About dumbfounding aspects of Canadian immigration policy

Gilles Paquet
Centre on Governance, University of Ottawa
www.gouvernance.ca

Introduction

There are many reasons why immigration flows may be said to be welfare-enhancing for a community, and many reasons why national governments may wish to actively promote immigration. But there are no reasons to believe that maximum indiscriminate immigration is an automatic optimum. Massive international migration flows may be disruptive and welfare-reducing for the host country, and an aggressive national immigration policy may have a negative benefit-cost impact. This is the case even when political, social, cultural, humanitarian, and all other sorts of benefits and costs (over and beyond the financial dimensions) are taken into account: there is no reason to believe that massive indiscriminate migration flows can be regarded as automatically desirable as a national policy. It all depends on the balance of costs and benefits.

Yet over the last 25 years, Canada has apparently adopted a massive and indiscriminate immigration policy based on a “faith in the long term benefits of high levels of immigration,” although no evidence or meaningful argument has ever been put forward to justify this faith\(^1\), and there are reasons to believe that it serves well neither the newcomers nor Canadian society.

The only rationale to explain this new philosophy of immigration is that it appears to have been a useful tactic to get the vote of the roughly 20% of the Canadian population that is foreign-born, who benefit from family reunification and the chain immigration this process underpins.

This new era followed decades when the Canadian immigration policy had been defined in keeping with what was called the absorptive capacity of the Canadian socio-economy. Such a stance seems to have served well both Canada and the newcomers, since it can be demonstrated that the Canadian experience proved quite successful: newcomers integrated into the Canadian socio-economy well and relatively quickly, and contributed significantly and positively to their new homeland.

Surprisingly, this recent act of faith in the long term benefits of high levels of immigration has not been challenged as one might have expected, since economists have argued for more than twenty years that economic benefits are likely to be very small\(^2\). Yet this unfounded assertion continues to be presented as self-evident by many stakeholders and so-called progressives, and has come to be consecrated by some political scientists like Keith Banting who have exorcised

---


the concerns about the impact of massive and indiscriminate immigration, and the lack of wisdom of such an option, by simply claiming that it corresponds to a Canadian consensus3.

According to Jeffrey Reitz, this Canadian consensus in support of massive indiscriminate immigration is supposedly based on two pillars4: first, that Canadians have been “convinced of the positive economic benefits of immigration” (because they have been told repeatedly that, through the operation of the point system selection process, the newcomers are highly skilled and therefore must be net contributors to Canadian wealth-enhancement); and second, because, supposedly, Canadians have been persuaded by their ‘multiculturalism commitment’ to view diversity per se as a very important primary good. So even if the positive economic benefits could be put in doubt, such massive and indiscriminate inflows could still be presumed to have by definition an overall positive impact since they contribute to the diversity objective. As a matter of consequence, any suggestion that such massive and indiscriminate immigration could have a negative impact on solidarity and the Canadian social fabric, or on the commitment to the welfare state or other fundamental institutions in the host society, has been merrily discounted.

This Panglossian view, based on ill-founded assumptions but robust state propaganda, has been highly contested5. But much of the criticism has been denounced as racist, nativist and even fascist in the media, and in official circles as politically incorrect.

I will argue that Canadians have been
(1) systematically disinformed by officials and the media about the real impact on the economy of massive and indiscriminate immigration, and about its use as an effective way to counter the effects of the aging of the Canadian population, and
(2) hoodwinked by state-sponsored multiculturalism into accepting diversity as an unbounded blessing when in fact the optimum of diversity is not necessarily the maximum of diversity, for it has negative impacts on many aspects of the host society including the common public culture.

These unfounded assumptions have been presented as self-evident by a diffuse coalition of immigration activists and naïve academics (with the complicity of politicians) to fuel a vicious cycle: the high percentage of foreign-born in the population triggering more pressure for increased immigration (whatever the consequences) as politicians tried to capture the electoral support of these new Canadians.

Once the foreign-born Canadians reach a level of over 20% of the total population, and the myths of massive and indiscriminate immigration generating economic benefits, demographic correction, and desirable diversity have been drummed into the psyche of Canadians and have become part of the conventional wisdom, there is no reason to believe that this dynamic will not continue unbounded. All the more so when it is anticipated that by 2031 the foreign-born component should reach between 25% and 28% of the total Canadian population, according to official Canadian government forecasts. Consequently, since there are limits to the economic,

---

demography-correction, and diversity benefits of massive and indiscriminate immigration, Canada, through continuing on the current path, is likely to sleep-walk into an irreversible loss of control over her common public culture and her destiny.

The lack of critical debate about immigration is consequential not only because of greater economic costs than benefits (although the imbalance on this front is enormous) but also because massive and indiscriminate immigration being allowed to somewhat irresponsibly redefine the very Canadian common public culture – its references, norms and social codes. Massive and indiscriminate immigration, and the deity of diversity and state-promoted multiculturalism as ideological programming, have transformed Canada’s self-image, its identity. We are no longer debating matters of degree here, but matters of kind.6

In summary, my argument suggests that

(1) there can be no denial that the present Canadian immigration and refugee policy regime supports massive and indiscriminate immigration;
(2) there is something puzzling about the so-called ‘pan-Canadian consensus’ that materialized between the mid-1990s and the mid 2000s (from a position where two thirds of Canadians polled consistently found immigration levels to be too high, to a position where two thirds of the Canadians polled disagreed with this statement). This reversal of position is most certainly not evidence-based, and it happened at times of increasing immigration flows. There are reasons to believe that it has been nurtured by naïve multiculturalists, immigration activists, and the state, in the wake of deepening multiculturalist propaganda. As Andrew Cohen suggests, “if enough people tell you this, you come to believe it” (158).
(3) while the federal Liberal Party played a key role in targeting the vote of the foreign-born by favouring mass indiscriminate immigration, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century all political parties had been forced to join in for these same electoral reasons. An examination of the electoral literature of all parties in the May 2011 federal election is illuminating;
(4) many serious benefit-cost analyses of the new policy reveal that the costs are greater than the benefits, and that therefore it is welfare-reducing for Canadian society; in addition there are other deleterious effects in terms of health, security, solidarity, etc.;
(5) there has been much sophistry and deception in defending the new policy by sheer disinformation; it has surreptitiously led to a redefining of the Canadian identity, and the systematic suppression of any critical thinking about the new norms being propagandized … in the name of political correctness;
(6) much administrative pathology has developed as a result of this new policy being recklessly carried out – e.g., an overly lax selection process, frauds, etc.

As a result, there are good reasons to believe that this new policy serves well neither Canadian society nor the newcomers, and that it must be reformed. Consequently, a three-pronged counter-attack would seem to be warranted:
first, the demolition of some toxic myths in good currency;

---
second, an exposé of the most grievous administrative pathologies (in particular, those around the selection process, etc.); and third, an effort to free the forum from the taboo that has been imposed on any discussion about immigration and diversity in Canada, so as to break the mould of political correctness and the hold that the newly manufactured norms have on the public mind.

Some stylized facts

The following sample of puzzling (and potentially bothersome) features of the Canadian immigration and refugee regimes is common knowledge. These facts have been documented (and at times denounced) over the years in various studies, and more recently by the Centre for Immigration Policy Reform. 

- for the past 20 years we have been accepting numbers close to 1% of our population as official immigrants each year: i.e., circa 280,000 last year (without counting another 280,000 temporary workers, 100,000 foreign students, and 30,000 refugees); 
- in the last 25 years, the number of immigrants has increased systematically without any regard to the employment and economic conditions in Canada; 
- the United States admits half as many official immigrants on a per capita basis as Canada, and their best experts have recommend that their immigration flow should be cut in half because it is not helping economic growth; 
- 80% of our official immigrants are not in the “skilled worker” category; 
- only 17% of the principal applicants in the selected worker category are chosen for their potential to enter the workforce; 
- only one fifth of the selected immigrants are met face to face and interviewed by a visa officer before their being admitted to the country; 
- the economic situation of the more recent cohorts of immigrants vis-à-vis the Canadian-born has dramatically deteriorated over the last 20 years, thereby revealing growing difficulties of integration; 
- immigrants cost the federal government as much as $23-billion annually; 
- Canada’s acceptance rate of refugees is three times the average of other countries, including a large number who would not even be considered as genuine refugees by other countries (e.g., those coming from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden etc. – countries considered to have democratic regimes and sound rule of law).

---

Moreover, the laxity of the admissibility criteria related to health, criminality, security, etc. (that have plagued the immigration and refugee regimes since the 1990s) has been denounced vehemently by the Office of the Auditor General\(^\text{10}\).

This laxity has made it more and more painful for the newcomers to integrate effectively in the labour market, and it has led to growing frustrations. Consequently, even some immigrant groups have come to favour a reduction of the immigration level, and, by a proportion of over 70% in some Canadian polls, are supporting the recommendation that the selection process be tightened for instance by requiring newcomers to be competent in English or French when they arrive\(^\text{11}\).

Finally, there is much cognitive dissonance and learning disability in this world of immigration and diversity. Information that has become available over the last twenty years has been explicitly ignored and occluded because it fits badly with the new paradigm that underpins the indoctrination program. For instance, as we mentioned above, an Economic Council of Canada study of some 20 years ago showed that what Canadians would gain from immigration in terms of economic benefits is very small\(^\text{12}\). In the same manner, demographers have noted that immigration cannot be expected to compensate for an aging population in Canada either in the short term or the long term\(^\text{13}\). Yet statements to the contrary continue to be constantly repeated by politicians, officials and the media. This is systematic disinformation.

Another important mass of carefully unacknowledged information has to do with the current immigration regime resulting in an excess supply of unskilled labour, making integration in the Canadian labour market much more difficult, and at much lowered levels of compensation. Indeed, Statistics Canada has shown that the recent cohorts have found their integration more painful and their earnings in relation to native Canadians significantly lower and continuing to deteriorate even further\(^\text{14}\). And this is not true only at the lower end of the scale. Green & Green have also shown (2004: 134) that there has been a pressure downward on wages paid even to well-educated workers, with the immigrants themselves “struggling – with declining success – to find jobs commensurate with their knowledge and experience, good incomes and decent affordable housing”.

As Michael Valpy would put it, this poses a question about the morality of admitting that many immigrants\(^\text{15}\).

There are also pernicious costs associated with the current immigration regime discouraging efforts to train and put to work Canadians that are unemployed or underemployed, and the

\(^{10}\) Martin Collacott, Canada’s Immigration Policy: The Need for Major Reform. Vancouver: The Fraser Institute 2003, 26-33.

\(^{11}\) Martin Collacott, « Immigrants want less Immigration » National Post, March 10, 2010.


\(^{14}\) Garnet Picot et al. Chronic Low-Income and Low-Income Dynamics among Recent Immigrants. Statistics Canada 2007, Catalogue No. 11F0019MIE2007198

negative impact of the immigration regime on the development of more productive methods of production in Canada by affording cheap labour\textsuperscript{16}.

**The baffling Canadian consensus reversal after the mid-1990s**

Despite these facts, it is surprising to see a dramatic reversal of perspectives in the opinion polls with reference to immigration after the mid-1990s in Canada, i.e., at the very time when things were seriously deteriorating.

When Canadians were asked whether they agreed with the vague statement, “The economic impact of immigration is positive”, some 40% responded NO in 1993. But to the same question in 2005, only 15% responded NO. Indeed, over 80% of Canadians polled agreed with this proposition in 2005, despite the quasi-unanimous opposite view of experts. To the statement “The immigration level is too high”, two thirds of Canadians responded YES from 1977 to 1993-4, but, over the following decade, this proportion dropped to one third, and two thirds of respondents disagreed with this proposition (see annex). All this has been happening while, in the period from 1993 to today, two thirds of the Canadians polled felt that too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values. Even the idea that immigration takes away Canadian jobs that was supported by over 90% of respondents in 1985 was rejected by close to 80% of respondents in the mid-2000s\textsuperscript{17}.

The same two main factors mentioned by Jeffrey Reitz to explain the Canadian support for massive immigration explain this extraordinary reversal. The only difference between his views and ours is that he regards it as organic change and we see it as manufactured transformation.

First, the cumulative impact of the increase in immigration in the 20-year period of the 70s and 80s has changed the texture of the demography of the country. By the mid 1990s, the foreign born population in Canada had become not only a significant portion of the total population (and therefore a significant portion of the electorate and of the swing vote that all the political parties had to pay attention to) but also had become fully conscious of the leverage that it could have at election time. The Liberal Party had reacted to this opportunity first, but the Conservatives, with a lag, have also come to see that anything that might be interpreted as likely to dam the flow of new immigrants, or to restrict the process of family re-unification and chain immigration might alienate the foreign-born voters.

Existing research on the motivations at work and the process of formation of public opinion on matters of immigration show them to be complex. In particular, some factors may affect differently opinions about restriction and expansion of immigration. But it would appear that (net of all other factors), it is the so-called symbolic-political dimension (reflecting the dominant national discourse in Canada) that has the most important impact. The beliefs about the positive or negative impact of immigration on national unity or the like are seen as a major determinant of


\textsuperscript{17} All those results are extracted from various presentations made by Michael Adams and its Environics Institute over the last decades.
the choice for expansion or restriction of immigration, while other factors (economic, social, cultural) may affect views about expansion but not restriction, or vice versa 18.

This explains the crucial importance of the efforts to manufacture a dominant national discourse by the clerisy of groups with interest in immigration expansion. It is less the personal circumstances of particular individuals than the overall belief in a certain national rationale that would appear to be echoed in opinion polls. Persuading the population (however false it may be) that high-levels of immigration are a significant source of economic growth and welfare-enhancement for the country, and that it will contribute to rebalance the age structure of the population (and thereby help to sustain the financial viability of the welfare state for an aging Canadian population) has had much force in determining one’s response to questions about expansion or restriction of immigration levels.

As a result, over the last twenty years, and regardless of the socio-economic conditions, the level of the flow of new immigrants has been raised, and suggestions to tighten the selection criteria – even those recommended by the Immigration Legislative Review – were successfully opposed by immigration activists, immigrant service organizations, and major political parties. This situation continued, even during the May 2011 federal election campaign, where all parties promised immigration levels higher than the 2010 levels – when 280,000 immigrants had been received, plus another 280,000 temporary workers – all this at a time when Canada had just lost close to half a million full-time jobs because of the recession – because 80% of Canadians polled clearly had been led to believe (falsely) that high-levels of immigration generate economic growth and would correct the demographic imbalance.

These false beliefs were drummed into the consciousness of Canadians by officials and other opinion-moulders. Since this is a debate with a certain degree of technical complexity, the citizens have not been able to appreciate the soundness of the arguments, and have relied on the apparent consensus of opinion-moulders. So one can only speak of systematic disinformation by politicians and consorts.

This disinformation became even more strident as of the mid 1990s because the electoral stakes had become higher: by that time, 20% of the Canadian population was foreign-born, and in the case of Toronto and Vancouver the proportion was coming close to 50% and 40% respectively. Among the major political parties, it was a case of which one would sound more pro-immigration, and there was an implicit collusion among the political parties to prevent any serious discussion of the evidence presented that seemed to suggest action to the contrary.

Second, it is not clear that this coalition of disinformers would have been anything like as successful as it has been were it not for the aggressive way in which the philosophy of multiculturalism was bolstered by the Charter of Rights in 1982. This began to bear fruit in the 1980s (the Singh case) when it was argued, invoking the Charter, that a newcomer who could put his foot on Canadian soil (legally or not) could claim entitlement to all the rights of Canadians.

except the right to vote. This contention was supported by the Supreme Court of Canada and as a matter of consequence Canada lost control of her borders.

The Mulroney government could not persuade itself to invoke the notwithstanding clause to defer the application of the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, for already Charter activism had given a new wind to multiculturalism. The foreign born population had become a new political force on the national scene that was sufficient to put the politicians into a sensitive mode. This movement came to full maturity in the 1990s and was accompanied by an extraordinary effort to propagandize and celebrate multiculturalism, and to theorize it as not only progressive, and changing the very nature of the social game (and therefore of Canadian identity), but also as a model for the rest of the world\(^\text{19}\). It is not so much that the books of Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka triggered the movement: they simply echoed the very active multiculturalist propaganda that had permeated \textit{le pouvoir social} in Canada and theorized it, thereby granting legitimacy to the on-going transformation of the social norms and of the very identity of Canadians. Indeed, this propagandizing aimed at making multiculturalism a source of national pride: unity in diversity became the mantra, and a subject of some sort of naïve pride without any understanding of the full implications of this leap of faith being understood by the host population, though they were fully grasped by newcomers.

What Tocqueville called \textit{le pouvoir social}\(^\text{20}\) connotes the mechanisms through which, on certain topics or issues, a dominant view (however ill-founded it may be) comes to prevail, and that the political authorities need to take into account because it has been presented effectively by interest groups and the media (and in our case even by many officials) as ‘progressive’ and therefore desirable. Eventually, such a view becomes a sort of conventional wisdom as it is uncritically repeated by intellectuals, journalists, or \textit{amuseurs publics} of various sorts. The Canadian \textit{pouvoir social} has been imbibed by the philosophy of multiculturalism. This has led to a growing reluctance to challenge this iconic issue, to the point where anyone doing so faced various forms of censorship.

One can reasonably refer to this period as one where the Canadian identity was surreptitiously redefined, where the reference points were modified, and where a new ethos came to be dramatically redefined in terms of ‘new truths’. Not only were new ideals and norms being brandished, but these new ideals were also articulated in a language of rights and became immunized from any criticism by aggressive political correctness\(^\text{21}\).

Politicians (whose purpose in life is to be re-elected) would have had to be very courageous to oppose the diktats of \textit{le pouvoir social}. All the more so since multiculturalism was an invention of the state, and that it spent immense resources propagandizing this ideology. It is not that the population had been ‘persuaded’ that immigration had a positive impact, or that diversity for the sake of diversity was good: they were brainwashed, these views simply became givens because


\(^{21}\) For a general discussion of the ways in which people and organizations may manipulate categories, norms and ideals, see George A. Akerlof & Rachel E. Kranton, Identity Economics. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2010, 124ff.
they had been promoted assiduously by the state as the Canadian way. Any opposition to them met with a certain amount of social odium. So it is abusive to speak of a consensus: it did not emerge by immaculate conception, but as the result of its being manufactured. This canonical view persisted because massive indiscriminate immigration, diversity as a primary good, and the philosophy of multiculturalism have been marshalled very aggressively and deceptively by interest groups and a clerisy of naïve progressive Canadians. Their deception is why Canadian citizens support that policy.

This extraordinary décervelage appears to have been perpetrated deliberately and cleverly with a view to eradicating the notion of a Canadian common public culture, to dissolving Canada’s cultural traits into a vast soup, and to shaping Canadians into shapeless selves – ‘citizens of the world’ (Cohen 2007: 160). One is reminded of the advertising brochure circulated by a 1980s Secretary of State that advised prospective immigrants that they could bring their own culture with them to Canada because Canada had no culture of its own!

Swamping the Canadian population and the Canadian common public culture was part of Pierre Trudeau’s design in his visceral opposition to any form of nationalism. The consequences have been to lead Canada through a process of erosion (dissolution) of the Canadian common public culture.

Canadians have been re-programmed. It is now politically incorrect to hold the views they held in the 1980s, and so Canadians no longer reveal them. Therefore, one may question the meaningfulness of the Canadian consensus on such issues. What the polls are harvesting is nothing more than the results generated by the brainwashing engineered over the previous few decades.

It is interesting, in closing this section, to note two flats or sharps that might be regarded as messages of hope because they would appear to give signs that the process of manufacturing of the new consensus may not be as successful and permanent as might have been anticipated. There are signs that cracks in this consensus are beginning to emerge.

First, the only region of the country where the massive and indiscriminate immigration policy is now being openly questioned these days (and indeed where decisions have been taken in 2011 to reduce albeit modestly – some 10% – the official immigration flows) is Quebec. It so happens that this is also the only segment of the country where multiculturalism is openly contested. This decision to reduce the immigration flow has been proposed even though mass immigration might be regarded as a way for Quebec to maintain its political and linguistic valence within Canada – a not unimportant concern of Quebec politicians. The fact that Quebec, despite these latter concerns, has chosen to cut the immigration flows might reveal both the end of the blind faith in the deceptive discourse of immigration activists and the relatively lesser grip of the multicultural pouvoir social on this front.22

---

22 For a recent analysis of the Quebec scene making reference to many of the issues raised above, see Mathieu Bock-Côté, Aux origines du malaise politique québécois http://bock-cote.net Avril 2010-Juin 2011.
Second, one may take some consolation from the very recent polling data: it may turn out that the evidence marshalled by the experts is finally getting through to citizens. The 2010 data from Environics show that there has been what might be regarded as the beginning of another significant reversal in the making: between 2008 and 2010: the percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement that there is too much immigration has grown from 33% to 40%, and the percentage of those disagreeing has slipped from 63% to 56% (see annex).

It is obviously too early to conjecture that this is the beginning of a trend, but it may suggest that the disinformation and the propaganda that I claim are very much at the basis of the manufactured public opinion may begin to give signs of not being entirely immune any longer to the forces of evidence.

A frontal attack on this wicked problem may be counter-productive

Many researchers (among which colleagues of the Centre for Immigration Policy Reform have been important) have observed the pathologies of governance in the immigration policy regime, and have become extremely concerned about the dynamics at play. They have urged a frontal attack on the regime before it was felt that Canadian politicians were leading Canadian society into an abyss. The frustration of those critics is understandable, but la frustration est mauvaise conseillère. This issue domain is fraught with deep-rooted beliefs that may be groundless but that have been manufactured over decades by le pouvoir social, aided by state engineering.

As a result, experts have been notoriously unsuccessful (or at the very least very slow) in becoming a countervailing force in the face of the general pro-immigration and multiculturalist narrative developed since the early 1970s in Canada, and ever more aggressively in the aftermath of the adoption of the Charter of Rights. It is my view that the present dynamics has taken such a hold on the Canadian scene that a frontal attack is bound to fail.

It would simply elicit accusations of racism and nativism, and would not succeed in swaying governments that see in this new policy a way to capture the votes of immigrants. In particular, acting frontally would be too politically destabilizing for governments. At a time when the new Harper government was elected in May 2011 with the support of 57.5% of the votes of immigrants and 54.1% of the votes of visible minorities, it would appear unwise for those impatient to see reforms in the immigration and refugee policies to suggest that it is a crusade that the new government could easily be persuaded of supporting.

What is required is obliquity: recognition that, in the face of complex wicked policy problems, goals are often best achieved indirectly. This does not require that one lose track of the main challenges, but it demands that awareness of the complexity of the environment be factored in – mental prisons, immigration industry powers, deep rooted myths, political parties being been

---

23 A measure of the resilience of the myth of the positive economic impact mass immigration might be that it has had toxic effects in many places that one would have regarded as naturally immune to such fantasies. I have heard at the annual meeting of the Canadian Economics Association in June 2011 that the Conference Board of Canada has joined the phalanx of the believers and that it now is developing scenarios of 350,000 and 450,000 new official immigrants per year for Canada.

24 John Ibbitson, “Tories are rebels in search of a cause” Globe & Mail June 6, 2011, A4

carried into competitive exaggeration on the immigration front, etc. In the face of such a dynamic, the best bet may be to scheme virtuously by acting in an oblique fashion.26

Scheming virtuously on three fronts: a very quick sketch

What I suggest is a guerilla action: (1) destroying myths; (2) proposing practical ways to deal with tractable administrative problems that could be dealt with without political fallout, and might serve as a Trojan horse to accomplish the goal of reducing the massive and indiscriminate immigration flows; and (3) working at developing a social movement.

On the first front, analytical and critical thinking is the sine qua non. The work of the study of Dubreuil & Marois27 of the Quebec scene could be regarded as a model. It has exposed the myths of the major economic benefits and of the demographically corrective power of massive indiscriminate immigration. Its findings were widely reported in the media because their work was not perceived as advocacy, but as myth busting. Indeed, most of their book has focused on exposing these myths. They have also added a few case studies exposing the immense flaws of the operations of the current immigration regime as a source of waste and flagrant ineffectiveness in certain precise areas (e.g. immigrant investor program). The clarity and detached tone of their work has attracted the attention of the mainstream media that usually ignore strident frontal attacks on the conventional wisdom. Much material available in the literature could be used in this manner to undermine the foundations of many other myths in good currency.

It is not clear whether this timely study – built on research done over the last few decades in Quebec and elsewhere – has had an impact on the proposal by the Quebec government to reduce the flow of immigrants, but one would like to believe that it has.

On the second front, what is needed is a very precise and detailed cahier de doléances, explicitly defining the Kafkaesque dimensions of the immigration policy regime as it operates now, and putting forward very detailed, precise and practical propositions on how to correct these flaws. In all cases, like the modification of the flawed screening and selection of immigrants (as well as other such mechanisms), the corrective proposals must be formulated in a manner that show them to be technically feasible, socially acceptable, implementable and not too politically destabilizing.28

Many such changes may be effected without much fanfare and could make a significant difference. A provisional list of key points that would deserve special attention might be:

- tighter selection for highly skilled workers and occupations in high demand
- requirement for face to face interviews of all applicants by visa officers

27 Benoît Dubreuil & Guillaume Marois, op.cit.
• more emphasis on the knowledge of French and English
• limitations to be imposed on family class and chain immigration
• discontinue visas to professionals that have not met Canadian standards

Work on this second front is not likely to progress if the conversation remains at the level of evasive thinking and vague complaints. What is required here is a re-engineering of the immigration and refugee policy regimes.

One cannot expect reasonable practical solutions to be proposed by well-meaning but ill-informed bystanders. This is a front on which the technical expertise of personnel with direct experience of these processes – like James Bissett who ran the system for a while – will be required.\(^{29}\)

In this work, the tactical transformations at the administrative level (on the second front) might be regarded as a sort of Trojan horse helping to get obliquely at the massive indiscriminate immigration issue by exposing grievous flaws in the administrative and operational process that most citizens can readily understand, appreciate, and denounce. Among issues that might serve in this work are

• security concerns
• unreasonable accommodations that challenge the Canadian ethos
• growing ghettoization in Canada
• growing difficulties of integration as new cohorts fare worse and worse
• radicalization in Canada of young immigrants
• threats to the social fabric
• threats to our welfare state

On the third front, the task has much to do with organization and the fostering of emergent publics: calling attention to problems of social importance and engaging persons in discussion and debates about immigration and diversity. This is the task of public intellectuals – to create new forums, bring new actors onto the scene, and “make questionable what has previously not been questioned and thereby open up larger areas of social life to public discussion, decision, and action.”\(^{30}\)

This construction task is of necessity Himalayan: this entails engaging in an exercise in seriously attenuating the degree of cognitive dissonance in this issue domain, in bringing to light assumptions the group is not aware it is making, and in trying to effect cultural and identity change by transforming the norms in good currency and the reference points, so as to align them

---

\(^{29}\) For a more detailed discussion of these administrative pathologies and of ways to correct them, see James Bissett, op.cit. 2009. In particular, it will be interesting to see if the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision (about Canadian sponsors of immigrating family members who have agreed to support these newcomers for the first three years having to reimburse governments for expenditures incurred and benefits received by the sponsored party) will generate a humane but forceful pressure for such reimbursement or if this legitimate claim will not be seriously enforced. The nature of the response may have a significant impact (or not) on the flow on sponsored immigrants.

\(^{30}\) Ian Angus, Emergent Publics. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing 2001, 65; also Gilles Paquet, Scheming Virtuously… op. cit. Conclusion.
better with what would be regarded as a sounder appreciation of the environment, and a lesser degree of false consciousness.

This is a long term project. One cannot overnight change a culture or correct some distortions that have been decades in the making. The project also needs to build on a position that is both strategically offensive in aiming to discredit the prevailing ideology, but also strategically inclusive in finding ways to appeal to all reasonable persons capable of a scintilla of critical thinking.

Conclusion

Colleagues may regard this approach as too prudent and modest an approach to a situation that many perceive as a looming major disaster for Canada: an irreversible loss of control of Canada’s destiny – as the percentage of foreign-born Canadians continues to increase, and to command yet more accelerated immigration rates, whatever the consequences. Yet, given the mortgage of disinformation and deception over the last 25 years, and the identity redefinition that has been carried out surreptitiously, this may be the only way. A more aggressive approach is likely to backfire. In the short run, the Trojan horse approach would appear to be the most promising strategy. Tinkering with the selection process and all the technical apparatus of the immigration and refugees regimes to make them more meaningful and effective would undoubtedly lead to a reduction in the immigration flows without fanfare. The cultural change in the long run has to do with consciousness-raising, nurturing emergent publics, and engaging in a redefinition of identity. This is not an easy task and it will take time.

In this sort ofendeavour, the philosophy echoed in an old jazz ballad of Bob Russell (often sung by Billie Holliday) would appear to be wise: “the difficult we’ll do right now, the impossible may take a little while…”

---

31 This is a situation that prevails almost everywhere but the case of Canada is most egregious. The Economist Me, Myself and Them May 14, 2011, pp. 75-76.
Majority disagree that there is too much immigration, but recent spike in concern
1977 - 2010

Response to the statement IMMIGRATION LEVELS ARE TOO HIGH
QUESTION : Do you agree or disagree?
Results for the period from 1977 to 2010
