Task 1) Canada and Multiculturalism

Canada is an extremely multicultural country. Originally, it was an English colony, which English and French people begun to stay in, but on the 1st of July, 1867 they gained their independence from England. However, it was not until 1982, that a constitutional reform gave them total independence (Thuesen, 2014). This however states that originally, Canada was a country, just like the USA, of immigrants from many different places. This has probably built up a base for their interest in cultural diversity in later years. Today, multiculturalism is either one of the biggest problems or one of the most important things in Canada, depending on your perspective.

To confirm Canada as a multicultural country, we only need to look at the different inhabitants of the country. We have from Wikipedia the following list with groups of people and their part of the total population: 76,3 % of the population or about 27 million people are White. 14,2 % of the population or about 5 million are Asian. 4,3 % of the population or about 5 million are Aboriginals. 2,9 % of the population or about 1 million are Black. 1,5 % of the population or about 420 000 are Latin Americans. 0,5 % or about 170 000 are multicultural, have more than one cultural background and the 0,3 % rest, which is about 100 000 people are from other cultures. Together this makes up a population of about 35 million Canadians (Wikipedia, 2015). This combined with the fact that Canada has the highest intake of immigrants per citizen in the world, about 250 000 immigrants per year (Immigrationwatch).

The official Immigration policy in Canada was, after 1967, based on a system where future residents get graded for how likely they are to become good, hardworking citizens. Points are given for knowledge in language, having gotten a job offer, education level, age, work experience and adaptability (The Economist, 2015). Furthermore, a policy in 1971 helped the earlier system by protecting the Aboriginal population and promote diversity in culture (Burnet, Driedger, & Block, 2014) (Government of Canada). They even established their own Minister of multiculturalism, though it was later combined with another post into the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Wikipedia, 2015). In 2006, this system has however been: “ mov[ing] away from the idea of letting in people based on their “talent for citizenship” to admitting workers with job offers.” (The Economist, 2015)

There are of course some people who criticise the Canadian multiculturalism and claim Canada is doing it wrong. “Critics argue that multiculturalism promotes ghettoization and balkanization, encouraging members of ethnic groups to look inward, and emphasizing the differences between groups rather than their shared rights or identities as Canadian citizens.” (The Government of Canada, 2010) This is how the official page for The Government of Canada describes the criticism they have gotten.

There are also different authors writing about this. Neil Bissoondath is one of these authors and in his book he argues whether Canada’s multicultural policy enslaves ethnic minorities to what he calls Social ghettos. He also says that the Government’s view on what a culture is defined as, is extremely oversimplified. He states that for him, it seems like they think of cultures as parties, cuisine and festivals and that this leads to easy stereotyping. Another man, Daniel Stoffman, wrote a book where he points out that many cultural practises are not combinable with the western culture and thus making it impossible for people practising either street cockfights or serving dog meat in restaurants to join the society. He also mentions elderly immigrants learning neither of Canada’s official languages and therefore not integrating with our culture (Wikipedia, 2015).

Some critics even claim that the government intentionally import too many immigrants, just to keep the wages at a low level. They claim that political parties think they know better how the immigration flood is interfering with the country than its own citizens and that they keep the maximum amount of immigrants allowed into Canada so high because they want more votes. The two downsides of such high immigration listed by this page contain the fact that house prices, especially in large urban areas, have risen to a level where even the some Canadians can no longer afford housing. This is because of the shortage of houses they are experiencing. They also mention slums as a problem which has begun after the immigration flood. Furthermore the say that many Canadians feel like they are being “**ethnically cleansed” and that Canada is being re-colonized** (Immigrationwatch)**.**

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