

Picture of a Maritime Mill Town

By KASPER D. NAEGELE

PERHAPS self-consciousness and the analysis of our own experiences are among the most important differences between our social and cultural life and that of preliterate people (such as the American and Canadian Indians, the native peoples of New Guinea and many others). We often search for our motives. We incorporate our knowledge of others into our novels, movies and soap-operas. We have learned to become especially self-conscious in our science, where our methods of solving problems constitute an important part of the very knowledge we seek. The rise of science is very likely closely related to our general self-consciousness in non-scientific affairs. As our traditional "recipes" for solving human problems become inadequate and as "scientific" recipes appear to be increasingly successful, we have now in part overcome our resistance to reasoning closely about the informal and intimate aspects of human affairs. In later years we have examined human communities and families, factories and nurseries, street gangs and dance halls, professional groups and different social strata. It is not always clear in what ways this accumulated knowledge is useful or accurate. It is however safe to assume that in our type of complicated society it is always useful to be able to diagnose situations in which we must live, to be aware of the correct diagnoses and to know why they are correct. Reasoning of this kind provides a setting for the remarks below.

The following notes result from an investigation undertaken during the summer near a Maritime mill-community, called Katetown, in order to probe into some of the social characteristics of

such a community. A summer is too short a time to arrive at significant and systematic conclusions. Instead a series of rather isolated observations emerged, which can conveniently be gathered together under the headings below:

"Town" or "Suburb"?

Katetown does not readily fall within the conventional notions of "industrial village" (although it does have a large textile mill in which most Katetown families are represented, "town" (Katetown has about 1800 inhabitants), or "suburb": it is not only in comfortable commuting distance to a ten times larger centre (Smithtown), but it also obviously relies on Smithtown for professional services, high school, partial employment, the supply of household goods and a newspaper, and entertainment. Yet Katetown is more than just a suburb. Smithtown may be the recipient of Katetown's money, but Smithtown is not the recipient of Katetown's pride. Geographically there is no real borderline between the two communities, but "mentally" there definitely is.

Katetown is thus a "dependent community"—mainly employed by industry and immediately surrounded by woods, farms and vegetable gardens. Its population is homogeneous: its people are predominately Protestant and of Anglo-Saxon extraction. Its inhabitants have lived there for a long time. The economic face of Katetown has changed during the last fifty years. A cotton mill has taken the place of several lumber mills. Katetown is now essentially a workers community. Yet it has half-hidden social distinctions too: the houses

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of the managers and bosses are not only part of the community, they are also bigger or sport extra piazzas.

This difficulty of classification makes one wonder whether we do not frequently lump together under one term ("suburb," etc.) communities which are really of a series of different types. One might go one step further. Perhaps our habit of classifying communities, people, nations and so forth not only simplifies matters, but at times also falsifies them. Since we cannot live without generalizations, we shall probably have to find many more adequate ones in the future than we have used in the past.

The Mill and the Community

It seems self-evident that where a small community is employed by one industry located in its midst, this industry "controls" the community and the community "depends" on the industry. In reality matters are more complicated. Even in such an apparently simple case as a university, where there are the four distinct groups of students, alumni, faculty and governing body (and donors), it is not easy to say who really "controls" the university — although there are many who are convinced of the answer. Similarly with Katetown.

In July, 1947, the cotton mill in Katetown employed 616 workers. Of these 260 were women and 356 were men. Approximately a hundred workers live outside Katetown. The workers who worked in the mill five years or more amount to 252. Of these seventy are women and 182 are men. This means that approximately forty-one per cent of the labour force has been in the mill five years or more. In terms of sex it means that the ratio of old and new employees in the case of women is 1:2.7 and in the case of men it is 1:1 (approximately).

Katetown workers live in company-built-and-owned houses. They usually pay between three and seven dollars rent a month. They buy their electricity from the mill. Most of their food is delivered to them by the company-

run store. Household goods, clothes, furniture and so forth have to be bought in Smithtown to which there are half-hourly buses or taxis.

It would need extensive further study and a separate paper to describe adequately the human aspects of mill work. It goes without saying that one can find there the usual characteristics of industrial work: formal rules and informal cliques, union and management groups, and a hierarchy of jobs and privileges, in which skill, age and other characteristics let one gradually move upwards.

The relations between the mill and the community lie, therefore, on several planes. The mill is obviously an employer. It is also a landlord in many cases. The mill owns a boarding house for out-of-town girls and serves meals there to some of its male employees also. The mill has put up a clubhouse, which is run by the athletic committee of the town council. Next to the club are tennis courts. The mill, further, helped with the establishment of a ball field. It contributes towards the salary of the local sports director. The mill runs two stores for the town. It owns the fire engine. Moreover, the mill contributes indirectly to the town, by paying about two-third's of the town's taxes.

And yet views as to the role of the mill in the community vary between two extremes. The logic of the one extreme would be: "The mill owns the town. If the mill burned down, it would certainly be a calamity. In that case the people who only board in Katetown would have to leave again. The others would have to use up their savings. Our government might have to help."

The other extreme reasons: "The people do not really depend on the mill. They would survive if the mill burned down. And I don't believe they'd put it up again. This is the wrong place for a mill."

In the middle one hears: "You can no longer talk of a mill town. It is half and half now." In that connection, one informant even suggested that in the

town council one group is trying to "make the town independent of the mill."

The present social structure of Katetown might perhaps be called a compromise between old fashioned industrial paternalism and Maritime individualism. The "paternalism" provides houses and a store (and in the past "moral" oversight including a minister), as well as leisure facilities. The "individualism" prevents too close an identification between mill and community—and between the various members of the community itself. This uneasy balance is by no means static. The relatively recent arrival of a union and the passing of the mill-ownership from local to non-local hands introduced elements of "remote control" into what seems otherwise such a "local" and (hence) "personal" situation.

At the moment, Katetown seems to be in an interim period: although the paternalism of the past is on its way out, the mill is very much part of every-day life and is still the main hub of communication in the community. At the moment extensive striking seems improbable. Grievances are still settled through arbitration. "Extremism" and "fanatics" are disliked by the workers themselves. All actions are within the community's vigilant knowledge. Loyalties still criss-cross mill and community and are not concentrated into two opposing groups. The future might be less peaceful.

Mobility and Ambition

The problem of population mobility was one of the major reasons for attempting some study of Katetown. Judging from the 1941 census figures, it appears that ninety per cent of Katetown had always lived in the province in which Katetown is located, and seventy-five per cent had always lived in the municipality itself.

Katetown is in fact a rather immobile community. This becomes especially clear when one compares Katetown statistically with a comparable mill com-

munity of relatively equal size, approximately ninety miles away.

Mobility and ambition are mutually significant, especially if the ambitions of Katetown youth can be shown to lie outside the pale of present occupations now found in Katetown. A questionnaire was distributed amongst all seven and eight graders in the local school. If one takes these people by their word—which one probably should not do—it would mean that fifty-six per cent of them will leave Katetown about six to ten years from now. Yet of the brothers and sisters of these same school children, only about fifteen per cent have actually moved away. Of those seventh and eighth graders who now say they want to leave, two-thirds want to go to the United States (some of the girls are especially keen on California), one-eighth wants to go to the rest of Canada (barring Katetown's province) and one-fifth is "content" to stay in the province.

Ninety per cent of these people want more than a grade eight education (although four of the grade seven pupils would very much like to leave school immediately). In fact, if the youngsters actually choose the occupation they now indicate as their goal, forty per cent will definitely have to find employment elsewhere, unless the occupational structure of Katetown undergoes considerable expansion.

The occupational choice of these seventh and eighth graders generally would ensure them a higher social status than their parents now have. This is to be expected on the basis of our society's values and structure. We believe in equality and in moving up. Such a belief has direct consequences, especially for the Maritimes: it means the partial exodus of the really ambitious. Such a belief also has peculiar consequences for Katetown:² only one of sixty-five

2. The questionnaire contained three questions on the mill, two of which were separated from the other so as to detect possible discrepancies. To an open question of future occupation, only one replied, "mill." To another question: would you like to work in the mill? ten answered positively. Of these seven stated they would like to do it "all year round," and three wanted to do it "for holidays only."

school children actually wanted to work in the mill. If such intentions are any actual guide for the future, Katetown must be prepared to import more labour than it has done in the past, while perhaps more of the residents of Katetown will want to work elsewhere. In addition, if the mill keeps up its rule of only allowing mill employees to live in its bungalows, Katetown will also see more actual exodus and influx than in the past. Such population exchange might well bring with it greater diversity (ethnic origin, religion, class differences) than the community has customarily had to incorporate.

In this way personal ambition, which is partly the reflection of the moral values of our society, affects community life and mobility. It is as though communities cause their own social change through the consequences of what they consider to be "right."

Culture

A daily acquaintance with the community soon brings with it an awareness of the rhythm of the community. Such rhythm has its steady points in the seasons of the year or in the seven o'clock punch at the mill, the eleven o'clock lunch, the three-thirty shift, the evening train, the eleven o'clock Sunday service, the Monday wash and the Friday cheque.

Daily life receives order from such periodic occurrences. These are held in their grooves by the religious institutions (which range from the Social Gospel to the fundamentalism of the Baptists) as well as by local gossip. Daily life receives spice and disorder from occurrences which are rare, or unexpected, or perhaps, expected only for "the others."

People in Katetown usually take this rhythm for granted. They speak of it when it is disrupted. On that account they still mention the depression, when the mill only worked three days a week. On that account too, they spoke of the spring of '47, because it was late and the seed could not go into the ground.

Katetowners do not usually ask what the rhythm is for, or why it goes on. Many, in fact, merely drift along, for it is true that we live in a society which is built both for those who are ambitious and know what they want, as well as for those who cannot make up their minds. There is something self-perpetuating about our social ritual in its many aspects—from work to education. Perhaps there are many more drifters than it appears. Katetowners do not usually discuss such questions or those further questions which the answers to the first would then produce. The unanswerable and very questionable matters of life are left well enough alone or dismissed with traditional formulae.

To someone, however, who looks for some clue to the interrelation between otherwise disconnected episodes and "facts," the idea of "culture" might appeal as one possible solution.

Katetown is probably best understood as a particular variation on the more general theme of Maritime culture, which in turn, is a variation on Canadian culture.

It is most difficult to characterize this culture. Great acquaintance and much keen observation is required for such a task. But it is not only a question of information alone. It is probably part of the nature of this culture to be both elusive and distinct. One might call it a mixture of shrewdness, distrust and withdrawal. But this would again be merely going round the point.

Several Katetowners suggest that Katetown is "queer" and "suspicious." Indeed, teachers and others can refer to a past in which they were partially ostracized. One often has the feeling of "being led down the garden path," of being kept at a safe distance. Such descriptions are again no analysis, merely allusions.

To catch this distinct reality in the term "individualism" is also only partly adequate. It is an individualism which believes in helping the other when he is down and in resisting government "interference" except when the whole com-

munity is "down" and needs assistance. It is an individualism which combines an apparently incongruous set of opposites: independence and shrewdness on the one hand, apparent docility (especially in matters of "teacher-authority") and distaste for "fanaticism" on the other.

I hope that the manifest inadequacy of these notes will stimulate some one (perhaps in protest against this very inadequacy) to undertake a systematic enquiry into the nature of Maritime "culture" and perhaps also into the nature of Maritime family life, whence many of these matters come.

Canada's Economic Interest in European Recovery

By E. P. WEEKS

THE attention of the world is now focussed on the possibilities of European recovery. The trade agreements signed at Geneva, the I.T.O. Conference in Havana, the recently announced restrictions on Canadian imports and consumption, and the recall of the American Congress to consider the problems of Europe, together serve to underline the obvious fact that all parts of the world suffer when great trading areas are disabled and that satisfactory trade relations can only develop as rehabilitation of these areas proceeds. In view of Canada's outstanding position as a world trader, it may therefore, be opportune to examine some implications for this country arising from the course of events in Europe.

A certain confusion may arise as a result of the practice of including the United Kingdom with Europe in discussions on the "Marshall Plan". For the purposes of this article Western Europe is taken to mean those continental countries outside the Russian sphere of influence, while the United Kingdom is generally treated separately except in direct connection with the European Recovery Program.

The Pre-War Position

It may not always be realized that before the war Western Europe and the United Kingdom together accounted for roughly 45 per cent of world trade, while Western Europe itself was the greatest single trading area. This pre-

dominance was due primarily to the existence of the bases for heavy industry, combined with deficiencies in certain raw materials and food supplies.

The backbone of Western Europe's economic strength lay in one of the great heavy industrial regions of the world—comprising the Ruhr, Aachen, and Saar in Germany, eastern Holland and Belgium, Luxembourg, Lorraine and Northern France, with industrial extensions on all sides. The region as a whole produced some 230 million tons of coal and over 30 million tons of steel in 1939. The particular significance of the German sector is illustrated by the fact that it supplied over 60 per cent of the total output of coal, most of the coking coal, and two-thirds of the steel.

Past investments in the growth of tropical areas and the more recently developed countries, and large exports of services, enabled Western Europe to be a considerable net importer of merchandise on balance, although there were net exports to the United Kingdom. For most of the main trading areas Western Europe was naturally a key factor—accounting for roughly a fifth of the trade of Britain and the United States, and for nearly a third of the Latin American total. Its significance for Canada before the war was more through its influence on the general level of world activity than as a direct market, since it absorbed only 6 per cent of our total exports.

The economy and trade of the United Kingdom had fundamentally the same foundations although more sharply defined as those apparent in Europe, i.e. heavy industry based on coal and the

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