

man's duty to face and answer the simple questions which I have set down above and to order his course of action accordingly.

## EMIGRATION

### A CANADIAN DECLARATION

**I**N a *communiqué* issued after their annual meeting last autumn, the archbishops and bishops of Canada have drawn the attention of Christians to the problem of immigration. In publishing this document, their thought was first of all for Canada where the policy of racial restriction in immigration recently put into force is much criticised by Catholics, but, in its general and doctrinal character, their *communiqué* is applicable in a much wider field:

'Immigration is a social fact with many aspects.

The Church does not pronounce upon technical questions concerning immigration, but she reminds all that immigration is subject to laws of morality on which legislators should base their decrees:

1. The separation of families is a deplorable and disastrous condition of affairs; it is the duty of public and private organisations to make an immediate and constant effort to reunite families, when one member has already obtained permission to enter a particular country—and this especially if it is the head of the family who has done so;
2. Since God has put the earth at the disposal of mankind, those countries which have unoccupied land have the duty of favouring the immigration of the inhabitants of over-populated countries;
3. The policy which directs immigration services must be truly democratic and any procedure which would arbitrarily exclude citizens of a nation with a surplus population from entering the country, or refugees from a country undergoing political or religious persecution, would be contrary to the principle of true peace.'

This firm stand is echoed by a declaration of Mgr Antoniutti, Apostolic Delegate in Canada. This important statement, from which we quote, stresses the fact that the problem of migrations is perhaps the most important social problem of our time:

'It is not the problem of the poor of which I am going to speak to you, that problem which haunted the warm-hearted St Vincent de Paul, to quote one name alone. Neither is it simply the problem of class barriers,

the problem of the workers whose dignity and rights have been magnificently defended by the great pontiffs Leo XIII and Pius XII. The problem of over-populated countries, the tragedy of these landless men who ought to enjoy the right of free and easy access to unpopulated territories—and if this is not granted them the nations will never know stability, peace and harmony—is a much wider one.

‘If such a problem is to be solved, the solution will only be found in a policy inspired by vision, a vision which calls not only for the reform of economic systems but for a deeper understanding and a more exact notion of the rights and limits of private property, as of the rights and limitations of the State to facilitate or restrict the tide of immigration towards richer and less populated lands.

‘This doctrine is no new one. It is as old as the world itself, founded on the very nature of man and on the right of all to what may be termed living-space. According to the eminent Spanish theologian Vitoria, the whole earth and all its material goods were originally created for all men, so that every man enjoys the fundamental and primordial right to use them in order to gain his livelihood and to attain more easily his spiritual destiny by the accomplishment of his particular vocation. The division and distribution of universal property as private property does not destroy the the essential destination of the world’s natural resources which, according to the words of Pius XII, “have been created by God for all men and placed at the disposal of all, in accordance with the principles of justice and charity . . .”.

‘It follows that every man enjoys a fundamental right which cannot be denied him: the right to emigrate from one country to another, in an orderly manner, no doubt, but also freely, in order to have access to the resources of the earth. It is the role of society to find the means to bring it about that such a right shall be a fact. Men without land have the right to cultivate land without men; and the workers of countries without sufficient natural resources have a right to the abundant natural resources of the countries without workers.

‘Amid the disorder in which the world is involved, people are inclined to forget this truth which is as clear the the light of day. God, in his goodness and generosity, has created the human race and placed at its disposal abundant resources. Well distributed and utilised, such resources should suffice to provide men with food, clothing and shelter.

‘Seen in this perspective the distress of so many peoples throws a terrible light on our practice of social justice and is an appalling denial of the brotherhood of man. What is there astonishing if, drawing a line between the well-nourished countries and those which are under-nourished, you also draw a line between danger zones and zones of security? It is

obvious that such a situation is in flagrant contradiction with the will of God and divine providence.

‘Emigration has thus become a problem of international order which it is impossible to solve today except by a collective action of the nations. What is needed is a universal and ordered plan in accordance with which the population of the earth would be redistributed and the currents of immigration canalised towards those countries which need greater manpower to develop their hidden resources.

‘The Church has opened the way; Catholics must resolutely follow, brushing aside the obstacles of apathy, excessive individualism, isolationism or a false nationalism.’

A further proof of the interest which the Church is giving to this question at the present time is the recent creation of a Catholic Committee for Migration, whose headquarters are at Geneva.

Without referring to the case of displaced persons nor of exiles who have come from beyond the Iron Curtain, it is obvious that in certain countries there is a considerable excess population; in the case of Greece the Greek Government estimates the excess at 960,000, i.e., 16 per cent of the whole population; the figure for Italy is estimated at about three millions. Holland finds her demographic pressure increasing by some 200,000 persons per year. There are, it is true, possibilities of absorption in the Commonwealth countries and in Latin America. But that supposes financial aid and a development of those territories.

It is obvious that we are here faced with a grave problem, an explosive problem, to which the Church is giving—and wishes that we too should give—great attention.

(From documentation supplied by the *Centre d'Information Catholique*.)