



# THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

## MONTHLY LETTER

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### THE MEANING OF CITIZENSHIP

CANADIANS have been described as the most "self-critical people in the world" and again as "a nation that has not grown up". Dr. James Roby Kidd, assistant director of the Canadian Association for Adult Education, says in an unpublished doctoral thesis that the Canadian attitude is one which might be called "group inferiority complex". If we were less self-critical and less self-conscious, we should likely go ahead and do things we are now unable to encompass because we do not trust our abilities.

The establishment a year ago of "Canadian Citizenship" is counted upon by well-wishers to raise our morale. It should bring us closer together under one roof, as it were; it should broaden our horizons, and it should enable us to look out upon the world with a feeling of confidence based upon knowledge of family solidarity and national co-operativeness.

Everyone will admit that there are differences between people of diverse origins. Persons brought up in France, Scotland, Ireland, England, Scandinavia, Italy and other countries have had distinctive environments and consequently their views of happenings and situations are varied. It is our right to be different, but strength lies in being united on the important and basic things in national and economic life.

This lesson should have been well and truly taught by our history. A glance through the rich lode hinted at in the indexes of the *Canadian Historical Review* shows how often important issues which should have been settled on business grounds or according to laws of equity became the football of sectional interests and prides.

Canada is a small United Nations in itself. There are 43 nationalities represented in the racial origin of our population. Under the impulse of common citizenship the best attainments, beliefs, customs and traditions of all these can be welded into a grand culture.

#### *Citizenship Requires Work*

Citizenship is like every other great movement or state in life in that it requires humble work as well as effervescent expression. Great religions teach the

virtues of lowly things; great scientific discoveries arise from painstaking and unassuming research; even the most elevated education rests upon a base of the modest ABC's. So, too, citizenship involves work. The physical welfare of the nation depends upon the product of individual hands, just as its spiritual welfare rests upon the contributions of individual minds.

Not so many years ago the producing world was made up of lone inventors in attics and lone artisans in whatever space could be had in overcrowded houses. Today, with a world population which has increased from 1,009 million to 2,151 million in 100 years, that scale of production would not meet our needs. Scientific work has become co-operative effort in great laboratories, and production has been made efficient by centralization in workshops and factories. This change has brought new social problems which it is one of the aims of citizenship to solve. It has not, however, altered the basic principle which requires every worker to contribute his best in the field he chooses.

#### *Citizens are Broadminded*

Citizenship requires, besides patriotism and industry, something people refer to as open-mindedness. Dr. Kidd, a graduate of McGill and Columbia Universities, who made an intensive study of Canadian ways in preparation for his treatise on Canadian citizenship, declares, ". . . the Canadian people as individuals are comparatively free from prejudice and bigotry". That is a good starting point for the building of a sane and healthy citizenry.

This matter of tolerance versus intolerance requires constant vigilance, because it is very easy to drift from one to the other. Only persons who are alert to these three maxims are safe from this danger: what we believe is not necessarily true; what we like is not necessarily good; all questions are open to consideration.

Good citizens will listen, before making up their minds on an issue, to all points of view reasonably expressed. John Stuart Mill, grand fighter for liberty

of expression as a means to good government, laid down as a rule: "If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."

### *Democracy Expresses Citizenship*

Citizenship arises in democracy and doesn't exist otherwise. Democratic government is nothing more than the top-layer expression of something that must be deeply imbedded in people's minds: voluntary association for the good of all.

From this thought to the conviction that the state exists for the benefit of its citizens is but a step — a step not taken in dictatorial countries where individual freedom was wrested from the people; where people are only chattels to be used for the exaltation of the state. In a citizen-state the government exists to be the servant of citizens and to protect them in their free individual development. The chief end of government is the virtue and happiness of citizens.

These happy ideals are expressed in the basic principles of government in Canada. We believe in government according to law, the recognition and assurance of certain rights of individuals, and when change is needed it must be brought about by due process of law. This form of government establishes the framework for harmonious development of personality.

Within this framework, citizenship involves certain liberties, qualities and duties.

### *What is Civil Liberty?*

Liberty has many meanings. In ordinary usage, liberty means the ability to think and act as one chooses without interference, but in living with other people the limitation has to be added "so long as one's actions do not interfere with the equal liberty of others".

Civil liberties include freedom with respect to personal action, the possession and use of property, religious beliefs and worship, and the expression of opinion. The mere fact of living in a democracy does not make certain the maintenance of any group of liberties for the individual. A democratic government must be constantly on the alert to avoid a danger inherent in majority rule — the danger of imposing bondage upon minorities.

There is an important protecting factor: one liberty preserved under the democratic form of government is the right to complain about violation of one's liberty. So long as citizens have the right to make complaints, and the complaints are freely heard and fully considered, and so long as indicated reforms are speedily made, then citizens have the utmost of civil liberty that wise men look for.

### *Qualities of Citizenship*

As to the qualities of citizenship, there are so many that merely to list them would use up all our space. They include all the good and beautiful things in

human nature, all the virtues. Here are a few, drawn from the essay by President Eliot of Harvard in which he discusses the good life from the viewpoint of the individual: moderation, knowledge of history and of the world today, weighing of evidence, consecutive thinking, progressiveness, passion for truth, drawing of accurate conclusions, self-reliance, open-mindedness, independence, and the wise use of liberty.

These qualities, it will be noted, deal with practicalities. In olden days the attention of thinking people was directed to abstract philosophy, or pure science, or the art of government. The emphasis today is upon things social. This is as it should be for the well-ordered direction of society and the promotion of welfare.

The citizen needs a cultural background which enables him to explain the factors giving rise to social unrest, radicalism and agitation. He needs straight thinking so that he may recognize the true ideals and goals of human progress amid all the shoddy counterfeits. And he needs moderation to tone down high-flying ideals to the point where they can be achieved through the normal processes of work and growth.

### *Citizenship Repudiates Collectivism*

A discussion of the meaning of citizenship would be incomplete if it did not include the point of view of sceptics who disbelieve in the principles for which Canadian citizenship stands. Some of these persons desire a kind of collectivist society, devoted to a sort of benevolence. They promise much. It is more than 1800 years since Plutarch wrote a maxim which has never been disproved by any government: "the first destroyer of the liberties of a people is he who first gave them bounties and largesses".

There are, and we suppose there always will be, utopians of a sort: people who quarrel with the moral code of the rest of the community or the social order of their country or the economic state of the world.

Citizens find their greatest satisfaction in attending to situations which are under their control. They would be robbed of this satisfaction by utopians, because Utopia, by whomever thought up, always means dictatorship.

Collectivism ignores the individual; Canadian citizenship admits that he is the mainspring of society. Collectivism destroys freedom; Canadian citizenship guarantees it. Not, as we have seen, that citizenship in a country like Canada provides an open field for rugged exploitation by individuals and license to do all things, but it is the best method yet attained of relating individuals to society in a middle way which avoids both the anarchy of savagery and the slavery of dictatorship.

### *The Schools and Citizenship*

It is not right to suppose that people are born with an inherited understanding of citizenship. If patterns of behaviour were inherited, says A. Scheinfeld in his

useful book, *You and Heredity*, we might expect that a fireman's child, hearing a gong for the first time, would jump out of his crib, pull on his clothes, and slide down the nearest pole or stair rail. Citizenship is no more inherited than that; it has to be learned. All that a child inherits is the better environment built by his parents, including improved opportunities to learn about citizenship.

Parents have the first responsibility, to show in their homes the working out of democracy on its lowliest level, but the finest and strongest cement for Canadian citizenship is the training provided in school. All provincial departments of education have given thought to this duty. They have courses in civics which take the students from appraisal of good behaviour in the school yard to discussion of world citizenship. Racial, religious and cultural tolerance and sympathy are stressed. Practice is given in the elements of parliamentary procedure. Student councils and student governments put into use the principles brought to light in the civics and social studies courses.

### *Education for Grownups*

Education of adults for citizenship should not be directed only at the immigrant, but should be extended to all Canadians. The primary purposes of adult education should include understanding of our social environment, improvement of the relationships in which each person finds himself, or which it is desirable for him to establish, and knowledge of what he may do as a citizen for the advancement of the nation.

Special efforts must be made, of course, in the case of newcomers. At a meeting of educational authorities to discuss the standards of education to be set for naturalization, a general plan was agreed upon. This includes instructional facilities to be set up by departments of education, with correspondence courses to serve remote areas, and distribution of a manual, *How to Become a Canadian Citizen*, at the time an immigrant files his Declaration of Intention to become a Canadian Citizen. Both this booklet and *The Canadian Citizenship Act, Regulations and Forms* are available from the Department of the Secretary of State, Ottawa.

One of the most effective organizations in the field of citizenship training is the Canadian Citizenship Council, formed in 1940 "to stimulate in the minds of all Canadians a greater appreciation of the meaning and implications of democracy as a way of life". It is a federation of the nine provincial departments of education and twelve national organizations, working to provide basic factual material, study plans, and suitable literature to all who are interested in education for citizenship.

Under leadership of the Canadian Association for Adult Education, many organizations with citizenship training as part of their programmes meet to co-ordinate their work, pool resources, and fill in the blank places. Out of these meetings has grown the Joint Planning Commission, on which are represented some 30 organizations which publish literature and make films dealing with citizenship topics.

### *Religion is Basic*

One of the Citizenship Council's publications is entitled *Freedom of Conscience*. It tells how the great tradition of political freedom which is Canada's heritage has been shaped in the brave struggles of men inspired by religion and conscience. The churches furnish in the conduct of their own organizations experience and schooling in democratic government. These church-democracies, all across Canada, accustom office-bearers and members to democratic procedure, and train young people's groups in democratic action.

In addition, one of the functions of religion is to bring to political and social thinking the background, depth and range that come from the attempt to grasp the ultimate ends of human existence. Says the unnamed author of *Freedom of Conscience*: "Enlightened religious faith constitutes effective insurance against the ravages of the demagogue who exploits democracy in order to destroy it. Good Christians are bad subjects for dictators."

### *Many Organizations Active*

Besides the churches and the educational institutions, there are many other organizations working toward good citizenship. Only a few can be mentioned as typical of the social, fraternal, cultural, service and sports associations which spread knowledge, encourage neighbourliness, and provide meeting places for people and ideas.

The Canadian Institute of International Affairs has as its objectives to promote and encourage research in international affairs, and to advance understanding by its members and the public of international questions bearing upon Canada. Through discussion, lectures, broadcasts, and information services, it draws attention to Canada's position both as a member of the international community of nations and as a member of the British Commonwealth.

The importance of "cultural factors" in promotion of good citizenship is the chief concern of The Canada Foundation, a national organization with offices in Ottawa. It endeavours to promote wider understanding and appreciation of Canadian literature, music and art, by serving as a national clearing house for cultural activities, and by promoting exhibitions, scholarships and competitions. The Canada Foundation believes that good citizenship must be based on love of country, and that pride in the nation's cultural achievements is indispensable to that end.

The Community Planning Association, whose first objective is to foster understanding of, and participation in, community planning, works also toward citizenship education. Common values and responsibilities in citizenship can be demonstrated clearly, it believes, by greater attention to the community's stake in the creation of its physical environment.

A particularly worthwhile effort is being made by the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, through official ceremonies of welcome to newly-

naturalized citizens originated many years ago. This gesture brings a new meaning to naturalization by adding friendly interest to what was formerly a cold legal proceeding.

The Young Women's Christian Association covers a wide field. Its objectives include the provision of means for health, fun, development of initiative, self-expression, friendliness, and the ability to participate in group activities. Interest in the welfare of people is fostered on three community levels: one's own neighbourhood, the country, and the world. Members are encouraged to develop their initiative in working out their own plans through group thinking and action.

The Young Men's Christian Association has developed a So-Ed (Social Education) programme which has spread across Canada in the past two years and now has 10,000 youths over 18 in its study groups. An exceedingly practical way was taken by the YMCA to acquaint leaders at first hand with the activities of the Federal Government. A three-day "institute" was held at Ottawa, when staff members from all over Canada observed Parliament in session, met members of the cabinet, visited government departments, and learned about the resources of information upon which they could draw to help in building citizenship.

At a younger level, the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides Associations are doing splendid work. There are, according to the announcement of Boy Scout - Girl Guide Week, 165,000 Scouts and Guides training to serve Canada, learning to help others, and learning to give and take. These organizations stress learning by doing; the boys and girls are encouraged to take part in the planning and carrying out of various forms of community and national public service.

Special duties and opportunities for making newcomers feel at home devolve upon the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, which are active in rural districts. The Radio Farm Forum and the Citizens Forum provide opportunities for study groups to consider important citizenship problems. In the large cities, University Settlements and Community Centres provide valuable contacts for new Canadians who would otherwise be apt to get lost in the great populations.

These are only a few of the associations of people working toward better citizenship. To all such organizations we owe a debt of gratitude, and we also owe our moral and practical support.

### *Citizenship Means Participation*

After education and preparation comes participation. It is one thing to talk about citizenship in your living room, or hear it talked about from the public platform, and quite another thing to get out and wrestle with problems in your community. In the first case you are dealing in words which have nice sounds: democracy, brotherhood, citizenship. In the

second you are dealing with actualities which are sometimes sordid, usually worrisome, and always entail work. The participation of people in doing something about things, added to knowledge of what might or should be done, holds society together.

It is the common, everyday people who make the country good or bad. Individually, they may think they count for little, but they become effective as members of groups. In European countries the tendency is to let officialdom take the initiative rather than to have it assumed by groups of private citizens, but this is a vicious trend characterized by the late President Roosevelt as one which withdraws government from practical contact with citizens as human individuals and makes men and women mere units in statistics.

Fortunately, we in Canada can benefit by the object lessons in other countries. Prizing Canadian citizenship, we can make it the backbone of government. We can avoid the procrastination which ends in spasmodic activity, flaring up for a while and then dying out; we can refrain from detached criticism, which complains from afar about what officials do, but refuses to get together for co-operation to make things better; we can shun dependence upon busybodies who go to meetings, listen to talks, but never work long enough to see one constructive thing through.

Good citizens will participate in local government, at least to the extent of selecting to the best of their ability the men who are to govern the community, administer its schools, organize recreation, operate health services, and beautify the district.

### *World Citizenship*

From local government to world citizenship may seem a long jump. It was Cicero who said that endowment of human beings with the ability to reason makes every man a member of the great human community. Starting with care for his family, expanding through service in his community, province and nation, every Canadian citizen finds himself embraced in the wider fellowship of world citizenship. Whether we think it a good thing or not, the future of Canada is wrapped up with the future of all countries. We can make great, and perhaps decisive, contributions to the preservation of human freedom and evolution.

Our citizenship contribution might well start, indeed it must start, on the home front, in communities where good citizenship can make itself felt quickly and decisively. Dickens set down for us in a dramatic way the picture of failure arising from our natural inclination to take in too much territory. In his novel *Bleak House* Mrs. Jellyby was a very earnest woman who began with the natives of Borrioboola-Gha instead of beginning with her own children. Nobody denies that we have duties to the natives of Borrioboola-Gha. But to begin with them is, for the most of us, to begin at the wrong end, and to make a sad mess of our citizenship in consequence.