

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.

It is encouraging to see that as a direct result of concerns expressed by researchers like Stasiulis a new consensus is emerging where scholarly investigations of particular governmental policies pertaining to immigration, multiculturalism, and welfare provisions to ethnic groups are increasingly represented in the literature. It is disheartening to know, however, that the recommendations from the interconnected special interest groups of ethnic minorities have been virtually ignored.

Stasiulis enumerates a series of well-known tactics used in containing dissidents: closely supervised funding of ethnic organizations, depoliticization of popular and costly demands, cooptation of militants, and construction of bridgeheads to unrepresentative but “responsible” spokespersons, who become effective disciplinarians of their constituencies for the state. Although many of the race relations structures within government, committees and liaison bodies have placed the need for racial equality and harmony on the agenda, the location of these bodies at the fringe of state power has made them profoundly irrelevant to the lives and material conditions of visible minorities. Again, the pattern looks like that of the United States.

The serious and deleterious effects that the “flexible immigration” measures are having on transient or “guest” workers have not been fully understood. These workers are now denied the right to move freely in pursuit of the optimal conditions for the sale of their labour power, to bargain collectively, to vote, or express dissent. The temporary visa system also benefits the state, which can now send an unwelcome or unemployed “guest” back home rather than bear the costs of their unemployment through payment of unemployment insurance or welfare benefits. These tactics are not news to us; we are familiar with the plight of the Mexican “wet back” and other types of illegal immigrants in the United States. What is to some extent surprising is the recourse to public consultation in order to provide a focus for public discussion of the problem in Canada.

“Racism and the Canadian State” constitutes an important contribution to one of the most pressing problems of our time. There is no question that Stasiulis’s research will become a must consultation for scholars and researchers who will be writing on this topic in the near future. Her article adds a new and refreshing perspective from whence new evaluations will emerge.

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