

NATURALIZATION AND IMMIGRATION

When the war is over it will be necessary to consider the problem of naturalization and to establish more rigid control over immigration. We do not believe that the wide fertile areas of Canada should be closed to desirable settlers from any free country. We will need population in order to carry the burden of the war and to provide adequate support for the machinery of industry and transportation which we have created. But we should guard the franchise against elements which cannot be expected to sympathize with our ideals or institutions.

If we have bought freedom at a great price we should set value upon free British citizenship. We should require allegiance to Canada and the Empire. We should not tolerate a covert political obligation to any other country. We should not give the franchise too readily to immigrants who have never lived under free institutions, who are ignorant of the responsibilities of citizenship and who have barely established themselves in the country. Careless enfranchisement of alien elements breeds political corruption and lowers the whole average of citizenship.

There will always be competition between political parties for the support of every voting element. Once the franchise is granted it is not easily withdrawn. But we can extend the period during which the franchise is withheld from newcomers and we can exercise more strict supervision over the kind of people who are admitted to Canada. There is reason to think that the medical examination at Quebec is careless and unsatisfactory. Not a few people have entered the country who should have been excluded. Hundreds of those who came as agricultural immigrants crowded into the centres of population.

There should be better inspection at ports of entry, and we think more rigid inspection before immigrants embark for Canada. Deportation is an undesirable practice. There is something cruel and barbarous in shipping sick or diseased people out of the country. We have a right, however, to exclude such people and to make other countries support their sick and indigent. It is not vital that we should have a population of ten millions in three years or five years. It is vital that we should have a population physically and morally sound and equal to the obligations of free government.

When the war is over we shall have to declare our attitude towards immigration from enemy countries. From this standpoint we will be able to consider the whole question of immigration and citizenship. A further reason for a critical examination of the basis of the franchise will be found in the probable concession of equal suffrage to women. It may be necessary, in consideration of the great interests involved, that the qualification for Federal voters shall be fixed by the Federal Government. The voters in Federal elections determine national character and the national destiny and in the future national and Imperial considerations cannot be wisely ignored in settling the qualifications of citizenship.