

CANADIAN AUTHORITY LIKES DAWN

Praises Board's Assimilation Policy

The Author of this letter, Mr. Thomas H. Ainsworth, Curator of the Vancouver City Museum, is well known throughout Canada as a Poet and Essayist, and keen Student of Human Affairs.

Dear Editor,

It was with great interest that I read Mr. A Norton's article in the November issue of *Dawn*, "On the road to Assimilation", because it presents the ultimate answer to the problem of assimilation.

This is made the more possible under such an organization as the Aborigines' Welfare Board, where there can be an acceptance of the Native People by the White race and not regarded as an intrusion by either. Moreover, in addition to becoming familiar with the manners and customs of their white neighbours and associates, it provides the great incentive to good conduct.

On this continent segregation must give way to integration to promote the unification of ideals. Insularity is detrimental to progress; and we in Western Canada can point to many examples to prove it. In the past, colonies of people came and established themselves in communities where they have remained distinct and apart; and in some cases, where a peculiar religious fanaticism has prevailed, they have not allowed their children to go to school and have become violently destructive to property when an attempt has been made to enforce the law. It is only by precept and example that Native peoples can rise to the point of being assimilated. Those who do so will lead the way for others: If they go backward they die, so let them go forward and live—to paraphrase an old saying of the Zulus.

Five years ago I visited the city of Seattle in the State of Washington, U.S.A., for the purpose of investigating and reporting on low-rental housing. It was part of a slum-clearance programme in which a large area was acquired and houses built for rent which was graded according to the size of the family and the wage-earners' ability to pay. I will not go into the economic aspect of the project, but will deal only with the assimilation or integration as it is called.

In the selection of tenants, this integration was finally made the keynote, and its attainment was the subject of my curiosity.

The herd instinct is strong, and therefore it is natural for peoples of a like culture or race to gather in communities by themselves.

Sometimes it is brought about by people with the same professional interest. This proved to be the case along a row of houses situated near a large hospital, where it became known as "Intern Row."

In other sections, different racial groups showed the same tendency.

This was soon corrected, however, under the policy of integration; but the separation was softened by

allocating the use of the community hall to the respective groups at specified times, to avoid any conflict of interests.

In certain parts of the United States there has been exhibited an antipathy toward the Negro race, and I was interested to learn how this problem was being met in the Seattle Housing Project.

When a vacancy occurred, a Negro invariably proved to be an excellent neighbour; the reason being that here was a chance to demonstrate a measure of conduct equal to those of other races. And where a vacancy was offered to a White applicant, if he were to have a Negro as a neighbour, then it was on the assurance of the management that the Negro would be found to be a good man and a first-class citizen. And that is how it proved to be.

Careful selection ensures the best possible results, and in measuring up to an acceptable standard the pattern is set for others to follow. And this is entirely apart from any tendency to racial discrimination, for there are many of our own race that we should not voluntarily choose as neighbours.

Assimilation is on a sound footing where the acceptance is based on the character of the individual and is free from cant or condescension. When such an individual is made to understand what is expected of him, given the opportunity he will rise to become an example to others.

I look forward to each issue of *Dawn*, which I read from cover to cover. I wish we had its counterpart in B.C.

Congratulations on a job well done!

Yours sincerely,
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Curator,
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Vincent Holten of Bellbrook and Jack Robert of Green Hills both play football with the Kempsey C.Y.M. team.