

MULTICULTURALISM & RACISM: CAUSE & EFFECT

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“When *I* use a word,” Humpty-Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.”

“The question *is*,” said Humpty-Dumpty, “which is to be master — that’s all!”

“The whole world is festering with unhappy souls:
The French hate the Germans, the Germans hate the Poles;
Italians hate Yugoslavs, South Africans hate the Dutch —
And I don’t like anybody very much!”

In Perth, Western Australia, I am a member of a small suburban tennis club — the only social organization in this world to which I belong, or indeed aspire to belong. In mid-1988 the club was in crisis. Many members were upset because teenage members were coming in increasing numbers on Saturday afternoons to play tennis with the adults, and (it seems teenagers will be teenagers) sometimes were sulky when they lost, or abusive of themselves or of their rackets or of their immediate surroundings. After several months of discussion and turmoil, an Extraordinary General Meeting of the club was held. Speeches — many speeches — were made. (I myself spoke at length and was told afterward by one of my mates that I was without doubt “the most confused committee member”.) The final result, in a close vote, was probably a triumph of moderation: true, teenagers were banned from playing on Saturdays, but only until tea-time! Still, moderation or not, damage had been done: now, several years later, teenagers rarely show up at all to play on Saturdays, and certain club members still avoid certain others because of the intensity of feeling and discussion during those times.

What has this trivial matter to do with multiculturalism and racism? After all, with the exception of one Polish immigrant, one Japanese (about whom more later), and possibly myself, the club membership was and is entirely homogeneous, both culturally and racially. Nevertheless,

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I would like to persuade the reader that there are in fact fundamental connections between the tennis club crisis and problems of race and culture, and further, that our difficulty in seeing these connections is, in large part, a reflection of the poverty of language.

A striking feature of the tennis crisis was the breakdown of the membership into opposing groups: one supporting the *status quo* (continued acceptance of teenagers), the other favouring some degree of restriction. Perhaps it is not inappropriate to use a sporting analogy and call these groups *sides*. Each side felt threatened by the other, each side felt that the other was acting contrary to its preferences and interests. Put in this more abstract fashion, common characteristics begin to emerge among this extremely unimportant problem and other more interesting conflicts (such as between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, or Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, or Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka):

- * *commitment on the part of a relatively large proportion of a given population to each side;*
- * *identification by the members of each side of certain preferences or interests which characterize their own and other sides;*
- * *perception by the members of each side that their own preferences or interests are threatened by one or more other sides.*

Leaving aside for a moment the large differences in scale, intensity, and duration among these various conflicts, perhaps we may agree that at least they all display the three specified characteristics. Let us further agree to call populations in which such conflict arises *polarized*, recognizing that conflict may be *bipolar* (as in the above examples) or more generally *multipolar* (exemplified by tripolar disputes among French, English, and native peoples in Canada or by gang rivalries in certain districts of large American cities).

The reader may wonder why so much effort has been spent to come up with a rather obvious definition of a polarized population. The trouble is that in English, and I believe in other European languages, there are plenty of terms for specific kinds of conflict, and plenty of words, usually rather charged with emotion, which relate to conflict, but seemingly none which provide any insight into the nature of conflict itself. At least the approach taken here permits consideration of a spectrum of conflicts among groups, ranging from the most trivial to outright war, and including along the way numerous others: ethnic conflicts, territorial struggles, even the normal scrum of partisan political debate. It is at least possible that such an approach may shed light on these phenomena.

What causes people to choose sides? How do populations become polarized? Usually, it seems, a small number of related issues assume transcendental importance in the minds of the people, at least temporarily. At the tennis club, polarization could only be expected to last for a short period, until things were resolved one way or the other: al-

though even such a small matter would have a permanent effect on the relationships between some club members, nevertheless the shared language, culture, values, nationality, aspirations, and way of life would act to close most of the interpersonal rifts, and soon restore the tennis club to a homogeneous non-polarized state. The members would recognize that there was more to hold them together than to pull them apart. Similarly, most political issues would not polarize a democratic country on a long-term basis; they could be important for a time, and cause the population to choose sides, but in the long run the wounds would heal and the country would reunite — perhaps only professional politicians remain permanently polarized! In a non-democratic context, the situation can be rather different: polarization may seem to disappear, but often it has only been suppressed by force and intimidation, a truth the leadership of the Soviet Union is currently rediscovering.

But certain issues do appear to give rise to permanent polarization, regardless of the political context in which they arise. In Canada, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and Sri Lanka the struggle is over territorial control and the central issue is national identity: the side to which each individual belongs is determined by some combination of religion, language, ethnic origin, and culture. Why then are these polarizations enduring and intense, when others are transient and comparatively mild? Does the issue of national identity necessarily polarize forever? In an effort to answer these questions, it is interesting to consider, first, the many cases in which polarization based on national identity has persisted and, second, the cases in which it has not.

Looking back over the 1980s, I distinguish three levels of intensity in this kind of polarization. The first level is characterized by continuing civil war based on animosity which in some cases has persisted for centuries. As examples of this level, one can add South Africa to the three cases noted above (Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and Sri Lanka). It is striking that, in each of these cases, the ruling side (whites in South Africa, Protestants in Northern Ireland, Jews in Israel, Sinhalese in Sri Lanka) is greatly outnumbered in the region by the side which is seeking recognition of its identity (blacks in South Africa, Catholics in Ireland, Arabs in the Middle East, Tamils in southern India). Thus both the determination of the rulers to maintain control and the expectation by the ruled of eventual success are encouraged. The result is intransigence on both sides, permanent conflict, and, seemingly, little hope of any peaceful or reasonable solution. The situation is not improved by the fact that, in at least three of these four cases, the ruled side is itself split into factions which periodically make war on each other.

A second level of intensity is characterized by sporadic terrorism and violence which falls somewhat short of permanent civil war, usually more because the ruling side is in a position to effectively suppress dissent than because the animosity between the sides is intrinsically less. Examples

include

- * *Basques in Spain;*
- * *Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and the Soviet Union;*
- * *Armenians in Turkey and the Soviet Union;*
- * *Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians in the Soviet Union;*
- * *Sikhs in the Punjab;*
- * *Moslems in India;*
- * *the Hutu tribe against the Tutsi tribe in Rwanda and Burundi;*
- * *Zulus against the African National Congress in South Africa.*

A third level of intensity is characterized primarily by political or social struggle. Here, among many others, are included:

- * *aboriginal peoples in North America, Australia, and New Zealand;*
- * *Indians in South and Central America;*
- * *blacks in the U.S.A. and the U.K.;*
- * *Québécois in Canada;*
- * *Scottish and Welsh in the U.K.;*
- * *Flemish in Belgium;*
- * *Slovaks in Czechoslovakia;*
- * *the Luo and Masai tribes in Kenya;*
- * *Jews in various East European countries;*
- * *Georgians in the Soviet Union;*
- * *Ossetians (a Persian-speaking minority of 65,000 people) in Georgia.*

The reader can no doubt easily add as many examples again to the astonishing variety listed above — all of them of long standing and certainly not likely to be resolved in the near future.

So much for continuing conflicts. If instead one casts the mind's eye over past national identity conflicts which no longer exist, four main mechanisms for the resolution of such conflicts suggest themselves: extermination, assimilation, coexistence, and separation. I shall briefly discuss each one of these in turn.

One would think that *extermination* would be, in Daniel Defoe's phrase, the "short way" with dissenters. If practiced ruthlessly enough, perhaps it is — certainly neither the Etruscans nor the Carthaginians caused the ancient Romans any further trouble, and the Spanish efficiently obviated future minority problems in the Canary Islands by killing off all of the fair-haired blue-eyed inhabitants whom they found there in the fourteenth century. But twentieth-century attempts to emulate these triumphs have not resolved problems, but rather prolonged and exacerbated them. The Jews survived the German holocaust and will no doubt survive the genocidal impulses of some of their new Arab neighbours. The Armenians survived the Turkish holocaust in 1917 and, as noted above, continue to resist the attempts of two large powerful countries to assimilate or subdue them. Quite apart from moral considerations, it

seems that, at least in the modern world, extermination is not practical: it does not do the job.

As a means of resolving conflicts among diverse people who inhabit the same geographical area, *assimilation* is lengthy, often painful, and uncertain in its outcome. Nevertheless, it has been a major factor in the formation of the existing nations of Europe out of the collection of warring tribes which lived there two thousand years ago. This is true even though none of these nations is entirely homogeneous, and even though whatever homogeneity there is has not been achieved entirely by assimilation. Indeed, it is the twentieth century which provides the most spectacular examples of the success of assimilation as a means of avoiding ethnic problems: throughout the century, millions of non-English-speaking Europeans have emigrated of their own free will to the four great English-speaking democracies originally established as overseas colonies by the British Empire, where now their descendants are distinguishable from their compatriots by at most a surname and a soft spot in their hearts for the home of their ancestors. The success of assimilation in these countries is an unparalleled achievement, approached in history perhaps only by the assimilation of diversity into the Roman Empire. But the twentieth century also provides plenty of examples of the failure of assimilation, usually for two main reasons:

* *there was too great a dissimilarity between the assimilating and the assimilated groups;*

* *the assimilation was forced.*

The same four English-speaking countries referred to above all provide examples of the first kind of failure: immigrants of other races and from very different cultural or religious background remain in polarized groups. Similarly in Europe, the U.K., France, and Germany have not been able to assimilate East and West Indians, Algerians, and Turks, respectively, who have emigrated to those countries in large numbers over the last 40 years. As for the second kind of failure, forced assimilation has been employed, sometimes with success, since the days of the ancient Greeks. In this century, the Soviet Union has tried to assimilate Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians by encouraging the immigration of Russian-speaking peoples into the Baltic states; inspired by similar motives, Roumania has sent tens of thousands of Roumanian-speaking immigrants into Hungarian Transylvania, and China has moved hundreds of thousands of its citizens into Tibet. Trying the opposite tack, the Soviet Union deported thousands of the citizens of the Crimea into Siberia; today many of those exiles, together with many of their descendants, are clamouring to return to the Crimea, and the Crimea itself is clamouring for independence.

By *coexistence* I mean the attempt by two or more sides to share the same real estate. Coexistence is the basis of multiculturalism: it supposes that such a sharing is feasible among not merely two, but perhaps

among many, distinct nations within the same political entity. Of course, as most of the preceding examples of national polarization attest, this result has often been achieved by force, almost always leaving a substantial residue of minority groups which, with varying degrees of intensity, seek independence. Are there any exceptions to this general rule? Are there cases in which coexistence without coercion works? One thinks of Switzerland, where a number of favourable circumstances (small area, defensible borders, geographical separation of the main linguistic groups within the country, prosperity, decentralized government) have produced a miracle: French, Germans, and Italians cooperating in a single country! But I know of no other exception. Two legacies of the British Empire — India and Tanzania — also spring to mind: both are characterized by a huge diversity of linguistic groups loosely tied together by many cultural similarities, and in both countries no one linguistic group is strong enough to be able to dominate the others. Thus a certain equilibrium is achieved. But India has nevertheless suffered continual ethnic strife since its independence in 1947, and Tanzania has been ruled by an ideologically rigid totalitarian dictatorship since it gained independence in 1961. Certainly neither of these countries can claim to have achieved stable coexistence among its diverse national groups.

The final mechanism for the resolution of national identity conflicts is *separation* — the break-up or rearrangement of existing political units into new ones which better reflect the nature of the populations within them. Thus separation is a strategy which acts in some sense opposite to both assimilation and coexistence. This century has seen numerous separations induced by the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian and European colonial empires, and is likely to see more before it is done resulting from the dissolution of the Soviet Union. On a smaller scale, the 1990s may also witness the separation of Québec from Canada and Slovenia from Yugoslavia. In certain circumstances, separation can be a very practical way of reducing or eliminating ethnic polarization; as some of the above examples suggest, it is often enabled by the removal of the military force which imposes a spurious unity upon a diverse population.

Let us recapitulate. We have considered polarization (the choosing of sides) within arbitrary populations, and in particular we have examined polarization within countries based on national identity. We have seen that this kind of polarization is ubiquitous, intense, and enduring — enduring because it is exceedingly difficult to cure. Further, if we look back over the examples quoted above, we see that this kind of polarization has three main causes:

- * *movement of peoples, whether forced or voluntary (for example, the import of black slaves from Africa into the U.S.A.; the migration of Sinhalese and Tamils into Sri Lanka in the fifth century B.C.);*
- * *conquest (for example, of the Baltic states by the Soviet Union in 1940), usually in conjunction with movement of peoples (for example, English con-*

quest and colonization of Ireland; French, English, Spanish, and Portuguese conquest and colonization of the New World);

- * *gradual diversification of separated peoples over time (for example, Bantu tribes in Tanzania or Slavic peoples in Europe), as a result of the movement of peoples.*

In broad terms, then, the movement of peoples, together with subsequent conflicts over political control or social justice, is the fundamental cause of ethnic polarization. Thus, when peoples move, we should seek to avoid or reduce this polarization by invoking one or more of the four mechanisms discussed above. Since it is clear that policies of multiculturalism encourage the movement of peoples, what we need therefore to determine is whether or not these same policies include provisions which bring such mechanisms effectively into play. I shall argue that, on the contrary, the mechanisms of multiculturalism exacerbate polarization rather than reducing it. However, before we proceed with this argument, we need to deal with a word. The word is “racism”.

Let me go back to my tennis club, which, the reader may recall, has a single Japanese member — let me call him Sam Toga. Sam has a very good topspin forehand and a competent backhand, but he appears to understand little English, and speaks less: he mostly nods and smiles. Taking into consideration World War II, taking into consideration the fact that Australia is a large underpopulated country of Europeans in uncomfortable proximity to numerous overpopulated countries of Asians, taking into consideration the increasingly frequent Japanese purchases of Australian beach properties, businesses, and skyscrapers, taking into consideration the wide gulf in language and custom between Australian and Japanese, I would be astonished — no, let me say thunderstruck — if there existed a single member of my tennis club who did not harbour reservations of some kind about the Japanese people. The reader may wonder then what sufferings this single tongue-tied Japanese must bear in such a nest of racists. In fact, I have never heard anyone speak to or of Sam in any other than the friendliest manner: someone always takes the trouble to make sure he is invited to social functions, he is always assured of a good doubles partner in club tournaments. In fact, Sam could be pardoned for believing that the Japanese are every Australian’s favorite people!

Now I ask the reader to imagine a somewhat different situation: suppose that instead of just one Japanese, my tennis club had fifteen Japanese members. Let us try to imagine what the consequences might be. Probably the Japanese members would tend to play with each other; this would only be natural, after all, since they share mannerisms, customs, and above all a language. Perhaps some of the other club members would resent this. And perhaps also the Japanese members would have experienced some reluctance on the part of some of the other club members to play with them. In doubles matches, if it happened that three Japanese

and one non-Japanese were playing together, the non-Japanese player might well complain that the others spoke to each other in Japanese — perhaps they might even keep score in Japanese! At tea break, as well, and on social occasions, the Japanese members might tend to congregate together and talk Japanese; on the other hand, the non-Japanese members might be reluctant to speak very often to the Japanese members because of the difficulty of making themselves understood. The Japanese members might hire the clubhouse one Saturday evening for a Japanese cultural evening — of course none of the other members would be invited. One of the Japanese member's children might have been subjected to a racial slur by another member's child, resulting in a formal complaint to the club committee. Some of the Japanese members might grumble that the admission of more Japanese members was being delayed on the questionable grounds that their tennis skills were not up to the club standard; at the same time, some of the non-Japanese members might wonder aloud whether their club was becoming a subsidiary of the Tokyo Lawn Tennis Club. All of these problems would then raise the issue of whether or not to reserve a proportional number of positions on the club committee for Japanese members, so as to provide for the representation of the Japanese constituency within the club. One or two members, on one side or the other of this issue, might well resign over it (having written angry open letters to the club president) and seek the haven of some other, more tranquil tennis club. And so on. And so forth. What do we end up with? Polarization, of course!

Depressing, isn't it? The existing situation is so pleasant and encouraging, and yet one can so easily imagine a somewhat different situation, one which would polarize the tennis club much more effectively and enduringly than the teenager issue did — and which suddenly exhibits human nature in a less than favourable light. Further, I insist that this polarization is not merely a matter of imagination — it is a consequence of the action of some kind of natural law. I do not know if polarization would occur as a result of ten, fifteen, or fifty Japanese joining the club, but I am quite sure that at some stage it would be inevitable. It would occur for exactly the same reason that polarization has occurred throughout history, for exactly the reason stated above: “the movement of peoples, together with subsequent conflicts over political control or social justice”. Thus, in the microcosm of the tennis club as in the macrocosm of the world, the same laws apply: we ignore them at our peril and to our individual and collective disadvantage.

“Outrageous!” I imagine some reader exclaiming at this point. “What is this madman advocating? Not admitting Japanese into the tennis club? Probably he won't want to let them into the country either! This is racism — pure and simple racism!”

I hope that the reader who does not react in this fashion will forgive me for putting words into his mouth. Still, it is trendy to cry “Racist!”

these days, and I feel sure that there will be readers who will have some such reaction. Let me address myself to them. I shall argue first of all that “racism” is a term which should not be used at all; secondly that the failure to take reasonable account of human nature is a *cause* of racism (in some meaning of the term), while a prudent regard for the shortcomings (if that is what they are) of mankind *reduces* it.

What does “racism” mean anyway? *Racism* is the unfavourable characterization of a racial group; by extension, the unfavourable characterization of an ethnic, linguistic, cultural, or religious group; by implication, the *favourable* characterization of any such group; in particular, the favourable characterization of *one's own* group. Many people extend the use of the term still further, to mean “any position taken contrary to a position assumed to be taken by a majority of the members of any group”; thus, for example, if I oppose the translation of municipal regulations into French or Italian or Cree, or if I oppose allowing RCMP officers to wear turbans rather than Stetsons, then in this usage I am a racist. Of course, *any* use of “racism” or “racist” is pejorative in its intent.

In connection with the definition of “polarization”, I have already alluded to the poverty of our language, a problem which becomes even more evident in the context of “racism”. To begin with, the term is hopelessly overloaded by its extensions: in order to express oneself with some precision, one would like to at least have terms available such as “ethnicism” or “culturism”; but one does not. The pejorative connotations of “racism” preclude its use in any case where the negative characterization of some group might be justified, or reasonable, or pardonable: *any* unfavourable characterization can be labelled “racism”, and is instantly condemned by its label (this is true, or should be true, even for an unfavourable characterization of racists!). To my mind, however, the most serious objection to the term “racism” is that a belief in an unfavourable characterization is not necessarily predictive of behaviour. People may well form unfavourable opinions about certain groups, but nevertheless still be willing to treat representatives of those groups in a fair and decent manner. Only a tiny minority of those who dislike Jews support violence against them. I have for 25 years (since my first visit to Sweden) cherished a healthy prejudice against Swedes, whom I have universally (well, almost universally) found to be boring when sober and predictable when drunk (the species does not seem to occur in any intermediate state); yet I claim that the only indication any individual Swede would ever receive from me of this prejudice would be a frank admission of it, if and only if I happened to find myself liking him! If this example does not convince the reader, he should consider that of my father-in-law, a man beloved of all (well, almost all) who knew him: he railed for much of his life against French-Canadians, yet married one, adored her for 62 years, and, with the utmost good grace, gave shelter and refuge to her French-Canadian relatives when they were in need.

The truth is that, in the common meaning of the term, all of us (yes, I mean *all* of us) are racist — even though we would like to believe that such a thing, like lack of a sense of humour, could be true only of our enemies. In a very basic sense, racism is loyalty to what one is and what one has been formed by. All of us, based on our experiences in the world, develop opinions about other groups of people, including those with which we ourselves identify. This is natural and reasonable, and exercises one of our highest faculties — the ability to generalize, to formulate hypotheses about a class based on observations of particular instances of that class. What is really in question is the objectivity, precision, intelligence and insight which are employed in this process; that is, the validity of the hypothesis formed, and the humanity of its interpretation. No doubt the hypotheses are almost always incorrect, probably wildly incorrect, mere stereotypes. But this does not stop this “racist” process (which I emphasize again goes on inside *all* of us), because there is a fundamental fact of which we are all aware: groups of people *do* differ, one from another — the French *are* different from the English, Turkish Moslems *are* different from Irish Catholics. We would not be human if we did not try to work out what those differences are.

I am reminded of a popular radio programme which is aired on week-day mornings by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Every Tuesday a panel of three semi-retired politicians discusses the events of the day, generally bending over backward to avoid offending any minority group, and indeed being quick to criticize anyone who does not exhibit their own perfect sensibility. One day the issue of German reunification was discussed: all three panel members mentioned World War II, expressed fear that a united Germany would be too strong, and characterized Germans in a very pejorative (and, in my experience of them, completely inaccurate) way. During a twenty-minute discussion, not one of them mentioned the Treaty of Versailles or the economic problems which gave Hitler his foothold in Germany. The virtuous panel members had suddenly, unwittingly, become racist themselves.

I hope I have convinced the reader that “racism” is a stupid and useless word! It applies to all of us, even the most self-righteous panel member, and it does not *distinguish* — it does not distinguish between my father-in-law and the ignorant vicious lout who, seeking a scapegoat for his own miserable inferiority, sets fire to a Chinese restaurant in the dead of night, or attacks with a tire iron a black man walking home from a concert.

Accordingly, I shall adopt Humpty-Dumpty’s approach to language: I shall force words to mean what I want them to mean. Indeed, I shall go Humpty-Dumpty one better — I shall rule the term “racism” out of my lexicon altogether, even though it occurs in the title of this chapter, and only use it in inverted commas to mean “whatever is bad”. Instead of “racism”, I shall use a term introduced above: polarization. From now

on, the title of this chapter becomes

MULTICULTURALISM & POLARIZATION: CAUSE & EFFECT

Less provocative, perhaps, but now at least there is a chance of making sense!

I have some sympathy for the reader who at this point complains that it has been a long journey merely to change a title. But of course the title change is just a symbol for advances of a more fundamental kind: we have gained a pretty good idea of what polarization is, especially that intense and enduring kind which derives from ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious differences; we understand the causes of polarization; and we have examined the largely ineffectual remedies against it. We have thus provided ourselves with a context within which the idea of “multiculturalism” can be examined. If indeed it is true that multiculturalism is a cause of polarization, then this context enables us to understand that multiculturalism will generally give rise to very severe problems.

Multiculturalism is a government policy which

- * encourages large-scale immigration without regard to the immigrants’ ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious background; and
- * does not vigorously promote the assimilation of immigrants into the cultural mainstream.

More specifically, let us call such a policy *weak multiculturalism*. If indeed the government

- * gives preference to certain immigrants whose ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious background is different from that prevailing in the country; and
- * funds programmes which assist immigrants to maintain their separate ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious identities;

then let us say that it pursues a policy of *strong multiculturalism*. We might make use of this terminology to say, for example, that the multiculturalism policies of Australia and Canada fall somewhere between weak and strong.

These definitions of multiculturalism each have two components, the first relating to immigration policy, the second to what we will call *de-polarization* policy. We discuss each of these aspects in turn.

Any amount of immigration may obviously give rise to polarization, at least locally and at least in the short term. The danger of more severe polarization depends on a number of factors, including:

- * the number of immigrants of a specified kind;
- * the degree or extent to which immigrants of a specified kind are different from the norm within their adopted country;
- * the size of the population into which the immigration takes place;
- * the total number of immigrants of all kinds;
- * the geographical distribution of the immigrants within their adopted country;

- * *the current and anticipated economic conditions within the country;*
- * *the skills and economic status of the immigrants.*

The first two factors are perhaps of particular importance, since taken together they provide a means of adjusting the intake of certain immigrants depending on the likelihood that those immigrants may form a polarized group within the country. However, it is exactly these two factors which governments are most hesitant to take account of, for fear of being labelled “racist” (that word again!) or “discriminatory” (another word rendered useless by modern extensions). In my opinion, this is folly.

Let us consider a particular example of a country with a multicultural policy — Canada. As noted above, Canada is, and has been since its birth, a tripolar country, divided among English, French, and native peoples; indeed, it is probably much more than tripolar, since the Inuit and Indians break down into geographically separated groups and tribes whose primary ambition is to control to the greatest extent possible their own individual ancestral lands. In dealing with this polarization, Canada has been a complete failure. Today the relations among the polarized groups are characterized by hostility and confrontation; they are probably worse overall than they have ever been throughout the past 150 years, and there is absolutely no prospect that they will get better. Quebec threatens separation, and threats of armed insurrection from Indian tribes are commonplace. Has this situation occurred because Canadians, of whatever ethnic origin or language, are more stupid than people in other countries? Based on what I see of my countrymen in action, I find myself tempted to answer “Yes!”, but I don’t really believe it — perhaps we have been unlucky to have been so badly led at a critical time in our country’s history, but I do not really believe that we are any more or less stupid than the inhabitants of any other country. Whether English or French or native, we are just human beings and, as such, not very skillful at resolving polarized situations. In this sense, Canada may be viewed as a model of the world.

It is into this context of dismal failure that Canada’s elected governments have, over the past 20 years, seen fit to introduce a policy of multiculturalism — as defined above, somewhere between weak and strong. What has been the result? More polarization, of course. In Toronto and Montreal, Canada’s two largest cities, one English, one French, the immigration of tens of thousands of mainly undereducated, mainly unskilled West Indian blacks has started to create the same sort of ghettoized polarization between black and white that has infested U.S. cities for half a century, and that no Canadian city ever thought to see. In Vancouver, heavy Chinese immigration has created polarization out of what was previously reasonable racial harmony; while in Edmonton and Winnipeg, heavy immigration of Sikhs and Pakistanis has led to intense conflict with the white majority. Of course these conflicts are

new, and some people hope that they may be resolved over time. After all, there have been Chinese in Canada for more than a century, and, while there has been much prejudice on both sides, there has been little conflict. And the Canadian absorption of hundreds of thousands of European immigrants after World War II was extremely successful in the end, even though at first it gave rise to much hostility against "DPs" and many rhetorical questions ("Who won the war anyway?"). But such hopes do not take into account certain facts: the numbers of Chinese were very low; the European immigrants were white and to a large extent shared a common culture with Canadians — World War II in Europe has been called a "civil war". The new conflicts described above all relate to large numbers of immigrants who are not white and who are culturally more distant from Canadians than non-English-speaking Europeans. In particular, in dealings with non-white minorities, Canada's record has not been very good: during the American civil war, a few hundred blacks fled to Nova Scotia by an "underground railway" and settled there; today, almost a century and a half later, their descendants exist in a state of permanent polarization with the descendants of the well-meaning Nova Scotians who brought them there in the first place. On top of all these entrenched and newly-invented polarizations, it must be added that Canada is also fragmented on regional lines: north, east coast, west coast, prairie, and Ontario. For this reason, it is widely predicted that if Québec separates, Canada will fall piece-by-piece into the arms of the United States. One may well wonder why Canada's political leaders should have introduced further division into an already polarized country with moreover a weak sense of identity. The short answer is "They didn't know what they were doing." A long answer takes us beyond the scope of this chapter, but one point, already mentioned, needs to be dealt with firmly: the question of whether or not it is reasonable to limit immigration in accordance with those factors which lead to polarization: ethnic origin, culture, language, and religion.

To begin with, one must ask what our objective is. If it is merely to cause trouble for later generations, then I hope the reader will have been sufficiently persuaded by the preceding discussion to understand that a policy of multiculturalism, especially strong multiculturalism, will serve admirably. Similarly, if our objective is to blindly follow some ill-considered notion of "fairness" or "equality" without regard for consequences, then there is nothing to discuss. But if our objective is to formulate an immigration policy which will benefit our country, then one of the issues which we must consider is the possibility of polarization. From this point of view, the safest policy is of course to limit immigration entirely to those who to a high degree share the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious background of the majority of the country's present citizens: the "white Australia" policy, for example. I see nothing whatever wrong with this — to my mind, every country in the world has the absolute right to admit, or refuse to admit, whomever it chooses —

but I would nevertheless agree that for many countries such a policy would be unnecessarily timid, and that it might in the long term have harmful side effects. Let us suppose then that quite to the contrary it is our objective to produce in our country a homogeneous blend of cultures and a corresponding blend of ethnic groups, so that we (or rather our descendants) all end up being coloured some shade of khaki. In other words, we want to admit diverse peoples but avoid polarization: the “melting pot” policy. One way to ensure that we will *not* achieve this objective is to adopt multiculturalism: all that we will achieve is a country of polarized groups who will probably *never* blend with each other. Blacks and whites in America have not blended — indeed, it is indicative of their polarization that the results of such blends defy reason and call themselves “black”. In East Africa the Masai and the Bantu tribes have lived side-by-side for centuries and have not blended. The examples are too numerous to mention, and the conclusion is clear: if we wish our immigration policy to yield a homogeneous non-polarized population, then we *must* take account of the numbers of various kinds of immigrants which are admitted into our country. This is the opposite of multiculturalism.

Think of the tennis club. Sam Toga has been a member there for several years now, and there is no-one who dislikes him. If this year three or four of Sam’s Japanese associates were to join, no-one would think twice about it: the Aussie members would soon get used to them; perhaps one of those members would start to play singles regularly with one of them — call him Tom Goto. Perhaps the two of them would take to having a couple of beers together after their game. “Not a bad bloke,” the member would say. Perhaps he and his wife would find themselves invited to the wedding of Tom’s daughter. Perhaps over the next ten years three or four Japanese a year would join the club, so that eventually there would be 40 Japanese members altogether. But quite a few of those Japanese members might not even know each other, because most of their contacts at the club would be with the original Australian members. There would be an occasional grumble, but for the most part, because of the gradualness of the transition, because the people were given time to get to know each other as individuals and not as representatives of groups, polarization would be avoided.

Of course real life is more complicated than the tennis club. But there is a moral here which applies to real life as well: much more can be achieved by being patient and constructive and using common sense and prudence than by simplistic ranting and raving about “equality” and “rights”. Alas, it is those ranters and ravers who hold captive the minds of many of our legislators.

We are thus finally led to consider depolarization policy. Even with the most cautious approach to immigration, some polarization will surely occur, and with a policy of multiculturalism, polarization is a certainty:

how do we combat it? Of the four depolarization mechanisms discussed above, we may presumably exclude extermination and separation: our objective is presumably not to bring in immigrants in order to kill them or to further Balkanize our country. We are left then with coexistence (the “mosaic” model) and assimilation (the “melting pot” model). But multiculturalism, as it is defined here and as it is in practice implemented, does not care very much about assimilation — the idea is that diverse groups will somehow be able to coexist and cooperate in order to run their adopted country. Thus, in order to evaluate multiculturalism, it is the coexistence mechanism which must be examined in further detail.

The basic idea of the multicultural mosaic is that Jews and Arabs, Sikhs and Hindus, Armenians and Turks, West Indian blacks and South African whites, and all other peoples of the world can emigrate to one place, retain their traditional identities, and miraculously agree to get along, not only with each other, but also with the established population and its values, customs, traditions, political and social institutions. The term currently used to describe such an immigrant group and its descendants is *community*: thus one speaks of the “Palestinian community”, the “black community”, the “Portuguese community”, and so forth. The customs, traditions, and beliefs of each of these communities are regarded as being equal in value, not only to each other, but also to those of the host country. These customs, traditions, and beliefs naturally give rise to social and political objectives; as a result, some members of each community will organize themselves politically into lobby groups, each of which purports to represent its respective community and to pursue its community’s perceived interests — usually by attempting to put pressure on politicians and political parties in various ways. This kind of community is thus an example of a “side”, defined earlier. In countries which follow a multiculturalist policy, these communities and their political arms are often supported by the tax revenues of the government. Thus, far from encouraging assimilation, a government committed to multiculturalism may actively *discourage* it.

The multicultural approach to society is thus seemingly not far removed from the original idea of fascism: society is thought of as being composed of interest groups, each of which by some means or other puts forward its views; then, by some mechanism or other, a compromise among these diverse positions is worked out which becomes the policy of the country. A striking feature of this approach is that citizens of the country are not thought of as individuals; they are first and foremost members of their communities. In Canada, for example, they are Palestinians, blacks, Portuguese, or whatever: they are not themselves Canadians; they merely belong to one of the “communities” of Canada. Thus, obviously, polarization is encouraged. Another striking feature of this approach is that there is no formal political mechanism provided by the host country which allows these communities to play their role,

whatever it is. As we have seen, coexistence has worked in Switzerland, and as far as is known, nowhere else. In Switzerland, a great deal of thought and preparation was devoted, over a long period of time, to working out the nature of the relationship among the country's three main constituent peoples; the result is a very delicately balanced system of government which rather surprisingly succeeds in satisfying the requirements of its coexisting national groups. In Canada, on the other hand, no thought or preparation whatever has been put into developing a form of government which permits the orderly representation of the views of a very much larger number of national or ethnic groups: it is imagined, in an affront to common sense and in defiance of historical experience, that coexistence will work "somehow".

To illustrate the kinds of consequences which result from this rather *laissez-faire* approach to political life, here is a list of some current Canadian controversies:

- * whether or not Sikh RCMP officers should be allowed to wear turbans;
- * whether or not adult Sikh males should be allowed to wear daggers wherever they go;
- * whether or not male Sikh children should be allowed to wear daggers at school;
- * whether or not house numbers in a largely Chinese suburb of Toronto should be changed so as to eliminate any occurrence of the digit "4" (apparently regarded by the Chinese as unlucky);
- * whether or not Christmas decorations should be put up in schools;
- * whether or not Christmas carols should be sung in schools;
- * whether or not honesty should be regarded as a virtue or presented as one in schools (since it is said that some cultures don't value honesty as highly as Canadians say they do);
- * whether or not the application of the law should depend on the cultural or ethnic background of the person to whom it is applied.

The central issue in each of these disputes is the extent to which the customs, traditions, and values of the host country — that is, ultimately, its social, political, and legal systems — should change to accommodate the preferences of immigrant "communities". In fact, there has been considerable change of this kind in Canada since World War II as a result of the massive immigration from Europe — change which has been gradual and unforced, which has evolved out of changing perceptions and fashions, and which has indeed been greatly influenced by that immigration. But today, in countries which adopt a policy of multiculturalism, those who resist change are routinely labelled "racist" because (to quote the definition given above) they oppose "a position assumed to be taken by the members of [some] group". Not without reason, people become angry at being pressured and coerced into changing their way of doing things, especially when the pressure is applied by newcomers who demand such changes as a "right". People can see quite clearly that in this context each such change is the thin edge of the wedge: if today the RCMP can be forced to accept turbans as acceptable headgear, then tomorrow

they will surely be forced to accept eagle feathers, Bedouin headdress, Jewish skullcaps, fezzes, and bandanas — when what the people really want to see their RCMP officer wearing is a Stetson! And if tomorrow the name-calling tactics of multiculturalism can be used to force such relatively minor changes, then the day after tomorrow they will be used to force major ones, perhaps of an even less welcome nature. As a consequence, many people are willing to suffer being called “racist” rather than have some foreign culture’s preferences forced upon them — and so what is called a “backlash” is born. But backlash is just a form of polarization. Coexistence does not cure polarization — it creates and exacerbates it.

Perhaps the kind of conflict that is taking place here will be made clearer by putting it into another setting. Think of the British Raj. The British went to India in the first place for understandable, but not particularly noble, motives — power and profit —, and, once there, forced upon the Indians new social, political, and legal systems. *They* were the immigrants, *they* were the newcomers, yet *they* wanted things to be changed to suit *them*. Under multiculturalism, immigrants to countries such as Australia and Canada are encouraged to take the same view. The immigrants have come, not because they care about the institutions, customs, and traditions of their adopted country; they have come because they want more wealth, more comfort, more opportunity, better social services — understandable, but not noble, ambitions. However, multiculturalism allows them to expand these horizons: they find that they are encouraged to try to change their new country to suit their own preferences — their own customs and traditions —, and that, furthermore, anyone who argues against these attempts is called bad names. Of course immigrant communities in Canada do not have the same coercive power that the British had in India: collectively they are not yet a majority, and there are many of them, often pulling in different directions. But in a sense that is really what makes matters worse. The Indians were able finally to evict the British conquerors and return to doing things in their own way: at least one polarization problem was solved. But in Canada, as long as the policy of coexistence is followed, there is no prospect whatever of resolving these conflicts. Immigrant communities, encouraged and funded by the government, will continue to agitate for changes to their adopted country, in conflict with each other and with what remains of the cultural mainstream. Multiculturalism brings permanent multipolarization.

The reader should not imagine that I am opposed to people who wish to preserve their culture and identity. On the contrary, precisely because I very much wish to preserve my own way of life, so therefore am I able to understand those who feel the same way about theirs. The point is, however, that I do not wish *them* to preserve *their* culture at the expense of mine. If my culture corresponds to one political jurisdiction and somebody else’s corresponds to another, then with a little good

will major problems can likely be avoided: each jurisdiction can manage its own culture in its own way. But if two or more cultures compete within a single political jurisdiction, then polarization is sure to arise. It is the policy that encourages and exacerbates this polarization — that perversely ignores facts of human nature — which I oppose. Indeed, the herd instinct is strong in human beings and is not to be despised: it is certainly related to those instincts which allow us to cooperate and to build together. As noted earlier, it is a kind of loyalty to what we are and to what we have been formed by. We should respect it rather than calling it names.

This completes our discussion of the coexistence mechanism, and thus of multiculturalism as such. Those who have followed, and agreed with, the argument presented so far may well despair. Is there anything to be done? Can the bad effects of multiculturalism be reversed? Certainly if I were to claim that I know how to eliminate polarization in society, I would be a Great Pretender on the awesome scale of those political leaders who, failing entirely to deal with polarization in their own jurisdictions (in Australia or Canada, for example), give free advice to others (to South Africa or Israel, for example). Still, there are some suggestions which may be made.

It seems clear, to start with, that the only viable mechanisms for reducing polarization are separation and assimilation. Separation is a last resort and has only ever been employed with the greatest reluctance. Indeed, I know of no case where a free society has voluntarily split; separation has always occurred because the central power holding a confederation together by force becomes too weak. Thus assimilation is the only practical alternative: how can it be encouraged? (It is important here to emphasize the word "encouraged"; as we have seen, it does not seem to work very well to try to force assimilation.) As a first step toward repairing the damage done by multiculturalism, then, I propose a policy which includes the following components:

- * *restricted immigration of groups likely to form enduring polarized communities within society;*
- * *geographical dispersal of immigrants from these groups in order to inhibit the formation of ghettos;*
- * *encouraging, or perhaps in many cases requiring, immigrants to learn the language of the country to an acceptable oral and written standard; and providing adequate funds and facilities for this purpose;*
- * *providing no public funds for the support of the culture or language of any immigrant group;*
- * *making it clear that every immigrant is perfectly free, at his own expense, to join or form associations or institutions for the preservation of his culture or language;*
- * *making it clear that each immigrant and his descendants are expected to become full individual citizens of their new country rather than members of*

a minority group; and requiring each immigrant to formally signify in writing that this is his intention;

- * providing effective legislation and mechanisms to ensure, as much as possible, that every citizen, immigrant or not, is treated equally, is free to enjoy his own culture and language within the laws of the land, and is not subject to arbitrary measures.*

The reader will observe that the thrust of these proposals is largely opposite to the multicultural approach. This individual is emphasized, not the group. The intent is to make each individual immigrant aware that he is making a deal: if he wishes to profit from the benefits of his new home, he must be prepared to give up many of the comfortable, beloved qualities of his old one. On the one hand, the immigrant recognizes the obligation to adapt; on the other hand, his new country recognizes the obligation to allow him to live his private life as he chooses (within the laws and institutions of the land): wear whatever clothes he likes, eat as he likes, speak whatever language he likes, worship whatever god he likes, and so on. I do not imagine that such a policy would prevent polarization; but there is no doubt that it would do much better than multiculturalism.