



Immigration: For Young Citizens

by

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Immigration to Canada is in chaos. The federal government's response to the problems has been to shuffle much of its responsibility to provincial governments and to employers recruiting for ostensibly temporary work. In the resulting confusion, the national purpose for immigration is lost.

Some easements, such as better settlement services and language upgrading, are widely urged but little done. At best, they are only band-aids. Fundamental changes are needed.

Mobility's winners and losers

Accepted opinion on immigration is more about how it was, not how it is. Until the 1930s it was chiefly the movement of Old Europe's poor to land and opportunity in the New World. Even a generation ago Canada's openness to newcomers was claimed to be part of our vaunted role as good guys in a naughty world. Today Canadian immigration practice is more widely seen as the narrow-minded bumbling of an administration out of touch with the realities of contemporary mobility.

To be again constructive, we need to change. The obstacle is the timid short sight of politicians of all parties.

The timidity is easy to understand. In some cities, concentrated groups of fairly recent immigrants, eager to grow with relatives and friends, are lobby groups strong enough to shift seats between Liberal and Conservative. Elsewhere the public sentiment in favour of immigration is broad but by no means strong. While few dare to be openly critical of immigration, all politicians are aware that a controversial case can readily stir concerns for security and for jobs. The dominant hope is that saying as little as possible about immigration will keep the dog asleep.

Short sight, however, is getting harder to maintain. It comes from the misunderstanding of globalisation by both business managements and trade unions. They see it as more trade, closer economic ties. Increasingly, what is more significant is that societies know each other better and grow more alike.

With that, immigration is no longer the concern chiefly of newer countries with room for more people. Mobility, in or out, is now important for the welfare of people everywhere.

Among them, however, are losers as well as winners. Demand is strongest for highly educated people, and they can best adjust to a new country. We seek them out. We compete with Australia and others to be the big winners from mobility.

The losers are the people left behind. The cost of educating a doctor, say, is a much larger burden on South Africa's national income than on ours. If the doctors emigrate, their nurture and education become an investment that has failed, a use of scarce resources that has

produced no return. As an international transaction, it is foreign aid in reverse, provided by poorer to richer.

That is no less true if the migrant's post-secondary education has been obtained in Canada. Universities charge foreign students high fees, generally paid by parents. They are a diversion of income away from the home country. Apologists for the way things are point out that there is a reverse flow. Migrants send remittances home. The argument is a modern version of the old colonialism, the pretence that some supportive inflow can make the development of their own societies and economies a matter of secondary concern for poorer nations (and aboriginal communities).

Critics of conventional foreign aid, from rich to poor, rightly complain of waste arising from corruption and inefficiency in recipient countries. No inefficiency is more indefensible, however, than the case of the immigrant taken from professional practice in his or her home country but denied it here, whom we employ only to drive a taxi or wait at a restaurant table.

In sum, the mobility that is inherent in globalisation comes with some harsh effects. This is in no way to say that we could or should clamp down on it. But it is to say that an immigration policy fitted to today's world must recognise, and include light for, the dark side of mobility.

Youth is the priority

Without external reinforcement, our population will soon stop growing and before long significantly decline. The easy assumption is that immigration will fix the problem. It will not, if it continues to be immigration as we know it, of the present composition and size.

The professional and skilled people we seek are mostly past youth if not already middle-aged, and some are followed by parents, even grandparents. The median age of immigrants is therefore little less than that of present Canadians. Consequently, it will be many decades before we stop being an ageing society. Immigration as it is will not lessen the handicap that the diminution of youth imposes on our society and economy.

Much thinking about public policy is poorly adjusted to the new pace of technological change. Skills that serve today will soon be outdated. An economy such as ours will be competitively productive only if it is in the forefront of some of the changes. For that the need is not so much the abilities of our 40-year-olds as the flexibility of their following generation. And it is of youth that we have increasingly too little. The productivity in which Canada is most seriously deficient is of babies.

Over 40 years ago a new, intellectual Prime Minister decreed that his government should give organised thought to the big issues of the future. My assignment was the demographic study. The great decline in fertility had then only recently begun. The common opinion – including, as it turned out, Trudeau's own – was that easy contraception was producing a temporary shift; women

would soon return to wanting two babies or more. I came to a different conclusion, and accordingly suggested a future in which the ideal immigrant to Canada would be an orphan child from what we then called the Third World.

That was a provocative exaggeration. There is no single ideal category of immigrant. The national interest is best served by a varying mix of newcomers. But it was becoming true 40 years ago that we needed more youth in the mix. Fertility has since fallen far below the population replacement level.

I shall point later to a particular group of orphans who could be of some help to us. More generally, we need young families. They are the readiest substitute for missing Canadian babies. They are needed both for the strength of our economy and the vitality of our society. And the younger some of the children are, the more of their nurture and education is in Canada, the less unequal are the international consequences of mobility.

Benefit to other countries is not, however, a major harvester of votes. Nor, indeed, is strength for the Canadian economy 20 years down the road, when an influx of the very young today would yield its payoff. Realistically, politicians can act on a long, broad view of immigration policy only if it can be made also to serve Canada's present interests. The search has to be for an efficiently balanced policy.

Shuffled responsibility

That is more difficult today than when immigration policy was last thoroughly reshaped, 43 years ago. Two fundamentals were then readily agreed. The social revolution of the 1960s produced consensus, bridging almost all conservative as well as left-wing opinion, that every trace of past racial discrimination, which had quietly survived even a decade earlier, must now go. And with that there was broad acceptance of the need to devise a selection process that was not only colour-blind but objective in the way it judged how diverse applicants were most likely to adapt to life and work in Canada.

The result was the so-called "points" system, adapted from the assessment scoring used for some jobs. It particularly related the potential immigrant's qualifications to the kinds of employment currently available as well as to level of education. For some years, it worked quite well. But, as happens so often, success produced complacency. Why worry, why make changes, why increase the resources of the immigration department, when the flow of likely applicants was running far ahead of the rate at which we wanted people to come?

In this atmosphere, government made light of both the dynamism and the restrictions of the labour market. The restrictions, varying province by province, relate to the recognition of foreign professional and trade qualifications and experience. The dynamism means that, increasingly, the jobs into which newcomers could fit easily last year are not the jobs calling for more workers today. The "points" selection process can work well only if assessments by it are both

detailed and timely. They have not been. There is now an overwhelming backlog of some 900,000 unprocessed applications.

An under-resourced department cannot cope. The escape has been to relieve it of much of its task. Who does or does not come to work in Canada is now largely determined not by national authority but by private industry and provincial governments.

The provincial role has, legally, pre-confederation roots. The former colonies had had their separate authority to admit people. One of the fudges that went into the writing of the BNA Act was to retain the provincial power but subordinate it to federal jurisdiction. Henceforth people were admitted to the new Canada, free then to move between provinces as they wished. In that spirit immigration was, for more than a century, treated without challenge as a federal responsibility. Provincial governments might advertise welcomes to newcomers, but who could come was strictly Ottawa's business.

The change began with Quebec, to which the Mulroney government in 1991 gave power to select "economic" immigrants to the province. In the course of the last decade all the other provinces have followed. Under the agreements, each can determine an unlimited number of "nominees" whom it considers fitted to the needs of its industries and services. Ottawa undertakes their quick admission, subject only to health and security standards.

In 1999 only 477 of the immigrants who came to Canada were provincially selected. In 2008 the influx was 22,417, close to 50 times greater. Ottawa makes room for them by cutting admissions under its own points system. It will now consider only restricted categories of new applicants. So humiliating is the withdrawal from responsibility that some people refused by the federal department are told that they might get admission by applying instead to a province.

The present trend means that within a year or two fully 80 percent of the people coming to Canada to work as permanent residents will be here on the authority of a provincial government. This is the transformation perpetrated by politicians shuffling off responsibility for the consequences of their ineptitude. A Conservative government began the process, Liberals took it up, under Harper it has been vastly accelerated. It is outrageous.

Immigration is a national interest. It is to Canada that people come, then to move within it as they will, to participate in the country as a whole, most to move on from residency to citizenship of Canada. Certainly the selection must take account of our cultural and economic diversities. Provincial governments should therefore be fully consulted. But the decisions about new Canadians are national business.

An opposition with any character would make that commitment. An opposition with any ability would have no trouble rousing public opinion to feel the national interest in how our society grows and our economy is strengthened.

Temporaries

The shuffle of responsibility to the provinces is only one element in the present confusion. Legally, immigrants are people admitted to permanent residence, free to live and work as they will and can, to travel abroad and return without further sanction. Temporary residents, by contrast, are subject to major restrictions. Agricultural workers, admitted only for a season, were the main category. They were followed by live-in caregivers. Now temporaries may be doing almost any kind of work, from highly specialised to low-skilled labour.

This variety is also the fruit of the federal government having become, over the past decade, helpless in face of the backlog of immigrant applications. Frustrated employers justifiably complained about the long delays in obtaining clearance even for greatly needed workers. The government's way of living a quieter life was again to shift responsibility, this time to the private sector. It acquiesces easily with assertions that vacant jobs can be filled only by recruiting outside Canada. In effect, employers select people to whom, if they come to do the specified work, the immigration department issues residence permission for up to two years.

Some of these recruits make significant contributions to productive industry. They do special, urgent work for which no Canadian could be found in time. Often, however, special and temporary are misnomers. Continuing jobs are filled by a succession of "temps." Much of the work could soon be done by presently unemployed or under-employed Canadians if training and finance for relocation were more available. Temporary admissions are, in large part, a way to avoid the development and efficient use of our existing human resources.

They also create social problems that undermine the public acceptance of immigrants. Some are seen to be here simply because they are cheaper than Canadians. Since their presence in Canada depends on keeping their jobs, many are vulnerable to exploitation. They become more so if they go underground when their legal residence expires.

So, popular though they are in some workplaces and houses, most temporary workers do not serve the national interest. Nevertheless, government has increasingly grasped at them. Admissions of temporary workers have lately been increasing by around 15 percent each year.

The universities have also helped to ease the political problems of immigration. Their straitened finances lead them eagerly to seek fee-paying foreign students, who are automatically granted temporary residence.

The combined result is that in 2007, for the first time, more people were admitted as temporary than as permanent residents. The excess seems destined to grow, particularly as Ottawa has lately moved to make temporary status the easiest position from which to qualify later for permanency.

Businesses, universities, householders have their own interests in recruiting people for their particular purposes. They are not responsible for the national interest in developing all the

capabilities of committed Canadians. Responsibility for that effort lies with national government. It calls for a sharp reversal from the growth of temporary residence. That should continue, certainly, for students and for people with specialised talents needed for genuinely temporary purposes. For all other workers, it should be much more tightly limited to urgent jobs that otherwise cannot be done.

Alarm bells should be ringing. The federal immigration department is well on the way to becoming little more than a bureaucracy rubber-stamping decisions made primarily by others, provincial and private. It could be left with only two independent functions. One is the routine business of issuing visas to those visitors from whom they are required. The other is to cope with people who turn up at Canadian borders, in airports or territorial waters, without prior authorisation of any kind but claim to be entitled to stay because they are refugees from another country.

The special non-Canadians

The second of these functions would not in any case be easy. It has been made acutely difficult by the Supreme Court. There have been other judicial misinterpretations that perverted the intent of a democratic constitution, notably some made in the days when Canada was subject to the Law Lords at Westminster. None has worked more plainly against good government than the 1985 decision that the “everyone” of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not mean all the Canadians on whose behalf and for whom it was enacted. It means, the justices opined, anyone who happens at some moment to be physically in Canada and wanting to remain.

The justices thereby arrogantly used the Constitution of Canada, as they saw it, to create a special class of non-Canadians. The qualification is to have the money required for some way to get here. Then you have only to say that you are a refugee from some mistreatment and you have a very good chance of staying here, because you have the same rights to legal process that the Charter guarantees to Canadians.

The consequence, with burgeoning numbers and the congestion of judicial proceedings, is that appeals to stay in Canada can be dragged out for years. The initial claim to be a refugee from oppression may have been weak, but time will strengthen it. The person who has complained about his home country cannot in any case expect a warm welcome if sent back. For that reason, as well as because roots are put down, friends made and supporters enlisted, perhaps marriages consummated and children born, the humanitarian case against deportation becomes stronger the longer appeals are spun out.

The upshot is that the requirements of Canadian immigration law are now decisive only for people from another democratic, relatively rich country. For a Swede, say, to claim to be a refugee would be ridiculous. But for people from much of the world, it is enough somehow to get a foot here. The chances are that you will get to stay. They are particularly good if you can get expensive lawyers for all the subtleties of the legal battle. And even if that is eventually lost, you may well dodge deportation.

Such is now the word, internationally widespread, about the incompetence of Canada's immigration regime.

There is a worse consequence. Our immigration practice has again become as arbitrary and unfair as it was in the days supposedly behind us, in the days of racial and political discrimination. True, the motivation is now very different. In large part, it is humanitarian. It is sympathy with troubles plainly visible because they are those of people here, with supporters and media contacts.

No doubt most refugee claimants merit sympathy. But are their cases special because they managed to get here? There are in the world hundreds of thousands of displaced people, living often in miserable camps, driven from home by oppression, conflict, deprivation. That they are refugees needs no elaborate determination. Their plight is generally quite as bad as that of anyone who gets a claim before a Canadian court. In very many cases, it is more painful.

Champions of refugee claimants necessarily represent their critics as flint-hearted people using the other side of the street. The issue is different. It is how to do most good where it is most needed. The reason why we should end our concentration on refugee claims in Canada is that there are many people with stronger claims to our humanitarianism.

Notwithstanding

The government has tried in various ways to stem the use of refugee claims as the way to get residence in Canada for people who, if they followed regular immigration rules, would be far down the line of applicants. The efforts have had little effect. As long as the Supreme Court ruling prevails, ingenious entrepreneurs and lawyers will find holes in any defences that bureaucrats can contrive. There will be no firm base for fair and efficient immigration until politicians have the courage to face down the justices of the Court.

If they will, they can. If they could not, we would never have had a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It was agreed only with the inclusion of the "notwithstanding" provision that empowers Parliament and provincial legislatures to enact laws contrary to the Court's interpretation of the Charter.

The power has been extensively used by Quebec, partly for purposes disliked in other parts of the country. Sensitive to that public opinion, federal politicians have fought shy of even discussing applications of the notwithstanding power. Certainly its use is not to be taken lightly, without regard to the danger that some day it might be used to limit the freedoms of Canadians. But no precedent for that would be created by legislation to ensure that getting off an aircraft or a boat does not give non-Canadians the constitutional rights of Canadians. To put an end to this practice would simply restore the sovereignty in our own affairs that the Supreme Court has ingloriously thrown aside.

In its defence, it should be remembered that in the days when the minds of the justices were perhaps formed, our immigration was disgraced by arbitrary bureaucracy. But it is more than 40 years since that was cured by an appeals procedure. Unwisely, it was replaced by the present amateurish and clumsy structure of boards. There is ample precedent for establishing instead an independent, professional tribunal, adequately staffed, designed specifically to hear only refugee claims, and to hear them fully. That is enough. Continuing appeals to the courts by non-Canadians are not part of Canada's freedoms, nor of our international obligation to refugees. The tribunal's decisions could and should be final. All that is required is the courage of politicians to use the notwithstanding power as it was intended, to replace a lawyer-bred contrivance by simple legislation for the public interest.

Some orphans, no grannies

The aim, it must for emphasis be repeated, is in no way to cut down the number of refugees we take in. It is to help more of them, in the way that also fits Canada's population needs.

The lives that are most deeply blighted by conflict and deprivation are those of uprooted children, the orphaned most of all. Their nurture, their health and education, is surely among the most pressing of humanitarian causes. In large part, it is best provided as close as possible to home, with the support of more fortunate countries' foreign aid programs. But often that can be hardly more than relief, providing little promise for the children's future. Some would have much brighter prospects in Canada.

They would also most directly serve the purpose for which immigration is vital to Canada, providing a continuing offset to the progressive decline in our ratio of young to old.

The nurture of orphan immigrants would be, of course, the responsibility of the federal government, though there would be couples eager and qualified to have the role transferred to them. Otherwise the non-profit private sector could be utilised, on the lines of the experienced work of SOS Children's Villages. From either base, the children would merge into the public school system. Not the least advantage of youthful immigrants is that acceptance is generally readier, integration into the new society easier, than for many adults.

While the cost per child would be considerable, even the most market-oriented economists now recognise that investment in human capital is key to improving productivity. Like investment in physical resources, its various forms provide returns over different time periods. Skills training of existing workers is quickest and should have higher priority than it is generally given. The importance of post-secondary education is now widely understood, but its quality depends on prior education, reaching back to early childhood development.

In that we are laggards. Until we do more for present Canadian children, a leap to major investment in young immigrants would be neither morally appropriate nor politically practicable.

That is not, however, an argument against taking first steps. Recruitment of displaced orphans could begin as a small, experimental program. But if well organised, and paced with improved early childhood care in general, it could grow into an excellent long-term investment in strengthening the productivity of an economy threatened by fewer and older workers having to support more retirees.

Immigration policy could further contribute to lessening that threat by reform at the other end of the age scale. Hitherto, immigrant workers have come not only with their direct dependants, spouses and children. They are able to sponsor a following of parents and grandparents.

That is a direct offset to the good immigration does for our ageing society. In the past it was, nevertheless, a humanitarian necessity. Family solidarity was commonly reflected in the generations living close to each other. Now, however, within Canada they are often far apart. Internationally, with the contemporary ease of communication and travel, there can be no set expectation that the older generation will feel need to follow the younger in a change of country. In today's mobile world, we do not have to go on treating that sequence as a right of passage.

In fact we are not doing so. The immigration department is engaged in one of its shuffles. Immigrants can still apply to sponsor their elders. But they have a long wait for an answer. Administrative guidelines now give the processing of such applications the lowest of all the burdened department's low priorities.

That is to say, the government of Canada unashamedly keeps elderly people in uncertainty about their future. Officialdom is not often so arrogantly indifferent to people. The pretence should stop. There should be a clean change of policy, an open announcement that elderly relatives can no longer be sponsored for residence in Canada.

New selectivity

When the federal government takes back its proper responsibility for immigration, there will be distractions to avoid. One is the international competition for outstanding people. Brilliant research scientists, as well as proven innovators and entrepreneurs, can nowadays work wherever they think their talents will for the present be best exercised. What Canada can offer them is restricted not only by the relatively small range and scale of our industries but also by the nature of their ownership. Transnational corporations do most of their research and innovation close to headquarters rather than in subsidiaries. Canada's attractiveness to outstanding people therefore depends largely on the discerning direction of ample public finance for research. We should not fall into thinking that any immigration favours can be an effective substitute.

Equally, we should not think that the immigration department can develop new foresight for what activities will require more workers in future. Particular qualifications are less significant than adaptability. Realism also requires recognition that Canadian employers will not stop discounting education and work experience obtained in other countries. Formal restrictions to

the recognition of foreign qualifications can be removed only to the extent that provincial governments are persuaded to exercise their authority over professional associations and trade unions. A federal government considerate of people may still need to warn some professionals that in Canada they could perforce be driving taxis or waiting at restaurant tables.

Realism in the assessment of potential immigrants can therefore be readily summed up: fewer points should be given for experience, more should be given for youth. A reasonable level for the maximum would be aged 20 to 25. Extra points could be added for offspring. In so far as there can truly be said now to be ideal immigrants, they are young families.

Post-secondary education, up to a bachelor degree or its close equivalent, is also valuable, but not as crucial as academic and official opinions nowadays tend to assert. The new economy calls, and will continue to call, for many less skilled workers. The great change made by technology is that even routine jobs require a level of numeracy and literacy far higher than in the even recent past. For that reason, immigrant assessment should involve a test, not accept a claim, of simple competence in one of our languages.

Relatives, friends and employers provide the best early help to settle into a new environment, but it is not universally given or sustained. A federal policy effectively friendly to immigration requires Ottawa to ensure that adequate public services are available both for settlement assistance and for upgrading in Canadian languages and work practices.

The revised assessment procedure, together with a new basic requirement to be proposed next, should not only be made public but should be transmitted directly to all the people outside Canada whose applications have so far gone unassessed. They should be asked to reply yes or no to a direct enquiry whether they still want to come to Canada. The backlog might thereby be considerably thinned; it cannot responsibly be left to moulder.

Other administrative reforms should follow. Computerisation could record all crossings of our borders, in or out, in a form that provides readily accessible information as to who has come and stayed, legally or not. It would then be practicable also to strengthen the enforcement of deportation orders.

Citizens only

Immigration will better serve Canada's current interests if most of the newcomers are young families. It is also crucial that most identify with Canada. For that, a fundamental change is needed. The first step to immigration should be a declared, signed intent to be a Canadian citizen.

Hitherto a "landed immigrant" has been a person admitted to permanent residence. That status continues for three (it used to be five) years. Thereafter the immigrant can choose to seek, and if modest qualification requirements are met, receive Canadian citizenship. But if he or she

chooses not to apply, or fails to qualify, to be a citizen, the entitlement to permanent residence continues unchanged.

This indifference has been shaped by history. Canada was 80 years old before it had any citizens. Until 1947, your nationality, your right to participate in the democratic affairs of Canada, was that of a British subject. Canadians had hardly become accustomed to their own citizenship when the fashionable attitudes of sophisticated people began to be that nationalism was narrow, old-fashioned prejudice; in the global village national states would wither and we should think of ourselves as “citizens of the world.”

That could come, eventually. Now, and for a long time ahead, government is national. And far from shrinking, government necessarily becomes more pervasively active. The close connections fashioned by contemporary technology mean that we can live and work together, can breathe and eat, can move and be informed, only thanks to tighter social rules, more detailed laws.

Certainly the independence of national governments is constrained by the necessities of international co-operation, but those necessities are themselves part of the growth of government. They thereby underline the importance to us individually of having democratic involvement in the affairs of our country; in short, of citizenship.

It is true that the significance of citizenship is changing. More people are citizens of one country but live in another. Dual citizenship – by choice or legal necessity keeping an old one after acquiring another – has become increasingly common. Those trends will not be reversed. What they bring into question, however, is not the importance of citizenship but the wisdom of how we relate it to immigration.

A democracy cannot thrive without some widely shared sense of community, developed in history by things done together, by the sense of a role in the world that distinguishes us somewhat from other countries. Across Canada that identity had to be built despite great diversities of people and place. It should not be diluted.

It is diluted by people who do not wish to participate in Canada, who prefer to live among us as passengers. True, permanent residents pay their fares, in the form of taxes, and get Canadian public services in return. But they have no vote to influence what the services are, what taxes we pay, how we take part in the world. Their loyalties, if any, are elsewhere. Any views they advance in Canadian politics are most often on what we should do for or about their former countries. In that some are strident, but the interests they seek to promote may not be those of Canada.

The objection, it must be emphasised, is not to dual citizenship. Even when regrettable, it may not be avoidable. The objection is to not wanting citizenship where you have the rights of permanent residence. It is to preferring legal identification with another country alone.

My proposal therefore is that immigration should mean admission to live in Canada for two years only. It would require a signed recognition that, if you do not apply and qualify for citizenship within that period, your residence status ends. That could well be followed by a grace period, within which to arrange your next move, back or on. Up to a year would be a generous allowance, but during that time you would be not a resident but a visitor, without entitlement either to receive public services or, except in special cases, to have employment. If within that time – within, that is, three years from the initial date of admission – you did not leave Canada, you would be deported.

Making citizenship the requirement for staying cannot, of course, ensure a change of heart. Some newcomers will still be uninterested in Canadian affairs. Some will remain most concerned for their countries of birth. A few may still treat Canada as no more than a safe haven from which to participate, even violently, in old political conflicts.

The point of requiring citizenship is, first, that it would end, in the eyes of the world, Canada's apparent tolerance for such misplaced loyalties. Second, their exercise requires a group of adherents and sympathisers. That was made painfully apparent by the Air India bombing, not only in the way it was perpetrated but in the subsequent failure to bring the perpetrators to justice. While Canadian citizenship would not deter determined practitioners of racial violence, it could give pause to some of those on the fringe of terrorism. At least it would improve the odds of moderating old concerns by a more active integration with Canada.

It is also important that the citizenship requirement could lessen the danger of Canadian public opinion turning against immigrants from troubled countries. Much as we have been enriched by multicultural immigration, recent politics in generally tolerant European countries must stand as warning that, in the heightened uncertainty that rapid change brings to jobs and ways of life, we cannot complacently assume that we will remain free from opposition to newcomers. Requiring that they can come only to be citizens is, in the contemporary troubled world, one of the policies that would help to safeguard the cherished peace, order and good government of Canadian society.

Needless to say, the citizenship rule could apply only to people arriving after the law was changed, not retroactively to those already here. For the future, some related changes are desirable. It will soon be 50 years since we gave ourselves our own flag. Surely we can now find distinctive words for a citizenship oath appropriate to a temporarily diverse society. The qualifying examination for citizenship could well be somewhat stiffened, requiring more knowledge of Canada, provided there is the improvement in settlement services and language upgrading noted earlier.

Taxpayers all

Our indifference to the citizenship of immigrants contributes to another international disorder: tax evasion. This, however, is a trouble that can be readily lessened, if we have the

political will to identify tax liability with citizenship. The United States now does so. We could.

Taxes are paid where you live, to the government that provides public services you use. If you are a Canadian living in another country, that is the end of the matter. You have no liability to pay Canadian income tax.

Foreign residence does not, however, deprive people of rights of Canadian citizenship. Most enjoy the convenience of Canadian passports. They are entitled to our consular services. They require no formalities to re-enter Canada at any time, to stay or to visit.

The consequence was made painfully evident a few years ago, when sudden war erupted in Lebanon. Our embassy was besieged by thousands of people demanding rescue at the expense of Canadian taxpayers. The Prime Minister even diverted his aircraft to take a few of them across the Atlantic in royal style.

This Lebanon affair illustrated the use of Canada to provide a passport of convenience, an insurance against misfortune. Such tenuous connection is of no benefit to the rest of us, though it is sometimes feebly advertised as creating trade connections. If they are honest connections that Canadian firms cannot make anyway, our businesses are in a poor way indeed. Any real benefit is trivial compared with the harm that is done by encouraging titular Canadians to remain more concerned with other countries.

Canada's interest is to insist on the responsibilities that come with the rights of citizenship. The identification can be plainly established only if residence outside Canada does not remove the obligation to make a Canadian tax return of income from all sources.

In most cases, where we have a tax treaty with the other country, payments to it would be deducted from the assessed liability to Canada. But if the citizen is living in a tax haven or a country of uncertain tax collection, the assessment would be for the full amount of Canadian tax. Since an outsider citizen does not have a province of residence, the amount would be the federal tax plus provincial tax reckoned at its average rate across the country. That supplementary part of the revenue could be passed on to provinces in ratio to their populations, or by some other agreed formula.

In fairness, the due date for making a tax return from outside should be later than April 30. If it was missed even so, there would be prompt international notice that the delinquent's Canadian passport was no longer valid. If the delinquency continued for a second year, it would be reasonable to withdraw citizenship acquired by naturalization. Citizenship by birth cannot be removed (except, for example, by the wish of someone wanting to become a British Lord), but the offender would become ineligible for a passport; if he or she attempted to return to Canada, even for a visit, the entry would be to arrest or would be denied, until the arrears had been settled.

No doubt the sanctions would not be in all cases decisive. Some people would not think their Canadian connection worth the money. Losing them would be no grief to the nation.

In sum

The changes suggested in this paper would refashion immigration policy to suit the times. The proposals can be summarised in 12 items.

1. The basic requirement for immigrant admission should be intent to become a Canadian citizen. There would be no grant of permanent residency otherwise. If you did not become a citizen within two years of being a landed immigrant, you could remain, for one more year at most, only as a visitor. If you tried to stay longer, you would be deported.
2. The selection system should give more weight to youth and general education, less to work experience obtained outside Canada.
3. We should end the entitlement of immigrants to sponsor a following of parents and grandparents.
4. Temporary residence should be limited to students and to workers specially needed for genuinely temporary jobs, thereby ending what is now the recruitment by some employers of cheaper immigrants for continuing work that could be done by unemployed or under-employed Canadians.
5. Provincial governments should be generously consulted about immigration, but the present delegation of selection to them should cease.
6. Both the rights and the responsibilities of citizenship should be better identified. In particular, residence outside Canada should not relieve people from the liability to make an income tax return here. Delinquents would have their passports promptly invalidated, and could not return to Canada without settling their tax arrears. Repeated delinquency would result in cancellation of citizenship acquired by naturalization.
7. Computerisation should record all entrances and exits in a form that provides readily accessible information about the status of recent movers.
8. Procedures and personnel to enforce deportation orders should be strengthened.
9. Our refugee policy should become active instead of passive. There are multitudes of refugees in poor countries where their prospects are dismal. Many among them are young families with the potential to become valuable Canadian citizens.

10. If we helped some of those undoubted refugees, we could stop our present favouring of people with the money to get here, in disregard of our entry requirements. Their claims to refugee status should be promptly examined by an independent tribunal. Its decisions would be made final by using the “notwithstanding” provision of the Constitution to set aside the Supreme Court’s imposition of prolonged judicial proceedings.
11. Deliberate recruitment of undoubted refugees would not only be more humanitarian than the slow processing of people who have contrived to be here. It could better offset the decline in our workforce, relative to older people, that creates the pressing need for young immigrants. Some of the refugees selected could be young orphans. This would have to begin as a small, experimental program but could grow into an important long-term investment.
12. When we take in professional and skilled workers, we are often depriving poorer countries of a return on their precious investment of their scarce resources. We should compensate for the foreign aid in reverse.

Conclusion

Such reforms would relieve federal politicians from much of the present trouble that immigration causes for them. Their implementation would be, however, a formidable task. It would disturb strongly entrenched interests and require a considerable upheaval in the administration of a weak department. As is commonly true of constructive policies, the costs would be current, the benefits largely longer term.

Again as is common, good policy is rooted in foresight. It will come only when driven by informed public discussion. To think that radical reform can come quickly would be naïve. Not to attempt it would be irresponsible. In the process, some of the proposals might well be improved. What is certain is that major change of such a kind will have to come, eventually, and the delay meantime will be costly for the welfare of Canadians.