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THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION:

THE CANADIAN EXAMPLE

THE PROBLEMS which the French, the Indians, and other ethnic groups present, are indicative not of social disruption but, on the contrary, of a process toward integration of a society which for a long period of time has been relatively unintegrated. Historically, the colonial character of Canada gave it a unity which has always been somewhat artificial, that is, imposed from outside rather than coming inherently from within. As some sociologists point out, even the Quebec Act of 1774, which gave the first legal recognition to Canadian pluralism, was yet another case of the British pattern of "indirect rule" over its colonies, a pattern followed in the British African and Asian colonies.¹ According to this pattern, a policy of non-assimilation made possible a more rational yet more effective control over potential tensions arising from cultural differences by containing the demands of the differing cultural groups within the bounds of the established treaty. Thus the preservation of native or other cultures ensured that equal rights would not be extended to them.

As is well known, there was always a strain of fear in Canadian history that Canada might secede from Great Britain and join the United States. This is apparent, in particular, in Canada's expansion to the West, and it marks one salient difference between the Canadian and the American frontier. The Canadian West was "wild", but in the United States it was wilder. It was only gradually that the law caught up with the American frontier; in Canada, the police force and the courts of law, or at least the army, pushed out together with the frontiersmen.² This official supervision of the Western expansion continued to perpetuate the "official" unity of Canada and slowed down indigenous development of its institutions. The British North America Act itself presented only a legal phrasing of the problem of Canadian identity. Wide dispersion and regionalism, to be sure, had much to do with the problem; they made even the external "official" integration of Canadian society more difficult.

Unlike most European societies, but like the United States, Canada

remains a plural society. In both Canada and the States, ethnic groups are constituent groups; they are part of the basic structure of society. In European societies, with several notable exceptions, ethnic groups are more or less peripheral to the structure of society. It is unrealistic, for example, to speak of Canadian or American lower or higher classes without any reference to ethnic groups. It is never simply upper or lower class, it is upper or lower "ethclass". For this reason the problems of social integration of North American societies are inherently bound up with the problems of ethnic groups.

The real problem of social integration, however, goes much deeper than the "official" or legal unity of society. Ultimately, it has to do with the total of inter-relationships between the involuntary groups that make up a specific society: moral, ideological, and psychological inter-relationships, as well as those of law, economics, and prestige or status.

It is at this point that a more precise definition of social integration is required. It is not implied that the process of social integration means harmony and lack of tensions or conflict in society. It does not. On the contrary, conflict is always part of the process of integration. Indeed, integration of modern societies can be defined as the process through which tensions deriving from inter-group relations come to be managed so as to effect mutual adjustments of these groups to one another, inasmuch as these adjustments contribute to the effective functioning of society as a whole. This somewhat abstract definition requires further explanation.

First, groups of the type that are being discussed here are what sociologists call involuntary as distinguished from voluntary groups. Voluntary groups are mostly associations or committees such as labour unions, professional associations, clubs, and the like. Involuntary groups are usually those into which a member is born, and which possess sub-cultures of their own. The main types of such groups are ethnic groups (including racial), social classes, and religious groups. The two types of groups, the voluntary and the involuntary, are closely interconnected. Significantly, as will be developed later, the voluntary groups are instrumental in the inter-relationships between the involuntary groups. It is the involuntary groups, however, that present the problem of integration of society, and of the minority groups in particular, and it is primarily these groups that will be considered as the subject of the process.

Secondly, there are two basic aspects of the problem of social integration: (1) The problem of allocating both rights and duties and facilities and

rewards between the different involuntary groups and, in particular, between minorities. This is the question of civil rights, availability of the opportunities that are available for minority groups, and the use that can be made of these opportunities. (2) The problem of developing and maintaining solidarity of the various groups, in particular minority groups, with one another and with society at large. This is the question of commitment or loyalty to society as a whole, a consciousness of community which binds members of different groups together and gives them common identity. Both of these aspects of social integration can be seen in present day Canadian society.

The key to the understanding of the status of ethnic groups within modern societies is found in the type of jobs which their members predominantly hold. One basic prerequisite for stability in modern, industrialized, urbanized societies is progressive economic development. A consequence of this progressive development is a constant shifting in the occupational composition of society in the direction of higher skill. Thus since 1931 the proportion of unskilled labourers in the labour force in Canada decreased by 50 per cent, whereas the proportion of persons in the clerical and professional occupations has about doubled.

It is in reference to the labour market that modern mass education performs its function, and this function, in spite of what we might or might not like it to be, is not so much that of making people more informed and less prejudiced as it is that of providing qualifications for more specialized types of jobs. Modern education is highly marketable, and in this sense it has become an integral part of the economy.

The problem of civil rights, however, can arise when some minority groups do not attain the same educational level as the rest of society or do not keep on a par with the occupational changes taking place in the total society. It is characteristic of modern "pluralistic" societies that some ethnic groups attain educational and occupational levels higher than the societal average, whereas others fall behind in the general rise in school and occupational attainment. In Canada, the three groups which have been consistently and substantially below the general level are the Indians and Eskimos, the Italians, and the French; those consistently above the general level, the Jewish, the British, and to some extent the Asians. Thus, as John Porter reports, in 1951, 53.8 per cent of all males in Canada from 5 to 24 years old were attending school, and in 1961, 68.3 per cent. Among the Indians and Eskimos, however, school attendance in the same age and sex category was in 1951, 12.5 per

cent below the average and in 1961, 7.1 per cent. For the French, in 1951, 3.3 per cent and in 1961, 4.2 per cent below the average. In the "above the average" category, in 1951, Jews were 11.1 per cent above and in 1961, 16.5 per cent; the British 3.0 per cent above in 1951, and 4.0 per cent in 1961; Asians, 18.0 per cent above in 1951, but only 5.3 per cent in 1961.³ Immigration, of course, is partly responsible for some decreases between 1951 and 1961, but immigration only complicates the civil rights issues.

A similar situation exists in the area of occupational attainment. Indians, Eskimos, Italians, and French are all under-represented in the professional, financial, and clerical occupations and over-represented in the primary and unskilled occupations. In 1961, Indians and Eskimos were over-represented in the primary-unskilled occupations by 34.7 per cent, Italians by 11.5 per cent, and the French by 2.8 per cent. They were under-represented in the professional and financial occupations by 7.5 per cent, 5.2 per cent and 1.9 per cent respectively. However, an interesting process has been taking place. Since 1931, and in particular since 1951, participation of Indians, Eskimos, and French in the primary-unskilled occupations has been decreasing. For the Italians it has decreased substantially from 1931 to 1951, but has increased again since 1951. Yet for all of these groups participation in professional, financial, and clerical occupations has also decreased since 1931, even though the decrease among the French has been small. All other ethnic groups, except for the Jewish, British, and Asian, remained under-represented in 1961 in the professional-financial occupations, but the percentage of their under-representation in these occupations has been gradually decreasing since 1931.³

Whether or not an ethnic group attains the same educational level as the rest of society or whether its participation in the higher-status and better-paid occupations is proportionally equal to that of the rest of society seems to depend on two conditions: opportunities for education or for getting better jobs; and willingness and ability of the members of the ethnic groups to make use of the opportunities that exist, and to go after better education or better jobs. However, even if opportunities are lacking but the members of a minority group are willing to accept their inferior status, no question of civil rights arises, and there is no problem of social integration. In this case, social integration is achieved through consensus and acquiescence as to what place a minority group occupies in society. Such consensus comes to be supported by stereotypes and public images which are invoked on behalf of the *status quo*.

Stereotypes, even if some of them derive from historical events, work to funnel immigrants and members of ethnic groups into specific types of occupa-

tions and to maintain the differences in occupational participation and in ethnic status. Certainly, such stereotypes as those that the Negro is lazy, that the Indian lacks ambition, that Jews are intellectuals, and that the British are efficient whereas the French think logically but make bad businessmen, that Poles are stupid and Italians are artists, and so on, and so on, will either limit or open opportunities to the members of specific ethnic groups, depending upon the stereotype. For most immigrants, the usual pattern has been that of accepting those opportunities that were most readily available without raising the question of why other opportunities were not available. In this way no problems of civil rights have been raised, but at the same time ethnic strata have continued to be perpetuated. Even if the problem of civil rights is not raised, however, the situation of inequality of opportunities itself remains a potential civil-rights issue.

In structured, traditional societies these issues are not raised, and they do not become problems of social integration. The situation is different in industrialized, urbanized societies which put a value on progress rather than on tradition, and which encourage change and social mobility into higher status levels. Such mobility becomes, in fact, an essential characteristic and a prerequisite for societal development. Canada has certainly taken a place among such societies, in which, especially today, any social inequality is liable to be questioned and to pose civil-rights problems. Hence, not only availability of opportunities, but also utilization of opportunities when they are available are essential for social integration. If one ethnic group, say Italians, for whatever reason fails to take advantage of educational or occupational opportunities that are realistically open, then this in itself becomes a source of societal tensions for the future.

It can be argued that ethnic status and ethnic stereotypes can be changed when ethnic groups assimilate into the values and patterns of the dominant society. This, however, is unrealistic in the case of French Quebec. Outside of Quebec, cultural assimilation has been taking place with relative rapidity, with second-generation immigrants readily taking over the language, the basic values, and the patterns of the society.

Cultural assimilation, however, has not guaranteed the opening up of all opportunities to members of ethnic groups, and it has failed to guarantee acceptance into higher strata of society. Especially, it has not removed the negative stereotypes that have identified members of different ethnic groups. It seems obvious that in groups of the lowest ethnic status, such as the Indians,

the Negroes, or even Italians and East Europeans, cultural assimilation has not sufficed in opening up opportunities.

It would appear that the problem of ethnic status can be dealt with more directly by means of ethnic pluralism itself. Canadian ethnic groups have been realizing that there is nothing which *should* make them unequal with the dominant ethnic group. Today, given the nature of modern societies, fewer people are willing to consent or submit to lower ethnic status. There is no reason to be embarrassed by any ethnic identity. There is even less reason to ignore problems deriving from ethnic status.

The method of ethnic pluralism involves two elements: institutions of government or public service; and the work of ethnic voluntary groups, associations, organizations, or committees supported by these institutions.

The government can play a much larger role in recognizing ethnic issues. It can also play an active role in attempts to change stereotypes. It can give more official recognition to different ethnic subcultures, not as foreign but as Canadian cultures. It can also support many more public-relations endeavours undertaken by ethnic groups, as well as develop better techniques of dealing with higher-skill job discrimination. There are, however, limits as to what governments can do. One difficulty in the efforts of public institutions is that they are unlikely to support all ethnic groups. As Peter Findlay of the Royal Commission Study on Bilingualism and Biculturalism has said,

In any State, there are various groups which manifest different degrees of vitality and viability. . . . The question for the state . . . is to decide which sub-groups, if any, it will *support* in their separateness and which it will *permit* separate forms of expression. Ideally, of course, the state would support every group fully, providing channels for expression and activity to the fullest degree. However, at the moment the exigencies of contemporary life do not afford this possibility: there is only so much to go around, and all public institutions cannot provide facilities and services for every group which may wish them. Some choices must be made within the bounds of scarce resources, and some groups must do with less than full recognition.⁴

Usually, governments recognize those groups that are able to exert on them sufficient pressure of one form or another. This leads to the second, more basic, element of the method of ethnic pluralism—the function of ethnic voluntary groups in changing the ethnic status in the process of social integra-

tion. Voluntary groups can and do become power elements within society, and their influences can be far reaching.

Voluntary groups can have an ethnic or inter-ethnic social base. That is, they can recruit their members either primarily from one ethnic group or else from several ethnic groups. (The base can be provided also by other involuntary groups.) Furthermore, voluntary groups can be either "instrumental", such as professional associations, political committees, and trade unions, or "expressive" such as clubs, fraternal societies or recreational and similar organizations.

Ethnic voluntary groups of the instrumental type (e.g., Indian-Eskimo Association, Association of Italian Professionals, B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League, NAACP, SNCC, first of all make their members aware of the position of the ethnic group within society. From their own vantage point, these groups inform membership on social, political, economic processes within society, teach them, interpret the values of their society, and in general orient them to society at large. Such groups can also help their members, or even non-members, in finding jobs, in acquiring education, and in availing themselves of other opportunities. Indeed, many organizations of this type can proudly display their records of such successful endeavours. In addition, they can provide leadership for movements of social change and can function as either lobbying groups or simply as power groups *vis-à-vis* the government.⁵ On the other hand, voluntary groups of the expressive type (e.g., clubs and recreational groups at ethnic community centres) perform the function of reinforcing ethnic identity; but at the same time they develop a spirit of cooperation or helpfulness which often leads members of ethnic groups to help one another, especially with jobs and opportunities.

There is no need to document here the functioning of ethnic voluntary groups. Anyone who has been in contact with the life of ethnic communities is aware that such organizations either do or can function in this manner. Perhaps the most commonly known examples are to be found in the Jewish ethnic group.

There is one less commonly known case, however, in which the change in ethnic status has taken place as a result of action of the indigenous voluntary groups. It is that of the Seneca Iroquois Indians of New York State as contrasted with the Onondaga.⁶ Senecas have been faced with U.S. government flood-control action as a result of which, in 1962, 10,000 acres of their reservation were flooded. Yet, in spite of this disaster, they have been able to build new housing units and to re-locate more than one third of the reservation's

1,800 citizens. Although government money was involved, the driving energy was their own collective will, which was marshalled by various indigenous committees. Since that time the Seneca have built an industry, they have established several educational funds and a museum, and they claim that hostility in the surrounding white population has been reduced.

The Onondaga, in contrast, have been subjected to the government's Manpower Development and Training program and to the Project Headstart; yet the Manpower program had only very moderate success and the Project was doomed right at the beginning when the lecturer from the government told a hall filled with parents that the program was intended for children from broken homes where the parents did not care about education and could not help the students. Onondagas remain bitter about the police and the Indian Agent who oversees the reservation (he is also a funeral director) and who keeps insisting that most problems between the Onondaga and the government result from Indian "imagination".

As David Corwin comments, both the Seneca and the Onondaga fear the day when their reservations might be dissolved, but the Seneca have a serious measure of control over their own lives and can face their future with some hope. Their problem is how to avoid dissolving themselves. The Onondaga, however, are dominated by a feeling of powerlessness. Their problem is how to avoid being dissolved by outsiders.⁶

Other examples can be given to show that voluntary groups from within are most effective in changing status of people. But it is also evident that a "bootstrap" operation cannot be successful without boots. Hence the present contention that in civil-rights problems there is a necessity for the government to work to support or to co-operate with the indigenous voluntary groups which realistically exercise leadership within specific minorities.

Yet, even though many government officials probably realize this, there are various blocks which prevent governments from using the method of ethnic pluralism. One such block is the paternalistic attitudes that derive from the structure of bureaucracy itself. They are most evident in such cases as the Indian reservations or the poverty programs. Another block is the perpetual inability of government structures to develop informal liaison with leaders of minority groups on local levels. Many civil rights problems, such as riots, might have been forestalled if such contacts had been made. Among the "official intellectuals", moreover, there is often a short-sighted failure to understand the nature of problems involved in civil-rights issues or movements. Too often instant economic solutions are seen as panaceas for all problems. Yet, a

civil-rights movement such as the one represented by recent riots throughout the United States, even though it has its roots in such socio-economic problems as unemployment and poverty, acquires a new character once it has "caught" and developed, and becomes a different phenomenon with its own momentum. No instant reduction of poverty or unemployment will now solve it by itself: political and ideological desires have to be satisfied before an economic solution can be satisfactory. Finally, governments too often prefer the rule of safety to the adventure of the spirit. Many demands of ethnic groups or movements can be granted without any danger of social disintegration. In the case of French Quebec, for example, it would appear that the political independence of Quebec, rather than effecting disintegration, would result in the long run in more meaningful co-operation and interdependence between Quebec and the rest of Canada.

It would be naïve, however, to conclude that obtaining one's rights through the use of power, even when used within the limits of the law, is in itself sufficient for the integration of society. Although competition for opportunities is a necessary feature of contemporary societies, it contains its own seeds of potential disintegration. Although conflict functions as part of the process of integration, there is no historical necessity that conflict must resolve itself in integration. On the contrary, unity which derives simply from a balance of power—i.e., from compromises of different self-interests—can persist only in so far as there is a more or less equal distribution of power among the competing groups. As soon as one competing party gains more power than another, a situation arises in which the more powerful party enjoys advantages at the expense of the other. In inter-ethnic relations this means, for example, control of the preferable occupational positions, more influence in government circles, more influence in the public media of communication. This again creates the danger that groups who gain more power might disregard the rights or civil liberties of those who have less. We can say that we are back where we started. This is the point at which to develop the second aspect of the process of integration—the necessity of solidarity between the constituent groups of society and commitment to society as a whole.

Modern societies involve a deep-rooted dilemma: although they can develop laws to guarantee rights and liberties, they do not create strong commitments to society itself or strong solidarities among its groups. The law, of course, is the medium through which relationships of groups are equitably regulated. But in modern societies the laws reflect more and more the inter-

ests of specific power groups. Power groups not only have influence on law enactment; they are also able to stretch existing laws by interpreting them in accordance with their interests. Hence it can be said that in our society law is in a constant state of inflation. Its face value is never exactly the same as its real value. There is always the question as to whose interests the existing law serves.

Sociologically, what this means is that there is, at least among the power groups, a certain scepticism, or perhaps even cynicism, about the values of objective universal justice which theoretically should underlie any law. Once the values underlying societal laws or norms are undermined, the ground is set for social disorganization. Hence, social integration requires that, in addition to pressures to obtain one's own rights and liberties, there must also be strong commitment to the values of universal justice, and genuine concern for the civil rights of all, not only one's own. It is only through such commitment on the part of all ethnic groups that the civil rights of each will be guaranteed. This, of course, is a difficult ideal to realize in modern societies, both by those groups who have been relatively successful in obtaining their rights or opportunities and by those who have been relatively unsuccessful. Yet there are means through which such an ideal has been approached.

Like ethnic voluntary groups, associations and committees which involve inter-ethnic membership are instrumental in the process of social integration by orienting its members to society at large, by making them aware of common problems, by offering them prestige, and by contributing to a spirit of helpfulness or sympathy. There are several types of such groups. Educational groups, for example the Ontario Welfare Council Conferences, make members aware, in a theoretical way, of integration or other societal problems. Practical groups, such as CORE, Urban League, Family Movement, and the like, bring members of different ethnic groups together to solve their local problems. Such groups—of which there are too few—if well organized and supported, could contribute much to societal commitment through common solutions of practical problems. "Expressive" associations or clubs exist for artistic, scholarly, and recreational purposes, and emphasize enjoyment. There should be more vigorous attempts, supported by influential organizations and individuals as well as by adequate publicity, to form such groups and recruit their membership. In contemporary mass societies, moreover, knowledge and information about other ethnic groups, their history in Canada, their subcultures, and their affairs, is essential if any spirit of common concern and sympathy is

to develop. Such knowledge can be effectively transmitted not so much through history books as through the public media of communication. There should be more opportunity for different ethnic groups to express themselves through national television, newspapers, or radio.

Finally, with the current attempts to incorporate the Canadian Bill of Rights into the Constitution, serious consideration should be given to the possibility of incorporating into the Bill of Rights some more explicit statements about the right to available opportunities for education and employment.

NOTES

1. See Richard J. Ossenberg, "The Conquest Revisited: Another Look at Canadian Dualism", unpublished paper presented at the Conference of the Canadian Association of Sociology and Anthropology, Ottawa, June 10, 1967.
2. See S. D. Clark, *The Developing Canadian Community* (University of Toronto Press, 1962), ch. I.
3. John Porter, *Canadian Social Structure, A Statistical Profile* (McClelland and Stewart, 1967), Carleton Library No. 32, pp. 82, 81.
4. Peter Findlay, "The Concept of Collective Rights", Multilogue Reaction Paper No. 2, Canadian Citizenship Council.
5. See also Arnold Rose, *The Power Structure* (Oxford University Press, 1967), ch. 7.
6. See R. David Corwin, "Dilemma of the Iroquois", *Natural History*, Vol. LXXVI (June-July 1967), No. 6.