



THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

MONTHLY LETTER

HEAD OFFICE, MONTREAL, APRIL, 1950

CITIZENS OF THE WORLD

JUST to live on this earth involves the human race in many problems. The longer we live here, and the more of us live here, the more complex become our problems. As tenants with no other housing project within reach, we need to set our present dwelling in order and adjust ourselves to our neighbours.

Only the generation that is now mature has been worried greatly about relations with people on the next continent. Up to forty years ago the ordinary man's geography became vague when it reached an ocean. We are not yet used to deep thinking about our world neighbours, and as a result we excite ourselves into ulcers by dealing with stop-press international news in a stop-gap way.

We can't help being involved in the affairs of other nations. There are potent forces at work in Europe which affect every one of us. The efforts being made there toward economic revival, the struggle for social betterment, and the drive by Russia to dominate the continent, all these have significance for Canadians.

It would be easy to make a list of the world's discontents and write an essay about the helplessness we feel as we face them. The need, rather, is to examine why the world is in so distracted a state, and to seek a way in which we may restore world society, give ourselves new faith in our destiny, and renew our belief in the virtues of truth, freedom, justice and toleration.

In making this attempt, we must avoid the temptation to brew easy-to-take remedies. Many a person who would not prescribe for his sick cat, but would call a veterinarian, still feels competent to prescribe for this sick world. In fact, there are so many prescriptions that we begin to develop complexes. One American soldier, just to take an example, renounced his United States citizenship in an effort to prove himself a world citizen. We are not clear about how that performance will help toward true internationalism.

Nor should we rely upon any equalitarian doctrine. It will not do to think of all humanity being lifted up or levelled down or otherwise made "equal." We have developed unevenly both as individuals and as

nations. We have adapted ourselves to different conditions of life in different ways. What may be good food to us in Canada may be a sacred cow to people in other lands.

Torontonians in their stone, brick and frame houses; Eskimoes in their igloos; Arabs in buildings with all their windows opening on a central courtyard; all these have merely devised different means to the same end of protecting themselves against the weather. The airplane, train, motor car, ricksha, camel, horse and covered wagon are simply various means of transport.

Just as people everywhere have found the solutions to physical life problems in different ways, so they have arrived at different ways of solving their ethical and spiritual problems. In some cultures, for example, a man is judged by what he earns; in others he is judged according to the acts for which he refuses payment in a spirit of service.

It would not do if everyone everywhere thought the same, appreciated the same, hoped for the same. To like everything with the same enthusiasm means in the long run liking nothing properly. Living involves expression of choice and preference.

The burden of our thinking today ought to be that while we retain the diversity that gives us character as persons and as nations, we need the unity that will maintain for us the world environment in which we can live our lives safely and comfortably.

What is a Nation?

The most advanced nations politically are those in which the state is a community composed of its citizens, an association formed for the good of all its people.

To be an independent state in that democratic sense is not, however, to be a state whose policy and opinion is always different from everybody else's. It is a sign of immaturity to disagree and be disagreeable in order to try to show that we are independent.

No nation can long continue to accept all the benefits of association with other nations without accepting

also some of the responsibilities. We Canadians have benefits as an independent nation, as a North American state, as a member of the Commonwealth, and as one of the United Nations. Our interests and our obligations extend to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Our best minds believe that we can retain all that is essential to the freedom of national life, and yet take part fully in the affairs of the international community. There must be sound patriotism before there can be sound internationalism, because only those who are faithful in their community and national duties can be counted upon to perform their international obligations.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the Roman philosopher of the Second Century, summed it up neatly when he said: "My city and my country, so far as I am Antoninus, is Rome, but so far as I am a man, it is the world."

Ordinary people who feel as the philosopher did are disheartened by the constant threats to peace. The local citizen, representative of service clubs, church groups, labour unions, home and school associations, and so on, doesn't want nationalism to run rampant. He knows that it is out of nationalistic greed that wars are born. And he knows that any war anywhere threatens to become a world war, involving him.

He wants an assurance of conditions under which he and his children can attain full intellectual stature, living without fear, and in the certainty that only their individual limitations hold them back from the best life offers to mankind.

The way to achieve such a world is not by having people run to their national homes and barricade the doors. Pessimists say that no effort has ever succeeded in bringing nations together to avoid war, and therefore it never will.

Some, even in Canada, dream of staying neutral in case of war. To these people, Mr. St. Laurent is quoted as saying: "Even if 12,999,999 of the 13,000,000 Canadians living in this country want to stay neutral, it is impossible." Like Belgium in the last two wars, our geographical position will involve us almost certainly.

What is Needed?

This being so, what can we do about it?

We need to study geography. Not the geography of naming capitals, defining islands, capes, bays and peninsulas, but the geography of people and how they are connected with their soil. We need to understand people in other lands and learn what makes them different from us.

Our schools can make a unique contribution to world understanding. They can provide a bridge to bring the people of many nations together. But what a long way some countries have yet to travel before they reach a meeting place! In Egypt, 85 per cent of the population over ten years of age is illiterate; in India 91 per cent.

Then, of course, there is home influence to be considered. The work done in schools can be destroyed if parents infect their children with that disease of the mind which makes so many men and women incapable of appreciating the worth of anyone not belonging to their class, creed, political party or country.

Things to Do

There are many ways in which we can do our bit toward gaining international understanding. Reading intelligently, not alone pretty pieces about the glamour of tours but sincere descriptions of other people's lives; looking at the art of other countries; studying the culture of groups and nations: these are some of the best and most interesting ways.

Correspondence between schools, whether messages from one class to another or individual letters, is a natural form of learning. Teachers should beware of making this merely practice in a foreign language. The letters should give news and information about the children's lives.

A "Museum of Human Co-operation" might be established, with branches in many places. It would show, through its exhibits, that modern scientific and technical development depends on world co-operation. It could demonstrate how an experiment carried out by a Scotsman enables a Frenchman to formulate a theory whose applications are worked out in England and put into practice in Canada.

Canada's Place in the World

Canada is a land of the future. Here, in the ages that lie before us, world history may reveal itself. Today it is new and unspoiled, a land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical lumber-room of older lands.

One of Canada's proud boasts is the way in which her people retain their individuality while taking on responsibilities and making use of their opportunities as Canadians. It is truly said in a new film prepared by the Canadian National Railways entitled *The Canadian Heritage*: "Canada is not a melting pot." We do not pour people into one mould.

We do try to get newcomers from other lands to contribute their national and individual arts and skills and philosophy in an attempt to make this the best land on earth in which to live wholesome, varied, happy lives. The highest loyalty to any institution, whether it be the family, the community, the nation, or the whole human race, is determined not by what we take out of it but by what we freely put into it.

We are, of course, proud of our wealth of natural resources. This abundance provides our people with the raw material upon which they use their varying skills and their imaginative thinking. But we cannot get on without the rest of the world.

We have arrived at an important milestone in our history as an independent nation. To maintain our domestic prosperity involves us, whether we like it or not, in the international network.

It was all right for us to hold fast the idea, up to a few years ago, that our remoteness preserved us from the worries and ills of the old world.

But we are no longer remote. We are not a hermit nation. We are at once an Atlantic country, a North American country, and a Pacific country. One could almost add: and a North Pole country. A former Prime Minister remarked: "If some countries have too much history, we have too much geography."

Our Closest Connections

Whatever the future holds, it can be said with truth that if the discovery of a workable world order is ever made, it will be in such a laboratory of political experimentation as the British Commonwealth. The success of the Commonwealth is our greatest assurance that a world order founded upon freedom and upon international decency can be set up.

Look at the way in which the Commonwealth has solved the problem of small groups living on terms of equality with the large ones. It respects natural political associations; it has profound toleration of social systems and manners that differ widely; individualism is taken for granted.

It is, in fact, this spirit of encouraging every separate nation and every individual person within the Commonwealth that seals the bond of union. It builds that mutual recognition of their need for one another that cements the diverse parts of the Commonwealth together.

In a world where so many states stand in daily fear of a great neighbour, Canada is fortunate that its border marches with that of a powerful nation which shares our ideals of freedom. Our rights as against the United States are better protected than they could possibly be by force of arms, because settlement by force means settlement on the basis of the will of the stronger, while our agreements are arrived at by law or by arbitration or by talking things over in a friendly way.

To Europeans, accustomed as they are to the perplexing ways of international politics, Canada's foreign policy problem would seem extremely simple. It can be said with some assurance that if there existed in all nations the same measure of control of foreign policy by public opinion as obtains in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, we would be far nearer the construction of an enduring peace on earth.

This public interest creates the need for explanation of issues and difficulties to the largest possible number of people. We have gained in knowledge during the past few years. We are better equipped today to choose our course than we ever were in the past. But the problems grow more complicated, so there must be no slow-down of our growth of knowledge and understanding.

Many agencies are at work to provide us with knowledge and to brush aside the mysterious and sinister implications that used to attach to foreign affairs.

Among these are the Canadian Association for Adult Education and the United Nations Association. There is study material in every newspaper and popular magazine, and the magazine *External Affairs* provides a monthly record in readable form of Canada's activities and her foreign affairs policies. Our diplomats are speaking out more often, and addresses by the Hon. L. B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, are models of simple exposition of world affairs.

The One World Idea

Beyond national interests and regional interests there beckons the larger hope of world-wide co-operation for the good of all people. The world of people is one world, because human beings are by nature the same no matter into what nation they were born, or in what region they live.

The world cannot be united by a constitution or a charter, however high sounding it may be. The world can be united only when men and women insist that their governments fulfil their world obligations.

There are good material reasons why people everywhere should make their voices heard.

Economic world co-operation is needed, because the natural unit of economic activity is no longer the single family, the single village, or the single national state, but the entire living generation of mankind.

Commerce between nations is vital to keep the world in running order. If all means of trade and transportation were cut off, even for one month, millions of people would die for want of the necessities of life.

New markets are needed by nations which produce abundantly. We cannot force our own population to eat all our surplus wheat, potatoes, fish, meat, bacon and butter; to use all our production of pulpwood and paper, of aluminum and nickel, of furs and gold. Canada has been compelled to build up an economy which depends on the outer world. The amount of every man's take-home pay every week depends upon brisk international trade.

We import goods from 110 countries and export to 122 countries. Our imports in 1949 amounted to \$2,761 million, and our exports came to \$2,993 million. If this trade were cut off or seriously interfered with, the effect on every workman's home in Canada would be disastrous.

That is why the President of this Bank said in his address to shareholders earlier this year: "The plain truth is that Canada's domestic prosperity depends upon our handling of a complicated foreign trade problem. And in the final analysis both our domestic prosperity and the future of world trade itself will depend upon a concerted international effort by all nations to return along the path to multilateral world trade unhampered by exchange restrictions, bilateral pacts, and all the paraphernalia of government control."

It is a Big Job.

In view of the inescapable logic of those who advocate international co-operation, what are we to do?

It is easy enough to say that if only all nations were as sensible as the two North American democracies, they could get together to talk things over, and arrive at an arrangement. But we cannot impose democratic ways upon alien people, and less than a quarter of the world's people live under a democratic form of government. Many millions in other lands are ignorant, illiterate, and opposed to majority rule.

This is the hardest part of the job taken on by persons who see the need for world understanding — to educate enough people in all lands to the fact that what is being talked about is not a super-state but a co-operative organization for survival of the human race.

There seems to be the same way out of this predicament as out of many that confront us as individuals every week in our own family or business life: use the little that you have in the best way you can toward getting what you want. No effort made by a person or an organization to achieve international understanding is wasted.

Much is being done by international non-government organizations, such as churches, trade unions, businessmen's associations, service clubs, co-operative societies, farmers' groups, women's organizations, as well as professional, scientific, humanitarian and athletic societies and associations. The world owes much to these people who have the intelligence and vision to discern the interests they hold in common.

On the official level, of course, hope rests in the United Nations. The world, being afraid of its own shadow, is eager for some type of collective security in which the peace and welfare of each state will be the common concern of all people.

The United Nations is not yet wholly effective, but to those who ridicule it the invitation is extended: what have you to suggest in its place? The alternative to co-operation through some such society as this seems to be world anarchy, in which each nation would seek to achieve its own security by its own arms or by alliances, until finally they would all be swallowed up in one imperial state.

Even the simplest tool made of a chipped stone is the fruit of long experience, and the United Nations, a tool for peace, has not yet been long in use. It is doing good work, but it awaits a spark of Promethean fire, a rallying point, a world-wide comprehension of its necessity and of the bounty it could bestow on an agreeing world.

Perhaps in this, as in other things, the spark should be lighted by the little people of the world. If enough individuals cared enough to keep telling the men representing them at the United Nations: "Get unity, and get it quick": perhaps that would help.

Perhaps, too, the opening words of the Charter should be displayed in letters of fire in every hamlet and city, over every legislative rostrum and over every teacher's desk: *We the peoples of the United Nations are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.*

An Ideal is Needed

We are all inclined to feel exasperated by our impotence in the face of today's world situation. We cannot reconcile men's declarations of faith with their actions; we cannot understand the bickerings and vetoings. Some days it seems as if the people of the world are bound upon destroying themselves. Sometimes we have the feeling of a world that is moving more and more slowly round a sun that is losing its heat.

The crisis of our time arises not so much from competing nationalities as from faulty human relations. We are not in the grip of some implacable destiny, but of our own disregard of the elementary principles of living together.

It may be that we are too earthbound, and that before we can be won over to the cause of world peace and co-operation we need to be lifted off the earth, as Hercules did Antaeus, into another realm.

J. W. Watson said this in his article in *The Canadian Historical Review* two years ago. Reviewing books on geography and history, he said: "Something more fundamental is needed to explain the evolution of civilization. This is something spiritual. It is the virtue which men discover in themselves when faced with adversity . . . The armour which saved man was psychic, not physical. It was his ability to see beyond the field of physical challenge, impinging from without, to the field of spiritual challenge, impinging from within."

Summing Up

The new world view will remain hazy unless we see it from a vantage point of geographical knowledge, economic realities, and spiritual insight.

Our dead civilizations are not dead by fate, but by the will or apathy of their people. We of the western world still have a creative spark in us, and if we find the grace to kindle it into flame then nothing on earth can stop us from erecting, in due time, the kind of human society in which it is good for all men to live.

We should not look for miracles. Our social improvement, like our personal improvement, comes in small instalments. We cannot say: "I shall make myself into a new person." We can only say: "I will give up this bad habit, and adopt this good one." So it is in world society, advancement will be made up of minute particulars, little by little.

We cannot longer remain indifferent to what is going on in the world, but we need not stand idly by, hopelessly wringing our hands. If we look around us we can see in the eyes of right-minded people the conviction that with good-will, honest purpose and effort, we can achieve our goal.

We may, for our objective, paraphrase the words of the Roman philosopher and say: "So far as I am an individual, my country is Canada; but so far as I am a man, I am a citizen of the world."