Recent Developments in Immigration to Canada and Australia*

A Comparative Analysis

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INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION in the modern world is subject to strict legal and administrative controls. In this respect it differs from internal migration which, at least in democratic countries, is free to respond to demographic and socio-economic forces. As a consequence, internal migration gives rise to multi-way exchange movements of population between metropolitan areas, substantial net gains of population by areas of high income and economic growth and contributes to the increasing urbanization of the population (Richmond and Kubat, 1976). If international migration was free from legislative control, there is little doubt that worldwide population movements would exhibit similar patterns. Distance and the cost of moving would have some inhibiting effect but the readiness with which employers, transportation companies, travel agents, friends and relatives will advance the cost of travel, combined with the comparative cheapness of charter flights and other means of transportation today, substantially reduces the deterrent effect of distance. As a consequence, highly urbanized industrial and post-industrial societies feel obliged to control immigration. Failure to do so could mean mass migration on a scale that would threaten the political and social stability of receiving societies and undermine their economically privileged position.

Traditionally, immigration controls have been designed to achieve three main objectives. These include, firstly, the preservation of ideological purity and the maintenance of security. In the case of communist countries this has meant limiting immigration to a select few who are committed to communist dogma. It has also meant exercising control over emigration and the return of politically dissident citizens. In the case of western countries, immigration is generally only encouraged from countries that have compatible forms of government. Exceptions are made in the case of refugees who are considered to

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be opposed to the regime of the country from which they have fled. Normal immigration selection procedures are aimed to prevent the entry of those who are considered a security risk or potentially subversive. A second major consideration has been to maintain the racial and ethnic homogeneity of the population or, in the case of plural societies, to maintain a balance between major racial, linguistic or religious groupings. This has led in many countries to the adoption of preferential categories based upon nationality and, in some cases, to the exclusion of particular racial or ethnic groups. Thirdly, immigration policies have been designed to maintain and further advance the material standard of living and the rate of economic growth of the receiving society. At times of economic recession, this usually means reducing immigration and de-emphasizing the labour force content of the immigrant flow. At periods of economic prosperity and expansion, it means the deliberate recruitment of immigrants or temporary workers who will enter the labour force in those occupational categories where demand is greatest and the local supply of appropriate skills is insufficient.

Countries of immigration can be divided broadly into two categories. There are those which have adopted a passive attitude, controlling the admission of those who meet certain criteria but not actively encouraging permanent settlement. In many cases visas are only issued on a temporary basis. Most countries of western Europe fall into this category (Rose, 1969). Other countries have taken a more positive and promotional view of immigration while at the same time maintaining a high degree of selectivity. Such countries have generally considered immigration favourably from the point of view of population growth as well as economic expansion. Canada and Australia are typical countries which, until recently, were perceived as underpopulated relative to their size. Australia has been more explicit than Canada in defining long-term population goals and in deliberately promoting immigration as a means toward their achievement. Population growth has been perceived in both countries as increasing consumer demand and contributing to economies of scale, although economists have begun to question these advantages in recent years (Parai, 1974; Raynauld, 1975). In Australia, the belief that a larger population was a prerequisite for adequate defense, particularly against Japan and China, was also a major consideration before and after World War II (Appleyard, 1971: 7). However, in the last decade, both Canada and Australia have reacted to internal and external pressures to modify their respective immigration policies. Although responding in varying degrees and at a different speed, the pattern of change has been similar in both countries. They exhibit the following common denominators:

1. A progressive liberalization of admission criteria gradually removing racial and national criteria of eligibility.
2. Selection related more systematically to the educational, technical and professional qualifications of applicants and to occupational demand in the receiving country.
3. Increased opposition to immigration from professional groups and educated classes, particularly those supporting zero population growth on environmental and ecological grounds.