DIVERSITY: THE CANADIAN SCENE

Maxwell Yalden received his BA at the University of Toronto, and M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Michigan. He joined the Department of External Affairs in 1956 and was posted to Moscow, Geneva and Paris, as well as serving in various capacities in Ottawa. He was appointed Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Department of the Secretary of State in 1969, and subsequently Deputy Minister of Communications in 1973. In 1977 he became Commissioner of Official Languages for a term of seven years. In 1984 he was appointed Ambassador of Canada to Belgium and Luxembourg. In 1987 he became Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. In 1996 he was elected to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, and re-elected in September 2000. Mr. Yalden is a Companion of the Order of Canada, and Commandeur de l'Ordre de la Pléiade. He has been awarded honorary doctorates by the University of Ottawa and by Carleton University.

ABSTRACT

An examination of the development and salient features of multiculturalism and interculturalism as they have evolved over the years. Certain areas where there is a degree of harmony between the two are identified, as are divergences, and their influence on the treatment of minorities is assessed. The major source of difference between multiculturalism and interculturalism policies lies in the emphasis given by the latter to reinforcing the "French core" in Québec. Although minority interests were also given a significant place in the Bouchard-Taylor report, they have been down played by the authorities in comparison with the importance attached to the need for integration with the majority culture. The two models will doubtless remain in opposition to one another. This is not likely to assist in developing coherent approaches that serve the interests of the minorities while reinforcing their participation in the larger community of which they are a part.

INTRODUCTION

Some observers suggest that multiculturalism and interculturalism are not altogether dissimilar. Others are of the view that they are no more than two ships that pass in the night, with no likelihood of coming together. At the level of principles, it is arguable that there are a number of similarities; but in practice, especially in the political arena, the latter thesis probably prevails. Let me try to elaborate.

First, on the matter of definitions, the 1988 Multiculturalism Act provides that it is "the policy of the Government of Canada to "...recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage..."[1]*. Interculturalism, for its part, has been defined by Messrs. Bouchard and Taylor, the authors of a major report to the Québec government, as "A policy or model that advocates harmonious relations between cultures based on intensive exchanges centred on an integration process that does not seek to eliminate differences while fostering the development of a common identity"*[2]*. It is not difficult to discern differences here, and I shall return to them below. First, however, it will be worthwhile to develop the background and major features of the two policies more fully.*

MULTICULTURALISM

To begin with, it should be noted that multiculturalism did not spring into being with Prime Minister Trudeau's statement announcing the policy in 1971. It started with the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism[3], which was appointed by his predecessor, Lester B. Pearson, as one of the first acts of his new government in July 1963. The Commissioners' terms of reference required them to recommend "what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Federation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups"[4]. The idea of "two founding races", notably in its "two nations" variant, was a major feature of the Canadian political scene at the time, particularly in the 1968 election. It was to haunt Canadian political discourse for many years, and, for that matter, still does. Politics aside, however, it is unquestionable that the "biculturalism" or "two founding races" idea took precedence over the "other ethnic groups" in the Commissioners' eyes. As they noted early on in their report:

> *"... the dominating idea in our terms of reference was equal partnership between the two founding races".*[5]

Nevertheless, however close to the hearts of some of the Commissioners it may have been, it had a shaky future ahead of it. The Commission's initial voyages across the country clearly revealed that, particularly in the West, "two founding races" had very limited appeal. As the Commissioners put it: "…when Canadians of Ukrainian origin vigorously stood up against the idea of 'two founding races' it was because they were deeply conscious of having themselves cleared and opened great stretches of territory … and of having contributed in this way to the 'founding' of a part of modern Canada" [6]. As a result, the Commission's first effort, *A Preliminary Report* already contained one of the earliest uses of the term 'multiculturalism' in a public document.[7] It is also worth recording that it was used in those days to refer to the situation of persons of Ukrainian, Polish, German, etc., extraction, rather than to individuals of African, Asian or Caribbean origin.

"Multiculturalism" as a full-fledged policy was not to be far behind, spurred on by substantial immigration and the profound changes to our demographic and social makeup that followed with it. In these circumstances, a pure "bicultural" model, with a slight bow to the "contribution of the other ethnic groups", was unsustainable, however painful that fact may have been for some to accept.

In the circumstances, it was clear to the Trudeau government that something had to be done to set the bilingual/multicultural ship back on course. The result, in the first instance, was the Trudeau Declaration to which I have referred above. Delivered in the House of Commons on October 8, 1971, Trudeau's statement set out the Government's new multiculturalism policy, emphasizing that "there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples and yet a third for all others. For although there are two official languages, there is no official culture …".[8] I must emphasize that Trudeau did not think that the diverse cultural groupings that constitute our country should live isolated in one or another ethnic enclave. On the contrary, the multiculturalism policy was to have as one of its goals to "assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society". For Trudeau at least, integration and multiculturalism were not conflicting ideas. Another decade was to pass before the multiculturalism policy was given constitutional sanction. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, adopted in 1982, asserts: "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians". Some scholars have disputed whether this "interpretive clause" is of major significance, but there can be no doubt that it gives constitutional weight to the policy adopted a decade earlier.

A further important building block in the multicultural structure was put in place by the Progressive Conservative government of Prime Minister Mulroney in the 1980s. Adopted in 1988, the Multiculturalism Act puts flesh on the bones of the multiculturalism policy and the constitutional undertaking. A number of specific commitments are set out in the legislation: it is especially worth noting that it requires the responsible Minister, inter alia, to "Encourage and assist … full participation in Canadian society … of individuals of all origins…", and to "overcome any discriminatory barriers … based on race or national or ethnic origin…".[9]

All of this makes it plain, in my view, that what we have achieved in Canada, whatever may be the case in other countries, does not set the integrationist and multicultural models in opposition one to another. We are trying both to encourage immigrants to be proud of their diverse backgrounds *and* to participate fully in Canadian society.

INTERCULTURALISM

And what of the background to the interculturalism policy? There is no doubt that it has been the subject of attention in Québec for some time. However, I think it is fair to say that it attracted nothing like the interest it has since the publication of the Bouchard-Taylor report in 2008.

> *The report sets out their judgment that;*
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> *…the Canadian multiculturalism model does not appear to be well suited to conditions in Québec, for four reasons: a) anxiety over language is not an important factor in English Canada; b) minority insecurity is not found there; c) there is no longer a majority ethnic group in Canada (citizens of British origin account for 34% of the population, while citizens of French-Canadian origin make up a strong majority of the population in Québec, i.e. roughly 77%); d) it follows that in English Canada, there is less concern for the preservation of a founding cultural tradition than for national cohesion.*[10]

And Louise Beaudoin, speaking on behalf of the Parti Québecois, has put the matter even more succinctly: "… multiculturalism is not a Québec value. It may be a Canadian one but it is not a Québec one". On this basis, it is argued that there is a fundamental difference between multiculturalism and interculturalism. However, I have to say that my own reading of the Bouchard-Taylor study itself

does not unequivocally support that position. The authors set down eleven criteria, which they suggested would serve to define the idea more precisely, a number of which cast a somewhat different light on the differences and similarities between the two policies. For example, it is stated that "The principle of multiple identities is recognized, as is the right to maintain an affiliation with one's ethnic group." Or, "For those citizens who so wish, it is desirable for initial affiliations to survive…" And, "Multilingualism is encouraged at the same time as French as the common public language". And again, "To facilitate the integration of immigrants and their children, it is useful to provide them with the means to preserve their mother tongue, at least at the outset." And, finally, "Constant interaction between citizens of different origins leads to the development of a new identity and a new culture" [11].

For these reasons, I have suggested in my book, *Transforming Rights*[12] that although Bouchard and Taylor were at pains to differentiate their view of Québec "interculturalism" from the "multiculturalism" of the rest of Canada, there are various aspects which resemble one another[13]. The major distinction between the two is of course the emphasis in their schema on the "French-speaking core." This is an important matter: there is no denying that many Francophone Québecers are convinced that vigorous measures are required to maintain that core intact, especially in so far as it is perceived to be threatened by the accommodation of minority communities that was the subject of the Bouchard-Taylor report.

It is also worth re-emphasizing that, in the rest of Canada, there is no such conception, for the majority language is not at risk, and cannot be, on a continent where English is abidingly dominant. It therefore does not need to be safeguarded in the way that many Francophone Québecers consider imperative for the French language in that province. With that exception, I would argue that the Bouchard-Taylor approach to minorities is in some measure in harmony with the multiculturalism policy that I have been describing.

Of course, that is not the end of the story, for there is a difference between the Bouchard-Taylor report as such and the political response to it. The reaction of the Québec government to the report was mixed. In a statement in the legislature on 22 May 2008, the day it was published, Premier Charest thanked the commissioners and asserted that "Their report will have an effect." [14] He went on, however, to put more emphasis on the "French core" aspects of the report, including, for example, reinforcing "francization prior to the arrival of immigrants," and less on the accommodation-of-differences side that I have commented on above. None of this is surprising, as the fallout in nationalist circles on the appearance of the report was less than favourable.

On one front, the legislature moved quickly in rejecting the recommendation that the crucifix above the chair of the speaker of the National Assembly be relocated. It was unanimously agreed that it was a significant part of Québec's "heritage", and, as such, should remain where it was. Québec government plans to emphasize "francization" and male-female equality were also confirmed, as was the intention to require immigrants to sign a declaration including a commitment on these issues. For the rest, Premier Charest suggested that the government would act after further study. However, there have in fact been very few concrete results to date, particularly with respect to implementing the recommendations of the report.

Indeed, one is inclined to see more than a little substance to Jack Jedwab's argument that;

> *The idea that Québec now practices interculturalism is based more on myth than on any reality whatever. For a number of years, those who suggest that Québec is intercultural have enjoyed the luxury of attacking the Canadian approach in the matter of diversity without offering a viable, practical alternative.*[15]

And from there, his further observation that results from polling by Léger Marketing show that, in terms of contacts with individuals or groups or openness to "dialogues interculturels", Québec society is less involved with its minorities than respondents in "English Canada" At the same time there have been two pieces of draft legislation in this general area before the National Assembly. The first, Bill 391, *An Act to assert the fundamental values of the Québec nation,* tabled by the PQ in 2009, would amend the Québec Charter to "take into account Québec's historical heritage and … fundamental values", inter alia by establishing a hierarchy of values that would give precedence to gender equality and secularism. It is not a government bill and has not been passed, but it apparently remains on the order paper. The second, Bill 94, was tabled by the responsible minister in 2010. It would establish guidelines with respect to accommodation, among other things by forbidding the provision of public services to persons whose faces are covered, a provision that must clearly be seen as directed against Muslim women, even though the bill purports to underline state neutrality in matters of religion. Thus far, it too has not been enacted.[16]

Finally, there is an interesting disconnect to be observed between the policy makers and the public at large. Jack Jedwab reported in May of 2011 that "a survey of 1000 Québecers … reveals that a majority are not clear as to the difference between multiculturalism and interculturalism … Moreover the lack of clarity is shared by both Québec Francophones and non-Francophones".

Further, he continued, "It has been suggested that the section of the Canadian Charter that calls for the Government of Canada to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians is unpopular amongst Canadians. Yet when roughly the same provision is applied to Québec it meets with substantial approval from the provincial population." [17]

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

On the one hand, we have a multiculturalism policy articulated by both Liberal and Conservative governments over a period of some two decades in the 1970s and 1980s. A programme that comprises a major policy statement delivered by the Prime Minister of the day, a constitutional clause enshrining the policy, and legislation on multiculturalism and employment equity that gives concrete substance to the whole enterprise. On the other, we have a major report to the Québec government, which has been left to slumber for the most part. Proposals for an 'interculturalist' approach have been discussed broadly, but in spite of a recommendation from the commissioners that the government enshrine interculturalism in a statute, a policy statement or a declaration[18], none of them has been forthcoming. There have of course been any number of observations and comments, and even an international symposium on the matter. However, thus far, there has been no legislation proposed, except for the two bills I have mentioned, neither of which has been adopted.

In the end, where are multiculturalism and interculturalism going as a result of all this? We are left with two ostensibly competing models, not an unfamiliar situation as between Québec and "the Rest of Canada". This situation is not likely to change. However, it is not likely either to advance the cause of coherent approaches to minority communities that serve their interests, qua minorities, while at the same time encouraging their full participation in the larger society of which they form a part.

NOTES

[1] Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988, s. 3 (1)(a).

[2] Québec, Report of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences, 2008 (Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, co-chairs), hereafter, the Bouchard-Taylor report, Appendix C: 286.

[3] Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, hereafter the RCBB.

[4] RCBB, Preliminary Report, Ottawa, Queen's Printer 1965: 151.

[5] RCBB Preliminary Report: 31.

[6] RCBB, Preliminary Report: 126.

[7] RCBB, Preliminary Report: 127.

[8] The Rt. Hon. P.E. Trudeau, statement in the House of Commons, October 8, 1971.

[9] The Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1998, sections 5(1) (d) and (g).

[10] Bouchard-Taylor report, abridged edition: 39.

[11] Bouchard-Taylor report, abridged edition: 40-41.

[12] Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2009.

[13] Yalden, Transforming Rights: 177.

[14] Statement by Premier Jean Charest in the Québec National assembly, May 22, 2008.

[15] Jack Jedwab, le Devoir. May 24, 2011; my translation.

[16] For a fuller discussion of these issues, see Pearl Eliadis, "Canada's Clash of Culturalisms", a contribution to the "International Symposium On Interculturalism: A Québec-Europe Dialogue", Montreal, 25-27 May 2011.

[17] Jack Jedwab, Executive Director, Association for Canadian Studies, May 23, 2011.

[18] Bouchard-Taylor report, abridged edition: 91.