

Multiculturalism and the Future of Canadian Nationhood

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One of the most influential commissions in Canadian history, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963–69) brought about sweeping changes to federal and provincial language policy. The commission was a response to the growing unrest among French Canadians in Québec, who called for the protection of their language and culture, and opportunities to participate fully in political and economic decision making. The commission’s findings led to changes in French education across the country, and the creation of the federal department of multiculturalism and the Official Languages Act.

These developments followed the “Quiet Revolution” that swept Quebec in 1960 following the rejection of the Catholic Church’s hold on Quebec’s social, political and religious life by a new, well-educated generation of the mainly secular Québécois, leading to the election of the Liberal government under Premier Jean Lesage in 1960.

These were all promising developments for the future of a strong and united Canada. What was not anticipated at the time was that the genesis of bilingualism and biculturalism would over several decades mutate into the multiculturalism of today, whereby every ethnic enclave would believe itself entitled to maintain the habits and customs of its country of origin no

matter how incompatible those habits and customs may be with life in a modern and democratic society such as Canada, where equality of women and men, respect for individual rights, and commitment to the national community are the essential prerequisites for universal citizenship and national integration.

The problem of tribalization of the nation has been aggravated by the corrosive ethnic policies of self-serving politicians, who have often given priority to election victory and to maintaining their positions of privilege over national interests and who have promoted ethnic identity with the sole aim of winning votes.

No modern nation state can survive for long if those living within its boundaries lack loyalty to the nation – not to be confused with loyalty to specific governments which come and go – but to the nation as a permanent entity.

The “genetic” mutation of the original dream of a bilingual and bicultural modern Canada based on the equality of the two founding cultures has been reduced to the egotistic

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belief that every ethnic enclave now considers itself an independent entity with little commitment to the national community.

It is important to emphasize at this point that we are not speaking of assimilation and creation of a bland universality from sea to sea. Integration is the unification of multitudes into a new whole in order to establish a cohesive national community of citizenship and commitment.

Mass immigration has been the decisive factor in bringing about the tribalization of Canada. In every country where large groupings of distinct ethnicities are admitted, the sheer number of the new entrants creates a self-sustaining mass of humanity large enough to satisfy nearly all the needs of its members – everything from obtaining normal services for daily living, business interactions, and even finding marriage partners – thus removing the incentive for the new entrants to interact with the larger society. The ethnic community hence becomes solidified and walled in, a process that leads to permanent geographic and cultural segregation within the country.

The press now report that in certain political ridings in the lower mainland of British Columbia nearly forty languages are the local means of communication – and the English language is not one of them. And, of course, in an era of “political correctness,” every potentially existing language group is entitled to have all the necessary information, from electoral literature to shopping brochures, in its own ethnic language. In the most recent British Columbia referendum on electoral reform, the referendum literatures were translated into 16 languages, presumably at significant cost to the taxpayers of the province. Media reports from Britain are

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to the effect that tens of millions of pounds have been wasted on translating electoral information into languages so obscure that nobody bothers to read them.

There was a time when being fluent in English or French was a requirement for obtaining Canadian citizenship. So was the requirement to be informed about Canadian society and politics before being granted citizenship.

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. (Genesis 11:7)

Obviously it did not take divine powers to confound our language; self-serving politicians did it by opening the floodgates of the nation and admitting vast numbers of immigrants with limited education and technical skills, let alone familiarity with or appreciation of Canadian culture and values, to enter Canada so they would provide employers with vast, cheap and docile pools of labour, thus enabling the employers to enhance their profits on the back of the “low-cost” labourers to the detriment of the nation as a whole.

Such “low-cost” labourers and their families are obviously entitled to education and healthcare, housing and police protection, use of roads and public parks and so on – all of which must be provided and subsidized by the Canadian public since the meager earnings of the low-wage workers hardly require them to pay sufficient taxes to defray the costs of the public amenities they need to use. •

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