Priests Block Recruiting in Quebec Province

French Canadians, Led by Their Clergy, Defy Dominion Government—Hints of Uprising Because of Bilingual Question

If you begin a conversation anywhere in Quebec, you are apt to be asked if you speak French for your own language in the schools of the Province—of the Provincial rights and privileges. This holds good whether the discussion is in the clubs or officers' quarters or in the homes of the men in the cities, or among the farmers and fishermen of the country. 

The question are very lightly touched, but the answers are always the same. The Quebec of to-day, they say, is in the middle of the town, and in the house of their children, and two or three are killed and then the families are finished.

It is the French priest in Quebec—there are about 5,000 of them all told—who is now engineering to get recruits in that province. In the city of Montreal and Quebec this is not so obvious. But, I say, the call is not so obvious. The priest is called by the fact that men are not taught, but even in the most perfunctory way without making any favorable comment. But in the very region the minor priest is making it a part of his parish work to add to his people. As a whole, I think it is the fact that the movement is in the province of the Dominion Government to join the universal forces.

The question is one of extremest who has actual public opinion, or who has actual extremest the civil war. Civil war is the least of the two.

There are 2,128 people in LeSieullette. All of his thirty-eight are French Catholics. There is one lone Baptist, one Englisn, with thirteen small schools. Half of the population is 58 to the square mile and every family has a house. There are 5414 meals in families in LeSieullette who are farmers. Two hundred and thirty-eight of them own their farms, with an aggregate of 23,169 acres. The other five are tenants, renting, all told, 690 acres.

Records for the entire Province of Quebec show an area of 23,723,087 acres, of which about 16,603,000 acres or 7 per cent. of the whole is being farmed. Twenty per cent. of the whole in capable of cultivation. The total value of the farm property in the province is $757,764,894. And, here is the important fact, 92 per cent. of all the cropland of this farmland is the owners of the farms they work. The farms average about 100 acres, and the average annual yield per farm is about $500.

Statistics of Bliss do not put the population and the priests in such a good light as the farm records. For all Canada the percentage of those above the age of 5 who cannot read and write is 10.3; for all Quebec it is 11.8. In Ontario it is 1.5, but in the maritime province of New Brunswick it is 14.6. From the cities of Quebec, however, the figures make a much worse showing.

As to everything else concerning their people, the clergy find something in the very recent decisions of the Government, in particular in the non-use of English.

We are on the use of the French language in Quebec, attributed to Bliss. I think it is because it is necessary to hold the children to the Catholic faith. Experience has taught us that the Church loses converts in the case of people who are taught a language other than its own and to mingle with people of another language and faith. If the Irish of the United States had a language of their own we would have 25,000,000 Catholic in that country.

As it is, I believe we have only about 10,000,000. We teach English in the Quebec schools, but the people have no use for it and therefore forget it. We give the children schooling up to ten or twelve years of age. They learn to read and write and figure enough to keep their farm accounts. Then they go to work. They have enough education to read their prayer books and their news- papers on Sundays and that is sufficient for those who are to stay on the farms.

"They have no time for other reading because of necessity. Suppose we had a lot of high schools. What would be the result? We would produce a crowd of young men who would not be content to stay on the farms and for whom there would not be enough of proper employment off the farms. We believe in education, but only enough for the needs of the people and no more. Too much may be an evil. At the turn of Quebec in 1591 I was on a committee to award silver medals to families that had been on the same farms in the Province of Quebec for 250 years or more. It was necessary to give 250 such medals. Some of the family records for the same farms run back as far as 1565. We printed them all in a volume a we call 'The Book of Gold of the Rural Nobility.' It is true that we have to have beautiful churches that cost money, but why not? They are for God and nothing else, and think there is any obligation on the individual in Canada to fight in France. Of course, we are proud to be British subjects, but our army is a national army, and England is generous to us when we cannot get justice from Canada. But we do not look to England. We have great affection for France, but not for the French Government.

We are a nation distinct. We have Quebec. We would fight for Quebe.

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