

SESSION I

*Thomas Flanagan, Reform Party of Canada, Calgary**

It seems that the Anglo-Celts have arrived. But I think we should look a little more beneath the surface when we use a term like "Anglo-Celtic." I do not normally talk about myself in presentations like this, but perhaps I can give Professor Lupul a few lines for the data file that he wants to build.

It is true that I am named Flanagan. My great-great-grandfather left Ireland in the 1840s, in the midst of the potato famine, and came through Canada to the United States. My mother's name was Lawniczak. She, in turn, was half Polish and half German. I grew up in the United States. I have been married twice; my first wife was a Protestant girl from New England, classic WASP, English and Scottish background. My second wife was a Mormon. She is, however, no longer a Mormon. I am not sure if you can ever stop being a Mormon, in the same sense as you can perhaps never stop being a Catholic. However, we have compromised and we now worship at an Anglican church, although if you worship at a contemporary Anglican church it is not always entirely clear what you are worshipping, but, nonetheless, we are there. I have three children, two of whom are adopted. My older daughter is a mixture of black, Chinese, and white ancestors. She is now a Green Beret in the American Army, serving at Fort Bragg. And my younger daughter is a mixture of Ukrainian and Irish ancestors, I believe, although it is not something that I ponder a great deal. Anyway, little remains of the Anglo-Celtic group when you start to probe the social conditions of present-day North America.

My main topic today is to present to you the multiculturalism policy of the Reform Party.

I am not going to try to analyse multiculturalism as a phenomenon. I simply want to present to you what the Reform Party's policy is. Although the Reform Party's multiculturalism policy has received a lot of attention in the press, most recently through one of our favourite interpreters, Liberal MP Sheila Copps, it is actually a fairly minor part of the overall policy of the Party. It is not something that we devote a great deal of attention to; it is there, it is part of overall policy, but it is by no means the major emphasis. But, because it has received so much attention, it deserves to be discussed and explained.

The Reform Party was founded in 1987, and its first policy document was the campaign platform for the 1988 election put together after a meeting in Calgary. There was nothing in that document about multiculturalism. Multiculturalism appeared for the first time in the 1990 *Blue Book*, the official policy manual of the Party, which was based upon a meeting held in Edmonton in 1989. In the 1990 *Blue Book*, which is the one that Ms Copps has been quoting recently, we find the following three short paragraphs about multiculturalism.

- (a) The Reform Party of Canada opposes the current concept of multiculturalism and hyphenated Canadianism pursued by the Government of Canada and would end funding of the multiculturalism programme.
- (b) The Reform Party supports the preservation of cultural background as a matter of personal choice. Whether or not an ethnic group preserves its cultural background is the group's choice.
- (c) The Reform Party supports the responsibility of the state to promote, preserve and enhance the national culture. The state

may assist and should encourage ethnic cultures to integrate into the national culture.

Now, the phrase "national culture" is one that has been interpreted unfavourably by Ms Copps and others, and it is also a phrase that I personally would not use, because it is not the business of government to promote a culture. To me, culture is a spontaneous social reality, and I think of it, in a modern liberal democracy, as rather like religion—something that should ultimately be the result of personal choices. So I am not particularly happy with the phrase "national culture." However, I don't think it should be given a sinister interpretation, because the phrase came directly from a speech delivered to the Edmonton assembly by Professor Rais Khan, the head of the Political Science Department at the University of Winnipeg, and the phrase "national culture" is his.

The *Blue Book* was revised after the Saskatoon Assembly held in April 1991, and the phrase "national culture" no longer appears in it. The wording from the current *Blue Book* is as follows:

The Reform Party stands for the acceptance and integration of immigrants to Canada into the mainstream of Canadian life. The Reform Party supports the principle that individuals or groups are free to preserve their cultural heritage using their own resources. The Party shall uphold their right to do so. The Reform Party of Canada opposes the current concept of multiculturalism and hyphenated Canadianism pursued by the Government of Canada. We would end funding of the multiculturalism programme and support the abolition of the Department of Multiculturalism.

In an attempt to explain this and other policies further, we are drafting at the national office a series of what we call "issue statements." They will be distributed to our members for use in the political struggle. Our issue statement on multiculturalism reads:

The Reform Party of Canada welcomes Canadians of all origins into the Party. We recognize that all Canadians are equal and should be treated equally. Unfortunately, the present multiculturalism policy does not

live up to this ideal. It categorizes people on the basis of ethnic and racial origin, thus ghettoizing our society and promoting hyphenated Canadians. It sets immigrant groups apart from their fellow Canadians, rather than encouraging them to participate fully in society. The Reform Party would put an end to the present policy of multiculturalism. We would repeal the Canadian Multiculturalism Act and dismantle the odd-couple Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship. Citizenship programs would be returned to the Department of the Secretary of State, where they belong both logically and historically. Other worthwhile programs, such as those designed to combat racial prejudice, could be transferred to agencies such as the Canadian Human Rights Commission. We would terminate all programs which subsidize ethnic and racial organizations. The Government of Canada should promote those things that are essential to all of us. The rule of law in an orderly society; equal opportunity to participate in society; a dynamic open-market economy; genuine democracy; and an efficient economical public administration. Within this framework, ethnic groups can use their families, churches, social organizations and lower levels of government to preserve their cultural heritage.

I should point out that the Reform Party of Canada is solely a federal party, and we stay out of provincial affairs as much as possible. So, if the political process in a province yielded the result that the people of that province were willing to subsidize ethnic societies or cultural-preservation programs, the Reform Party would not have a problem with that; we would regard that as a matter for the voters in a particular province. We are only concerned with what the federal government should do.

We may not yet have succeeded in expressing our multiculturalism policy in the best possible way. As you can see, it has been going through alterations since 1990, and we are groping for the best way to say this. But, whether or not we have found the best way of saying it, I do think that our views are shared widely among Canadians today.

In August of 1991 we commissioned a survey in preparation for the coming election. This was a sample of about fifteen hundred respondents in what is now known as "ROC"—the rest of Canada. Quebec was not included because we do not intend to run any candidates there at this time. We gave the respondents twelve policy statements drawn almost word for word from the *56 Reasons* pamphlet. One of

those was a multiculturalism statement: "The government should stop funding multiculturalism projects. These projects should be funded by the organizations themselves."

In total, 44.3 per cent of respondents strongly agreed with that statement; 24.1 per cent agreed; 18.3 per cent disagreed; 9 per cent disagreed strongly; and 4.3 per cent had no response. Roughly 68 per cent of those who

C O P Y

Montreal April 11, 1960

Ukrainian Canadian Committee
722 McIntyre Bldg.
Winnipeg, Man.

Dear Sirs:

I wish to inform you that have applied for Canadian Citizenship papers and have encountered difficulties. The officials of the department refuse to enter my nationality - Ukrainian - but insist that it should be AUSTRIAN. I was born February 5th, 1909 at Bobiatyn, pow. Sokal, West Ukraine.

I will greatly appreciate your assistance in this matter.

Yours truly

Ilko Bozylo

4152 St. Urbain St.
Montreal.

Letter from Mr. Ilko Bozylo to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, 11 April 1960, UCC Collection.



The M. Lysenko Band, Toronto, Ontario, 1918, photograph MHSO Collection.

responded either agreed or strongly agreed that it was not the business of the federal government to use public money for the promotion of ethnicity or for cultural preservation.

I do not think that one should give too much weight to the answer to a single question on a survey. We all know that answers depend on the way that questions are phrased. I am sure that somebody phrasing the question differently could get a different set of answers. But I have seen the results of many other surveys, and the conclusion of the overall sweep of data that I have seen is that there is in the Canadian public today a sceptical attitude toward the use of public money for the preservation or promotion of ethnicity.

Let me conclude by reading a letter I saw recently. This immigrant to Canada sent in his membership renewal with a modest additional financial contribution for the Reform Party. His name may come from a Slavic background, I am not sure. It does not sound Anglo-Celtic! He wrote:

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to you and your colleagues for under-

taking the arduous task of reforming Canada. For the first time since I reached these shores in 1963, I shall be able to vote as a Canadian citizen for a real Canadian party. The concept of the two "feuding nations" is not acceptable to us, the so-called "ethnics." I should like to see the following definition of a Canadian used by the Reform Party: "A Canadian is a person who feels Canadian, who wants to be Canadian and who works towards the betterment of the country in all fields of human endeavour." This simple definition will bring together the real Canadians of all creeds, colours and origins. The same idea you have expressed in a slightly different way in your talks. The potential pool of the Reform Party voters is very great indeed, particularly among us who were relegated to the citizens of the third rank.□

[*Thomas Flanagan is no longer working with the Reform Party. He has returned to his position at the University of Calgary as Professor of Political Science.]