

Compte rendu

Ouvrage recensé :

The Effects of Mass Immigration on Canadian Living Standards and Society, Edited by Herbert Grubel, Vancouver: The Fraser Institute, 2009, 236 p., ISBN 978-0-88975-246-7.

par Olga Artemova

Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations, vol. 65, n° 2, 2010, p. 333-336.

Pour citer ce compte rendu, utiliser l'adresse suivante :

URI: <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/044307ar>

DOI: 10.7202/044307ar

Note : les règles d'écriture des références bibliographiques peuvent varier selon les différents domaines du savoir.

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter à l'URI <https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche. Érudit offre des services d'édition numérique de documents scientifiques depuis 1998.

Pour communiquer avec les responsables d'Érudit : info@erudit.org

About this last factor, researchers should consider whether the inclusion of a cultural component like learning one of the official languages (French or English) would produce better-quality measurement about this assimilating desire. After a comparative study with a number of Western countries, the author concludes that "policy-makers in Canada are very likely to maintain current immigration levels."

The next chapter is about public opinion on immigration in Canadian English-speaking media. Its author, Mahtani, provides a broad scope on the question, studying: newspapers, television and the emerging ethno cultural media. She is interested not only in the "consumption" of media, but in its production. She also turns to research methods other than traditional content analysis to get in touch with producer (individual interviews), study minority journalism (ethnography) and explore immigrants "media diet." Representation in Canadian media about immigrants is not always positive, showing a tendency to "miniaturize (...) minorities," "an irrational suspicion," "[i]mmigration (being) scrutinized negatively." The reader may stumble on one discursive point regarding this text. When referring to her own works, the author oscillates in the use of the first or third person, a variation which could lead to an interesting content analysis...

Finally, Belkhodya, from the University of Moncton, studies a restrictive subject in one media type, newspaper, published in French-speaking Canada. The theme studied surrounds what the author calls the "controversy" over reasonable accommodation in Quebec. The method used consists of content analysis of five newspapers, two of them being published outside Quebec (*L'Acadie-Nouvelle*, New Brunswick, and Ottawa's *Le Droit*). Without apparent justification, the author chose to analyze editorials, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor containing the phrase "reasonable accommodation." Prior to that, the author would describe "The Situation in Quebec," sketching the province's history in a single paragraph to present the context explaining criticism of Canadian multiculturalism. The author would then rapidly zoom onto an event that made Prime Minister Jean Charest react by creating the Commis-

sion on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences, chaired by philosopher Charles Taylor and sociologist Gérard Bouchard. If those actors nowadays are still active in their respective fields, other ones the author specifically refers to in order to sustain his claim against manifestations of one-way street integration have disappeared from the political scene (specifically, a member of a village's municipal council who triggered the event, as well as Mario Dumont, chief of the right-wing Action démocratique du Québec). While other authors in this book insist on the importance of elaborating longitudinal analysis to study both sides of the immigrant integration phenomenon, this article focuses on mere circumstances. It says little about Quebec's general public opinion on immigration and integration, and little about its evolution. Belkhodja submits several extracts from citizens expressing frustration toward accommodations – a listing mixed with an excerpt from a so-called political analyst denouncing these same attitudes. These findings are not only "preliminary" (p. 254), as the author mentions, but incomplete. The author concludes his article with "impression[s]" (p. 263), leaving the reader somewhat confused and the Quebecer disappointed for not being probed in his/her ethos regarding this book's fundamental theme.

Other than this last article, "Immigration and Integration in Canada" is a must-read review about the Canadian approach towards a reality that has changed the country's composition during the last years and will do so even more deeply in years to come. This book also provides policy-makers with a number of vital indicators that, if undertaken, will help survey the evolution of this phenomenon and maybe provide key collective transformations.

Michel Racine
Université Laval

The Effects of Mass Immigration on Canadian Living Standards and Society

Edited by Herbert Grubel, Vancouver: The Fraser Institute, 2009, 236 p., ISBN 978-0-88975-246-7.

Canada is widely perceived as a country of immigration. Indeed, Canada's annual rate of immigration is one of the highest in

the world. Since 1990, the rate has been averaging 0,75% of the population which resulted in additional 3,9 million (14,2%) immigrants, between 1990 and 2006, to the 1990 level of 27,4 millions. What impact such as an extensive policy has on the wellbeing of Canadians, their culture and identity? This volume puts together twelve papers presented by the Fraser Institute in 2008. The objective of this publication is to inform the public about the mass immigration effects on Canada's living standards and to motivate politicians to improve public policy.

The book is organized into five sections. In the first section, former diplomats present an overview of the issues and some international perspectives. They provide a succinct summary of negative demographic, economic, social and cultural issues of immigration in Canada and abroad and analyze conceptual issues related to the measuring the fiscal impact of immigrants. According to their findings recent immigrants to the US represent a significant burden for taxpayers. In France, immigrants have difficulties to find a job, suffer from low income and high unemployment rate, more so than French born people. The net financial costs of all governmental programs for recent immigrants are high. Social integration is inadequate and leading to the ghettoization of ethnic communities and rising civil unrest. Even if some of the recent immigrants have made a significant contribution to sport and society, authors are sceptical about the overall contribution of immigrants.

In the second section of the book, the economists analyze the economic impact of mass immigration on labour markets, productivity, and the living standards of Canadians. They focus on *per-capita income of residents* when the immigrant arrives and *not on the aggregate national income* normally used by politicians to justify mass immigration. Indeed, if the latter grows with the arrival of immigrants, the evolution of the former is not so obvious. The main conclusion of these authors is that mass immigration has had a *negative impact on the living standards* of Canadians. They impose a high fiscal burden on all Canadians, contribute to the degradation of salary

and working conditions in Canada. Besides mass immigration would be responsible for an *increased pollution and crowding, higher real-estate prices, and longer commutes*.

The third section is about demographic issues of mass immigration. The demography analysts assess whether mass immigration helps to cover the unfunded liabilities of the country's social programs by importing young people from abroad. Actually, the ratio of benefit recipients and taxpayers is 0,2 (five taxpayers paying for benefits of one person). To maintain the ratio at this level the annual rate of immigration would be much higher than it actually is in order to reach 165,4 million population by 2050 with 7 million of immigrants only for this year. But Canada's economy and society would be incapable of absorbing such a huge quantity of immigrants. The authors examine four immigration policy scenarios. But even the most "radical," that implies raising dramatically number of immigrants aged 20 coming to Canada (difficult to implement), would not allow to deal with the financial problems of the social programs. The authors remind of that immigrants will age like anyone else. They will also need social benefits in retirement. It means that the problem of financing social security programs would not have been solved. The alternative solution they put forward would be to raise the average retirement age instead importing workers from outside.

The social consequences of mass immigration are discussed in the fourth section by political scientists. They analyze the effect of immigration and multiculturalism on culture, identity and security in Canada. One of their conclusions is that many immigrants keep their loyalty and attachment to the country of origin more than to Canada. The result is that many of them continue to live in their countries of origin pragmatically using the privilege of being a Canadian citizen, or simply refuse to assimilate or to integrate. Another conclusion is that existing permissive and non-controversial mass immigration and multiculturalism policies *are causing Canada to transform into a "diasporic society," a "global suburb" or "bedroom community" for people whose identity are rooted elsewhere but in Canada*. They blame the

Canadian creed based on overall importance of protection, openness, tolerance and diversity. It would justify existing permissive and non-controversial immigration and multiculturalism policies. In their opinion, the result is the absence of assimilation of immigrants and the transformation of the traditional vision of Canada based on its British heritage and French fact into a new "multicultural" society with "national minorities" making special claims on the nation. This "centrifugal" tendency and lack of social coherence *threatens Canadian identity and unity*, and could give rise to many social pathologies. Even if the expression of protest from Canadians like in Herouxville (Quebec) wishing to defend their culture and way of life is quite uncommon at the moment there are some signs of growing discontent among Canadians facing refusal of immigrants to assimilate local values presenting demands for "unreasonable" accommodations. The debates on "reasonable accommodations" under the auspices of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission in Quebec in 2008, was an occasion to let steam off, but it didn't really solve the problem.

The last *section* of this volume gives an overview of political issues related to immigration. The emphasis is put on the importance of availability of information about the effects of immigration in influencing government policymaking. They deplore as well the inertia of governments unwilling to touch those "explosive" issues et put forward an idea of existence of a political market place where politicians "buy immigrants' votes" in return for all kind of favours for them. Two ways to change the present market for votes are presented. The first is to reform the electorate system in order to allow small single-issue parties to enter Parliament. This would help to open the public debate on immigration issues and probably induce changes in government policies. The second is to inform all voters of the costs and benefits of immigration. The idea behind this is to wake up the majority of voters (immigrants are minority). Green describes the challenges and tactics used by Migrationwatch UK to become credible, public and the main source of information on immigration issues used by the media and politicians.

The idea, which comes through all papers, is that, since 1990, mass immigration has become prejudicial to Canadians. Its effects on economic, demographic, social, and political conditions in Canada would be mostly *negative* and would *deter* the well-being of Canadians. The living standards would be falling and the existing national identity, culture and social fabric would be under attack. Canadians are not aware of it because of the absence of an open immigration policy debate. The authors attribute the responsibility for this state of affairs partially to academic complacency and cosmopolitan bias, the influence of professional advocates, activists, and interests groups, to Canadian traditional political correctness, as well as to Canada's electoral system that prevents even small anti-immigration parties capable of bringing forward this issue from appearing. *Two ways* of dealing with this problem are offered. *The first* one includes a better selection process of immigrants; elimination of family class of immigrants; transferring the responsibility for selecting immigrants from civil servants and the present point system into hands of private employers (admission only with a job). *The second* way to change the immigration policy would be reduction in the number of immigrants (for example from 250 000 to 100 000) or even better to settle the immigration rate at the same level than the emigration rate. This policy of zero net immigration would result in only 45 000 immigrants instead of 250 000 that really immigrated. The absence of mass immigration will not lead to depopulation of Canada because of low fertility rate and the negative population growth. The idea advanced is that *lower taxes, less pollution and crowding, and lower land prices could easily induce [Canadians] to have larger families.*

Thus this book presents an uncommon point of view on Canada's mass immigration and multiculturalism policies. The statistics and facts presented are helpful for one trying to understand the dynamics of immigration policy in Canada and its socio-economic and political impacts. The rationales of immigration and multiculturalism policies as well as the Canadian creed of overall acceptance and tolerance of differences have to be questioned. However there is something

that makes me feel uncomfortable about this book. First, the tendency to blame only immigrants in almost all internal and even some external problems that Canadians have ranging from economic problems et environmental degradation to urban concentration, lost of identity and national culture, national security and so on. The book omits the discussion of the problem of integration or assimilation of immigrants. The emphasis is put on their refusal to respect local values. If in some cases it is true, one can't generalize. We need to question existing programs designed to help the settlement of immigrants. Are they really adequate and efficient in promoting integration and loyalty? What about the existent restrictive policy relative to recognition of diplomas? It is widely known that many immigrants like medical professionals with years of experience cannot work in Canada. They are often obliged to start from scratch or to change profession with several years of new studies. If in some cases the refusal to recognize diplomas may be justified, in most cases it is a simple discrimination against immigrants. So it's hardly surprising that they earn less than Canadians and use social services and transfers. The result is years of misery and resentment. Do they refuse to integrate or is the integration refused to them?

The book missed to present the problem of "Canadian identity" and the Canadian multiculturalism policy. It doesn't develop enough the notion of "Canadian identity." What does it really mean "*British heritage and French fact*"? The point of view presented in the volume comes from "English speaking Canadians" and reflects whether ignorance or absence of will to recognize historically real fact of the eternal problem of scission between English and French Canada. Immigration as political arm has been used by federal government for more than 100 years and still used against French Canadians. Canadian immigration and multiculturalism policies were designed to flood French Quebec by successive waves of immigration. The objective has always been to weaken French culture and values and to prevent the sovereignty of Quebec and its possible separation from Canada. For example, in 1880 almost half of Manitoba's population was French speaking, now they

represent hardly 3%. This is the result of efforts of the federal government immigration policy. They encouraged English speaking immigrants mostly from Eastern Europe to settle in the Prairies giving to them lands and work tools, creating at the same time conflicts between natives and Métis whose lands were distributed with the colons. Quebecers eager to settle there had right to nothing. In this respect it would be interesting to mention the history of two famous rebellions of Louis Riel in 1870 and 1882 and his execution in 1885. It was a patriotic attempt to defend the rights of Métis and French speaking population in Manitoba and Saskatchewan facing hostile policy of Ottawa. But for a long time was largely ignored in "English Canada" and Luis Riel was considered there till 1990s like a "traitor of nation." In 1906, still in Manitoba, an anti-French law was passed. It was forbidden to speak French in public, to have French schools, etc. Everything was done to make French leave or assimilate completely abandoning their language and origins. Another example of use of immigration as political arm against Quebec is 1981 and 1995 referendums about sovereignty of Quebec. The federal government feeling that Quebecers would vote for sovereignty of their province, decided to accelerate naturalization procedure of immigrants in Montreal just before referendum in 1995. The objective was to boost the number of pro-federal voters. Only in the month preceding the referendum, 50 thousand new citizens appeared in Montreal. The multiculturalism policy dates from 1970s when Trudeau decided to change political ground and to fight the scission between English and French Canada. During the years that followed, the Canadian immigration policy was designed to discourage French-speaking immigrants to settle in Quebec. The only choice they had was to install in the western Canada (Vancouver) with the right to move in other region only after three years of residence. These are the facts that were omitted from analysis in this book. Still I would recommend this book like a provocative "starter" for debates on a wide range of problems related to immigration.

Olga Artemova
Université Laval