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Images of Racialized Childhoods in Canadian Interwar Political Discourse

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ABSTRACT Recent work in an emerging "childhood studies" has analyzed a variety of public discourses of childhood including political discourses. This paper uses data drawn from the Canadian interwar federal parliamentary debates to analyze the ways in which "childhood" and racialized childhoods in particular, were constructed by politicians. Political constructions of both universalized and racially stratified childhoods are revealed and located within the larger project of a racialized nation-building in Canada.

INTRODUCTION

While the scholarly study of children has been dominated by psychological approaches and a developmentalist paradigm, a growing number of scholars from other disciplines such as anthropology and sociology are contributing to a more interdisciplinary field of study.1 Recent work in the emerging "childhood studies" has used archival and ethnographic research to document the connections between local constructions and experiences of childhood, and wider national and global political economies (e.g. Boyden, 1997; Nieuwenhuys, 1994, 1996; Scheper-Hughes, 1992; Stephens, 1995; Szanton Blanc, 1994). Within this literature there has been discussion of the link between the emergence of modern western ideologies of childhood and the rise of modern nationalism and calls for more analyses of the "roles children and childhood have played in the development of modern nation-states and nationalist projects" (Stephens, 1997: 11).[2]

Post-structuralist perspectives emphasizing how "different discourses of childhood constitute childhood (and children) in different ways" (James and Prout, 1997: 24) have led to a recognition of how discourses of childhood are "profoundly implicated in the politics of gender, sexuality, community and nation" (Mankekar, 1997: 26) and how the sacralization of "the child" in contemporary western societies means that political claims made "in the name of the child" are especially powerful (Cooter, 1992)

My paper is part of a larger project on childhood, "race" and racism in Canadian political talk and here I focus on the constructions of racialized children in the federal parliamentary debates of the inter war (1919-1939) years.[3] Of interest is how rhetorical invocations of children and childhood invoke universalized and naturalized childhoods on the one hand, while differentiating between childhoods stratified by "race" and ethnicity (as well as other variables such as gender and class) on the other.

The decision to look specifically at the federal Hansard (the official record of the Canadian parliament) is prompted by the work of Van Dijk who has analyzed racist discourse in contemporary western parliamentary debates. He argues that critical analyses of this particular site of political discourse are important because talk within this site disproportionately influences the "production of public opinion and the dominant consensus on ethnic affairs" (Van Dijk, 1997: 33). His argument can be extended to include the construction of public opinion and dominant consensus on childhoods and racialized childhoods in particular.

My examination of political talk is intended to contribute toward the larger project of deconstructing discourses of universalized and naturalized childhood and locating these discourses within wider relations of power.[4] Writing of the contemporary American context Stephens has noted how: "notions of the universal child, with pre-established needs and interests, tend to

short-circuit, more far-reaching political debates about...the place of various groups of children-differentiated by class, race, ethnicity, religion, gender and geographical location" (1997: 8). This Canadian case study aims to contribute to the emerging critical analysis of political discourses of childhood, both universalized and specific.

Childhood and "Race" in Interwar Canada

The interwar period in Canada has attracted considerable attention from social historians including those interested in children and childhood. By this time, Canada like many other industrializing states saw a consolidation of a hegemonic construct of childhood as a distinct phase of the life course characterized primarily by economic and political dependency, vulnerability, asexuality, and an ideal location in family and school. In the post World War One years there was also an increasing identification of children as "assets" for the nation and as such, as appropriate targets for state (rather than simply philanthropic) intervention. As Cunningham, speaking of Western nations more generally puts it, during this period, " 'saving the child' involved moving them somewhere close to the centre of the political agenda of the modern state" (1995: 137).

In the Canadian context this movement was most concretely marked at the federal level by the creation of the Child Welfare Division within the Department of Health in 1919. The Child Welfare Division, like its counterparts in other western industrializing nations, became involved in the creation and dissemination of child-rearing advice aimed at reducing high rates of infant mortality and thereby building up the nation through "child saving". Scholars of these initiatives in Canada have noted that increased state activity in the field of child welfare was prompted in part by eugenic concerns about the reproduction of "the race" which was increasingly equated with "the nation" (McLaren, 1990). This meant that the identification of children as national "assets", was accompanied by political discussion regarding their relative "quality" -using a eugenic logic to distinguish between groups of children in terms of "race", class and disability.

In the Canadian context, concerns about the premature deaths of children of "quality", i.e. upper middle class Anglo/Celtic "stock" in particular, motivated the actions of many child welfare campaigners, who were concerned about "race suicide" and who advocated saving these "quality" children for the nation (Comacchio, 1993; Arnup, 1994). Paradoxically, however, the result of their efforts was a state sponsored creation and distribution of child-rearing advice that was intended "to cut through barriers of class, race, and ethnicity" (Comacchio, 1997: 404) and which drew upon increasingly influential environmentalist, rather than eugenic or hereditarian, theories of child development (Comacchio, 1993: 128-9). In the U.S. context, there was a similar coexistence of the language of "racial improvement" and new programs of parent education and environmental reform that in fact, "challenged eugenic principles more than supported them" (Ladd-Taylor, 1997: 140).

The apparently contradictory currents of racial and class exclusiveness and eugenics on the one hand and universality and environmentalism on the other, in the early Canadian child welfare movement, prompted this analysis of how various categories of racialized childhood were imagined and constructed in the political talk of the period.

The "Young" Nation

Before turning to look specifically at political talk about racialized childhoods during the interwar period, it is important to first point out one of the common metaphors underlying discursive constructions of the Canadian nation at this time, i. e. the construction of the nation as a person with individualized attributes of maturity, gender, family status and "race". These attributes of the nation illuminate the related discursive positioning of various racialized childhoods.

In the federal debates of interwar Canada the nation was often metaphorically represented as "young" or as a "child" that was in the process of "growing" or had recently "grown up". In many of the references to "its birth, its growth and its attainment of nationhood" (Lacombe March 24, 1938:1664) the nation's trajectory toward maturity was positively evaluated and childishness denigrated, but there was also a degree of celebration of the alleged vigour and future potential of the country's "youth" in contrast to the "old" countries of Europe.[5]

As feminist analyses have pointed out, nations are not only "young" or "old" but also gendered (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Nagel, 1998). This was manifestly the case in the (overwhelmingly male-dominated) political discourse of the interwar period which, by this period, tended to construct the Dominion of Canada as "male". In what has been described as the "interpenetration of...kinship and nationalist ideologies" (Williams, 1995: 203) the Canadian nation was also located within a "family", notably as the growing child (frequently "son") of various progenitors.

For many politicians from English Canada, the nation was the "child" of the "Mother Country" [Britain] but for some, a maturing nationhood was seen to involve a necessary supplanting of this "mother" by the Canadian "fathers of [1867] confederation." In the context of moves toward greater political autonomy from Britain (i.e. the Balfour Declaration in 1926, then the Statute of Westminster in 1931), there were references to the need for greater detachment from the "mother" and closer identification with the "fathers" as a natural part of the nation's mascu linized development. The naturalizing of a national developmental trajectory away from the feminine was parallel by political discussion of how excessive maternal coddling and a predominance of female teachers in elementary schools threatened to produce an effeminate nation-an argument that supported militaristic programs for boys such as cadets as an allegedly necessary countervailing influence.

Nationalist political discourse tended to credit the nations' "fathers" (rather than mother) with its creation and repeatedly identified the father-son link as the site of its ongoing reproduction. Such a monogenetic model of male reproduction is in fact common to many modern nationalisms (Delaney, 1995).

Along with the construction of the nation as a growing male child within a paternalistic family, was an extension of the nation into the future through its children and "children's children". Thus Canadian politicians of the interwar period described measures to deal with unemployment during the Depression as being in the interests of "generations yet unborn" (Church Jan 24, 1935: 156); a proposed trans Canada highway as a project that would "show future generations that we really wanted to unite the whole of Canada" (Barber Feb 3, 1928: 176) and protection of the forests (in a now familiar refrain) as something to be done for the sake of "future generations" (Gendron April 20, 1925: 2249).

The frequent references in political discourse to "future generations" may be understood in the context of Yuval-Davis' observation that in settler nations such as Canada which lack a shared myth of common origin, a myth of "common destiny" becomes crucial to nationalist discourse (Yuval-Davis 1997:19). This combined with the western identification of childhood with 'futurity' (Jenks, 1996: 100-1), makes the invocation of children and "children's children" unsurprising in political rhetoric.

The construction of the nation as a young male child that would reproduce itself through its male-generated children and children's children drew upon and in turn reinforced, dominant understandings of a universal and naturalized model of childhood and child development (and gender relations). I now want to demonstrate how these constructions were also racialized.

In its status as a "child" of Britain, many politicians implicitly or explicitly racialised the nation as Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic. Others suggested that Canadians were the "children of two great races" by which they meant French and Anglo-Saxon/Celtic (Thompson March 23, 1931: 219). The construct of "two founding races" allowed for an imagined national "family" based upon separate patrilineages of fathers and sons and indeed representatives of French Canada invoked their own distinct "forefathers" in defense of linguistic and religious rights (Cannon May 11, 1920: 2288).

Along with these ways of racializing the nation there were also occasional constructions of the nation as "white". An example of this is found in a speech against Japanese immigration by a politician from British Columbia who, in 1924, argued that "growing up" as a nation required a disengagement from both the female and the non-white:

"We [the nation] have grown up and we must forget those boy and girl entanglements of the past. We are now a man among men, a nation among nations. We have the full rights of a

nation...to set up as our ideal of citizenship, a white Canadian manhood" (Neill April 15, 1924: 1390).

Along with such references to the nation as a newly adult white man, references to actual or future children of the nation were often racially exclusive. Thus, for example, anti-Japanese immigration measures were promoted by British Columbian politicians as being in the interests of [presumably non-Japanese] "future generations" (Bennett Feb 17, 1938: 571) and restrictive controls on immigration more generally were described as necessary to keep Canada: "for the children, and the children's children, of the two great pioneer races of Canada [French and Anglo-Saxon/Celtic]" (Spotton April 21, 1932: 2262). In such passages some racialized children and not others were explicitly identified as bone fide descendants of the national lineage and appropriate symbols of its "futurity" or "common destiny". As such they were appropriate recipients of support and protection from a benevolent paternal state concerned with both child and national "development".

Discourses of childhood articulated with those of "race" in a somewhat different way for those outside of this construction. Most dramatically, perhaps, there was the attribution of "childhood" to an entire racialized population as happened in discussions of "Indians" who fell under federal jurisdiction. For this population an older recapitulation theory that equated "primitives" with children, was the basis for a much broader "aboriginal infantilism" (Miller 1996:188). Here pervasive discourses of childhood were used to support the denial of full citizenship as First Nations-whether adults or children, were described as "wards" or "minors" vis-a-vis the federal government. The status of "wardship" moreover located this population in terms of a contractual rather than consanguineal link to the national "family".

Racialized Children and Federal Political Discourse in Interwar Canada

In the context of a new federal involvement in childhood, the links between discourses of "childhood" and "race" cited above, suggest the need for a closer look at the ways in which actually existing (rather than metaphorical or future) racialized children were constructed and discussed in political talk. With this in mind various categories of implicitly or explicitly racialized childhoods can be identified and examined. Some of these included "Canadian-born" children, children of the "foreign-born", "Indian" children, "Oriental" children (encompassing those also referred to as "Chinese", "Japanese" and "Asiatic") and "white "children.

"Canadian-Born" Children

One of the categories repeatedly referred to by politicians was the category of "Canadian-born" children. For many speakers it was self-evident that "Canadian-born" children represented the core children of the nation and many argued against immigration on the grounds that the country would be best populated through natural reproduction or an "immigration by the cradle" (Anderson Feb 22, 1926:1218). As one politician put it: "The best immigrant that ever comes to Canada is the one which the stork brings to the Canadian home" (Forke Feb 2, 1923: 40).

Prioritizing the health of Canadian-born children (over immigration) was a constant refrain of child welfare leaders, who saw this as the solution to the perceived threat of "race suicide". The argument was often taken up in parliament by the sometimes overlapping left-leaning Progressives who also argued for greater support for the families of Canadian (male) workers and who were skeptical about further immigration. The need for more investment in the Canadian-born child was also made repeatedly by French Canadian members of parliament who reminded politicians from other regions that French-Canadians were distinguished by relatively high fertility rates and only needed greater economic security to ensure their continued reproductive contribution to nation-building.

The alleged desirability of the "Canadian-born" child appeared on the surface to be based upon an environmentalist argument regarding child development-notably that those children who had from their infancy grown up with Canadian institutions (especially schooling the crucial marker of modern childhood), were the most suitable citizens. In fact, however, the non-racialized label of "Canadian-born" obscured the fact that in its application this category was

usually reserved for the Canadian-born children of Anglo-Saxon/Celtic or French Canadian parents. Later in the period the label was occasionally extended to include the broader category of Canadian-born children who were considered "white" but it never referred to all of the children actually born in Canada.

Children of the "Foreign-Born"

The racial/ethnic exclusiveness of the category of "Canadian-born child" was apparent in political discussions of the contrasting category of the "foreign-born" or *children of* the "foreign-born" -a term which also had a racial or ethnic exclusiveness insofar as it usually referred to those of Southern and Eastern European origin including on occasion those who were in fact "Canadian-born". Throughout this period political discussion regarding European immigration included arguments about the putative capacity of these children to assimilate or be "Canadianized" (e.g. Luchkovic May 28, 1929: 2904-5).

Some politicians, for example, took the position (based upon a hereditarian logic) that the children of the "foreign-born" and their children in turn, could "never become part and parcel of the true Canadian people" (Tweedie April 30, 1919: 1941). Others however invoked the alleged accomplishments of such children as evidence that they and/or their children were capable of Canadianization-primarily through the experience of Canadian schooling. Advocates of more open immigration, especially from Eastern Europe, supported their position by pointing out how exposure to Canadian schooling resulted in environmentally determined differences between older and younger siblings who had been born before and after arrival in Canada (e.g. Euler March 25, 1920:744-6). As one politician argued: "in these families one saw a remarkable difference from the eldest child to the youngest who had attended [Canadian] school...in the course of one short generation the improvement was most strongly marked" (McMaster March 29, 1920: 834).[6]

Advocates of the children of the foreign-born credited Canadian schooling with the inculcation of patriotism even in those children from populations deemed "enemy aliens" (i.e. immigrants from Germany and the Austro-Hungarian empire) in the post World War One period. In 1920 one politician noted that these children "have been educated in our Canadian schools, have acquired Canadian habits and imbibed Canadian ideals, and surely there is no disloyalty in them" (Thompson March 25, 1920: 747). Another described witnessing the patriotism of Canadian-born children from various European backgrounds:

"I well remember meeting little Slovaks, little Polanders, little Italians, little Greeks, in my city and of observing how quickly these Canadian-born children became good citizens...I remember on one occasion hearing 200 little Slovak children sing 'God Save the King' with as much gusto and heartiness as any of our Canadian children could do it" (Manion, May 15, 1923: 2749 see also Millar May 23, 1922: 2163).

While even their advocates continued to distinguish between these children and "our Canadian children", as the period progressed there was growing support for the idea that children of the foreign born could, through a developmental/socialization (and significantly intermarrying) process, *become* full adult "white" Canadian citizens (a claim that was central to the legitimation of various preferential immigration and citizenship provisions). Children of the "foreign-born" then appear to have been the clearest beneficiaries of the new environmentalist thinking; thinking that was only partially acknowledged or denied altogether for the explicitly racialized "Indian" and "Oriental" child.

"Indian" Children

The environmentalism that was increasingly influential in the constructions of children of the whitened "foreign-born" was present but more tempered and contested in the case of the explicitly racialized category of Indian childhood. I have already referred to the broader context of infantilization that constructed the entire First Nations population as "wards" of the state. In political debates over the capacities of Indian children, however, some politicians invoked environmentalist arguments to support the position that Indian children could and should embark on an assimilatory/maturational process that would bring them into a civic adulthood within the national family. As in the case of the children of the "foreign-born" the school was imagined

as the key site for this transformation. Unlike the latter children, however, for Indian children the process was imagined to require their removal from their families and communities and their full-time attendance at segregated boarding schools.[7]

Many speakers advocated the radically environmentalist view that such removals would allow Indian children to enter the Canadian "family" to: "take their place along with their white brothers and sisters" (Stewart April 24, 1923: 2146). Others however expressed skepticism about the degree to which Indian children could in fact transcend infantilism. Indeed in the 1930s a more hereditarian-inspired discourse argued for vocational schooling as more appropriate to Indian "nature" and "instinct". To move from "savagery to civilization" in two generations, it was claimed, was impossible (Bennett June 13, 1938: 3796). In these discussions then, hereditarian thinking that was disappearing from constructions of increasingly whitened children of the "foreign-born" European immigrants, remained and some cases was heightened, for First Nations children.

"Oriental" Children

Hereditarian rather than environmentalist theories of child development were most evident however, in the political discussions of another category of childhood that preoccupied federal politicians during the interwar period: the "Oriental" child of Japanese or Chinese descent. Significantly these children were rarely acknowledged as part of the category of "Canadian-born" despite repeated references to Japanese and Chinese birth rates that allegedly threatened a "white" demography in British Columbia.

Along with being constructed as a reproductive threat, "Oriental" children were described as school goers whose very attendance (rather than non-attendance as in the case of Indian children) was problematized because of the putative threat posed to their "white" classmates, especially "white" girls. In a characteristic passage one federal member asked rhetorically:

"Is there any man in this assembly to-day who would like to see his little girl, eight or nine years old, having to sit in a school beside an oriental boy, fifteen or sixteen years of age, and that oriental boy having an opportunity of associating with that child of his" (McBride March 22, 1922: 317).

Anti-Oriental discourse appealed to members of parliament in their paternal capacity as controllers and protectors of young white female sexuality. One speaker's rhetorical query to fellow members: "would any honourable gentleman of this House consider an alliance between a sister or a daughter of his and a Chinaman or a Japanese" (Black May 8, 1922: 1521) illustrates how the nation was constructed as a family and how "Oriental" children, identified as those whom the fathers/brothers of the nation would not allow their daughters/sisters to marry, were located as permanent outsiders.

In anti-Oriental political discourse, the claims of white childhood for "protection" were foregrounded. This foregrounding of the claims of "white" children was facilitated by the removal of a "child" status from the "Oriental". Indeed, in contrast to the infantilization of the "Indian", "Oriental" children were often placed outside of "childhood" through a process of adultization that involved the attribution of qualities of aggressiveness and sexuality.

The removal of "childlike" qualities from "Oriental" children made it plausible to deny them the allegedly transformative power of schooling (emphasized for all other categories of childhood), as well as other environmentally driven processes of Canadianization. Because "Oriental" children were rarely acknowledged as children, the tensions between an environmentalist model of child development and a racist construction of "Orientals" as unassimilable (a construction which legitimated restrictions on civil rights and further immigration on this population see Bolaria and Li, 1988) could be sidestepped. "Oriental" children were first and foremost imagined as members of an unassimble non-white "race", and this racist logic overrode claims that might have been made on their behalf based on their status as children.

Problematized "White" Childhood

In the previous discussion I have attempted to demonstrate how reading across political discourses of various categories of racialized childhoods illuminates the interpenetrations and tensions between ideologies of "childhood" and

"race". The differentiated application of prevailing theories of child development is perhaps clearest in the case of "Indians" and "Orientals" both of which were clearly contrasted to a shifting "white" childhood. This suggests the need to look more closely at the significance of "whiteness" and especially how "white" privilege was extended to even the most problematized of "white" childhoods.

The case that I will focus upon here is that of the Doukhobor children. The Doukhobors were members of a Russian sect that was the subject of a great deal of negative commentary at the federal level due to their acts of civil disobedience including many that struck at the heart of modern construction of childhood, e.g. resistance to the registration of their children's births, refusal of compulsory schooling and a practice of disrobing as a form of political protest (which was described as a threat to the sexual innocence of non-Doukhobor children who witnessed the resulting nakedness of adults).

This population whose children were unequivocally described as "white" were the target of legislative repression at the provincial level-especially in British Columbia. Of interest here is what happened when measures to remove civil rights from Doukhobors (who broke the law) *and their descendants* were introduced at the federal level in 1934. Some federal politicians at this time argued that a distinction needed to be drawn between problematic Doukhobor adults and their "innocent" children. The removal of rights from descendants and "unborn children" was described as wrong because, it was argued, such descent-based exclusion involved "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children who in years to come may be the very finest of our Canadian citizens" (Mackenzie June 30, 1934: 4530). The removal of civil rights from children and children's children was seen in this case to be repugnant and indeed in the words of one politician to smack of "Hitlerism"(Jacobs June 30, 1934: 4533).

The debate over Doukhobor children revealed the way in which an increasingly influential environmentalist logic was extended to even the most problematized of "white" children. In fact, however, the debate over Doukhobor children was more complicated than this, because it also became a site of a public challenge to the larger racial order in Canada. This was because the discussion over the perceived inequity of descent-based legislation for "innocent" children provided an opportunity for some to draw parallels with such existing inequities in the case of other minority populations in Canada, including the "Indians" and "Orientals".

By 1936 in fact the apparent hypocrisy of defending "innocent" Doukhobor children while turning a blind eye to existing legislative exclusions of Canadian-born Chinese, Japanese and Indian children was used to support a historic motion to grant political rights in Canada "without regard for race".8 Here the ideology of innocent and environmentally shaped childhood facilitated the articulation of the anti-racist position as this ideology was extended across the boundary of "whiteness".

The politician that introduced the motion in 1936 not only drew upon images of childhood innocence and an environmentally determined capacity for Canadianess but also invoked racially innocent, "colour-blind" children as symbols of the imagined non-racist nation of the future. Thus for example, he made reference to a school in Vancouver where despite the presence of children of "twenty-eight different races...there was no difficulty whatever, so far as racial grounds were concerned. The children played together; they worked together and...race made no difference" (MacInnis February 20, 1936: 378). He went on to add that: "any day [in Vancouver] one can walk along the street and see Japanese girls accompanied by white girls, or Chinese girls and white girls walking arm in arm along the sidewalk" (MacInnis February 20, 1936: 378). Here images of childhood were mobilized behind a broader anti-racist position. As mentioned, this relied in part on an extension of environmentalist logic across the boundary of "whiteness", but it also involved the association of children with racial innocence as well as "futurity" and promise, reminding us, as Cindi Katz (1998) has recently noted, how childhood can be a metaphoric site for a wide range of progressive as well as regressive political projects.

CONCLUSION

In this analysis I have suggested that the political debates of the interwar period were marked

by a nationalist discourse that constructed the nation as a growing male white child located within a paternalistic family. This construction was in turn linked to the positioning of various racialized childhoods *vis-a-vis* the nation. A reading across several categories of racialised childhoods revealed how in some cases children were identified as paralleling the nation through a process of development that would result in adult citizenship in this "national family". In other cases, however the capacity of children for such "development" was either contested or completely denied, resulting in their marginalization within the nation (as permanent children in the case of "Indians"), or as in the case of "Oriental" children, exclusion from it. The analysis of political discourse then reveals both images of universalized childhood and the construction of racially stratified childhoods to whom changing theories of child development were differentially applied. It also reveals that occasional images of racially innocent childhoods were invoked in the course of challenges to the racist state. By drawing attention to how in this single site "discourses of [racialised] childhood constitute childhood (and children) in different ways" (James and Prout 1997: 24) naturalized discourses of childhood that obscure the significance of racism and other inequalities are challenged.

NOTES

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2. The special issue of the journal Childhood on the theme of Children and Nationalism (1997) includes a number of papers that illustrate different approaches to this issue.
3. The concept of racialization as used by Miles refers to the processes by which social relations between people become structured by the signification of putative biological and/or cultural characteristics (Miles, 1993). One of the few attempts to provide an overview of racialized childhoods in Canada is Ashworth (1993). Hansard indexes for the federal debates for the interwar period (1919-1939) were consulted for debates with references to both children/childhood and "race", ethnicity and nation building more generally. Relevant passages were analysed for this paper.
4. While I see these political discourses as contributing to the construction, legitimation and reproduction of measures vis-a-vis various collectivities of children "on the ground", I do not mean to deny the agency of those so constructed nor the important alternative and/or oppositional discourses of childhood of this period.
5. This discussion was prompted by Gullestad's (1997) description of the imagery of childhood childhood within Norwegian nationalism.
6. Despite the preferences of many politicians for the "Canadian-born" and/or British immigrants, there was pressure in the post World War One period to return to an earlier immigration policy which had actively recruited immigration from other parts of Europe. By 1925, demand for immigrant labour led to an easing of restrictions on those from Eastern and Southern Europe. This would tighten again with the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s (Whittaker, 1991: 11-12)
7. In 1923 there was an amalgamation of industrial and boarding schools into a single residential school system based upon a premise of forced assimilation. The system involved the forced removal of children from families and communities (Miller, 1996: 148).
8. While there were earlier individual challenges to the denial of citizenship rights to these groups (and especially Canadian-born "Oriental" children see Woodsworth Feb 15, 1929: 183), opposition was formally adopted by the left-wing CCF party in 1932. In 1936 after the motion to grant political rights "without regard for race" was defeated, a special house committee was formed to study the issue in a move described by Anderson as "an important moment in the history of human rights in Canada" (1991: 153).

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