

A HISTORY OF RACISM IN CANADA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY

1900- Head tax on Chinese immigrants was increased from \$50 to \$100.

1901- Census. Of the 5,371,315 population in Canada, 12.7% were immigrants (i.e. born outside Canada) and of those 57% of immigrants were born in the British Isles. 96% of the population was of European origin.

1903- Head tax on Chinese increased to \$500. From 1901 to 1918, \$18 million was collected from Chinese immigrants.

1906- Immigration Act. According to Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, the purpose of the Act was "to enable the Department of Immigration to deal with undesirable immigrants" by providing a means of control. Grounds for deportation included becoming a public charge, insanity, infirmity, disease, handicap, becoming an inmate of a jail or hospital and committing crimes of "moral turpitude".

1906-1907- An "Anti-Asiatic Parade" organized by the Asiatic Exclusion League ended in a riot, with extensive damage done to property in Chinatown and the Japanese quarter.

1908- Continuous journey rule imposed by Order in Council. The "landing money" required of Indians was also increased from \$50 to \$200.

1908- Chinese Immigration Act amended to expand the list of prohibited persons and narrowing the classes of persons exempt from the head tax.

1910- Immigration Act Section 38 allowed the government to prohibit landing of immigrants "belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character".

1910- Black Oklahoman farmers developed an interest in moving to Canada to flee increased racism at home. In 1911 an order in council was drafted prohibiting the landing of "any immigrant belonging to the Negro race, which race is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada".

1914- Komagatu Maru arrived in Vancouver, having sailed from China with 376 Indians aboard, who were refused admittance to Canada. Between 1914 and 1920 only one Indian was admitted to Canada as an immigrant.

1914- War Measures Act was passed, giving the government wide powers to arrest, detain and deport.

1917- Wartime Elections Act disenfranchised all persons from "enemy alien" countries who had been naturalized since 1902.

1917- Office of Immigration and Colonization was created by order in council.

1917- Hutterites immigrating to Alberta from South Dakota suffered prejudice because they were German-speaking.

1918- Socialist and anarchist groups such as the The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, known as the “Wobblies”) were declared illegal. Another order in council banned publications using Finnish, Russian, Ukrainian, Hungarian and German as a result of fears of enemy alien subversion and pressure from industrialists interested in suppressing labour activism.

1919- A Women’s Division was created within the Immigration Department. Immigrant women who engaged in sexual relationships outside marriage were liable to be deported (sometimes on the grounds of prostitution, or if they had an illegitimate child, on the grounds that they had become a public charge, since they would generally be forced out of their job).

1919- Immigration Act amendments were made, adding new grounds for denying entry and deportation (e.g. constitutional psychopathic inferiority, chronic alcoholism and illiteracy). Section 38 allowed Cabinet to prohibit any race, nationality or class of immigrants by reason of “economic, industrial, or other condition temporarily existing in Canada” because of their unsuitability, or because of their “peculiar habits, modes of life and methods of holding property”.

June 1919- Doukhobors, Mennonites and Hutterites were prohibited entry because of their “peculiar habits, modes of life and methods of holding property”.

1920’s- Citizenship could be revoked if anyone were found to be “disaffected” or “disloyal” or if the person “was not of good character at the date of the grant of the certificate”.

1920’s- Japanese men are paid 1/2- to 2/3 of what white labour earn for the same type of labour 1920 Immigration official: “At the present moment, we are casting about for some more effective method than we have in operation to prevent the arrival here of many of the nondescript of Europe, whose coming here is regarded more in the light of a catastrophe than anything else”.

June 1922- Opium and Narcotic Drug Act provided for the deportation of “domiciled aliens” (i.e. immigrants who had been in Canada 5 years or more) with drug-related convictions. This measure was particularly directed against the Chinese. In 1923-4, 35% of deportations by the Pacific Division were under these provisions.

Jan. 1923- Order in Council issued excluding “any immigrant of any Asiatic race” except agriculturalists, farm labourers, female domestic servants, and wife and children of a person legally in Canada. (“Asia” was conceived broadly, going as far west as Turkey and Syria).

1923- The door opened to British subjects, Americans and citizens of “preferred countries” (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium and France).

June 1923- Chinese Immigration Act. This Act prohibited all Chinese immigrants except diplomats, students, children of Canadians and an investor class. The day on which this Act came into force - July 1 - became known to Chinese Canadians as “Humiliation Day”.

1923-24- The suicides of three home children led to a study by a British parliamentary delegation into this program which sent children from Britain into indentured labour in Canada.

1930- As the depression took hold, the number of deportations on the grounds of “becoming a public charge” rose. From 1930 to 1934, 16,765 immigrants were deported on this ground.

Sept. 1930- Order in Council (P.C. 2115) issued prohibiting the landing of “any immigrant of any Asiatic race”, except wives and minor children of Canadian citizens (and few Asians could get citizenship).

1931- Census. The population of Canada was 10,376,786, of whom 22% were immigrants (i.e. born outside Canada). 97.7% of the population was of European origin.

1931- Deportations of immigrants who had organized or participated in strikes or other organized labour activities.

August 1931- The Communist Party was made illegal under the Criminal Code. Even naturalized immigrants who were members of the Party could have their citizenship revoked and be deported.

Fall 1931- Political deportation became federal policy. The Minister of Justice hosted a special meeting attended by the Minister of National Defence, the Commissioner of Immigration, the military chief of staff and the RCMP Commissioner. The exact number of people deported on political grounds is unknown, because they may technically have been deported on other grounds, e.g. criminal conviction, vagrancy or being on the public charge.

Early 1930s- Widespread deportation of the unemployed (28,097 people were deported 1930-1935). Following an outcry, the department changed its policy at least so far as to suspend deportations against those who had found work by the time the deportation orders were ready.

May 1932- In a “red raid” left-wing leaders from across Canada were arrested and sent to Halifax for hearings and deportations. One of them was a Canadian citizen by birth. Despite extensive protests, they were deported.

1934- 94% of applications for naturalization were refused. Confidential RCMP assessments led to refusals on the basis of political or labour activism or perceived “bad character”.

1938- Memo to Mackenzie King by Departments of External Affairs and Mines and Resources: “We do not want to take too many Jews, but in the circumstances, we do not want to say so. We do not want to legitimise the Aryan mythology by introducing any formal distinction for immigration purposes between Jews and non-Jews. The practical distinction, however, has to be made.”

1939- The St Louis sailed from Germany with 930 Jewish refugees on board. No country in the Americas would allow them to land. The ship was forced to return to Europe where three-quarters of the refugees died at the hands of the Nazis.

1940- In a comparative study of deportation in Britain, Northern Ireland, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, C.F. Fraser found Canadian practices the most arbitrary and the Canadian judiciary apathetic: “the most notable feature of deportation cases in Canada is the apparent desire to get agitators of any sort out of the country at all costs... [T]he executive branch of the government, in its haste to carry out this policy ... displayed a marked disregard for the niceties of procedure”.

Feb. 1942- Japanese Canadians were expelled from within 100 miles of the Pacific. Many went to detention camps in the interior of B.C., others further east. Detention continued to the end of the war, when the Canadian government encouraged many to “repatriate” to Japan. 4,000 left, more than half Canadian-born and two-thirds Canadian citizens.

Nov. 1946- The Prime Minister announced emergency measures to aid the resettlement of European refugees. Labour was involved), ethnic prejudices (Jews were routinely rejected) and political bias (those with left-wing or Communist sympathies were labelled “undesirables”). An External Affairs officer claimed that Canada selected refugees “like good beef cattle”.

1 May 1947- Prime Minister Mackenzie King made a statement in the House outlining Canada’s immigration policy. Regarding discrimination, he made it clear that Canada is “perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. Large-scale immigration from the orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population”.

May 1947- Chinese Immigration Act repealed, following pressure, e.g. by the Committee for the Repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act.

August 1948- The first of a total of 9 boats carrying 987 Estonian refugees arrived on the east coast of Canada. They sailed from Sweden, where they were living under threat of forced repatriation to the Soviet Union. All but 12 were accepted (the 12 were deported).

1950- The Department of Citizenship and Immigration was formed.

June 1950- Order in council issued replacing previous measures on immigration selection. The preference was maintained for British, Irish, French and U.S. immigrants.

1951- The Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted. Canada did not become a signatory because the RCMP feared that it would restrict Canada's ability to deport refugees on security grounds.

1952- A new Immigration Act was passed, less than a month after it was introduced in the House (it came into effect 1 June 1953). It provided for the refusal of admission on the grounds of nationality, ethnic group, geographical area of origin, peculiar customs, habits and modes of life, unsuitability with regard to the climate, probable inability to become readily assimilated, etc. Homosexuals, drug addicts and drug traffickers were added to the prohibited classes. The Act provided for immigration appeal boards, made up of department officials, to hear appeals from deportation.

1955- Report of a Canadian Bar Association sub-committee criticized the arbitrary exercise of power by immigration officials and called for a quasi-judicial Immigration Appeals Board.

1955- Canadian Domestic Workers program is established to deal with the constant shortage of Canadian workers prepared to accept low wages and undesirable working conditions. Many of the immigrant women entering as domestics were qualified professionals.

Nov. 1956- The crushing of the Hungarian uprising led to over 200,000 Hungarians fleeing to Austria. In response to public pressure, the Canadian government implemented a special program with free passage. Thousands of Hungarians arrived in the early months of 1957 on over 200 chartered flights. More than 37,000 Hungarians were admitted in less than a year.

1 July 1960- The Chinese Adjustment Statement Program was announced. The program included measures to curtail illegal entry of Chinese and to land Chinese in Canada without legal status. The initiative followed on the crackdown of a large-scale illegal immigration scheme, involving "paper families". The amnesty program continued throughout the 1960s - by July 1970, 11,569 Chinese had normalized their status.

1969-White paper Policy: explicitly rejects any special status for First Nations.

1970- Environmental racism of Africville: The Black settlements near Halifax, Nova Scotia is forced to relocate (without the consent of the residents) due to the poverty and health risks imposed upon them which included: human waste disposal pits, an infectious disease hospitals, slaughter houses, open city dump, coal-handling facility, a tannery and shoe factory, all of which white Haligonians did not want in their backyard.

1 April 1970- The Assisted Passage Loan Scheme, previously restricted to Europeans and then Caribbeans, became available worldwide. The interest rate was 6% annually.

1970- The number of people applying for immigration status after entering Canada had “exceeded expectations” and led to a backlog. There were about 8,000 applications in 1967, 28,000 in 1969 and 31,000 in 1970. Delays in processing caused problems for the individuals as they did not have the right to work while awaiting processing.

1971-72- The U.S. was the largest source country of immigration, in part because of the large numbers (possibly 30,000-40,000) of draft dodgers and deserters unwilling to fight in Vietnam who found refuge in Canada.

August 1972- The Ugandan president announced his intention of expelling Ugandan Asians by November 8, 1972. By the end of 1973, more than 7,000 Ugandan Asians had arrived, of whom 4,420 came in specially chartered flights.

Sept. 1973- Overthrow of Allende government in Chile. Groups in Canada, particularly the churches, urged the government to offer protection to those being persecuted. In contrast to the rapid processing of Czechs and Ugandan Asians, the Canadian government response to the Chileans was slow and reluctant. Critics charged that the Canadian response was ideologically driven.

1979-80- 60,000 refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were resettled in Canada. Responding to media reports of the “boatpeople”, thousands of Canadians came forward, giving a dramatic launch to the new refugee private sponsorship program.

1981- Census. Of the total population of 24,083,500, 16% were immigrants (i.e. born outside Canada). In terms of ethnic origins, 92% of the population declared a single ethnic origin. 86% of population had a single European ethnic origin (40% British, 27% French).

1981- The Foreign Domestic Workers Program was introduced. Those admitted came on a temporary contract, but could apply for permanent residence after 2 years in Canada.

1984- The Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act transferred responsibility for security aspects of immigration from RCMP to the newly created CSIS.

4 April 1985- The Supreme Court of Canada rendered the Singh decision, in which it recognized that refugee claimants are entitled to fundamental justice. The court ruled that this would normally require an oral hearing in the refugee status determination process.

1986- An administrative review program was instituted for all refugee claimants in Canada before 21 May 1986, to address the backlog in the refugee determination system. 85% of the 28,000 applicants were accepted.

Feb. 1987- Measures were instituted turning back refugee claimants arriving from the U.S. They were made to wait for processing in the U.S.

July 1987- A group of Sikhs landed in Nova Scotia and claimed refugee status. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney issued an emergency recall of Parliament for the tabling of Bill C-84, the Refugee Deterrents and Detention Bill. Despite the so-called emergency, the draconian bill was not passed for a full year.

1990- The government unveiled its Five Year Plan for immigration, proposing an increase in total immigration from 200,000 in 1990 to 250,000 in 1992. The long-term commitment to planned immigration was new in Canadian history, as was the proposal to increase immigration at a time of economic recession.

June 1993- Prime Minister Kim Campbell transferred immigration to the newly created Department of Public Security, a move that was widely and bitterly denounced by many other organizations.

Feb. 1995- As part of the federal budget, the government imposed the Right of Landing Fee, widely known as the Head Tax. The fee of \$975 applied to all adults, including refugees, becoming permanent residents. In February 2000, the government rescinded the Right of Landing Fee for refugees, but maintained it for immigrants.

Canada's Bureaucratic Colonization of Indigenous Peoples

1763 - Royal Proclamation: explicitly protects native sovereignty and specifies nation-to-nation treaties as the only means for obtaining Crown title. Enshrines fiduciary obligation.

1857 - The Gradual Civilization Act - stripped Native citizenship and legal rights. If Indians were educated, free of debt and of "good moral character" (i.e. assimilated), they could apply for and be awarded 20 hectares of land. This land was taken from reserve land and privatized, breaking the tradition of collectively shared land and awarded to men only. This act recommended that Native organizations eventually be replaced by municipal-style governments. Foreshadows "First Nations Self-Governance Agreements" today.

1867 - The British Parliament passes the British North American Act creating the Dominion of Canada. Section 129 of the Act confirms the Canadian government is bound by British legislation, including the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

1869 - Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians is passed. The Governor in Council is given power to impose the Band Council system of governance on Indian reservations and to remove from office those considered "unqualified or unfit".

1871 - The colony of British Columbia joins Canada without the consent of Native Peoples. The terms of the Union acknowledge the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

1876 - Canada passes the Indian Act in violation of imperial and constitutional law. The Indian Act, as a policy of cultural genocide, is specifically designed to eradicate native culture and expropriate land and resources for profit and settlement. The Act prohibits Native women from running for Band Council or voting on land surrenders which require 50% agreement by males. The Canadian government gains complete control over who can purchase the Native land, the terms of the sale, and the price paid for surrenders.

Initially, purchasers pay a 10% down payment and carry a mortgage for the balance. As long as the annual interest is paid, the principal is not required. The annual income from the interest is supposed to be used to make annual payment, in perpetuity to the Indians who “sold” the land. This money is held “in trust” and administered to Indians through Canada’s Indian Agents. Canada uses “trust” monies to build Canadian infrastructure, health and welfare systems.

1876 - The Indian Act is amended to give the Canadian government control over timber extraction rates and terms.

1879 - Indian Act Amendment Bill passed, includes “Trespass, Timber, and Illicit Sale or Exchange” law which enable complete government control over the most micro-economic transactions of commerce including collection of debt, passing on inheritance to a family member, or division of family estates. The “Incitement of Indians to Riot” law includes 2-6 months imprisonment for the celebration of Potlatch, a ceremony which played a central role in Indigenous politics, social, economic and spiritual systems.

1880 - The Indian Act creates the Department of Indian Affairs, and empowered its Superintendent General to enforce imposition of the elective system of Band Council government. This legislation deprives remaining traditional leaders of recognition by stating only spokespeople for the Band are those elected according to the Indian Act.

1881 - Amendment to the Indian Act makes it illegal for Indians to “sell, barter, or traffic fish”.

1884 - “Indian Advancement Act” confers certain privileges for more “advanced” bands of Indians of Canada with the view of training them for municipal affairs. It gives the Band Council power to levy taxes and extends council’s power over police and public health matters. Most reserves refuse to come under Act.

1884 - Indian Act amended so the Superintendent General of the Department of Indian Affairs can lease Native land to non-natives.

1885 - Permit system instituted for Indians absent from reserves.

1885-97 - Off-reserve Native men and male veterans east of Manitoba are granted limited voting rights. On-reserve men only able to vote with the surrender of their exemption from Income Tax.

1887 - An order-in-council pertaining to mining is adopted. This regulation allows exploration on both surrendered and unsurrendered lands with approval of the Superintendent General of the Department of Indian Affairs. If a third party wishes to secure a mining location, they pay the government (again “in trust” for Indigenous Peoples) \$5 per acre along with a royalty fee of 4% of revenues.

1894 - Amendment to the Indian Act authorizes the forced relocation of Native children to residential boarding schools where Native language, culture, traditions, customs, values, and even clothing is forbidden and punished.

1895 - Indian Act amended so that traditional Native leaders elected to Band Council office, but deemed unfit and thrown out by the DIA, could not be re-elected by the people as was practiced in resistance to colonialism and in the fight for self-determination. Traditional Sundances, Pow-wows, and again the Potlatch are outlawed.

1910 - Indian Act amended so “No contracts or agreements are binding...either made by chiefs or councilors of any band...shall be valid or of any force or effect unless or until it has been approved by the Superintendent General” of the Department of Indian Affairs.

1911 - Two amendments to the Indian Act give the Department of Indian Affairs the authority to expropriate native land, first for “the purpose of any railway, road, public work or any work designed for public utility”, and second, “In the case of an Indian reserve which adjoins or is situated wholly or partly within an incorporated town or city having a population of not less than 8,000” land can be expropriated if “expropriation is expedient for public and Indians”, then “Indians should be removed from the reserve or any part of it”.

1919 - Act amended so that “Any Native woman, who marries any person other than an Indian, or a non-treaty Indian, shall cease to be an Indian in every respect within the meaning of this Act”.

1920 - Indian Act amended for the compulsory enfranchisement, the relinquishment of Indian Status, in return for voting privileges. The bill “allowed for the enfranchisement of an Indian against his will following a report by a person appointed by the Superintendent General on his suitability”.

1920 - Federal government passes legislation making it mandatory for all native children, 7 years or older, in BC (the least Christianized province) to attend residential schools or face fines and prison terms.

1924 - Indian Act amended to allow the DIA to “authorize and direct” the expenditure of Band funds for capital projects which would promote “progress”.

1927 - Indian Act amended to prohibit “lawyers and other agitators from collecting money from Indians for the pursuit of claims against the government without departmental approval”. For over 30 years First Nations are prohibited from raising

money for, or even using the courts as a means to pursue grievances on land issues and claims.

1927 - \$73 million held in “trust” fund for Indians, accumulated through mineral and resource extraction from Indian lands, is liquidated to create Canada’s social programs.

1928 - Alberta passes its Sexual Sterilization Act which allows for the sterilization of any Residential School inmate.

1933 - BC passes its Sexual Sterilization Act which allows for sterilization of Residential School inmates.

1951 - Amendment to the Indian Act allows First Nations people to drink alcohol in accordance with provincial or territorial regulations. They are not, however, permitted to be drunk in public.

1952 – After 25 years, the 1927 ban on Indians pursuing claims in court is repealed.

1960 - All First Nations accorded full voting rights.