

3. Columnist C. D. Smith Lampoons American Tourists in Search of Drink in Canada, 1925

Refugees from Albania have enlisted sympathy for generations. Refugees from Poland have aroused tender pity in the breasts of thousands. Refugees from Belgium were objects of extreme commiseration during the war. The exodus of the Israelites from the land of Egypt will never be forgotten. But none of

C. D. Smith, "Refugees From Volstead," *Daily Colonist* (Victoria, British Columbia), Aug. 30, 1925, p. 1.

these events exceed in sympathetic interest the refugees from Volstead, driven forth by the Eighteenth Amendment for a recompensing "life-saver." Their case is indeed a sad one.

Here in the wonderfully attractive Capital of British Columbia, in which place so many of the sufferers from the South of us fly for shelter, protection and safety from the rigors and aridity of their own country, their arrival has now become a commonplace. For two reasons its ceases to attract any particular attention; one, because we are used to it and the other from the fact that, living in the land of plenty—however we make look upon the Prohibition question—we take it as a matter of course. Every weekday sees the coming in of large numbers of these distressed exiles who, so to speak, turn themselves loose on the moistened ranges of the Canadian Pacific Coast to assuage the pangs caused by lack of the stimulating liquids of which they are deprived in their homeland.

The news has gone forth to the uttermost parts of the United States that throughout the haven of this Province there are located seventy-one hospices where the respective monks in charge dispense all brands of succor to the weary, travel-stained refugees. And also that there are two hundred and twenty-nine additional places, known euphemistically as beer parlors, where fermented liquors, made from malted grain with hops and other bitter flavoring matters, are dispensed at ten cents per glass, froth included. The result was a foregone conclusion.

This city [Victoria] possesses two of these fully-fledged refuge camps, or hospices, one close to the wharf at which tourists arrive by steamer, and the other in the centre of the shopping district. Residents, of course, are fully aware of this fact. It is pathetic indeed to see how quickly the parched arrivals from the weary treks over the intervening desert to this oasis discover the first-mentioned hospice and, bearing on their faces a look exceeding great gladness, make for its helping arms. It would, indeed, be difficult for them to miss their road, for waving in the breeze at the corner of the street the Stars and Stripes indicates the happy way.

This flag, which hangs from the first floor of the building in which is situated the offices of the United States Immigration Department, indicates a curious paradox. Under the shelter of the United States flag—"Old Glory"—is one of the legalized places where alcoholic drinks of all and every description can be procured. Yes, Old Glory is to many glory indeed.

Mostly, the refugees are men. It is naturally distressing in the extreme when women, children and helpless babes are the victims of cruel circumstance which cause them, through political crisis, to leave their native land. But when the sufferers are strong men it is heart-rending.

The pains of the strong who have battled long and manfully should, perhaps, make a greater sympathetic appeal than the afflictions of the weak who habitually endure submerged conditions of life, and never kick. These latter have capitulated without a struggle, whereas the others have fought, and some—resisting decrees they held to be aimed at their sacred liberty—have taken to moonshine and died.

Many of these refugees, however, have succeeded in bringing their women-kind safely with them through the arid deserts to the promised land. They reach this country flowing, not with milk and honey, but with more potent liquids, full details of which can be inspected in the tabulated lists prepared by the monks of

the hospices according to the rates at which the Providential Fathers of the Order are prepared to supply alcoholic goods without loss to Provincial revenues.

It is not found that the refugees arrive in trucks, trains, and moving lorries in regular refugee style. They are not huddled together, nor do they sleep on straw sacks. Their appearance does not all suggest privation in the sense of their being starved, hollow-eyed, with haggard faces, torn feet and bleeding hands, caused by the dangers and privations of the journey. Neither are they attired in conventional garb of harassed wanderers, subsisting on what they can beg from kind-hearted peasants in route. All that is not a bit like it. They are mostly clothed in plus-fours and their one look is of assured triumph and anticipation. Nothing else matters.