

RESTRICTIONS ON IMMIGRATION

A correspondent of The Daily News at Mildmay urges serious consideration of the problem of immigration in all its phases. In reply to his questions we cannot pretend to speak with authority. We are not impressed by the infallibility of newspapers and fully recognize that only by free discussion are the best results produced in a democracy. We do not think Canada should admit immigrants who may be diseased, who may be paupers and likely to remain paupers, or for whom steady employment is not likely to be secured.

There is no doubt that many of those who came to Canada as agricultural immigrants crowded into the cities and when the time of depression came in 1913 became a burden upon public benevolence. Possibly a percentage of those who came as farm immigrants never could have succeeded on the land. But at worst the percentage would be small. With patience on the part of farmers and determination on the part of immigrants even very undesirable material becomes useful in agriculture. In a few years men who were regarded as beyond hope have become independent and valuable citizens.

We should be hospitable to people from Ally countries who have fought with the soldiers of the Empire in the common cause of freedom and civilization. We should make liberal provision for British soldiers who may desire to settle under the flag and who, through service in the field, may have developed a distaste for indoor pursuits. Chiefly, of course, we should seek British immigrants. We will have to provide assistance in establishing these on the land. Particularly will we have to do this for those who have been soldiers. After all, those who compose the British armies are very like the citizen soldiers of Canada. To-day there are very few professional soldiers in the armies of Great Britain or the Dominions. Those who fight as valiantly as ever men fought in human history were withdrawn from civil pursuits and will return to civil pursuits in Great Britain, in the Dominions or elsewhere, as soon as peace is restored. We can go far, therefore, to establish British soldiers in the Dominion and possibly for immigrants from any part of the Empire we can make exceptional provision.

We doubt if the old system of steamship subsidies should be continued. We are certain that far more severe penalties should be imposed upon steamship companies who bring in undesirable people. We agree, indeed, with the report of the Ontario Commission on Unemployment, which suggests an Imperial Migration Board in London. This would ensure co-operation between the Imperial authorities and the Dominion Government in distributing population throughout the Empire and in determining whether immigration of particular classes at particular seasons should be encouraged or discouraged.

There should also be greater co-operation between the Dominion and Provincial Governments. Our obligation to immigrants should not cease when they land at Halifax or St. John or Quebec. We should be as anxious to have newcomers well established in Canada as we were to induce them to leave other countries. We should see that they are treated with sympathy and consideration when they land on Canadian soil, that they are carried to their destination under the direction of sympathetic public officers, that they are assured of necessary medical and hospital treatment during their first years in the country, and that they have wise and continuous instruction from agricultural experts if they devote themselves to

speaking the English language should have the assistance of interpreters who know their own language. They should have advice from officials who understand conditions in this country. They should be helped to secure employment at fair wages and guarded against robbery by conscienceless dealers and speculators. In short we should look chiefly for immigrants who will go upon the land and we should regard ourselves as responsible for their welfare until they have a reasonably secure footing in the country.

We think also that those who are admitted from lands still under autocratic government, and thus have no knowledge of the responsibilities of citizenship in a free country, should not have the franchise until they are able to speak the common language of the Province in which they live, until they have some definite conception of the responsibilities of British citizenship and some adequate knowledge of the questions upon which judgment has to be pronounced at the polls. There is no royal road to assimilation of immigrants, but at least we should not herd masses of people in the West or in the cities who cannot speak the English language, and therefore will be very slow to acquire any sympathetic knowledge of Canadian conditions or Canadian problems.