

**"THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF";
CANADIAN RESTRICTIVE IMMIGRATION POLICY, 1905-1911**

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ABSTRACT

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During the years 1905-1911, Frank Oliver was the Liberal Minister in charge of Immigration. It was during this period that a restrictive policy of immigration, and the government apparatus to put it into effect, were definitely established in Canada.

This essay examines that development. It deals with the Department and its operations. It looks at the various groups of immigrants, and at what certain native-born Canadians wrote about them. Finally it examines the restrictive legislation of the period, and the debate that this occasioned.

It is concluded that the particular policy which Canada developed was influenced by the country's economic situation as well as by the attitudes of Canadians towards immigrants and towards themselves.

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INTRODUCTION

Canada, in common with other young countries, whose natural resources attract the residents of the overcrowded communities of Europe, is fully aware of the necessity of sifting "the wheat from the chaff" in the multitudes who seek her shores.

The years 1905-1911 constitute a significant period in the history of Canadian immigration. It was during this period, when Frank Oliver was the Minister in charge of Immigration, that the restrictive legislation and the method of administering it that would prevail at least up to the Second World War were established. While in the United States restrictive legislation became an important national political issue over a period of several decades,² in Canada it was accepted and passed with a remarkable unanimity on the part of Parliament. After it was passed the mechanics of who would actually be admitted or excluded were largely left to the Immigration Department.

This essay is an attempt to examine that particular development. To begin with we require some knowledge of the operations of the Department and the opinions of certain influential people connected with it. It is also necessary to look at the various immigrant groups, not internally through their own aspirations and opinions, but externally with a view to establishing the way in which

¹ W.D. Scott, Immigration and Population, Vol. 7 in A. Shortt & A.G. Doughty, eds., Canada and Its Provinces, 23 vols. (Toronto: Glasgow, Brock & Co., 1914), p. 574.

² For the arguments in the United States, see John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925, corr & with a new preface (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1963).

they were perceived by native-born Canadians. The perception of particular groups as "desirable" or "undesirable" influenced the formation of policies restricting the entry of some groups and encouraging the entry of others. Finally it is necessary to look at the restrictive legislation and regulations of the period and the Parliamentary argument (or lack of it) that these occasioned.

The impetus behind this move toward immigration restriction was provided by the increase in the number of immigrants who entered Canada in the period between the late 1890's and the beginning of the First World War. During the nineteenth century Canada had been seen as "the Cinderella among countries suitable for immigration."¹ Small numbers, largely from Britain and Ireland, arrived annually, but the depressed economic conditions of the seventies and eighties drove a steady stream of Canadians into the United States. The election of the Laurier government in 1896 coincided with an improvement in world economic conditions. An increased demand for wheat, lowering of ocean freight rates, improvement of dry farming techniques and the development of faster-maturing strains of wheat combined with the fact that the American frontier lands had largely been filled up made the exploitation of the

¹ C.A. Magrath, Canada's Growth and Some Problems Affecting It (Ottawa: The Mortimer-Press, 1910), p. 71.

Canadian west economically profitable. The result was a "boom" period in the Canadian economy. Immigration also "boomed", the numbers entering the country increased steadily during the Laurier years.

The improvement in Canada's ability to attract immigrants also coincided with a change in the pattern of immigration. During the nineteenth century the major sources of immigration had been north-west Europe, Britain, Germany and Scandinavia. By the end of the century large numbers of the "new immigration" from southern and eastern Europe, Italy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Russia were beginning to arrive. Throughout this period Canada received her largest number of immigrants from Britain and the United States, but a significant number of the "new" immigrants also arrived.

The proportion of immigrants in the population increased.¹ At the same time improved economic opportunities were drawing more people into the cities.² City slums grew, and the large number of immigrants who crowded into such areas as the North End of Winnipeg and St. John's Ward in Toronto could then be identified as the source of the social evils of the city.

¹ The large volume of immigration in comparison with existing population was seen as a problem at the time. C.A. Magrath estimated it to be about three percent of the Canadian population annually. Magrath, p. 72.

² R. Craig Brown & Ramsey Cook, Canada, 1896-1921, The Canadian Centenary Series, vol. 14 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), p. 2, p. 185; J.A. Hobson, Canada Today (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906), p. 97.

Rapid economic development brought social and cultural tensions, even in more homogeneous European populations. The Canadian "immigrant problem" during this period was bound up with the general problems of economic development. An increase in population was necessary to develop the country's resources, but it created cultural strains: There were two reactions to the problem.

The first was that of the economic nationalists. In line with laissez-faire economic views, they advocated vigorous pursuit of almost unregulated development. Growth and increased prosperity would eventually benefit everyone. In 1906, Sir William Van Horne, that prime example of a capitalist obsessed with development, argued this position.

What we want is population. Labour is required from the Arctic Ocean to Patagonia, throughout North and South America, but the Governments of other lands are not such idiots as we are in the matter of restricting immigration. Let them all come in. There is work for all. Every two or three men that come into Canada and do a day's work create new work for someone else to do. They are like a new dollar. Hand it out from the Bank and it turns itself in value a dozen or more times in a year.

¹ Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, J. Castell Hopkins, ed. (Toronto, Annual Review Publishing Co.), 1906: 281 (Hereafter cited as C.A.R.):

The second position, which could be described as cultural nationalism, held that growth should be controlled where it caused social problems or conflicted with what were perceived as the goals of the national life. The logical end of this position was to urge immigration restriction, with the aim of securing only "desirable" immigrants for Canada. J.S. Woodsworth, the Methodist minister who was active in various movements for social reform, argued in 1909 that

We, in Canada, have certain more or less clearly defined ideals of national well-being. These ideals must never be lost sight of. Non-ideal elements there must be, but they should be capable of assimilation. Essentially non-assimilable elements are clearly detrimental to our highest national development, and hence should be vigourously excluded.¹

In theory at least, these ideals were often not clearly defined. However, what they were, and of equal importance, what they were not, did emerge as Canadians encountered and judged various immigrant groups, and particularly as they attempted to define "undesirable" immigration. Although there were disagreements over the treatment of particular groups, by the end of our period there had developed a decided consensus in the direction of Woodsworth's view.

¹ J.S. Woodsworth, Strangers Within Our Gates or Coming Canadians (Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1909), p. 278.

The Immigration Act of 1910 did not mention any specific group of immigrants, but it contained ample machinery to enable the Immigration Department to carry out a policy which discriminated between immigrants, encouraging some and restricting or virtually excluding others.

I. The Department

Clifford Sifton

The Liberal government under Laurier did not attribute the increase in population after long years of stagnation to changes in the world economy. They advertised it as a result of their energetic encouragement of immigration.¹ During this period immigration was a branch of the Department of the Interior. Two Ministers headed the Department under Laurier: the first was Clifford Sifton, who resigned in 1905; the second was Frank Oliver.

Sifton had described the Interior as a "department of circumlocution", and upon taking office considerably changed its administration.² He enlarged the scope of immigration activities. On the Canadian end he reorganized the system of land-granting in order to make it easier for settlers to acquire homesteads. He established a large network of agents to promote emigration from the midwestern

¹ Handbook on Canadian Politics shewing the Splendid Record of the Liberal Government, 1896 to 1908 (Ottawa, The Holla L. Crain Co. Ltd.), pp. 59-61; James B. Hedges, Building the Canadian West: The Land and Colonization Policies of the Canadian Pacific Railway (N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., 1939), p. 129.

² J.W. Daffoe, Clifford Sifton in Relation to His Times (Toronto: The Macmillan Co. of Canada, 1931). See Daffoe's chap. 5 for a description of Sifton's reorganization of the department.

United States.¹ He sent W.T.R. Preston to Europe with a promise of financing and instructions to "look over the ground", since "Immigration we must have".²

The organization established in Great Britain was similar to that in the United States. It included a network of agents who promoted Canada by means of displaying Canadian products in their office windows, passing out literature at agricultural fairs, giving lectures illustrated with lantern slides and using a travelling van to carry the word to remote rural districts. Typical of this "boosting" of Canada was the display arranged by Preston for the Coronation of Edward VII in 1902, which described Canada as the "Granary of the Empire", and apparently attracted considerable attention.³ None of these methods was new. They had been used by the C.P.R. since the eighties, and they had borrowed many of them from American railways, state governments and land companies.⁴

¹ For a description of promotion of emigration in the U.S., see H. Troper, Only Farmers Need Apply; Official Canadian Government Encouragement of Immigration from the United States, 1896-1911 (Toronto: Griffin House, 1972).

² W.T.R. Preston, My Generation of Politics and Politicians (Toronto: D.A. Rose, 1927), p. 215.

³ Ibid., pp. 220-221.

⁴ Activities of Canadian government agents are described in Canada. Sessional Papers, No. 25, Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, chapter on "Immigration" for appropriate years, (Hereafter cited as Report on Immigration). Descriptions of the promotion schemes of government, railways and land companies can be found in Hedges, chaps. V and VI, pp. 94-168; S.C. Johnson, A History of Emigration from the United Kingdom to North America, 1763-1912 (London: Geo. Routledge, 1913), pp. 61-64.

To encourage emigration from continental Europe, where most countries had laws prohibiting active solicitation of emigrants, Sifton established in 1899 an association called the North Atlantic Trading Company with headquarters in Amsterdam. Its purpose was to covertly direct as much emigration from north-eastern Europe as it could.¹ The agents of this company were paid a bonus of five pounds per adult and ten shillings for those under eighteen who intended to go onto farms in Canada.² According to Sifton, the company gave good service in selecting out the "agriculturalists and peasants" from the "wasters and ne'er-do-wells" and "very poor shop-keepers, artisans or labourers."³ The names of the company's members were kept secret, apparently to prevent them from being arrested for illegally soliciting emigration, but according to J.W. Dafoe, the Government approved the contract at the time it was made.⁴

¹ Descriptions of the North Atlantic Trading Company can be found in Preston, pp. 259-262; Norman Macdonald, Canada: Immigration and Colonization, 1841-1903 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, Paperback Edition, 1970), pp. 148-149.

² Similar bonuses were paid for agricultural workers in Britain and the U.S. However, during Sifton's administration, they were lower than those paid to the North Atlantic Trading Company.

³ Dafoe, p. 321.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 321-322.

During Sifton's administration this preference for agriculturalists, a vocational rather than an ethnic distinction, remained the major basis for selection among immigrants. It was Sifton's desire to find farmers to open the undeveloped lands of the west that had first led him to seek immigrants from eastern Europe. These Slavic immigrants at first excited considerable opposition, and were referred to by their detractors as "Sifton's pets". Sifton described the outcry against Slavic immigration as "absolutely ignorant and absurd" and "unpatriotic" as well.¹ He was fascinated by large-scale development; his was a nationalism of economic expansion. He was confident that the children of Slavic immigrants would assimilate and that the social and cultural problems would straighten themselves out in time. The succeeding Ministry would show, however, that Sifton's views were by no means supported by all of his fellow Canadians.

In February, 1905, he resigned from the Cabinet over the issue of separate schools in the newly-created provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. In April he was succeeded by Frank Oliver.

¹ Dafoe, p. 142, ff.

Frank Oliver

Like Sifton and many of the other westerners who came to staff the Department, Frank Oliver was one of those who had taken part in an internal immigration of eastern Canadians to the west which had begun in the nineteenth century and was increasing during the Laurier years. He was of English and Irish origin, born in Peel County, Canada West in 1853. His early life does not seem to have been particularly prosperous; his father was a farmer, and he himself did not finish high school. He learned the printing trade and went to Toronto where he got a job on George Brown's Globe. He admired Brown and was probably influenced by his opinions. Certain of Oliver's later opinions had a frontier Grit flavour about them. He campaigned for responsible government in the Northwest Territories, favoured a cheap land policy to encourage settlement, objected to control of the hinterland by eastern monopolies, particularly railroads, and generally opposed what he called "Macdonaldism". In later years the Globe referred to him as a "pushing, fighting Westerner".¹

In 1873, he moved to Winnipeg, where he worked on the Manitoba Free Press. Three years later, he went further west to Edmonton where he made a living for several years

¹ Biographical material on Oliver obtained from Henry James Morgan, ed., The Canadian Men and Women of the Time (Toronto, 1912), p. 869; William S. Waddell, "Frank Oliver and the Bulletin", Alberta Historical Review 5 (1957):7-12; Idem, "The Honorable Frank Oliver" (M.A. thesis, Univ. of Alberta, 1950).

as a trader and freighter. In 1880 he began publishing the Bulletin. This was the first newspaper in what later became the province of Alberta. It began as a small news sheet, but by the following year Oliver had begun regular production, and eventually gave up storekeeping to become a full-time editor and to involve himself in local politics. In 1883, he was elected to the North West Council for Edmonton, and remained an active force in Territorial politics until 1896, when he was elected a federal Member for Alberta. During these years the Bulletin provided him with a forum to air his highly individual political views, and to lash his opponents in a colourful and very partisan style.

During his political career in the Territories, Oliver had been opposed to "partyism", and he began his 1896 campaign as an independent. His reformist views inclined him toward the Liberals, and the Territorial Liberal party supported him. On the strength of his record he apparently also gained wide support from voters who expected him to go to Ottawa to fight what they saw as the malevolent effects of National Policy on the west.¹

He and Sifton were not close colleagues. Oliver's ally in Manitoba was R.L. Richardson, the editor of the Winnipeg Tribune, who had been on the opposite side from

¹ Waddell, "Frank Oliver and the Bulletin", pp. 10-11.

Sifton in a provincial party split in the 1890's, and who ran as an Independent with Conservative backing in 1900. Like Oliver, he opposed the existing railway and tariff policies and was also against Sifton's "unselective" immigration.¹ However, Sifton recommended Oliver's appointment in 1905, on grounds of "long service and capacity".²

Apparently his appointment was considered surprising. Public speculation, particularly among the opposition, held that Oliver was chosen for the position because Edmonton was the only safe seat the Liberals could find in the west during the crisis created by the passage of the Autonomy Bill, and that it was safe largely because the "foreign vote" was controlled by the Liberal machine. It was also argued that Oliver was not as talented a man as Sifton, and that he had finally compromised his independent position in exchange for the Ministry. However, he had a large personal following in Edmonton, and was re-elected by acclamation.³

Unlike Sifton, he remained a Laurier man to the end. In the 1917 election the Bulletin was the only western

¹ Ibid.; Dafoe, pp. 127, 198-199, 244-245.

² Dafoe, p. 301, ff.

³ W.S. Waddell, "The Honorable Frank Oliver", pp. 337-345; C.A.R., 1905, pp. 28-29.

paper supporting Laurier, with Oliver complaining characteristically that eastern Tory interests were attempting to destroy it.¹

The western reformer was reminiscent of George Brown in having decided opinions on the social and cultural complexion he wanted his society to develop. He was opposed to unrestricted immigration, and in part saw it as a further example of federal mismanagement of western interests; "It is in order to get a market for the products of your factories and for your wholesale houses that you want the North-west settled with anybody or anything, so you say."²

To him the most desirable immigration for the west was that of "our own people" from eastern Canada. British immigrants who came as "ready made citizens" ranked next in his view. They were followed by Americans who also shared the political institutions and cultural aspirations of those settlers already in the west.³ Those Slavic immigrants, Galicians and Doukhobors, who did not share this background were not popular in the west. They were opening up new farming areas, but to Oliver

¹ Joseph Schull, Laurier: the First Canadian (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1965), p. 610.

² Canada, House of Commons Debates, 1901, 2938.

³ Ibid, 1903, 6566; C.A.R., 1906, p. 282.

It is not enough to produce wheat out of the ground. We do not live to produce wheat. We live to produce people, to produce a social condition, and to build up a country, and if you give us only those who can produce wheat, and who cannot take their places as citizens, you do us an injury, and you place an obstacle in the way of our progress....¹

In the case of the Galicians, Oliver argued specifically for restrictive legislation. It was not enough to discontinue the payment of bonuses, which the Conservatives wanted to do. It was not only the bonus system which brought these people to Canada, but

It is because the conditions in the country in which they live are unfavourable, it is because there is continually pressure behind them, the pressure of political sentiment, the pressure of landlordism, the pressure of race and religion that they are being driven out of that country into this.²

The size of an immigrating group had a significant effect on their reception in the receiving country. The possibility of a large number arriving could create the fear that the native-born would be "swamped". Oliver's opinion of eastern European immigration was also affected by this fear. He thought that the Doukhobors would not make good citizens because they rejected the civil state. But they did not threaten to arrive in

¹ Debates, 1901, 2934.

² Ibid., 1903, 6565-6566.

overwhelming numbers, since they were a small sect and most of them had already arrived in Canada. However, "the Galicians are practically unlimited in number."¹

During his first year in the Ministry, Oliver reorganized the promotional work of the Department to bring its activities more into line with his views on immigration. In April, 1906, the bonus on British immigrants was raised to five dollars per adult and half that for those under eighteen. Apparently control over the bonuses was also tightened. They could be withdrawn if the immigrant was deported or went to the United States within one year, and they were supposed to be paid only on those coming to Canada to work on farms or to go into domestic service.² The system of agents in the United States was maintained. In Europe the Department had offices in London, Liverpool, Birmingham, Dublin, Belfast, Glasgow, Cardiff, Paris and Antwerp. In the late summer of 1906, Oliver made an inspection tour of these. The agents' reports give the distinct impression that they had been "shaken up" and told to put more energy into their work.³ New offices were opened in Exeter, York and

¹ Debates, 1901, 2937.

² Ibid., 1906, 2966; C.A.R., 1906, p. 289.

³ See Report on Immigration, 1906-07.

Aberdeen, no doubt in the hope that farmers could be drawn from the surrounding countryside. Those agents who had not been to Canada were sent out to tour the country, offices which had not been situated where the passing public could see the display of Canadian products in their windows were moved, and the agents were asked to send in reports of the activities of sub-agents (usually shopkeepers or pub-keepers in small towns) in their areas, with suggestions for improvement.

The contract with the North Atlantic Trading Company was cancelled. The Conservatives had objected to the fact that the names of the members of the company were kept secret, and apparently both Government and Opposition agreed to the cancellation of the contract.¹ In 1907 they were still protesting to Oliver that they had not been given sufficient notice as required by their contract and that the government still owed them large sums of money in bonuses earned.²

The cancellation of this contract marked a decided change in the Department's position in regard to immigration.

¹ Debates, 1905, 8182.

² Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Laurier Papers, 457/123052-123055, North Atlantic Trading Co., Amsterdam to F. Oliver, Mar. 22, 1907, copy sent to Laurier. (Public Archives hereafter cited as P.A.C.).

from eastern Europe. In his 1906 report W.W. Cory, the Deputy Minister, noted the cancellation of the contract and "the withdrawal of the bonus system in connection with bookings from the continent."¹ At a later date W.D. Scott, the Superintendent of Immigration, commented on migration from the Austro-Hungarian Empire that "Since 1906 no effort has been made by the Canadian government to secure further immigration of this class."² If "Sifton's pets" were going to continue to come to Canada, they were going to have to get there on their own.

These changes can be seen as the first instances of the implementation of the selective policy which would be further elaborated during Oliver's Ministry.

W.D. Scott

The change of Ministers did not lead to a radical change in the personnel of the Department. William Wallace Cory had replaced James A. Smart as Deputy Minister in January, 1905.³ The person who exercised the greatest

¹ Report on Immigration, 1905-06, Sessional Papers, No. 25, p. xxxiii.

² Scott, p. 560.

³ Troper, p. 24, states that Smart resigned when Sifton left, but the Report on Immigration, 1905-06, p. x, notes his resignation as taking place on Jan. 1.

influence in the running of the Immigration Department during this period was in fact not Oliver or the Deputy Minister, but William Duncan Scott, the Superintendent of Immigration. An English newspaper commented in 1908 that

Energetic, able, and sympathetic, [Scott] has seen the machinery in his hands, largely created by himself, grow into one of the most important, active, and useful branches of the Interior.¹

Scott was of Scots Presbyterian origin, born in Dundas, Ontario in 1861. He studied law for a short time; then, like Oliver and several other members of the department, went west in 1881. After a short period with the C.P.R., he became an immigration agent for the Manitoba government. Manitoba sent him to Toronto in 1895, and in 1899 he joined the Department of the Interior as Commissioner of Exhibitions in Europe. Sifton appointed him Superintendent in 1903, and he held the position until his retirement in 1924.²

¹ Bristol Western Daily Press, Sept. 1, 1908, clipping in R.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 27.

² Biographical material on Scott obtained from Morgan, p. 1006; P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 283, Parts 1, 2, 3.

"Big Bill Scott" was described as

one of the Dominion's most original characters, ranking with George Ham as a humorist, with William Van Horne as an organizer and smoker, with J.R. Booth as a tireless worker, and with the parliamentary library as a source of information regarding Canada and its people....But he has backbone, and knows how to bring down his foot when he has to, which is pretty often, in his position. ...A Yankee official, who had been unable to get some project or other through Mr. Scott's office, speaking afterwards of the superintendent of immigration, remarked; "That Bill Scott is a slick candy kid with an oily tongue, a steel backbone, and stone crusher feet inside plush slippers".¹

In 1914, Scott wrote the section Immigration and Population for Shortt and Doughty's compendious history Canada and its Provinces. Scott was the most influential member of the Department during this period and at the time that he wrote this chapter. Since the legislation was structured so that many of the actual decisions regarding the position of particular groups emanated from the Department, Scott's views perhaps formed the basis of actual policy, or if not, certainly reflected it closely.

His opinions on the role immigration would play in Canadian development were those of a cultural nationalist. At one point he quoted Stephen Leacock to the effect that the country had been virtually empty for centuries, and that its resources could remain undeveloped while a

¹ Montreal Star, Sept. 6, 1911, clipping in P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 283, Part 1.

"nation worthy of the task" of developing them was constructed.

Scott went on to say that

In checking undesirable immigration it must be decided what constitutes an undesirable, and the following definition is put forward for consideration: undesirable immigrants are those who will not assimilate with the Canadian people, or whose presence will tend to bring about a deterioration from a political, moral, social or economic point of view.¹

This is not very specific unless we understand what his criteria for assimilation were and what he saw as deterioration. By looking at his opinions of particular immigrant groups we can form some ideas of his standards and how they compared with the views of certain other Canadians.

¹ Scott, p. 590.

II. The Immigrants

The immigrants themselves are a crucial factor in understanding the development of restrictive legislation. We are not looking here at the way in which they viewed themselves, but at how they were seen by native-born Canadians. The internal operation of the various groups, their hopes, dreams and motivations were probably often misunderstood or simply invisible to the native-born and to other groups. However, their external social behaviour was judged by other Canadians and influenced the degree to which they were seen as either desirable or undesirable acquisitions to the country.

While as early as the nineteenth century, immigrants in the United States took part in the debate over restrictive legislation, either through their own newspapers, pressure groups or election of members of Congress, in Canada very little appears to have been heard from the immigrants themselves. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that many of these groups had only recently arrived. They had not had time to become established in significant numbers and involve themselves in politics on their own behalf.

Organized interest groups among the native-born such as spokesmen for French Canada, labour, and the churches all expressed opinions on immigration. For a variety of reasons all of these favoured some degree of restriction. While many in the business community shared Van Horne's view, by 1910, Industrial Canada, the journal of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, was also arguing that Canada should admit only as many immigrants as it could assimilate.¹

Canada did not produce abstract theorists, such as Madison Grant in the United States, who looked at immigration within the framework of eugenics and race theory. Terms like "blood", "stock" and "degeneration" sometimes appeared in Canadian arguments, but they were usually used incidentally, not as part of an argument based on these criteria. Where the discussion was about a specific group of immigrants, then this group was usually judged on cultural and economic grounds.

The most important Canadian book on the subject was J.S. Woodsworth's Strangers Within Our Gates, written in 1909. Woodsworth was an Ontario-born Methodist minister of English origin. His earnest paternalism and his own particular prejudices give the book a strange ring today,

¹ Industrial Canada, March, 1910 and April, 1911, quoted in Howard Palmer, "Responses to Foreign Immigration: Nativism and Ethnic Tolerance in Alberta, 1880-1920" (Univ. of Alberta: unpub. M.A. thesis, 1971), p. 169.

however his intention was to broaden understanding. He was one of the initiators of the "social gospel" movement in Canada, and he had come to know many immigrants and their problems through his work with the All Peoples' Mission which he had helped to found in Winnipeg. To Woodsworth the answer to the social problems of the immigrants lay in assimilation which could be brought about through the public schools and social work done by the churches.

Assimilation also entered into the Parliamentary discussions; much was said about immigrants "adopting our way of life" or "becoming standard Canadians". Even those Members who differed with each other on the details of immigration policy assumed that there existed a cultural standard recognizable to everybody. No one argued with T.S. Sproule, a Grand Master of the Ontario Orange Lodge and the Conservative Member for East Grey, when he claimed that

It is not a hard matter to distinguish the difference in quality between desirable and undesirable immigrants. Who would not be able to distinguish the Galicians from some of the others who come over? An Irishman saw a lot of Galicians landing at Montreal. He thought it was an easy matter to distinguish them, and when he looked them over he said: 'Begorra, I don't wonder that St. Paul wrote to them instead of visiting them.'¹

¹ Debates, 1906, 5238.

This concept of what constituted a Canadian was seldom expressed formally or explicitly, but we can understand something of its content by examining what was said about various groups of immigrants.

Scandinavians and Northern Europeans

To W.D. Scott Icelanders were the most desirable group of immigrants. He pointed out that a government agent was sent every year to Iceland to solicit immigration. The bonus paid to steamship agents for agricultural labourers and domestic servants was paid on all Icelandic immigrants, "irrespective of occupation", and Icelanders were "the only class to whom this arrangement applies." He considered it unfortunate that Icelandic immigration was falling. Economic conditions had improved in Iceland probably because the emigration of the late nineteenth century had lessened the stress of population on the resources of the island. Scott's reasons for approving of the Icelanders were that they learned English quickly and were enthusiastic about educating their children; they were independent, did not solicit government aid and paid back those loans they received; they were quick to take out naturalization papers and they took "a keen interest in the political questions of their adopted home."¹

¹ Scott, pp. 532-534.

Woodsworth, who also praised them for being "sober, industrious and thrifty", remarked on their interest in politics and on the fact that were at that time two Icelandic members of the Manitoba Legislature. One of them, Captain S. Jonason, had come with the first group to Manitoba in 1875.¹ Travellers to Canada also noticed the popularity of Icelanders, followed by that of Scandinavians generally.²

Other Scandinavian groups were seen by Scott as having similar virtues to the Icelanders, and he added that they were "hard-working, honest, thrifty and intelligent".³ One of Woodsworth's comments on Scandinavians provides an amusing example of the type of opinion that puts a great distance between him and the modern reader. He quoted from a Baptist minister who had travelled among immigrant settlements in the west.

Attend a Swedish church assembly, and you would imagine, if it were not for the language, that you were in the midst of a gathering of Presbyterian elders. Serious, thoughtful, sober, determined and possibly a little bit obstinate, the Swedes are astonishingly like the Scotch.

He went on to describe this as a "compliment paid to the Swedish settlers".⁴ It is an instance of Anglo-Saxon

¹ Woodsworth, pp. 96-97.

² Hobson, p. 89; Rupert Brooke, Letters from America, with a preface by Henry James (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, Ltd., 1916), p. 113.

³ Scott, p. 565.

⁴ Woodsworth, p. 87.

bias, but it should be noted that the argument is cultural. It is behaviour that links the two nationalities, not common "stock" or "blood".

Similar statements were made about Germans, Dutch, Belgians and Swiss, all nationalities among whom Canada conducted immigration propaganda or paid bonuses.¹ They were all described in terms such as thrifty, hard-working, law-abiding, concerned with education (particularly learning English), and politically independent. By this last was meant the fact that they were not induced by their leaders to "bloc" vote.

Americans

The largest single groups to enter the west during this period came from the United States. Americans, exclusive of blacks, were regarded by many as the best type of immigrant for the west. They usually arrived with capital and they were familiar with the dry farming techniques necessary on the prairie.²

Some of them came in large groups to open up new territory. Expeditions of this type were usually organized by land companies. The British journalist, John Foster Fraser, often commented as he crossed the west on the presence of the ubiquitous American land speculator.³

¹ Scott, pp. 559, 563-564; Woodsworth, pp. 87-100; Oliver, Debates, 1901, 2934-2935; R.G. MacBeth, Our Task in Canada (Toronto: The Westminster Co. Ltd., 1912), pp. 50-51.

² Scott, p. 555; Hobson, pp. 94-95; Brown & Cook, p. 60.

³ John Foster Fraser, Canada As It Is (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1905), pp. 116-117, 171.

Oliver had been raging against the "landlock" created by monopoly companies since early in his career. In the 1910 Parliament two Conservatives, A. Broder and W. Wright, asked for stiffer laws regulating these American speculators, who had "not got their coats off" before they returned to the United States with the profits. They criticized the government's free homestead policy, claiming that as a farm a homestead was worth about one thousand dollars and the government was in fact offering that as a bonus to land speculators.¹

The C.P.R. did business with some of these companies. They were dubious about them at first, but the eventual basis of co-operation was that the American land companies, with their high-pressure promotional techniques, would develop the poorer tracts of land, which would increase the value of the adjoining C.P.R. lands.² C.A. Magrath, the Conservative Member for Medicine Hat, who was with a C.P.R. company was enthusiastic about the "American Landman" and offered him with his efficient methods of settling people on new lands as an example of the type of agents the government should employ.³

¹ Debates, 1909-1910, 5511, 5528.

² Hedges, pp. 160-161. See his chap. VI, "The Land Boom on the Prairie", pp. 128-168 for a description of land companies and their operation.

³ Magrath, pp. 136-137.

The Department of the Interior also had dealings with land companies. In 1902 a syndicate of two Canadians and four businessmen from the northwestern states formed the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company and undertook to settle an area between Regina and Saskatoon which had previously been regarded as unfit for settlement. Sifton was attacked, both in and out of Parliament, for the fact that the Department had allowed this company to purchase free homestead lands. He defended himself on the grounds that the venture had been a great success, the area had become prosperous, and if the company had also made money, well "I may say it is the ambition that most people have when they go West".¹

Many westerners probably agreed with him. In 1906 André Siegfried maintained that of the few political arguments of a general character that could stir Canadians, one of them was the prosperity of the country.² At that period the mood of the country was that things were "booming". It is hard to criticize a successful venture, so the land companies continued to pursue their activities unobstructed.

Culturally the Americans had the advantage that they posed no serious problems of assimilation. They were

¹ C. Sifton quoted in Dafoe, p. 309.

² André Siegfried, The Race Question in Canada, ed. & with an intro. by F.H. Underhill, The Carleton Library, No. 29 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1966, orig. pub. in French in Paris, 1906 and in English in London, 1907), p. 130.

familiar with the language and institutions of the country. On the other hand their growing presence raised the question of the "Americanization" of Canada.

J.A. Hobson, the English economist and apostle of free trade, saw this as a foolish concern. In his view

The Americanization of Canada is sometimes spoken of as if it were an intrusion or invasion of alien institutions. No such thing. The simple fact is that Canada is American;...¹

Most Canadians were not willing to concede that, but they defended the American immigrants on the grounds that they did become good citizens. Many were returned Canadians or Scandinavians who had been one or two generations in the United States. They acquired naturalization quickly and were said to prefer the judicial system in Canada. Their success as farmers was a point in their favour, and Scott argued that if "Americanization" meant that "the progressiveness of the American will be copied by the Canadian, the more rapid the Americanization the better."² In spite of the contemporary agitation in favour of Sunday observance legislation, few people seem to have shared the complaint of R.G. MacBeth, a Presbyterian minister, that "too many of them come over with loose ideas as to the sacredness of the Lord's Day."³

¹ Hobson, p. 11.

² Scott, p. 556.

³ MacBeth, p. 45.

Robert W. Sloan, who has reviewed some of the contemporary literature on the subject concluded that the danger perceived was not Americanization, but Canadianization, the fact that Canada was becoming independent of the British Empire. In his view the concern over Americanization originated with British journalists.¹

However, Sloan assumes a more unified concept as to what exactly Canadianization consisted of than existed at the time. While many Englishmen did desire to see Canada remain firmly within the Empire, the country itself did not lack people who objected to the type of Canadianism that immigration was creating in the west. During the 1911 election John Willison, the editor of the Toronto News, argued that

With our trade settled in American channels and with a vast new population with no reverence for British traditions and no inherited loyalty to British institutions we strengthen all the influences towards continentalism and risk the sacrifice both of a young nation and an ancient Empire.²

Apparently anti-Americanism was prevalent enough to enable the Conservatives in the 1911 election to use an appeal to Imperial sentiment in their campaign to defeat reciprocity.³

¹ Robert W. Sloan, "The Canadian West - Americanization or Canadianization?", Alberta Historical Review, Winter (1968), p. 7.

² J. Willison quoted in A.H.U. Colquhoun, Press, Politics and People: The Life and Letters of Sir John Willison (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada, 1935), p. 180.

³ Brown & Cook, pp. 180-181; Schull, p. 536; W.M. Baker, "A Case Study of Anti-Americanism in English-Speaking Canada: The Election Campaign of 1911", Canadian Historical Review LI (December 1970), pp. 440-443.

The Imperialist idea, however, remained largely a product of Ontario. People like Oliver, who saw Slavic immigration as a threat to the type of Canada which they wanted to see built in the west, did not see any large cultural differences between themselves and the immigrants from the United States. Many probably thought in the same way as C.A. Magrath, who took pride in being a British subject, yet admired the success of the American farmers and welcomed them as immigrants.¹

In the absence of any widespread cultural opposition to the immigrants themselves, the economic argument prevailed. Population was needed to develop the west, the American farmers provided it with a minimum of cultural strain and the Department continued to actively solicit these immigrants.

The British

Immigration from the British Isles posed an interesting problem. The cultural affinity between these immigrants and English-speaking Canadians combined with a certain amount of Imperial sentiment would account for the fact that Canadians should find it desirable that "for obvious reasons we should receive a fair share of British subjects emigrating from the old land."² However, the English regularly had

¹ Magrath, pp. 85, 143-150.

² W.W. Cory, Report on Immigration for fiscal year ending Mar. 31, 1908, p. xxviii.

the largest proportion deported of any group of immigrants.¹

To the nationalists they should not have posed a problem. They satisfied many of the standards by which immigrants were judged; they spoke the language, they were already British subjects and understood and were used to the political system. Large numbers of British immigrants were absorbed into Canadian society every year because these factors did make their assimilation easier.

Those who failed to assimilate illustrate the importance of the other criteria by which immigrants were judged. It has been remarked how immigrants who were considered desirable were often described in terms such as hardworking, thrifty and honest. To be seen to have these qualities could secure acceptance for nationalities who were not initially well-regarded. Another important factor was success, either in accumulating capital or in getting something to grow where nothing had before. In contrast to this was the description of P.H. Bryce, the Chief Medical Inspector, of the English people who were deported.

Not only does the large number of people from English cities come to our large cities, but it is especially true of that class, "ne'er-do-wells", social and moral derelicts, and ineffectives in general. They are not only physically unequal to the task of farm life, but they are further usually incapable

¹ Reports of the [U.S.] Immigration Commission, Vol. 40, The Immigration Situation in Other Countries (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), p. 51. (Hereafter cited as Reports of the [U.S.] Commission)

of enduring the quiet of rural life. Hence if sent to the country they too frequently drift back to town, and when winter comes and work fails they seek aid in those institutions set apart for the city poor and helpless.¹

The frequent discussions about immigrants becoming public charges were usually couched in terms of the expense involved. However, the government, in spite of Conservative objections, was willing to spend large sums to secure immigrants that they considered desirable. The concern had a moral dimension. Canada during this period was not a welfare state; to have to accept charity was evidence of being a "ne'er-do-well" or ineffective at best.

This criticism was also frequently applied to those immigrants whose fares had been paid by British charitable organizations. Unlike most of the other countries of Europe, Britain did not have laws restricting emigration. In fact, a fairly large body of opinion in the country saw emigration of the unemployed as a solution to social and economic problems. Although much of this assistance to emigrants was provided by private organizations, especially churches, the first British Government grant to assist emigration to the colonies had been made in 1819.²

¹ Report on Immigration for fiscal year ending Mar. 31, 1908, p. 136.

² See Johnson, Chap. IV, pp. 68-100 for description of various types of assisted emigration.

Brown and Cook comment that during our period Canadians suspected that a large number of those immigrants assisted by charity had been sent out with the intention of shortening British relief rolls.¹ In fact, the Canadian Government had had ample opportunity over a period of years to become acquainted with the operations of a large variety of these organizations.

The most active of these was the Salvation Army, in 1906 it claimed to have brought out one in every thirteen English-speaking people.² It was the only British association to receive a grant from the Department,³ probably because it maintained staff and operated receiving stations in Canada, as well as placing its immigrants in jobs.

The Department also provided inspectors in Canada for those societies involved in the immigration of British children.⁴ This was always a controversial issue. Its supporters claimed that as the children were orphans the charitable organizations were giving them an opportunity

¹ Brown & Cook, p. 57.

² C.A.R., 1906, p. 283.

³ P.A.C., R.G. 2, Registers to Orders-in-Council, P.C. 206 and 1466, 1909.

⁴ See annual Reports on Immigration, for the reports of G. Bogue Smart, who was Chief Inspector of British Immigrant Children.

they would otherwise not have had, with the advantage to Canada that since they came to the country young they would not have the adjustment problems that older immigrants had. On the other hand there were abuses. However, it was estimated that in the fifty years up to 1909, nearly sixty thousand British children had been sent to Canada.¹

Although all charitable organizations claimed that they selected only those they thought would succeed in Canada, their purpose was social work among the poor and unemployed, and even in the nineteenth century, this had caused complaints that British indigents were being "dumped" in Canada.² The majority of Canadians would probably have agreed with the Department's Liverpool agent who believed that people who bought regular steamship tickets made the best immigrants because

[they] go out of their own volition and pay their fare, and are consequently more likely to be good "hustlers" than those requiring the help of an emigration society.

In a country which saw itself as booming, a place for individualists and self-made men, the preference for "hustlers" seems obvious enough. However, Canadians also saw themselves as building a new country, and in the

¹ Report on Immigration, 1909, p. 89.

² Macdonald, pp. 107-111.

³ Report on Immigration, 1905-06, p. 63.

indignation over "dumping" of undesirables can be seen the wish to avoid importing the problems created by the social system of the old world. In fact, argued Woodsworth, the reformer, by accepting these impoverished British immigrants, Canada was harming the cause of reform in Britain. Accepting them removed the pressure on their society to reform its own social evils.¹

As well, British charity-aided immigration conflicted with Canada's preference for agricultural immigrants, since the majority of these organizations operated among the urban poor. The process of converting a landless rural population into an urban working-class was a century past in Britain. The position of agricultural workers was fairly stable, and it was well-known that a large immigration of them could not be expected.²

There remained "the mechanic, the artisan and the drifter in the Southern towns". These were the people, Sifton later argued,

that Frank Oliver got in by the thousand and which [sic] flooded Canada and would have precipitated a crisis in labor if it had not been for the war.³

Doubtless Oliver was aware that the British immigrants could not all be farmers, and that this immigration was contrary

¹ J.S. Woodsworth, "Pump Them In - But Whom?", Christian Guardian, Nov. 27, 1907, p. 10.

² Dufoe, p. 138; Magrath, p. 90-92; Hobson, p. 91.

³ R. Cook, ed., The Dufoe-Sifton Correspondence, 1919-1927 (Manitoba Record Society Publications, 1966), p. 41.

to official government policy. Oliver, the cultural nationalist, preferred them because they were British. Canada could tolerate them not being farmers, but violation of the prevailing social mores was another matter. As John Foster Fraser advised his compatriots,

If you are a "waster", and show you are a "waster" within the first year, you will be taken on board a steamer some morning, and sent back to England. Canada has no use for you.¹

French Canada and the Immigrants

European immigration posed a serious problem to French Canada, in that the majority of the immigrants assimilated to the English milieu. Particularly in the west, French-Canadians were coming to be regarded as simply another one of the growing number of non-English speaking minorities.² The Manitoba school question brought this issue to the fore, and the debate over the school clause in the Saskatchewan and Alberta Autonomy Bills further emphasized it.

In 1899 F.D. Monk, the Conservative Member from Montreal-Jacques Cartier, had suggested that the west be reserved for settlement by the two founding races.³ Henri Bourassa, who had initially supported Sifton's policies, by 1904 was arguing that

¹ Fraser, p. 20.

² Brown & Cook, pp. 127-128; Siegfried, pp. 182-183.

³ Brown & Cook, p. 74.

it never was in the minds of the fathers of confederation...that in order to be broad - or even in order to make land speculators rich - we ought to change a providential condition of our partly French and partly English country to make it a land of refuge for the scum of all nations.¹

French-speaking immigration was solicited by the Department, and agents were located in Paris and Antwerp. Quebec Conservatives criticized the Government for not making a great enough effort in this direction.² However, there were problems in both countries. The agent in Belgium reported great success in flooding the Belgian schools with atlases and books describing Canada.³ The problem with Belgium as a source of immigration could be compared with that of Iceland. It was a small country, and as early as the nineties a C.P.R. immigration agent had reported that its comparative prosperity militated against emigration.⁴

In France active solicitation of emigration was illegal. By 1909 there were five permanent agents in France.⁵ Some success was reported because the law allowed them to lecture

¹ Debates, 1904, 6182.

² Debates, 1909, 6144-6145; Joseph Levitt, Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf (Ottawa: Les Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1969), p. 9.

³ D. Treau De Coeli, Report on Immigration, 1906-07, pp.78-79.

⁴ Hedges, p. 105.

⁵ P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 558. Answer to Parliamentary question regarding the agents employed in France.

and describe Canada, provided they did not talk about emigration. In his 1907 report the Paris agent explained that the difficulties in securing this immigration were due to

...military service, a restrictive law, the efforts of the French government to people its own colonies, the advantageous offers of material advances by different countries (Chile, free transportation, the Argentine Republic, until recently, half fare), the fertile soil and favourable climate of their own country, old standing prejudices, the opposition of the press, and doubts raised as to the truth of our pamphlets,...

The number of emigrants from these countries was never large, but during this period a much greater percentage of them went to the United States than to Canada.²

It was repatriation of French-Canadians who had gone to live in New England that excited most interest in Quebec. The C.P.R. had begun employing agents, often Catholic priests, in New England in the nineties.³ When Sifton reorganized the Department he began employing similar agents. Much of this work was done by Quebec-based colonization societies. The largest of these, the Quebec and Lake St. John Repatriation and Colonization Society, was affiliated with the Department in 1906.⁴ There were some French Canadian colonies settled in the west under the auspices of these societies, but

¹ P. Wiallard, Report on Immigration, 1906-07, p. 81.

² Magrath, p. 78.

³ Hedges, pp. 112-113; Dafoe, p. 141; Debates, 1909, 849.

⁴ Report on Immigration, 1906-07, p. 62.

the pace of repatriation was not encouraging.¹

Eugene Paquet, the Conservative Member from L'Islet, in 1909 appealed to Parliament to take a greater interest in this work. This problem also had an economic aspect, and Paquet argued that the repatriation movement should be combined with an attempt to create greater economic opportunities in the province, for as he pointed out

In certain important centres, Franco-Americans control capital, they have good commercial establishments and take an active part in public business. Their property represents millions of dollars. Their ownership of real estate, naturalisation, the establishment of French Catholic schools and of the parochial system attach them to the soil of the republic and render repatriation difficult.²

The problem was also one from which the Opposition could make political capital. In the same 1909 debate, the Liberals accused the Conservatives of raising the "racial cry" about immigration in British Columbia and Quebec in the 1908 election. They claimed that Borden had one policy for the prairies where he favoured immigration and another for Quebec where he had argued that "the government was sacrificing the French Canadians for the sake of the Doukhobors and the Galicians". Jacques Bureau, the Solicitor-General, claimed that as early as 1900 Monk had been "deploring in every respect the presence of Doukhobors in Canada; such was his hobby and he could not get rid of it."³

¹ Levitt, p. 65; Siegfried, pp. 182-183.

² Debates, 1909, 837.

³ Ibid., 854.

Eastern Europeans

During Oliver's administration, and particularly after the cancellation of the contract with the North Atlantic Trading Company, the variety of ethnic and religious groups (with the exception of Germans) who came from southern and eastern Europe came to comprise an unofficial category in the view of the Immigration Department. The Department did not solicit immigration in these countries and did not pay bonuses to ticket agents. However, if the immigrants could satisfy the requirements of the laws and regulations they were not specifically excluded.

The largest group of these people to settle in western Canada, and those who attracted the most comment, were the Galicians.¹ Of these people Scott remarked that

They have improved their positions by coming to Canada, but whether or not they are a valuable acquisition to the Dominion is an open question.

He thought that they should make good farmers, but that they lacked capital on arriving and tended to settle in wooded areas which were hard to clear.² The fact that they did this was probably Government policy.³ As late as 1922

¹ The people referred to were Ukrainians. At that time they were designated by the province from which they came. They were also called Ruthenians and Bukowinians.

² Scott, p. 559.

³ Palmer, p. 98, argues that the Galicians' choice of wooded lands was a result of their own preferences, but that the Government did little to discourage this preference.

Sifton was still emphasizing the necessity of obtaining agricultural immigrants. Canadians and Americans would not tolerate the rough, pioneer conditions necessitated by clearing these lands, and

the only people that will ever settle them and stay on the land are the European peasants of the Ruthenian and Hungarian type. I do not think a few hundred thousand would be any peril to the general community, and they would fill a place that is very necessary to fill in the present economic condition of the country.¹

Fraser noticed a similar situation in regard to a colony of Finns who were settled near Wapella in what is now Saskatchewan. He wanted to see the type of land they had "for a growl frequently heard in Canada is that the Government give the foreigners the best of the homesteads." He concluded that these Finns had not received of the best. However, he went on to note that although these Finnish peasants lived a hard life, they themselves thought it was a less hard life than they had lived in Finland, an observation that would probably have elicited an "I told you so" from Sifton.²

Donald Avery has argued that it was the aim of Canadian capitalists during this period to introduce a permanent proletariat into Canada by drawing unskilled labourers from southern and eastern Europe.³ We could argue that Sifton wished to introduce a permanent peasantry.

¹ C. Sifton quoted in Dafoe-Sifton Correspondence, p. 138-139.

² Fraser, pp. 123-126.

³ Donald Avery, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the 'Foreign' Navy, 1896-1914", Canadian Historical Association Papers, 1972, p.136.

Canada's development differed from the traditional pattern of the countries of Europe. The country had not experienced the centuries of feudalism and peasant agriculture which had resulted in forests being cleared and the major areas of arable land being exploited. Lacking this peasantry, the country could not pass through a stage in which they were, whether gradually or violently, forged into an urban proletariat. Immigration would presumably have to supply the needs created by this uneven development. However, Sifton ran into conflict with the cultural nationalists, who saw themselves as building a society which would be free of the social evils of European society. Men like Scott and Oliver, whether or not they thought in these terms, did not want to import a peasantry.

Scott also thought that the Galicians were slow to assimilate.¹ Both Woodsworth and MacBeth disputed this, describing them as people who were particularly eager to adopt Canadian ways.² The difference in view is perhaps accounted for by the differing perspectives of the bureaucrat and the social worker. The Presbyterian

¹ Scott, p. 560.

² Woodsworth, p. 136; MacBeth, p. 56.

Church, in which MacBeth's father had also been a minister in Kildonan, had helped these people to found the Greek Independent Church in the prairie provinces. Both men were particularly eager to educate and "Canadianize" the immigrants. The people who came to their missions were probably those who most wanted to assimilate. They would have seen many more of them than Scott, and were probably more likely to recognize and encourage their aspirations. Both ministers also described them as very hard-working, industrious and ambitious.

The lack of education among Galician immigrants was a point of debate. In 1901 Oliver had argued that they put an obstacle in the way of other prairie settlers who had to "depend for the schooling of [their] children on the taxpaying willingness and power of people who neither know nor care anything about schools".¹ T.O. Davis, the Member from Saskatchewan, responded that the Galicians in his constituency has a "thirst for knowledge" and were eager to see schools established.² In 1906, a Department official, who described them as a "thrifty, frugal, industrious people" estimated that of seventy thousand Galicians in the country, about fifteen thousand of these were children and about half of them were attending school.³

¹ Debates, 1901, 2934.

² Ibid., 2956.

³ P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 179, C.W. Speers, General Colonization Agent to W.D. Scott, Feb. 26, 1906.

To Scott the major problem lay with those Galicians who settled in the cities.

Living as they do in crowded, insanitary and usually filthy quarters, existing upon food and under conditions which a self-respecting Canadian would refuse to tolerate, they enter into unfair competition with the wage-earners of Canada and constitute a source of danger to the national life. Crime is all too common among them, and it is without doubt the city element of this people which has brought about the prejudice which exists against Galicians in the minds of Canadians. ¹

Although Woodsworth showed more sympathy his descriptions of life in the North End of Winnipeg were in substantial agreement with Scott's opinion. In fact the difficulty of "Canadianizing" those already in Canada was his major reason for favouring immigration restriction.

The cities played an important part in the development of the relations between immigrants and Canadian society. They offered a greater variety of opportunity, but also a greater possibility of friction between immigrants and the native-born, particularly if the immigrants formed ethnic neighbourhoods. Even if they were not a large proportion of the population, they were likely to be seen as such.

The 1906 Winnipeg census showed that almost one-third of the population had been born in non-English speaking countries.² By 1910, W.H. Sharpe, the Conservative Member

¹ Scott, p. 560.

² Cited in Woodsworth, p. 259.

from Lisgar in Manitoba, was connecting the fact that forty-nine languages were spoken in Winnipeg with the complaint that these immigrants were "filling our jails and asylums."¹

The city also brought the immigrants into immediate contact with the native-born through economic competition. As early as 1901, A.W. Puttee, the Winnipeg Independent Labour Member and the editor of the labour paper, The Voice, was arguing that bonusing should be stopped and immigration restricted if it brought in large numbers of labourers who lowered the level of wages that the unions were attempting to secure. He wanted to see something done about the fact that Galicians and Doukhobors were being hired in Winnipeg for thirty cents a day, and that the railways were hiring them "at rates of wages which we have reason to know are less than current."²

Woodsworth attributed the crime rate among Galicians largely to their drinking habits. Temperance was a growing reform cause, and Woodsworth was a strong temperance man.³ The temperance crusade aimed for an elevation of

¹ Debates, 1909-10, 5544.

² Ibid, 1901, 2950.

³ Oliver was also a teetotaler and a temperance advocate.

political as well as social life, and he argued in connection with the Galicians that

These people are open to good influences. They are anxious to adopt Canadian ways. But when do they meet Canadians? Only at election times, when the lowest party tools seek their friendship for a few brief days, offering them free drinks with the prospect of "plenty whiskey" if they vote right.¹

Corruption in Canadian elections had by no means been introduced by the immigrants, but the fact that they opened a large new field of operation for the party machines was cause for concern. Arthur R. Ford, a Winnipeg journalist who collaborated with Woodsworth in writing Strangers Within Our Gates, remarked that many of the Galicians, particularly those who were illiterate, regarded their vote "as they would any other possession, something they have a perfect right to sell to the highest bidder."² Magrath complained that the only Canadians who took any interest in whether the immigrants became naturalized or not were the political parties just before an election.³ On one occasion Oliver was explaining in Parliament that the Department required certain powers granted to it in

¹ J.S. Woodsworth, "Foreign Immigrants and Temperance", Christian Guardian, April 13, 1910, p. 8.

² Arthur R. Ford, "That Foreign Question Again", Christian Guardian, Jan. 6, 1909, pp. 9-10.

³ Debates, 1909-10, 5518.

order to be able to deal with emergencies. Sam Hughes interrupted him to ask if a Dominion election was one of the emergencies he was considering.¹

In fact Oliver's constituency was one of those where the cry was raised. After the first Alberta election in 1905, the Calgary Herald jibed

When the totals are all in it will be found that after Oliver's Galicians and Pollocks(sic), who were voted like cattle by the machine, are deducted from the list, there will be a majority of good Canadian electors against the government.²

Italians

The largest group of southern European immigrants during this period were Italians. They were almost entirely city-dwellers; there were few in Winnipeg, and Woodsworth estimated that there were six thousand living in Toronto and eight to ten thousand in Montreal.³

However, large numbers of men came each year to work on the railway and then return to Italy or the United States. The railway was linked with immigration in the opening up of the country. In the countries where bonuses were paid men with experience as railway labourers were included in the bonused category. Even before Confederation

¹ Debates, 1906, 5214.

² Quoted in the Edmonton Bulletin, Nov. 17, 1905, Waddell, The Honorable Frank Oliver, p. 351.

³ Woodsworth, p. 258.

D'Arcy McGee had advocated a comprehensive programme of national development, which included public works and immigration.¹ Sifton's concept of national development was similar. However, the parts of this plan did not always function smoothly together.

Scott referred to Italian railway labourers as "birds of passage", who did not remain to settle in the country. In 1905 James A. Smart, who had gone into the passenger and land business after leaving the Department, wrote Laurier with a proposal to provide five thousand "Scotch and north of England workmen", who, unlike the Italians, would settle on the land after the railway was built.² This had been Sifton's concept of the role of railway construction in the immigration programme, and Laurier was open to the idea,³ but Donald Avery maintains that employers preferred Italian or Oriental labour.⁴

The reason was not far to seek. Scott noted that Italian labourers were eagerly sought across Canada. Without apparent irony, he noted, "The Italian is a good navvy"; he obeyed the "boss"; he did not care to strike, since he was

¹ R.B. Burns, "D'Arcy McGee and the Economic Aspects of New Nationality", Canadian Historical Association Papers, 1967, p. 9.

² P.A.C., Laurier Papers, 366/97529-97532, Jas. A. Smart to W. Laurier, May 13, 1905.

³ P.A.C., Laurier Papers, 366/97533, W. Laurier to Jas. A. Smart, May 16, 1905; Dafoe, p. 191.

⁴ Avery, *passim*.

often returning to Italy and the loss of time and money was not worth it, and he boarded himself on accepted the accomodation offered.¹ On the other hand, British workers were often unionized and were able to use the English press to air their grievances.² We have noted Oliver's preference for British immigrants. However, when they were involved in labour disputes in Canada the Department was in a weak position vis a vis the employers, since the publicity in Britain damaged Canada's reputation and undid the work of the agents who were trying to propogandize its advantages.³ The necessity of finishing the railroad also put pressure on the restrictionists to allow these men in.

On cultural grounds Scott objected to the Italians' attitude to the law and did not want to see the "vendetta" concept and Black Hand societies established in Canada.⁴ Magrath seems to have held similar views and used them to buttress his argument in favour of a moral as well as a medical examination of immigrants, on the grounds that

¹ Scott, p. 561.

² Avery, p. 138; See also Fraser, pp. 111-113 for comments on the involvement of English immigrants in Canadian trade unions.

³ Avery, p. 137; Debates, 1909-10, 5805.

⁴ Scott, p. 562.

crime was "fully as dangerous to the country as insanity and tuberculosis."¹ Woodsworth thought too much had been said about the criminal instincts of Italians, that a few violent crimes had caused a false estimate of the whole group. Both he and MacBeth praised their industry and high standard of family morality. They also noted that they took no interest in Canadian politics, that their main objective in coming to Canada was to make money.²

The Jews

There was a fairly large Jewish immigration during this period. Scott noted that while the 1881 census had shown only six hundred sixty-seven Jews in Canada, 16,131 had arrived in 1901 and over fifty thousand between then and 1914. He stated that no attempt was made to solicit them, but that their own philanthropic societies brought them over and looked after them. Although there had been attempts at Jewish farm settlements, notably at Wapella and Hirsch, he concluded that they were not generally farmers. His major objection to Jewish immigration was a socio-economic one, that

Sweat-shops have not yet reached in Canada the deplorable condition found in the United States, but the tendency is in that direction, and the Jews are one of the strongest factors in bringing this about.³

¹ Magrath, pp. 105-107.

² Woodsworth, pp. 163-166, MacBeth, pp. 60-61.

³ Scott, p. 571.

Woodsworth, on the other hand, admired their ability to make a living although they often arrived very poor. MacBeth saw them as "sober and industrious", and both men noted their attachment to family life. Woodsworth also admired the fact that they put a high value on education, were enthusiastic about libraries and night-schools (many attended the night-schools organized by the All Peoples' Mission) and learned English quickly.¹

Both ministers noted that many of the Jewish immigrants were socialists "of a most extreme type". Woodsworth attributed these views to the intolerable conditions under which they had lived in eastern Europe, and believed that conditions in Canada were shifting them toward liberalism.² It is worth recalling that during the twenties and thirties, when Woodsworth had become a leading figure in the farmer-labour movement in the west, he was still to find that one of the conflicts within this movement was between the Marxist socialism that eastern European immigrants had brought from the continent and the Christian socialism that Woodsworth and others had inherited from England.

¹ Woodsworth, pp. 155-158; MacBeth, pp. 61-62.

² Woodsworth, pp. 158.

Religious Communities

During this period three groups of people attracted attention, not particularly because of their nationality, but because of their mode of living. Mennonites, Mormons and Doukhobors all lived in communities, and all held beliefs which Scott described as different from the "well-known creeds of Anglo-Saxon countries".¹

In 1910, J.G. Turriff the Liberal Member from Assinaboia, another eastern Canadian who had migrated west as a young man, voiced a general objection to the principle of living in communities.

We want the people who come into the country to adopt Canadian ways of living. Even English speaking people coming into Canada, if they live in communities, would not be the class that we desire.²

Community living was decidedly at variance with the "rugged individualist" ethos that prevailed in the west during this period.

The Mennonites were a German-speaking sect who had been living in Russia. They had begun coming to Canada in 1874 to escape religious persecution. This was a period of depression and little immigration, and the Canadian government was eager to have them settle in the west. They were assisted by the Quakers and by Mennonites in Ontario. By 1879-
fourteen hundred families had settled in southern Manitoba.

¹ Scott, p. 534. See C.A. Dawson, Group Settlement and Ethnic Communities in Western Canada (Toronto: The Macmillan Co. of Canada, Ltd., 1936) for a description of all three groups.

² Debates, 1909-10, 5546.

Woodsworth quoted a description of the early settlements by the journalist Cora E. Hind: "A village...is more suggestive of Holland, in the sixteenth, than Manitoba, in the nineteenth, century." However, he thought that thirty years had worked a great change. They were becoming educated and the young people were taking a greater interest in the world.¹ Scott described them as "peaceful, law-abiding, industrious, honest...one of the most desirable classes ever to come to Canada".²

Woodsworth also noted that they had begun to take an interest in Canadian politics and that a Mennonite sat in the Alberta Legislature. C. Hiebert had been elected in Rosebud constituency in 1905. The Liberals used his election to counter the charge that they manipulated the immigrant vote, since Hiebert's nationality had been "prominent and influential" in the election, and he was a Conservative.³

Neither Woodsworth nor MacBeth approved of the Mormons. In the first place, they disagreed with the substance of their religion. However, they were both ministers of a zealous missionary bent, and it is likely that they felt more strongly about this than the majority of westerners. In fact, it was those churches, the Methodist and Presbyterian, in which the "social gospel" movement originated, who were most actively anti-Mormon.⁴ In the second place, they

¹ Woodsworth, pp. 105-108. ² Scott, p. 536.

³ C.A.R., 1905, p. 240. ⁴ Palmer, pp. 85-89.

objected to what they saw as a Mormon design to take over political control of the areas where they lived. MacBeth maintained that they always voted the way their leaders directed, and that the Mormon vote was "that most dangerous thing, a 'solid' vote, and it is absolutely in the hands of the priesthood."¹

The last two objections had some currency in the country at large,² and Magrath felt called upon to answer them. He was a manager of the Canadian Northwest Irrigation Company, whose irrigated farmland in southern Alberta had been largely taken up by Mormons. He praised their good character and business ability, and argued that since there were only about four hundred thousand Mormons throughout the world, there was no serious possibility of their taking over any legislatures. He maintained that polygamy was dying out.³ Scott quoted Magrath's defence of the Mormons and added that they were very successful people, who had never caused any trouble to the Immigration Department.⁴

However, it could not be said of them, as it was said of the Galicians, that they did not understand democratic

¹ MacBeth, pp. 45-49; Woodsworth, pp. 78-86.

² C.A.R., 1907, p. 296; Howard A. Kennedy, New Canada and the New Canadians, with a preface by Lord Strathcona (London: Musson, 1907), p. 225.

³ Magrath, pp. 120-123.

⁴ Scott, p. p. 538.

politics. They saw how their voting power could be used to protect their own interests. In 1905, J.W. Woolf, the Liberal candidate for Cardston, protested that Laurier had said in the House that the Mormons were not Christians and that his statement had "given our opponents a formidable weapon in the local contest."¹ Laurier issued a public response explaining that he had meant that they were not Catholics or Protestants, but that they were "excellent citizens and their conduct is unimpeachable."² Woolf was elected.

This type of action perhaps helps explain the circumspect nature of the debates in Parliament, the absence of racial slurs, in fact the very few direct references to any ethnic groups. Oliver could rail against the Galicians while they did not understand English and their votes were bought. However, a group which did understand the political system and was organized had a means of exerting pressure on a politician who appeared in public to be a bigot.

There were a variety of reactions to the Doukhobors. They were a Russian religious sect who had been persecuted in Russia because they refused to do military service. Through an arrangement promoted by Count Tolstoy and James Mavor, a professor at the University of Toronto, the

¹ P.A.C., Laurier Papers, 383/101946-101947, J.W. Woolf to W. Laurier, Oct. 5, 1905.

² W. Laurier quoted in Palmer, p. 82.

Government arranged for them to immigrate in several large groups beginning in 1898. The practice among some of them of going on religious pilgrimages, sometimes in the nude, was seen as an insult to the morality of the community, causing one western Member to remark that they should be brought to parade around in Ottawa so that the Government could see what the west had to put up with.¹ Their high rate of illiteracy and the fact that they were not eager to send their children to school, even though the Quakers had provided them with teachers, concerned a man like Woodsworth.² The amount of control that one man, Peter Verigan, exercised over the whole community was not something that individualistic westerners could find easy to understand or accept.

However, there was also a large current of opinion in their favour.³ Even their unusual religious practices found some admirers. MacBeth had been the spokesman of a delegation of churchmen who had welcomed them to Canada, and "since that day, some people have made merry over the Doukhobors, but our faith in them remains." To him people who had suffered for their religious convictions were "not to be despised in these mercenary days."⁴ Magrath, who

¹ W.H. Sharpe, Debates, 1909-10, 5544; Also Debates, 1909-10, 5504, 5510, 5548, 5534-44.

² Woodsworth, pp. 121-122.

³ Hobson, pp. 89-90; Fraser, pp. 158-160; P.A.C., Laurier Papers, 626/170112-170115, Rev. J. McDougall to F. Oliver, May 21, 1910.

⁴ MacBeth, pp. 51-54.

had doubts about their future unless they themselves made the effort to assimilate, also commented that

when the report first went abroad a few years ago that some of them were starting on a pilgrimage seeking the Saviour of mankind, it sounded somewhat refreshing - in the stress and bustle of a new country - that some people were deeply concerned in things not of this world.¹

A greater factor in winning them acceptance was probably the fact that they were successful farmers (both in Saskatchewan and British Columbia), they were in demand as workers on the construction of the Canadian Northern Railway and they were judged to be thrifty, clean, honest and hardworking. Scott thought that they were likely to make good settlers for these reasons,² and Oliver, who had originally opposed their immigration defended them in Parliament.³

It was generally agreed, however, that they did best if they left the community. The virtues of some who had left were described to Oliver by an immigration agent who wrote that they were

...first class settlers. They are all falling in line with the laws of the country, they all become British subjects and has voted [sic] for the Liberal Government, and each man⁴ is quite capable of running his own business.

¹ Magrath, pp. 118-119.

² Scott, pp. 542-548.

³ Debates, 1909-10, 5543-5545.

⁴ P.A.C., Laurier Papers, 396/105265-105269, P. Buchanan to P. Oliver, Dec. 21, 1905.

All three groups secured a fairly satisfactory degree of acceptance by Canadian society in spite of the fact that their religious beliefs and their modes of living did not conform to the standards of the majority of the native-born. This was probably largely due to their success as farmers. If their particular religious beliefs were discounted, they were also seen to have many of the personal qualities that were generally described as desirable. The fact that none of these people settled in the cities probably also helped. They avoided the friction which might have developed had they been in regular personal contact with their critics, and were able to adopt their own gradual pace of assimilation.

The Asians

The last category of immigrants, those who not only were not solicited but had definite obstacles put in their way, were people from Asia. The major groups concerned were Chinese, Japanese and Hindus.¹

The question was frequently argued in economic terms, that Asian labourers, by accepting lower wages, competed unfairly with white labourers. But it was made more explosive by colour prejudice, the demand for a "white British Columbia" and by the potential size of the immigration, the fear that the Pacific coast would be "flooded with Asiatics".²

¹ All immigrants from India during this period were described as Hindus. The majority were Punjabi Sikhs, although some were Moslems.

² R.G. Macpherson quoted in C.A.R., 1907, p. 385.

The most serious result of anti-Asiatic feeling during this period was the Vancouver riot in September, 1907.

In July of that year several thousand Japanese had begun arriving in Vancouver, largely from Hawaii. This resulted from a complicated set of circumstances involving recent American legislation restricting the entry of Japanese and a move on the part of Hawaiian planters to encourage the Japanese to emigrate because they were importing cheaper labour from Portugal. The majority of the Japanese who arrived in Vancouver were in transit to the United States, but the number who landed was about seven thousand, roughly equal to the Japanese population already living in British Columbia. This, coupled with a large increase in the immigration of Indians from Hong Kong in that summer, created what Oliver described as a "panicky" feeling in the city in regard to Oriental immigration.¹

In August an Asiatic Exclusion League was formed at a meeting in the Vancouver Labour Hall. This was affiliated with the San Francisco League and had several Californians in its leadership. J. Castell Hopkins, the editor of The Canadian Annual Review, described anti-Oriental feeling as being confined to a minority, "but a very noisy one."

¹ See excerpts from the reports of the King Commissions of 1908 which inquired into the Vancouver riot and immigration from Asia included in Reports of the [U.S.] Commission, pp. 64-72.

The culmination of this agitation was a riot on September 8. The police were unable to control it, and during a five-hour period considerable damage was done to businesses in the Chinese and Japanese quarters and several people were killed. It was finally stopped when the Japanese armed themselves with knives and bottles and turned on the mob.¹

The riot was a source of embarrassment to the government. In 1906 they had ratified the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1894. This gave trade advantages to Canada, but its provision that the nationals of each country could pass freely through the other's territory created a situation which Borden described as permitting "the entire population of Japan to migrate to Canada if they desired to do so."² This again raised the argument between the economic and cultural nationalists, with the cultural nationalists arguing that Canadian nationality was being sold out so that certain people could become rich. On September 17, the Trades and Labour Congress passed a resolution asking for the abrogation of the treaty, to which Laurier responded in the negative.

Laurier conferred with the Japanese consul and in October, Rodolphe Lemieux, the Minister of Labour, made a special trip to Japan. The result was the "gentlemen's agreement" by which Japan agreed to limit emigration to

¹ For a description of these events, see C.A.R., 1907, pp. 384-387.

² C.A.R., 1907, p. 392.

four hundred a year. Those people allowed to emigrate were issued passports, so that subsequently all Japanese entering Canada were required to have a passport.

In November, Mackenzie King was appointed to head two commissions. The first inquired into the causes and results of the riot; Laurier had already sent Scott out to make a "quiet enquiry" in September.¹ The second investigated the reasons behind immigration from Asia. These resulted in legislation and regulations in 1908 which further tightened the controls on Asian immigration generally and almost entirely eliminated immigration from India.

There were a variety of reactions both to the riot and to Asian immigration generally. Labour unions frequently had passed resolutions opposing the immigration of skilled labourers or those who worked for lower wages than Canadian workers. The position was generally justified in nationalist terms; the standard of life that the unions were attempting to secure for the Canadian working population would be lowered by the competition of "foreigners". A 1906 resolution of the Trades and Labour Congress combined the nationalist with a racial argument. While the welfare of immigrants merited consideration, labour's major concern was for

¹ P.A.C., Laurier Papers, 479/129383, W. Laurier to F. Oliver, Sept. 16, 1907.

"the welfare of the Canadian people and the betterment of our common country", and that this required the exclusion of those who

...either by temperament, non-assimilative qualifications, habits, customs or want of any permanent good which their coming brings to us, are not a desirable acquisition to our citizenship.

In this category was included "Chinamen, Hindus and all other Asiatic peoples."¹

On the other hand, most employers in British Columbia were in favour of Oriental immigration, since it was the cheapest way of solving the labour shortage.² James Dunsmuir, the Lieutenant-Governor of the province particularly irritated the exclusionists, and was burned in effigy on the night of the Vancouver riot. He had large mining interests in the province and was much resented for the fact that shortly after refusing official consent to provincial restrictive legislation, he had imported several hundred Japanese labourers to work in his mines.³

J.A. Hobson believed that a less restrictive policy on the admission of Chinese was necessary to the economic development of the province, and argued

¹ Dominion of Canada. The Labour Gazette, The Journal of the Department of Labour (Ottawa: Queen's Printer), July, 1906-June, 1907, p. 397.

² C.A.R., 1907, p. 388; 1906, p. 295.

³ M.P. Timlin, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1896-1910", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science XXVI, no.4 (November 1960): 525.

That a huge country like this, with all its vaunted possibilities, should be cramped in its development by a dog-in-the-manger policy is a monstrous exhibition of monopoly, whether it be cloaked under the name of racial integrity, protection of labour, or any other phrase.¹

Opposition to the exclusionist position was not based only on economic considerations. One Winnipeg clergyman described the position as "anti-Christian", and the Reverend Doctor W.T. Herridge, an Ottawa minister, argued that

a dash of Orientalism will not hurt us.
...our turbid Western life will be all the better for an infusion of the repose of races whose civilization is much older than our own...²

The poet, Wilfred Campbell, managed to combine opposition to the exclusionists with the fear of Asian domination that some of them expressed. To him

The Oriental...has been treated as no decent human being should be treated in any country calling itself human and Christian. He is much more intelligent and industrious than many of the European peoples which have demoralized these American shores; and yet he has been placed under a tyrannous ban...

The result will be that the Orientals of the Pacific, who are a highly civilized people, the oldest in the world, and who are now awakening from their lethargy, and rapidly adopting modern methods of warfare, will some day arrive in such numbers, and such conditions, as will annihilate our people, and teach them when too late, that true freedom should be given to all men alike.³

¹ Hobson, p. 36.

² C.A.R., 1907, pp. 387-388.

³ Canada; painted by T. Mower Martin, R.C.A.; described by Wilfred Campbell (London: A.&C. Black, 1907), pp. 257-258.

Chinese

By 1914, Scott would write that "Although not popular, the Chinaman may be said to be now the least hated Oriental on the western coast." He described the Chinese as "quiet, inoffensive, law-abiding people", whose only vices were gambling and indulging in opium. In business they were "credited with having a strict sense of honour". He did not consider that they could be assimilated, since their primary objective was to accumulate wealth and return to China, but thought that if their numbers did not increase they could not be described as a danger to the country.¹

He described them occupationally as divided into four classes: merchants dealing in Oriental products, market gardeners, restaurant keepers and laundrymen and domestic servants. These do not seem to be occupations that would involve direct competition with white unionists, and in fact Hobson maintained that "the smaller traders of the towns" were active in demanding the imposition of the head-tax because they feared the competition of Chinese merchants.² In 1904 the head-tax on Chinese immigrants was raised to five hundred dollars.³ Probably many more Chinese would have come to Canada if this impediment had not existed, but

¹ Scott, pp. 567-568.

² Hobson, pp. 34-35.

³ In 1906 the Trades and Labour recommended that the head-tax be raised to one thousand dollars. See The Labour Gazette, July, 1906-June, 1907, p. 397.

immigration continued to increase slowly up to the war, and Scott estimated that over thirty thousand had entered the country between 1901 and 1912.¹

Mackenzie King believed that the head-tax had been useful to the Chinese already in Canada, since by cutting down competition in the occupations in which they were engaged, it had enabled them to ask for higher wages. He thought that this was particularly true of domestic servants.² This was borne out by a petition of 1907 which was signed largely by women in Vancouver, and asked for a removal of the Chinese head-tax in order that they might get domestic servants more cheaply.³

In 1911, Scott was appointed Chief Controller of Chinese Immigration. Up to that year the administration of the Chinese Immigration Act had been under the Department of Trade and Commerce. On the recommendation of a Royal Commission that all immigration legislation be consolidated under one department, it was moved to the Department of the Interior.⁴

¹ Scott, p. 567.

² Mackenzie King quoted in the Reports of the [U.S.] Commission, p. 64.

³ C.A.R., 1907, p. 296.

⁴ P.A.C., R.G. 2, Registers to Orders-in-Council, P.C. 1846, Aug. 11, 1911. The Chinese were the only group whose nationality was specifically mentioned in any immigration legislation. The Chinese Immigration Act had been passed in 1885 and remained in force until 1947.

Japanese

Scott believed that the Japanese were the "most undesirable" of the Orientals from a Canadian standpoint. They were an emigrating race and proud of their own country. Because they lived so close to the west coast of Canada, they might come to "dominate not only the labour market, but, through the investment of capital the principal industries as well."¹

The fear that the Japanese would come to dominate the province was common. At the time of the Vancouver riot, R.G. Macpherson, the Liberal Member for Vancouver City and a vociferous spokesman for the views of the Asiatic Exclusion League declared that the Japanese Government was behind the influx of Japanese of that summer; that these were picked men chosen to take over the country. R.P. Pettypiece, a Vancouver socialist, believed that the monopolies and the employers were behind the "invasion".²

The source of this fear, aside from the large number of Japanese who arrived in the summer of 1907, probably lay in the rise of Japan as a world power during this period and the success of the Japanese, who had become extensively involved in the west coast fishing industry. MacBeth described them as "more vain and aggressive" and more

¹ Scott, p. 569.

² C.A.R., 1907, p. 385.

"eager in business" than the Chinese.¹ Scott thought that their unwillingness to remain "hewers of wood and drawers of water" probably accounted for some of the resentment against them.² J. Castell Hopkins also explained it as a clash of this sort.

Unlike the Chinese these new settlers were not submissive and they threatened to take root in the country...they had the personal confidence which national greatness often gives and the assertion of which, to some extent, might have been deemed excusable in such a new-born people; they were in contact with Canadians also more or less aggressive in character;...

He went on to describe a resolution presented to Parliament by Ralph Smith, the Liberal trade-unionist from Nanaimo, favouring the restriction of Oriental immigration and commented ironically that "Much of his argument went to prove that Japanese labour was better than that of the white-man and must, therefore, be excluded."³

The element of racial prejudice in the situation is obvious when we remember that being judged as hard-working and ambitious would generally gain favour for white immigrants. However, the issue was part of a genuine labour struggle in a province which went on to have a history of serious labour trouble. It is interesting to

¹ MacBeth, pp. 83-84.

² Scott, p. 569.

³ C.A.R., 1907, pp. 284 and 396.

note that even Macpherson, who was not ashamed to publicly declare the necessity to "keep the strain white",¹ also felt it necessary to buttress his view with appeals to the future of Canadian nationality and attempts to demonstrate that Orientals would not assimilate or become citizens.²

"Hindus"

Immigrants from India had begun to arrive in 1905. They were almost entirely men and worked in sawmills and on railroad construction. Apparently they were treated very badly by the man in the street,³ and the 1906 Trades and Labour Congress resolution described them as

by reason of disease, absolutely unfitted to be allowed into this country, and...by reason of practices obtaining among Hindus as a people they should be altogether excluded from Canada.⁴

Both Scott and Woodsworth thought that the great barrier to their assimilation was the caste system.⁵ Obviously the cultural distance between the Hindus and the native-born workmen of British Columbia was a large one. However, Canadian objection to the caste system could probably be compared to the attitudes of some westerners to the religious practices of the Mormons or the Doukhobors. Colour prejudice no doubt made the problems of the Indians

¹ Debates, 1907-08, 6445.

² C.A.R., 1906, p. 295.

³ P.A.C., Laurier Papers, 679/185718-185721, F. Oliver to W. Laurier, May 3, 1911.

⁴ The Labour Gazette, July, 1906-June, 1907, p. 397.

⁵ Scott, p. 570; Woodsworth, p. 189.

more acute. As well they lacked the protection afforded the Mormons and Doukhobors by the fact that they lived in relatively isolated rural communities. The fact that the Indian immigrants looked for employment in Vancouver and the lumber towns of the coast would have provided constant opportunity for abrasive contact between them and the native-born, and probably contributed to the development of exclusionist opinion.

J. Castell Hopkins, who thought that many of labour's charges against them were unfounded argued that

the Hindus were mild-mannered and inoffensive men; they did not carry knives like the Italians or revolvers like the Japs; they were fellow-subjects of Canadians under the Crown and many of those deported, or neglected, or even ill-treated at Vancouver and on the Coast, generally, wore army medals and were of that gallant Sikh race which has so often served as 'soldiers of the King'¹

The Imperialist argument was the one most frequently employed in their favour. Some of their leaders argued that as British subjects they had come to Canada for patriotic reasons. However, Mackenzie King concluded that their arrival was due to the efforts of transportation companies and employment agents. In fact, he maintained that in excluding them Canada was acting in the spirit of an Indian immigration act of 1883, which was intended to protect emigrants from being exploited as indentured labour.²

¹ C.A.R., 1907, p. 295.

² Mackenzie King quoted in the Reports of the [U.S.] Commission, pp. 72-75.

However, if Imperialism grew fainter as one moved west of Ontario, it paled almost to nothingness in British Columbia. There was strong resentment against the British connection as being the source of both the Japanese and Hindu immigration, to the point where Macpherson threatened "another episode like the Boston tea party" if something was not done.¹

King was sent to England in 1908 to confer with the British Government, and an agreement which accepted the Canadian immigration legislation was worked out. An example of the amount of influence Imperialism had on official opinion was provided in the 1908 debate over restrictive legislation. John Haggart, the Conservative Member from South Lanark, suggested that Canada probably did not have the power to exclude British subjects. Oliver responded that since the Department had been excluding them since 1906, he presumed that the necessary authority existed.²

¹ C.A.R., 1907, p. 387.

² Debates, 1907-08, 6431.

III. Restrictive Legislation

The most important feature of the period of Oliver's Ministry was the definite establishment of the selective principle in Canadian immigration policy and the construction of government machinery to carry out this policy.

Nineteenth-century policy had been nominally laissez-faire. M.F. Timlin relates this to the economic outlook of the time. Canada, deficiently supplied with agricultural labour, would absorb the European surplus population until equilibrium was reached.¹ There were no criteria for admission, although even then a series of rudimentary statutes provided for the exclusion of those who were considered detrimental to the country, the diseased, the criminal or "vicious", and "paupers".² The small number of immigrants in the nineteenth century, and the fact that the majority were British probably accounted for the fact that there was little pressure for change. However, the passage of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1885 indicates that when a demand for restriction arose, the Government had no theoretical objection to implementing it.

During Sifton's nine years in office, immigration continued to be regulated by the nineteenth-century laws,

¹ Timlin, p. 517.

² Canada. Manpower and Immigration, 2 The Immigration Program, A report of the Canadian immigration and population study (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1974), pp. 3-5.

although he appears to have been considering new legislation at the time of his resignation.¹ On the other hand, Oliver's six years in the Ministry saw the introduction of two Immigration Acts, in 1906 and 1910, and two amendments and a series of Orders-in-Council that contributed to the shaping of the 1910 Act. Various activities which had previously not been regulated or been regulated by other departments were consolidated under the Immigration Department by the power given by the Immigration Acts.

In introducing the 1906 Act, Oliver described it as "a brake upon the wheel".² While the Department could conduct propaganda in countries from which it considered immigration desirable, restrictive legislation was necessary if they were to exclude those whom they considered undesirable. The legislation during this period provided the Department with considerable power to restrict the entry of particular groups, without any particular ethnic or racial group being cited in the Acts.

No serious objection to the principle of restriction was raised in the debates over either Act. In describing the passage of the 1910 Act, Scott remarked that, "while, as a rule, considerable criticism is directed against government legislation by the opposition, in passing this act the two great political parties were as one."³ This unanimity was also evident in 1906.

¹ P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 26, P.H. Bryce to C. Sifton, March 9, 1905.

² Debates, 1906, 5249.

³ Scott, p. 572.

The 1906 Immigration Act

Oliver introduced the Bill in May, 1906. In the following month an exchange between the Conservative F.D. Monk and W.M. German, the Liberal Member from Welland provided an example of the two opposing positions on immigration. German, an Ontario Lawyer and businessman argued that

The United States wanted to fill up their country with people and they did so; we want to fill up our country with people... Let the people come. They may not in all cases be desirable but we will endeavour to lead them in the proper paths and make them desirable when we get them here.

Monk's response was that

We should exercise more prudence in the choice. What is fifty years in the life of a nation? It is nothing, and in building up our nation we should aim to have the best kind of men, men who would be prepared to maintain here the institutions of a free people. I do not at all agree with the principle that our ambition should be to fill up the country.

German's statement was almost unique in Parliament during the years of Oliver's Ministry. Before 1905 there were Liberal Members who spoke in favour of unrestricted immigration.³ After 1905 their voices were noticeably absent.

¹ Debates, 1906, 5231.

² Debates, 1906, 5233.

³ Debates, 1901, 2939-2945 and 2955-2960; 1903, 6557-6562.

When he introduced the new legislation Oliver claimed that the old Act had become obsolete and not adapted to existing conditions.¹ A decade of dealing with the increased immigration had raised problems not envisaged in earlier legislation. An indication of the rudimentary state of legislation at the time was the fact that one of the first problems was to define the term "immigrant". The attempt to frame the definition illuminates contemporary social attitudes. It was to apply only to steerage passengers and those working their passage, and Oliver argued that it was not assumed that saloon passengers would be of the class to which the principles of exclusion would apply.²

The Act as it was finally passed covered a variety of items including the structure of the department and its personnel, regulations governing the number of passengers permitted on a given size of ship and the responsibilities of the captain in reporting and landing immigrants, medical inspection and the protection of immigrants, including the licensing of hotel and boarding-house keepers, immigrant runners and people selling railway tickets to inland destinations. What concerns us here, however, are those provisions dealing with exclusion and deportation, the sections of the Act which enabled the Department to put into practice its policy of selective immigration.

¹ Debate, 1906, 3712.

² Debates, 1906, 5198.

The Act definitely excluded those who were feeble-minded, epileptic or insane, or suffering from a "loathsome" or contagious disease. Paupers, professional beggars, vagrants or those likely to become a public charge were excluded, as well as those who had been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude, prostitutes or those bringing in women for purposes of prostitution. Hospitals were provided for those who had diseases which could be cured within a short time, and the deaf, blind or infirm would be permitted to enter if in the company of a family who could care for them.

Wide powers were given to the Government to make regulations under the Act. Clause 10 allowed the Governor in Council, on the advice of the Minister, to make any regulations necessary to carry out the Act "according to its true intent and meaning, and for the better attainment of its object". Clauses 20, 30, 32 and 33 also gave wide powers in the exclusion and deportation of immigrants.

These clauses occasioned surprisingly little comment. In regard to the clause which empowered the Governor in Council when "necessary or expedient" to prohibit the landing of "any specified class of immigrants",¹ H. Lennox, the Conservative Member from South Simcoe, argued that this would give them too much power over deciding who should enter the country.² Oliver's response was

¹ This was referred to in the House as clause 32, and in the draft Bill in R.G. 76, Vol. 26, it is also numbered 32. However, the wording is that of clause 30 in the final Act.

² Debates, 1906, 5253.

that although the provision was "drastic", it was necessary. For certain undesirable groups "it would be quite proper to say: you cannot come in."¹

Robert Watchorn, the United States Commissioner at Ellis Island, who generally regarded the Act as "a distinct advance over any previous legislation in Canada", said of this clause that it was

one which the United States Government would never adopt, because, in the event of its becoming law, too much would depend upon the person clothed with the great authority.²

A further increase in the Department's power to select among immigrants was provided by clause 32 of the Act, which provided for the deportation of immigrants within two years of arrival and required that railways or transportation companies, on the demand of the Superintendent, were to return the immigrant to the place from which they had brought him. The inclusion of railways was new in this Act, since previous legislation had dealt only with immigrants arriving by ship.³

¹ Ibid.

² P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 26, R. Watchorn to P.H. Bryce, June 7, 1906. Although Watchorn also describes this as section 32, the context indicates that he was also talking about clause 30 in the Act as finally passe.

³ P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 26, A. Power, Acting Deputy Minister of Justice to P.H. Bryce, July 31, 1905.

Amendments

There were two legislative amendments to the 1906 Act. The first was in 1907 and tightened up the administration of clause 33. This clause provided for the deportation of any immigrant who had "within two years of his landing in Canada, become a public charge, or an inmate of a penitentiary, gaol, prison, or hospital or other charitable institution." Oliver described the change as being prompted by a strong demand on the part of public opinion for the exclusion of undesirables. The Conservative George E. Foster objected that the law was harsh and that people who had simply encountered a temporary difficulty should not be deported.¹

Oliver replied that deportation was part of the selection policy, and that "Although it may look ugly, still it a question that we must face." The substance of his argument was that the 1906 Act did not give the Department sufficient power in the matter of deportations. They were being hampered by legal disputes over whether the immigrant had arrived with his particular problem, or had acquired it in Canada. This amendment would eliminate such problems. Answering Foster, Oliver trusted that the law would be interpreted leniently in the case of desirable immigrants who had temporarily fallen on hard times.²

¹Debates, 1906-07, 5719.

²Ibid.

The way in which these provisions for deportation were implemented as a selective device was noted by the American Commissioners, who compiled statistics showing the proportion of deportations among various nationalities.¹ In gross numbers the English and Welsh group had by far the largest number of deportations. With the exception of immigrants from the United States, Belgium and Germany, the proportion of those deported from the countries in which Canada solicited immigration was generally higher than from those countries in which immigration was not solicited. There were practically no deportations of Chinese and Japanese. The American Commissioners concluded that

This apparent discrimination suggests that Canada generally accepts immigrants from the favoured countries on probation, and that other Europeans are more carefully selected at the time of their landing. Whatever the fact in this regard may be, it is evident that no discrimination is made in favour of any race or class in the deportation of undesirables after landing.²

In some cases the cultural traditions of the immigrants probably led to them being cared for within the community, so that they did not find their way into public institutions. As the regulations became better known, fear of deportation probably influenced many.

¹ Reports of the [U.S.] Commission, pp. 51-52.

² Ibid, p. 52.

In March, 1908, Oliver brought in Bill 135, which dealt with people whose national origins differed from their immediate country of migration. In an exchange with R.G. Macpherson of Vancouver, Sam Hughes interpreted the Bill as being intended "to exclude Hindus, that is all." He then launched into a condemnation of anarchists, "galvanized Yankees", who were allowed into Canada, while Hindus who had served in the British army were excluded.¹

Hughes went on to say that "I would rather have a black gentleman than a white anarchist." Macpherson's reply was illuminating: "I would too; I am not talking against black gentlemen...it is only the lowest possible caste that leave India and come to our shores. Macpherson went on to add race to class in his condemnation of the Hindus, remarking that "I think we can never expect to maintain a high standard of nationality unless we keep the strain white."²

At one point John Haggart asked if it was not dangerous to draw the colour line. Macpherson replied that that it was better to draw the line immediately than to chance building up a problem like the United States' "African" problem.³ Haggart did not press the point.

¹ Debates, 1907-08, 6435, 6438, 6457. Hughes' introduction of anarchists into the subject was due to the fact that it was commonly believed that American labour agitators had been primarily responsible for the anti-Asian riot in Vancouver the previous September.

² Debates, 1907-08, 6445.

³ Ibid.

Hughes' was the only Imperialist voice raised in defence of the Indian immigrants in Parliament. His objections irritated Laurier, who wanted the Bill passed quickly as it was "very important legislation for British Columbia".¹ During this debate both Borden and T.S. Sproule, who generally favoured restriction, argued that this law could have the effect of excluding desirable as well as undesirable immigrants.² However, Borden was on record as saying in British Columbia that

We must not allow our shores to be over-run with Asiatics and become dominated by an alien race. British Columbia must remain a white man's country;...³

The Bill passed and amended clause 30 to permit the Governor in Council to prohibit the landing of immigrants who had come "otherwise than by continuous journey from the country of which they are natives or citizens and upon through tickets purchased in that country". Immediately following the passage of the legislation an Order-in-Council was issued which did prohibit this immigration. Because there was no way in which a continuous voyage between India and Canada could be accomplished, this provision put a stop to immigration from that country. In 1908 there had been 2,623 Hindu immigrants; in 1909 there were six.⁴

¹ Debates, 1907-08, 6546. This was one of Laurier's few contributions to the immigration debates, although occasional comments indicate that he was present on some occasions. Both Timlin, p. 517, and Brown and Cook, p. 120, indicate that his laissez-faire opinions made him, at least in theory, an opponent of immigration restriction.

² Debates, 1907-08 6432-6435.

³ C.A.R., 1907, p. 392.

⁴ Report on Immigration, 1908-09, p. 6.

Orders-in-Council

Immigration from India was also affected by an Order-in-Council passed in June, 1908. It stated that Asiatics must be in possession of two hundred dollars before they could be admitted into Canada, in order that they should be made "temporarily independent of unfavorable industrial conditions" when coming into Canada. Since the Chinese Immigration Act required most Chinese to pay a head-tax of five hundred dollars on arrival and under the "gentlemen's agreement" Japanese immigrants were not subject to this requirement, it applied primarily to immigrants from India.

Another group affected by the two hundred dollar regulation were Asians from countries such as Turkey, Armenia and Syria. On two occasions Monk spoke in Parliament on behalf of the Syrian community of Montreal, asking if they could be relieved of this provision. The Syrians also had a lawyer representing their case with the Department.¹ Nothing was done, however, possibly because the Department did not consider them desirable immigrants.²

¹ Monk, Debates, 1909-10, 5510; P.A.C., Laurier Papers, 687/188214, W. Laurier to F. Oliver, July 3, 1911; 678/188213, Petition presented by P.R. DuTremblay.

² Scott, pp. 565-566. He described immigrants from these countries as "most undesirable". They were not producers, but city-dwellers engaged in trade and barter. If they took out naturalization, they often had U.S. papers as well, as a form of protection. He concluded that "Pedlars are no great acquisition to any country...".

Under the powers granted by clause 10 of the Act, an Order-in-Council was issued in February, 1908, that prohibited the landing of those immigrants whose passage had been paid by charitable organizations, unless they had obtained authorization from the Department's officers in London. The events which prompted this regulation also began in the summer of 1907. Unemployment in England in that summer caused large numbers of British immigrants to come to Canada. Depressed conditions in Canada the following winter put many of these people on the relief rolls of the larger cities.¹ The Department was concerned, and in January, 1908, J. Bruce Walker, the Assistant Superintendent in London, was transferred to Winnipeg and J. Obed Smith, the Winnipeg agent, was moved into Walker's position in London.

Before leaving London, however, Walker had prepared a report on seven of the immigration societies operating in Britain. In 1907 they had assisted 12,236 British immigrants. Walker recommended that the procedure followed by the Poor Law Guardians be followed by all societies. Before sending out an emigrant they checked his background then had him approved by the Canadian Superintendent in London.² The Order-in-Council implemented this proposal.

¹ Debates, 1909-10, 5805.

² Walker's report is reproduced in Reports of the [U.S.] Commission, pp. 111-116.

The majority of British immigrants were not assisted by charity, and changed economic conditions could have produced a change in the immigration pattern. However, the Order-in-Council probably helped account for the fact that the number of British immigrants in 1907 was 120,182, while for 1908 the number had fallen to 52, 901.¹

The problems of the winter of 1907 also led to the issuing of Orders-in-Council in May and September, 1908, which stipulated that in order to be landed, immigrants over eighteen would have to have twenty-five dollars in addition to a ticket to their inland destination. Those under eighteen were to have half the amount, and fifty dollars was required during certain winter months. These regulations were adjusted over the next few years. Those going to farm work or domestic service were exempt from the money requirement, and were only expected to have a ticket to their destination. In the summers of 1910, 1911 and 1912 men from countries in which immigration was solicited who could prove they were going to railway work were exempted.²

We are a long way from laissez-faire here. The Department was attempting, in an almost month-by-month regulation, to create the situation which their policy advocated - satisfaction of the steady demand for farm

¹ Report on Immigration, 1908-09, p. 6.

² P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 558, Notices to Boundary Inspectors from the Office of the Superintendent of Immigration, July 24, 1910; Nov. 15, 1910; March 1, 1911; March 28, 1912.

labour and domestic servants without congestion and consequent social unrest in the urban labour market.

Another Order-in-Council of May, 1908, further strengthened the Department's position in regard to deportation. Immigrants headed for Canada often came through American ports (the American Commissioners cited this movement as 14.4 percent of the transoceanic immigration for 1908).¹ Apparently in February the Department had asked the steamship companies to sign an agreement to the effect that they would take immigrants they had brought in back through these ports if they were deported. By May only the Allen Line, which did a large immigrant business, had signed. The railways had refused to take fifty-five people whom the Department wanted to deport on the grounds that they would not be admitted to the United States unless it could be guaranteed that they would be sent directly to ships for deportation. The Order-in-Council stated that as of May immigrants arriving by rail from the ships of companies which had not signed the agreement would not be admitted into Canada. Under this pressure shipping companies hastened to sign.

During the 1910 debates, Members of Parliament frequently claimed that the transportation companies were opposing the Government's attempts at selective

¹ Reports of the [U.S.] Commission, p. 47.

immigration, since it was in their interests to transport as many fares as they could sell.¹ However, the relationship between the transportation companies and the Department seems to have been characterized by that co-operation between business and government frequently found in Canada.

Such pressures as the aforementioned Order-in-Council were doubtless not appreciated by the shipping companies, and they held out until the last minute. They were frequently informed by the Department when people they were bringing over were not considered desirable.² However, compromises were made. Although the Act stipulated that they must return any immigrant who had come on their ships and was deported within two years, in practice they were not expected to do so free of charge. The Department regularly paid a fifteen-dollar "charity rate" on steamships for any immigrant ordered deported after one year. The money was supposed to be collected from the deportee or friends, but if it could not be the expense was incurred by the Department, not the transportation company.³

The companies were kept informed of changes in the regulations and were consulted in the preparation of the 1910 Act. The large companies, such as the Canadian Pacific,

¹ Debates, 1909-10, 5541, 5823-5833, 5812.

² P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 26, Supt. of Immigration to the Agents, Donaldson Steamship Line, Montreal, May 20, 1905.

³ See various correspondence in P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vols. 292 and 293.

which owned both railway and steamship transport and was itself heavily involved in immigration promotion and western land settlement, probably preferred this arrangement. What they lost in fares would be compensated for by the security of an immigration approved by the Government and the chance to have a voice in the formation of policy.

The situation in 1909

On June 4, 1909, Scott issued a circular, "In Re-Exclusion of Over-Seas Immigrants", which was widely distributed to border inspectors, medical officers and steamship companies.¹ Its purpose was to state clearly the exclusion provisions then in effect, in view of the fact that the Act had been amended and supplemented by Orders-in-Council. It emphasized the fact that the Department's policy was to secure immigrants "whose purpose in life is to occupy farm lands, whether as owners, tenants, or laborers" and to exclude those "whose presence in Canada would tend to add to the congestion of our towns and cities", and that "immigration effort" was carried on in those countries likely to provide the former and not in those countries likely to provide the latter.

It pointed out that the provisions to exclude the "physically, mentally, or morally unfit" applied equally to people "of every class and of every country". It then

¹ P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 27.

listed three other provisions for exclusion: "continuous passage", charity-aided immigrants who had not been approved by the Superintendent in England, and money regulations. The money regulations were outlined as two hundred dollars for Asiatics, with the exception of Chinese who were required to pay the five hundred dollar head-tax and Japanese who were required to have twenty-five dollars and a passport. Europeans were to have twenty-five dollars and a ticket to destination.

The way in which officials were told to apply the regulations to Europeans is instructive in showing the way in which the Department used its exclusion regulations to reinforce its positive efforts in soliciting immigration. It also shows how immigration from certain countries was discouraged, in spite of the fact that none of these countries were specifically mentioned in the Act.

Immigrants from countries where Canada did not make any effort to solicit immigration would not be assumed to be going to assured employment, and the money regulations were strictly applied to all these people. Immigrants from countries where immigration effort was made, but who did not speak English (France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland) would be assumed to face trouble finding jobs, so that the money requirement could be waived only if they could produce

written evidence that they were going to assured farm employment. English-speaking immigrants, who were otherwise desirable, could have the money requirement waived provided they could give "reasonable assurance" that they could find employment on farms.

We can see that by 1909 a selective immigration policy was clearly in operation. That category of people, the diseased, the criminal and "paupers", who had been excluded in the nineteenth century, remained excluded, regardless of nationality or race. Other prospective immigrants were effectively divided into three categories: Americans and northern Europeans, whose immigration was encouraged; southern and eastern Europeans, whose immigration was not solicited, but who were not excluded if they could meet certain requirements, and Asians, who had definite obstacles put in the way of their immigration.

The 1910 Immigration Act

In January, 1909, Scott sent a circular to the various agents and medical officers in Canada, saying that the Government was considering amendment of the Immigration Act and asking for their suggestions, "based upon your experience of the working of the Act as it now stands."¹ In September, the Departemnt hired T.R.E. McInnes, an Onatrio-born lawyer and author, who had previously done

¹ P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 27, Circular from the Superintendent, Jan. 7, 1908.

work for the Government in connection with Pacific Coast Fisheries Commissions and in the Yukon Special Police Customs Force; to draft a new Immigration Act.¹ During this time Scott was also receiving briefs from the shipping companies and the Trades and Labour Congress as to the changes they wanted to see in the Act.² By late November, 1909, Scott sent Oliver a "synopsis of all the suggestions which I have on my files with regard to the amendment of the Immigration Act." He included a draft of the changes which he thought should be made and sent Oliver a pamphlet containing the existing Act and Orders-in-Council for his perusal.³

The Bill was introduced in the House in January, 1910, and it passed without a division in May. There was more debate than there had been in 1906, but no major disagreement with the principles of the Bill; the major Conservative criticism was that it did not go far enough in the direction of restriction.

During the years since 1906 the Conservatives had had a chance to formulate a comprehensive view of immigration. F.D. Monk remained the chief critic. He was an influential Montreal lawyer who had been described by Toronto's Saturday Night as "the best bi-lingual speaker in Canada". He had been considered for the Conservative leadership in 1900,

¹ P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 27, W.W. Cory to W.D. Scott, Sept. 16, 1908.

² See correspondence in P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 27.

³ P.A.C., R.G. 76, W.D. Scott to F. Oliver, Nov. 24, 1909.

but he was the leader of a group of young Quebec Conservatives, and it was feared the his appointment would alienate the older bleu faction in the province. He had been the leader of the party in Quebec, but his personal relations with Borden were strained. In 1911 he aligned himself with Henri Bourassa to oppose Laurier in Quebec.¹ Like Bourassa, he was opposed to unrestricted immigration. In a speech on March 14, 1910, he elaborated the Conservative position. In the same year C.A. Magrath had published Canada's Growth and Some Problems Affecting It. The book dealt mainly with immigration, and the ideas advocated by Magrath were in substantial agreement with Monk's.

The Conservatives opposed all forms of assistance to immigration. This included the bonus system and the employment of agents in Europe and the United States, which Monk described as simply a source of patronage for "our cousins, our friends and our defeated candidates."² In all references to this topic there was the suggestion that they regarded it as damaging to national pride to have to pay to get immigrants to come into the country. Canada's resources and opportunities should have been sufficient

¹ Morgan, p. 815; R. Craig Brown, Robert Laird Borden: A Biography, Vol. I: 1854-1914 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975), pp. 47 and 55-59.

² Debates, 1909-10, 5508.

advertisement, and by attempting to solicit people Magrath argued, "we can make ourselves too cheap."¹

Both Magrath and Monk argued that immigration was such an important issue that discussion of it should be "above politics", and they wanted to establish a Royal Commission, modelled on the American inquiry, to look at all aspects of the question. Along with stricter inspection generally, they wanted to introduce a "moral examination", which Monk suggested could be accomplished by requiring the immigrant to produce a letter from a clergyman or the mayor of his town.²

The Conservative critics argued in favour of having all examination done in the country of origin before the emigrant sailed, to prevent the hardship created for immigrants who did not find out that they were rejected until they were already in Canada. Oliver consistently rejected this suggestion. However, the Department appears to have been seeking such an arrangement, and as early as 1905 Lord Strathcona, who was Canadian High Commissioner in London, had approached Lloyd George. He was told that the problem was a jurisdictional one; Canadian law did not apply in Britain, and under British law people could be prevented from embarking only if it was likely that for physical or mental reasons they would be dangerous

¹ Magrath, p. 81.

² Debates, 1909-10, 5508.

to themselves or the other passengers during the voyage.¹
Under the 1910 Act the examination continued to take place
in Canada.

The Conservatives opposed the money requirement for
immigrants. Martin Burrell, a Conservative from British
Columbia, expressed the general tenor of this opposition
when he argued that

a man...although he might not have been
able in the crowded centres of Great Britain
to make his way, and save money, should be
the subject of generous interpretation of
our Canadian laws so as to give him a chance.
After all, although he may not have the
money, and although someone may have
helped him, he may make the most valuable type
of citizen we can get.²

Magrath also objected to the fact that first class
passengers were not subject to examination, and commented
that

It is generally understood that many of those
social lepers engaged in the white slave
traffic travel first-class. In any event,
to be able to travel by saloon is no proof
of a man's fitness for citizenship in a
respectable country.³

The 1910 Act did contain a much expanded definition
of "immigrant". Certain groups, such as diplomatic officials,
students, tourists and travelling lecturers and actors were
exempt, but otherwise it applied to everyone entering the
country, so that the distinction between steerage and
other classes of passengers was eliminated.

¹ Report on Immigration, 1906-07, pp. 63-64.

² Debates, 1909-10, 5859.

³ Magrath, p. 103.

The most important new provision of the Act was found in clauses 13 to 23, which provided for the creation of Boards of Inquiry of three or more people appointed by the Minister to decide on the admissibility of each immigrant. The burden of proof as to his right to enter the country rested on the immigrant. Except in the case of the specifically prohibited classes, "idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, epileptics and insane persons" and those with a contagious disease, there was a provision for appeal. The immigrant could deposit twenty dollars and ten for each dependent and appeal his case to the Minister. If it was decided in his favour the money would be returned. In cases where there was no Board of Inquiry at a place of entry, the officer in charge was expected to discharge these functions.

The appeal could go no further than the Minister, and the Act specifically stated that these decisions could not be overruled in any court. In effect, as Oliver stated, these provisions denied an immigrant access to Canadian courts until he had been granted landed status. They did not apply to Canadian citizens or those who had acquired Canadian "domicile", which was defined in the Act as being acquired by three years residence in the country.

Oliver considered this provision necessary for the better enforcement of the Act, but at the same time he regarded it as a serious change, and invited discussion on it.¹ Robert Bickerdike, a Montreal Liberal, objected to it being applied to British subjects, since Canadians could appeal to courts in Britain.² However, there was no serious objection, and the clauses passed. Scott also saw the measure as "drastic", however he justified it on the grounds that

the immigration officers are the best judges of those who are, and of those who are not, qualified to land in Canada, and they should be trusted to discharge their duties justly.³

Obviously this gave the Department greater power to carry out its policy of selection among immigrants. In an administrative sense it can be seen as a stage in the organization of a branch of the civil service. The Department was defining the boundaries of its power, and legislatively defining its operations within these boundaries. As Oliver pointed out, the decisions of a Board, which had to be recorded, would be less arbitrary, but at the same time they were made more binding. They would also further define the situation of an immigrant as distinct from that of a Canadian citizen.

¹ Debates, 1909-1910, 2133.

² Ibid., 5553.

³ Scott, p. 577.

Clause 37 empowered the Governor in Council to make money regulations and also added the provision that passports or penal certificates could be demanded from immigrants who came from countries which issued these. This clause served to strengthen the regulation regarding Japanese passports; the demand for penal certificates was also applied to Italians.¹

Clause 38 was an expanded version of clause 30 of 1906. It incorporated the "continuous passage" amendment, included the prohibition against the landing of immigrants by any transportation company which refused to comply with the Act, and allowed the Governor in Council to prohibit, for a short period or permanently, the entry of "immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character." It was argued with regard to immigrants from India that they could not endure the Canadian climate, but the clause was probably intended to cover the Department's prohibition of the immigration of blacks from the United States.²

¹ See Scott, p. 562 and Oliver, Debates, 1909-10, 5851. Italy issued all emigrants with a certificate showing whether or not they had a criminal record. The United States also required Italian immigrants to produce these. Failure to show one was considered evidence of having something to hide.

² See Troper, pp. 121-145 for a description of the position of American Negroes. A petition in the Laurier Papers, P.A.C., 674/184085-184086 provides evidence of the attitudes of the members of the Edmonton I.O.D.E. who opposed Negro immigration.

The period during which an immigrant was liable to be deported was extended to three years, apparently because this was the term specified in the United States Act and it would make co-operation with the Americans easier.¹ Uriah Wilson, the Conservative Member from Lennox, had made the issue of immigrants who became public charges or who ended up in jails or insane asylums particularly his own. He wanted no fixed limit to the period during which an immigrant could be deported under these conditions. If these people could not maintain themselves, "I do not see why we should retain them at all...We have a right to deport undesirables any time we see fit"²

The provision for the deportation of anarchists was new in this Act. Except for Sam Hughes' outburst, Members do not seem to have expressed much concern over "foreign agitators". It was during and after World War I, and particularly at the time of the Winnipeg General Strike that this became an issue. The Canadian provision differed from the similar one in the American Act in one important respect, "attempting to overthrow the government" was a ground for exclusion in the United States, while in Canada it was grounds for deportation. Clarence Jameson,

¹ Debates, 1909-10, 5871.

² Ibid., 5519, 5870. ↗

the Conservative Member from Digby, argued that anarchists should not be allowed in in the first place, as was done in the United States. Oliver did not agree and responded that

When we undertake to interfere with the right of expression of opinion, the right of personal liberty, to question the right of men to say what they please, we should only take action when we have it within our power to establish the facts.¹

It was also the intention of the Department to tighten the regulation of immigration along the American border. Clause 31 provided that transportation companies bringing in passengers by land were subject to the same regulations as vessels arriving by sea, and that they could be compelled to build suitable accommodation for inspection at designated border points. Clause 32 provided that the Superintendent could make further regulations for inspection along the border, which seems to indicate that the Department intended refining procedures through practice as they had already done in other areas.

The intention was not to restrict the entry of those immigrants from the United States who were taking up farms in the west, but to control "undesirable movement between the two countries. The Americans also had inspectors along the border; at the beginning of this period one of their

¹ Ibid., 5870.

purposes appears to have been checking the immigration of people who were using Canada as a waystation to the United States because Canada's standards for admission were lower than those of the United States.¹ By 1910 the objection seems to have been disappearing, and Scott worked in close co-operation with the American immigration officials.²

It was obviously difficult to control movement across the border, and many people did pass between Canada and the United States in this period without going through any official procedures. One of the Conservative criticisms of the Department was that they did not keep adequate records of this movement, and were not in a position to know what Canada was actually gaining or losing by this movement.³ So the provision to further regulate the American border can be seen as part of a general desire on the part of the Department to bring all aspects of immigration under tighter regulation and control.

With the passage of the 1910 Act the Department had created a more sophisticated legislative definition of itself and its activities than had existed when Sifton resigned. Within this was an elaborate administrative

¹ Prescott P. Hall, "The Recent History of Immigration and Immigration Restriction", Journal of Political Economy XXI (1913), 36-37; P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 26, R. Watchorn to P.H. Bryce, June 13, 1906.

² P.A.C., R.G. 76, Vol. 558, "Circular to Boundary Inspectors", Oct. 4, 1910.

³ Magrath, pp. 103, 170-173; Debates, 1909-10, 5508, 5518, 5524-5525.

apparatus through which a selective immigration policy was effected.

A postscript to the period was provided in January, 1911, when D.D. McKensie, the Liberal Member for Cape Breton, demanded to know "why Asiatics are singled out as different from other people coming into this country", since those in his area were "as desirable as any other foreigners...very industrious, clean, honest people, willing to earn a livelihood..." Oliver replied that this was not the time to argue with the "fundamental principle" of the law. If any Members thought "this exclusion law should not be on the statute-book, it would be fair for them to place themselves on record as of that mind." No one did.¹ Scott could truthfully write

That the exclusion provisions are drastic none can deny; that their enforcement has brought and will bring hardship on some all must admit, They were passed by members of parliament fully aware of these facts.²

¹ Debates, 1910-11, 2015-2017.

² Scott, p. 574.

CONCLUSION

During the Laurier years "the twentieth century was going to belong to Canada". The country had at last come into its own, and elaborate predictions of future greatness were in the air. The realization of this rosy future would require an increase in population, and yet within a decade of the beginning of the "boom", Canada, with little opposition from any quarter, had established a restrictive immigration policy. The explanation for this lies in the way various immigrant groups were perceived by Canadians, which in turn was influenced by the way the native-born conceived of themselves and the goals and purposes of the national life.

Of the two founding peoples, French-Canadians had little enthusiasm for immigration. Provincial politicians saw economic development as desirable if it would serve to stop the emigration of French-Canadians to New England, and provide enough employment to encourage the repatriation of those who had already left. Quebec was interested in securing immigrants from Belgium and France, but there were too few of these to be significant. Large-scale immigration of other groups was regarded as a cultural threat to Quebec, since they only served to increase the Anglo-Canadian majority in the country.

For Anglo-Canadians the situation was different. Their commitment to Canada was not an ideological one. With the exception of Loyalism, which involved only a limited number of people there was no founding tradition around which the country could be united. Nor, as we have seen, was Imperialism a tradition which involved all Anglo-Canadians. Canada was a country which to a certain extent had been founded as a good business proposition. However, there was a commitment involved in the particular achievement of Confederation, a commitment to expansion and development. This had two aspects. The first was cultural, the expansion of "Anglo-Saxondom" - the English language, the Protestant religious denominations, the political, social and cultural assumptions of Victorian British society. The second was economic, a commitment to push forward the ideas and institutions of nineteenth-century British capitalism - railway construction, exploitation of agricultural and other natural resources, urban settlement and trade. This was the future that McGee had envisaged at Confederation, and it was Sifton's view. The difficulty in this concept was that if the country was to grow rapidly, Britain could not provide enough emigrants to provide for the achievement of both objectives. This was the basis of the "immigrant problem" during our period.

Alternative sources of immigration were eventually divided into three rough categories. Americans and north-western Europeans raised few problems. Culturally they were seen as hard-working, thrifty, law-abiding and clean, in other words to possess the virtues of Victorian "respectability". The religious and political institutions of the countries they came from were similar to Canada's. Their success as farmers also contributed to national prosperity and the expansion of the western agricultural frontier. Thus they satisfied both cultural and economic criteria. The policy of the Immigration Department, that of soliciting and encouraging their immigration, reflected this view.

Southern and eastern Europeans provoked a variety of reactions. They aroused opposition to the extent that their cultural practices deviated from the values of Anglo-Canadian Victorian respectability. On the other hand, they were seen to be contributing to national growth, particularly those who took up farms. Those who supported them for this reason could argue that they possessed enough of the Canadian values (or that they wanted to acquire them) to make assimilation possible. This ambiguous set of opinions was reflected in the Department's policy toward these immigrants. Their immigration was not solicited or made

easy, but it was possible. It was assumed that they would eventually become a desirable addition to the country if they arrived in small enough numbers to permit of gradual assimilation.

The third group, Asians, were judged by somewhat different criteria. The basic factor influencing their reception was colour prejudice. Even those who defended them, on the grounds that racial prejudice was un-Christian, that they contributed to the economy or that the contributions of the older cultures of the Orient would benefit Canada, did not assume that they or their children would assimilate to the model of "standard Canadians". It should also be noted that the majority of these people did not take up farms. Thus there was no general agreement that they were making a valuable contribution to the economy. Their economic position, and the fact that it was exploited by employers, raised the opposition of labour groups and the "noisy minority" in British Columbia. In dealing with a situation involving colour prejudice, the Canadian government looked at the American experience. From this they drew a belief in a policy of caution; a "race problem" could be prevented by keeping the size of the minority group small. The Department's policy toward Asian immigrants could be described as closer to exclusion than restriction, although the assumption here too was that they would be a benefit to the country as long as the number arriving was kept small enough.

How small "small enough" would be was a matter left to the determination of the Department. We have noted how, once the principle of restriction was accepted, Parliament was satisfied to leave the details of regulation in the hands of the Department. The existence of this free hand depended on the absence of any sort of countervailing body of opinion in Parliament or the country, and, as we have seen, there was none. The absence of a division of this kind suggests that those who shared Van Horne's view were willing to accept the compromise of the Department in allowing fairly free immigration of railway labourers in the season when they were required.

This lack of an industrial lobby reflects the state of the country's economy. Railway-building was the major large-scale enterprise. Although the economy was expanding Canadian businesses, compared to the huge industrial enterprises crying out for immigrant labour in the United States, were relatively small. Economic growth during this period remained closely tied to the exploitation of the western agricultural lands. Agriculture requires a long, steady development, not the sudden demand for labour that such enterprises as railways, gold rushes or huge factory industry create. This particular situation provided an opportunity for the various restrictionist groups to air their views.

In examining the two reactions to immigration, we can describe the cultural nationalist position as "conservative" and the economic nationalist position as "liberal". Sifton in this case was clearly the liberal and Oliver the conservative, however much the latter may have been a Grit radical on other issues. Other restrictionist groups, Quebec nationalists, labour and "social gospel" reformers, although they also were radical in relation to certain situations, adopted a conservative attitude toward immigration.

In the absence of an organized push for unrestricted immigration, either from economic nationalists or the immigrants themselves, the conservative position prevailed. The policy that resulted was restrictive, or, as it was often described, selective. There was no dramatic "closing the door", as was done in the United States, but simply a series of moves to make the opening a little narrower. Perhaps the metaphor which best describes Canadian immigration policy during this period is that of a sieve, which was intended, as Scott stated, to separate "the wheat from the chaff".

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