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**The Birth of Canada's Multicultural Policy:
Plotting the Official Acceptance of Diversity**

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Canada's unique plural society provides us with many reasons to be proud of our country, but it also creates unique challenges. Issues concerning the distinct society of Quebec, regional economic disparity, the existence of many First Nations within our borders, and 'hyphenated citizenship' have been raised repeatedly in national discussions about the definition of the Canadian identity. Michael Adams (2009) puts this pluralism in a positive light when he says that 'we are coming to define a new sociological 'postmodernity' characterized by multiple, flexible roles and identities' (p.6), but there have been many who worry that a fragmented identity will lead to a fragmented country.

In 1971 Prime Minister Trudeau crafted a multicultural policy that acknowledged the range of cultural identities within our country rather than continuing to strive towards a national character based on British colonialism. To many today, this seems like a bold, positive move into the new postmodern reality of nationhood. However, some scholars believe that multiculturalism as a framework for postmodern citizenship is a failure. They point to recent reversal of multicultural policies in supposedly 'liberal' European countries like the Netherlands, where religious immigrants are often believed to be threatening national values of secular tolerance (Banting and Kymlicka, p.44). Some suggest that it is doomed to fail here as well, but there are many indicators that our unique cultural history and the demographics of our immigrant groups have allowed our multicultural policy to evolve throughout the years since its inception and will continue to do so to meet future challenges.

My paper will argue that Canadian multicultural policy was first conceived as a risky political compromise designed to placate the swelling numbers of 'ethnic' Canadians who felt that the Federal government was unfairly privileging French Quebecers. The Liberal implementation of official bilingualism in 1969 was a response to the findings of the Royal

Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, founded in 1963. Bilingualism policy was seen as a slap in the face to other ethnic groups who worried about maintaining their own homeland languages. The creation of the first multicultural policy was primarily designed to appease these groups; the government was much more concerned with the main problem of Quebec than on the ethnic fringe groups scattered throughout the country. But as Will Kymlicka (2008) suggests, by formally acknowledging the contributions of these 'other ethnic groups' through multiculturalism within a bilingual framework in 1971, Canada built a new foundation for our national identity.

I will begin with a brief literature review to examine some of the current themes within this paper. Although this paper primarily focuses on the political decisions made by the Canadian government between 1963 and 1978, I will include a brief history of post-Confederation settlement patterns in Canada's West in order to demonstrate the important regional aspect of ethnic diversity in our country. Multiculturalism was not just an 'ethnic' issue, but also a regional one. I will then touch on the volatile political climate in Quebec in the mid-1960s to add context to the creation of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which was implemented by Prime Minister Pearson in 1963. The fourth volume of the report published by the commission will be examined in detail to show how it led directly into the creation of Canada's first multicultural policy in 1971. Finally, I will discuss the divisive public reaction to the policy in the first few years after it was announced, and the ways that the government itself attempted to frame the policy in the public arena.

Literature Review

A recent publication by the Policy Research Initiative, *From Mosaic to Harmony: Multicultural Canada in the 21st Century*, (2007) begins with a brief historical overview of multicultural policy

and offers the prime motivations for each era of the policy:

In the 1970s, the emphasis was on encouraging individuals to participate in Canadian society by valuing their cultural identities. From the 1980s on, a significant evolution occurred as the original concept of multiculturalism evolved away from a mere celebration of cultural differences to a removal of barriers to economic participation for racial minorities at the institutional level. (Kunz, Jean and Sykes, Stuart, p. 7).

I am interested in examining *why* the early multiculturalism policy focused on this type of cultural pluralism. What were the concerns of ethnic groups in 1971? Why did the Ottawa establishment find it necessary to develop a bold new policy that changed the way Canada was perceived by the world and also how it perceived itself? I will focus on the government reports, studies, conference proceedings, and promotional material published by government agencies to understand the concerns which were present at the time. Similarly, I will focus primarily on academic literature written in the 1970s and early 1980s which debates the usefulness of the policy as it was first conceptualized.

The relationship between Canadian multicultural policy and the reports published by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism has been obscured in recent years, and few contemporary scholars mention this early link in their academic work on multiculturalism. Those who do tend to either applaud the original vision, or denounce it as a bald political tactic. Neil Bissoondath is a harsh critic of multiculturalism who feels the policy highlights the difference between Canadians rather than the similarities that unite us. Surprisingly, Bissoondath (1994) quotes the B & B Commission report recommendations on acculturation in

the conclusion to his book, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*, as an example of what Canadian policy should have been striving towards from the beginning:

The process of integration goes hand in hand with what anthropologists call ‘acculturation.’ Anyone who chooses Canada as his adopted country adopts a new style of life, a particular kind of existence...Acculturation is the process of adaptation to the environment in which an individual is compelled to live as he adjusts his behaviour to that of the community.(p. 209)

Bissoondath’s book has been quoted heavily in modern conversations about the state of multiculturalism, but to my knowledge, this aspect of his argument is never stressed.

Many scholars have investigated the regional dimensions of the Canadian multicultural story. It is now fairly accepted that the policy was originally implemented to relieve pressure from Western provinces who felt upset about the government’s implementation of official French-English bilingualism. Gerald Friesen (1999) discusses this alienation in his book *The West: Regional Ambitions, National Debates, Global Age* and explains that these historic grievances started much earlier with discriminatory immigration practices, the removal of language rights in schools, and the detainment of ethnic groups during the two world wars (p. 59). Friesen explains that multicultural policy “seemed to provide national recognition, however belated, for a ‘third force,’ neither English nor French, as an important component of Canada” (p. 62).

Although ‘ethnic’ Westerners believed multiculturalism was a personal victory, it is likely that the politicians themselves saw it more pragmatically. CP Champion writes about the growing importance of ‘the ethnic vote’ in his essay, “Courting ‘Our Ethnic Friends’: Canadianism, Britishness, and new Canadians, 1950-1970” (2006). While Champion does not

discuss the policy itself, he does illustrate the growing awareness of ethnic voters by savvy Anglo-Celt politicians, and describes the awkward attempts to court their favour. John English's recent biography of Pierre Trudeau (2010) also reveals the pressure on that government to mollify the Western lobby groups that were growing in power. It is quite revealing that many biographies on Trudeau, and indeed, his own memoirs, gloss over multicultural policy in a page or two. This is an important point which helps us understand the role of short-term politics in Trudeau's political agenda.

Historical Patterns of Immigration since Confederation

Canada's population at confederation was largely French and British, with small scattered populations of indigenous people, freed black slaves, Irish and some northern Europeans. The new dominion passed its first immigration law in 1869, as the major focus of this time was to rapidly settle the West (B&B report Vol. IV, 1969, p. 20). During the next three decades, hardy agricultural settlers were actively sought by the MacDonald and Laurier governments who believed that Northern and Eastern European settlers were the most likely to actually stay on the forbidding landscape of the prairie. Clifford Sifton, Laurier's Minister of the Interior from 1896 to 1905, was particularly influential in describing the kind of immigrant Canada needed: 'a stalwart peasant in a sheep-skin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children' (as cited in Sugars and Moss, 2009, p. 476). He was quite insistent that town dwellers from England were not desirable to populate the new West. He doubted their ability to adapt to the frontier farming life, and there were fears that they would eventually move from their homesteads and create slums in the cities.

An influx of immigrants from central and eastern Europe soon landed on Canada's shores and moved straight to their homesteads on the prairie, including Ukrainians, Russians, Hungarians, Romanians, Icelanders and Russian Mennonites. Chinese labourers were brought in by the thousands as contract labourers to work on the Canadian Pacific railway, and by 1901, people of Asian descent made up 11 % of British Columbia's population. The Japanese started immigrating to BC in large numbers in 1907 and also tended to settle in rural areas. Over 400,000 people immigrated to Canada in 1913 alone, a large portion of whom moved straight to their homesteads in the West. By the mid-1920s, immigrants were beginning to prefer to settle in cities, with eastern and northern Europeans generally settling in the West and southern Europeans moving to the larger centres of Toronto and Montreal. During the Great Depression, Canada began to implement more restrictive immigration policy but it picked up again after World War II. By 1961, another 2,100,000 immigrants had arrived in Canada – and close to 25% of the country's population were from ethnic backgrounds other than French, English or Aboriginal (B&B report Vol. IV, part one).

There were many early cases of systemic discrimination against these new Canadians. Many books have been written about the injustices inflicted by the Canadian government on the Japanese, the Jews and the Chinese, among many others. The large groups of white ethnic settlers were usually treated with more respect, but even those groups have historic grievances with Canada. During the First World War German and Ukrainian groups were targeted for discrimination and at least 5000 Ukrainian men were interned in work camps as enemy aliens (Friesen, p. 59). Around the same time language laws were passed in each of the Prairie Provinces enforcing exclusively English language instruction in public schools. Many groups felt so strongly about losing the ability to teach their children in their own language that large

groups left the country in protest (Friesen, 59). Most of these issues had been settled by the 1960s, but they were not forgotten.

The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism

In the words of J.M. Bumstead (2003), ‘The 1960s was the decade in which the average Anglo-Canadian discovered that Quebec was unhappy with Confederation’ (p. 390). There was a growing sense of independence within Quebec that was borne of a frustration over the second class standing of French Canadians. The Jean Lesage government, aided by his minister of natural resources, René Lévesque, campaigned successfully in 1962 under the slogan ‘Maîtres chez nous’ and were determined to use the recently nationalized hydro power system as a sign of Quebec’s growing independence. (p.392) John Ross Matheson, a federal Liberal at the time, believed that ‘any sensitive observer of the Canadian scene was aware of the rapidly accelerating isolation of the French, the excessive social distance in Canada and the disturbing lack of interaction. There was an atmosphere of impending crisis’. (as cited in Mackey, 1999, p. 56). This growing separatist sentiment made it clear to Prime Minister Pearson that grand symbolic gestures were required to woo Quebec back to Canada. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was set up by Pearson’s Liberal government in 1963 to come to grips with Quebec’s equal status as a charter group member. According to a government publication from 1978 entitled *Multiculturalism and the Government of Canada*, the B&B Commission was given the mandate to:

inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural

enrichment of Canada and the measure that should be taken to safeguard that contribution. (Appendix One).

The Commission was specifically set up to solve the problem of Quebec's place in Canada, but the 'other ethnic groups' were unimpressed by the idea of French/English bilingualism and biculturalism. Many people in the Western provinces expressed a sense of outrage that they should have to accommodate the French language in any capacity. There was a sense that as immigrants, the ethnic populations of the West had been forced to give up their languages, 'so why should the French, now a small minority in each western province, receive special grants and school programs and government services?' (Friesen, p. 61). Many other Canadians simply were upset with the amount of tax dollars being spent on a report that they felt had little to do with them. Official bilingualism was eventually implemented, but the Commission clearly had uncovered a messy situation that required some creative compromises.

In October 1969, one month after Parliament passed the Official Languages Act establishing federal bilingualism, the B & B Commission published their fourth report entitled *The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups*. The rather inelegant title of the report is quite revealing; it is clear that the commission was still working under a premise of biculturalism, and that the 'other ethnic groups' were secondary, although still important, to discovering the cultural makeup of Canada. As mentioned earlier, the Commission was under considerable pressure to ensure that Quebec was seen as an equal charter member to the development of Canada and this report was reluctant to upset this balance. However, the B&B meetings throughout the country had revealed that there were strong ethnic cultural groups in substantial numbers that had integrated into Canadian life without having assimilated to it. In the introduction to *The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups*, it states that 'among

those of non-British , non-French origin, some accept official bilingualism without hesitation but categorically reject biculturalism. They consider Canada to be a country that is officially bilingual but fundamentally multi-cultural'(p.12). This is the first mention of the word 'multicultural' in this report, but in the next few paragraphs, it goes on to explain that, in fact, biculturalism should still be considered the basic nature of the country, even though the contribution from other cultures should not be overlooked. Clearly, multiculturalism was a new and confusing idea, and certainly not one that the commissioners of the report were willing to champion, since their mandate was to explore how biculturalism was to be implemented.

Much of the research contained in the Report was brand new because virtually none existed at that time on ethnocultural groups' retention of cultural languages and customs, and little was known about how integration or assimilation occurred (Innis, 1973, Foreword). In addition to providing demographic statistics, the report clearly lays out the widely divergent values and experiences of ethnocultural groups in Canada. Certain groups that had not been previously studied at any length, such as the Ukrainian populations in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba were introduced to a Canadian public previously unaware of their existence. The Ukrainians were not the largest ethnic group in the Prairie Provinces, but were definitely the most vocal in demanding cultural language rights, and one of the least likely to have assimilated into the broader Anglo culture. People of German descent held much greater numbers across the country, but apart from the small ethno-religious communities of German speakers like the Mennonites and Hutterites, they were very likely to have shed their outward cultural trappings of language and culture. Many of these groups that still strongly identified with their ethnic identities had had their own language rights taken away from them in the 1910s (Friesen, 59) and the importance of language was heavily weighted in the report.

Although the report did reveal information about groups previously unknown to the general public, it was still a study rooted in the prejudices of its time. Only seven of the three hundred and fifty two pages of the report explicitly deal with discrimination and exploitation faced by ethnic groups. In the small section on discrimination, the commissioners state that it is ‘difficult to prove’ because in Canada, ‘discrimination has rarely been directly expressed in laws or bylaws’. It is also difficult to measure because ‘prejudiced attitudes do not always lead to discriminatory behaviour, and discriminatory behaviour is sometimes practised by the unprejudiced’. Furthermore, ‘discrimination seems to spur some groups on to outstanding achievement while it limits the economic advancement of others’ (p. 58-59). There is some acknowledgement of the racism shown to the Chinese and Japanese in British Columbia, the Hutterites in Alberta, and toward Jews and Black people across the whole country. However an equal amount of space is dedicated to describing the inter-group discrimination within the Italian construction industry in Ontario, where new immigrants were taken advantage of and exploited by those of their own kind (p. 60). Clearly, there was a limited understanding of racial issues at this time.

The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups contained many recommendations for the inclusion and recognition of Canada’s ethnic groups in the broader Canadian system. Of the sixteen recommendations, five of them propose building language education into the existing school systems and four of them propose the removal of language restrictions on CRTC broadcasting on television and radio. There are only two recommendations that speak directly to reducing discrimination based on country of origin. This emphasis on language rights is not surprising in a report commissioned to find how ‘other ethnic groups’ feel about a bilingual and bicultural Canada, but it is clear that the concerns of white cultural groups already concerned

with language rights such as the Ukrainians were inherently favoured in a growing awareness of cultural pluralism in the country. These recommendations were soon going to carry much more weight.

Multicultural Policy

On October 8, 1971, Prime Minister Trudeau accepted all sixteen of the recommendations of *The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups*, and laid out his vision of a policy of ‘multiculturalism within a bilingual framework which commends itself to the Government as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians’ (Gov’t of Canada, 1978, p. 45). Trudeau saw the cultural and linguistic recommendations as an opportunity to envision a new framework for Canada:

National unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one’s own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create this initial confidence. It can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all. (p. 45)

In his speech, he also mentioned his government’s attempts to ‘correct the bias’ against the French language and culture through the Official Languages Act, and also the steps made toward supporting cultural-educational centres for native people, but frames these as separate initiatives from those concerning ‘the other cultural communities’.

The government pledged to provide funding for multiculturalism initiatives such as promoting ‘creative encounters’ between cultural groups, assisting members of cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers that prevent full participation in Canadian society, and providing

English or French language instruction for immigrants. Most importantly, the government pledged to ‘assist all Canadian cultural groups that have demonstrated a desire and effort to develop, a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada...resources permitting’ (Canada, p. 46). In short, the lofty goals for the new multicultural framework were going to be achieved through multicultural festivals, ESL classes, and an ambiguous pledge to help cultural groups grow, *resources permitting*. In hindsight, these pledges look quite paltry, and heavily based on the language issues brought up by the Commission for Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Nevertheless, the new multicultural policy stirred up a great amount of heated debate.

Early reviews of the policy were mixed. All party leaders in the House of Commons gave their firm approval, and the governments of Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan also gave their support. Howard Palmer (1971) discusses the mixed reactions among the lay people and intellectuals and suggests that organized ethnic groups (aside from those trying to assimilate and shed their cultural identities) were happy with the policy, English editorial reactions were generally mixed, French editorial reactions were overwhelmingly negative, and both French and English intellectuals were very uncomfortable with it for various reasons, calling it ‘dangerously ambiguous’ and ‘the definitive project of disintegration for the Canadian confederation’ (p. 109). There was concern that the policy had drifted too far away from the B&B Commission’s recommendations, and that official recognition of the ‘other cultural groups’ amounted to transparent pandering towards the ethnic vote. Palmer disagrees with these negative views, and suggests that “the government’s introduction of measures to prevent discrimination in order to help orient immigrants to Canada, and to help ‘other ethnic groups’ preserve and develop their cultural identities, can only be a threat to people who have failed to grasp the reality of Canada in the 1970s” (Palmer, p. 115).

John English makes it quite clear in his biography of Pierre Trudeau that the implementation of multicultural policy was a political compromise between Quebec and the West. He writes that Trudeau ‘agreed to recognize ‘other’ groups as his political advisors insisted he must’ (p. 146). However, he was much more preoccupied with the ever-growing crisis in Quebec. The horrible events of the October Crisis in 1970 led to his unpopular decision to enact the War Measures Act in order to crack down on the FLQ. It was a bold and unpopular decision that did not save the life of Pierre Laporte, but Trudeau still believed that ‘his decisiveness in the midst of the chaos of October 1970 had halted a freefall toward violent anarchy in Quebec’ (p. 100). The aftermath of the crisis left him ever more alienated from the leadership in Quebec, who he believed showed poor judgement in wanting to ‘bargain with the FLQ and give in to them’ (p. 100). Multicultural policy, for Trudeau, was a political afterthought.

Early Implementation of Multicultural Policy

The Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism was established in May 1973 as an advisory body that would help determine the course of policy implementation. The Council was appointed by the Minister of State and was composed of lay people drawn from forty-seven ethnocultural backgrounds. Some cynically saw the appointments ‘as the most direct means of rewarding ethnic groups for earlier political favours’ (Lupul, 1982, p. 93). Its first review of the progress of federal programs was published for the first annual meeting of the CCCM in October 1973. This report lists many of the 497 federally funded initiatives that were underway across the country through the Multicultural Grants Programme and is sprinkled with photos of happy ethnic people in diverse settings. The CCCM clearly wanted to emphasize the breadth of

diversity that could be helped through the programs, and the organization of the report lends itself to a breathless reading of exciting and colourful initiatives rather than an unambiguous understanding of where the federal money was being spent. Many of the subsequent criticisms of multicultural policy were pointed toward these shallow attempts at celebrating diversity of the first few years.

This preliminary report shows us that the federal government focused on handing out grants to individual groups to fund festivals and folk arts across the country during the first two years. They took this approach rather than working towards intercultural dialogue. As a result of meetings at the conference, the CCCM did have a list of new recommendations for the direction the federal government should take, and many of them tried to build some substance that may have been lacking in existing programs (1975). There was still a heavy emphasis on national cultural education strategies, including third language instruction and the promotion of folk arts and culture, but these priorities were now framed more clearly as long term initiatives and short term initiatives. They also recognized that work would need to be co-ordinated with the provinces, particularly in the realm of education. It is noteworthy that at this time, only the province of Saskatchewan had passed its own multiculturalism act (Dewing p. 14). Another long term goal was to overcome cultural inequalities, which was to be accomplished by promoting federal recognition of human rights, reviewing the Immigration Act, and by providing funding to the CRTC, NFB and the CBC in order to help educate the country about multiculturalism. The vast majority of the short term priorities were to provide funding for community cultural centres, the ethnic press, and the folks arts, although there was also a recommendation that orientation services for new immigrants to Canada be expanded.

During the mid-70s, there was an explosion of government funded ethno-cultural initiatives and festivals. Many of the larger festivals, such as the Caribana festival in Toronto, and Folklorama in Winnipeg had been started before the federal multicultural policy had been created, but the initial reports by the CCCM reveal that federal money helped fund everything from providing facilities for Estonian modern Rhythmic Gymnastics in Montreal, publishing a labour history of Ukrainians Canadian and a book on Lithuanian national costumes. Public support began to grow for multiculturalism, or at the very least, for the colourful and tasty side of multiculturalism.

By the time of the second CCCM conference was held in February 1976, there was growing debate over multiculturalism policy. The Conference Report document itself looks identical to the report released in 1975, but where the first report was full of fanciful sloganeering and pictures of happy multicultural people, the 1976 report reveals a great deal of dissatisfaction and debate over the necessary direction of multicultural policy. A theme that runs through the proceedings is a desire to move away from the funding of folkways, crafts, arts and language as the center of multicultural initiatives and towards producing initiatives that would encourage integration between all the groups in Canada (Canadian Council on Multiculturalism, 1976, p. 4), while acknowledging a growing realization of political landmines that were still part of the Canadian landscape.

The opening session, entitled 'The Bear Pit', was designed to prompt lively discussion, and the transcripts of the panellists' presentations revealed deep concerns that multiculturalism initiatives were little more than window dressing that did little to address the cultural pluralism in the country. There was also an acknowledgement that multiculturalism policy was still a major rift that divided Anglophone and Francophone Canada, and the second day of the conference was

devoted to exploring this issue in depth. Many presentations throughout the conference recognized that cultural differences were being exploited to maintain the unequal status quo, rather than re-ordering class structures of discrimination (p. 103). A special presentation by the National Indian Brotherhood also asserted the aboriginal population's status as a charter group in Canada. On the other hand, many of the presenters felt that multicultural initiatives favoured ethnic voters at the expense of 'non-ethnics' in a way that was damaging to national unity (p. 28). This latter group consisted of anglophones who desired more assimilationist policies as well as the francophones who feared for the survival of bilingualism.

Probably the only presenter in the conference that was happy with the current direction of the policy was the Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism John Munro, who argued that focussing on the folk arts and language of ethnic groups brought an important level of cultural awareness to everybody in the country and denounced the idea brought up earlier in the conference that these initiatives were simply fun: 'It disturbs me to see serious university researchers suggest that multicultural activities are seen as fun for others. To me, that is a patronizing view... and works against everything that cultural groups have struggled to achieve in Canada' (p. 125).

The future of multiculturalism was unclear, but there was a growing awareness that the policy had overlooked many important issues that were beginning to arise. There was a new influx of immigrants coming to Canada from Asia and the Caribbean, and their experiences showed that the policy was not adequate for these visible minorities. For many of the English or French speaking immigrants from the Caribbean, the state-assisted retention of language had little to do with their integration into Canada, unlike the European immigrants from earlier generations. In her 1978 essay, 'The Policy of Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework:

A Stock-Taking', Jean Burnet stated that the government was still overly concerned with 'linguistic maintenance rather than intergroup understanding or the combating of discrimination' and called for a larger focus on human rights to address the racial prejudice inflicted on new visible minorities (p. 109).

Other scholars blamed the failure of the multicultural policy to truly help new immigrants on the failure of the government to truly support the policy with dedicated governance and proper funding. Manoly Lupul blamed Prime Minister Trudeau himself for the lackluster results of multicultural policy and said 'he did nothing to build the climate or atmosphere needed to have multiculturalism develop beyond the superficial level' (1982, p. 114). He also noted the extreme difference in expenditures during the 1979-80 fiscal year toward the Bilingualism program (\$190,179,000) and the Multicultural program (\$7,783,000) to prove Trudeau's lasting concern with French issues above all. However another scholar, Wsevolod Isajiw, (1983) rebutted Lupul's essay with of his own the next year and came to Trudeau's defense. Isajiw agreed that Trudeau was not personally invested in multicultural policy, but that the policy had been a necessary and important political compromise at a volatile point in history. He states:

It is obvious that after the October events, after the War Measures Act and the aftermath that followed, to insist on a policy of both bilingualism and biculturalism would have meant playing into the hands of the separatists and would only have invited more trouble. Yet, to retain bilingualism but drop any reference to culture in a government policy, after the B and B report had placed so much importance on it, would have been tantamount to an implicit recognition of Anglo-uniculturalism, a position that could

backfire. . . Thus ‘multiculturalism in a bilingual framework’, under the circumstances, was a good way out of a political dilemma.’ (p. 114)

This pragmatic view that the early policy was a political compromise is still held by many today. Will Kymlicka goes further and suggests that this political compromise saved the unity of our country: the policy may have been understood as political pandering to ethnic voters but ‘this bribe was repaid – with interest – in the immigrant vote in the 1995 referendum’ (2008, 20:25).

Conclusion

In 1963, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism started a conversation with Canadians to investigate how culture and language is actually lived in Canada. It is unlikely that they foresaw the ramifications of their reports. However, understanding the origins of our multiculturalism policy, and studying the early debates on its effectiveness can permit us to understand it as a policy that was created as the result of consultation with Canadians. It is in this tone that we can hope to continue discussing multiculturalism in the future. Understanding the origin of multiculturalism policy allows us to understand it as an important building block to the unity of our country, rather than a divisive force. The Association for Canadian Studies and the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association held a joint conference in Ottawa in October, 2011 on the topic, ‘Multiculturalism Turns 40: Reflections on The Canadian Policy’ and there are plans to publish select papers from the conference in the *Canadian Ethnic Studies journal* and the ACN’s *Canadian Diversity* (ACS website). It is likely that many of these papers will be critical of the policy, and have innovative ideas on where the *idea* of multiculturalism in Canada should move

toward. It is possible that in future years we may discard multicultural policy altogether if it ceases to help Canadians understand one another.

Our multicultural reality in 1971 was quite different from what it is now, and the short-term political goals it was trying to accomplish in 1971 were quite different than the national value-building goals that many believe it needs to accomplish today. Banting and Kymlicka (2010) summarize that “multiculturalism went from being the bold idea of a few ethnic organisations in 1965 to the supreme law of the land in 1982, and has since been reaffirmed in 1988 and 1997 with only minor changes in emphasis’ (p. 52). Our country is continuing to grow through immigration and there are many new challenges ahead of us as we continue to define Canadian values. For example, a recent report on the future of multiculturalism (Kunz and Sykes, 2007) has stressed that active education policies are required to provide Canadians with more understanding about religious cultural values. Discrimination towards visible minorities also continues to be an issue that is not being sufficiently addressed in the current policy. As the forces of globalism influence our immigration policies, we must be alert to our changing diversity and come up with new methods to address these issues as they arise. Canadian multicultural policy is far from perfect today, but I strongly believe that the first implementation of this policy in 1971 led to a Canada where cultural pluralism has been established as a national strength. It is absolutely crucial for Canadians to keep fostering this strength through openness, acceptance of diversity, and continued dialogue.

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