

Clifford Sifton's Immigration Policy

Department of the Interior,

Ottawa, November 8, 1904

To the Honourable Clifford Sifton,

Minister of the Interior,

Ottawa.

Sir,— I have the honour to submit the thirty-first annual report of the Department of the Interior for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1904.

The chief functions for which the department was created in 1873 were the survey and administration of the public lands in Manitoba and the North-west Territories, as well as all other lands the ownership of which is vested in the Dominion of Canada. In 1891, the management of immigration was assigned to the Department of the Interior as it was felt that the work of administering the vacant lands of the country was so closely connected with their settlement that it would be in the public interest that the two duties should be entrusted to the one department. These junctions are amongst the most important of any of those devolving upon any branch of the government service. In older countries, where the great bulk of the land has passed from the control of the state, the administration of the public domain is necessarily of secondary importance, as compared with the development of other interests. This, however, could not apply to Canada, where most of the lands, especially in the western regions, are still vested in the Crown, and under existing conditions upon the proper disposal of such lands must rest very largely the future building up of the country.

The steady increase in the flow of immigration that has been directed towards this country, the interest aroused amongst United States capitalists as to its possibilities, the attention which the wealth of its agricultural and other natural resources commands to-day in Great Britain, in Europe, and even in some of the most important British colonies, clearly show that Canada has at last emerged from a state of semi-stagnation in which it had remained for so many years, and its future advance, as judged by the remarkable progress of the past few years, must henceforth be by leaps and bounds.

That Canada, however, should be a nation of fifteen or twenty million inhabitants within a comparatively few years—and there are strong grounds for such belief from present indications—is a consummation to be sincerely wished for, but the question of number, desirable as it may be, is not the chief result aimed at by the department. The social character of the people that are being added to our population, and their adaptability to become loyal, prosperous and contented Canadians, is considered to be a matter of far greater moment. In this endeavour, I am glad to say, the department has been highly successful, as a careful analysis of the result of the work, both as regards the number of new arrivals and the desirable classes to which they belong will amply testify. . . .

From the returns submitted, it will be seen that the result of the work has been highly satisfactory. The total arrivals in Canada during the twelve months ending June 30 last, numbered 130,330, or, on an average, over two thousand five hundred settlers have located in the country every week during that period, and are now engaged in the development of its resources.

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It is the largest immigration in the history of Canada. While there are no doubt economic conditions underlying the movement of population from one country to another, over which individual or corporate action has little effect, still, when it is borne in mind that only a few years ago, as evidenced by the returns of that time, Canada was almost ignored by the emigrating world as a field for settlement, and that immediately following the adoption of certain methods for fostering and stimulating British and United States immigration, the number of arrivals from those countries has assumed such large proportions to-day that it exceeds the entire British emigration to the United States, there would appear to be little doubt that to the work of the department and to that alone must be attributed the favourable change that has been brought about. It is true that the country has made a remarkable advance since the flow of British and American immigration first set in, and to the development of the western portion of Canada by a large additional population must be attributed the increased prosperity of the past few years. The same opportunities, however, were available many previous years to incoming settlers as are offered now; the agricultural lands of the public domain were no less productive than they are found to be now by the thousands of well-to-do immigrants who have had the good fortune to take them up as a free gift from the government; railway facilities from ocean to ocean, through

the fertile wheat fields of western Canada were afforded as far back as 1887; the gates of Canada, both along the three thousand miles of boundary on the south and at ocean ports, had always been left wide open; the natural resources of the country had always existed, but notwithstanding these favourable conditions, the British settler passed our door on his way to the neighbouring Republic, while the American agriculturist almost seemed to scorn the limitless fields extending to the north of the Western States. The moment, however, that vigorous steps were taken by the department to attract immigration to this country by judicious advertising and by the adoption of practical methods for educating the agricultural classes of the United Kingdom and the United States as to the possibilities of the country, thousands upon thousands of the most desirable settlers are pouring into Canada, and are becoming contented and prosperous citizens. This is certainly one of the most satisfactory features in the future prospects of the Dominion. It seems so manifest that the change has been brought about wholly and directly through the policy of the department that for the present it would not appear to be in the public interest to depart from the methods heretofore followed in this relation, but rather to increase the scope of this important work by even more persistent and systematic efforts in the same direction. . . .

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your obedient servant,

Jas. A. Smart