

## Restrictions on Immigration

In an illuminating article on Canadian immigration in The London Evening Standard, Denis Crane says in part:—

The revised regulations respecting immigration passed by the Canadian Government have by their alleged severity caused some misgiving in English minds, and in certain quarters have even evoked protest.

It is naturally repugnant to the Britisher that restriction should be placed on the free movement of any of his Majesty's subjects from one part of the Empire to another, and it is perhaps equally natural, should general restrictive measures be shown to be necessary in regard to immigrants, to contend that British subjects should be exempt from such provisions. It is well, however, while considering the Englishman's rights, to remember also his duties, or at least that primary one of conceding to an opposing party what he very properly is not slow to claim for himself—namely, fair play; and to recognize that the King's Canadian subjects have rights and feelings calling for respect equally with his own. Some of these rights and feelings find expression in the new regulations, and before attacking them it is obligatory upon us at least to try and understand them from the Canadian point of view.

The main provision to which exception is taken is that which requires every immigrant, during the period from March 1 to October 31, to have in his possession \$25, and from November 1 to the last day in February \$50, in addition to a railway ticket or the price of one to his destination, unless he is going to assured employment on a farm, or, in the case of a female immigrant, to assured employment at domestic service\*.

This regulation, on first sight, not only appears to run counter to our national ideas of freedom, but also, it is urged, effectually prevents many British workmen from emigrating to new fields of industry where they will find relief from the distressing conditions that afflict them at home.

The Canadian's answer is that no one can know the needs of his country better than himself, and that the regulation in question has been reluctantly adopted in self-defence. The lesson of 1907-08, when the influx of immigrants—many of them totally unfit for Canadian life—was such as to glut the labor market, and set up in a new country, possessing neither Poor Laws nor other machinery for the relief of distress, evils which at home it takes all our resources to keep within bounds, has been thoroughly learned, and the Canadian is determined that, come what may, that experience shall not be repeated.

The after-effects of this invasion of the west still linger. In certain parts of the Dominion, especially among employers of unskilled labor, there exists a distinct prejudice against the English laborer. The present writer, in the course of an extensive inquiry into immigration conditions, more than once heard an opponent in a heated dispute dubbed, as a crowning insult, a sanguinary Englishman.

Ask any well-informed Canadian the reason of this prejudice, and he will tell you that, until the large immigration movement of recent years, almost the only Englishmen with whom he came in contact were the tourist, the remittance man and the pauper. The tourist, never perhaps in any age or country a very tractable person, hardly made it his business to understand the Canadian, while the Canadian, proud of his country and full of its praises, was unduly sensitive to passing criticism, with the result that relations between the two rarely became cordial. The remittance man was ipso facto a dead-head. Cast on his own resources he might

have proved a national asset, but so long as the remittance came he had no incentive to work, and frequently became a social pest. As to the pauper, he came not as one whose restless and adventurous spirit drove him to conquer new territory and to pluck from the overflowing lap of Fortune a competence for himself and his children, but as one who had failed at home, and whom some charitable agency had shipped over as much for its own relief as for his advancement. Other Englishmen, of course, there were, of the best type, and some of Canada's greatest industries are the fruit of their coming; but they were outnumbered by the less desirable.

It is only fair to say that as the direct result of the selective policy pursued since 1907 the Canadian complaints as to the character of the immigrants to the Dominion, which in 1898 had fair to compel a cessation of immigration effort by the Government, have ceased. There is now nothing but praise for the immigrants, and especially those from Great Britain, of the past two years. At first the imposition of the restrictions had a noticeable effect in lessening the movement, but it rapidly recovered, and this year the migration of British people to Canada is larger than ever before, and at the same time is, from the Canadian standpoint, absolutely satisfactory.

In the light of experience, then, is it unreasonable that the Dominion Government, understanding, as we at home cannot understand, the exact nature and duration of Canada's industrial needs and anxious to avoid the social and other ills so widely exemplified in England, insists that those who enter the country shall be reasonably capable of standing its climatic and labor tests, and possess the wherewithal to maintain themselves and their families until they shall have secured employment? For it should be borne in mind that, although there is during the summer months a large demand for skilled and unskilled labor in the building trade and for unskilled labor in railway construction works during from three to five months of winter these sources of employment are practically shut down. If, therefore, a laborer coming out in the spring does not immediately need his little reserve of dollars, he is likely enough to need it in the winter if only for the purchase of clothing—a somewhat expensive article—warmer than he would need at home.

Moreover, the Canadian may well ask: If you have in England men so helpless or undesirable that you are prepared to spend money to send them out to us, how can you expect us to be willing to receive them with open arms? Admitting that some of them, under the wider possibilities and freer life of our new country may turn out well, is it fair to expect us to support them if they do not? Yet all we ask is that they shall come to us physically fit and possessed of a very modest sum for the satisfaction of their immediate wants. . . . As to the popular plaint that the Dominion wants only our best men, the case is more correctly stated in the words of a typical Canadian. "We don't ask to buy the horse that wins the race," said he, "much as we should like it. We will be glad to get the horse that is only a nose behind. But you want us to take the horse that never started."

\*Note.—The writer overlooked the fact that provision is made for exemption in regard to the money qualification, not only, as he stated, for farm laborers and domestics going to assured employment and having the means of reaching the place of employment, but also for the following, who have the means of reaching relatives who are able and willing to support them, viz.: Wife going to husband, child going to parent, brother or sister going to brother, minor going to married or independent sister, parent going to son or daughter.