holds that key position in the English-speaking world. To hold that position well is to touch the destiny of all nations.

If Canada would, indeed, play a great part among the nations her standing must be maintained as free among the free nations comprising the British Empire, without abatement of any powers of self-government and with due regard for the obligations of empire. None of the rights of responsible government won a half century ago can be surrendered to any theory of imperialism. And those rights, which give dignity and worth to all other privileges, must be made to match the new obligations which the relations of world-wide empire impose. Canada must make and administer her own laws, police her own shores, and do her share in keeping the peace on the high seas. But all this she must do in alliance with the rest of the Empire, and in the free exercise of her own responsible judgment. National autonomy is of the very essence of national freedom, and freedom is the source and secret of enduring loyalty. This is the glorious British way. By it Canada has grown in loyalty as she grew in power. And by it South Africa, that a decade ago was seething with rebellion, is now justifying once more to the world the all-conquering power of Britain's confidence in that liberty by which she makes free all the nations under the flag. Let us not doubt it. We may have no precedent for a world empire of free nations. Let us make one. Britain had to blaze the way for responsible government. Canada blazed the way for overseas confederation. Let Britain and Canada and the other British dominions give the world a new type of empire in which the measure of individual freedom is the measure of imperial loyalty.

But Canada's relations are not with Britain alone, but with America as well. A partner in the English-speaking fraternity, a factor in Anglo-American arbitration proposals, an ally for the security of America, Canada's position on this continent is a pledge of peace not for America alone, but for

the world. Believe me, the problem of Canada's future and the part and place of this young nation in the development of American life, while uncertain enough to command our severest thought, is hopeful enough to inspire our highest effort.

Time was, and not many years ago, when many thoughtful Canadians saw no future for this country except in political union with the United States. Some who were then not averse to such an issue are now the stoutest protesters against even ordinary trade relations. Time was, too, when thoughtful men in the United States looked forward to the annexation of Canada as an inevitable and not far-off event. The situation has completely changed. Annexation is no longer an open question. I do not know one informed and respectable leader of opinion in the United States who advocates it or wishes it. In a chance, but not unfruitful, conference which I had with President Taft in March of last year, when the ground was covered from the maximum and minimum tariff clause to the proposed Anglo-American arbitration treaty, the Chief Executive of the Republic assured me in terms and with an emphasis not to be mistaken that the political union of these two nations is, from the American point of view, not only not desired, but not desirable. Since the incident at Manilla Bay; since the United States was pushed out into world-politics; since the Orient loomed large on the horizon, there has come to their men of thought and leadership a new experience and a new insight. They appreciate now as they never did before the significance of the Union Jack on the north half of this continent. "The Pacific is a safer situation," said President Taft, "because two flags, not one, represent the power of English-speaking civilization." The past half-dozen years of diplomatic history illustrates this new attitude. To-day not one commanding voice, either in Canada or in the United States, would be given for annexation. That is the great new fact which shines on the horizon of Canada's international relations.

But through all these problems there runs the question: How is the ideal of the nation of eight millions to be kept unlowered and unspoiled against the day when Canada shall have eighty millions? In answering that question each man of us has his opportunity for service. Parliament and the politicians have their tasks, but the real chance is for the man out of office. Official obligations smother and hamper. In the freedom of simple citizenship the man who has a message will get his audience. The dignities of office are insignificant compared with the chance to awaken and direct the opinion

of the people. Let who will be Premier or President; it is the man who moulds the people's thoughts that rules the democracies of America.

If I have any right to make direct appeal, let me press home the obligation which Canada's problems and Canada's prospects put upon every young Canadian. Within your reach is the thing you can do. Do that thing unselfishly and with your might, and some problem of your country's life will be pressed one point nearer solution. It is for us here so to resolve and so to serve that democracy shall have a new chance and shall not fail in this young Canadian nation.