

# *The Second Century, Challenge to Women*

*This essay written by Mrs. Edward S. Brown of Kitchener won the first prize in the Tweedsmuir Competitions held for Ontario Women's Institute members.*

"Ca-Na-Da, we love you", the lilting tune of Bobby Gimby's centennial lyric fades into the distance; Canada has passed the milestone of her first hundredth birthday. The centennial celebrations, songs and projects have fired us with patriotism. We are citizens of this Canada — this young nation — this land of untold opportunity! The feelings of pride, blended with humility, which have so moved our hearts will remain indelibly printed upon our memories as we enter the era of Canada's second hundred years.

Canada has frequently been called the melting pot of many civilizations. From the east coast with the people of the French, German and Scottish backgrounds, to the Pacific with the many English, Oriental and Indian folk, we have citizens from almost every clime. They, with their innumerable, age-old cultures have given of their best to our Canada and have greatly influenced the customs of our vast country.

The first years of our second century see us as a family striving to retain our unity. We are the Dominion of Canada composed of ten provinces plus the Yukon and North West Territories. All seem to be happy with this union with the exception of some dissention from one province which has expressed the wish, through a minority, of being a nation separate from us — a nation in its own right. This is a minority group, it is true, but here is a challenge — we must endeavour to understand the problem that is prompting this desire among some of our French Canadian friends. It seems after one hundred years of union to be very unfortunate that one province could consider existing alone, and we wonder what could have prompted this desire. Therefore, I feel we, as Canadian women, should devote a great deal of study to this matter.

We, in Canada, are experiencing prosperity as we have never known it before. We realize, however, that the old saying "The poor we have always with us" is only too true as we hear the statistics that one-fifth of our population is still existing below the poverty line. Here we find a focal point of a great deal of the trouble in the Indian Eskimo question. Many of our Indians on Reserves live under conditions of which we can be very much ashamed. We, as Canadian citizens, would be

the first to comment — "How could such conditions prevail in this, our Canada?" What can we do for these people? There is no "cut-and-dried" answer. Here again we must study their problem. The importance of education must be stressed. Is it not in the uneducated folk you find the unskilled labourer, first to be laid off work and last to be employed? Segregation also is a problem with the Indian, as with others of different skin. It is imperative that training in the home stresses equality of all, whether rich or poor, red or yellow, black or white. Here is another challenge for us as Canadian women.

Entering our second century, we must prepare ourselves for the great changes which are taking place in our way of living. We are seeing unrest, dissatisfaction with our accepted way of life, rebellion in our universities and high schools; standards and beliefs of centuries are being dissected and all too often discarded. Ideals we have cherished, rules which seemed most important to our well-being, now dim into obscurity. Religion is challenged. Even the validity of the virgin birth has been questioned by many Christians as well as non-Christians. There is a debate at present on whether schools will be required to teach religion. We, in this province, have just won the question regarding the taxation of churches. It was turned down — but for how long? We see all religions regarded as myths. Yet I remember hearing a prominent speaker state emphatically, "The more we delve into science, the surer we are of the existence of the Supreme Being." Why the distrust, the selfishness we find so common in the world of today? An outstanding statesman whom we all revered once said, "No nation can survive without acknowledging the supremacy of God over all." We as women, mothers, sisters, daughters must see that religion is taught at the source, in our homes, whatever our faith. "Give a child a strong branch of faith to reach up to on the Tree of Life and he will not stoop to pick up the dead, discarded leaves of doubt and despair that lie in the mud."

The student unrest which is very prevalent throughout the world warns us of the unacceptable conditions among the younger generation. They are thinking, trying to find the answers. They state, "We are old enough to fight