

Hiring Canadians

The arguments against it and the arguments for it

There have been many arguments put forth to justify the low percentages of Canadian faculty at York. To bring the level of debate above the more obvious platitudes, we present below the arguments we have found against Canadianization, together with a rebuttal.

New appointments are, and should be, based only on academic merit.

New appointments are usually made at the whim of department heads, without advertising, and, more frequently than one would like, the appointments go to distinctly mediocre scholars.

The "should" part is more difficult to answer. Suffice it, for the moment, to say that it is hard to see why Canadian graduates should be forced to compete, in their own country, against the glut of PhDs in other countries, when these countries do not reciprocate.

Canadianization would lower a university's standing.

This is either a gratuitous insult to Canadians, or else a claim that there are insufficient numbers of qualified Canadians available. If the latter, then why not advertise in Canada? Supposedly, it wouldn't make any difference.

Departure from present practices in hiring would weaken academic freedom.

We grant that Canadianization guidelines would threaten the "academic freedom" to ignore Canadian graduates. But more seriously: unless academia amends its practices, it should not be surprised when government (which pays the salaries) does it by legislation.

The lower percentage of Canadian faculty merely reflects the recent expansion of the university system.

This may, at one time, have been true for a limited number of disciplines, such as sociology. But while the number of Canadian PhDs increases, the rate at which foreign faculty takes new positions increases alarmingly, leading one to wonder if the prior shortages were not manufactured. Only 49 per cent of faculty at York are now Canadian.

Talk of Canadian nationalism is reactionary and/or chauvinistic. Nationalism is dead.

In Canada, internationalism is no more than the rationale for continentalism, and the sellout of our resources to that decidedly nationalistic behemoth to the South. Canadian nationalism should not be equated with that of an exploitive and racist world power, but rather conceived as the legitimate aspiration of people to control their own destiny.

As for the incipient death of nationalism: it's never been healthier. And you should be glad. For just as people are entitled to individual integrity, they are also entitled to cultural integrity.

Advertising is "unprofessional".

This quaint view was inherited from the United States, which has stringent laws to guarantee that its college teachers are nationals. In Canada, academics must compete against the scholars of all other countries. Failure even to inform them of available jobs is ridiculous.

A person's citizenship is his private matter.

A person's citizenship is a matter of public record.

Foreign scholars enrich Canadian society.

So do Canadian scholars.

Most foreigners would lean over backward to be Canadian if we could tell them what a "Canadian" is.

This alludes to the famed "Canadian identity problem". Clearly, what is needed to solve it is not a concentration of foreigners in the humanities. Moreover, it is doubtful that very many would in fact "lean over backward", any more than the British in India strove to be Indian.

Knowledge is universal.

Only some of it, while much of it, such as history, is clearly local. Further, the modes of transmitting it are quite clearly not universal.

Canada's cultural uniqueness lies in its concentration of foreign peoples.

Translated, this reads: the only thing distinguishing Canada from the United States is first-generation foreigners. A gratuitous insult.

We are getting the world's foremost scholars.

Only very occasionally. It would be closer to the truth to say that we tend to get those scholars who are unable to obtain a position to their liking at home. Remember, most people have a preference to work and live in their own country.

As in the United States in the 1930s, the foreigners will become dedicated nationals.

Examples of such conversions at York are as scarce as snowballs in July.

A quota on foreign faculty would favor the second raters.

Translation: a quota would favor Canadians.

Canadian studies can be taught by foreigners who do some studying up.

This seems to suggest that Canadian studies are something of a triviality. Are foreigners allowed to teach U.S. political science in the United States after nothing more than some "studying up"?

The infusion of foreigners represents a "coming of age" of the Canadian university.

It is scarcely surprising, at a time when there is a glut of PhDs in many countries, that many people would seek employment in Canada, where, incidentally, pay and working conditions are good.

Mobility of men and ideas is an essential mark of a free and open society.

Surely this refers to the mobility of men inside a country. Or are we to assume that the existence of an immigration department is the hallmark of an un-free, classed society?

The Canadian Association of University Teachers will intervene if there is discrimination against Canadians in the universities.

CAUT has yet to proceed against anyone for contempt of Canadian studies, despite numerous and blatant cases of "incompetency", which would probably fall into their definition. This definition allows that an academic with the requisite degrees may be said to be incompetent (as a chairman) if he is "unsympathetic or indifferent to the development of Canadian studies."

Any standard other than competence would be an admission that Canadians are second rate.

As pointed out earlier, we do not very often hire on the basis of the "most competent person". And if we did impose a quota, then the conclusion that we are second rate would force the conclusion that the Americans, British, Germans, Indians, etc. are no better than third rate, since their home countries in all cases guarantee through law that only miniscule numbers of foreigners may be present as teachers.

Canadianization is a danger to university autonomy in that it invites government intervention.

When our universities are becoming factories for the production of helots in a colony, when they find social responsibility a distasteful concept, then there is no point in their being granted autonomy. From the point of view of the students, there is no government conceivable in Ontario which could possibly run the universities worse than they are being run now.

By and large, advertising is not a way of getting faculty. By and large the people who answer ads are the people who have very little success getting jobs.

Again, why not advertise in Canada? Supposedly it won't make any difference. Let's find out for sure first.

The Liberal American Couple

The Liberal American couple who came to Canada for freedom from the land of Eternal Youth To escape fascist oaths of allegiance and unnecessary criminal wars and violent disgusting racism and a pretence at political parties and even a pretence at democracy giving up their dear friends and their dear country and their dear mothers and fathers who they didn't particularly like anyhow and who one imagines standing a long time at windows weeping silently at what has become for them an alien unpeopled distance

while their children have come to a land where men and women can be themselves and speak freely and fairly about communism and the terrible imperializing of South America as well as China and the Chinese people even without talking about the yellow peril for instance

and they do all that now openly and liberally as well as fighting in Canada against racism and against anti-semitism and petty nationalisms like Canadianism especially and vivi-section which they do a lot about seeing people and talking to people as reasonably as they can because everything that lives is Holy and the only things the Liberal American couple hate are ignorance and dogmatism and people who show themselves genuinely unwilling to be liberal as the Liberal American couple is liberal

and they have been in Canada twenty years now but they don't have Canadian citizenship

and they both have quite high rank now and sit on committees to decide what other truly liberal people and anarchists will get grants and prizes and special awards and jobs in Canadian universities even

but they still help organize anti-war marches although they're important and powerful now which they first check through with city hall and the RCMP

and in fact they expect daily to be offered something very very good very suited to their special abilities in some Department of Humanities Research or something else very experimental and on-going and liberal and progressive if not nearby then somewhere farther away in a liberal section of the USA maybe because jobs that good are pretty scarce and a person has to go where he can get a chance to expand

— Robin Mathews