

In search of a Utopia

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IN SEARCH OF A UTOPIA

A MAP OF THE WORLD must include Utopia, because that is the one country at which humanity is always landing. No sooner does it land than it looks out and sees a better country, and sets sail again.

Every enlightened and active-minded person is to some degree a Utopian. He pictures to himself the political, social and industrial conditions under which he should like to live, and, at least in some small degree, he tries to realise those conditions.

Few persons in the Western World give in to the thought that things have been already settled for them. We know that things accepted today as part of our way of life were once merely dreams, and we look forward to having our own dreams come true.

The word "Utopia" was first used by Sir Thomas More in 1516 as the name of a far distant island on which, according to his story, there existed an ideal commonwealth. It has made its way into the dictionary as meaning "a place, state or condition ideally perfect in respect of politics, customs and conditions".

Some people may think it more or less childish to read utopian literature, but one of the great benefits is this: it helps us to break through the barriers of conventional thinking and see things fresh, from new points of view. There is, in the more serious utopian literature, a great treasury of creative ideas and useful practical devices.

"What is Utopia?" is a legitimate and perhaps a useful question to raise. Some of the writers portray its citizens as living leisurely lives, with an abundance of the necessities of life, and enjoying the advantages furnished by gadgets. That thought was in keeping with the physically hard times in which the books were written. But the utopian idea has something for the mind and spirit, too.

The essence of any civilisation is found in its sense of values, demonstrated in its preferences, its moral commitments, its aesthetic judgments, its loyalties, its conception of the good life, its standards of excellence, its measures of success, and what it teaches its young people about the things for which men shall live.

—From the monthly newsletter of the Royal Bank of Canada.