

Bi-lingualism a National Menace

Bi-lingualism, as we have it in Manitoba schools, is a national menace. It is unfair to the children who are condemned to endure it. It is as unnecessary as it is unwise. These are the first three charges that can be made against the system, and they are all capable of easy proof. In this article the first point only will be considered.

American papers tell of a growing unrest due to a fear that assimilation of the non-American elements can not be effected. Yet the influx of settlers to the United States previous to the war was but one and one-half per cent. of the native population. Recently, in Canada, it has been about eight per cent. Miss Laut, in her latest work, calculates that in about two decades the foreign-born will outnumber the Canadian element. Will anyone say that this fact alone is not of the gravest concern? In a city like Winnipeg there are large sections where, among all but the school children, English is an unknown tongue. In some sections of Western Canada a person may travel for one hundred miles through settled territory without hearing a word of English. Will anyone say that this is not alarming? The number of aliens registered in Winnipeg, Montreal and Toronto is scarcely believable. Let one add the number of foreign-born who are not aliens. It almost seems as if the three great Canadian cities are not Canadian at all. Some times, people in talking of the non-English settlements refer to little Poland, little Russia, little France, little Galicia, and the like. Does it not seem as if, in a few years, we might have to refer to little Canada?

Canada requires the foreign-born, but only on one condition—that they become good Canadians and loyal British subjects. A little investigation will show that in some sections there is anything but loyalty to Britain and in a few cases anything but love for Canada. Every citizen who is more loyal to his native land than to the land of his adoption is a menace to our peace and prosperity.

We have made two fundamental errors in policy—at least the Dominion has made one and the Province of Manitoba the other. The foreign-born have been admitted without adequate tests, and they have been hived in large constituencies. This was the error of the Federal government. Then Manitoba aggravated the evil by introducing bi-lingual teaching. Children are taught to love and honor their native land and language rather than Canada and the speech of old England. If the United States, with its one-language public schools has been scarcely able to Americanize the foreign element, how can we expect to succeed in our task if we segregate nationalities and then take pains to teach them their own language, even to the neglect of the language of the country? We have been committing national suicide. If the war has made anything clear, it is that. Through making provision for bi-lingual teaching we have been deliberately emphasizing division and preventing assimilation or coalescence.

The time has come for Manitoba to undo the wrong. There is only one way. Bi-lingualism as a system must cease. The medium of instruction in every school must be English, and only those capable of giving instruction in English must be permitted to act as teachers. Manitoba cannot afford to be less loyal than Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Ontario. There are two ways of aiding the Empire — one by sending troops to the front, the other by developing loyalty at home.