

Matti Kurikka: Finnish-Canadian Intellectual*

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Oh Malcolm Island, Sointula,
Our home of peace and happiness,
Whyever were you created?
That is only known to him.
Of all that he has created upon earth
You have been granted to us.
To us you are precious
For you give us peace.

MATTI KURIKKA
(*Aika*, May 16, 1902)

Most historians of Canadian history suffer from the disability of not being able to read easily any language other than French or English, or at best both, and therefore see the history of their country in terms of those French or English-speaking people who were responsible for "making" it. Consequently a large dimension of Canadian history is lost to them, completely overlooked, or minimized. I refer to the history of Canada's various non-Anglo-Saxon, non-francophone immigrant groups. Their histories have in varying degrees been recorded but almost always from the viewpoint of the two "founding races." There are exceptions of course. For example, T. D. Regehr's edition of Martin Nordegg's memoirs *The Possibilities of Canada are Truly Great* (Toronto, 1971) shows the value of immigrant accounts of Canadian life. Also a recent article by Jorgen Dahlie on Scandinavian immigrants in Western Canada throws new light on the integration/assimilation question because it looks at immigrant ideas and aspirations from their own point of view and not from that of the government or the dominant majority.¹ Thus in addition to our

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¹ Jorgen Dahlie, "Learning on the Frontier: Scandinavian Immigrants and Education in Western Canada," *Canadian and International Education*, 1, no. 2 (December 1972), pp. 56-66.

traditional emphasis on Canadian political history to the exclusion of other types of history, there is also this large missing link in Canadian intellectual and social history, namely the work of Canadian intellectuals who did not write in French or English.

Canada did have many such intellectual leaders who made their mark in languages other than English or French. Two such men were Matti Kurikka and A.B. Mäkelä, co-founders of the Finnish utopian socialist settlement called Sointula on Malcolm Island, on British Columbia's west coast. The story of Sointula has been told elsewhere.² A simple summary will suffice here.

Although the first Finnish settlers in British Columbia came from Alaska shortly after Russia sold that territory to the United States, the first period of major immigration occurred between 1880 and 1905. Most of these Finns were peasants and artisans from Finland's western-most provinces. As with many Scandinavian immigrants to British Columbia, a good many of them had originally emigrated from their homeland to the United States.³ In British Columbia the Finnish settlers engaged in coal mining at Nanaimo, Ladysmith and Wellington on Vancouver Island, and in railroad construction in the interior, after which they took up homesteads at Salmon Arm, Solsqua and White Lake. Finnish agricultural settlements were also established in the Lower Fraser Valley near Vancouver in 1905 and five years later fishing settlements were begun at Lund and Sunbury on the west coast.

One of their most interesting ventures, however, was the attempt at the beginning of the twentieth century to found a utopian socialist community on Malcolm Island almost 200 miles north of Vancouver between Vancouver Island and the mainland. This experiment in communal living resulted from the discontent with their lot experienced by the Finnish miners of Nanaimo and Wellington.⁴ Working conditions were dangerous and exploitative in the extreme. Wages were kept low by

² John I. Kolehmainen, "Harmony Island: A Finnish Utopian Venture in British Columbia," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, vol. V, no. 2 (April 1941), pp. 111-23; George Woodcock, "Harmony Island: A Canadian Utopia," in R. E. Watters (ed.), *British Columbia, A Centennial Anthology* (Toronto: 1958), pp. 206-13.

³ Jack K. Heino, "Finnish Influence on the Cooperative Movement in America," *The Michigan Academician*, III, no. 3 (Winter, 1971), p. 56.

⁴ One contemporary report noted that the Finns "do not take kindly to work in the mines. They are a pastoral people combining the pursuit of agriculture with fishing. . . ." *Victoria Colonist*, April 11, 1901. For evidence of a similar "Back-to-the-Land" movement among U.S. Finns, see John I. Kolehmainen, *The Finns in America* (New York: 1968), p. 14.

the employment of Chinese, Japanese, and east Indian workers. Some of these disillusioned Finns were socialists and inspired by what they read in Finnish labour newspapers like *Työmies* (*The Worker*) published in Helsinki, they began discussions as to how they might better their conditions by forming a utopian socialist community.

One man whose newspaper and journal articles caught their attention was Matti Kurikka, well-known editor, author, publicist and playwright in Finland. Between 1897 and 1899 Kurikka was editor-in-chief of *Työmies* in whose columns he set forth his socialist and anti-clerical doctrines. Born in 1863 and educated as far as university, Kurikka had for two decades been prominent in Finnish radical circles. A student of Minna Canth, the prominent Finnish socialist and suffragette leader, he wrote his first play entitled "*The Last Struggle*" (*Vuimeinen Ponnistus*) in 1884, in which the conflict between different classes in society was discussed. In August 1888, he became co-editor of *Viipurin Sanomat*, a newspaper already critical of the establishment, associated with the labour movement, and concerned with propagating new ideas, particularly "power to the masses."⁵ Other themes to be found in its pages were the value and dignity of physical labour, female education and the status of women generally,⁶ universal manhood suffrage,⁷ and support of the European peace movement.

At the beginning of 1889 Kurikka wrote a series of perceptive articles on socialism.⁸ His brand of socialism, however, was not Marxism. For him socialism was rooted in Christianity since both had the same foundation, the ideas of equality. In terms of society's historical development, Kurikka disagreed with Marx's conception of dialectical opposition expressed in terms of class struggle. He laid emphasis instead on the place of love and harmony in life. "Love develops and creates," he asserted; "hate can only destroy."⁹ For him the Marxian concept of class struggle laid too much stress on hatred and bitterness. The first and greatest socialist was Jesus Christ and His teaching, "Do unto others as you would

⁵ Hannu Soikkanen, *Luovutetun Karjalan Työväenliikkeen Historia* (Helsinki: 1970), p. 34.

⁶ Kurikka's wife, Anna Palmquist (whom he divorced in 1898), was the first chairman of the association for the improvement of the status of women in Viipuri, *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁷ Kurikka opposed the right to vote for women until all men had the vote otherwise upper class women, as he said, would outvote all reform. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Quoted in Arvi Hautamäki, "Matti Kurikka," in Hannu Soikkanen (ed.), *Tienäyttäjät* (Helsinki: 1967), p. 313.

have them do unto you” summed up for Kurikka mankind’s guiding principle. Spiritual power should predominate over materialistic considerations.

Kurikka was a typical utopian socialist. His philosophic underpinnings were the usual moral socialist ideal of Saint-Simon and the co-operative philosophy of Robert Owen. He firmly believed the power of love, justice, and humanity would combine to create a new society. His diagnosis of and prescription for the world follows:

Bourgeois society is in a state of decay. To this rotting world must be revealed the possibility of utopian society; there must be created a model which is founded upon altruism; once this model is seen, people can no longer continue their former lives, but will hasten . . . to make it explicit to the rest of the world.¹⁰

Such motives led Kurikka to try to found a model society first in Australia and then in British Columbia.

By the late 1890’s while still in his thirties, Kurikka was a recognized leader of the Finnish working-class movement.¹¹ Disturbed by an acceleration in the process of Russification (specifically the February Manifesto of the Czar of February 1899) and associated press censorship, Kurikka began a campaign in support of emigration. He wrote, for example, “We shall discover the historical salvation of our people through emigration. In Finland the working class may eat only raw herring and drink skimmed milk. . . . It is not worthwhile for the working people to remain in Finland.”¹² Finally, although attracted by America, he resolved to set up a utopian socialist community in Australia. Interest in Australia derived from two sources: Australian government campaigns to encourage immigration from Finland and Scandinavia, and the presence in Queensland of a worker-dominated government. The latter point was given considerable attention in the pages of *Työmies* during 1899.¹³

On April 7 of that year Kurikka resigned as editor-in-chief of *Työmies* although he remained associated with the paper until August. His remarks on resigning reveal both his disillusionment with Helsinki and his resolve to try a new way of living: “I intend to move from the ranks of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

¹¹ Soikkanen, *Karjalan*, p. 56.

¹² Quoted in Reino Kero, “The Background of Finnish Emigration,” in Ralph J. Jalkanen (ed.), *The Finns in North America* (Hancock, Michigan: 1969), p. 58. This article provides an excellent summary of the reasons behind Finnish emigration to North America.

¹³ Vilho Niitemaa, “Australiansuomalainen Erakko-seura vv. 1902-1904,” *Turun Yliopisto Siirtolaishistoriaa*, VII, no. 14 (1971), p. 166.

the contamination and slander of the Helsinki populace to a place where I may feel direct contact with godly nature."¹⁴ In two subsequent public meetings attended by 800 people interested in emigrating to Australia, Kurikka lauded the advantages of that country and warned against the temptation of choosing Canada. Kurikka's plans for the society called "Kalevan Kansa" (The People of Kaleva) were to establish in Queensland a utopian society where work, food production, learning and entertainment would be experienced in common.¹⁵ "In this colony," he wrote, "a high, cultural life of freedom would be built, away from priests who have defiled the high morals of Christianity, away from churches that destroy peace, away from all the evils of the outside world."¹⁶

During the summer the first group of Finns left London for Australia with passage assisted by the Queensland government. Kurikka himself left Helsinki early in August and arrived in Queensland in October 1899. His first card home, dated Brisbane, October 7, sounded an ominous note for the future. Instead of sticking together many Finnish immigrants were spreading out in different directions and taking employment for twelve shillings a week.¹⁷ In a letter dated four days later Kurikka told of having met the Queensland minister of immigration, but little progress was made concerning government support in founding the intended commune. Kurikka blamed the outbreak of the Boer War which he believed rendered his proposal only "a pain in the neck" for the Australian authorities. By the end of the month his pessimism grew: "the immigrants here are being confronted with many difficulties."¹⁸

By the beginning of 1900 the situation among the Finns had reached a crisis point. Three of them left for British Columbia and the Finnish coal-mining communities near Nanaimo. At Extension, they met one Matti Halminen whom they introduced to Kurikka through copies of his books. Of this development Halminen writes in his memoirs:

For many years Finns had wanted to move away from the mines where they had risked their lives and lived in an unhealthy environment. It was thought a good idea, therefore, to write to Matti Kurikka in Australia asking him to come to British Columbia and start a Finnish colony.¹⁹

¹⁴ *Työmies*, April 7, 1899. Cited in Niitemaa, p. 168.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁶ Quoted in Aili Anderson, *History of Sointula* (n.p., n.d.; 1958?), p. 2.

¹⁷ Niitemaa, p. 179.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 180-1.

¹⁹ Matti Halminen, *Sointula, Kalevan Kansan ja Kanadan Suomalaisten Historiaa* (Helsinki: 1936), p. 16.

In June 1900, Kurikka replied underlining his extreme disappointment with Queensland as his main reason for moving. He spoke of the "darkness," "drunkenness," and "cruelty" of Queensland, lamented the way in which the Finns were treated as cheap labour,²⁰ and concluded that "the foundation of a specifically Finnish commune has seemed to become impossible because those few Finns who have arrived are confronted with poverty or else do not understand the purpose of our commune. . . . Your letter indicates better possibilities."²¹

The Canadian Finns immediately launched a fund-raising campaign which resulted in \$125 being sent to the penniless Kurikka to cover his fare from Australia. Towards the end of August he arrived in Nanaimo to spread his ideas in speeches before temperance groups, parties and churches. Halminen reports that his plans seemed more logical and practical than what had been discussed earlier.²² While Kurikka assumed the presidency of a colonizing company, also called Kalevan Kansa, efforts were begun to find a suitable location for the colony. Kurikka and Halminen visited government officials in Victoria where they obtained maps, books and land descriptions. In the spring of 1901 the search was concentrated among the channels and inlets between Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia. From several possibilities Malcolm Island was chosen because it was near shipping lanes and was designated suitable for agriculture.

News of the scheme attracted great attention from Finns and non-Finns alike. The sanguine, flamboyant Kurikka anticipated the early arrival of 2000 settlers — Finns from the homeland as well as the United States.²³ An article concerning the colony in the *Victoria Colonist* was headed "Two Million People Ready to Immigrate — Desirable Class of Settlers."²⁴ It was fully expected that the bulk of the Finnish population was prepared to pick up stakes and head for British Columbia "in order to escape the tyranny and oppression of the Russian government."²⁵ Sointula, as they called Malcolm Island, was to be the nucleus for what

²⁰ The Finns soon discovered that it was the Queensland government's intention to get Scandinavian immigrants instead of Negroes, especially for the sugar plantations. Niitemaa, p. 179.

²¹ Halminen, p. 17.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²³ *Vancouver Province*, April 9, 1901.

²⁴ *Victoria Colonist*, June 27, 1901.

²⁵ The local press made repeated reference to the despotic nature of Russian rule which was leading the "freedom-loving" Finns to seek emigration. For example, *Province*, April 9, 1901; *Colonist*, April 11, 1901.

the newspaper editors saw as "a vast immigration, which would fill up the waste places of northern British Columbia and turn the fertile valleys of Cassiar and Cariboo into prosperous agricultural communities."

Provincial government delay in granting Malcolm Island to the Kalevan Kansan Colonization Company led Kurikka to consider leaving British Columbia for Astoria, Oregon, where he had been invited to edit the Finnish paper *Lännetar*. He agreed to stay, however, when Halminen promised to get a newspaper started in Nanaimo with Kurikka as editor.²⁶ An appeal for funds was launched immediately. To purchase a press and help pay for printing, ten dollar shares were sold. Published weekly from May 17, 1901, under the motto of "Freedom with Responsibility," the newspaper called *Aika* (Time) became the main cultural organ of the colony and, of course, the main vehicle for allowing Kurikka to promote his utopian dream for Sointula.

The editor wasted no time. His first editorial entitled "Dedication to a New Vocation"²⁷ underlines Kurikka's strong Finnish nationalism, his idealism based on faith in the inherent goodness of man, his desire to improve the condition of the working class and his fundamental anti-clericalism. He envisaged a messianic role for the Finns of North America and predicted the British Columbia Finns "would show the way to freedom for the working class." He spared no harsh words in his condemnation of the Church and its concepts of human nature:

Alcoholism is hindering our ideals. The Church thinks it is normal because man is bad and sinful from the beginning. This is not so; man longs for good and is good internally, but social organization at present stops people from listening to their hearts and being good. Harmony was present in Christendom in the beginning before the priests sold Christianity to the service of godless despots.²⁸

For the time being Kurikka became engrossed in the *Aika*, so engrossed in fact he became convinced he needed a helper from Finland. That person was to be A. B. Mäkelä, his "best and trusted friend," a former teacher who had worked with him on the *Vuipurin Sanomat* from 1892 to 1894 and succeeded him as editor of *Työmies* from 1899 to 1901. In contrast with the impulsive Kurikka, Mäkelä was cool and deliberate.

²⁶ Halminen, p. 26.

²⁷ I could not find a copy of this first issue, but Halminen gives a detailed account of Kurikka's first editorial, pp. 28-33.

²⁸ Cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2. Elsewhere he described the church as "one of the most damaging of the old world's criminal institutions." *Aika*, November 1, 1903. See also November 1, 1901; April 11, 1902; May 16, 1902; May 23, 1902; November 1, 1903; February 15, 1904; June 1, 1904.

Now in 1901, like Kurikka, approaching his fortieth year, Mäkelä was described by contemporaries as

a middle-sized, lean man, dressed in a grey flannel suit, blondish hair curling at the neck and big ears. His face was aging but his eyes revealed a thinking and sparkling man. . . . He seldom spoke, but when he did, he hit the nail on the head and always expressed his opinion.²⁹

Like Kurikka, Mäkelä had a good high school education and in his twenties became associated with various radical and left-wing intellectual groups, including the circle centred around Minna Canth. One observer credits Canth with leading Mäkelä to accept socialism.³⁰ In 1887 he took over his father's position as a school teacher, published with Canth a magazine entitled *Free Ideas (Vapaita Aatteita)*, and in 1889 joined the Kuopio Workers' Association. Four years later he moved to Viipuri where he joined Kurikka at the *Viiipurin Sanomat*. In 1897 he returned briefly to teaching, but finding it lacking in stimulation, he left for Helsinki where he joined forces once again with his friend Kurikka on the staff of *Työmies*, the workers' daily. When Kurikka left for Australia, Mäkelä took over as editor.

Contemporary observers seem to agree that Mäkelä made a major contribution to the success of *Työmies*. He was, according to one commentator, "much more dangerous to his opposition than the shifting and inconsistent Kurikka."³¹ Untiring in his labour, he did not promote his own opinions, as Kurikka was wont to do, but saw the paper as a vehicle for the expression of workers' views. In 1899 he was present at the founding of the Labour Party of Finland, whose brand of socialism followed the Marxian creed formulated by the Socialists at the Erfurt congress in 1891.³²

Although Mäkelä was more down-to-earth than the idealistic Kurikka, he too had a dream for Sointula, which he later admitted "was no more sensible than Kurikka's."³³ He continued:

In my opinion that shore with its islands in every way was very suitable as a place of refuge . . . for persecuted socialists in Finland. There would have been room there for . . . the whole Finnish working class. I thought of build-

²⁹ Erkki Salomaa, "A. B. Mäkelä," in Hannu Soikkanen (ed.), *Tiennäyttäjät* (Helsinki: 1967), p. 209.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

³² John H. Wuorinen, *A History of Finland* (New York: 1965), p. 199.

³³ Salomaa, p. 231.

ing a big ocean vessel which could eventually transfer that whole sector of the Finnish nation to that free land.

Late in 1901 the first settlers began to arrive on Malcolm Island. The place where they chose to settle they called *Sointula* — “the place of harmony.” They formed a vanguard of an eventual population by 1903 of 238 inhabitants including eighty-eight children.³⁴ Even though most of the settlers were young — in their twenties and thirties, and male (men out-numbered women at least two to one), not all were able to cope with the rugged pioneer conditions of the isolated island. During the first year of settlement, thirty-seven left, and the following year, 1903, eight-five left of whom two were forced to leave as undesirable members of the colony.³⁵ One scholar estimates that over the colony’s four years’ existence more than 2000 people came.³⁶

The socialist principles underlying the colony’s operation are evident from the fact that all meals were taken in common in one large building. All food was prepared there and no kitchen was to be found in the individual buildings. The same rate of pay was extended to all — in 1905 \$1.00 per day plus board — but the hours of labour were gauged in proportion to the work done. Thus in more arduous and dangerous labour the hours of work were shortened. A fisherman, for example, might work four hours a day while a man engaged in clerical work might work nine. Both received the same pay. The original agreement was that shareholders in the company would receive five per cent on their investment, half of which went into a common fund for education, music, and the like, and the other half to be divided among the workers both men and women. A contemporary report in 1905 revealed, however, that no colonist had actually drawn his wages.³⁷

The lack of interest in, if not outright hostility to, established religion at Sointula, is underlined by the fact that no church was ever established until several years ago.³⁸ The original working principle was that “each man worships or not as he pleases.”³⁹ The same 1905 report observed that, “there is no public worship nor any church established in the col-

³⁴ Kalervo Oberg, “Sointula, a Communistic Settlement in British Columbia” (graduating thesis, U.B.C., 1928), p. 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Woodcock, p. 212.

³⁷ *Province*, April 9, 1901; April 22, 1905. *Colonist*, September 8, 1901.

³⁸ Mrs. Aili Tynjala, “Sointula, Past and Present” (mimeographed supplement to A. Anderson, *History of Sointula*. (n.p.: 1969), p. 3.

³⁹ *Province*, April 22, 1905.

ony,” and contrasted this state of affairs with the Indian settlement of Alert Bay, six miles away, where the “most pretentious buildings in the settlement containing, it would appear, most of the wealth spent on the settlement, were two large churches, one with stained glass windows in front and in the chancel.”⁴⁰ The absence of formal religion in Sointula did not, however, remove a certain puritan morality, for alcohol was forbidden.

The main organ of propaganda in the colony as well as a powerful agent of adult education was the *Aika*. In presenting a wide range of articles advocating socialism, harmony, and fellowship, and avoiding any religious bias except theosophy, the paper clearly reflected the social philosophy of Matti Kurikka, its editor. The naïveté of his thinking is evident from his conviction that once Sointula had been established many Sointulas would appear all of which would join together. Then when many “ringlets” were formed “they could legally take power into their hands and the whole nation would join Sointula.”⁴¹ It is little wonder that prominent Finnish socialists of the day were skeptical of Kurikka’s value to the movement and saw him, as one Finnish historian concludes, as an “unstable utopian dreamer.”⁴² Salin, for example, criticized Kurikka’s socialist philosophy for being indefinite and “that kind of humbug, which could not be talked about.”⁴³

A major theme in all Kurikka’s writing was his pronounced opposition to clergy and established church both of whom in his opinion had sullied the purity of Christian philosophy and bent Christian doctrine to their own selfish ends. Established religion, he argued, did not understand the needs or aims of the working class. Anti-clerical sentiments were frequently voiced in the pages of the *Aika*. His strong anti-clericalism combined with his concern for the common man helps to explain the intellectual kinship he felt with Leo Tolstoy.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Hautamäki, p. 316.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 282. In 1906, a year after his return to Finland, Kurikka left the Finnish Social-Democratic Party because of a dispute over differences of opinion. His socialism and support for the working class movement was always held somewhat suspect by mainstream Finnish socialists.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁴⁴ *Aika*, August 30, 1901; September 27, 1901; October 18, 1901; October 25, 1901. Included in Kurikka’s library were books by Tolstoy, Victor Rydberg, Rousseau, Lombroso, Herbert Spencer, Flammarion, Ruskin, Nietzsche, Kirkegaard, Plato, Annie Besant, Gibier, Carus, Darwin, A. D. White, Ingersoll, Luther, Max Müller, F. W. Farrar, Hoffding, and Zola. *Aika*, May 16, 1902. In addition to Owen, Saint-Simon and Fourier, Kurikka also referred in the *Aika* to Hegel and Bellamy.

Tolstoy sees clearly how humanity demands reform, which will be complete, not only political, but social. He knows that the hypocrisy of the religious institutions needs to be conquered.⁴⁵

While Kurikka found the Christian church unacceptable, he believed a religion of some sort was necessary for the spiritual order he considered so important. The virtues of love, truth, freedom, universality and harmony with nature he found to be present in theosophy, a religious philosophy that was just beginning to receive attention in western Europe at that time. Theosophy is described in *Webster's* as any religious system that "proposes to establish direct contact with divine principle through contemplation, revelation, etc., and to gain thereby a spiritual insight superior to empirical knowledge."

A. B. Mäkelä, the Marxist realist, however, rejected theosophy as "the seventeenth form of religion they have tried to force upon me in my lifetime."⁴⁶ The dispute between Kurikka and Mäkelä over theosophy was eventually transferred from the realm of philosophical debate into the public arena. The point at issue was Kurikka's advocacy of free love. This was a practical issue in Sointula where men outnumbered women by two to one. But Kurikka's startling views on sex and morals had a theosophical basis. According to him, the Christian church had misused natural law by setting limits to knowledge and science; Christian ethics limited scientific investigation by saying in effect "thus far and no further."⁴⁷ Theosophy, on the other hand, knew no limits. It was a "natural religion" to borrow the title of a book by Max Müller, which in Finnish translation Kurikka advertised for sale in the *Aiku* at fifty cents a copy.⁴⁸ It preached "naturalistic development which starts from movement of particulars in the universe, passes through mineral, plant, animal and human eras towards the period of utopian idealism for people, when all limitations disappear and people participate in this world in eternal godly living."⁴⁹

From as early as 1902 Kurikka focused his attention on the institution of marriage. In giving its blessing to this institution, the church was supporting the breaking of divine and natural law. Natural sexual drive would not have an opportunity to develop within marriage because hus-

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, October 18, 1901.

⁴⁶ Kaapro Jääskeläinen (A. B. Mäkelä), *Muistoja Malkosaarelta* [Memoirs of Malcolm Island] (Helsinki: 1907), p. 122.

⁴⁷ *Aika*, January 1, 1904, p. 100.

⁴⁸ The book was originally published in English in London in 1888.

⁴⁹ *Aiku*, May 16, 1902, p. 1.

bands had made the marital contract a licence to rape.⁵⁰ Kurikka therefore launched a campaign to alter traditional views with respect to marriage. Kalevan Kansa men should declare only the "rights of love," not the "chains of marriage."⁵¹ This campaign complemented his general desire to improve the status of woman. In his view marriage was a form of slavery with the wife always subordinate to her husband. Therefore it was right that women should be freed from the possession of men and should have the right of motherhood without the sanction of a wedding ceremony.

Letters to the editor of the *Aika* make it clear that the female sector of the colony were far from ready to have Kurikka burst their bonds of slavery. Polite queries such as, "By what right do you, Mr. Kurikka, argue that the present form of marriage could develop into another?" were answered by the petulant editor in a manner destined to increase not reduce tensions:

I ask you, dear friend, who has the right to argue that I have no right to express my thoughts? Some big-mouth old women perhaps, who under the wings of their husbands and protected by the marriage contract have been allowed to bring into the circles of Kalevan Kansa itself that spirit from which we came to Malcolm Island to escape.⁵²

Convinced of the merits of his case, Kurikka persisted in his argument:

Marriage and morality are two different things just as law and justice are two different things. Marriage and love are two different things just as the church and truth are two different things. Similarly just as capitalism appears as a protector of the social organization, and the church as the protector of truth, so also marriage appears as the protector of morality.

Kurikka's appeal for sane sexual relations with its stress upon the rights of women as well as men was much too "progressive" for his time. Victorian sexual taboos were too deeply ingrained. Kurikka was aware of the strength of his opposition. Because of their "dirty imaginations," he concluded, people understood "that all sexual union outside the marriage sacrament is criminal. . . . Sexual passion is animalistic; therefore it must be got rid of they say and that is all."⁵³

The original agreement between the provincial government and the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company signed on November 27, 1901,

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, March 15, 1904, p. 279.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, June 1, 1904, p. 427.

⁵² *Ibid.*, August 29, 1902, p. 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, June 1, 1904, p. 423.

provided that children of the colonists were to attend an English school. The Company diary for 1903 makes it plain that "in spite of renewed applications the government has as yet not set to work to get us a school house and teacher of the English language."⁵⁴ In the fall of 1904, however, the colonists' persistence was crowned with success as a new school was opened with an English teacher in charge. Up to that point the children had been taught only in Finnish.

Apparently there was some concern among the colonists lest schooling in English should result in the disappearance of the Finnish language and hence their nationality. Mäkelä tried to remove these fears in an article entitled "About Education in English." Moreover, he warned, their present situation demanded bilingualism: Finnish for reading literature and interaction within the community; English for communication outside the community. He added facetiously:

There may come a time when the whole of British Columbia, the whole of Canada and the United States, the whole of America, is in the same family as Malcolm Island in ideas as in action. Then we no longer need more than one language. However that time may be very far in the future.⁵⁵

The new teacher was an Englishwoman by the name of Miss J. M. Cleveland.⁵⁶ In 1905 she received a salary of \$60 per month. She reported to a Vancouver visitor that "the [thirty-nine] children are gradually learning the English language and adopting our mode of speech, even to the loss of their own tongue in some instances."⁵⁷ Miss Cleveland left Sointula after one year.⁵⁸

The Company diary for 1903 also mentioned the construction of a large nursery and children's building where mothers could leave their children while working. Kurikka saw the importance of this development from two standpoints: it would provide a superior environment for the children, and it would release more women for the labour force. Anyway it was better for women to be working than doting over their children all day long. People must learn to accept that "motherhood is . . . entirely a different thing from the matter of child up-bringing . . . often the mother is the most unfit to educate her own children." For Kurikka,

⁵⁴ Anderson, p. 16.

⁵⁵ *Aika*, May 9, 1902, p. 1.

⁵⁶ British Columbia, Department of Education, *Annual Report of Public Schools, 1905* (Victoria: 1906), Tables B and C.

⁵⁷ *Province*, April 22, 1905.

⁵⁸ British Columbia, Department of Education, *Annual Report of Public Schools, 1906* (Victoria: 1907), Table C.

the children's home was to be "a school from the beginning to the end, a school of life in all possible forms."⁵⁹ The idea, however, did not meet with the success anticipated for it. It took almost two years before such a home was established. Then the project met a rapid demise because, according to Anderson, the mothers were "unwilling to have their children away from home."⁶⁰

From a population of 238 in 1903, the colony's ranks were severely depleted by the departure of Kurikka and half the members in October 1904. The ostensible issue was the dispute over the topic of free love and marriage, but the colony was already experiencing difficult times. Neither logging nor fishing proved profitable; distance from markets ruined the chances of converting shoemaking, tailoring, brick-making, or foundry work into profitable ventures. The sawmill held some promise for a time, but an ill-conceived contract to build bridges over the Capilano and North Seymour rivers in North Vancouver resulted in disastrous losses from which the colony never recovered. Mäkelä attempted to rally the remaining population. The last annual meeting of the Colonization Company was held on February 5, 1905, with a mere fifty shareholders present. An act of embezzlement on the part of the manager of the colony and the seizure by the colony's creditors of a large shipment of lumber destined for Vancouver finally brought the enterprise to its knees. The Colonization Company was liquidated on May 27, 1905, and went into receivership.

To cover the colony's debts, the trust company sold all the colony's property. Those people who remained purchased land, built their own homes, and formed the basis for a settlement which has continued to this day. In an article in the *Vancouver Province* in April 1905, J. Edward Bird, commented very favourably on the state of the "Finnish Communitistic Colony" despite its numerous setbacks. He listed as residents forty-five men, twenty women, and forty children.⁶¹ In 1914 the population consisted of "about 250 people, chiefly members of the original Finnish colony."⁶² In the early thirties the population stood at 450. By 1958 it had increased to 570 and today exceeds 700.⁶³

⁵⁹ *Aika*, April 1, 1904, pp. 289-95.

⁶⁰ Anderson, p. 10.

⁶¹ *Province*, April 22, 1905. In Bird's view, "the colonists have in fact in a very short time done probably what many other communities in this country have taken many long years to accomplish."

⁶² F. E. Leach to Surveyor-General, November 16, 1914. In *British Columbia, Report of the Minister of Lands... 1914* (Victoria: 1915), p. D168.

⁶³ Anderson, p. 16; Tynjala supplement, p. 4.

The later fortunes of Kurikka and Mäkelä are worth noting. After supervising the dissolution of the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Society, Mäkelä left for Fitchburg, Massachusetts where he edited the newspaper *Raivaaja*. From there he returned to Finland in 1907, mainly because his second wife was homesick. Two years later he returned to Sointula because in Helsinki there "survive only the spy and the cordwood dealer."⁶⁴ The year 1917 found him editing the Finnish paper *Toveri* in Astoria, Oregon. In the 1920's he worked on many Canadian and American leftist newspapers including the still-existent *Vapaus* in Sudbury, Ontario. He was editor of that paper for five months in 1924-25 and again for a few months in 1930. For several years while residing once again in Sointula he edited the agricultural section of *Vapaus*.⁶⁵ On February 28, 1932, he died of a hemorrhage at Sointula.

As for Kurikka, after departure from Sointula and the failure of another utopian socialist colony called Sammon Takojat in the Fraser Valley, he returned to Finland in 1905. He involved himself once again in the working class movement, but the following year left the Finnish Social Democratic Party after bitter disagreement. From 1906 to 1908 he edited the newspaper *Elämä* (Life) before returning to America where he lived the rest of his life as a newspaperman in New York and a farmer on Rhode Island. He died in 1915.

Today Kurikka still has his critics, even among his biographers. Arvi Hautamäki acknowledges his keen intellect but decries the lack of empirical thinking in his writings. Väino Voionmaa faults him for having no "organized doctrinal structure" in his writings. Both these critics can be answered by reference to the pages of the *Aika* which Finnish scholars have overlooked. There it becomes apparent that Kurikka did indeed possess a philosophic base and that was found in theosophy with its emphasis on the spiritual and its rejection of the empirical method. Moreover Kurikka's intellectual stance places him in the mainstream of turn-of-the-century developments among Finnish-Americans. As S. Ilmonen says, "these years were a time of spiritual awakening among Finnish-American immigrants who for decades had been satisfied in being dormantly led by . . . the clergy."⁶⁶

From the standpoint of Canadian history we are given a glimpse into

⁶⁴ Salomaa, "Mäkelä," p. 232.

⁶⁵ Information relating to *Vapaus* supplied by Urho Tynjala of Sointula, September 13, 1972.

⁶⁶ S. Ilmonen, *Amerikan Suomalisten Sivistyshistoria* [American Finnish Cultural History] (Hancock, Mich.: 1930), p. 174.

the mind of a Finnish-Canadian intellectual and his hopes for a model utopian socialist settlement. Like several other British Columbia ethnic settlements at that time — Bella Coola, Quatsino, Cape Scott — Sointula was characterized by virtual isolation, a homogenous ethnic population, a desire to escape from “civilization” and government supervision, and a determination to control the education of their children. Yet the colony was a failure. The screening process had not been rigorously applied⁶⁷ and Kurikka’s determination to “convert” the settlers to an acceptance of utopian socialist principles fell short. Perhaps he did not have enough time; perhaps the colony’s economic difficulties proved ultimately crucial. Although Kurikka’s impatience, even petulance, and his mercurial nature were helpful qualities in launching such a venture, they were downright harmful when it came to keeping the colony afloat. Even Mäkelä’s more practical turn of mind failed to keep Kurikka within bounds. As Matti Halminen concludes in his memoirs: “Had we had as much wisdom and practical experience as we had sacrifice and vigour, we would have succeeded better.”⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Mäkelä described a good many settlers as “windbags and fanatics aggressive enough in spouting the principles of utopian socialism but who preferred to leave the task of their realization to others.” Quoted in Kolehmainen, p. 120. For further details on the sort of people attracted to Sointula, see Halminen, pp. 51-54; 91-94.

⁶⁸ Halminen, p. 3.