

# Multiculturalism a fantasy

**DOUGLAS  
FISHER**



The bulging proposal of Justice Minister, Otto Lang, that we adopt millions of the world's orphans came a few days after the publishing of immigration statistics for 1972.

If we were to reach seriously towards the 50,000,000 population figure advocated by Mr. Lang something as drastic as bringing in huge numbers of orphans from the world's storms would be needed. Last year we took in 122,006 immigrants, an increase of only 106 over the 1971 intake.

While Mr. Lang's intelligence and study capacities are restricted the imaginativeness of this proposal which he tossed off as a personal proposition worth discussing publicly took me by surprise. Certainly, his wife and he with their seven children have done their share to populate Canada. Such large families, however, go against the grain of the times when our birth-rate has almost dropped to a zero population growth range and Quebec leads all the provinces in choosing not to procreate.

If one's perception of the brotherhood of man runs far and strong there is an attraction in bringing multitudes of children without parents to Canada. The strenuous efforts and the spending of many childless couples recently to get babies from the Bangladesh cauldron symbolizes such humanity. One could build further castles using arguments relating to the pending surplus we have in school space and teachers as the last bulge of native-born kids move into the top end of the educational system. And few would deny that we have the elbow-room in land, air and water for millions more.

To be humane and idealistic about immigration, however, would seem to run against currents in public opinion. It is hard to remember a time since the middle of the great depression when there has been so little, broad enthusiasm for immigration.

Regional disparities and regional grievances plus a high level of unemployment have tended to turn us off immigration, certainly towards domestic concerns which flood-tides of new arrivals would only accentuate.

More specifically, the consequences of our recent immigration policy are still unread or not in focus. Add

to that an even more recent Federal policy of multiculturalism. It seems rather nice and very liberally-minded on the face of it but probably it is madness over the long term.

It is apparent that the "points" system by which the qualifications of those who wish to come to Canada were established and then implemented within a crude reading of the capability of the economy to absorb them has had the effect of immensely widening the range of countries from which immigrants come.

A glance through the "countries of origin" of 1972 and then through the same statistics from the '50s demonstrates that proportionately we are taking in many more blacks and colored people. Last year's figures startle simply because the bulk of it does not come from a few countries.

The points system is giving us more and more the face of the United Nations but in a smallish way. There's nothing wrong with this if one assumes or at least does not balk at the conception of eventual assimilation into something we might broadly call "Canadian".

Here is where the multiculturalism policy seems a fantasy. It follows from a reaction of the "third force in Canada" (that is those who were not of British or French stock) to all the "two founding nations" talk of the centennial period.

Our politicians since the early 20s have tended to make much, in broad generalities of "the Canadian mosaic." Ethnic origins traditions, customs and languages are to be prized. Canada is seen as a kind of happy Noah's Ark of humanity drawn from the whole world.

The proliferation of ethnic potential under the recent immigration policy seems an insuperable challenge to an operative multiculturalism.

Take the sturdy variety coming in from the West Indies. The bigger flow from such unusual places as India, Egypt, Portugal, Hong Kong and the Philippines. The emergence of the USA as our largest single supplier of immigrants.

What a melange. Unless we can count on a very high assimilation rate multiculturalism will build in and perpetuate. Next thing we know there'll be annual July 4th banquet on the ethnic circuit of politicians.

Another discouraging aspect of recent immigration — at least it discourages one who wants French-Canadians to be satisfied with Confederation — is the drop in the bucket which is French-speaking and the slightly bigger drop from that bucket which chooses to settle in Quebec.

In the past two years less than a twentieth of the immigrants have French as native tongue. Ontario gets just about 50 percent of the immigration, Quebec barely more than settles in BC.

The gist of the immigration situation at this time of the orphan's crusade of Otto Lang is that there does not exist an enthusiasm for the transfer here of teeming millions from the rest of the world. Further, we have little understanding yet of the social and economic problems developing, for example in our cities, from the much wider and yet finer net we now cast around the world to catch or strain out those who want to come here.