

Many of the language classes for immigrants also ignore the great differences in education which exist among their students. Our Chinese immigrants come from mainland China, from Hong Kong, Indochina, and other places around the world. In the same class you might have a lawyer or doctor, on the one hand, and a rice farmer who has never been to school, on the other. This does not satisfy the needs of either kind of student. For the well-educated, it is too slow. For the person with little formal education, it is too fast. We need to have two different kinds of language classes, in recognition of the great differences in formal education and the ability to learn.

I have not yet touched on the obstacles to employment which come from discrimination. In Vancouver this is a subtle matter because the Chinese are not singled out for any kind of racial trouble. As a group we have been established for a long time, at least 125 years. In that time I think we have gained considerable respectability among the white Canadian population. Many of our people are professionals—doctors, lawyers, and accountants. There is a great deal of prosperity within our community, and I think that white Canadians respect the intelligence and hard work which have produced this prosperity.

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But individual Chinese immigrants are probably denied employment opportunities, for no other reason than they are outsiders. It is so easy to reject or avoid someone without it being illegal—especially when the job-seeker lacks language skills and confidence. Our attitude is that opportunity comes mainly from understanding how the system works, and for that kind of understanding one must have a good facility with the English language. The same would hold true for the French language if the immigrant is settling in Quebec.

RECOMMENDATION

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