

## X. THE PROBLEM OF CULTURE

A very interesting and novel point of view on the population question was put forward by Dr. G. H. Scholefield and Mr. A. Mulgan, with whom was associated Mr. A. W. Reed.

Their thesis was that a vital factor in the social progress of a community was the development of its cultural activities. New Zealand, they said, was the smallest society of its kind in the world, except Newfoundland. "The countries nearest to it in population and culture combined are Denmark, Norway, and Finland, but these three European countries carry a much larger population than ours, and geographically they are in the midst of the European stream of culture, whereas we are at the other side of the world, the most remote of civilized societies. This remoteness is a factor in the development of a national culture, and has a bearing on the population problem." They continued by stating that New Zealand is attempting to carry out all that Great Britain is doing with a very much smaller population. "New Zealand is working an elaborate system of Government and cultural development on the model of Britain's with a population that is roughly only about one twenty-seventh of Britain's." They then asked whether our population is sufficient to carry this development; whether it can provide the ability required to man these various services and the talent and "audiences" which are necessary for the advancement of the arts. "It is a common argument on the economic side that we need more people to finance our large 'overhead' expenditure on public works. Much of the equipment we have built, so it is contended, would serve a larger population. It is submitted here that a similar argument arises on the cultural side, but with the difference that human personality enters into the situation. We need more people to take advantage of what has already been provided—to nourish the seed and extend the garden."

Many of the first-grade brains of the community trained in our own institutions are unable to find an outlet for their energies within the Dominion because of the smallness of our population. Much of our literary talent is stultified by the fact that there is no demand in such a small country for its product. New Zealand writers, despite the fact that often their product is acknowledged to be of a very high order, are unable to find publishers because there is no adequate sale for their writings.

Mr. Reed pointed out that because of the smallness of the reading public the cost of production of books in New Zealand is prohibitive. The same arguments may be adduced with regard to art, drama, and music. As a consequence, much of our best talent is lost to the country. Clearly these young people "would find it more attractive to stay here if the community were larger. As our activities increase there is more demand for their services, but demand is not the only factor. We could offer them higher salaries, but not so high as we could if we had a larger number of producers and taxpayers. Besides, salary is not the only attraction. Such young people seek contacts with a larger world, the stimulus of its special groups and the encouragement of its audiences. We would provide them with a measure of these things if we increased our population."

From the above arguments, the witnesses submitted that there was a scope for a liberal policy of regulated immigration. "We prefer that most of these immigrants should be of British stock, but we would not exclude foreigners. The success of Scandinavian settlers in New Zealand is a well-known historical fact. Industrially and culturally foreigners might be a valuable asset, as many of them have been in the past."

We desire to commend the point of view of these witnesses, which was certainly original and refreshing. Undoubtedly progress is not to be measured in terms of the multiplication of material commodities. The cultural life of the people is probably basic to all real progress, and in so far as a larger population will assist this progress we agree with the point of view put forward by the witnesses. On the other hand, in the short run the economic factors discussed elsewhere in this report must determine practical policies.