

The London Free Press

Established 1849

PUBLISHED BY LONDON FREE PRESS PRINTING COMPANY LIMITED
A BLACKBURN GROUP INC. COMPANY
369 York St., London, Ontario, Canada. P.O. Box 2280, N6A 4G1
Telephone (519) 679-1111

WEDNESDAY, Dec. 16, 1992

R. A. Green, President and Publisher
Philip R. McLeod, Editor
Patrick J. Collins, Director of Operations and Systems
Diny E. Dalby, Director of Communications
Ken Kwall, Director of Marketing
John L. Loebach, Director of Human Resources
Ian M. Pittendreigh, Director of Engineering
G. Wayne Smith, Director of Advertising
Tony Bembridge, Executive Editor
Helen Connell, Associate Editor
Mary Nesbitt, Associate Editor

Josiah Blackburn—Publisher 1853-1890 Walter Josiah Blackburn—Publisher 1890-1920
Arthur S. Blackburn—Publisher 1920-1935 Walter J. Blackburn—Publisher 1936-1983
Martha Grace Blackburn—Publisher 1984-1992

OUR OPINION

Increased immigration can bring growing pains

As immigration continues to increase, so too does the need for programs aimed both at smoothing the introduction of newcomers into a new cultural environment and at encouraging Canadian acceptance of them.

These needs become evermore apparent with statistics released in Ottawa this week indicating that Canada not only had the biggest inflow of immigrants in 35 years last year, but also achieved the highest population growth in the industrialized world.

These are healthy signs for a huge and sparsely populated country, and one with a birth rate well below replacement levels, but growth often brings growing pains. In present economic circumstances, the difficulties involved in absorbing such a large influx of people are magnified.

About 225,000 people immigrated to Canada last year, the highest number since 1957 when a larger influx included

With more people arriving and fewer leaving Canada, there's a need for programs aimed at helping newcomers adjust.

refugees from the Hungarian revolution a year earlier. Last year's immigration helped push Canada's population to 27,243,000, its over-all growth rate to 1.5 per cent.

Interestingly enough — and this might say something to Canada's burgeoning supply of special-interest groups — the number of people leaving

the country fell to 38,300, the lowest level in 30 years. Something must be right here, after all.

It is altogether appropriate that one of the world's wealthiest and most-favored nations should continue to be receptive to other peoples from less-fortunate parts of the world. Canada is a nation of immigrants, of course, and its people should be aware that most immigrants become a national resource, and not a burden.

But resentment is unfortunately inevitable in times of economic uncertainty. It may also be generated, paradoxically, by policies of institutional multiculturalism which have the virtue of preserving national and ethnic identities, but which also tend to maintain differences between us and to perpetuate ethnic hostilities better left behind.

A report issued last year by the Economic Council of Canada discussed the social implications of a too-rapid influx of newcomers, and warned that it could provoke social problems and strain the country's capacity to accommodate them. The council said immigrants should be expected to adapt more readily to Canada's political and cultural traditions, and to make a positive commitment to Canadian values and traditions. *This is not happening at 95-105*

Canadians are not exempt from the vices of prejudice and intolerance, and policies that might arouse such resentments and/or fears, no matter how well-meaning, could become self-defeating.

The celebration of diversity in Canada has tended to accentuate and perpetuate our differences, instead of encouraging the integration of cultural and linguistic groups into a cohesive and unified whole — a unity that need not necessarily involve a loss of cultural identity.

The economic council offered a reasoned blend of altruism with social and economic realities. With immigration increasing, and with federal policy calling for further increases, the council report deserves serious attention.