

THE FLORIDA OF THE NORTH

BY DANE YORKE

ALMOST on the anniversary of the Battle of Lexington, wherein the worthy Revolutionary fathers of New England died in stern resistance to the touring British soldiery, there was presented last year the amazing spectacle of the Governor of Massachusetts appearing as a radio star for the Standard Oil Company in order to broadcast to tourists everywhere a warm invitation to visit the old Bay State. If the bones of the Fathers stirred restlessly at the sight it may have allayed their unease somewhat to discover that the Governor was not alone in this novel and disquieting stunt. For on successive weeks the Standard Oil also "presented" over its national hook-up the Governors of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island (and even the Governor of New York!), and each great one, with more or less dignity, played the part of side-show barker for the tourist attractions of his State. To the thoughtful present-day observer the spectacle was vastly illuminating. Evidently the erstwhile infant tourist trade of New England has attained the dignity of long pants!

Certainly the child has grown. A national automobile association estimates that one million motor cars now tour New England every year, and the revenue derived from the occupants of those cars—for board, gasoline, hot dogs and other such essentials—is placed by zealous statisticians at the round sum of \$240,000,000 per annum. Still other visitors come by train and steamer and for these another \$100,000,000 is claimed, while the income from inter-State visiting among the Yan-

kees themselves is placed by the boosters at \$160,000,000, which makes the total tourist takings of New England half a billion dollars a year. Such a sum is certainly worth the attention even of Governors. It is eight times larger than the total combined debt of all the six New England States, and much in excess of the world's production of gold in any one year in the last half century. Fat, fascinating, luscious figures!

It is a little sad, though, to realize that their very lusciousness may spring from a watery content. Over them, indeed, the boosters have been quarreling of late, and with the usual enlightening effect. A native son of the Pacific Coast, perhaps envious of New England's claims, recently placed the tourist revenue of California at the very impressive total of \$365,000,000 a year (or \$366,000,000, I suppose, in leap years!), and this stung a Maine lad to remark with characteristic New England indirection that on the California basis of figuring "the tourist business of Maine would show a yearly value of \$500,000,000," instead of the modest \$115,000,000 now claimed. Whereupon a kibitzer statistician of Massachusetts cruelly pointed out that even Maine's modesty is based upon an estimated expenditure of \$90.53 by each tourist, whereas similar figures of expenditure compiled by the United States Department of Commerce run as low as \$14.70 and never higher than \$50, thus rendering Maine's figures quite doubtful. So it's evident that there is water somewhere, and no statistician seems to mention the well-known tin-can tourist and his probable percentage of importance in

the grand total of cars that yearly scatter dust and dollars and lunch débris over New England's roads.

But after all the question of whether the tourist spends \$15 or \$50 or \$100 in each State is relatively unimportant. In spite of all the possible water in the boosters' figures, the spectacle of those Governors earnestly bidding over the radio for the tourist dollar remains quite impressive. There's certainly money in the tourist trade. Six New England Governors can't be wrong!

II

Their parade before the Standard Oil's microphone is interesting from still another aspect. The old-time Summer trade was based upon the Summer boarder, and that standby of the jokesmiths was relatively settled and dependable. He required comparatively little effort to attract him, and still less to hold him while his money was being extracted. But the present-day tourist is a flighty, irrational thing whose wings are wheels, and the business based upon his flittings has become highly capricious. Also highly competitive. More than 45,000,000 motorists are estimated to go touring in this country every year, and New England's yearning for the dollars they spend not only has to face the competition of California, the Shenandoah, the Rockies and the great Northwest, but is also sadly harassed by the pulling power of neighboring Canada, whose lure, by all Volsteadean standards, is grossly unfair. For instance, in the small Canadian province of New Brunswick the Liquor Control Board has just reported that its 1929 sales of liquors totaled \$4,511,365.10—"of which 65% went to tourists." Most of those tourists travelled by way of New England to reach that oasis, thus making their New Brunswick expenditures (and the even greater volume received by the Province of Quebec adjoining) money that New England actually failed to get.

The result of this competition for the

tourist (and his money) has been to greatly intensify his natural caprice. Thus extraordinary stunts, such as the unbending of the Governors, are now necessary to attract his attention. The trade also requires greater and greater expenditures of money. The stunt of the Governors is estimated to have cost Socony \$100,000 in radio tolls and other advertising costs, while the publicity done by the various States and communities of New England begins to approach the half-million mark each year. In addition, New England spent in 1929 more than \$50,000,000 in improving her tourist roads, and her total expenditures, over the last few years, in highways and bridges made necessary by the tourist demand, run into huge figures that surely have no water in them. They represent cash actually spent.

The raising of such sums has cost the booster much breath and sweat. Particularly has he been annoyed by the question, "Cui bono?" Obviously the gasoline sellers benefit, and the hotels and roadside camps and Ye Olde Tyme Eatery. But who else? Desperately striving to make the Commonwealth share in the expense, the booster has been compelled to argue long and earnestly that the tourist is the source of all good things. But usually his own job depends upon the trade, and so his interest is as open to suspicion as the wild cheers with which a recent convention of hotel men greeted the announcement that their State legislature had just appropriated money for special tourist advertising, certain to help the hotel business . . . at the State's expense.

But such imputations pain the booster. His thought and speech are passionately concerned with the public welfare. Is the population of a State or community declining? Very well, then the tourist will increase it. Are taxes growing steadily more onerous? Then every tourist and Summer resident will add to the community wealth and so lessen the burden on the native. Is the farmer complaining? "But can't you see," cries the booster,

impatiently, "that every visitor means an additional mouth to feed and a greater market for your crops?" Is there industrial and commercial depression? Then the remedy is to give the booster more money with which to draw tourists. "This tourist business," says a great national organization of professional optimists, "reflects to the advantage of every resident." It sounds like the old, old army game. "Everybody gets a prize!" shouts the booster.

III

Runs the old political saying, "As Maine goes, so goes the nation." Maine was the first New England State to engage in the great and benign industry of cajoling the tourist. Her efforts date back over seventy-five years, during which period there has been a steady growth that, by 1900, gave her a tourist income of importance, and by 1920 a tourist plant (*i.e.*, property used wholly for recreational purposes) valued at \$50,000,000, although, curiously enough, this same plant admittedly paid taxes on a valuation of only \$16,000,000. It drew about 500,000 Summer sojourners, whose spendings, in 1920, were estimated at \$30,000,000.

In the last ten years the State of Maine has sought the tourist dollar with such method and intensity that what is called the Maine Plan has been approvingly studied, and urged upon other States for adoption, by even such super-publicists as those of California and Florida. Whether due to the Maine Plan, or to the Coolidge-Hoover bull market (of lamented memory), at any rate, in 1929, the total number of Summer visitors to Maine was placed at 1,250,000 and their spendings in the State at the very sweet figure of \$115,000,000. Even discounting one-half there remains an impressive income for a State with a population of only 800,000.

But curiously enough, in spite of this annual tourist horde, Maine's population shows a steady relative decline. From 1910 to 1920 the births within her bounds ex-

ceeded the deaths by nearly 48,000, yet the census of 1920 showed a net population increase of only 25,643. Again, since 1920 and with the tourist trade at its very peak, the average excess of births over deaths has exceeded 6,000 per annum, so that the government census now being taken should reveal a gain of at least 60,000 inhabitants during the last decade. But it will not, and the most optimistic prediction of gain yet made public has not placed the possible increase at above 30,000.

It is the sea-coast counties of Maine which constitute the great Summer playground of the tourist, with a chain of noted resorts that begin with Bar Harbor and run to Ogunquit and York. Those playground counties in 1900 contained 49% of the State's population and 53% of its taxable estates. But in spite of the fact that they also include Maine's largest city, Portland (which alone has 10% of the State's inhabitants), those same counties in 1920 had only 46% of the population and barely 51% of the taxable estates.

The census of 1920 revealed five counties (out of Maine's total of sixteen) in which there had been an actual decline of population, ranging from 10% to 20%. All five were playground counties and one of them (showing a decrease of 18%) contained the great resort of Bar Harbor.

Lest these several declines be confused with the loss of sea-industry, there is the case of another famous Maine resort, quite inland, of which it was recently boasted that "there is almost no pursuit or industry in the town which is not directly or indirectly connected with catering to the Summer tourist," yet which was shown by the callous census-takers to have lost 15% of its population in spite of the tourist's beneficence.

But taxes! Says the booster: "In the last twenty years the non-resident valuation of Maine has increased 324% while the resident valuation has grown only 88%." This, he argues, shows that the non-resident—presumably a Summer sojourner—has greatly lessened the tax burden upon

the resident native. But the figures are somewhat specious. With all the three-fold increase the non-resident valuation still represented only 24% of the State's total valuation. And how much of this credit belongs to the Summer visitor is very hard to determine because, included in the non-resident valuations, are great mill and other industrial properties, owned and operated by outside capital, which have no connection whatever with the tourist trade. If non-resident ownership of personal property (not real estate) be accepted as a truer index, then the non-resident property-holder of Maine pays about fifteen cents of each tax dollar.

Does it help the native? Well, in the same twenty years that non-resident valuations increased 324% it seems rather interesting that the State's rate of taxation also increased sharply—by 216%. In other words, for each tax dollar that the native paid to the State in 1908 he now pays \$2.16. And county and community taxes have risen as well. The highest State tax in Maine's history was the eight mills imposed in 1864, during the Civil War. The next highest was seven and one-half mills in 1919, at the close of the World War. But in 1928 the rate had declined only one mill—to six and a half. Maine was still on a war basis . . . deeply engaged in the great war for the tourist dollar.

As for the tourist and the farmer, the booster has cause to be fretful. The three great money crops of Maine are, in the order of their value, potatoes, hay and oats. If each one of Maine's million tourists should carry away a bushel of potatoes it would still leave the farmer with the problem of marketing another twenty-four million bushels every year. The case, fortunately, is better with hay and oats. Here the tourists could really help. If each of them should kindly take away just one ton of hay and five bushels of oats, then both crops would be cleaned up nicely. But the great trouble is that the tourist—drat him!—betrays no proper interest in hay and oats.

The farmer, however, betrays a vast interest in the tourist. Listen to the wail of the Maine Commissioner of Agriculture: "Too many of our best farm locations are being perverted to such uses as the sale of gasoline and soft drinks, while our country roadsides everywhere grow hideous with a multiplicity of signs calling attention to non-essentials." It's true. Fertilized by the tourist dollar, the broad roadside acres which formerly grew foodstuffs are now sprouting hot-dog stands, overnight camps, filling-stations—even tea-rooms. Writes a clear-eyed observer: "Far from encouraging agriculture, the Summer business on the Maine coast is responsible for more abandoned farms than any other single factor."

IV

No one is going to stop the tourist. For better or worse nearly one-half of all America is now on wheels, "going places," each Summer. But when the solemn Babson places the tourist trade on a seeming parity with the iron and steel industry, and Governors bark for it, and the American Automobile Association makes the direct claim that "it [the motor-tourist business] means as much, possibly more, than if some gigantic industry with an annual payroll of over \$150,000,000 was suddenly transplanted to New England" . . . well, it is then about time to scrutinize this pet of the booster's with eyes more disinterested than those of its sponsor. To such eyes the tourist trade has no more right to be called an industry than has the bucolic county fair. Both are amusement enterprises. Both are parasitic rather than productive.

The booster is obsessed with the ideal of playground Switzerland. "New England must be the Switzerland of America," is his war-cry. But he overlooks the fact that Switzerland's tourist income is derived wholly from foreigners, whereas in this country the touring foreigners are relatively unimportant. The result is that

in America there is a strong resemblance between the pseudo-industry built upon the tourist, and the activity of those fabled islands whose inhabitants lived by taking in each other's washing. By the booster's own figures, in truth, more than one-third of New England's alleged tourist income is derived from inter-State visiting . . . from Yankees happily exchanging washings between themselves. Certainly no regional wealth is produced or added by that process. And over the nation the resemblance is even more striking. Not so long ago the boosters of Maine and Florida made a friendship pact, the basis of which was the slogan "Summer in Maine—Winter in Florida." Florida was to spend her money in Maine each Summer, and Maine was to travel South and spend hers in Florida each Winter! It was fine while it lasted—but it did not last long. How could it?

But there are other aspects. Wrote a thoughtful and traveled Governor of Maine, back in 1924:

The seasonal business brought by Summer tourists is not conducive to normal, steady, all-the-year-round growth and prosperity. A community that is principally a Summer resort is abnormal. Its citizens must earn their twelve months' living in two or three months' time. They are inclined to do little or nothing during the long closed periods and to become mere caretakers of other persons' property.

And he added, significantly, "Maine must not, like Switzerland, be a servile state of caretakers and tip-seekers." One has only to study the permanent population of the various resort towns along the New England coast to see just what that Governor feared. Or it may be sufficient simply to listen to the high-school youths of Maine's coast counties as they look forward with eagerness each Spring to the pride and glory of a bellhop's livery and the servile tips of a Summer hotel's patrons.

The thing is not exaggerated. A little while ago a semi-public booster organization in a New England State sent about a solicitor to beg donations from the wealthy

Summer residents. As each rich man graciously chipped in there was a glad chorus of praise from the newspapers and the editorial columns carefully echoed such crumbs of wisdom as the Diveses let fall. The remarks of two drew especial approval. A great industrial magnate and a great publisher both contributed most generously and both took occasion to criticize the advertising being done to draw visitors to the State. "It is too general," said they, "too much aimed at the average individual. What you need is to attract more men of wealth to build great estates whose erection and upkeep will give your people employment. You need more Bar Harbors." And the servile chorus echoed back: "Exactly! We need more Bar Harbors!"

Such snobbery, of course, is not peculiar to the New England trade. There is that *Saturday Evening Post* advertisement of the California boosters: "If you are succeeding where you are, then we should like to have you come here." And at the height of Florida's boom a prominent member of the Florida Chamber of Commerce gave all credit for the State's prosperity, not to the tourist or the climate or the soil, but to the fact that the State had particularly invited the wealthy by adopting a constitutional amendment prohibiting the levying of a State income or inheritance tax. And still Florida's boom collapsed, in spite of tourists and Winter residents.

The tourist and seasonal resident, in fact, is far from being an economic cure-all. His money in a community (the A. A. A. notwithstanding) has no value in any way comparable to the regular monthly payroll of a stable year-round industry. The real effect of the trade is that of a hectic boom with a resultant backwash of stagnation that is utterly demoralizing. In one tourist resort of which I have personal knowledge, a full 20% of the so-called permanent population moves out restlessly each Winter—unable to stand the between-seasons dullness. There is no communal pride, no communal life.

And the rewards of the trade are curiously elusive. The tourist is followed in his seasonal flittings by a corps of specialists in catering—and extraction. The native gets only the leavings. Into one Maine town whose sole resource is the tourist there comes each Summer a golden stream that in two months amounts to nearly \$2,000,000. Divided *pro rata* it would give each town voter an income for those two months of \$3000. But the fact is that barely 10% can show a twelve months' income that even exceeds \$2000. And there are many in that small town whose annual income does not top \$1000. Yet every Summer each native endures a marked advance in every living cost. Food goes up over one-half, lighting bills double, and rents increase three- and four- and five-fold, even for the native. The excitement is so great, they are all so deep in the glad-glad game of trying to milk the tourist, that they absent-mindedly submit to being milked by one another.

The Summer inflation of wage scales drives out any local industry. It cannot compete for labor with a boom operation. This same inflation unsettles labor as much as any charity dole. Men calmly loaf all Winter—actually asking and accepting aid from the town's poor relief fund—rather than demean themselves by taking the work that is obtainable in the dull season, but not at Summer scales. In the playground area the number of inhabitants who "live on the town"—either the poor relief or some form of public work—is surprisingly large.

From such conditions the ambitious migrate. "My people," said a Maine col-

lege senior, "would be disappointed in me if I went home and settled down after graduation. They'd think I was a failure. I'll have to get out." He came from an old sea-coast town in the Maine playground. "You see," he went on, "there's so little to do. A fellow *could* work at fishing till he got enough money to buy a boat and take out Summer tourist parties. There's money in that. Or, if he was smart, he could even get to be captain of a rich man's yacht." This collegian was not sarcastic. The irony of that smart rise, to be a rich man's servant, had escaped him.

Where the playboy tourist is king, the old prides falter. New England's great glory has been her schools, her wide diffusion of, and insistence upon, thorough school training. But the subtle blight of the tourist is felt even here. The month of September happens to be one of New England's glorious weather months, an ideal month for touring. It happens, too, to be the month when the schools reopen, and every Labor Day chops off the tourist trade as sharply as an axe. "It's the school openings that do it," says the booster. "If they didn't open so soon the people would stay longer." And year by year in playground New England the agitation grows steadily for a shorter school year—for one that does not begin until October. "It would help the tourist business," cries the booster and his press.

Perhaps it would. And if the schools closed a month earlier, then the tourists could come that much sooner. And if only there were no schools anywhere, then the tourists might come all year. The logic is irresistible . . . to the booster.

EDITORIALS

A Way of Escape

Some years back certain holy clerks of the Latin rite, having found that they were themselves greatly strengthened in virtue and confirmed in the faith by what are called retreats, concluded that it might be prudent to invite laymen to the same solemn exercises. The plan was an immediate and immense success, and today every monastery that provides retreats for laymen is crowded at every session; and has a long waiting list. Not only Catholics apply for bookings, but also Protestants, and now one of the great branches of the Protestant church, the Methodist Episcopal South, has gone into the retreat business too, though so far, I believe, it offers accommodations to clergymen only.

The idea of the retreat is simple and sound. For a week or two weeks or whatever the time may be the candidates for purgation retire to some quiet and untroubled spot, preferably a holy house, and there give themselves to plain living and high thinking. They are in charge of a pastor of worldly experience, and he sees to it that they get precisely the right dose. Aroused in the morning at cockcrow, they hear mass, and then proceed to a light breakfast. There follow walks in the garden, conversations under the trees, and spells of quiet reading. For dinner: honest ham and cabbage, the food of the holy martyrs. For supper: buttermilk and homemade bread. The pastor is on hand to hear troubles, settle doubts, soothe despairs. There are occasional discourses on pious themes. No golf. No women. No stock-market reports. No politics. Flags of barley water, 2% bicarbonate of soda and 5% Glauber's salts are easily accessible. Tobacco is permitted, but no gin.

The most depraved and evil man, even a bank president or a United States Senator, emerges from that retirement visibly renovated and improved. Not only is his skin pinker than it was; his soul is pinker too. For the duration of his term he has been shielded from the temptations and seductions, the annoyances and irritations of his everyday life, and exposed to peaceful and elevating influences. No effort is made to scare him with the flames and fumes of Hell, but it is subtly suggested to him that Heaven must be a very pleasant place, and probably not much unlike the monastery garden where he walks. So his mind is diverted from the worship of his ordinary heroes—Owen D. Young, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Henry Ford, Andy Mellon, and their like—and he begins to suspect that there must have been some merit, too, in such fellows as St. Francis, St. Ignatius and the *doctor communis*, Thomas of Aquino. Maybe, in this direction, he gets no further than suspicion, but that is at least something. He returns to his office, as the phrase has it, a better man. He has been sober for a fortnight, he has eaten simple and hearty food, he has slept eight hours every night, and he has heard a variety of improving discourses, some of them sufficiently plausible. Thus the institution of the retreat justifies itself, and there are more customers for it every year.

What I have to propose is that it be borrowed from Holy Church and adapted to the needs of larger classes of men. After all, there are only ninety-six United States Senators in the country, and probably not more than 5000 bank presidents, and not many more judges, political bosses, newspaper editors, chain-store magnates and other such evil men. The great majority of us, lacking the temptation, are perforce