

FIRST PRIZE Excellent (L-

Maxwell Gaskin

16 Waldgrave Road, Liverpool, 15

Quarry Bank High School, Balderstones, Liverpool 18

(A)

The problem of migration within the Empire.

Preface

- A Introduction brief summary of Migration up to 1928.
- B The need for the recommencement of migration
 - 1 Overcrowded and over industrialized condition of Great Britain, and her dependance on overseas sources for her food supplies
 - 2 The Emptiness of the Dominions and their dependance on world agricultural prices.
 - 3 The menace of other nations to the Empire: the need of space by the crowded Eastern races, and the demand for sources of raw materials by European nations.
 - 4 The growth of foreign elements in the Empire, and the danger of it losing its British character
 - 5 The problem of Imperial Defence: the defencelessness of the Dominions and their dependance on Britain's naval strength
- C. The relation of the need for Migration to the Problem.
- D. The Problem of Migration.
 1. Unwillingness of men to migrate, due to inherent conservatism and a high standard of living

2. Misconceptions about the climate and occupational conditions of the Dominion
3. Refusal of the Dominion to accept immigrants and the solution
4. The opposition of Dominion agriculture and industry and how it can be met
- F. Conclusion. necessity for ~~for~~ renewed large scale Empire settlement and the urgency of the Problem.

In the nineteenth century and in the first quarter of the twentieth there was a large and steady flow of migrants from Great Britain to the Dominion and Colonies. The settlers were mainly drawn from the lower and lower-middle classes of people, who saw in migration an escape from the poverty and oppression which society and the economic system imposed upon them. Life in the Dominion with its freedom from old ties and restrictions, and its prospects of a decent and more remunerative livelihood, attracted them, and hundreds of thousands of settlers left Great Britain each year, for the young countries of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, to a lesser extent, South Africa. Philanthropists found in these lands a useful means of providing careers for orphans, and other less fortunate members of society, and the Dominion, with the enthusiasm of prosperous, virile, and rapidly developing countries, welcomed all who came to their shores.

With the outbreak of the Great-

War, in 1914, this great period of migration came to an end, and when peace was restored, although migration re-commenced, it did not attain its former proportions. Altered conditions in the form of dislocation of trade and unemployment on a scale hitherto unknown, seriously diminished the flow of migrants.

It was due to the Great Depression, commencing in 1928, that migration finally ceased. The immigrant countries of the world, all with their own large armies of unemployed, refused entry to immigrants. The restrictions placed on migration were sufficient to reduce it to negligible proportions.

In recent years there has been a slight increase in the number of emigrants leaving Great Britain, but this has been more than counter-balanced by the return of large numbers of former emigrants, ~~to Great Britain~~.

And although some Dominion statesmen have expressed the need for the recommencement of migration on a large scale little has been done in the way of constructive planning or practical effort. It is essential however that Great Britain should, with all speed, attack the problem which migration presents, the problem of how it is to be restarted on a large scale, of how people are to be persuaded to emigrate, and of how the Dominions are to be made to realise the

dire necessity of populating themselves. For there must come, sooner or later, a recommencement of migration leading to a rational distribution of population throughout the Empire. The population statistics of Britain and the Dominion, and the statistics of the import and export of foodstuffs of Britain and the Dominion, all point to this fact.

✓ England forms one of the most densely populated areas in Europe, with an average density of population of seven hundred and one persons per square mile. Besides this she is over-industrialised and far too dependant on overseas sources for her food supplies. For the last hundred years it has been on industry and manufacture that the people of these islands have concentrated their effort, with the result that although British Industry is pre-eminent, British Agriculture has so diminished that Britain can produce little more than a third of the food which her population, increased by industry out of all proportion to area which it inhabits, requires. So long as there are markets for her industrial products Britain can support her relatively huge population, and every fresh investment of capital abroad helps to maintain a larger non-productive population at home.

Britain is therefore in a somewhat precarious position she is overcrowded

with people, over-weighted with industry, completely dependant on her foreign markets and on overseas food supplies.

The Dominion, including Rhodesia, cover an area of seven and three-quarter million square miles, as compared with Great Britain's eighty nine thousand. The population of Great Britain, however, is forty five millions whilst that of the Dominion is, rather paradoxically, a mere nineteen millions.

The countries of the Empire are mainly dependant for their economic life on the export of agricultural ^{products}. For, although the total acreage under cultivation is a mere fraction of that which could be settled, they produce vastly more food than they themselves require.

A reasonable and sane solution to this problem would be the settlement of the empty lands of the Dominion by Britain's surplus millions. In this way Britain would become less crowded, and the Dominion, now seriously under-populated would receive much-needed immigrants. Britain would be much less dependant on foreign sources for her food whilst the Dominion would be less exposed to the fluctuations ~~to the~~ ~~fluctuation~~ of world agricultural prices, much of their surplus products being absorbed by their own peoples. The Empire could, by wholesale re-settlement develop itself into several strong and rationally

balanced states. In all of them there is land, suitable for settlement, in abundance, even New Zealand, which is more closely settled than the other dominions has room for several more millions of people. South Africa, whilst offering similar possibilities, has internal racial problems which would, at present, render large scale immigration difficult.

An evenly populated Empire would also provide the best possible defence against the menace which other nations constitute to the Empire. For the dominions with their vast spaces and limitless possibilities excite the envy of those nations who were late in entering the sphere of colonial development. Other countries covet the Empire as an outlet for their teeming populations rather than as a source of raw materials. The mainland and the islands of Asia hold countless numbers of people, all existing at the lowest standard of life, and all increasing at a great rate. Japan, the most formidable of these peoples, has a natural increase of population of seven hundred thousand per year. The hot, humid lands of Northern Australia, unfit for white settlement, would form a perfect accomodation for many of her cramped millions.

With the Japanese in this cry for space are all the other fertile races of

Asia. Indians, Chinese, Javanese all need land into which they can expand and the point will ~~to~~ no doubt be reached when something more than Immigration laws will be needed to keep them out.

A well populated Empire would, therefore, be less likely to be coveted by these peoples and more able to resist them if it were. This would also be the case with those European nations which are demanding colonies as an outlet for surplus population and a source of raw materials. Italy and Germany and other land-hungry nations ~~at~~ would be less attracted by ^{strong} well-populated ~~and strong~~ dominions. At the moment they see the British race squatting on large areas of the world's surface which, although they will not themselves develop, they will not yield to others who would develop them. The Empire must therefore prove that it can and will populate itself. Only by a comprehensive policy of migration and land-settlement can the jealousy and ~~other~~ indignation of other nations be allayed.

Already the "peaceful penetration" of the Dominions by the central and southern Europeans has begun to an alarming ~~an~~ extent. This problem is most serious in Canada where, in the last twenty years large numbers of people from central Europe have set up their homes. In the prairie provinces the non-British elements

the Premier of
Alberta, in 1929
~~taken from~~
"Empire Settlement"
by Marriott
(H.L. Hornby.
"Canada and
British Immigration")

are now almost equal to those of British
origin. The gravity of this situation is well
expressed in the following words, spoken ^{in 1928} by
the then Premier of Alberta. "The proportion
of immigrants to Canada is each year
overwhelmingly in favour of the Central
European races. The majority of the people
coming ^{to} Alberta are not British. I think
that one of the gravest Empire problems
of the day is that of inducing the
Empire to take an interest in itself
before the outsider steps in. The significance
of this is that if swift measures are
not taken Canada will undoubtedly
develop into a heterogeneous collection of
races, similar to the United States of America,
with few, if any, ties or loyalties to
the British Commonwealth of Nations. The
problem is intensified by the present large
influxes of refugees. This does not mean that
entry should be denied to these unfort-
-unate people, and, indeed, to other immigrants,
~~by~~ but the superiority of numbers of
British over non-British immigrants should
be so overwhelmingly great that the
non-British would be absorbed by the British
and not, as at present threatens, the reverse.

This problem of foreign
infiltration is also ~~applicable~~ applicable
to Australia, where large numbers of
Italians are settling in the hotter
and wetter regions of the north. These
lands, ~~however~~, could be used for the
settlement of Maltese, who with a

density of population of two thousand persons per square mile are almost crowding ~~squeezing~~ each other out of their tiny island

By a large-scale settlement of her crowded peoples in the Dominions, Great Britain could therefore solve many problems. She would conquer her dependence on other nations for her food supplies, the empty lands of the Empire would be filled and would therefore be less desirable in the eyes of other nations, and finally the problem of Imperial defence would be solved. No longer would the Dominions rely for their continued independence on the maintenance of a ridiculously large navy. The Empire would form a confederation of strong nations each capable, if the necessity arose, of feeding itself.

So far the need for Empire settlement has been exclusively dealt with. This is because it has a definite bearing upon the problem which migration presents. The dire need for the recommencement of migration within the Empire intensifies the problem ~~which it presents~~, and makes all the more urgent the need for its solution.

There are unfortunately, many obstacles to migration and it is ⁱⁿ the overcoming of these that the problem of migration lies chief among them is the so-called conservative nature of men. Men will not readily make such

a great change in their life as migration necessitates, even when their standard of living is lower than that enjoyed to-day. To make this change therefore, they must be convinced that it will result in a great improvement in their general lot.

However, gone are the times when home conditions were sufficiently bad to drive people across the sea in search of a decent livelihood. The standard of living, ~~now~~ has, during the last fifty years risen greatly, the measure of political freedom has increased. Due to trade unions ~~better~~ ^{higher} wages and better working conditions have been obtained in all occupations. Housing schemes have brought good, cheap homes to millions. Life and health insurance, unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, and social-services of all kinds have brought with them a greater sense of security. - It is this feeling of security, induced by modern conditions, ~~coupled~~ coupled with man's natural reluctance to undertake a great change in his life, that forms the greatest obstacle to migration.

This reluctance to emigrate is aided by general misconceptions about the climates of the various dominions. People envisage Canada as a vast icefield, Australia as a sun-scorched desert, and Rhodesia as a tropical jungle inhabited by wild beasts and tribes of blacks.

No greater fallacies than these could exist. In the habitable parts of Canada conditions are no different from those in large and well-populated districts of the United States. Australia, apart from the arid central regions and the hot, wet, northern lands, enjoys a Mediterranean type of climate whilst Rhodesia is a cool, well watered plateau, well suited to settlement by whites.

Many also reject life in the Dominions as signifying the adoption of farming as a career. Farmers, however, will not be the only type of emigrants required. If a large settlement scheme is undertaken towns will have to be built, industries set up, services of all kinds supplied to the new settlers, and life for many would differ little from that at home in Britain.

These are the more underlying and more psychological deterrents to migration. More real and concrete ones are to be found in the attitudes of the various Dominions themselves, that is, in the restrictions which, for the last decade, they have seen fit to impose upon immigration. These restrictions are, needless to say, the outcome of the Great Depression.

Owing to the collapse of world trade and the consequent unemployment in their own countries the Dominions have refused to accept immigrants except under the most prohibitive conditions.

The answer to this is that a well planned and soundly financed scheme of Empire settlement would go a long way to restoring trade and re-establishing world economic confidence. It would create fresh home markets for the Dominions' industries, as well as providing large scope for the ~~manufacture~~ industries of Great Britain. An increase in the buying power of the Dominions, such as would result from the expenditure of capital in settling migrants, would naturally benefit Britain.

The financing of a scheme of Empire settlement could be accomplished by the use of surplus capital, a plan which is being carried out with great success in the settlement of the Jews in Palestine. The Dominion themselves are well prepared to receive immigrants both in the matter of land, ~~and~~ social services, and transport facilities.

In the Dominions, however, there are large sections of people who believe that immigration would not lead to less unemployment, but would only aggravate the problem. They also fear that there ~~then~~ would be a drop in the wage level, with a consequent drop in the standard of living. Rigorous supervision and strong Trade Unions would be sufficient to maintain wage levels, whilst well-capitalised immigrants, who would help to exploit the ^{economic} possibilities

of the Dominions, would most certainly raise the standard of living considerably. The fears that fresh settlers would increase agricultural production at a time when the demand for it is diminished, and that they would be competitors for existing industrial employment, are groundless. Settlers would create industrial employment, which in its turn would create a greater demand for agricultural products, thus absorbing the increased yield. They would require houses, furniture, clothes, farm machinery, seeds, animals, and animal foods. This would create employment in both local and national trades and industry, unemployment would diminish, the purchasing power of the industrial workers would increase and they would be able to absorb larger quantities of agricultural products. Nor would this creation of employment cease when the migrant ~~is~~ ^{established} ~~settled~~ finally. His needs would still have to be satisfied, he would still provide a market for industry.

Thus, it is conceivable that Empire settlement applied on a large scale would do much to relieve world depression and restore confidence. The expenditure required for such a scheme would, it must be remembered, be largely counter-balanced by the huge saving in such things as unemployment pay.

and public relief, and should therefore present no difficulty.

It is in these deterrents and obstacles to migration that the real problem lies. The need for the recommencement of migration is acute and makes the solving of this problem all the more important. It is impossible for the present state of affairs to continue much longer. Great Britain cannot remain in her present overcrowded and dependant condition, nor can the Dominions remain weak and unable to defend themselves. People must be persuaded to emigrate, to settle and develop the spacious lands of the Empire. They must be made to realise that this course will eventually lead to the raising of the standard of living of themselves and of those left behind in Great Britain. Only by fully exploiting its own economic possibilities can the Empire become richer, and only by populating itself can it encompass this development. The manner in which the other obstacles can be overcome has been indicated, it remains for people to be persuaded of the truth of the above facts. When this is achieved the problem of migration within the Empire will have been solved.

Books consulted

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