

(January 5, 1911)

Some Problems of the Canadian People

BY MR. R. L. BORDEN, M.P.*

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject, "Some Problems of the Canadian People," Mr. R. L. Borden said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—I hope that I may justify the very touching confidence reposed in me by the Executive of this Club. And as the time is limited I will plunge *in medias res* at once. I know there is a suspicion, more or less well founded, that members of Parliament waste a good deal of time, but I hope to depart from that as far as possible.

It is needless to say that my subject is one upon which I conceive there is no difference of opinion between the political parties in Canada at the present time. So far as what I shall say reflects upon the administration of affairs, I do not think it will apply to one party more than to the other, and I want it distinctly understood that I mean to reflect no more upon one than upon the other of the parties, for there is no difference either with respect to policy or administration except in minor matters.

In the brief time at my disposal, it is impossible that I could instruct you to any effect or advantage upon matters, even if capable of doing so, upon which I suppose all of you have thought. All I desire is to impress upon you the importance of these subjects, to ask you to think more of them. By and by the people of Canada may instruct the members of Parliament upon them.

The first subject to which I desire to allude is the question of immigration. We have at the present time, and have had for many years past, a great volume of immigration, the

* Before he entered politics as Member for Halifax, in 1896, Mr. R. L. Borden held the leading position at the Nova Scotia Bar. Since taking the leadership of the Conservative party for the Dominion he has steadily developed as a figure in public life, and his party has improved as a fighting force in Parliament. Mr. Borden's conduct as leader has ever been marked by dignity and he has always been regarded with the greatest respect and personal esteem on both sides of the House of Commons. In a non-political address, such as that given to the Canadian Club, he is seen at his best, as a great citizen sincerely desirous of bettering his country, without attempting to blame one party more than another for its political ills.

greater part directed to Western Canada, west of the Great Lakes, a great part of it coming from the United States, but the volume is also very great from the British Islands and Continental Europe. We welcome our kith and kin from beyond the seas, the place from which our ancestors came. Maybe we find these cumbered with traditions of the past, but we welcome them because they are accustomed to the same institutions as we here enjoy.

The same is true of those coming into Canada from the United States: they are men of our type, and accustomed to responsible government. Their government is framed, it is true, not exactly upon the lines of our own, but they are accustomed to the principles of responsible government, to the working of democratic institutions in very much the same way as we are accustomed to have them. So far, therefore, as the immigration into Western Canada from the United States is concerned, I have no apprehensions with regard to that. I asked a man of great discernment and judgment in Saskatchewan what he had to say with respect to the inflowing tide of people from the United States. He said: "There are American settlers in southern Saskatchewan who have lived here not more than one year, but they are teaching lessons in patriotism to Canadian citizens." Therefore, I think there is no need to fear so far as immigration from the United States is concerned.

But we have a great influx of population from Continental Europe. I desire to say nothing in disparagement of these people: for the most part they are good citizens, and their children and grandchildren will make as good citizens as any in Canada. But we must remember one thing with regard to this influx: in the first place, so far as the total is concerned, we are attempting the assimilation of a growth many times greater, in fact three or four times above that which the United States of America ever attempted. That gives us some food for thought, and I desire you to think of it especially with regard to these citizens coming from Continental Europe, who have for the most part no conception of the working of representative institutions as known to us and our ancestors for hundreds of years. What are we doing to give these people some adequate sense of the responsibility that devolves and will devolve upon them as citizens of this country? The task of assimilating them is no small one, and it devolves upon the government of Canada, whether Liberal or Conservative, past, present and future, and upon every Provincial Government, to devote itself to the task of assimilating them and teaching them in some way the responsibilities of citizens under democratic institutions. I

want you to lend yourselves to every movement of that kind.

I was talking with a good friend of mine, a journalist, in Montreal, and pointed out that there were German thinkers who are declaring that the Anglo-Saxon people are unfit for the task of self-government. I was combatting that idea, and he agreed with me, but said that people will have exactly the kind of government that they deserve, depending upon their intelligence and their interest in public affairs and their vigilance in the cause of liberty. Matters may be well so far as we are concerned, but I don't think the most optimistic will deny that there is some reason for thought and cause for anxiety when we deal with the question of these immigrants from Continental Europe.

Then I want you to consider the possibility of the apparent divergence of interest and the wide divergence of sentiment between the East of Canada and the West, the part west of the Great Lakes. I will ask you for one moment to consider the history of the United States in that regard. Twenty-five or thirty years ago in the United States the divergence was so marked between East and West that there were those who were not slow to prophesy a breaking away or even a civil war. Let me remind you that we have every one of those conditions, marked in an unusual degree at the present time. With a country to the south of us containing a hundred millions of people, with its boundaries for four thousand miles co-terminous with ours, the pull to the south is very great. Then there is the great influx of immigrants from the United States of America. There is eight hundred miles of territory between us and the West almost absolutely uninhabited at present and with no prospect of being inhabited in the immediate or early future. There is the difficulty and extent of the transportation problem, and the supposed conflict of interest, arising from the West being almost purely agricultural, while the East is agricultural and industrial in its interests as well. Think of the problem the United States of America had to face, and from which they are not yet altogether free, and believe me, that in respect of these matters the same problem is demanding the earnest and thoughtful attention of the people of Canada at the present time. But when their attention is once called to it, when they once thoroughly realize it, the problem is more than half solved. I trust every public man will give his attention to it, will lend his voice and his influence to every movement which may be devised, every effort that may reasonably be made, for the dispelling of the idea of a divergence of interest. There will not be, there is not at the present time, looking upon the interest

of the nation, any possible divergence. Looking to every man as a citizen to stand for that which makes for the interest of the whole country, and overlooking mere transient, temporary and local considerations, we cannot doubt that the interest of the East is the interest of the West, the interest of Nova Scotia is and always must be the interest of British Columbia as well.

Now I pass to another subject which is not controversial: the conservation of the natural resources of Canada. We have heard a great deal about it in late years, and we know there has been a great awakening in the United States during the past ten years. President Roosevelt called a representative gathering, and enlarged the scope of that gathering; subsequently there was a great conference of all the nations upon the North American continent, and a certain policy was laid down and certain united effort undertaken. I took up the subject in a non-partisan way in the House of Commons three or four years ago, and in preparing what I then presented, I was absolutely astounded at the lack of reasonable information on the subject of our national resources. I applied here and there, and finally through the writings of a gentleman in the United States I obtained the most certain and accurate information with regard to the resources of Canada. The Dominion Government has since become interested, and I am here to-day to congratulate them on taking it up. I did my best to assist them in the establishment of the Commission of Conservation, and I hope it will do splendid work for the future of our country.

The natural resources include the minerals, fisheries, public health, the inland waters, the lands and forests. These may be divided into those consumed by the user, and those which may extend all their benefits to future generations as well as our own. I have been reading many books published in the United States of America for my own information as a public man, and have been absolutely astounded at the utter waste which has attended the exploitation of the mineral resources of that country. For every ton of anthracite coal mined in the United States there is from one ton to one and a half tons wasted, and for every ton of bituminous coal taken out, at least one ton is wasted. I am glad to see, in the pamphlet from which I gained this information, the compliment paid to my own little Province of Nova Scotia in that regard: it is there declared that there is in Nova Scotia no such waste.

As to the fisheries, I would like to say, so far as the Conservation Commission is concerned, that they have only begun

this work so far as effective steps are concerned; I want to explain that we have only touched the fringe of the question. I am sorry that the fish of Nova Scotia do not go into Canada as much as they should; it is largely a question of transportation. The motor boats, which are now being largely introduced into the Atlantic fisheries, will help. I hope to see the day in the not distant future, when the citizens of Toronto will get their fish supply from the coasts of Nova Scotia. I have had the belief that there are dozens of varieties of fish now thrown away as useless, which in the years to come will be regarded as of great value. At a summer resort—and in all summer resorts I defy you to produce anything more beautiful, more alluring, than the coasts of Nova Scotia—I saw sword fish which used to be thrown away as useless, now sold at 12 to 15 cents a pound, and a fish weighing anywhere from 250 to 400 pounds would therefore be of considerable value. If taken to the markets of Boston or New York, these sword fish would bring 15 to 20 cents a pound, though a few years ago they were considered absolutely worthless.

Coming now to the forests. I went at this subject three or four years ago with the idea that Canada had four, five or six times as great wealth in forests as the United States. After three weeks' study, I came to the conclusion that the forest resources of Canada were not greater than those of the United States, were in fact probably slightly smaller. I know there is an idea that the case is different, but that is my conviction. As to the destruction by fire, there are no very reliable statistics available. In the United States, according to a reputable authority, during the years from 1880 to 1896 \$800,000,000 worth of merchantable timber was destroyed by fire, and the loss in cutting of immature growth and cost of reforestation was at least \$1,600,000,000 in the sixteen years, or \$100,000,000 a year. I even think the record in Canada is not very much better than in the United States. It is computed that as much has been destroyed in the United States as has been cut by lumbermen. Can it be prevented? Look at the record of other countries. The loss in the United States is nearly fifty times as great as in the Kingdom of Prussia. I think that should be an object lesson to us, to teach us what should be done for the future of our country. We have no right to destroy this wealth! It is said that in the United States twenty-five per cent. of the forest wealth is lost through unscientific methods of lumbering, and that this could be reduced to ten per cent. by better methods. There is reason for the Government of Canada, for the Provincial Governments, and for every

thoughtful citizen, to lend their interest and energy to the same purpose, of preventing this waste.

In the waters of Canada, the system of inland waters, Mr. Chairman, we have unknown wealth, in the possibilities for transportation, for power for agricultural and industrial uses. It very largely depends on the forests. A committee is investigating this question, and has evidence which will be of great value. The fertility of the three great Western Provinces depends absolutely upon the forests on the Eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains: if these are cut down, the fertility of Alberta, of Saskatchewan, and probably of Manitoba, goes as well. In the United States they have investigated also the subterranean waters, a thought which has not been mooted in this country. It is said that there is an underground water-table, as it is called, at least 96 feet of water, and that there is a belt of water-table in the first hundred feet. In the United States it is computed to be reduced by 17 feet, so, taking the whole depth as 96 feet, scientists thought it to be reduced from 10 to 40 feet; the consequence is that springs have gone dry, and brooks have dried up, by the deforestation.

I have not time to touch on the question of the preservation of the fertility of the land; or that of the public health, an important question surely in face of the fact that thousands are carried off every year by diseases that are absolutely preventible.

These material, natural resources, who owns them? The Crown, as trustee for the people. What does conservation mean? It means preservation, not waste; efficient development of these resources, not locking them up; reasonable uses, having regard to the nation's interests, and last, but not least, participation by the people in all the advantages and benefits of our natural resources. They belong to the nation, and are to be used for the advantage of the people.

When William the Conqueror landed in England, he parcelled it out among his barons. The people in England have not got wholly free from that system yet, but we in Canada are not hampered; but if we do not develop our resources, but lock them up, we are simply carrying out that policy of eight hundred years ago. It is our business to see that the people at all times shall have their proper share and use of these resources. They belong to the nation.

What does the nation mean? Elisha Mulford has written one or two notable books, one of them entitled "The Nation,"

and one on "The Republic of God." From the former I quote these sentences:

What is the nation? It no more exists in a single period of time than does race. It is not composed of its present occupants alone, but it embraces those who are and have been and shall be. There is in it the continuity of generations; it reaches backward to the fathers and onward to the children, and its relation is manifest in its reverence for the one and its hope for the other. It transcends the achievement of a single individual or a separate age. The life of the individual is not its measure. In its fruition there is the work of the generations; and even in the moments of its existence, the expression of their spirit. Burke has represented this continuity in the nation as moving through generations in a life which no speculative schemes and no legal formulas may compass. The nation is indeed a partnership, but a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.

In that way, conservation and preservation are not only for the benefit of the present, but also of succeeding generations. There is with the increasing wealth of Canada the possibility and probability that it may be very unequally divided. All men are born free and equal as to their rights and privileges before the law; but men are not born free and equal in their abilities and capacities and energy. Therefore there must be inequality of wealth. Wealth in itself is not specially undesirable. "He that provideth not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." But wealth that is irresponsible, wealth that is misspent, wealth that is acquired by unjust means, is and will be a menace to the political structure of this country. I am not seeking to preach, but only to turn your minds to this subject. The highest types of citizenship have been evolved, we know, without great wealth, and when there was no very great inequality for the time being. We know that it was in the days of luxury at Rome that the Pretorian guards put up the Empire to the highest bidder. Of this time Professor William Stearns Davis in his notable book on "The Influence of Wealth in Imperial Rome," which is not a studied comparison with any modern nation, but in which certain critics have found a comparison forced upon them, writes:

And so the Barbarians at length destroyed a society that was slowly destroying itself. The economic evil was

at the bottom. First Italy, then a vast Empire, devoted itself for centuries to a feverish effort for getting money by any means and to spending that money on selfish enjoyments. Other things went for little. No state ever excluded the ideal from its national and social life so strictly as did Rome. It taught its prosaic commercialism to all its provinces. It dies a slow, lingering, painful death after achieving the greatest seeming success in history. Its citizens served Mammon in place of God with more than usual consistency. The power they worshipped carried them a certain way, then delivered them over to their own rottenness and to the resistless enemy. Their fall was great—for their Empire with its social structures still looms as the greatest fabric ever reared by human ingenuity; while the lesson of their fall lies patent to the twentieth century.

Another writer, Dickinson, a modern writer, speaking of the difference in conditions between America and Europe, speaking of the remarkable triumphs over matter and space accomplished by the men of this western hemisphere, inquires seriously and earnestly whether they have been accomplished at the expense of the loss of spiritual force. He defines that issue: "Whether the spirit of unquenchable aspiration which created all that we deem most holy and most to be treasured in the legacies bequeathed to us by the civilizations of the ages shall find a new and more perfect incarnation in the civilization of the western world."

I leave the question with you there, deeming it no more than right that in these days of fierce industrial and commercial development in Canada, thoughts such as I have suggested should be brought to the minds of the people. This doctrine of civic responsibility, of your responsibility as citizens, I have preached a good deal, I hope not in a partisan way.

In New York not long ago, when browsing among the book stores, as I like to do, I came upon a pamphlet describing a course of Yale Lectures which the Hon. William Earle Dodge has instituted, to give effect to these sentiments and doctrines which a great many eminent men in the United States have been uttering, such men as Justice Brewer, President Hadley of Yale, Bishop Potter, President Taft, and Mr. Root. These lectures, on "The Responsibilities of Citizenship," Hon. Mr. Dodge states are to be on "a topic whose understanding will contribute to the formation of an intelligent public sentiment, of high standards of the duty of a citizen, and of habits of

action to give effect to these sentiments and these standards." I trust some one or more of our Canadian millionaires will lay the foundation of a similar series in our own country: they could do no worthier work.

How do you imagine that democratic institutions can be stable if the foundation is insecure? And how can the foundation be secure if you do not instruct the children in the schools? Every one of us owes a duty to his God, to his family, to his neighbor, and to himself, and also to his country, to this great Dominion of Canada, and to the greater Empire of which we form a part. Men now and then affect a certain attitude of contempt and superiority when they speak of politics. If politics are dirty, whose fault is it? Yours! Whose duty is it to cleanse them? Yours! And that is all there is to be said about it! I understand the anomalies of the party system,—or at least some of them; I have considered the many criticisms urged against it; but still something better can be devised, let us make the best of it. Mulford, in his "Nation," says:

When Caius Marcius turns to the crowd in Rome and denounces them as the detached and disorganized rabble, in whom there is nothing of the organic unity of the people, the disdain of the Roman is in these words: "Go, get you home, you fragments!" And those who, in the conceit of culture, or of wealth, or of high interests, or of spiritual endowments, withdraw from the normal political action of the nation are obeying the impulse of the mob, and are as the very fragments for whom the Roman patrician felt such unmeasured scorn.

How much do you teach your children of this? Of the responsibility of a man to his God, to his family, to his neighbor, to himself? Yes, and his responsibility to his state, to his country, to his Empire? How much of it are we teaching to our immigrants from Continental Europe? So long as the "normal political action of the nation" is to be manifested in the system or party government, then it is the duty of every man to ally himself with one or other of the great political parties. I would rather see every young man allied with the political party with which I am not in sympathy, than to see him sit as a drone, taking no interest in public affairs. How much of this responsibility are you teaching to your children, and to the immigrants from Continental Europe? Can freedom and free institutions be accepted if their responsibilities be rejected or disregarded? Yes, but at the price of that freedom and those institutions.

I am an optimist: I believe in the moral and spiritual, as well as the material future of this country: "God's in His Heaven: all's right with the world;" but it is my profound conviction that it will not always be well and right with this country unless an earnest and abiding sense of their true responsibilities as citizens of this great country and of this greater Empire sinks deep into the hearts of the Canadian people.