

Book Reviews

Immigration: the end of innocence

by Maxwell Brem

Haven's Gate: Canada's Immigration Fiasco by Victor Malarek. Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1987, 262 pages, \$24.95.
Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration by Reg Whitaker. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987, 348 pages, \$24.95.

Coming out at roughly the same time, during a period of intense reassessment of immigration policy, these two books add a stick or two more fuel to what is already a contentious debate. What kind of immigration and refugee policies should Canada have? Is the immigration system in need of reform? Who really controls immigration decisions? Is Canada responding properly to the challenges of much increased international migration?

Victor Malarek's answer to the last question is a resounding "No!" He declares a lack of confidence in the present immigration system. As the *Globe and Mail's* immigration reporter since 1984, he finds the immigration department "ruled by a cold, unfeeling hand and riddled with confusion, incompetence and sometimes outright stupidity." This comes through, he maintains, in its dealings with refugees, other migrants and the public.

Malarek's is principally a view from the bottom of the system, from the standpoint of the system's users or clients. What he sees from this angle is a "fiasco." The fault, he asserts, lies mostly with the senior bureaucrats and politicians in charge. More than twenty-five immigration ministers since 1945 (eight since 1980) "have failed repeatedly to put some order into the de-

partment," he contends. In his swipes at External Affairs, he singles out visa officers abroad for much "delay and bungling."

Although sharply critical, Malarek's book is not a diatribe. He documents his charges by calling on facts from official reports and his own newsgathering. Here is the familiar cast of immigration characters — from illegal aliens, desperate refugees, and anxious sponsors to immigration lawyers, slippery "consultants" and, of course, hard-hearted officials. Although recognizable from his *Globe* stories, some of the episodes he relates gain coherence — and potency — in book form.

He has also made good use of leaked memos and confidential documents, including several still-secret 1987 Cabinet papers on the refugee mess. Incidentally, anyone still sold on the official version of the current refugee controversy should read Malarek's chapters on the subject. Malarek concludes, after reviewing the evidence, that "the debate over the so-called refugee invasion has been deliberately distorted by government exaggeration." He follows this some pages later with a truly shocking account of Canada's disdain for the victims of the Afghanistan conflict, only 781 of whom, he says, were among the 130,000 refugees sponsored by Canada from 1980 to 1986.

Despite his popular writing style, Malarek is serious about issues and wants to stimulate debate on such concerns as immigration expansion (which he favors), our response to refugees, racism in Canada, the population debate, and the political and economic effects of immigration. All these topics are covered in varying degrees. But Malarek does not provide policy answers beyond those suggested by humane common sense. His value is in posing questions, and making us see how tangled a milieu immigration is.

Second book.

Reg Whitaker, a York University political scientist, has a different purpose. To the question "Who really decides who gets

