

to quarantine and related measures at the receiving ports of Halifax, Quebec, Saint John and Montreal. The usually destitute condition of the arriving immigrants, related to the continuing frightful conditions of shipping and to the general poverty of those who were forced to migrate from the British Isles, also prompted local regulations.

Until the 1820's the British Government was officially opposed to emigration, though military considerations resulted in some Canadian settlements. When the outlook changed, emigration was seen rather as an alleviation for misery, unemployment and pauperism at home than as a means of advancing the interests of the colonies. The colonies, on the other hand, welcomed the fit and intelligent for whom there was no lack of employment. But there were increasing protests against the unloading of the destitute, the paupers and the unfit who were variously assisted to leave for Canada and the United States because they were a burden at home. The early adoption by several American States of protective measures resulted in thousands of the latter being diverted to Canadian ports. In 1831-32 at least 20,000 arrived.*

It is evident that the floods of newcomers even under the best of conditions would have created problems for those who preceded them. The receiving situation was worsened by the effects of the horrifying conditions of travel of that time. Before the middle of the 19th century, voyages were arduous and dangerous and long journeys were difficult and expensive. In the 17th century a trip from France to Canada took about two months, and as many as 40 to 50 p.c. of the passengers died during the voyage. Around the middle of the 19th century the average passage took about a month and a half and deaths at sea were still commonplace. Ships were few, small, crowded and lacked sanitary facilities and were known as "floating coffins".

Preparations for immigrant reception and distribution were inadequate. The port cities and districts were often overcrowded and their resources drained in caring for and protecting themselves against the newcomers. Lower Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick naturally bore the chief burden though Upper Canada, more remote and especially in need of labour, did not always agree with the protest of the lower provinces.

During the season of immigration the threat of smallpox, typhus, cholera and other diseases hung continually over Canadian ports. Demands for regulation gained special force with the repeal of the Passenger Vessels Act in 1827. It was soon evident that the ship owners were unable to govern themselves. In the summer of the year crowds of newcomers reached Halifax, Quebec and Montreal starving, diseased and dying. Disease spread and 800 of a population of 11,000 died in Halifax alone. New Brunswick fared little better. While a new Imperial Statute was passed to govern transport, Nova Scotia decided on a law of its own. An Act in 1828 provided that no passenger could be landed until the master of the vessel had entered a bond of £10 for every person who within a year became a public charge "by reason of disease, bodily infirmity, age, childhood or indigence".† Penalties were provided for evasions. Continued protests led to legislation by Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Lower Canada a few years later, imposing a head tax on every immigrant, the funds to be used for the care of the sick and destitute coming off the ships and for forwarding them to their destinations. A need for such funds arose almost immediately when Asiatic cholera broke out in Britain and was carried with tragic results to the colonies in 1832. Thus the state of health of arriving immigrants generally and epidemics in particular clearly showed the necessity of quarantine and hospital quarters as being inseparable from immigration. Makeshift hospitals and pest-houses were established and the temporary facilities of 1831 at Grosse Ile below Quebec were made permanent and were not superseded until about seventy years later. Despite various legislation passed by the British Government there was little improvement. It was undoubtedly the Irish who suffered most. In 1847 out of 90,000 immigrants embarking for Canada in British vessels, 15,000 died on the way.

* Norman Macdonald, *Canada 1763-1841* (New York, 1939), p. 24.

† J. S. Martell, *Immigration to and Emigration from Nova Scotia 1816-1838* (Halifax, N.S., 1942), pp. 22-23.