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The Canadian state and the racialization of Caribbean migrant farm labour 1947–1966¹

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Introduction

In 1966, 264 male workers from Jamaica were allowed entry to Canada to work on a seasonal, contractual basis in the southwestern Ontario fruit and vegetable harvest. During the past two decades the numbers of workers increased to the point where during the late 1970s and early 1980s, an annual average of 4,700 men, and a small number of women, from a number of other Caribbean countries, including Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, Montserrat, and Dominica entered the country. They currently constitute about 5 per cent of the harvest labour force in southwestern Ontario.²

The workers are employed under state administered labour contracts that are not dissimilar to those which Caribbean workers are employed under in the Florida sugar cane harvest.³ The contracts specify a period of employment to commence on the day of the worker's arrival in Canada and to terminate anywhere from between six weeks to eight months after their entry. After the termination date of the contract, the worker has no legal right to remain in the country. As such, these contracts involve compulsory rotation and repatriation. The contract also specifies, among other things, the minimum wage which the employer must pay, the provision of adequate living quarters on the part of the employer, the conditions under which workers are to be repatriated, and that the worker at no time works for any person other than the one he/she is contracted to.⁴

The question to be examined here is why, in spite of persistent shortages of labour in this industry since the Second World War, in spite of a number of Caribbean states' willingness to send migrant workers to fill this demand since at least 1947, and in spite of pressures coming from southwestern Ontario grower and processor organizations since the mid-1950s, the Canadian state did not allow workers from the Caribbean to sell their labour power for a wage to southwestern Ontario fruit and vegetable growers until 1966? This paper will show that the

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Canadian state's resistance to such a proposal was based on its racialization of Caribbean migrant labour.

This paper is of relevance for the political economy of migration. It suggests that migrations are not only linked to the broad historical structural processes of uneven development, capital accumulation and changes in the organization of production⁵ but are also fundamentally structured simultaneously by the state, and various political and ideological relations.⁶ Racialization is one such ideological process. It is both an excusatory process which precludes certain groups of people from the possibility of selling their labour power in particular formations, as well as an allocative mechanism which assigns certain groups to specific positions in production relations. The findings presented here provide a basis for questioning instrumentalist views of the relationship between the state and migration.

Alternatives to labour import

This section will begin by highlighting the overall pattern of labour demand, and the nature and extent of labour scarcity in Canadian agriculture in general and the southwestern Ontario fruit and vegetable industry in particular between 1945 and 1966. An analysis of various alternatives to the importation of labour in the face of labour scarcity will follow.

The area extending southwest of a line running from Toronto to Georgian Bay to the shores of Lakes Huron, Erie, and Ontario is the single most important fruit and vegetable producing region in Canada.⁷ Some of the crops now produced by Ontario farmers were grown by aboriginal people before the arrival of Europeans. However the large scale commercial production in Canada of crops such as apple, peaches, pears, cherries, asparagus, cucumbers, and tomatoes, extends back about one hundred years.⁸ One of the features of this industry during the post-war period is that it has faced persistent shortages of labour.⁹

The long wave of economic expansion which embraced the centre formations of the capitalist world from the end of the Second World War to the late 1960s created conditions where the demand for labour outstripped the supply.¹⁰ As in other nations, the process of capital accumulation was fuelled, in part, by the mobilization of women who also worked in the household, and in part, by migrations of labour. In Canada, the female labour force participation rate increased from 20.3 per cent in 1941 to 39.9 per cent in 1971 and the proportion of women in the paid labour force increased from 19.9 per cent in 1941 to 33.2 per cent in 1971.¹¹ Migrations included the large scale movement of immigrant labour, the proletarianization of petty agricultural commodity producers, and the rural to urban migration of wage labour.¹² Between 1947 and 1966, well over 2,500,000 immigrant men, women and children were granted the right of permanent settlement in the country and

during the 1950s immigrant men and women contributed to nearly 50 per cent of the growth in the Canadian labour force.¹³ The extent of the proletarianization of farmers and the rural to urban migration of wage labour is evidenced by the fact that the proportion of the labour force employed in agriculture declined from 28.6 per cent in 1941 to 7.2 per cent in 1968.¹⁴

However, changes in the components of the agricultural labour force, which is made up of farm owners and operators, unpaid family members, and hired workers, have not been uniform.¹⁵ While there has been an absolute decline in the size of each component of the labour force, the proportion of hired labour in the total agricultural labour force increased from 10.7 per cent in 1947 to 18.1 per cent in 1968.¹⁶

The absolute decline in the total farm labour force is attributed to the 'cost-price squeeze' experienced by Canadian farmers: a situation where farmers increasingly pay monopoly prices for their inputs (with the exception of labour) and continue to receive competitive prices for their outputs.¹⁷ It is also attributed to the ability of urban industries to pay better wages and offer better working conditions than farmers.¹⁸ However, the relative increase in the hired labour component of the farm labour force is indicative of a continued, and increasing demand, for paid wage labour.¹⁹ This demand is for both permanent, year round employees, and for seasonal employees. In the southwestern Ontario fruit and vegetable industry the demand is increasingly, and primarily, for the latter.²⁰ According to Dawson and Freshwater:

The demand for labour in this industry [fruit and vegetable growing] is primarily a seasonal one peaking at harvest. Recently, the requisite supply of labour has not been available . . . Regardless of the reason, however, the existence of the shortage is crucial because the fruit [and vegetables] must be harvested when ready or else it will rot.²¹

Growers of fruits and vegetables in southwestern Ontario are confronted with two problems with respect to seasonal labour.²² First, they face a problem of initially recruiting an adequate number of workers, and then a problem of retaining those workers for the duration of the harvest.²³ Both difficulties are compounded by the industry's geographical contiguity to Canada's industrial heartland which is able, by the offer of higher wages, to lure workers and potential workers away from farmers. In this way, it is possible to speak of the southwestern Ontario fruit and vegetable industry as characterized by a persistent situation of labour scarcity.²⁴

Sassen-Koob argues that:

In a situation of labour scarcity . . . there would be at least four alternatives to labour imports. These are (a) increasing imports in

order to diminish labour needs by freeing labour presently used; (b) implementing labour mobility and manpower training policies, including mobilization of so-called marginal workers, e.g. teenagers, elderly, handicapped, etc.; (c) capital substitution of labour; (d) export of productive activities.²⁵

Sassen-Koob's fourth alternative to labour import is not applicable to the southwestern Ontario fruit and vegetable industry. Land, a key factor of production, is not exportable. The first option, 'increasing imports in order to diminish labour needs by freeing labour presently used' has only a partial applicability in this case. The Canadian state maintains a relatively low tariff on fruits and vegetables imported to the country, which has in turn resulted in increased imports to Canada.²⁶ However, the state's maintenance of low tariffs and high levels of fruit and vegetable imports has not so much been to dampen the demand for farm labour, but rather is part of its 'cheap food policy'.²⁷

There are limits to the third option of substituting capital for labour. In Ontario, the average value of machinery and equipment increased from \$844 per farm in 1941 to \$8,167 in 1966 and in Canada as a whole it increased from \$813 per farm in 1941 to \$9,850 in 1966.²⁸ However, investment in fixed capital has affected farm labour demand for only some crops. The introduction of mechanical harvesting equipment has been widespread in the case of green and wax beans, peas, and sugar beets, for example, but other more tender crops such as peaches, apples, and asparagus, continue to require a high proportion of variable capital in the harvest.²⁹ More recently the mechanization of the harvest process has also been retarded by the high costs of purchasing machinery and of borrowing money to pay for such machinery.³⁰ Thus, certain sectors of the industry continue to require a high content of variable capital in the harvest.

Sassen-Koob's second option, the mobilization of 'marginalized' workers from within the boundaries of the nation state, was and continues to be, pursued extensively by the growers and the state. Between 1945 and 1966, at different times and with varying degrees of success, the Canadian state and employers attempted to mobilize temporarily unemployed farmworkers by paying for their transportation costs from their place of residence to the harvest. They also attempted to mobilize the unemployed from the Toronto, Hamilton and Windsor areas, Quebec, and the Maritimes, children between the ages of ten and sixteen with the assistance of the YWCA and YMCA, women household workers, military personnel, aboriginal peoples, students and patients from psychiatric hospitals.³¹ In spite of these attempts at mobilization, the dual problems of recruitment and retention of suitable quantities of labour remain because of low wages, poor and unsafe working conditions, poor housing, and the lack of worker protection under provincial labour standards legislation.³² Thus, the shortage of

labour is a recurring problem, even during periods of high unemployment.³³

Recruitment of immigrants for farm work

Immigrants, those granted the right of permanent settlement by the state, were an important source of new farm labour in the first decade after the end of World War Two.³⁴ Between 1946 and 1955, 21.7 per cent of the 635,798 immigrants who were originally destined to join the labour force were recruited to fill farm labour positions.³⁵

Farm labour positions were filled by a succession of different groups: Polish War Veterans, Displaced Persons from Eastern Europe, and immigrants from a number of western and southern European countries, the most important of which were Germany, Holland, Italy, and Portugal. With the exception of Polish War Veterans and Displaced Persons, these groups were admitted as 'free immigrants'. That is, they were recruited and subsequently admitted to the country by the state on the basis of their expressed intention to fill farm labour positions. While the state expected them to fill these positions, at least for one season, it did not use its power to force them to remain in the positions for which they were recruited. Once in Canada they could circulate freely within the Canadian labour market.

Polish Veterans and Displaced Persons, however, were forced to sign labour contracts. Among other things, these contracts stipulated that their entry and subsequent right to settlement in the country was conditional upon their remaining in the employment for which they were recruited for a period of two years. These two groups were thus subject to repatriation for the 'crime' of circulating in the labour market.³⁶ After the two year period, they were free to sell their labour power on the market like indigenous labour.

Of the 4,527 all-male Polish Veterans admitted to Canada in 1946 and 1947, 1,907 originally worked on farms in Ontario.³⁷ Most fulfilled the terms of their contracts. The state did, however, begin deportation proceedings against three veterans who refused to remain in agricultural employment in order to 'encourage the others'.³⁸ Only a small proportion of the 165,697 displaced persons (men and women) admitted to Canada between 1947 and 1953 were employed on farms in southwestern Ontario, and it appears that most fulfilled the terms of their contracts. They too, however, were subject to repatriation for failing to remain in the positions for which they were recruited.³⁹

In the absence of state control over their circulation in the labour market, many of those Western European groups admitted as free immigrants left farm labour positions shortly after their arrival in the country. They reacted to labour market conditions in much the same way as indigenous labour by seeking out better paying positions in manufacturing, mining, construction and service industries.⁴⁰ Some

farmer organizations proposed a specific solution to this problem. They called on the state to force these groups into signing labour contracts in the same way that Polish Veterans and Displaced Persons were required to. The state, while it considered this as a possibility, did not give in to the farmer's request.⁴¹

In 1955 the Deputy Minister of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, the branch of the Canadian state which exercised greatest control over immigration matters, explained the state's differential treatment of the Polish Veterans and Displaced Persons and the Western European immigrant groups in the following terms:

The Polish veterans and refugees [i.e., Displaced Persons] were in a position where they had little alternative but to emigrate from their European countries of residence. At present, however, most [Western European] immigrants are employed in their own country and came to Canada not through necessity but as a matter of choice. It is necessary to sell them on the idea of migrating to Canada.⁴²

In addition, the Deputy Minister identified the following 'disadvantage' of requiring the latter to sign contracts which would subject them to possible repatriation for circulating in the labour market:

It may well be argued that the implementation of such a law is an infringement of the freedom of the individual and abnegation of human rights which cannot be justified in a democratic country. . . . The denial of opportunity of a man to better himself is difficult to defend for it . . . may be argued that the sum of self improvement is a national benefit.⁴³

From the late 1950s the farmer's labour recruitment and retention difficulties were further aggravated by a reduction in the flow of immigrants who intended to fill farm labour positions. By 1966, immigrants who wished to pursue farm occupations constituted only 3.2 per cent of the total number of immigrants who were destined to enter the labour force.⁴⁴ This reduction was due, in part, to increased competition for unskilled immigrant labour with western European capital. One of Canada's traditional post-war sources of unskilled farm labour, the southern European periphery, was being increasingly tapped as a source of labour to fuel the process of capital accumulation in Western Europe,⁴⁵ and as such the pool of labour that Canada could draw upon began to dwindle. The reduction was also due to a shift in Canadian immigration policy. Rising levels of unemployment in the late 1950s, especially amongst the unskilled, meant the state was becoming increasingly reluctant to recruit unskilled immigrant workers. It felt that farmer's labour supply problems would be resolved through their use of the expanding pool of unemployed labour, both immigrant and non-

immigrant, from within Canada. However, even with high levels of unemployment, farmers still faced difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitable quantities of labour.⁴⁶

The unwillingness on the part of the state to control the circulation of immigrant workers into and out of farm labour positions, and the state's increasing reluctance to recruit immigrants to fill farm labour vacancies was a matter of conflict between the state and the growers.⁴⁷ At this time Ontario growers began to seriously consider the possibility of using migrant contract labour from the Caribbean. The first farm organizations to press the state to allow them to import migrant Caribbean workers for the harvest were the Southwestern Ontario Field Crops Association and the Canada and Dominion Sugar Company in 1957.⁴⁸ By the early 1960s a number of other farm organizations in southern Ontario, including, among others, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, the Essex County Associated Growers, the Niagara Peninsula Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, the Canadian Horticultural Council, and the Ontario Food Processor's Association, took up the cause of attempting to convince the state to allow their members to make use of such labour.⁴⁹ They did so in conjunction with representatives of a number of Caribbean governments, including Jamaica and Barbados. The latter two had pressured the Canadian state since at least 1947 to allow farmers in Canada to make use of migrant workers from their countries.⁵⁰

The proposals by the growers and the Caribbean governments usually took one of two forms. One was to bring Caribbean workers, who were temporarily employed in the US, north to Canada for several months and then send them back to the US where they would either continue to work for American growers, or be returned to the islands. The other was to import the workers directly from the Caribbean and return them directly to the Caribbean. Generally speaking, Ontario farmers preferred the former option because it entailed the payment of lower transportation costs.

The grower's interest in Caribbean labour specifically was in part based on their assessment of Florida sugar cane grower's experiences with the use of Caribbean labour. This involved the 'discovery' that 'the social problems [associated with the use of Caribbean workers] are negligible as they are too busy earning money to get into trouble'.⁵¹ Farmers also believed that workers from the Caribbean were experienced with 'stoop labour' and that the supply of these workers was 'inexhaustible', that they were 'reliable', and that they could 'be provided on about one weeks notice'.⁵²

What is particularly interesting, then, from the point of view of political economy, is why, in spite of a tradition of intervention in the farm labour market, in spite of persistent shortages of labour in the industry, and in spite of pressures being placed on it since at least 1947, the Canadian state did not allow Ontario growers to purchase the labour

power of workers from the Caribbean for nearly a twenty year period after the end of the war? The answer lies, in part, in the state's racialization of migrant labour. This process precluded groups defined as 'racially' different from the majority population from selling their labour power in the country.

Racialization of post-1945 migration to Canada

International migration to Canada has been far from a spontaneous reaction to labour demand. Historically, the state has maintained close control over which groups have entered, and their conditions of entry to the country. Before 1962, the majority of immigrant workers recruited and allowed entry to the country by the state were unskilled and semi-skilled agents who originally filled unskilled and semi-skilled manual labour positions.⁵³ 85 per cent of all immigrants admitted to the country between 1947 and 1962 came from Europe, 8.7 per cent came from North and Central America while the remaining 5.3 per cent came from Asia, Africa, Australasia, South America, and Oceania.⁵⁴ This overall pattern reflects the state's racialization of immigration control between 1945 and 1962.⁵⁵

The category of 'race' does not appear in post-war immigration control regulations. However, what does appear are the categories of 'colour', and 'coloured person', euphemisms for 'race'. People defined as 'coloured' were never completely barred from entering, settling, and selling their labour power for a wage in the country. According to state policy in the 1950s, the admittance of 'coloured or partly coloured persons' was restricted to certain classes of close relatives of Canadian citizens, and 'cases of exceptional merit . . . [of] immigrant[s who] will contribute appreciably to the social, economic or cultural life of Canada'.⁵⁶ The state also allowed, beginning in 1955, for the entry of female domestic workers from the Caribbean on a quota basis, a practice which continued until the early 1970s.⁵⁷

Those people who were defined as 'coloured', but who fell outside of the three categories, were generally not allowed to enter and settle in the country. According to the Director of the Immigration Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration in 1955, 'It has long been the policy of this Department to restrict the admission to Canada of coloured or partly coloured persons.'⁵⁸

He went on to explain the reason for the state's exclusionary practices in the following terms:

It is not by accident that coloured British Subjects other than negligible numbers from the United Kingdom are excluded from Canada . . . They do not assimilate readily and pretty much vegetate to a low standard of living. Despite what has been said to the contrary, many cannot adapt themselves to our climatic conditions.⁵⁹

The Canadian state formally committed itself to deracialized immigration control in 1962. In revising the immigration control regulations the state admitted that their previous policy had been 'racially' discriminatory.⁶⁰ According to Section 31(2) of the 1962 Immigration Regulations, the selection of immigrants for settlement was to be no longer based on the possession of certain phenotypical characteristics and their presumed social correlates, but rather on the 'education, training, skills or other talents' they could bring to the labour market.⁶¹

After 1962, there were increases in the number of skilled, professional and technical workers recruited and a change in the relative importance of source countries. In 1970, for instance, 51.1 per cent of those granted landed immigrant status were from Europe, while 14.3 per cent were from Asia, and 8.4 per cent from the Caribbean.⁶² These increases are attributed by many to the apparent deracialization of immigration control, and the end of preferential selection of 'white' immigrants in 1962.⁶³ While the increased numbers of arrivals from non-traditional source countries cannot be denied, there are sound empirical grounds to question the view that there was a *de facto* deracialization of immigration control after 1962.

Closer examination of the state's position, after 1962, on the admittance to the country of people defined as 'racially' different from the majority population shows that certain parallels can be drawn with the earlier era of racialized immigration control. The view that the process of racialization continued to structure immigration control is supported by a briefing paper prepared by the Immigration Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration for the information of Lester Pearson on the occasion of the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference held in London in 1965. Echoing a theme found in Mackenzie King's speech in the House of Commons made nearly twenty years earlier,⁶⁴ and which provided the political cornerstone for the racialization of immigration control between 1947 and 1962, the Immigration Branch told the Prime Minister that:

although Canada may not discriminate racially in its immigration policies we cannot deny the right of a state to decide its own social and racial composition and refuse to accept immigrants whose presence would cause severe disruptions or drastic change.⁶⁵

This statement is interesting not so much because it reaffirmed the idea of selection in immigration control but rather because it identified 'race' as a criteria of selection used by the Immigration Branch.

The state's continued racialization was made even more explicit in the context of the admittance of unskilled workers to the country. The Immigration Branch, in response to proposals put forward by various Caribbean states in the mid 1960s for Canada to allow the entry of more unskilled workers to the country, suggested that:

We would be asking for trouble were we to give any immigrants such preferred treatment, but it would be even more dangerous to bring in noticeably large numbers of racially different migrants who, without special treatment, would slide to the bottom of the social and economic scales.⁶⁶

Between 1962 and 1967, the effect of the state's continued racialization of Caribbean labour was further evident in its decision not to establish an immigration visa office in the Caribbean. Commentators on Canada's post-war immigration policy suggest that the presence or absence of an immigration visa office in a particular country or region is an indication of the state's interest or lack thereof in the recruitment of individuals of certain ethnic and 'racial' backgrounds for permanent settlement. It is considered a litmus test of the state's sincerity in the deracialization of immigration control.⁶⁷ It is therefore useful to consider the state's privately articulated position on this matter.

Between these years, the state had chosen to service applications for permanent settlement from the region through the use of travelling interview teams. People in the Caribbean who applied for landed immigrant status had their applications forwarded to Ottawa for paper screening by a 'Central Selection Unit'. This Unit generally rejected outright the applications for settlement coming from those who were unskilled, and selected for interview immigrants who claimed some special skill. A team of immigration officers then proceeded to the Caribbean to interview the applicants.⁶⁸ What was particularly interesting about such teams were the character assumptions some of the interviewing officers held about certain groups in the Caribbean. According to one of the officers who conducted interviews in 1963:

One characteristic of the West Indian Negro, which is of interest and value when considering him for immigration is, that in order to get continued good results in his work output he has to be continually humoured, encouraged, and complimented on his work. If he is reprimanded, or told to perform his work in a manner different from what he is accustomed to, he becomes sulky and unco-operative and a poor worker. He finds it very difficult to re-adjust and adapt himself to new and different approaches to a job.⁶⁹

The description of 'Negro' males from the Caribbean as childlike is not dissimilar to eighteenth and nineteenth century stereotypes which were used as outright justifications of slavery and colonialism.⁷⁰

The state's reasons for not wanting to open a permanent immigration office in the Caribbean were set out in two internal documents. The first is a briefing paper prepared by the Immigration Branch for the use of Prime Minister Pearson on the occasion of Alexander Bustamante's visit to Canada in 1963. The Branch argued that:

Opening an office in Jamaica would, to Jamaica and others in the area, create the impression that Canada was wanting to stimulate immigration, and when they realized that the function of the office was more for the purpose of control than promotion, then there is little doubt that such an office would be subject to considerable adverse publicity, and be accused openly and possibly violently of applying coloured discrimination.⁷¹

This calls into question the view that the opening of an Immigration Office in a particular country or region is necessarily a sign of the state's interest in the recruitment of nationals of that country, or region.⁷² In the case of the Caribbean, the state was clearly not enthusiastic about the possibility of an increase in the number of permanent settlers, whether skilled or unskilled, from the area.

The second document is a position paper prepared in early 1966 by R. B. Curry, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Immigration. The paper was used by the departmental representative for a series of preparatory meetings with officials of the Caribbean states regarding the agenda of the Canada-West Indies Conference at which the Canadian Prime Minister hoped to develop 'closer ties between Canada and the Caribbean'.⁷³ The Assistant Deputy Minister stated that there were both 'operational' and 'policy' grounds for not opening an immigration office in the Caribbean. In terms of the operational grounds he stated that the Department feared too much interest and publicity in emigration to Canada would be generated in the Caribbean and that the office would 'be inundated with applications largely from unqualified people'.⁷⁴

On policy grounds, he began by admitting that:

We feared an office in the Caribbean would be a focal point for West Indian resentment at the selective aspects of our policy. Moreover, once an office were opened in the West Indies it would be virtually impossible for political reasons to close it even though the number of qualified persons might drop to where the flow is negligible.⁷⁵

Thus far, the explanation does not differ substantively from the state's publicly articulated position. He went on to suggest, however, that:

It should also be mentioned here that one of the policy factors was a concern about the long range wisdom of a substantial increase in negro immigration to Canada. The racial problems of Britain and the United States undoubtedly influenced this concern *which of course still exists*.⁷⁶

The concern over the 'racial problems' of Britain and the United States, and the creation of a potential 'race relations problem' in Canada

contradicts the state's publicly articulated position on the admittance of people defined as 'black' to the country, as well as the spirit of section 31(2) of the immigration regulations which stated that immigrants were to be considered suitable for settlement in the country if they possessed certain training, education or talent. It also runs counter to Hawkins' assessment of the state's delay in establishing an immigration office in the Caribbean. She argues, rather economically, that the 'delay' was the result of the 'fluctuating economic depression' and 'the austerity in the fiscal policies of the Conservative government' of the time which in turn made it impractical to establish and enlarge immigration offices in non-traditional source countries.⁷⁷

Racialization of Caribbean migrant labour

It is evident that the state racialized potential settlers from the Caribbean. We will now examine the manner in which the Canadian state considered the requests on the part of Ontario growers to make use of migrant Caribbean labour: labour that would not be granted the right of permanent settlement. This decision, like the state's position on the admittance of persons destined for permanent settlement was structured by a process of racialization.

Between 1947 and 1966, two branches of the Canadian state were involved in the decisions which prevented the migration of Caribbean farmworkers to Canada: the Department of Labour and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. While there is evidence to suggest that racialization structured the Department of Labour's position, especially during the late 1940s and early 1950s, its later opposition to the proposal seems to have been largely based on its attempt to protect the Unemployment Insurance fund.⁷⁸ It tended to see unemployed Canadians as the chief source of labour for southwestern Ontario farmers, and as such, viewed their employment in this industry as a measure to reduce its expenditures on unemployment insurance.⁷⁹

It is noteworthy to elaborate on one of the reasons not used by either branch of the state to reject the proposals. The state never considered refusing Ontario growers the use of Caribbean migrant workers under contract because such contracts would approximate conditions of 'unfreedom'. That is, while the state, with the exception of Polish Veterans and Displaced Persons in the late 1940s, did not force immigrants from Western Europe to sign labour contracts because such restrictions involved an 'abnegation of human rights which cannot be justified in a democratic country', it never once rejected the proposals put forward by either the Caribbean states or Ontario growers on these grounds. Those who occupied positions of state power appear to have lived in an Orwellian world where some groups were more deserving of freedom than others.

The Immigration Branch's public rejections of the proposals invari-

ably, and sometimes in a contradictory fashion, claimed that the southwestern Ontario growers did not, in fact, face a shortage of labour, that there were sufficient quantities of labour available from within Canada, and that Canadian farmers required workers with skills which it claimed the Caribbean workers did not possess.⁸⁰ The arguments were similar to those used by the American state in the context of the termination of the Bracero Program in the early 1960s and in its attempt to curtail the flow of migrant workers from the Caribbean to the Florida fruit, vegetable and sugar cane harvests.⁸¹ Privately, however, its rejections of the proposals were premised on the fear that these workers would, once they were allowed even only temporary entry to the country, by virtue of the historical and ideological ties of the Commonwealth, make claims for permanent settlement.

This concern was expressed both in relation to proposals to bring Caribbean workers to Canada via the United States, as well as proposals to bring workers directly from the Caribbean. For instance, in 1961, after pressure from both Ontario growers and the Jamaican state, the Immigration Branch was prepared to accept a small 'experimental' movement of workers from the Caribbean via the US. This was, however, conditional upon receiving assurance that the American authorities would guarantee their re-entry to the US after the termination of employment in Canada. The Deputy Minister of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration outlined the chief concern in the following terms:

We do not want these people to remain in Canada: we do not want to get involved in difficulty or embarrassment forcing them out; therefore it is up to the West Indian authorities to get it across to the workers themselves that we are willing to try this once on a small scale, but if we have any difficulty, at all, it will not be repeated. If it works well the first year, we might well be encouraged to repeat it, and after a few years possibly enlarge it. But the minute we find that these transient workers are causing us difficulty by refusing to leave, we are through.⁸²

When the Canadian state learned that the Americans would not guarantee the re-entry of Caribbean workers to the United States after a period of temporary employment in Canada, the proposal was dropped. Again, according to the Deputy Minister, 'This is the clincher. If they could not be assured of re-entry to the US. I wouldn't consider touching it even if all other aspects of the proposal were favourable, which of course they are not.'⁸³

Even though Canada was never legally bound to accept citizens of the Commonwealth as permanent settlers, it was concerned about the negative international reaction which would inevitably result from the forced repatriation of the 'Queen's subjects'.⁸⁴

This assessment is confirmed by the Assistant Deputy Minister in the position paper prepared for the Canada–West Indies Conference. He admitted that ‘from an immigration standpoint our only real concern is that seasonal workers may attempt to stay here permanently.’⁸⁵

It could be argued that the concern over the possible settlement of seasonal workers was based, not on considerations of ‘race’ but on the belief that as unskilled workers, they would eventually contribute to future unemployment in Canada. Such an interpretation is, however, unwarranted. Since, the early 1940s, the Canadian state allowed the annual temporary entry of as many as four thousand tobacco workers from the American south to work in the southwestern Ontario tobacco harvest.⁸⁶ One of the particularly interesting, and little known, features of this migration stream is that the Canadian state specified that ‘no coloured workers [be] included in those selected . . . for work in the tobacco fields of Ontario.’⁸⁷ It is evident, then, that the Branch’s concern was not so much over the settlement of unskilled migrant workers in the country, but rather the settlement of ‘black’ unskilled migrant workers.

While the Department continued to maintain its concern over the possible settlement of the latter in the country, a number of factors forced the Department to change its mind. First, in 1963, 1964 and 1965, farmers faced extreme shortages of labour. In the latter year, the Canadian state was forced to recruit and allow the temporary entry of as many as 600 workers per day from Detroit, Michigan.⁸⁸ The shortages were due in large part of a boom in the Canadian economy which resulted in a reduction in the pool of unemployed Canadians farmers could draw upon.⁸⁹ Second, the issue became a matter of public debate, and the state’s refusal to allow farmers to make use of Caribbean workers was interpreted by some of the press and some Liberal members of Parliament, the most notable of which was Eugene Whelan the future Minister of Agriculture under Trudeau, as racist.⁹⁰ And third, a number of Caribbean states were pressuring the Canadian state to allow more unskilled workers entry to the country. The Assistant Deputy Minister of Immigration, summed up the state’s change in position succinctly when he stated that:

Such a measure would not only meet the needs of Canadian employers but it might also have a very real side effect of value to this Department. By admitting West Indian workers on a seasonal basis, it might be possible to reduce greatly the pressure on Canada to accept unskilled workers from the West Indies as immigrants. Moreover, seasonal farm workers would not have the privilege of sponsoring innumerable close relatives.⁹¹

It is clear that the Deputy Minister saw contract migration, at least in part, as a method to prevent ‘black’ settlement in Canada. This is

consistent with the state's privately articulated concern over 'race relations' problems if large scale black settlement in the country were to occur.

Once the state had publicly announced that it would allow south-western Ontario fruit and vegetable growers to make use of Caribbean contract labour, tobacco growers and food processors in the area also requested that they be allowed to make use of these workers on the same basis as the growers. The state's response to these pressures highlights empirically the manner in which racialization allocates particular groups of people to particular positions in production relations.

The state was firmly against the tobacco growers' request, and in fact denied these growers the opportunity to exploit Caribbean migrant labour. It justified its denial in the following terms, 'it might be very dangerous to mix the racially sensitive West Indians with the southern United States workers now entering. The result could ruin the existing US movement'.⁹²

As an alternative to Caribbean labour, the state suggested that the growers make more use of the American workers.⁹³

It is clear that the state would rather have 'white' American workers than 'black' Caribbean workers come to Ontario for the tobacco harvest. Even more interesting, however, is the state's conception of the cause of the 'danger' related to the 'mixing' of the two groups of workers. It did not define the potential 'problem' as the racist American workers harrassment of Caribbean workers but rather as the 'racial sensitivities' of the West Indians.

The representatives of the state were also initially against allowing food processors the use of Caribbean labour. According to the Ontario Regional Employment Officer:

These operations require a high content of female labour and to introduce Jamaican males into the plants and provide accommodation adjacent to that used by domestic female labour could create social difficulties. Moreover, the Jamaican male is adapted to field rather than factory work and while the processors felt that they could train them to the latter, it does not seem that they could hope to staff plants entirely with this labour. These factors are not present in field employment. The Jamaicans are adapted to work, the work units are smaller, and there need not be a male-female, or even a Jamaican-domestic mix of male labour on any one operation . . . There is also some informally expressed opposition in the Leamington area to the introduction of Jamaican workers on domestic grounds.⁹⁴

These factors led the Regional Employment Officer to suggest that they reject the processors' request. The Deputy Minister of the Department of Manpower and Immigration agreed with this assessment and added

the further observation that, 'There are some obvious and very difficult problems involved in this proposition. Perhaps the most serious are the social difficulties that might develop when groups of Negroes are working among, and far outnumbered by, Canadian female workers.'⁹⁵

Thus, the initial reaction was to reject the proposal, but they eventually gave in to the processors' request. At that point few growers had specifically requested the use of Caribbean labour. This was due to the Canadian state's requirement that employers had to pay the cost of return transportation for the workers. In order to avoid criticism that the return transportation stipulation was designed to discourage growers from making use of Caribbean labour, the state officials decided to allow processors to make use of them in order to avoid embarrassment over the low numbers of workers entering the country.

The concerns articulated by the state officials are laden with racist and sexist stereotypes⁹⁶ but only the former will be commented on here. First, state officials correlated the physical appearance of groups of people with the ability to do certain kinds of work. Its logic was clear. Black workers were 'suited' to field labour and not factory labour and should therefore be confined as much as possible to the former and excluded from the latter. Second, they were concerned about the creation of a 'race relations' problem in both the community and in the workplace. They believed that by confining them to harvest labour positions, it would be easier to manage such 'problems' if they arose.

The underlying theme of the evidence presented suggests that the Canadian state constructed 'race', or 'colour' as a problem. The state's initial strategy to deal with the 'problem' was pre-emptive. It restricted the entry of people it defined as the source of the 'problem', namely 'black' people. But given this solution was increasingly impractical in light of the high demand for labour in the southwestern Ontario fruit and vegetable industry, the state's second line of 'defence' against the 'problem' was to carefully control the workers' conditions of entry, circulation in the labour market, and exit from the country. The theoretical significance of this will be discussed below.

Conclusion

The study of migration from the viewpoint of political economy is dominated by an emphasis on the processes of uneven development, capital accumulation, and changes in the organization of production.⁹⁷ Very broadly, migrations are said to occur because of the penetration of capitalist relations of production in the periphery. This penetration displaces persons from non-capitalist modes of production and forces them to sell their labour power for a wage in centre formations. Such formations demand 'cheap' labour to fill vacant positions and to further fuel the process of capital accumulation.⁹⁸ Accompanying this approach is a concomitant undervaluation, or silence, on the role states play in

structuring patterns of migration into social formations, and in allocating agents to sites in production relations.⁹⁹ This undervaluation is evident in Castles and Kosack's claim in the context of post-war migration to Western Europe, that:

The movements have developed in accordance with the economic needs of industry on the one hand and of the migrants on the other. Government immigration policies have come after the event, to control and direct already existing movements rather than to determine them from the outset.¹⁰⁰

This conception, which accords the state a purely instrumental, but nevertheless peripheral role in structuring migrations, is becoming increasingly inadequate in the light of recent studies of post-war New Commonwealth migration to Britain and the role the British state played in the migration process.¹⁰¹ These studies show that the state and the process of racialization, play key roles in structuring the manner in which the boundaries of the nation state are breached.

The concept of racialization is becoming increasingly popular in the sociological analysis of racism, 'racial discrimination', and 'race relations' in both Britain and North America.¹⁰² Despite a variety of usages, its significance as an analytical concept is premised on the position that 'race' is not an objective category of the human species, and that 'race relations' are not particular types of social relationships. Rather, they are social and historical constructs that are applied to certain groups of people and certain forms of social relations.¹⁰³

In *Racism and Migrant Labour*, Miles argues that racialization is an ideological process which involves the delineation of group boundaries, and the attribution of social significance to supposedly inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics.¹⁰⁴ Racism, on the other hand, is an ideological process which 'ascribes negatively evaluated characteristics in a deterministic manner to a group which is identified as being in some way biologically (phenotypically or genotypically) distinct'.¹⁰⁵ The difference between the two is that racism involves a negative evaluation of physical and social differences, whereas racialization need not involve such negative evaluations.

The Canadian state's concern over the potential settlement of 'black' migrant workers in Canada, at minimum, is evidence of the state's continued racialization of migration control. It could also be argued, however, that the state's concern was also structured by racism. While parts of the state's position on the settlement of people it defined as 'black' do not display overtly negative evaluations of phenotypical difference, it saw the simple presence of 'black' people as the cause 'social problems', or 'race relations problems'. These 'problems', were not identified as being rooted in a racist 'host' society, but rather in the physical presence of people with certain phenotypical characteristics.

The belief that the presence of groups with certain phenotypical characteristics would cause certain 'problems' constitutes a negative evaluation of those forms of phenotypical difference and, as such, qualifies as racism.¹⁰⁶

There is a twofold significance of racialization for political economy. First, it is a boundary maintenance process which prevents certain groups of people from selling their labour power within the nation state. As such, instrumentalist views of the state and the regulation of the entry of foreign labour must be questioned. In the first instance racialization marginalized a group of people not so their labour power could be exploited by Canadian employers, but rather so that they could not sell their labour power for a wage and be exploited by employers. This is not, however a purely 'ideological' process. It is rooted in material social relations to the extent that it defines the presence of certain 'others' as a threat to both the short and long term stability of the nation state. Second, racialization is an allocative mechanism which allocates and confines certain groups to certain sites in production relations. The solution to problems of labour demand and the process of racialization, are enmeshed in the labour contracts the workers are brought to Canada under. These contracts fulfill southwestern Ontario growers' demand for a reliable labour force, and the state's attempt to restrict the settlement of 'black' people from the Caribbean in Canada.

The data presented here suggests that more attention be paid, on the part of those who claim to work within a Marxist problematic, to the way in which ideological and political relations structure particular patterns of migration. These relations shape which groups are allowed entry to a country, as well as the conditions of their entry to a country. It also suggests that those concerned with post-war migration to Canada look beyond public statements and policies by those in positions of state power to the actual decision making procedures of state officials. Detailed examinations of the latter provide a less sanguine version of the history of the Canadian state's regulation and racialization of migration to the country.¹⁰⁷

Notes

1. This is a revised version of a paper presented to the British Association for Canadian Studies Annual Conference, London, April 8–10, 1987. I would like to thank the Association of Commonwealth Universities for its financial assistance, Rodney Young and Bennett McCardle of the Public Archives of Canada, and Bob Miles and Linda Mahood for their patience with me and for their comments on this paper.

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