

Welfare and Immigration: Canada and Finland Compared

C. Michael Lanphier

Centre for Refugee Studies

York University

Toronto

February, 96

Draft -- not for quotation without express permission of writer

Welfare and Immigration: Canada and Finland Compared

C. Michael Lanphier
Centre for Refugee Studies
York University
Toronto

Introduction

Change of social policy is as important in social planning for the late 1990s as is fiscal crisis. The nation-state in the current post-industrial policy framework is perceived as no longer being mandated to intervene in service delivery at no additional cost to the recipient. At best, the range or boundaries of such services are severely curtailed. This paper explores this theme as it relates to the provision of services to immigrant and refugee newcomers to Canada and compares this situation with its counterpart in Finland.

Finland continues to develop a social-welfare nation-state model. While somewhat behind its Nordic counterparts temporally, social welfare patterns are now converging, especially with respect to the amount of direct service delivery by government as well as in the proportion of monies from GDP which are transferred into social welfare benefits. If Finland departs from the model, it is with respect to employees' contributions to social security, relative to those of employers. Compared with Canada, Finnish employees contribute a greater proportion of their income to this scheme, but not as much as do workers in other European countries: Germany and UK, for example (Kangas, 1994).

Contemporaneously, Canada is moving from a policy which represented a mix of welfare-state and capitalistic *laissez-faire* to one far more saturated in *laissez-faire* practice and policy. The implications of this shift are examined within the context of immigration. This domain provides a window through which we may view a general process. It is at the same time an important component to change and development in Canadian society. Attention will be devoted to the importance of the non-governmental (NGO) sector, which is itself deeply affected by these changes but which is also an important agent in moderating this process. This process involves devolution of responsibility and poses an important dilemma in the organization of the nation-state.

Canada and Post-Multiculturalism

During the past two decades Canada has adopted a policy of multiculturalism primarily as orientation for domestic social policy. This policy has gained international attention and has been copied with modifications worldwide. Yet multicultural policy has developed global dimensions on another plane: as a particular form of reciprocal exchange. This form becomes increasingly relevant in international policy, especially immigration. This paper addresses some recent changes in multicultural policy impacting on immigration and welfare issues.

Inherent in multiculturalism policy is the paradox of universalism of life claims versus the particularism of culture. This paradox affects policy formulation and implementation

with resultant contradictory demands. Fostering antidiscriminatory social policy for immigrants and the resident population, for example, exemplifies a policy resolution to the dilemma of forging a single policy from these multiple demands. More difficult is the provision of equivalent goods and services of every cultural group requesting the same.

Simultaneously, a "culture of bureaucracy" has developed around multicultural policy: interested groups are encouraged to develop programmes and productions eligible for governmental funding. These groups have become attached to such funding sources not only for production of their work but to support a cadre of employees and members of particular ethnocultural groups who have come to depend on these services. This subsidization has extended to service deliveries in the welfare area. These services are delivered by established ethnocultural groups to deliver services (orientation, language training, job counselling, self-defense for persons at risk and for women) of which members of a given ethnocultural group might take advantage.

Officially, multicultural policy is an occasion for celebration: to commemorate the heritage of newcomers through preservation of language and customs. As such, Canada has been successful in developing a multiculturalism of separation, in which the uniqueness of individual ethnocultural groups has been given tangible support. Canada has been less successful in developing a multiculturalism of integration, in that the development of a base of common customs and practices has been difficult to achieve. Important inroads have been made, however, in the development of anti-racism programming, both through the educational and civil service institutions as well as in general publicity campaigns.

Despite certain advances in policy-making, tensions have developed in the administration of multiculturalism as governmental policy: multiple groups representing what appear to be similar constituencies requesting funds. Demands for funding therefore escalate beyond proportions which are amenable to service in the culture of bureaucracy. Symbolically, the granting of funding legitimates the mandate of any group. If not all groups can be funded, those not funded might likely become marginalized.

Canada is embarking on a post-multiculturalism phase as a resolution of this dilemma.¹ As a result, cultural communities are becoming detached from a nation-centred frame to a network orientation which transcends national borders to a more global plane. This process is accelerated with increasingly diverse immigration intake.

What are the implications of this change away from broad-based funding to multicultural organizations? Attitudinally, certain political leadership in Canada approaches multiculturalism as an anachronistic policy in terms of implementing practices. Yet ideologically, neither leaders nor activists appear willing for the most part to abandon the rhetoric. This veritably contradictory state of affairs has taken the form of a protracted debate in political, social (Bibby, 1991) and literary arenas (Bissoondath, 1994).

¹The editors of the recent joint Australia-Canada volume on immigration policy join Dorais, *et al.*, (1994, p. 404) in suggesting that a post-multicultural approach probably fits both countries in light of their recent experiences (Cf. Adelman, H., *et al.*, 1994).

Agreement appears neither on the terms of the debate over multiculturalism nor on the level at which it should take place. Still less does any resolution appear, other than the now-fashionable general practice of budgetary reduction from governmental departments and functioning. Despite the rather wide-ranging scope, this debate tends to focus on a limited number of dimensions. These will be explored below as certain criticisms of multiculturalism.

Expenditure/cutback:

Debate has oscillated between concern over the level of expenditures appearing excessive in comparison with other administrative and regulatory governmental activities and whether expenses at any authorized level amount to abuse of governmental funds.² Multiculturalism sometimes appears as an expensive luxury. Governmental multicultural expenditures, however diminutive by federal standards,³ slip out of phase with calls for governmental restraint, deficit reduction and elimination of "unnecessary" activities. The critique in the public arena has not, however, related expenditures on multiculturalism with other types of governmental expenditures, in which priorities are attached to each activity form.

This financial argument has been spread widely enough to extend to provincial as well as municipal levels of government in Canada. Lower governmental levels thus experience a double pressure. First, general "offloading" of expenditures by the federal to provincial levels has been in evidence since the Canadian federal government launched its budget-cutting exercises in 1993. Secondly, a more specific onslaught on the arena of social and community services which earmark funds specifically for multicultural services has occurred.

Political distinctiveness

Multiculturalism policy gained notoriety from its 1971 Canadian inception as an often thinly disguised ploy to blunt the political agenda of Québec nationalism. From this optic, support to activities of non-English, non-French language cultures, as recommended in the findings of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1968), have arisen as a means to assure that Québec culture would not attain equality with that of the dominant English Canadian culture; rather, it would remain as one of many cultures supported by Canadian federal policy

²The federal Reform Party of Canada has been the most vociferous on this question since it attained a significant number of Parliamentary seats from the Prairie provinces during the 1993 election. Their platform was clear enough on the policy being unnecessary. It is less clear whether instances cited of abuse flow from this overall position or from a lack of appreciation of cultural differences in use of governmental services. Insistence that the federal government re-orient its immigration activities to select those not in need of extensive training, especially in the English language [French not mentioned], reveals this ambiguity.

³The annual budget of the (now absorbed) Secretary of State for Multiculturalism plateaued early in its existence, as noted below, at just over \$C25 million.

The government of Québec province for its part has enunciated policies under alternate rubrics, "*interculturalisme*" and "*pluriculturalisme*", which closely resemble multicultural policy in the rest of Canada but emphatically adopt different nomenclature. These policies provide services and public visibility to non-English, non-French cultural groups.. While insisting that the official language (French) remain dominant, policy pronouncements call for limitations only within the frame of democratic values and inter-community exchange (McAndrew, 1995).

Multiculturalism in this context may be interpreted as a codeword of an ideology which refuses Québec claims for independent governmental control. Clearly, Québec politicians *via* the terminological shift call for a policy crafted by Quebecers, administered under their own purview for their own citizenry. Yet similarities in the two policies outweigh differences so that the terminological distinction "multiculturalism" "*interculturalisme*" appears mainly of nominal symbolic significance in light of convergent practices.⁴

Cultural distinctiveness other than "Canadian"

Certain critics (Bissoondath, 1994; Ubale, 1992) claim that multicultural policy amounts to a significant diversion from a Canadian cultural policy. Implicitly, according to this line of argumentation, newcomers should make deliberate attempts to adopt the (English) language and the complete set of Canadian symbols as their own. Canada represents a country of choice. It therefore follows that characteristics of the home culture are matters of a past left behind, or to be filtered through Canadian communication, artistic and political media.

Generational specificity

Multiculturalism may be perceived as a transitory state bridging the arrival generation between the home culture and Canadian culture. As a cultural way-station, certain goods and services should be supplied on a needs basis to newcomers. While governmental contribution to these services may be appropriate, these services continue to serve newcomers who, after a certain period (one to three years), should no longer need them. Multiculturalism, then, becomes an instrumental means toward eventual cultural absorption or assimilation into Canadian culture.

Finland and Canada

Despite overall similarities between Finland and Canada resulting from geopolitical configurations, the two nation-states have somewhat differing orientations to questions of welfare. This paper now turns to the specific case of welfare and immigration. While this is a question of signal importance to both countries in its own right, it stands as well

⁴McAndrew (1995) notes that the pattern of anti-racial incidents in Québec resembles those in the rest of Canada. In 1994, public attention both in Québec and the rest of Canada was incited over Muslim girls' practice of *hijab*, wearing of headscarves as a normal part of apparel. Some two years previously, highly similar protests were voiced especially in Western Canada over the use of turbans by Sikhs as a formal part of uniform of police and military.

as a metaphor, I suggest, for orientations to the relation of welfare-in-general to domestic orientation in the nation-state.

Both nation-states have established welfare as a permanent feature, but one which, vis-à-vis its citizenry, should be portrayed as a temporary assistance -- one which itself can change to effect the eventual disappearance of those particular citizens from welfare rolls. This conception perhaps finds greater emphasis in Canada. But more important is the Canadian interest in eliminating barriers to access to economic participation at the individual and group levels. By contrast, Finland, reflecting a European tradition, perceives systemic effects as primary and consequently attempts to assess equality of outcome through various governmental interventions. Such interventions are effected through minimum wages and transfer payments which offer broader guarantees of collective social-economic welfare. Thereby, they reduce disparities in economic status and put less emphasis on the necessity of individuals and identifiable groups to seek out opportunities for economic viability and in effect to eliminate their eligibility for beneficiary status.

For the specific issue of welfare and immigration, Canada and Finland represent contrasting models of service delivery to incoming refugee-newcomers. Yet external pressures on the two nation-states are similar. Part of the difference may be attributable to volume of intake in the respective nation-states. A notable part, however, still remains to be explained, especially with respect to the management of goods and service delivery in response to identifiable needs of each set of refugee-newcomers.

In search for a settlement model, Canada is transforming its traditional service delivery from central government to a more decentralized system, the dimensions of which are yet not fully specified (to be discussed below). Certain features of Anglo- and North American redistributive schemes are unlikely to change. Means-tests, for example, appear even more firmly entrenched, as various services such as those medically-related, for items previously accorded as a matter of entitlement. Rather, we are witnessing changes in the calculus of redistributive mechanisms which become translated into the common fare of budgetary cutbacks.

It seems fairly certain that there will be fewer services delivered to refugees (and fewer still to economic immigrants). The bulk will be delivered either by NGOs or local mainstream agencies and financed to some extent by either provincial or local government funds but not federal. This "devolution" or offloading will curtail services which may result in increasing unmet need. It will also solidify NGO agencies as essential to refugee-newcomer integration. This is both a challenge to the voluntary sector and a financial strain: both personnel and financing have to be recruited from sources previously accustomed to marginal or occasional contribution. Increasingly, ethnospecific and other agencies supplement traditional mainstream governmental sources of support and service delivery. The major types of budgetary stringencies and cutbacks are listed in Table 1. They are classified by areas of impact: federal and provincial government bureaucracy (i.e., operations and service deliveries); organizations: the cutbacks which affect the operation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and those which impact primarily on individual and family recipients.

While the Canadian model is fraught with risk both in agency stability and adequacy within the NGO and voluntary sector, it appears more highly adaptable to changing profiles of needs of various entering immigrant cohorts. Short-term (immediate post-arrival) needs may receive adequate attention. Long-term needs, however, receive no specific attention; nor is there an established social infrastructure which directly addresses such concerns.

By contrast, Finland has developed a highly integrated set of service deliveries to their refugee population. This integration is both lateral and vertical. It represents only fractional loads for many mainstream services, so that horizontally, the integration adds only a little to the total caseload. Vertically, state agencies have allocated responsibility so that, again, the overall governmental organization accommodates the allocation as marginal additional workload.

The Finnish model furnishes little evidence of organizational instability and therefore lit-

Table 1

Redistributional cutbacks by Canadian governments to various levels:1995		
Government b'cy	Organizations: NGOs	Individuals, Families
<u>Staff cutbacks</u>	<u>Contracts</u>	<u>Welfare</u>
-- Front-line service	-- Service deliveries	--eligibility
-- Direct service depts.	-- Fringe benefits	-- payments
<u>Transfer payments</u>	<u>Training programmes</u>	<u>Goods and services</u>
Health and Welfare -- Immigrant reception -- Training programmes	-- Gender-related: [daycare; violence- proofing]	-- Medical care --drug plans
-- from "envelope" to un- specified block-grants	-- Skills training	<u>Specifically Immigration- related.</u>
-- Disappearance of ju- risdiction-wide guidelines		-- Taxes for "landing" -- Service charges for sponsorship

tle risk. By the same token, the capacity of the arrangements to change to accommodate larger numbers or differing ethnocultural backgrounds is less likely. This model is capable, in any event, of attention to short- and longer-term needs for resettlement.

The effect of the accelerated revision, curtailment and withdrawal of governmental participation has manifold implications. On the administrative side, a snow-ball devolution effect results in passing off responsibility for portfolios to the next lower governmental level as part of decentralization and "local autonomy" over distribution of funding and usually goods and services. While the federal government insists on the maintenance of federal "guidelines" for evenness of distributional outcome, it becomes virtually impossible to guarantee such adherence. Both the amount of funding and its specificity have been altered. Instead of specific "envelopes" of funds for particular purposes, severely lowered funds are being distributed in terms of block-grants to provinces. Provinces, in turn, enjoy greater latitude in the distribution of these reduced funding packets. Thus, although the federal government is loath to relinquish control, its "policy levers" have been commensurately reduced, so that it appears all but impossible for the government to exercise its authoritative oversight to assure uniformity of outcome.

The world challenge:

Refugees as burden-sharing issue as international and global concern:

For nearly two decades, the world has experienced a veritable explosion in movement of peoples, large numbers of whom are migrants forced to leave their homeland. These refugees have increased in number from just about 10 million to more than 23 million in 1993, according to United Nations counts of those who qualify by UNHCR standards.⁵ Although the number of refugees has diminished to some extent, with some 17 million being counted in 1995, the burden to receiving countries in term of asylum-seekers remains large with no immediate prospect for resolution (*Refugees*, III, 1995).

As signatories to the UNHCR *Convention on Refugees* (1951), most nation-states, including Canada and Finland, have both a contractual and humanitarian obligation to receive certain numbers of refugees. While this undertaking flows from international obligations, a certain infrastructure within nation-state is required to accommodate intake of any size. While this infrastructure (burden, cost) is internationally invisible, assurance of its viability precedes international commitment.

Does refugee intake require a distinctive service delivery apparatus, specifically dedicated to refugee resettlement? Or is it sufficient to feature existing mainstream agencies as delivery agents by making marginal additional modifications to their mandates? While delivery of services is perceived as important to any cohort of newcomers, the nation-state may be concerned as well about the agents of delivery. Are these direct agents of the state, or should these service deliveries be delegated? If the latter, what agencies should be so entitled to undertake this activity on behalf of the state? The major needs are summarized in Table 2 with the typical responses of Canada and Finland listed by column. It will be noted that while both countries have similar types of provisions of goods and

⁵ The fundamental criteria established by the UN High Commission for Refugees include being outside the country of origin, and in flight because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, nationality, religion, political beliefs or membership in a particular social group. Nevertheless, each nation-state signatory to the UNHCR Declaration may interpret the definition locally.

services, those offered in Finland are more extensive, especially in the areas of welfare, relating to economic participation.

Table 2

Responses of Canada and Finland to Refugee Needs

Needs of refugees	Canada	Finland
Protection	"Landing" status identical for all officially recognized refugees and immigrants; Initial welfare support; Voluntary post-trauma counseling.	Refugee or Asylum status; Refugees: immediate state support; Asylees: limited state support.
"Home"	<i>Non-specific orientation;</i> <i>ethnic organization;</i> Multicultural policy.	<i>Non-specific orientation</i> Preserving culture <u>and</u> finding place in Finnish society.
Productive activity	Skills training; Job orientation; Human-rights legislation.	Adult education (initial, pre-vocational training); Human rights legislation; Unemployment insurance; "Aliens": requisite work permits restricted work permits; Refugees (Resid. Permit) work permits (4+ mos.)
Family, kinship	<i>Nuclear family reunification,</i> <i>Sponsorship, extended kin</i>	<i>Nuclear family reunification.</i>
Citizenship-integration: reciprocal rights and duties	<i>Optional citizenship orientation</i> Educational opportunity (youth); Taxation; Citizenship (3+ yrs.).	<i>Optional citizenship orientation</i> Educational opportunity (youth and adults); Taxation as "alien" (6+ mos.); Citizenship (5+ yrs.).

N.B.: *Italics* denote those services not specifically offered by the state but by other (private) sectors of the society.

Canada

Strategies for settlement: Ethnospecific to mainstream the humanitarian-multicultural dilemma

Canada has yet to confront the full implications of accommodating the welfare needs of a varied population of refugees and immigrants. Humanitarian and multicultural principles would suggest the extension of welfare benefits, whether under the guise of settlement allowances and expenditures or more generally as welfare expenditures. Both popular opinion and government policy, however, reject the quantitative and policy implications. For the quantitative, it is apprehended that the pool of eligible recipients would be too high, thereby causing an impossibly heavy drain on the budget. For policy generally, such a move would reverse the growing trend that attempts to disengage government from this involvement and leaves the task to more local sources of support, including local (municipal) and provincial governments as well as greater responsibility allocated to non-governmental organizations. Eligibility for services varies from one to three years after arrival, at which time if recipients are still in need, then they are transferred to mainstream social service programmes: general assistance/welfare and unemployment-insurance programmes.

Effect on specific groups

Women and Workforce Participation

In general women immigrants have experienced a series of discriminatory barriers which limit the degree and type of labour force participation. In past immigration legislation, for example, Canada has fixed different provisions for single females who arrive under a provision for domestic service (nannies). They were inhibited from bringing any accompanying family member, including any children, nor was there any provision for marriage once arrived in Canada. They were veritably consigned to a pre-arranged contract with a single employer. More recently such legislation has been rescinded in favour of entitlements much resembling those of other immigrants.

Nevertheless women still find access to services blocked for financial and service assistance often required for participation in the civic and occupational sectors. Canada lacks a federal child care plan, with only a small monthly subsidy to mothers for each child under 18 years of age. This "baby bonus" does not cover child care costs and represents only a token payment. Immigrant women with children find difficulty in obtaining child care to attend language or training classes, nor are those services necessarily scheduled at convenient hours for mothers. As a result immigrant women have been disadvantaged in orienting and retraining for the Canadian labour force, especially if they lack facility in English/French and have not completed higher education (Opoku-Dapaah, 1994). In any event, forces for economic integration appear bleak: lower wage rates for women, especially among women of lower levels of education: (Gadd, 1995).

Children and Education

Among the items slated in the programme of the new Conservative government in Ontario is the curtailment of early childhood education programmes for 3- and 4-year old

children. Despite an education budget that amounts on a *per capita* basis twice that of comparable Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions, Ontario children do not fare as well on international measures of educational achievement (Corson, 1995). A major cause of this difference is the lack of a universal, publicly supported early childhood education programme (which was slated to begin in 1996 under the previous provincial administration but which has now been cancelled).

The interest for Ontario educators is manifold: not only do longitudinal studies conducted in the US demonstrate superior academic performance later in childhood and adolescence, the experience is also associated with lower incidence of delinquent behaviour and higher levels of awareness of moral rules (*Ibid.*).

Of particular interest is the impact of educational programmes in first- and second-generation immigrant children who, if anyone, stand the most to gain in terms of socialization into the host culture. Curtailment of early childhood education programmes represents a deficit of two years of formal socialization, the benefits of which compound among children of immigrants and refugees whose parents are in many cases unable to communicate such knowledge and value instruction.

The problem of providing educational foundations for children of newcomers has loomed large both for reasons of number and more particularly for reasons of providing qualitatively meaningful educational experiences. Comprehensive data on school enrolments of first-generation children are not available. The Province of Ontario, which characteristically receives between 40 and 55 per cent of all immigration to Canada, counted approximately 35,000 refugee children of more than 60 (non-English, non-French) mother tongues during the 1981-1991 decade (Kaprielian-Churchill and Churchill, 1994, p. 107-8). Some 20 per cent of the older children (16 and over) lacked any secondary education, many of whom had little or no formal education (*Ibid.*, p.104).

In light of this profile of experience with formal education, it is clear that schools in metropolitan areas face a special challenge to provide enriched educational services to a small but significant minority of their student body. According to brief and informal studies, the present level of use of educational services by refugee children falls below expectation. While the reasons for underutilization remain matters of informal explanation by teachers and other school professionals, it is felt that accessibility is hindered by the need to frame services within existing educational delivery patterns -- not to change conventional and most cost-efficient methods of service deliveries (*Ibid.*, ch. 6). Pressure of cost and institutional inertia combine to blunt whatever impact innovative educational programmes might make for newcomer students.

Newcomer children require assistance in "balancing" two cultures: to combine customs which themselves are not easily mixed.⁶ Students of non-English, non-French language

⁶ A Muslim female student recalls being harassed by male students during high-school years. Although school authorities would attempt to rescue her from the malicious pranks, her cultural modesty did not permit her to "stand her ground" as would her Canadian female peers. Her teachers appeared unable to instill the type of behaviours required to cope with such harassment. Several years of peer interaction ultimately provided her the necessary support. (Personal account provided to the writer)

background encounter formidable difficulties with academic instruction. Teachers do not have adequate time to spend with such students requiring special assistance because of language deficit. Teachers complain as well that even more severe problems are encountered by students with little or no formal educational experience (*e.g.*, children whose early years were spent in camp settings with no exposure to formal classroom instruction). These children cannot cope with specialized instruction in secondary school classes (*Ibid.*).

As a consequence of inadequate educational programming, relations between family and community are not adequately bridged. There are no other institutions which can replace the formal educational experience, which combines academic instruction with organizational experience of competing in a formal institution with a peer culture. The spectre of extensive budget cuts, not only in the sector of childhood education but throughout the school system in many Canadian provinces, casts a future shadow over an important cohort of the (new) Canadian population.

Types of immigrants

Canada's immigrants are administratively divided into three major categories: "Independent", selected by the "points system" on the basis of education, language and job skills (43 per cent of the total), Family-class", sponsored by relatives already landed in Canada (51 per cent of the total), and "Refugees"/others (6 per cent).

"Independent" immigrants who arrived from 1981 to 1985 showed a high degree of financial self-sufficiency shortly after arrival. They were relatively highly skilled and arrived with at least rudimentary knowledge of one of the official languages (English/French). They were thus able to join the labour force more quickly in jobs which required verbal as well as manual dexterity. In a recent study combining tax returns with face-sheet immigration data, findings revealed that this "independent" immigrant cohort showed improvement over time and reported incomes which were higher than twice the national average income (C\$43,000 vs. national Canadian average of C\$21,500 in 1988). The level of income appears high enough easily to support the wage earner and family although data are lacking on either dependency or financial contribution of other family members. By contrast, the similar income figure for the "Family-class" immigrant cohort was C\$15,500, lower than the Canadian average (Thompson, 1995).⁷

Social assistance

The "workfare" controversy

Governments and social planners in Canada, no less than elsewhere in North America and European capitalist economies, have been debating changes in social welfare arrange-

⁷ The lack of unit comparability across the four major categories: independent, entrepreneurial, family member, refugee, is a major methodological flaw of the study. Independent immigrants were evaluated against their own incomes, whereas family immigrants were evaluated in light of their joint incomes with spouse. Thus comparisons cannot be made directly across the various categories of immigration (Thompson, 1995).

ments both as a macro-economic problem as well as a matter of social welfare for individuals and families.

The macroeconomic problem appears serious. Canada has seen a marked rise in utilization of social assistance through welfare in the past decade. The number of adults and dependent children receiving social assistance has more than doubled since 1980 to reach more than 3.1 million in 1994 -- a figure which represents more than ten per cent of the Canadian population (Sayeed, 1995). Moreover, the number of recipients of unemployment insurance (UI) increased during the same period by more than 80 per cent. Overall, the portion of the Gross Domestic Product attributable to UI and social assistance rose from 2.5 to 5 per cent. While some of this rise can be explained by the severe recession Canada experienced 1990-1992, the trend had been rising prior to that period. The recipient loads were 40 per cent higher in 1989 than in 1980, even though the rate of unemployment for each year was similar -- about 7.5 per cent (a relatively low figure for the Canadian economy). Clearly, governments have been forced to alter their approach to social planning. Such changes will invariably be reflected in changes in arrangements for recipients.

In this light, notions of "workfare" have increased in their currency as a palliative to what appears to be a crisis in social assistance programming. As a result, the federal government has reduced its share of payments to the provinces, which administer social assistance programmes. This plan, announced by the federal Minister of Finance late in 1994, involves the aggregation of all such expenditures into a single envelope, a progressively declining portion of which is to be transferred annually to provinces for distribution more or less according to their own priorities.

In light of this commonly accepted fiscal crisis of rising expenditures and deficits, programmes of self-help and other non-governmental alternatives which appear to offer savings in expenditures have risen in popularity. A recent poll indicated, for example, that some 86 per cent of all Canadians favour "making people on welfare go to work" (Evans, 1995). Accordingly, certain provinces have already laid plans for such a "workfare" scheme, and all provinces have been attaching various work-related conditions for welfare eligibility. These developments have been progressing despite federal provisions which stipulate that social assistance eligibility be determined solely upon financial need, taking into account available income and resources.⁸

Rationales for such programmes often link high welfare utilization to problems of welfare dependency and lack of individual initiative possibly reinforced by what appears to be generous welfare payments. Less attention is focused upon the structural disjunction between the high number of claimants and the lack of job availabilities which fit the employability profiles of the recipient population. Likewise, less attention falls on the dual problems of lack of employability of many recipients, especially women with small chil-

⁸ The latter term, "resources" has provided the operative mechanism for planners to develop work-related conditionalities. Currently, only three out of 12 Canadian provincial jurisdictions do not attach work-related conditions. The populous regions of Ontario and British Columbia require mandatory job searches and acceptances of employment offers. Others require additional evidence of employment preparation, such as training programme enrolment (Evans, 1995).

dren. Even more daunting is the anticipated cost and design of a workfare system which would create appropriate matches among skill levels, training programmes and new jobs. Experience accumulated to date in the US on workfare indicates that initial (front-loaded) costs for mounting such programmes do not represent a financial saving in comparison with traditional welfare payment schemes over a period of years (Evans, 1995).

The problems for newcomers searching for employment in this era appear to have to no easy resolution. Clearly, training programmes continue to be necessary to permit adaptation to Canadian employment patterns. Ironically, language preparation often retards a rapid insertion into the workforce by requiring people to remain in day-long classes. Employers, for their part, prefer to hire persons who have "Canadian experience," an ambiguous codeword which covers work experience as well as attributes of employees which allow them to resemble others who are well established in the Canadian work economy. Mandatory workfare programmes do not address the array of problems inhibiting rapid integration of newcomers into the Canadian workforce. They do neither sufficiently increase available opportunities, nor do they redress the types of "deficits" which retard such integration.

There is a triangle of control-style as follows (Fig. 1):

[Figure 1 about here]

Three variables predominate in terms of policy options: control, adjustment, and *laissez-faire*.

Control relates the power of the state to determine behaviour patterns of (part of) the population. Control may be direct, by limiting alternatives so that options are limited nearly to one. Control may be indirect by offering incentives, *e.g.*, subsidies or payments for compliance.

Adjustment relates to the power of the state to make structural changes in social or economic arrangements. These arrangements do not directly control any single person or group. Rather, these arrangements alter the conditions within which people act by altering supply of goods and services or the instrumentalities through which they may be accessed.

Laissez-faire relates to the power of the state to withdraw from activity which it might have undertaken, or which it had done in the past. Thus other social and economic forces may determine how the population will react in certain social conditions without state intervention.

The state may use all three "levers" of action in different domains and in different quantities within any single domain. While altering such types of action levers is a normal part of administrative activity of the state, we have seen more activity and more interest in that activity in recent years, especially in the domains of welfare and immigration.

Limited options

Expansion or contraction of programmes

The federal government is phasing out transfer payments for welfare. Instead, an unspecified bloc grant will be made to provinces, considerably below that presently offered in terms of "envelope" programmes. This bloc grant will be used in some (unspecified) portion for welfare. Yet restrictions presently in force: that recipients will not be subject to "workfare," will no longer be applicable. Provinces will thus be able to exact any sort of eligibility and continuation requirements as appear desirable. There will be no overall uniformity in application from province to province.

Increase or decrease of welfare payments

The Canadian provinces, most recently Ontario, have introduced increasingly restrictive régimes of welfare assistance, amounting to cuts of some 22 per cent with increasingly restrictive eligibility requirements both to initiate and remain.

An immediate effect of this cut resulted in a 4½ per cent shrinkage, or some 60,000 people⁹ from the Ontario welfare rolls in a two-month period. It is not known what came of these cases -- whether they have gained labour force attachment or otherwise.

While the Ontario economy generated some 18,000 jobs in the same period, (Mittelstadt, 1995), it is most unlikely that many such vacancies were filled by formerly unemployed. As most jobs introduced are rather specialized and result from industry newly located in Ontario, former welfare recipients would be among the last to be informed, let alone hired, within the framework of such new jobs.¹⁰ A more plausible explanation points to new restrictions cutting off supplementary benefits for low-income employees who formerly received a monthly allowance to "top up" the low wages to levels comparable to welfare rates in effect at that time..

Active or passive policy:

Policy may try to counter cyclical trends. This type of active governmental intervention earmarks labour policy in social-democratic régimes: *e.g.*, Sweden, Finland and to a lesser extent pre-1995 Ontario. Currently, however, labour policy has moved to a more distinctly *laissez-faire* mode, as indicated above.

For immigration, Canadian policy has characteristically adopted a more interventionist, or structurally adjustive, mode. There is always some adjustment which government can and does effect with respect to intake eligibility and acceptance criteria. The 1995 annual policy announcement indicates a veritably unchanged level of intake but with signifi-

⁹ The total Ontario welfare load in August, 1995 was some 633,500 households, or some 1.26 million people (*Globe and Mail*, 4 November, 1995).

¹⁰ Metropolitan Toronto is planning the addition of some 900 beds in hostels in the near future as one response to the increase in demand from the introduction of welfare cutbacks, for example. Social planners have expressed wariness about any incentive value in seeking remunerative employment as a result of welfare cutbacks (*Globe and Mail*, 4 November, 1995).

cantly more emphasis on selection of qualifications, such as requirements of knowledge of one of the official languages and higher levels of completed education.¹¹

NGOs and Populist irony:

While the plans being formulated in the recent past regarding budgetary reduction have often lacked either precision, rationale or both, NGOs, by contrast, have been required to demonstrate a high degree of instrumental and fiscal control over programmes and finances from whatever source. They are commonly perceived both by governmental departments and sectors of the informed public as the only existing set of agencies which will be capable of supplementing goods and services which will no longer be provided from governmental sources.

This expectation is implicitly reinforced by NGO organization in Canada. They are creatures of larger benevolent organizations *e.g.*, churches or service organizations designed to provide programmatic assistance to newcomers and others in similar need. Governments, for their part, have funded these NGOs through project contracts to provide a variety of specific settlement services. By accumulating complementary expertise to that available in government offices: *e.g.*, needs assessment and service delivery to the newcomer population, the very success in these efforts increased the dependence of these organizations for governmental funding. This symbiotic relationship proceeded more or less successfully while governments continued to offer project contracts. Since 1994, as governments have developed increasing debt-consciousness, the supply of such contracts available for NGOs has dramatically collapsed, leaving an infrastructure of expertise and service without appropriate funding.

Alternative sources of support are few but sometimes potent in light of structural position. Major NGOs are semi-independent creations of national and international organizations with large infrastructures, budgets, personnel and other resources. While they cannot "tap into" these resources at will, they bring reputation and solidity, if not financial liquidity, to their operational face even in the darkest hours. It is possible for NGOs therefore to redefine goals and re-examine their mandates.

Numbers of constituency

This larger potential organizational frame carries with it a large number of affiliated persons to give support and bring pressure to bear politically and morally to sustain the NGO activity. Major religious organizations and faith groups perceive their local NGOs as the ground work for a larger mission. As such, the larger organizational infrastructure links directly with the local level of service deliveries.

¹¹ Québec forecasts a significantly lower intake (from a 1995 total of 40,000 to 27,000 immigrants) for 1996, presumably for reasons of economic restraint. The rest of Canada in contrast forecasts a slightly higher intake, with the overall total 1996 intake of 190,000 to 205,000 immigrants (all categories) remaining nearly the same as anticipated for 1995 (*Toronto Star*, 2 November 1995).

Broader support: legitimacy in community

No less significant, if less dependable over time, is the wide measure of broad public support which NGOs have gained as service providers to populations in need. Their ability to attract local funding rests upon this wide if diffuse base of public support. The very legitimacy enjoyed by NGOs becomes a source of reputational strength. Whether or not this strength can be converted into hard currency is moot, but it is clear that NGOs can gain time and political space to strengthen or revise their service delivery and organizational mandate.

General public

Positive and negative political effects

Much of the above rationale which might forecast the viability of NGOs as important community and organizational pillars as the state shifts from welfare to *laissez-faire* ideology and control depends on broad public consent. Conversely, secular shifts in public opinion toward more negative sentiment or veto can blunt or hinder organizational moves almost as effectively as the sanction of a formal vote or referendum can nullify a given administration or political direction. Often large political agendas can be apostrophized in terms of short, pithy slogans which represent code for organizational and political reversal.¹²

It is difficult for organizations which do not currently enjoy public sympathy to counter an ideological sweep because of its diffuseness. More likely, they will assume a low public profile during such a campaign in hopes not to become identified as a direct target in the agenda of political and organizational change. They are less likely to become identified with a counter-ideological political trend, as well, despite how powerful it might be, out of a similar fear of being targeted with a political coloration which might in its turn become vulnerable. The attempt to seek neutrality in the public imagery thus implicates NGOs ironically in organizational obscurity -- itself a precarious move in the search for a meaningful mission in contemporary society.

Linkages desirable and undesirable

Political effects in public opinion can make linkages which impair effectiveness both to social process and to organizational efficiency. Immigration has been linked with increases in crime, rise in welfare numbers and dependency, and threat of absorption of jobs otherwise occupied by those established in the country.

Spread of such linkages through mass media implicitly implicates NGOs and advocates, who might be perceived as harbouring criminals or fostering welfare dependency in their very work. Organizations thus become engaged in informational campaigns which are otherwise ancillary to their service mission in order to counter charges which they find unsubstantiated. While countering such charges often builds solidarity in the NGO com-

¹² The neo-conservative political sweep in the province of Ontario was encapsulated in the slogan "Common sense revolution". While this slogan was never defined, it was associated with all the major political objectives and to aspirants who endorsed them, such as cuts in public welfare, reduction in governmental spending, privatization of crown organizations, etc.

munity, it does so at the organizational cost of diverting energy from service delivery. This political agenda is thus added onto the organizational service mandate. With added constraint on personnel and other resources, the organizational risks may accentuate. Little alternative appears viable, however, for counter-propagandistic activity may be viable from no other organizational source. The exchanges between the governmental and organizational sector are illustrated in Figure 2

[Fig. 2 about here]

New settlement proposals

The Department of Citizenship and Immigration in 1995 issued a series of working papers on the development of a "new partnership" between itself and NGOs, provincial governments and the broader public. It is obvious that the government wishes to relieve itself of settlement as a federal responsibility. What forms of "partnership" will emerge is yet to be determined. Alternatives such as an initial cash payment for three months has been suggested, with NGOs and private sponsors assuming management responsibility in assisting newcomers. By late 1995 neither general principles nor specific contractual renegotiation had been set. The federal rôle is difficult to discern for want of official policy statements. Effectively, this lack of policy visibility has provided administrative latitude to make decisions without responsibility to a wider public and to change policy both from case-to-case as well as from time-to-time without recourse to legislative change.

It appears clear that NGOs which have traditionally been supported through federal contracting arrangements will have to seek other funding although the caseloads will likely either remain the same or increase. As most of these organizations are simultaneously affected by financial restraint from their respective parent organizations, their attitudes in 1995 have ranged from cautiously entrepreneurial to apprehensively desperate. Former fundraising activities have been combined with internal reorganization to "downsize". Within specific localities, organizations have re-examined their own division of labour in order to "carve out" an orientation which appears unique enough to withstand a budget-cutting exercise. Others eventually come to question whether their own mandate might be combined with another organization to ensure mutual survival.

Two very limited options are being considered:

♦ *Delegating responsibilities to ethnospecific organizations*

Mainstream organizations may delegate responsibility for various services to a variety of ethnospecific agencies which have arisen within a newly arrived ethnocultural group to serve and minister to various needs. In the greater Toronto metropolitan area, for example, Opoku-Dapaah (1993) counted some 55 agencies serving groups from different regions, countries and often specific ethnic subdivisions of Africa alone. Various needs (translations, orientation to Canada, counselling on initial adaptation difficulties) are immediately and served through these relatively small and informally constructed organizations. These agencies in turn make referrals to larger "mainstream" organizations for cases requiring more extended, professional or administrative service -- often relating to official business, *e.g.*, a request to the government for sponsorship.

As a result the range of services available is widened, as is the network. This type of arrangement is uneven, however, and dependent on the indigenous efforts of newcomers, drawing upon their own human and financial resources. Some groups have been well served; others suffer from a paucity of such service, so that the dependence upon "mainstream" organizations is total. Moreover, there is no assurance of quality of service in the smaller and more informally organized ethnospecific agencies and groups. No professional standards govern them, nor is there any accountability outside the group itself.

◆ *Use of volunteers from ranks of former clientèle*

Volunteers can be recruited by mainstream organizations to extend the range of services. They often make excellent rôle models, and their attractiveness appears at once personal and organizational. As the work does not drain scarce financial resources, volunteers are perceived as a legitimate way to extend a budget. Yet they require coordination, supervision and rewards to continue. In order to assure motivational balance among the volunteer cohort, a strong volunteer program exacts organizational resources which might otherwise be spent in direct service to clients.

Conclusion: In balance

The change of state organization from social-welfare to *laissez-faire* involves a new mix of opportunities, challenges and risks. Clearly, fiscal restraint has triggered a restructuring scenario in Canada which involves not only budget cuts, but even more importantly, devolution of responsibility to lower governmental levels and from the governmental to the non-governmental sector. Nowhere is this devolution more evident than in the domain of immigration. New numbers are perceived as positive, not only in official political ideology, but in the wider public imagery of immigration as providing a wider demographic base and greater social and economic opportunity.

Two currents of centralization and decentralization cross each other: Funding authorities remain centralized, despite shrinking budgets. Yet decisions on how funding shall be allocated is being decentralized; legitimation of ethnocultural groups occurs predominately at the local level. It has become increasingly difficult to translate this local legitimation into institutional recognition in terms of funding.

Yet settlement of newcomers is itself a welfare responsibility which sometimes reflects negatively on an otherwise positive image. Such needs are officially described as temporary and in the longer run will result in compensatory return in terms of higher occupational and social achievement launched by settlement assistance. Whatever the benefits of settlement, the federal government has opted for "renewal" which effectively releases it from responsibility by devolving it to lower governmental levels and to non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Consistent with federal government practice, specifically designated funds will be rolled into a general allotment (of smaller size) to be transferred to provincial governments according to a formula yet to be decided. However smooth the policy appearance, the cut-back of assistance in a climate of general fiscal restraint invites a similar scenario for the

form of welfare known as settlement. Governments and organizations are currently puzzling over this soon-to-be unmet need.

No obvious solutions present themselves, but the strength and number of non-governmental organizations implies that their interposition will provide some latitude to resolution. This latitude will be moderated by obvious budgetary restraint, as NGOs themselves have become dependent on the very settlement assistance being cut back. Likewise, organizational affiliations of the NGOs are themselves experiencing similar fiscal restraints. Nevertheless, NGOs have the organizational capacity to absorb some of the negative impact. This ability is possible through their own sources of personnel recruitment, organization and funding, which, however restricted, tap in to resources not available to the general public. This organizational interposition represents neither a "quick fix" nor a permanent resolution to a severe problem of unmet need in a society and *polis* increasingly moving toward *laissez-faire* organization. It does represent an important strength that represents neither the private nor the public sector, but an intermediate organizational sector which provides, however narrow, a necessary bridge.

The scenario is by no means assured nor free from risk. Alternative scenarios, however, are neither numerous nor close at hand fiscally, culturally or politically in the Canada of today. It may look to Finland's social welfare organization with a certain nostalgic envy, but it is certain that a return to that welfare-state organization is foreclosed in the near future.

References

- Adelman, H., *et al.*, 1994. *Immigration and refugee policy: Australia and Canada compared*. Melbourne and Toronto, Melbourne University Press and University of Toronto Press.
- Bibby, R., 1990. *Mosaic madness*. Don Mills, ON, Stoddart..
- Bissoondath, N. 1994. *Selling illusions: the cult of multiculturalism in Canada*. Toronto. Penguin.
- Canada, 1968. *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*. Ottawa, Supply and Services. Vol. 4.
- Corson, D., 1995. "Tories flunk test on early schooling," *Toronto Star*, 8 August, A13.
- Esping-Andersen G. and W. Korpi, 1987. From poor relief to institutional welfare states: the development of Scandinavian social policy," in Erikson, R., *et al.*, *The Scandinavian welfare model: welfare states and welfare research*. New York, M.E. Sharpe.
- Evans, P., 1995. "Linking welfare to jobs: workfare, Canadian style," *Policy options*, May, 5-10.
- Gadd, J., 1995. "Ontario, Michigan welfare standards show bold contrast," *Globe and mail*, November 4, A8.
- Kangas, O., 1994. "The merging of welfare-state models?" *Jnl. of European social policy*, 2, 79-94.
- Kaprielian-Churchill, I. and Churchill, S., 1994. *The pulse of the world: refugees in our schools*. Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- McAndrew, M. 1995. "Multiculturalisme canadien et interculturelisme québécois: mythes et réalités." Montréal, Actes du colloque de l'Association francophone d'éducation comparée (in press).
- Mittelstadt, M., 1995. "Ontario welfare rolls shrink by 36,000," *Globe and mail*, November 4, A8.
- Opoku-Dapaah, 1993. *Directory of African community groups in metropolitan Toronto*. Toronto, York Lanes Press.
- Opoku-Dapaah, 1994. *Somali refugees in metropolitan Toronto*. Toronto, York Lanes Press.
- Refugees*, 1995. N° 101, III.
- Sayeed, A. 1995. "Workfare: an introduction," *Policy options*, May, 3-4.
- Thompson, A., 1995a. "'Skilled' immigrants have big incomes," *Toronto Star*, September 24, A3.
- Thompson, A., 1995b. "Immigration levels to rise except in Québec," *Toronto Star*, November 2, A3.
- Ubale, B., 1992. *Politics of exclusion: multiculturalism or ghettoism*. Toronto, Ampri.

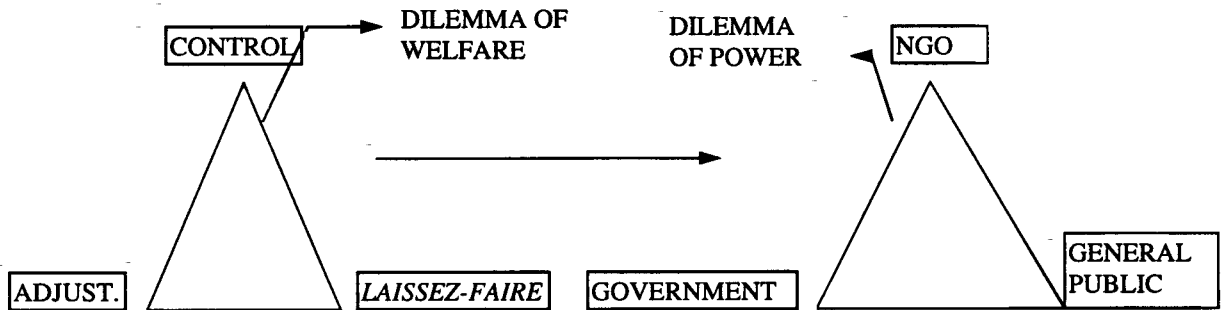
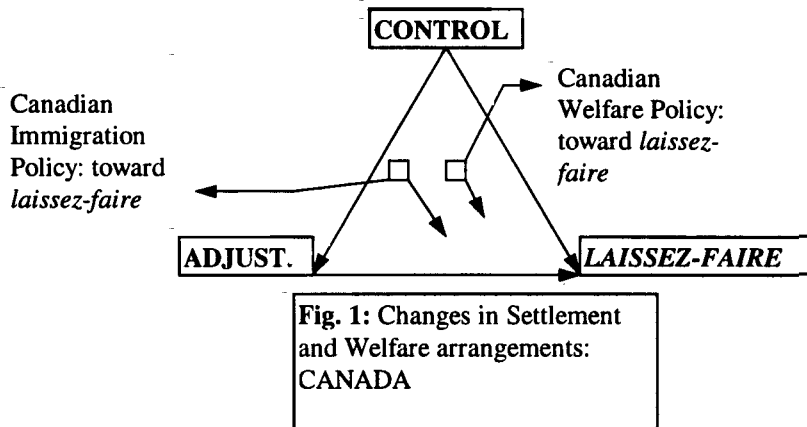


Fig. 2: Dilemma of Welfare and Dilemma of Power Compared: Canada