

## Chapter 7 - Cultural, Religious, and Sporting Groups

### Diversity Versus Assimilation

Unlike the twenty-first century where cultural diversity is seen by many as something to be valued and the Prime Minister of the day declares that “Diversity is our strength,” many people living in the early twentieth century believed just the opposite. They saw diversity as a source of division, and believed that the best way to make Canada strong was to assimilate everyone into a Canadian society. When some of them spoke of a Canadian society what they really meant was a society that was predominantly British in outlook, language, and values. It is no surprise, therefore, that in western Canada there were many calls to “Canadianize” the newly arrived settlers from Central Europe.

Numerous articles and letters appeared in the various newspapers across western Canada that were not only critical of the government’s policy of accepting settlers from Central Europe, but were also highly critical of the settlers themselves. In 1923, for example *The Manitoba Free Press* in Winnipeg received a letter from someone living in the Theodore district which was not only a wholesale condemnation of the policy of bringing in immigrants from Central Europe but was also a disparaging attack on the settlers who had already arrived. In the editorial response to the author the author of the letter was charged with classifying all Central European together, of making no allowance for any good qualities any of them had, and not acknowledging those who had not only proved to be successful farmers but had also become Canadian citizens. While the newspaper did publish the letter with the pseudonym Canadian, its editorial response refuting many of the writer’s arguments that was almost as long as the original letter.<sup>1</sup>

On reading some of the anti-immigration, anti-Ukrainian material that appeared in the press, it appears that many of those with biases against the Ukrainian population seem to have simply accepted the notions of certain prominent Canadians without critically examining them for accuracy or bias. One such prominent Canadian was Anglican Bishop, George Exton Lloyd who made it clear to anyone who would listen that he believed that Canada should be populated by British immigrants.<sup>2</sup> Many twenty-first century Canadians would view his attacks on settlers from Central Europe as blatantly racist. One example of such racism occurred in 1928 when he said that the immigration of Jews was a “prostitution of British blood,” and when he described some immigrants as “dirty, ignorant, garlic-smelling, unpreferred continentals.”<sup>3</sup>

Although many authors of Saskatchewan histories can find many concrete examples of the discrimination faced by the Ukrainian population in the province, it is difficult to find clear cases of discrimination in the Theodore news column. Of course, the fact that discrimination was not reported as such does not mean that anti-Ukrainian sentiments or activities were unknown at Theodore. There was, for example one news item relating Klu Klux Klan activity in the Theodore area that targeted a Ukrainian lad. It can also be argued that some of the decisions relating to education, such as restricting the language of instruction to English reflect the underlying anti-Ukrainian sentiments that were common at the time.

For the most part, however, it appears that in the Theodore area there were many people who made an effort to include and accommodate people of all cultures, ethnicities, and heritage in the everyday life of the community. Among those people were members of the various churches in the village who saw the benefits of working together whenever possible and the co-operation among the Anglican, Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians is described below. Another group

whose members worked toward co-operation among Theodore's residents was the Theodore Community Club.

**Notes:**

1. "Settlers From Central Europe," *Manitoba Free Press*. Winnipeg, Manitoba. 13 January, 1923.
2. "George Lloyd (bishop of Saskatchewan)" retrieved 4 February, 2019 from <https://www.revolvy.com/page/George-Lloyd>
3. "The Churches and Bishop Lloyd," *The Star-Phoenix*. Saskatoon 13 October 1928.