

Within the past decade, a nation has been born...

But how shall we weld this heterogeneous mass into one people? That is our problem.

- Reverend J.S. Woodsworth, 1909

[heterogeneous: varied, miscellaneous, composed of unrelated or unlike elements]

Between 1900 and 1910, close to a million immigrants sailed across the Atlantic to Canada. Approximately half that number came from Britain. A large percentage of the others came from Europe, the majority from central, eastern and southern Europe.

The Laurier government came under increasing criticism from Anglo-Canadians about the "quality" of immigrants arriving in western Canada. Many of these new immigrant groups, with their different languages, customs and habits of dress, seemed slow or unwilling to assimilate to British-Canadian ways of life. Some Canadians said that the government's approach to encouraging immigration from various countries was undermining the British character and heritage of the Canadian nation; they also felt it would damage national unity. But the government wanted to focus on peopling western Canada, and developing its agricultural potential. For this reason, Clifford Sifton did not necessarily want to promote the immigration of people who were accustomed to urban life. The government was mostly seeking a type of immigrant who was a strong rural person, able to endure hardships and many years of hard work. Many of these people came from areas of Europe that were not as urbanized as Britain.

Sources:

Museum of Civilization, Presenting Newcomers to Canada, 1910-1911

<http://www.civilization.ca/hist/advertis/ads5-01e.html>

Timelinks, Clifford Sifton:

<http://timelinks.merlin.mb.ca/referenc/db0053.htm>