

³⁴The image that Canada is not merely a liberal democracy, but one supportive of the cultural rights of a multi-ethnic populace is codified in Section 27 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which states: "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canada."

³⁵Canada, Minister of State, Multiculturalism.

³⁶Steve Paproski. Special Parliamentary Committee on Visible Minorities in Canadian Society (heretofore SPCVM). *Minutes*. (Ottawa, October 4, 1983). At several points, the non-Anglo "ethnic members" of the Committee made reference to the discrimination and suffering white Europeans had been subjected to in the past. The clear implication of such remarks was that the discrimination experienced by visible minority immigrants would disappear, as it had for earlier groups of immigrants, through a process of ethnic succession, or in the words of the Committee's Chair, Bob Daudlin, "Your turn is coming—the next 30 years."

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸SPCVM, *Equality Now!*, 2-3.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁰Charlotte Montgomery, "MPs urge Ottawa to press for hiring of more non-whites." *Globe and Mail*. (March 29, 1984) 2.

⁴¹SPCVM, *Equality Now!*, 50.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 35. "The Affirmative Action Branch of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission has encouraged and assisted the private sector to develop programs targeted at women, the disabled, aboriginal people and Blacks in Nova Scotia on a voluntary basis. From 1979 to 1983, 1130 firms were approached, but as of November 1983, only 49 companies throughout the country had signed agreements to establish formal affirmative action programs."

⁴³*Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 56.

Critique

Stasiulis's two-part essay offers a critique of the policies on immigration and racism pursued by the Canadian government during the past decade or so. While the government's multicultural institutions seek to ameliorate racism, its immigration agencies get blamed for intensifying the problem. The latter agencies are better supported than the former which are on the "fringes of state power," and, according to the author, have little chance of changing immigration policies.

The first part of the essay argues that since the early 1980s the Canadian government has tried to control and maintain a flexible

immigrant labor force to meet the fluctuating demand for labor in a stagnant economy. Instead of welcoming immigrants who become permanent residents, the government has favored workers admitted with temporary visas. Almost half of these visa workers represent the “visible minorities” from Jamaica, India, and the Philippines. Concurrently, the government is trying to get rid of illegal minority workers who are seen as a threat to an immigration system which has traditionally preferred assimilable whites. By focusing on the “illegals” the government legitimates the racist view that the blame for the growing economic and social crisis in Canada belongs to the “recent visible minority immigrants and illegal immigrants.”

The second half of the essay examines the official policies on multiculturalism and their challenge to racism. The article agrees with critics that the government’s multicultural bureaucracy is weak and poorly funded in comparison with the agency that deals with illegal immigrants. It also questions the wisdom of a bureaucratic policy of extolling cultural differences of ethnic groups while encouraging them to merge with the dominant culture. Finally, it criticizes a governmental committee’s recommendations offering “symbolic” rather than material support to the visible ethnic minorities. Thus, minorities are channeled into non-threatening agencies which emphasize cultural contributions and deflect attention away from racist immigration policies. The article concludes that winning symbolic concessions shows that the state can be made to respond to democratic pressures, nevertheless.

Questions arise regarding this provocative two-part thesis about Canadian policy makers. It is not clear, however, whether the few reports of consultants and commissions cited were accepted as official definitions of policy since receiving one does not signify approval or disapproval. Also, there is no systematic analysis of the policy makers and their views; they are merely assumed to share the views expressed in the reports. Likewise, one wonders whether the policy makers were all conscious of serving corporate labor needs. Is it possible that they were instead inspired mainly by racist or other ideologies? Nor does the article explain the relationship between the two groups of policy makers, saying only that the multicultural institutions divert attention from the immigration agencies.

The author needs to explore the distribution of immigrants in the labor market to determine responsibility for it in subsequent studies. Although pointing to the low-paid jobs of the visible minorities with temporary visas, Stasiulis does not examine the employment of

whites arriving on the same basis. Nothing is said about employer responsibility in distributing both groups. Is it correct to assume that the government became a kind of employment bureau for employers? Nor is it clear whether employers conceded that kind of interventionist power any more than they would tolerate controls imposed by the multicultural institutions. And it is not made clear whether white workers rather than employers bear more responsibility for creating the illusion that new minorities reduce job opportunities for everyone. All this is to suggest that the roots of racism are more complex and long-seated than is made apparent by "Racism and the Canadian State."

Despite these observations and queries and others that might be made, the author's basic thesis on the interventionist role of the modern state in Canada is still tenable. Western nations like the United States have also long intervened in labor, immigration, and related matters. So, the Canadian experience is not unusual. But the nature of its interventionist role dealing with immigration and racism may not be as one-dimensional as suggested. And its historical roots need study to determine if it is such a recent development responding to the impact of a stagnant economy.

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Critique

The value of "Racism and the Canadian State" is its tragic reminder that injustice is alive and flourishing in Canada as well as the United States and elsewhere. Stasiulis presents an interesting and perceptive analysis of the practices of official discourse of different Canadian institutions which have brought about a new level of "race consciousness." She deals effectively with the measures taken by the federal government, within the past five years, to confront the social problems and demands of visible minorities in Canadian society.