

A BRIEF ON

THE

GREEN PAPER ON IMMIGRATION

TO THE

SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION POLICY

BY

QUEBEC FEDERATION OF HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

MONTREAL, SEPTEMBER, 1975

Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations is a voluntary organization of some 12,000 family members of parents and others who are deeply involved in and committed to the improvement of the quality of education in the Province of Quebec.

As our membership includes a very large number of "new Canadians" who are integrating into the Canadian "Mosaic" as it is manifested in Quebec, we are therefore anxious that our experiences be represented to the Parliamentary Committee involved in revising our Immigration laws.

We are equally glad that we have the opportunity of submitting our impressions and recommendations which are contained in this paper.

We acknowledge with gratitude our appreciation for materials that were sent to us for study by the following members of the Federal parliament:

Ian Watson, M.P. for Laprairie
Heward Grafftey, M.P. for Brome-Missisquoi
Jake Epp, M.P. for Provencher, Manitoba
J.E. Broadbent, M.P. and Parliamentary Leader, N.D.P.

BASIC PRINCIPLE - THE MEANING OF IMMIGRATION

Any new Immigration Act ought to satisfy criteria which will make its spirit easily grasped by all people interested in the subject: it ought to be concise; it ought to spell out clearly a set of positive and basic principles governing regulations which will be issued from time to time to implement the Act - it being recognized that while the regulations themselves must be revised from time to time to make the Act applicable to changing circumstances, yet these must at all time represent in practice the spirit of the Act. Thus we agree with what the Green Paper indicated (Highlights Vol. 1 p. 18).

Recommendation

The act must set forth the purposes of immigration: first of all, in broad general terms, what Canada has to offer - in natural resources, in challenges and opportunities for satisfying and fulfilling human goals, and in the freedoms and securities of human rights and dignities guaranteed in our political system; secondly, such an Act should state what Canada ought to expect of any and all prospective immigrants - this is stated in the Green Paper Highlights (Vol. 2, Ch. 2 - p. 6) in the broad objectives for the admission of immigrants, "to serve the economic, social and cultural interests of Canada".

We feel that it is essential that two balancing, complementary statements of what Canada has to offer and of what Canada expects are necessary, in order that native Canadians and potential immigrants alike can acknowledge the kind of country that they want Canada to be, and what the national goals of the country are to be - for example, in the spheres of economy and industry in terms of the balance between an expanding domestic market and an expanding international market (Highlights Vol. 1, p. 5).

NO DISCRIMINATION

We acknowledge that over the past century immigration to Canada has progressively moved from being almost exclusively from the United Kingdom to being world-wide in sources.

Recommendation

Thus we recognize, and recommend that the continued acceptance on the part of the Federal Government of the principle set forth in the Government's White Paper on Immigration in 1966 (and translated into the present selective system) that Canadian immigration policies "must involve no discrimination by reason of race, colour or religion and consequently... must be universally applicable".

This principle, and this policy, can become inoperative in

fact, however, if, in many countries of the world the Canadian government lacks an information service to tell about Canada, and an adequate consular service to provide further information and aid to direct would-be immigrants.

Without adequate information and consular services, defacto discrimination exists in our immigration process, despite high sounding policy statements to the contrary.

We wonder, for example, about the closure of our Bombay consulate in the late 1960's. Would-be immigrants have to make contact through the New Delhi High Commissioners' Office - a rather difficult process. A recent immigrant from Ghana, Africa - a former British colony - found that he had to work through Paris - an even more complex process!

Recommendation

Thus we recommend further that, to make our immigration policies truly non-discriminatory adequate information and consular services be established in all countries wherever possible.

It ought to follow that comparable services ought to be established by other countries in Canada. The resulting exchanges ought to work to the mutual enrichment of ourselves and our international friends - whether or not there is mutual gain through

immigration.

SELECTION OF IMMIGRANTS

Our Federation agrees with the continuation of an open-ended (responsive) immigrant selection policy, that is, Option 1 of the four described (Highlights Vol. 1 p. 12-14) because it seems to be both broadly fair as a means of applying a non-discriminatory philosophy of immigration and also the one most flexible to meet changing needs; such changing needs can be satisfied through administrative procedure.

In general we are in agreement with the specific goals listed in the Green Paper:

- to promote family reunion by expediting the movement to Canada of dependents of Canadian citizens and residents, and by facilitating the movement to Canada of other relatives, who in conjunction with the assistance available in Canada, have the qualifications necessary for successful establishment;
- to recruit, or assist Canadian employers in recruiting, qualified workers for whom there is an immediate specific demand in Canada;

- to encourage the movement to Canada of other workers whose occupations and skills are in continuing demand, and of entrepreneurs possessing the capital, knowledge, experience and personal qualities necessary for successful industrial or commercial enterprise;
- to help alleviate human distress by admitting to Canada refugees, who, although they may not have the usual qualifications necessary for admission, are likely to become successfully established within a reasonable period;
- to facilitate the movement to Canada of other workers or retired persons who, although lacking occupations currently in demand, have the financial and other resources and qualifications necessary for successful establishment;
- to promote the early adjustment and establishment of immigrants by counselling them fully about living and working conditions in Canada. (Highlights, Vol. 2 pp 6-7)

The "points" system seems to be a rational, objective way of applying the policy and of fulfilling the goal that applicants are to

be chosen on the prognostication of their success in establishing in Canada - the criteria of such success being the mutual benefit to both Canada and the immigrant.

We recognize that the application of the "points" system must be fairly flexible, especially as regards to current demands for occupational skills.

We note, however, that the "points" system has not been applied to sponsored dependants of those already established in Canada, nor is it applied to refugees in emergency situations - specifically, economic consideration does not enter into the selection of such categories of applicants.

Recommendation

We would recommend however that in all cases, the initial selection not over emphasize and over stress the economic justification to accept the applicant - but that a greater emphasis be placed on other important aspects - for example, the cultural and social contribution that the applicant may bring to the Canadian mosaic.

The corollary of this recommendation is that by attributing greater value in terms of "points" to cultural, social and other riches of the applicants personality, would have the effect of de-emphasizing

the present high value on the economic - and restraining acceptance solely on that basis.

In view of the fairly wide discretion allowed immigration officers in the awarding of "points" - in fact, in some instances, and at some times, a maximum of 15 points is left to the officer's discrimination, we would recommend that great care be exercised by the immigration service to secure the most responsible personnel who can be depended upon to act objectively, in an unprejudiced manner.

Further, we recommend that there should be some kind of automatic appeal and review to higher authorities in the event that a would-be immigrant's application be refused by the officer on the location; hopefully, the application will be reprocessed almost immediately.

FOLLOW-UP ENTRANCE TO CANADA

We looked very seriously at several immigration problems - where applicants do not have the skills - vocational, linguistic, and other - which are desired at the moment; where there is reluctance on the part of countries of source to allow the loss of well-trained citizens to other lands; where during an occasion of emergency due to famine, insurrection or other disasters, conditions there is pressure

to provide for freer admission.

We concluded that while a liberal philosophy with its consequent liberal policies must be maintained, yet these ought not to cease at the moment the applicant enters the country, but should continue in two areas.

Recommendations

First, we recommend that the status of the immigrant be reviewed during a probationary period following admission and entrance to Canada, and that ultimately final landed immigrant status be granted following such a probationary period. It follows therefore that mere admission to the country granted to the immigrant would not ensure his permanent immigrant status - this being accorded only after a period of time. Such status is a privilege to be earned, by the immigrant proceeding through a positive, constructively planned programme of development leading up to all the privileges of citizenship over a specific period of time.

Second, to enable the new immigrant to attain the objectives of permanent status, Canada, through its immigration services, and by means of any new Act, ought to create the mechanism and institutions whereby the immigrant is aided in his endeavours to become a contributing Canadian. It is in this recommendation that our interests in education relate most closely to the whole field of immigration.

LOCATING OF IMMIGRANTS

Concern was also expressed that discretion in the selection of applicants was necessary to lessen the potentially dangerous situations which arise where there are immigrant concentrations supposedly competing for seemingly limited job opportunities with economically depressed indigenous workers.

It has been observed that the energy and enthusiasm of immigrants their positive acceptance of challenge and achievement of success, and their willingness to accept lower economic standards put them in an advantage over natives who have succumbed to a hopelessness over their own situation.

Immigrants tend to concentrate in certain urban centres - especially Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Thus they contribute to what is referred to as the "demographic problem" of Canada - it is in these areas of high population density that conflicts can and indeed have arisen.

Therefore there is need for some sort of immigrant placement policy.

Recommendation

It is recommended that some special effort be made in im-

migration regulations arising out of any new act to encourage immigrants to move directly to more remote areas of the country. Such encouragement would have to involve the awarding of special advantages - perhaps within the "points" system - certainly by the close integration of many services of local, provincial and federal agencies - manpower, social welfare, education and so on - to provide mechanisms and institutions to promote their vocational, linguistic, social and cultural integration. Note that we are in no way advocating the institution of a system of "indentured servitude"!

With this in mind, and with reference to our interest in the "Commel Report"* and its recommendations which we have studied and reported on to the Ministry of Education of the Province of Quebec, we see the possibilities of Federal funding subsidizing our public schools, especially in remote areas, for the express purpose of aiding in the integration of immigrants - but in the long run being to the mutual advantage of both immigrants - their children, and through continuing education programmes, the mature adults - and native Canadians.

* The "Rapport du Groupe Commel" - the 1974 report of a Task Force to examine services, better ways of financing, and communication with school boards, set up by the Minister of Education of the Province of Quebec.

We look to the example of the cooperative efforts of the Federal Department of Northern and Indian Affairs, the Provincial Ministries of Education and the local school boards over the past thirty years to develop the kind of planning we have in mind.

ENCOURAGEMENT OF "SELF-HELP PROGRAMMES

Certain ethnic groups - many represented in membership within our Federation - have the long standing tradition of aiding their new arrivals to integrate into our Canadian mosaic - and yet to retain and enrich their own cultural, linguistic, religious and social values.

Such groups not only welcome the new arrivals, but provide all kinds of support - so that they may "feel-at-home". These efforts make the traumatic transition of the immigration experience easier and more complete to Canada and the total Canadian life.

Other groups have not been so successful. That kind of support really never has been part of their tradition. Yet their people - as new arrivals - feel very much at a loss and find it very hard to become "at-home".

Recommendation

Therefore, we recommend that in any new Immigration Act, positive opportunities will be provided for the encouragement of

the development of mechanisms and institutions which will be able to welcome and support the newly arrived immigrants from among the ethnic groups already established in Canada - so that new arrivals may expeditiously overcome the transition from their old home land to their new.

REGIONAL RESTRICTIONS IN IMMIGRATION

Our Federation has taken a very strong stand in favour of pluralism in public education. This stand has placed us in opposition to "Bill 22" the 1974 Official Language Act of the Province of Quebec. We recognize a conflict between two principles in respect of language in the province of Quebec. One is the "Personality Principle" - that is, that the individual is at liberty to choose in the use of language. This principle is enshrined in clauses of the British North America Act and in more recent federal and provincial legislation with the exception of Bill 22, all of which recognize duality (English and French).

The "Personality Principle" has also gone beyond the "English-French" duality in recent actions in some provinces and in the Territories which extends the legal right of language of instruction in public, tax supported schools to languages other than the official two.

Since language is the principle vehicle of culture - the logical conclusion to the "Personality Principle" in language is its extension to plurality in culture, it is our position that this has been the Canada trend.

On the other hand, "Bill 22" represents a move towards an opposite trend that of the "Territorial Principle" - where, in the case of Canada - it is assumed that there are two distinct unilingual regions - one, English-Speaking and the other, French speaking.

Culturally, the consequence of such a principle is that of "melting-pot" or rather, of dual "melting-pot" in which all residents of the English region will be forced ultimately, by education, by language of government, of business, of industry and so on, to become Anglicized in language and in culture. Comparably, residents of the French region will become French.

Each step along the way of a monistic French only - or an English-only principle increases the threat not only to the principle minority within the linguistic region - but to all minorities.

To a country which owes a substantial amount in its growth to immigration - and which holds out its hand not only in welcome to the new comer but to accept him in what he is and what he

brings in language, culture, skills, his total integrity of personality - the acceptance of the Territorial Principle represents a retrograde step.

It makes Canada's welcome conditional - and it is insulting the new comer degrading him as it degrades his background which is a substantial part of what he brings with him in his total personality.

Recommendation

Notwithstanding the genuine concern on the part of majority language-culture regions of Canada for their own survival, we recommend that no new Act shall have clauses which make it imperative that the freedom of new-comers to Canada be restricted by regional linguistic and cultural aspirations.

We are distressed that the Green Paper makes the "Territorial Principle" an open subject and an option to be seriously considered. (Highlights Vol. 1 Ch. 4 pp. 16-17)