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BACK TO SQUARE ONE: RE-IMAGINING MULTICULTURALISM

Abstract: My paper is an attempt to re-imagine multiculturalism and to offer sound reasons why this is now necessary. Particular focus is put on the Canadian experience. It is increasingly evident that the multicultural policies and practices in place today cannot cope with the emerging realities of global migration in the 21st Century. Today's policies have allowed us to cope with small numbers of immigrants. But today, we face large numbers of immigrants, refugees and migrants. We also face a globalising world, at least in the sense that we now know that we are stuck with one another on a single planet.

I make the case that we need a more adequate understanding of human cultures and forms of civilization. A model to assist such understanding is offered. Second, I review the criteria for an adequate multicultural policy. Third, I review the Canadian experience, focussing on both the unique circumstances of Canada and what we got right in 1971. Fourth, the focus is on what we in Canada missed back then — factors so important that we must now re-imagine multicultural policy.

I conclude by drawing out the core implications of the view I have come to hold — we need to be more supportive and sympathetic of both those who have become voices for nationalism and those who are vocal supporters of globalism, although in different ways and for different reasons. In short, together, we need to re-imagine multiculturalism.

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