

Dr. Perkins re French--Canadians

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General Yankee attitude to French is that of numerous disdain and derision. Best shown in Rowland Robinson's "Uncle Elisha's Shop." In that it is brought out that the French have bad reputation for veracity. You cannot believe a thing they tell you and this seems to be one of the general impressions about them. Also that they are a genial, neighborly folk but many have a pretty low I. Q. They came as longshoremen and lumberjacks and since then have graduated to filling stations and are the better mechanics in all our garages as well as doing trucking, etc, etc.

They have a general happy-go-lucky way, are time-servers, spend what they get as they get it and are by no means thrifty. Others, usually of the better class become thriftier, pay their bills promptly, etc.

The farm population of Vermont is pretty sore at the French Canadians because they took the farms from the Yankees which the Yankees couldn't make pay and have made a go of them, living at a lower standard but at the same time have been able to present a fairly good appearance, send their children to school, well-dressed, etc. One of the chief hopes of the VCCL was that the French Canadian would be given his proper due, that is, his proper place in society; the Commission felt that he was considered a much lower person on the social scale than he really is and that a greater appreciation of him was necessary because he deserved a higher place socially.

When Dr. Perkins asked Paul Moody of Middlebury College if he had had any students of French Canadian descent who had made a name for themselves in any type of endeavor Mr. Moody immediately said no, and even on consideration said he thought a lot about it and checked up that not one Canadian had risen to a place of responsibility. When asked if they hadn't contributed much to the community of Middlebury itself, Mr. Moody added another vehement no, stating that the whole French Canadian population could be wiped out of Middlebury and no one would miss it.

The inferiority of the French is due a lot to the pressure of his environment. Usually the Frenchman is treated superciliously by the Yankee. The Frenchman begins to feel inferior and he fails because he lacks the characteristics of drive to overcome that handicap. The French are a complacent people; it would be impossible to have a French Mussolini for instance. That kind of drive is lacking.

The French are undoubtedly an oppressed race in eastern Canada. As a people they have a daintiness, a delicacy and liveliness that is not to be found in the older Yankee or Irish. Their poetry has an unusual charm and humor. Many of the traits of the French are superior to that of at least the Irish. They are always more friendly and genial and kindly and make better neighbors than do the Irish. There is of course another class of French who is the voyageur and lumberjack who is roistering and rough and callous but is nevertheless full of song.

Yet with all this appreciation of the French race and of their very fine qualities, Dr. P. admits that socially of course they will never be recognized. There is and probably always will be a wall there. They are nice people---at a distance.

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