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The decline of the 'WASP' in Canada and the United States

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The Decline of the 'WASP' in Canada and the United States

Dominant ethnic groups may be resurgent, stable or in decline. Theodore Wright has drawn our attention to a number of formerly dominant groups – including White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) Americans and Indian Mohajirs. Most lost power due to military defeat. In other cases, dominant ethnic decline can be traced to demographic change and/or cultural assimilation. (Smith 1986) In this context, the 'Decline of the WASP', to borrow the title phrase for Peter Schrag's 1973 book, represents one of the most unusual reverses of ethnic fortune in history. (Schrag 1973) Demographic change plays an important role in the story we are about to tell, but not in the usual way. For example, the demographic change that brought Chinese into Malaysia, Russians into the Baltic, Englishmen into Wales and Cornwall or European settlers to the New World occurred under the aegis of a colonising power. Yet the decision to alter the ethnic composition of the United States and Canada was taken, and is being taken, by the dominant ethnie itself - a deliberate policy within an environment of democratic deliberation and liberal self-consciousness.

To be sure, ethnies are not unitary actors. Elites tend to welcome immigrants and foreign culture to a far greater extent than the mass of the population. Whether they be Malaysian princes striking deals with the British as Chinese settle inland, Palestinian-Arab landlords selling land to Jewish settlers, Welsh and Cornish gentry adopting the English language or English kings importing Flemish craftsmen, ethnic 'treason' is most often committed by dominant group elites. While the United States and English-Canadian cases conform broadly to this pattern, a number of interesting differences remain. First of all, as democracies, ethnic minorities were able to have influence over the course of events, though less than many believe. Second, ethnic decline occurred as part of a deliberate ideological turn rather than for more mercenary reasons like economic gain or political power. Indeed, ethnic decline is strongly linked to the rise of post-industrial (or 'post-materialist') liberalism after 1960.

The WASP case is becoming the paradigm rather than the outlier as globalisation and cultural liberalism bring migration to Europe on a scale unseen since the ancient waves of Celtic and Germanic colonists swept out from Central Asia. This latest North-South migratory trend is occurring during a period in which liberal-egalitarian thought is at its historic apogee. Together, these factors are driving a

wedge between dominant European ethnies and the nations which, as Anthony Smith has written, 'they' spawned. In this sense, what is occurring on Europe's North American settlement periphery is coming home to roost. Just as developments in California serve as a beacon to the United States, the fate of the WASP in North America seems a harbinger of developments to come in Europe itself.

Defining WASPdom

The categorisation of White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants ('WASPs') as a dominant minority in Canada and the United States would strike readers at the beginning of the twentieth century as odd, for both groups still comprised a demographic majority of 'their' respective nation's population in 1900. In the United States, the amalgam of English, Scottish, Irish and Dutch Protestants that assumed the label 'old American' formed no less than 55 percent of the population. (Kaufmann 2004) In Canada, those of British and Irish background made up 60 percent of the total, with British Protestants a majority in the English-speaking part of the country. The vast influx of non-British Europeans to North America in the twentieth century changed this demographic equation. Nevertheless, demographic decline might have been overcome through successful ethnic assimilation as happened in Hungary after 1778 and in a vast array of other nation-building societies from Mexico and France to Turkey, where the dominant ethnie moved from a minority to a majority position. Why this did not take place in North America is of vital importance to any general theory of dominant ethnicity.

The Rise and Fall of American Dominant Ethnicity

Dominant ethnicity in the United States had its early foundation with the influx of thousands of Puritan Englishmen from East Anglia from the 1620's. Throughout the seventeenth century, settlers from England migrated to the English (later British) North American colonies. In the seventeenth century, this wave was joined by a slightly more diverse flow from Protestant Ireland, Scotland and Northwestern Europe. By the time of independence in 1776, eighty percent of the free population was of British descent and 98 percent were Protestant. This was hardly the global nation conjured up by foreign idealists like Crèvecoeur, Paine or Tocqueville.

Nonetheless, the population was diverse in both regional and sectarian terms. David Hackett Fischer writes that the United States began as a collection of cultural regions based around core English settler ethnies. In New England, the Puritans were dominant, Quakers influenced the Middle Atlantic States, in the Coastal South, Southern English Cavaliers held sway and in the Appalachian hinterland, Anglo-Scottish Presbyterians predominated. (Fischer 1989)

Intercolonial migration, trade and political links helped to integrate these regions during the mid-eighteenth century. Of greater significance, however, were cultural developments. The First Great Awakening, a New England-inspired Protestant revival movement that swept through the colonies during 1725-50, was an important mechanism here. In addition, as in Mexico, there was a growing intercolonial sense of *Criollo* difference from 'Old Country' British officials and military officers – expressed through the increasing use of the term 'American' after 1740. (Kaufmann 2002) American independence in 1776 represented a step change in American identity and gave birth to the American nation-state.

Many contend that the United States was an 'exceptional' nation born in liberty, with a diverse culture and no founding ethnie. (Lipset 1996; Zelinsky 1988; Greenfeld 1992) More recently, this sanguine Whig view has been challenged. (R Smith 1997; Lind 1995; King 2000) Low-church Protestantism and romantic Anglo-Saxonism were especially important Revolutionary chords. Alexander Hamilton probably reflected the sentiments of many when he excoriated the Quebec Act of 1774, which, like the Proclamation Acts a decade earlier, protected the French Catholic population of the trans-Allegheny West from encroachments by Anglo-Protestant settlers. Hamilton went on to speak of the 'corruption of the British Parliament,' and its implication in abetting the spread of 'popery' in the colonies. (Hamilton [1768-78] 1961) The importance of Protestant religious identity at this stage derives from both the general currency of anti-Catholic ideas in the British population at large, and the Calvinistic American proclivity for viewing themselves as chosen servants of God. The latter, as much as anything, helps to explain the mass response to the call of Revolution – especially among the Calvinist New Englanders and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of the Backcountry settlements. (Colley 1992; R Smith 1995)

Romantic Anglo-Saxonism was more important for sections of the Whig elite in their attempt to narrate the break with British identity. Edmund Burke, John Wilkes

and other English Whigs, many of whom supported the American revolutionaries, already tried to differentiate their 'Anglo-Saxon' inheritance from the supposed 'Norman' hierarchy imposed by Tories on their true liberal selves. (Haseler 1996: 34) American Whigs took this reasoning a step further. On this account, the English of the Old Country represented a tired, hierarchical Norman influence, whereas the true Anglo-Saxon spirit migrated to the New World where it achieved its full flower. In Reginald Horsman's words,

> The various ingredients in the myth of Anglo-Saxon England, clearly delineated in a host of seventeenth and eighteenth-century works, now appear again in American protests: Josiah Quincy Jr., wrote of the popular nature of the Anglo-Saxon militia; Sam Adams stressed the old English freedoms defended in the Magna Carta; Benjamin Franklin stressed the freedom that the Anglo-Saxons enjoyed in emigrating to England; Charles Carroll depicted Saxon liberties torn away by William the Conqueror; Richard Bland argued that the English Constitution and Parliament stemmed from the Anglo-Saxon period....George Washington admired the pro-Saxon history of Catherine Macaulay and she visited him at Mount Vernon after the Revolution. (Horsman 1981: 12)

Thomas Jefferson was perhaps the greatest proponent of this creed, claiming that Americans were descended from the Anglo-Saxon chiefs Hengist and Horsa, and based his agrarian philosophy on the ideal of the Yeoman farmer of King Alfred's period. Throughout the nineteenth century, particularly after 1840 as Romanticism deepened its influence, the Anglo-Saxon myth continued to gain currency among American intellectuals – a development that was only opposed in the antebellum Southern states.[1] (Frantzen & Niles 1997; Ross 1984: 917; Gossett 1963: 201-3) Even twentieth century presidents like Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were influenced by Anglo-Saxonist theories. (Roosevelt 1889: 26)

While the lineaments of American 'WASP' ethnicity were evident at this point, it should be stressed that the absence of a significant non-British, non-Protestant threat retarded its development. This changed swiftly after 1815, when

[1] Antebellum Southern writers tried to stress their Norman, as opposed to Anglo-Saxon, inheritance. A century later, however, it is interesting that southern segregationists like George Wallace were among the last to speak of themselves as the 'Anglo-Saxon people'. (Wallace [1963] 2002; Horsman 1981)

immigration resumed on a large scale. The attractiveness of the United States to non-British, non-Protestant immigrants after 1815 was to lead to profound changes in the nature of American dominant ethnicity. Previous immigrants were Protestant and mostly British, while those from Northern Europe – especially the Dutch and Huguenots - were readily assimilated. After 1830, this changed: most immigrants were Irish and German, and many were Catholic.

The Irish Catholics tended to settle in the growing cities of the northeast, where they quickly became demographically powerful. For instance, by 1853, Boston was 40 per cent Irish and over 50 per cent foreign white. (Burkey 1978: 244) All this in the city that housed the Puritan elite that saw America in its own image. Since the American constitution granted the franchise to all free whites, this ethnic bloc soon became a political force as well. This was symbolised by the rise of the Democratic political machine at Tammany Hall in New York. More to the point, the pro-Slavery Democrats helped forge links between the Southern plantocracy and northern immigrants, enraging northern WASP free soilers.

The result was the emergence of the Native American, or 'Know Nothing' Party, so-called because of their secretive ways. 'The result was phenomenal,' writes Ray Billington of the 1854 spring elections. 'Whole tickets not even on the ballots were carried into office. Men who were unopposed for election and who had been conceded victory found themselves defeated by some unknown Know-Nothing.' (Billington 1937: 387) This third party movement won a quarter of the national vote in 1856, swept the Massachusetts and Delaware state legislatures and polled well in a number of other northern states. Even Catholic papers acknowledged the inevitability of a Know-Nothing president. Only the slavery issue and Civil War helped to avert a more complete affirmation of American ethno-nationalism.

As the nineteenth century progressed, immigrants began to arrive from a wider array of sources in Eastern and Southern Europe, eventually forming a majority of the flow. (Easterlin 1982) New England WASP writers of the mid-nineteenth century like Ralph Waldo Emerson, though decrying the rise of the Irish presence, at least contented themselves with the knowledge that they had been spared the 'Black eyes and black drop….the "Europe of Europe".' (Higham [1955] 1986: 65) Likewise, a new generation of writers in the late nineteenth century, like Theodore Roosevelt or Francis Parkman, subscribed to the idea that the Irish and Germans could combine with the English to re-form a new Anglo-Saxon compound akin to the English blend

of Saxon and Celt. This would allow the WASP dominant ethnie to restore its congruence with the nation. Assimilation to Protestantism and the English language could thereby lead to a retention of the ethnic boundary in the face of massive migratory transgression. The shift in source countries from the north and west to the south and east of Europe threatened to upset this national vision, as did the potential of large-scale Chinese immigration post-1864.

It is vital, however, to focus upon the divisions that were emerging *within* the WASP or 'Native American' dominant ethnie by 1900. To begin with, the elite were more strongly pro-immigrant than the rural majority or urban working-class. Abraham Lincoln had first given the nod to the importation of Chinese contract labour in 1864, and the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 placed Chinese immigration on a firmer footing. After the Civil War, Southern plantation owners, notably Ku Klux founder Nathan Bedford Forrest, eagerly supported immigration, hoping to increase wage pressure on the indigenous black workforce. (Gyory 1998: 33) 'All I want in my business is muscle,' declared a large employer of labour in California in the 1870's. 'I don't care whether it be obtained from a Chinaman or a white man-from a mule or a horse!' (Gossett 1963: 294) The WASP cultural elite, both secular and religious, backed political and economic elites in their support for free Chinese immigration - a stance which crossed party lines. Meanwhile, business interests representing railroad and steamship companies as well as manufacturers pressed successive administrations to maintain the free flow of immigrant labour between 1890 and the mid-1920's.

Protestant workers and mechanics in the 1840's, 50's and 60's spearheaded the Know-Nothing movement in northern cities and towns. (Foner 1970: 107; Silbey 1985: 149) Likewise, their descendants forged the Workingmen's Party, a California movement that brought white labourers together in a successful crusade to bar Chinese immigration in 1882. In subsequent decades, the American Federation of Labour provided the muscle behind the drive to limit immigration from southern and eastern Europe. (Leinenweber 1984) The AFL's stance was reinforced by support from patriotic societies like the American Legion and WASP hereditary groups like the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution (SAR & DAR). The rise of the agrarian, temperance-based, Populist and Progressive reform movements in the 1890-1920 period won many former *laissez-faire* elites to the cause of restriction.

This ultimately succeeded with the enactment of the Johnson-Reed Act (1924) which allocated a quota to each nation based on their proportion of the American

population. In this way, the WASP dominant ethnie - through its 50 percent British quota - hoped to maintain its ethnic position within the American nation, slowly strengthening it through 'Americanization.' WASP ethnic activity in the 1920's was reflected in many ways. The Volstead Act (1920) introduced the prohibition of alcohol, a longstanding Protestant crusade. The Ku Klux Klan emerged as a mostly northern anti-Catholic (rather than southern anti-black) association with millions of members, some rural but most part of the urban WASP working class who felt threatened by Catholic immigration and secularism. There were Klan mayors and even one Klan president. (Jackson 1967) WASP dominance, it seemed, had been consolidated.

The Decline of the WASP in America

On the other side of the ledger, the twenties marked the high tide of WASP control. Naturally, legislative success did result in a degree of institutionalised dominance along the lines suggested by Andreas Wimmer. (Wimmer 2002) Immigration no longer posed such a serious threat to WASP control and Americanization rested on a sure government footing. The history texts in the nation's schools, along with its popular magazines and films, reinforced the message that the true American type was Anglo-Protestant - a descendant of Revolutionaries and westward-moving frontiersmen like Daniel Boone. (Smith 1950) Finally, the political system allowed for the malapportionment of seats between rural and urban districts, ensuring the domination of rural America, where some three-quarters of the WASP population resided.[2] (Erikson 1972; Schwab 1988)

Underneath this apparent self-confidence, though, new liberal-cosmopolitan currents of thought were emerging. Whereas cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth century tended to be the byproduct of laissez-faire empire building and business interests, a new confluence of reformist and liberal WASP thought developed in Chicago and New York in the 1900's. This so-called Liberal-Progressive movement departed from the organic ethno-communitarianism of the Progressive movement. It advocated social reform, but felt non-WASP immigrants to be a source of richness rather than social ills. Rooted in rising non-denominational universities like the

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[2] In 1890, just eight percent of 'native' whites lived in cities of over 100,000 people. By contrast, fully a third of the foreign-born did so. (Easterlin 1982)

University of Chicago, Liberal Progressivism also expressed itself in educational outreach missions known as 'Settlements', which sprung up in deprived inner-city districts. John Dewey and Jane Addams were among the most important figures in this movement, which was the first to unite left-wing and liberal-cosmopolitan activists.

This ideological wind quickly gained political teeth as part of a caucus within, paradoxically, the federal government-sponsored Americanization movement. Liberal Progressives founded The Immigrant Protective Association (1908), National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (1909) and joined business interests in the fight against immigration restriction legislation in 1912,1917, 1921 and 1924. Liberal Progressives urged immigrants to treasure their ethnic heritage as a 'gift' to the nation and subscribed to Israel Zangwill's new vision (1909) of two-way assimilation in which both native and immigrant gave and received to forge a new cosmopolitan 'Melting Pot'. (Lissak 1989) Meanwhile, a new generation of young Americans turned their back on westward settlement and celebrated the decadence of urban life. Beginning in 1912, New York's Greenwich Village served to incubate a modernist, Bohemian counter-culture which challenged the strictures of Protestant America. Ethnic cultures were lauded as liberating, and Anglo-Protestant mores lampooned. (Abrahams 1986)

Though the twenties saw many WASP legislative successes, the growth of left-liberal thought was exponential. In that decade, modern architecture, illegal drinking establishments and fashion innovations like the 'flapper' signified that many elite WASPs were flouting the moral code of small-town America. The popularity of anti-provincial, Protestant-bashing writers like Sinclair Lewis and H.L. Mencken heralded a new era. Along with drinking, bohemian innovations like watching black jazz in Harlem became increasingly popular middle-class pursuits. While many young, middle-class urban WASPs were drawn to Europe as part of the 'Lost Generation', their parents successfully launched a campaign against Prohibition which resulted in its repeal in 1933.

Arguably more important for the demise of WASP America was the stance of organised Protestantism in the form of the Federal Council of Churches (FCC). The churches embraced the ideas of the Liberal Progressives and were in the van of the ecumenical and interfaith movements. Rejecting the Protestant crusade as early as 1910, the mainline Protestant elite led the fight against Klan influence and

immigration restriction. This increasingly critical posture led to a rejection of the entire missionary effort as imperialistic - a startling about-turn for the once hegemonic Protestant crusade. (Cavert 1968)

The thirties witnessed a continued division between the WASP elite - both secular and religious - and the mass of the Anglo-Protestant population. However, the high degree of cultural capital possessed by cosmopolitan WASPs fed into the political system. Though unable to challenge the Anglo-Protestant hammerlock over the malapportioned legislature, liberal forces lapped at FDR's New Deal administration. The war effort, for instance, though it excluded black Americans, embraced Catholics and Jews as never before.

This was reinforced in a torrent of government-sponsored pamphlet literature and radio broadcasts which stressed the theme of 'Americans all'. (Savage 1999) The battle for the nation's soul was also fought over the contentious terrain of historiography. Accounts which preserved an Anglo-paternalist vision of the nation gave way either to critical or liberal-consensus historiography. The latter emphasised political unity and American exceptionalism and downplayed ethno-cultural pedigrees. The school system proved a harder row to hoe, but even here, the newly powerful National Education Association (NEA), influenced by Liberal Progressivism, managed to face down patriotic societies like the DAR over textbook selection. Once central school texts like Muzzey's Anglo-Saxonist *American History* gave way, in the forties and fifties, to books which applauded white ethnic contributions and reinterpreted the Statue of Liberty as a beacon to prospective immigrants. (FitzGerald 1979: 79-82, 175; Strayer 1958: 69-71)

The aforementioned cultural revolution was followed by wartime films which, though privileging the WASP in lead roles, nevertheless suggested that others were also 'One Hundred Per Cent' Americans. Meanwhile, the ecumenical interfaith movement was so successful that the Jewish-American writer Will Herberg could assert that while the American ideal remained the WASP type, a non-denominational religiosity embracing Protestants, Catholics and Jews defined a new Americanism. (Herberg 1955) Dwight Eisenhower's election as the first German-origin president in 1953 and John F. Kennedy's 1960 triumph as the first Catholic to occupy the Oval Office demonstrated how much things had changed since 1928 when Al Smith's bid to become the first Catholic president foundered on the rocks of WASP dominance.

The last redoubt of WASPdom now lay in the political arena. Much work remained, for the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 reaffirmed the ethnic exclusivity of the 1924 immigration act and malapportionment continued unabated. In their quest, WASP liberals were aided by a more self-confident Catholic and Jewish population in the northeastern cities. The Americanised, Irish-led Catholic church and multi-ethnic AFL-CIO labour movement helped to fuel the success of the Democratic party, which held the lion's share of power during 1932-68.

Yet the ethnic lobby could never have achieved its goals without Anglo-Protestant stewardship. Moreover, Democrats relied on rural Southern Protestant 'Dixiecrats' who often voted with conservative Republicans to block changes to the ethnic and racial status quo. Only the intervention of the Supreme Court in the landmark Baker v. Carr (1962) case unlocked the potential for unseating the WASP 'ethnocracy,' to use Oren Yiftachel's phrase. A number of other decisions in 1964 established that nothing less than complete redistricting would be tolerated. Quite clearly, minority agitation, which is a feature of many societies, is an insufficient explanation of WASP decline.

Reapportionment enabled a restructuring of power in Congress as committee and sub-committee chairs passed out of the hands of conservative Protestants. Metropolitan congressmen now controlled the fate of House legislation. (Schwab 1988: 143-6) For instance, the chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on Immigration until 1963 was Francis Walter (R-Penn.), a defender of the National Origins scheme and co-sponsor of the restrictive McCarran-Walter Act of 1952. He replacement in 1964 by the reformist Michael Feighan (D-Ohio) smoothed the way for passage of Hart-Celler. Whereas President Truman railed unsuccessfully against the quota act in 1953, the Johnson administration was able to triumph with the enactment of the 'colour-blind' Hart-Celler immigration bill of 1965. (Fitzgerald 1987)

The changed political terms of reference affected social relations as well. The rapid expansion of the university system in the 1950's, 60's and 70's and the rise of a centralised mass television media helped to produce important liberalising attitude changes on questions of race, ethnicity and religion. (Mayer1992; McClosky & Zaller 1984) Protestant fraternal associations like the Freemasons faced membership losses while mainline Protestant churches haemorrhaged members. (Anderson 1970; Roof & McKinney 1987; Putnam 2000) Catholic ethnic groups like the Italians, Poles and Irish achieved economic and educational parity with WASPs by 1980. (Alba 1990)

The ranks of the elite were among the last to open up, but by the late 1980's, Jews - just 2 percent of the population - outnumbered WASPs among the ranks of the media elite while Jewish, Italian and Greek millionaires (representing no more than 10 percent of the population) outnumbered their WASP counterparts. Added to this, the proportion of WASPs in positions of corporate leadership and in academia were cut in half in a generation. (Christopher 1989; Wright 1980)

A partial consequence of the above was a jump in inter-religious marriage: 91 percent of Protestants married those of their own faith in 1957, but this changed greatly from the sixties onward. Only a minority of European-origin Americans can claim single ancestry today. This is especially pronounced among youth - who frequently embody a mix of ancestries and ethnic identities. Theodore Wright and Richard Alba suggest that the new trend portends the emergence of a new 'white' or Euro-American ethnie. The decline in the non-Hispanic white proportion of the American population from 90 percent in 1960 to 70 percent today is seen as a stimulus to white dominant ethnic identification. The racialised politics of multiculturalism are touted as yet another spur to action. (Gallagher 1997; Lind 1995) Some view white nationalist far right movements (which include Catholic whites) as the edge of a rising wedge of dominant-group ethnic nationalism. (Swain 2002)

Evidence for a rise in white nationalist activity is, however, scant. (Kaufmann 2003) Instead, the main expression of this sentiment has been the 'white flight' of the native-born working class away from high-immigration metropolitan areas. (Frey 1996) Certainly the level of white nationalist agitation, expressed through the Immigration Reform and Official English movements pales in comparison with the stridency and success of 1920's Anglo-Protestant nationalism. Is Wright correct in treating the decline of the WASP as a successful group strategy of boundary expansion? Indeed, some have argued that lighter-skinned Asians may be admitted to this 'club' in the near future, given rising rates of inter-racial marriage. (Alba 1990; Gans 1994)

I am skeptical. The closer one looks at current trends, the more they show continuity with the shift toward liberal value change identified by writers like Daniel Bell and Ronald Inglehart. (Bell 1980; Inglehart 1990) Propelled by a university-educated 'New Class', vertical and horizontal cultural boundaries are dissipating. The boundaries of most American historic communities, whether religious or ethnic, are

loosening. [3] Rising rates of inter-ethnic, inter-racial and inter-religious marriage provide support for this. The appearance of symbolic, voluntary and even 'post'-ethnicity reinforces the new trend. The appearance of white unity through intermarriage can be shown to be illusory by examining opinion polls on immigration and the results of popular anti-immigrant initiatives like California's Proposition 287 in which ideology and party identification are better predictors of attitudes than race. The true gainer from loosening boundaries is therefore not white dominant ethnicity, but trans-ethnic 'lifestyle' enclaves with their 'virtual' placelessness and temporal ephemerality.

Thus one might better conceive of what is happening as a continuation of the narrative of dominant ethnic decline as whites and Protestants lose ground to others year after year. I theorise this as a shift from a *dominant ethnic* pattern - consisting of a 'vertical mosaic' of tightly-bounded ethnic groups dominated by Anglo-Protestants, to a *liberal-egalitarian* pattern - in which ethnic hierarchies are largely flattened and ethnic boundaries considerably relaxed. Americans of British descent and Protestant religion still comprise almost 20 percent of the population and continue to dominate the Oval Office to this day. But they are just one group among many, having lost the political, economic, demographic and cultural clout which seemed unassailable only yesterday.

The Rise and Fall of Canadian Dominant Ethnicity

The Canadian case sketches out many of the same social and political contours as the American. When we speak of Canadian dominant ethnicity, we really are referring to Anglo-Canadian Protestant ethnicity. French and Native (Aboriginal) Canadians were generally preoccupied with their own identity projects while it was the English-speakers who spoke in the name of the Canadian nation. This was not always the case, for though New France had fallen to General Wolfe's forces on the Plains of Abraham in 1765, few English-speaking settlers joined the several hundred thousand French-speaking descendants of Colbert's early 1600's colonisation effort. In fact, no less redoubtable a figure than Governor Guy Carleton of Quebec assumed that the British North American colonies 'must, to the end of time, be peopled by the

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[3] Black males and certain Asian and Hispanic groups with large components of recent immigration represent an obvious exception to this rule. Otherwise, the broader pattern holds quite well.

[French] Canadian race, who have already taken such firm root, and got to so great a height, that any new [British] stock transplanted will be totally hid....'[4]

The equation of 'Canadian' with French-speakers soon changed with the arrival of 19,000 Americans loyal to the British Crown during the war of independence. These United Empire Loyalists were an incredibly disparate crew: they represented the most faithful component of the estimated one-third of the American population that remained loyal to Britain during the Revolution. Some generalisations can be drawn from the fact that New Englanders and Virginians were less likely than those in the Middle Atlantic states to be loyal. For the most part, though, motivation for Loyalism was largely ideological, hence social groups and even families tended to be divided on the issue. (Nelson 1967)

The Loyalists gave Canada its American English dialect and Loyalist political philosophy as well as its Tory political culture and British institutions. They generally settled west, east or south of the established French population in the lower St. Lawrence valley. Continued American migration raised the strength of English-speakers, though they remained a minority as late as the 1820's. The successful British-Canadian rebuff of American expansionism during the War of 1812 helped to provide a narrative of Anglo-Canadian election, but otherwise this group remained strongly wedded to British myths and symbols.

The British connection was dramatically reinforced in the next half-century by a large wave of British immigrants, most of whom were Scottish or Irish Protestants. They helped create an English-speaking majority by 1830 and fortified the imperial link. Conflicts between Tories and Reformers in English Canada were severe, however, and involved not only differing political philosophies but distinct cultural identities. Tories tended to support the established church and the aristocratic 'family compact' elite as well as the British connection. Reformers, by contrast, stressed that Anglo-Canadian Protestantism was more Dissenting and its culture more American than the Tories would allow. This chasm boiled over into the Rebellion of Upper Canada of 1837. The union of the Canadian colonies under the 1867 British North America Act led to a growth in Canadian self-awareness - but not at the expense of the British connection, which was reaffirmed after the abortive Rebellions of 1837. (Kaufmann 1997)

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[4] Wallace, W. Stewart, *The United Empire Loyalists*, pp. 4-5

An important organizational form entered Canadian life at this time, notably the Orange Order. Stressing loyalty to the Crown and to Protestantism, this Irish import quickly transcended its ethnic base to appeal to a wide section of English-speaking Canadians. Between 1870 and 1920, nearly a third of adult male Protestants were initiated into an Orange lodge. Orangeism provided Canada with several Prime Ministers (including the first, Sir John A. Macdonald), numerous mayors, premiers and members of parliament at all levels. It served as a bulwark of rural and working-class Toryism as late as the 1950's. (Houston & Smyth 1980) The appeal of the British connection can also be gauged from popular participation in Royal visits. The Duke of Cornwall (future George V)'s tour of 1901 drew 200-250,000 people in Toronto, a figure larger than the city's population. Similar enthusiasm was displayed throughout English Canada, in both cities and towns. (Buckner 1998: 11)

British Canadians were energized by conflict with French-Canadians, whose high birthrate and propensity to migrate made them an important demographic force in the English-speaking provinces of Ontario, New Brunswick and Manitoba. Orange pressure and high levels of British immigration led to the abolition of funding for Catholic schools in 1890 and was instrumental in suppressing the political aims of the French-speaking Métis (mixed-blood) population of the northwest in 1870 and 1885. British-Protestant dominant ethnicity also crystallized over the Crimean war (mid-1850's), Fenian raids (1866), Boer War (1899-1901), conscription crises (WWI and II) and flag debate (1964-5).

Dominant ethnic actors railed against non-British immigration, especially under Laurier's Liberal government during 1896-1904. The Orange Order, Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) and other Loyalist associations were instrumental in hastening the exit of Clifford Sifton, Laurier's Minister for the Interior who encouraged German and Eastern European immigrants to settle in the prairie provinces. (Anderson & Frideres 1981: 277) This led to a rebound in the proportion of British immigrants to nearly 60 percent of the total by 1920. Nonetheless, the non-British immigration stream continued to gather pace after this date, reducing the British intake to just one-third of the total in 1930. However, once again, dominant ethnic pressure from prairie WASPs, largely Orange-led, resulted in the introduction of an Imperial Preference immigration policy in 1931. Though less rigid than the American National Origins quota system, it effectively laid down the basis for the maintenance of Canada's British-Protestant ethnic character.

The categories under the new dispensation included: 1) British subjects from the 'white' Dominions of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland, Newfoundland or the U.K., 2) U.S. citizens, 3) Relatives of Canadian male residents and 4) 'Agriculturalists with sufficient means to farm in Canada.' Combined with Oriental exclusion acts of 1923 and 1928, it is unsurprising that this legislation reduced the non-British component in the immigrant stream from almost 70 percent in 1930 to just 10 percent by 1941. Synchronously, renewed efforts to Anglo-Canadianise the immigrants affected the school system and many sections of the public and private spheres. (Palmer 1975)

The Anglo-Conformist philosophy was enunciated in 1928 by R.B. Bennett, Canada's Prime Minister from 1930 to 1935. 'We earnestly and sincerely believe that the civilization which we call the British civilization is the standard by which we must measure our own civilization;' thundered Bennett. 'We desire to assimilate those whom we bring to this country to that civilization...That is what we desire, rather than by the introduction of vast and overwhelming numbers of people from other countries to assimilate the British immigrants and the few Canadians who are left to some other civilization. That is what we are endeavouring to do, and that is the reason so much stress is laid upon the British settler....' (quoted in Palmer 1975: 119)

Finally, while the French majority province of Quebec had a certain degree of federal autonomy, Quebec Anglo-Protestants controlled the province's economy and dominated its corporate sector. As in the American case, it seemed that the hegemony of the dominant WASP ethnic group was successfully institutionalised.

The Decline of British Canada

In the United States, dominant ethnicity lost some of its vitality due to its association with an unpopular, declining tradition - namely that of Prohibition. In Canada, the dominant WASP group suffered as well since it had invested greatly in the symbolism of the British Empire since 1776. Thus the decline of the British Empire opened up space for criticism of the entire WASP-Canada axis. To be fair, currents of anti-British, Canadian nationalism had their antecedents (among English-speakers) in the 1837 Rebellion of Upper Canada. Liberal supporters among dissenting Protestant sects like the Baptists were generally predisposed to this kind of sentiment. After Confederation in 1867, Canadian nationalism reappeared in the form

of the Canada First movement. Though loyal to the Crown, it sought to establish a more independent sense of Canadian identity and steer loyalty toward Canadian interests over those of the mother country. (Foster 1888)

A sense of disillusionment with empire and pride in Canada's contribution to the war effort contributed to a step-change in the popularity and stridency of Canadian nationalism after 1918. During the 1920's, Canadian cultural nationalism took off - represented by bourgeois associations like the Native Sons of Canada (120,000 membership in that decade) and the Association of Canadian Clubs. The popularity of the Group of Seven landscape painters in the twenties and thirties owes much to this new spirit. Indeed, A.Y. Jackson, one of the leading Group members, produced one of the first Maple Leaf designs (1912) for what would become the new Canadian flag. Crucially, the Orange Order suffered a dramatic decline in membership after 1920 - even as the nation's population greatly expanded. (see fig. 1)

Fig. 1 Orange Male Membership, Ontario West, 1901-1995
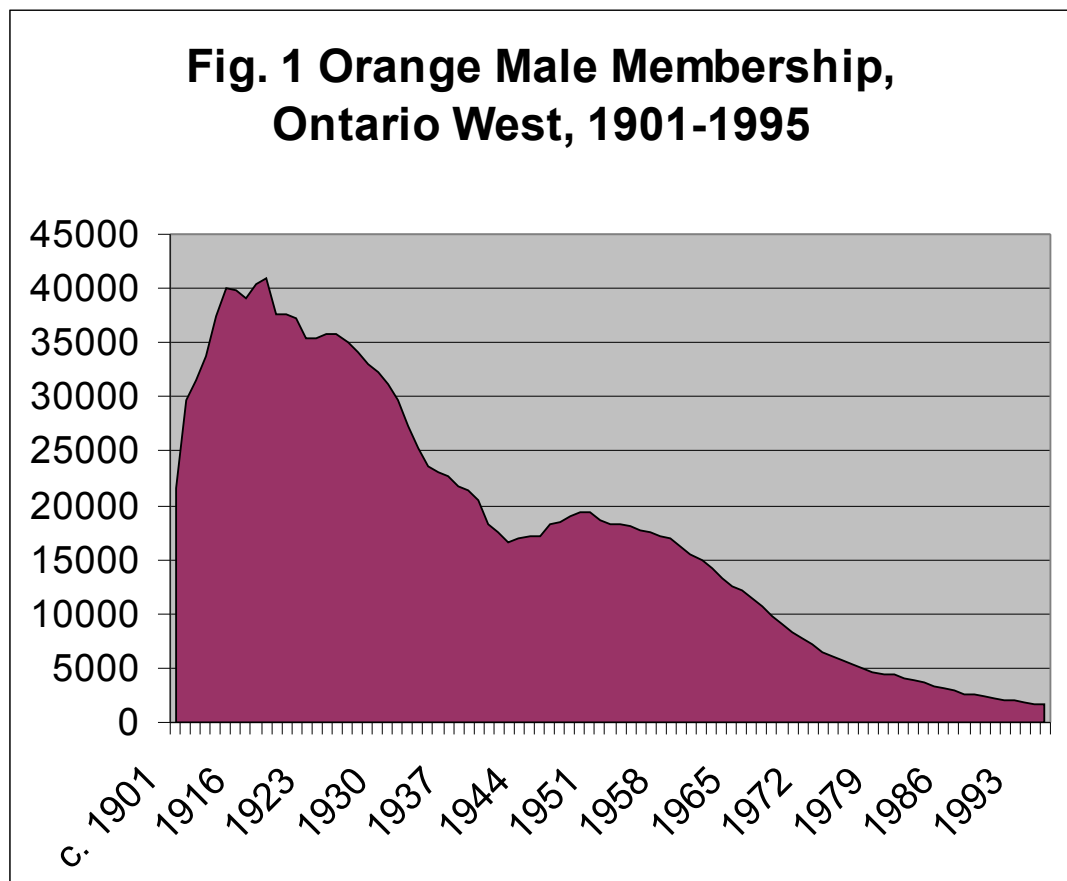
Source: Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West annual reports.

Between 1940 and the mid-sixties, new opinion polls found that British symbols were waning in popularity in competition with Canadian ones. Sentiment in favour of retaining the Union Jack as the national flag, for example, declined from 42 percent in 1943 to 25 percent in 1963, paving the way for the adoption of the new Maple Leaf flag in 1965. (Schwartz 1967: 119) The decline of British loyalty did not produce any immediate change in ethnic power relations in the country due to the entrenched position of WASPs at the pinnacle of what Canadian sociologist John Porter termed Canada's 'Vertical Mosaic.' (Porter 1965) Yet such changes loomed over the horizon. The rapid secularisation, or 'Quiet Revolution' of French Canada after 1960 irrupted the traditional social order and released secular-nationalist energies that burst forth in the rise of Quebec separatism. This new challenge, coupled with the disarray of English-Canadian identity in the face of imperial decline, opened up cracks in the WASP ethnocracy.

Developments in Canada show some similarities with the United States, though Canadian thought of the 'Liberal Progressive' variety came later and was a minor chord in the nation's intellectual and political life until the sixties. The radical Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) movement - forerunner of today's left-wing NDP party - had its roots in agrarian prairie populism and thus shared a Social Gospel emphasis on organic social unity more characteristic of William Jennings Bryan and Teddy Roosevelt than John Dewey.[5]

An important countercurrent of left-liberal thought did, however, emerge from the 1930's onward, most clearly identifiable in the persona of Frank Underhill. An intellectual disciple of John Dewey and Walter Lippmann, Underhill enjoined his compatriots to study the new American thinking. It is also likely that he was influenced by the rise of anti-imperialist thought emanating from Britain's new internationalist historians of the Union of Democratic Control (UDC). (Francis 1986; Kennedy 1977) Though long a soldier in the wilderness, Underhill's moment finally arrived in 1966 in an opening statement he wrote for a book by the left-liberal University League for Social Reform.
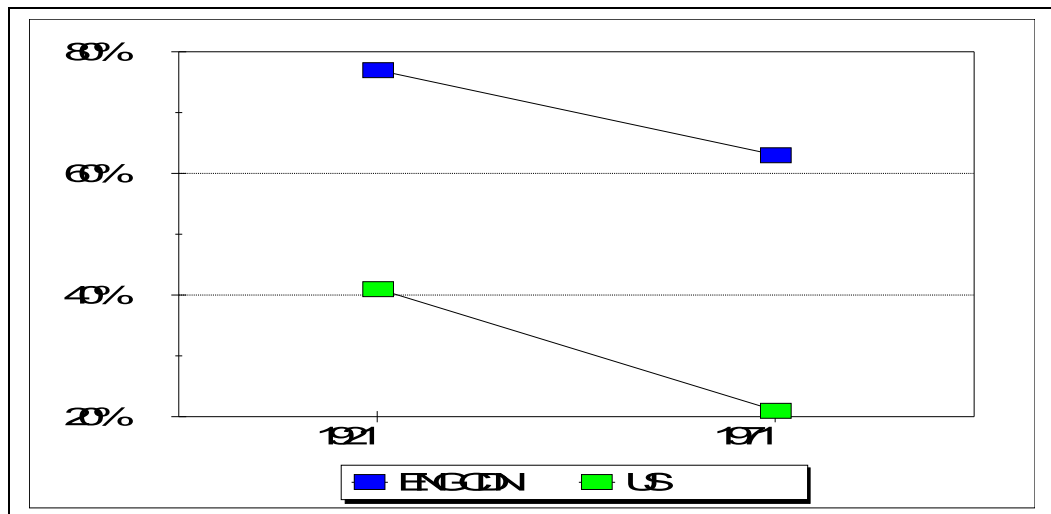
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[5] CCF leader J.S. Woodsworth, for instance, penned the influential *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909), a tome which echoed some of the same left-wing ethnic nationalist themes as Josiah Strong's *Our Country* (1885) had in the United States.

Notice the use of the term 'WASP', which had been invented in the U.S. in the late fifties and only popularised in the mid-sixties:

> Our authors…abandon the concept of British North America as defining the Canadian identity...Our new Maple Leaf flag will, one hopes, be taken by future generations as the epoch-making symbol marking the end of the era of the Wasp domination of Canadian society. At any rate, our authors are all post-Wasp in their outlook.' (Underhill, quoted in Russell 1966: xvii)

A chrysalis for Underhill's rise was a renewed increase in non-British immigration after the second world war as the Liberal Prime Minister Mackenzie-King allowed the Imperial Preference provisions to be interpreted more broadly to admit more non-British Europeans. By 1962, geographic preferences were abandoned - a measure executed with little fanfare, and which probably reflected the more prominent role played by federal bureaucrats in crafting such policy in Canada as compared with the U.S. (Veugelers 2000) Though polls are unclear on this, it is possible that post-war attitudes to European immigrants softened somewhat -as they did in the U.S. during 1945-65. (Simon & Alexander 1993) The expansion in the high-school and university-educated population in this decade may also have exposed more Canadians to liberal social attitudes. In any event, the result was a continued erosion of the British demographic presence. Figure 2 shows the 'WASP' proportion of the population in both English Canada and the United States in 1921 and 1971. Canadian WASPs clearly experienced demographic decline in parallel with their American counterparts, though on a less steep tangent.

Fig.2 Proportion of English Canadian and American Populations of WASP Origin[6]

```
80%          ■
60%                                    ■
40%          ■
20%                                    ■
          1921                      1971
           ■ ENG CDN    ■ US
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The Canadian government's Royal Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission report of 1966 recommended the introduction of a more comprehensive bilingualism in the federal government, and drew attention to the economic disparity between English and French Canada. All of this was facilitated by the almost unequivocal support provided to the Liberal government by French-Canadians and many Catholic immigrant groups. These communities made it much more difficult for British-Protestant Canada to elect Tory governments that might be more sympathetic to dominant ethnic hegemony. Yet this was nothing new. Accordingly, though Liberal governments were returned throughout the 1960's and 70's under Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau, the key ingredient of change was that both of were committed cosmopolitans.

Pearson's White Paper on immigration urged the country to accept as many immigrants as possible, and his government adopted an ethnically neutral 'points' system in 1966-7 which also embraced a strong humanitarian component.[7] Furthermore, the increased presence of so-called 'third-force' Canadians of neither French nor British descent infused itself into the increasingly heated debate over Canadian ethnic relations as Quebec nationalism's meteoric ascent began in the mid-

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[6] The Canadian figures refer to those of 'British' descent, including Irish Catholics, a far less significant population than in the United States. This partly reflects the fact that Irish Catholics were arguably closer to the WASP mainstream in Canada than Dutch and German Protestants - the reverse of the American situation. This may reflect the relative importance of Protestantism in American WASP identity as opposed to Britishness in the Canadian self-conception.

[7] 'History of Canada's Immigration Policy,'
http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/Magazine/JF01/culture_acts.html

sixties. The Royal Bi & Bi Commission thus made recommendations for accommodating the aspirations of third-force Canadians.

The Commission's report proved but the tip of an emerging iceberg of post-WASP Canadianism. Pierre Trudeau, the Liberals' new charismatic leader, was instrumental in pushing forth this agenda. Due to his part-French background, he had always been sympathetic to the aspirations of this underprivileged segment of Canadian society. Yet Trudeau broke with his left-wing Quebec nationalist colleagues in the influential *Cité Libre* magazine circle in which he was involved. Spurning what he took to be the 'narrow' premises of Quebec nationalism, he instead favoured a cosmopolitan, post-WASP Canadianism based on the model of a bilingual and multicultural Canada. (Trudeau 1968) Some writers suggest that this was Trudeau's personal response to his own ontological crisis as a British-French, bilingual Canadian cosmopolitan - a response that ultimately stoked Quebec nationalism and alienated many unilingual English Canadians. (McRoberts 1997)

Trudeau's long reign as Liberal Prime Minister between 1968 and 1984 helped to institutionalise his vision. Multiculturalism and bilingualism became official policies with the former even engraving itself on Canada's constitution. Meanwhile, the decline of British Canada's demographic preponderance gathered force with the immigration reforms of the sixties. As in the United States, most post-1970 immigrants were non-Europeans, mostly from Asia, and this new wave bolstered the rise of a more self-confident multiculturalist movement. As in the United States, this is one of the few policy areas in which the Left has achieved its aims. The notion of Anglo-Saxon and now 'white' decline tends to be viewed as a positive development by most within the (largely white) cultural elite and is perceived as an indicator of progress towards a new type of civilisation. Reaction against this reigning posture has been intermittent, but has achieved little discursive or policy success.

Conclusion

The timing of the rise and decline of dominant ethnicity in both English Canada and the United States is striking in its similarity: Anglo-Protestant groups in both nations asserted their political power through important ethno-nationalist movements in civil society. In Canada, the Orange Order and other pro-imperial societies played this role whereas in the United States, a diverse series of 'Native American' Protestant mass

movements held sway. Immigration was an important battleground. The Protestant working-class, which dominated both Canadian Orangeism and American Nativism, was instrumental in restricting non-British immigration. On the other hand, the commercial elite - represented by figures like Clifford Sifton in Canada or President Taft in the United States - pushed for more open borders.

Non-British ethnic groups, notably Catholic immigrants and their descendants in the U.S. and both French and 'third-force' Canadians played their part in engineering WASP decline. Yet minorities' struggle against oppression is more of a universal phenomenon and cannot account for key policy and identity shifts. Therefore, a far more important factor were *intra-ethnic* divisions. The shift in the sensibility of the WASP cultural elite in both countries thereby becomes crucial. In the U.S., left-wing Anglo-Protestant intellectuals of both secular and religious stripe gradually abandoned the organic Protestant reform crusades of the early Social Gospel Movement in favour of Liberal Progressivism. Pluralism and ecumenism thereby displaced ethnic homogeneity in the leftist vision of the nation.

Here is where we come to an important difference between the two societies in question. The rise of American Liberal Progressivism took place between 1905 and 1917, well before analogous Canadian developments. Only in the thirties did mavericks like Frank Underhill introduce these ideas to the Canadian context. This delay can partly be explained by the smaller proportion of 'non-founding' groups in Canada, but also by the more conservative and cautious nature of English-Canadian intellectual life in this period. This difference aside, however, if we look at the broader sweep of policy and identity change, we see a pattern of pre-1939 dominant ethnic hegemony slowly giving way to greater openness in the forties and fifties, followed by collapse in the sixties.

In the United States, an expansion of the university education system and national media helped to transmit Liberal Progressive and Modernist ideas to a wider section of the population. The Supreme Court - again a reflection of elite-driven change within WASPdom - helped pave the way for dominant ethnic decline by ordering reapportionment of the legislature between polyglot cities and WASP-dominated rural areas. This helped to repeal the National Origins quota immigration scheme and introduced new civil rights legislation under the Johnson Democrats during 1964-5. In Canada, the federal bureaucracy served as the engine of liberal change, abetted by the post-1945 success of the Liberal party, with its strong Catholic

support base. A reorientation of Canada's geographic preference-based immigration policy toward a system grounded in merit and international compassion followed in 1962 and 1966-7.

Some see a resurgence of dominant ethnicity in the rise of far-right political activity and the emergence of a more race-conscious, blended white population shorn of internal ethnic and religious differences. However, far-right activity has generally been muted in comparison to both the North American past and to European movements. White flight is a significant social feature of the North American landscape but political resistance to demographic change or multiculturalism remains but a shadow of its 1920's ancestor. The historiography, public discourse and political institutionalisation of post-ethnicity, whether in civic nationalist or multiculturalist guise, appears to have attained an almost unassailable position.

Similar processes are noticeable in Quebec and Britain, as Juteau and Bruce suggest, as well as in a number of European societies. It is true that resistance to dominant ethnic decline appears stronger in Europe than in North America, something borne out by the rise of anti-immigration politics in several European societies. Yet this is only loosely related to higher levels of North American tolerance or the greater legitimacy of 'civic nationalist' traditions. Instead, it is probably explicable in terms of the more favourable (for ethno-nationalists) political opportunity structure offered by Europe's many proportional representation electoral systems as well as the more limited potential for 'white flight' caused by lower labour mobility. The greatest difference in dominant ethnic legitimacy thus remains between Enlightenment/New Left-influenced western societies, with North America at the forefront, and the non-Western world in which norms of liberal 'correctness' have had far less socio-political impact.

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