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Breaking Ground: The 1956 Hungarian Immigration to Canada

Edited by Robert H. Keyserlingk

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ISBN 1-55014-232-1, 117 pages, $6.99

This book is a collection of personal and archival-based memories on the selection, transport and settlement of about 40,000 Hungarian refugees in Canada in one year. It is a source of primary record as well as scholarly reflection on one of the most significant refugee movements to Canada after World War II—the 1956 Hungarian refugee movement.

Functions and Service Delivery of Non-Government Organisations for Immigrants in Australia

Rosario Lampugnani

Abstract

This paper evaluates the functions and service delivery of NGOs for immigrants in Australia. It argues that the radical economic restructuring in Western nations has been characterised by massive processes of deinstitutionalisation and decentralisation, with an associated move towards privatisation and the targeting of disadvantaged groups. This has led to a significant reliance on the voluntary sector to assist in the provision of settlement services for immigrant groups. As result in most immigrant receiving nations the use of NGOs as an extension of the state is common.

Précis

Cet article procède à une évaluation des fonctions et des services assurées par les ONG ciblant les immigrants en Australie. Il développe une argumentation selon laquelle les restructurations économiques radicales des nations occidentales se sont caractérisées par une progression massive de la désinstitutionalisation et de la décentralisation des services, auxquels s'associent à la fois les privatisations et un ciblage plus net des groupes défavorisés. Cette conjoncture a entraîné un accroissement significatif de la tendance à miser sur le volontariat dans la mise en place de services visant à l'intégration des groupes d'immigrants. Conséquemment, dans la majorité des nations receveuses d'immigrants, le recours aux ONG comme à une véritable extension de l'état est un phénomène de plus en plus courant.

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the author, not necessarily those of his institution.

Theories of NGOs

Croft and Beresford (1992) indicate that beyond the immediate economic concerns, theories of NGOs should take into account ideas like the nature of participation and involvement of different sections of the population in relation to social policy. In a society in which immigration is a major government-sponsored policy and practice, the relationship of immigrant sections of the population (especially those of non-English-speaking background) to NGOs and to their participation and involvement in mainstream society is particularly salient.

NGOs tackle problems which may be looked at by governments or may be ignored by them. They provide welfare services to immigrant groups which are often marginal to mainstream society, disadvantaged and disenfranchised. These immigrant groups experience deprivation of resources, lack of access to the channels of communication and they have low levels of skill in negotiating with people and organisations in the dominant society such that they are unlikely to obtain entry to mainstream services.

Functions of NGOs

NGOs are a "natural," "spontaneous social phenomenon" which "act, or react, to certain types of action undertaken by institutions with the purpose of improving the overall or global quality of the functioning of these institutions" (Moles 1983, 3; Unikoski 1978; Radecki 1979; Lampugnani 1993). At the same time, these NGOs have been set up to fill a gap in service delivery.

Cox (1991) suggests that NGOs' functions are to provide immigrants with information, material assistance,

emotional support, and social and sporting activities. They may also encourage the harmonious integration of immigrants who come from different cultural backgrounds by, for example, promoting the social interaction of immigrants within their own group and with other immigrant groups, as well as with the host society. In this capacity NGOs are the bridges between the recipient society and the individual immigrant. They may model the new cultural ways to be found in the receiving society and sanction ways of behaving among immigrants which are considered by some too "different" from the norm. That is, NGOs act as a socialising agent and, as such, play a decisive role in the social integration of immigrants while assisting them in preserving their own language and culture. They moreover act as "mediators" or perform a "buffer" function in which NGOs "acting either singly or in combination, interpose themselves between the ethnic community and the institutions of the state, and act as interpreters of both to the other" (Jackson 1991, 48).

Petruchenia and Green (1986) provide a useful review of the functions of NGOs in Australia. They identify four major roles often associated with NGOs. These are:

1. *Vanguard:* the organisation's purpose to pioneer and test programs which eventually were taken over by the government.
2. *Improver or advocate:* organisations which operate as "critics" and pressure the government to extend, improve or begin needed services.
3. *Value guardian:* organisations which are established to promote citizenship, develop leadership and to protect the interests of social, religious, cultural and other minority groups.
4. *Service provider:* organisations which mainly provide services that the government is either unable or unwilling to provide (Petruchenia and Green 1986, 7).

These functions are similar to those recognised by the Wolfenden Committee (1978) in England. At the same time, other scholars indicate that in some countries the role of NGOs is mainly one of human rights activism (Battistella 1993). The major functions of these NGOs are:

- *Empowerment of the impoverished*—that is, to help the underprivileged to understand and gain their rights in order to develop countervailing power;
- *Securing accountability* of those in power;
- *Participation* in key decisions affecting resource allocation or technology choice; and
- *Asserting values*, especially "the social values and ethical principles which should underlie the much-needed restructuring of social orders" (Dias 1993, 202).

The Committee of Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services in Australia (the ROMAMPAS Report) indicate that NGOs are central in the welfare field, where they undertake a diversity of roles (1986, 204). They are providers of human services in such fields as health, housing, education, employment and training, arts and culture, legal aid, information, advice and referral, advocacy, research and innovation and community education. NGOs carry out information dissemination about the nature of the host society, public liaison and education. This is accomplished through activities such as briefings, personal contact, consultations, conferences, seminars, and regular newsletters. This is important because issues such as culture shock, post-migration adjustment and cultural conflicts are of intense interest to service providers, to other organisations and to educational institutions (ROMAMPAS 1986, 259–60).

Similarly, the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies (CAAIP) states that community structures and networks "have proved critical in bringing essential services and information to groups in transition towards participation in the new society, and they have often operated to nurture these groups beyond the settlement stage" (CAAIP 1988, 64). The report further indicates that despite some criticisms about immigrant structures, "there is much evidence that they are simply essential transitional support for newcomers, providing a sense of community, security, maintained traditions and language environment" (CAAIP 1988, 64–65). Ethnic organisations have had a major impact on Australian politics, "particularly in fighting for equity and access," and have played a major role in the development of social policies (CAAIP 1988, 65).

Thus, while ethnic organisations have been important in fighting for access and equity, integral to the principles of access and equity is the development of "small ethnic self-help groups and ethnospecific large welfare organisations" (Mitchell 1992, 12). The Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs (ACMA) in Australia claims that NGOs are independent and generally community controlled. Nonetheless, "many function as an extension of government insofar as they are publicly funded to provide services to the community, either directly or in some cases indirectly as advocacy agents" (ACMA 1988, 52). Therefore, proper funding of NGOs, particularly ethnic-specific ones, is a major requisite of an Access and Equity Program. However, funding is conditional on NGOs' adherence to Access and Equity principles in terms of their management, staffing and service provision (ACMA 1988, 52).

In essence, NGOs are seen as a significant element of the social justice strategy (Doyle and Visano 1987). Yet ethnic welfare organisations, particularly those established by smaller, newly arrived migrant communities, least well-resourced but most in need of help, are those that are not being funded by government departments (ACMA 1988, 53). As Chu points out, despite all the arguments of social justice and Access and Equity, and the recognition of the major role played by NGOs, since the mid-1980s the Federal Government has adopted a laissez-faire approach in funding ethnic welfare organisations which has favoured

some, i.e., the most conservative ones, and has discriminated against others (1993, 6–17).

Further, NGOs are faced with a number of problems. In the first instance, they are confronted with strong competition among themselves as well as with some government organisations in the provision of some services, and in attracting donations and volunteers from the public (Lyons 1993, 28). At the same time, governments use grants as a mechanism with which to control the activities of NGOs. Sometimes they facilitate these activities. At other times they "shape" the aims, objectives and the work of NGOs. When this happens, many organisations have to divert and even abandon their own objectives for a specific kind of service and "operate according to guidelines of a government funding program if they are to provide a service at all" (Lyons 1993, 30). ■

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Asylum: A Moral Dilemma

By W. Gunther Plaut
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Every year the refugee landscape changes, but only in that more problems are added, fewer are solved, and all become constantly more urgent. Fuelled by the explosion of the world's population, the quest for asylum is one of the most pressing problems of our age. Refugee-receiving nations—located frequently, but by no means exclusively, in the Western world—have to respond to masses of humanity searching for new livable homes. Human compassion for these refugees can be found everywhere, but so can xenophobia and the desire to preserve one's nation, economic well being, and cultural integrity. The clash between these impulses represents one of the great dilemmas of our time and is the subject of Plaut's study. In exploring it, he provides a far-ranging inquiry into the human condition.

The book presents political, ethnic, philosophical, religious, and sociological arguments, and deals with some of the most troublesome and heartbreaking conflicts in the news.

Contents: *The Issues;* Questions Without Answers; Definitions; Religion, Natural Law, and Hospitality; A Look at History; Some Ethical Questions; Through the Lens of Sociobiology; Community and Individual; Contended Rights: To Leave, Return, Remain; *The Practice;* Refugees in Africa; Four Asian Lands; Glimpses of Europe and Central America; The North American Experience; The Sanctuary Movement; A Final Look; Bibliography; Index.

Asylum—A Moral Dilemma is simultaneously published in the United States by Praeger Publishers, and in Canada by York Lanes Press.