

Welland Ontario's Springfield Plan: Post-War Canadian Citizenship Training, American Style?

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After World War II, minority activists and their Anglo-Canadian allies convinced the Ontario Ministry of Education to bring the Springfield Plan to Welland, Ontario, as a pilot project to combat racist and religious prejudice through the public school system. Pioneered in Springfield, Massachusetts, the Plan taught children the importance of tolerance by stressing that minority groups had made important contributions to the local community, the nation, and the world beyond. In Welland, however, the Plan only lasted for a few years because many influential Canadians failed to recognize the pervasiveness of discrimination, while non-British immigrants tended to see new industrial unions as better vehicles for claiming their rights. In addition, the Plan was unsuited to the understanding of Canada as a "bi-racial" country founded by the English and French.

Après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, des militants issus des minorités et leurs alliés anglo-canadiens convainquirent le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario d'introduire le Plan de Springfield à Welland (Ontario), à titre de projet pilote destiné à combattre le racisme et les préjugés religieux par l'intermédiaire du réseau d'écoles publiques. Lancé à Springfield (Massachusetts), celui-ci enseignait aux enfants l'importance de la tolérance en soulignant que les groupes minoritaires avaient apporté d'importantes contributions à la collectivité locale, au pays et au monde extérieur. À Welland, toutefois, le Plan ne dura que quelques années parce que bon nombre de Canadiens influents refusèrent de reconnaître l'omniprésence de la discrimination et que, de leur côté, les immigrants non britanniques eurent tendance à voir les nouveaux syndicats industriels comme de meilleurs outils pour faire valoir leurs droits. De plus, le Plan n'était pas conçu pour faire comprendre le Canada comme étant un pays « biracial », fondé par les Anglais et les Français.

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IT HAPPENED in Springfield, a film produced by Warner Brothers for United States Army Education in 1945, was a widely used tool for citizenship training in Ontario in the years immediately after the Second World War. The film told the story of Bill Knudson, a young American soldier, wounded overseas, who returns to his home town with a buddy to find his home in ruins and his father, an immigrant grocer, in hospital. Bill learns that a local political boss incited townspeople to destroy the store and beat up his father, after his father refused to influence the voting of fellow immigrants. Bill's buddy, disturbed by this example of discrimination, tells townspeople that Bill Knudson had saved his life on the battlefield and asks: "Where is the democracy we fought for?" Meanwhile Bill himself despairs as he reflects on the meaninglessness of the sacrifice that he and others of different ethnic backgrounds made fighting for democracy in Europe. Their confidence and optimism is restored, however, when they visit a school in Springfield, Massachusetts, where they see children of all "races" being taught the meaning of democracy by teachers of equally diverse backgrounds. The aim of the film is to convince Americans that tolerance of diversity is a key component of democracy.¹

While the character of Bill Knudson was fictitious, the citizenship education plan that supposedly restored his optimism about the prospect of democracy in the United States had been practised in Springfield schools since 1939. The Springfield Plan attracted considerable attention from educators and social activists not only in the United States but in Canada as well.² In 1946 teachers and school administrators from Teck Township (a mining town in Northern Ontario) and Welland (a manufacturing town on the Niagara Peninsula) travelled to Springfield to observe how the Plan worked. Upon their return to Canada, they introduced citizenship training programs modelled on the Springfield Plan in their respective communities.³ Only in Welland, however, have adequate records survived to allow us to study this particular experiment in Canada.⁴

Ontario's Ministry of Education relied on an American model of citizenship education in this pilot project in the late 1940s because both state and civil society agencies in Canada were relative newcomers to the field of managing ethnic diversity. In earlier studies of racialization and human rights in Canada, we pointed out that the larger scale and the earlier timing of mass immigration from the peripheries of Europe to the United States, as compared to Canada, helps to explain why American programs to promote tolerance developed earlier than

1 *Toronto Daily Star*, January 15, 1946; Wood Museum of Springfield History (Springfield, Massachusetts), Local History Library & Archives, Springfield Vertical File, Box 205, undated news clipping entitled "Movie Premiere Draws Big Crowd."

2 Lauri Johnson, "One Community's Total War Against Prejudice": The Springfield Plan Revisited," *Theory and Research in Social Education*, vol. 34, no. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 301-323.

3 Archives of Ontario [hereafter AO], *Report of the Minister of Education Province of Ontario for the year 1946*, Toronto, 1948, p. 12, "Citizenship Instruction"; *Report of the Minister of Education Province of Ontario for the year 1947*, p. 15, "Citizenship Instruction."

4 Advisory Committee of the Collegiate and Vocational Institute Board of Township Teck, March 25, April 22, May 20, September 12, and October 22, 1946. We are indebted to Ellen Watson, Kirkland Lake, for reviewing the materials of the local school board and sending us all the references to the Springfield Plan.

Canadian ones.⁵ Basing our views on the reports of early human rights activists and on the work of legal historian Constance Backhouse, moreover, we have also argued that the prevalence of a myth of racelessness in Canada presented an obstacle to the development of programs against prejudice and discrimination in our country. An important reason for this myth was that, largely thanks to its racist immigration policy, Canada had no large, visible racialized minority group analogous to African Americans in the United States. Although African Canadians faced significant discrimination against which they continued to fight, they constituted a much smaller percentage of the Canadian population than did their counterparts in the United States, and their concerns were too easily overlooked by those in power.⁶ In the 1940s many Canadians were either unaware—or unwilling to recognize—that racist prejudice and discrimination constituted a serious problem in their country. Our study will show that the existence of such doubts about the extent of racist discrimination in Canada accounted for some of the limitations of the Springfield Plan in Welland.

Yet, by World War II, immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, as well as their offspring, had been suffering from substantial discrimination since they first began to arrive in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century. As relative newcomers—who were deemed racially inferior—they experienced sharp constraints in critical areas such as housing, employment, and education. The Jews among them and especially African Canadians and Asian Canadians, as well as Indigenous people, generally faced more extreme constraints. In fact, the wartime internment of people of Japanese heritage, combined with the federal government's determination to deport many of them after the war was over, constituted an extraordinarily virulent manifestation of prejudice. In the aftermath of the war, members of minority groups intensified their efforts to achieve human rights, increasingly forming broader coalitions in the process. Their campaigns included the fight against racist immigration restrictions and struggles against various forms of exclusion in particular parts of the country.⁷

5 Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias, "Transnational Links and Citizens' Rights: Canadian Jewish Human Rights Activists and Their American Allies in the 1940s and 1950s" in David Goutor and Stephen Heathorn, eds., *Taking Liberties: A History of Human Rights in Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 139-165. See also Carmela Patrias, "Socialists, Jews, and the 1947 Saskatchewan Bill of Rights," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 87, no. 2 (June 2006), pp. 265-292.

6 For a discussion of this myth, see Constance Backhouse, *Colour Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 14; Carmela Patrias and Ruth A. Frager, "'This Is Our Country, These Are Our Rights': Minorities and the Origins of Ontario's Human Rights Campaigns," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 82, no. 1 (March 2001), pp. 1-35. Studies that discuss citizenship education but do not give enough weight to minority contributions include: Reva Joshee and Susan Winton, "Past Crossings: US Influences on the Development of Canadian Multicultural Education Policy" in Reva Joshee and Lauri Johnson, eds., *Multicultural Education Policies in Canada and the United States* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), pp. 17-27; Lorna McLean, "'There is no magic whereby such qualities will be acquired at the voting age': Teachers, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Citizenship," *Historical Studies in Education* (Fall 2010), pp. 39-57.

7 See, for example, Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1982); Carmela Patrias, *Jobs and Justice: Fighting Discrimination in Wartime Canada, 1939-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 21-26; Patrias and Frager, "'This Is Our Country, These Are Our Rights'"; Backhouse, *Colour Coded*, chap. 7; James W. St. G. Walker, "Race," *Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies* (Toronto:

Our study of the implementation of the Springfield Plan in Welland emphasizes the role of minority group members because the marginalization of minority groups explains both why their efforts to render Canadian citizenship more inclusive unfolded largely in civil society and why these efforts have thus far received insufficient attention from historians. Even as Jews and other minority group members succeeded in carving out a place for themselves in mainstream Canadian voluntary organizations, they were rarely incorporated into state agencies concerned with problems of citizenship. No minority group members served on the Committee on Cooperation in Canadian Citizenship, one of the agencies established by the federal government during World War II to promote harmonious relations among Canada's cultural groups to help solidify the war effort. Indeed, that organization turned away members from such groups who expressed an interest in joining. On the few occasions when the exclusion of minority group members was discussed, it was rationalized on the grounds that minority groups were too divergent in size to be equitably represented, the educated among them were too fractious or partisan, and the manual workers and peasants who made up the bulk of these groups were incapable of offering guidance on questions of citizenship.⁸ The Nationalities Branch of the Department of War Services had only one such member, a Ukrainian Canadian who had been educated in England. Similarly, no racialized minorities were represented when the Canadian Council of Education for Citizenship was established in 1940 by provincial education ministries and adult education and community organizations to promote civic participation.⁹ Because the work of these state agencies is well documented, studies of citizenship training have often focused on them.

Yet, precisely because of the myth of racelessness in Canada, minority activism was crucial to bring discriminatory practices to light and to expand notions of Canadian citizenship to encompass racialized minorities within it.¹⁰ African, Chinese, Japanese, and Jewish Canadians were the most active groups in anti-discrimination campaigns. Jewish human rights activists in particular were able to mobilize effectively to promote human rights campaigns partly because Canadian Jewish human rights activists had strong organizational and personal ties to their counterparts in the United States. Jews on both sides of the border had already developed their own organizations to defend against anti-Semitism, and they had been working carefully—often behind the scenes—with non-Jewish allies for quite some time. Canada's Jews spearheaded a number of other crucial anti-discrimination campaigns particularly in the aftermath of the Second World War, at which point public support for human rights had increased in Canada, at

Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 1997), chaps. 4 and 5; Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending North American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, 1942-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008); Stephanie Bangarth, "The Second World War and Canada's Early Human Rights Movement: The Asian Canadian Experience" in Janet Miron, ed., *A History of Human Rights in Canada: Essential Issues* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2009), pp. 61-76.

⁸ Patrias, *Jobs and Justice*, p. 160.

⁹ Library and Archives Canada [hereafter LAC], MG 28 185, vol. 54, file: Can. Citizenship Council, p. 2; Ivana Caccia, *Managing the Canadian Mosaic in Wartime: Shaping Citizenship Policy, 1939-1945* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 269, n. 59.

¹⁰ Patrias and Frager, "This is Our Country, These are Our Rights."

least to a certain extent.¹¹ As we shall see, Canadian Jews played an important role in the introduction of the Springfield Plan in Welland as well.

The relatively small town of Welland was characterized by the ethnic diversity of its largely working-class population and also by a tendency toward radicalism on the part of a notable segment of its residents. In 1941, when non-British "racial" groups made up 22 per cent of Toronto's population, such groups constituted 44 per cent of Welland's 12,500 inhabitants and 69 per cent of neighbouring Crowland's 6,638 inhabitants. Most of the "non-British" residents of Welland and Crowland were from eastern and southern Europe. Although Jews played such an important role in disseminating the Springfield Plan in Canada, their numbers in the two towns were small: 82 in Welland and 21 in Crowland. There were even fewer residents belonging to groups frequently described as "visible minorities" today: 45 people of Chinese origin in Welland and 6 in Crowland and no people of African origin at all.¹² As Carmela Patrias has demonstrated in her study of poverty, prejudice, and resistance in the Welland area in the 1930s, the area's minority groups had been experiencing serious forms of discrimination locally.¹³

Our decision to study a short-lived educational plan in a small, little-known town was based on the conviction that some of the attributes of the plan's implementation in Canada, such as its timing, location, and brief life, can enhance our understanding of the nature and development of conceptions of citizenship in mid-century Canada. Examining the implementation of the Springfield Plan in Welland, where, despite great ethnic diversity, visible minorities constituted a tiny part of the population, permits us to consider these important themes in a relatively unexplored context. Until fairly recently, studies on immigrant integration have focused almost exclusively on such large cities as Toronto and Winnipeg.¹⁴ Yet, in mid-twentieth-century Canada, the experiences of immigrants in large urban centres cannot be taken as representative. At that time, minority group members were more widely dispersed in smaller communities, especially in Canada's industrial heartland, than they are today. The role of these groups in Canadian nation-building should not be neglected. This case study shows that ideas of Canadian citizenship in the late 1940s were not simply generated by Anglo-Canadians and imposed upon minority group members. Rather, views of Canadian citizenship comprised a contested terrain between mainstream policy-makers and marginalized minorities.

11 Frager and Patrias, "Transnational Links and Citizens' Rights," pp. 139-165. On the important roles of Jewish human rights activists, see also James W. St. G. Walker, "The 'Jewish Phase' in the Movement for Racial Equality in Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2002), pp. 1-29.

12 *Eighth Census of Canada*, Vol. II, Table 23, Population by principal origins, for census subdivisions, 1941, pp. 440-441; Table 34, Population by racial origin and sex, for urban centres of 10,000 and over, 1941, p. 517.

13 Carmela Patrias, *Relief Strike: Immigrant Workers and the Great Depression in Crowland, Ontario, 1930-1935* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1990), pp. 10-20. Patrias's study also includes material on the various ethnic organizations in the Welland area.

14 For the incorporation of immigrants in some of Canada's major urban centres, see, for example, Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrants in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006).

Furthermore, examination of the views and needs of Welland's French Canadians offers a particularly important and interesting perspective on the shaping of Canadian citizenship in a local context. In some respects the experiences of French Canadians resembled those of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Members of these groups migrated to this town in response to the same employment opportunities. A large number of French Canadian men and women, like immigrant workers, found employment in local factories, most notably the Empire Cotton Mill, which was notorious for low wages and harsh working conditions.¹⁵ Yet, because French Canadians saw themselves, and were recognized by law, as one of Canada's two "founding races" with special rights, they differed from immigrants. The American Springfield Plan, which made no allowance for such dualism, was ill-suited to promote citizenship among them. The program's unsuitability helps to explain both its early demise and the significance of local circumstances in shaping the understanding of Canadian citizenship.

Even the program's ephemeral character in Canada is historically significant. Precisely because human rights campaigners and state officials were searching for new ways to develop distinctly Canadian citizenship, they sometimes embarked on projects that proved to be unsuitable to local circumstances and were then abandoned. This study confirms the conclusion we drew in some of our earlier work, that minority human rights activists were among the first to recognize the limitations of educational approaches to fighting discrimination and prejudice. Consequently, they increasingly came to invest their energies in developing alternative strategies to fight discrimination.¹⁶

The Plan

The Springfield Plan was conceived by a committee of social scientists and educators at Columbia University, led by Clyde R. Miller (a professor at Columbia's Teachers College) and funded by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. This Plan was one of a number of intercultural education programs that emerged in the United States, in the 1930s and 1940s, in reaction both to the intensification of racism and anti-Semitism in Europe and North America and to violent hate riots that accompanied the migration of hundreds of thousands of African Americans to fill jobs in war industries in Northern and Western American cities. The main goal of the Plan was to promote tolerance of all "races" and religions and thereby safeguard American democracy.¹⁷

In some respects the Springfield Plan continued the "immigrant gifts" approach to education for tolerance that had been practised in the United States

15 Carmela Patrias and Larry Savage, *Union Power: Solidarity and Struggle in Niagara* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2012), pp. 45-46.

16 Frager and Patrias, "Transnational Links and Citizens' Rights," pp. 150-153; Patrias, "Socialists, Jews, and the 1947 Saskatchewan Bill of Rights."

17 Clarence I. Chatto and Alice L. Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1945), p. 139; Richard W. Steele, "The War on Intolerance: The Reformulation of American Nationalism, 1939-1941," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Fall 1989), pp. 19-20; Robert L. Fleegler, "'Forget All Differences until the Forces of Freedom Are Triumphant': The World War II-Era Quest for Ethnic and Religious Tolerance," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 27, no. 2 (Winter 2008), pp. 59-84.

since the 1920s.¹⁸ That approach taught pupils about the contributions that members of minority groups had made to music, art, literature, industry, science, and public life in the country and in the world more broadly. The goal of this approach was twofold: to familiarize all pupils with different cultures so as to combat xenophobia and to enhance minority children's sense of self-worth. Yet, at the same time, this approach promoted cultural stereotypes. As Diana Selig has cautioned, even though the cultural gifts approach substituted more positive stereotypes for the negative ones, this framework nonetheless "perpetuated a racialized way of thinking that ascribed particular qualities to certain groups," while it also "erased differences within groups and froze each culture in time."¹⁹

While Springfield's surviving curriculum documents indicate some of this stereotyping, the Plan's detailed listing of the contributions of specific minority groups did not necessarily box them in sharply. In the 1944 Grade 9 curriculum, for example, the Poles were characterized as an "industrious freedom-loving people" whose lives centred on their church. Although this group was described as "largely composed of laborers," the document also mentioned Polish skilled mechanics, holders of political office, and a lawyer. This curriculum document, entitled "Democratic Procedures ... the Contributions of Nationalities to Springfield," lauded the group's strong contribution to the war effort and also left open the possibility that Springfield's Polish Americans would be able to make contributions to the city and to the United States in other capacities as well. More broadly, while this document encouraged teachers to display the costumes of different "nationality groups," to collect the groups' folk stories, to exhibit diverse families' cultural heirlooms, and to "arrange music typical of each nationality group," the curriculum's stated objectives were far-reaching. Students were to learn that "all groups have the right, in a democratic city, to equal opportunities: civically, economically, educationally, and socially." Students were to understand that "color of skin or nationality origins, are not determinants of human value or human potentialities."²⁰

Yet the Springfield Plan's designers were also concerned to avoid creating a highly idealized view of American society, one that minority students would find unconvincing, because it failed to consider the obstacles in their way:

[Previously,] youngsters were given to understand that we in this country had already achieved a perfect society. Experience soon disillusioned them. The boy preparing for college who found that he could not be admitted by the college of his choice because the quota of applicants from his group had been filled, and the

18 Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 64.

19 Diana Selig, *Americans All: The Cultural Gifts Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 13.

20 Wood Museum of Springfield History, Local History Library & Archives, Springfield Public Schools, Box 224, R7A-03-1, "Democratic Procedures, Grade 9: The Contributions of Nationalities to Springfield," February 10, 1944, pp. 3, 12-13, 15. Selig's book contains a paragraph on the Springfield Plan where she incorrectly asserts that the Plan did not focus on specific cultural groups (*Americans All*, p. 258).

Negro girl, an honor student, who could not secure a position as a stenographer, knew that democracy did not work for them.²¹

Accordingly, the Plan called on teachers not to avoid pointing out the weaknesses in American democratic processes, but rather to discuss ways of eliminating them. Central to their approach was the conviction that prejudice and discrimination constituted key forces undermining democracy.²²

Miller and his associates inaugurated the Springfield Plan in 1939. Although the United States was not to enter the Second World War until the end of 1941, the broader wartime context lent urgency to their educational initiatives. In fact, even before the war had broken out, various American intellectuals, educators, and activists, particularly members of ethnic minority groups, had begun to fear that the Nazis would work to intensify American prejudices in order to weaken American democracy. Once the United States was in the midst of the war, fears increased out of the concern that various forms of prejudice would further divide the country, undermining the national unity that was so central to the war effort. Although some ethnic employees in the Justice Department had been involved in the campaigns to promote tolerance before the United States joined the war, President Roosevelt had feared that the American public would be suspicious of state propaganda and had therefore rejected overt government involvement in these efforts at that time. Once the country entered the war, the government joined voluntary associations in condemning prejudice and promoting tolerance, largely through the Office of War Information. In Springfield more specifically, concerns to eliminate prejudices were augmented by the need to incorporate—and boost the morale of—the thousands of diverse people who poured into this city to work in war-related sectors, especially in munitions production at the large Springfield Armory.²³

The understanding of prejudice as a contagious disease on which the program was built was also specific to the mid-twentieth century. Miller argued that the Springfield Plan was designed to “immunize” Americans against “contagious phobias.” The success of the Nazis in “infecting” the German people with the “most vicious kind of phobias,” despite Germany’s high rates of literacy and “glorious” intellectual traditions, exemplified the urgency of defending Americans against the spread of prejudice.²⁴

Miller, and other educators who followed developments in Nazi Germany and at home, believed that innovations in media and communications enhanced the ability of anti-democratic forces to influence public opinion through clever use of propaganda. As Miller explained, the manipulation of modern, efficient “channels

21 Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, p. 6.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-10.

23 Steele, “The War on Intolerance,” pp. 13-14, 23, 30; Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, pp. xiv, 111-112; James Waterman Wise, *The Springfield Plan* (New York: The Viking Press, 1945), pp. 70, 114, 130; Selig, *Americans All*, pp. 136, 256; Zoe Burkholder, *Color in the Classroom: How American Schools Taught Race, 1900-1954* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 118.

24 Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, p. xiv. See also “Springfield Plan Called Successful,” *Springfield Union*, February 11, 1946.

of communication” threatened their country’s mental health. Demagogues could poison the attitudes of Americans and thus “divide the nation and destroy our democracy.”²⁵ The Springfield Plan therefore aimed to teach students to read critically and to understand how public opinion was formed by careful analysis of newspaper articles, radio programs, and films.

While educators concentrated their efforts primarily on public schools because they saw children as the most promising agents of new attitudes, the Springfield Plan was meant to extend beyond schools to entire communities. The Plan’s advocates discounted the previously widespread belief that prejudice was a natural, indeed innate, reaction to difference, for they tended to believe that children were born without prejudice but were then potentially corrupted by the adults in their lives. Children could learn—and also unlearn—prejudice. Thus the Plan needed to extend into the local community, for otherwise children could become infected with racist ideas, despite the schools’ best efforts. Reaching out to the community was also based on the view that education could not stop with book learning, but must be based on pupils learning through experience and through engaging the whole community of Springfield in the process.²⁶

The Springfield Plan was also shaped by 1940s scientific thinking about “race.” Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish’s pamphlet, *The Races of Mankind*, perhaps the most influential of the wartime anti-racist publications in North America, was distributed to all Springfield teachers.²⁷ The pamphlet sought to combat racism by introducing general audiences to the view that there was no correlation between visible signs of “racial” difference (such as the colour of eyes and skin, the texture of hair, or the shape of nose and head), on the one hand, and character traits (such as intelligence, alertness, and kindness), on the other. At a time when the American Red Cross segregated wartime blood banks, Benedict and Weltfish explained that notions of “racial” inferiority and superiority had no scientific basis. Yet they still accepted the division of humankind into “Caucasians,” “Mongoloids,” and “Negroids.”²⁸ Thus, although they opposed ranking “races,” their continued reliance on this classification lent support to an analytic criterion that might invite such ranking.²⁹

In more practical terms, this heightened attention to racist prejudice explains the Plan’s promotion of non-discriminatory hiring practices in Springfield schools and in the wider community. John Granrud, superintendent of Springfield’s schools, initiated the practice of hiring teachers of a variety of backgrounds to reflect the diversity of the school populations.³⁰ While Granrud focused on resisting racist and religious discrimination, he also eliminated salary distinctions based

25 Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, p. xiv.

26 *The Springfield Sunday Union and Republican*, March 28, 1943; Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, pp. 146-152. See also Selig, *Americans All*, pp. 19-25.

27 Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, p. 77.

28 Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish, “The Races of Mankind” in Ruth Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics* (New York, 1962). On segregated blood banks, see Burkholder, *Color in the Classroom*, pp. 125-126.

29 See Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Colour: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 103.

30 Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, pp. 13-14.

on gender.³¹ Yet, with the notable exception of equal pay for the city's women teachers, Granrud and other advocates of the Springfield Plan ignored gender discrimination.³² This omission was, in fact, typical of human rights activists on both sides of the border in this period.³³

In keeping with the Springfield Plan's goal of "bringing the schools and community together," job placement programs for graduating students attempted to eliminate racist and religious employment discrimination outside the schools as well. The application cards filled out by graduating students carried no questions or comments about nationality, religion or "race." Thus, if employers asked for workers belonging to specific "races" or creeds, the school's placement director could state that he had no records concerning these characteristics of applicants. Ideally, even prejudiced employers would thus be forced to employ members of minorities; if these employees proved satisfactory, the employers' prejudice would be modified. If employers still refused to hire minorities such as Jews or African Americans, local leaders, such as the Superintendent of Education, would pressure them to mend their ways. This approach corresponded to the Fair Employment Practices legislation that was being introduced in various parts of the northern United States at this time.³⁴

Another community-wide component of the Plan consisted of classes on labour relations for adults. Each of the classes was comprised of representatives of labour and management in equal numbers, as well as some representatives of the greater public. Advocates described these classes as guided by the spirit of "economic democracy," namely, the right to work, the right of employees and employers to organize separately, and their obligation to cooperate for the welfare of the community.³⁵ Although these advocates were critical of competitive individualism and recognized the right of workers to form unions, the Plan minimized the conflicting interests of labour and capital, advocating cooperation between workers and employers. The relative "economic security" of many Springfield residents active in the Plan may help to explain this accommodationist approach to labour relations.³⁶

The Springfield Plan attempted to foster political democracy, to provide students with "the experience of living democracy," at times even challenging power and hierarchy, by encouraging participatory democracy on the part of pupils

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

32 See, for example, the absence of any other references to gender discrimination in Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*.

33 Ruth A. Frager and Carmela Patrias, "Human Rights Activists and the Question of Sex Discrimination in Post-War Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 93, no. 4 (December 2012), pp. 1-28; Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 204, 228; Selig, *Americans All*, p. 81. As Dominique Clément has emphasized in the Canadian context, human rights legislation only began to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in 1969. See Dominique Clément, *Equality Deferred: Sex Discrimination and British Columbia's Human Rights State, 1953-84* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), p. 10.

34 Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Colour*, chap. 4; *Christian Science Monitor*, July 24, 1944; Wise, *The Springfield Plan*, p. 92.

35 Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, pp. 108-110.

36 University of Minnesota, "Education for Democracy in Springfield Public Schools," F. B. Chalfant, Pittsburgh Board of Education, p. 6.

and teachers at many levels of the school system.³⁷ Pupils obtained the opportunity to have a say in school life through a system of committees. They served on committees responsible for news bulletins, interior decorating, garbage disposal, playground safety, and the like. Each committee meeting was conducted by the children, who elected a recording secretary, treasurer, and auditor. Committee members reported to their homerooms about the business conducted by each committee. Pupils also visited municipal government committees to observe how they transacted their business.³⁸

Dissemination in Canada

Canadian Jews played a central role in introducing Canadian politicians and educators to the Springfield Plan, for Jews, of course, had much at stake in the fight against racist and religious discrimination in these years. Moreover, even though anti-Semites had repeatedly accused Jews of failing to integrate into Canadian society, by the 1940s the Jewish community included professionals such as lawyers, educators, researchers, and MPPs, whose skills were especially valuable in the human rights campaigns.³⁹



Figure 1: The depiction of Welland's major employers in this classroom at Ross School was meant to foster good citizenship by awakening civic pride.

Source: Courtesy of Welland Public Library.

As early as 1940, Oscar Cohen of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) and Reverend Claris Silcox of the Canadian Conference of Christians and Jews (an organization modelled after the American National Conference of Christians and Jews and funded primarily by the CJC), met with Ontario's Deputy Minister of Education to discuss the "significance of inter-group appreciation with regard to

37 Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, p. 139; Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, p. 71; *Springfield Union*, November 10, 1941.

38 Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, pp. 22-23; *New York Times*, December 7, 1941.

39 Frager and Patrias, "Transnational Links and Citizens' Rights."

Canadian unity.” Cohen and Silcox hoped to encourage the development of an intergroup relations movement in Canada by inviting the director of the American Service Bureau for Intercultural Education (an organization that received financial assistance from the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith) to meet with Canadian educators.⁴⁰ Canadian Jewish activists also offered to distribute materials from the American Service Bureau to Ontario school principals and teachers.

American-born and American-educated Rabbi Abraham Feinberg, head of Toronto’s largest Reform congregation, continued the campaign in 1945, when he submitted information about the Springfield Plan to Ontario’s Royal Commission on Education while urging Premier George Drew to introduce the Plan in Ontario’s public schools.⁴¹ That same year, after Warner Brothers produced *It Happened in Springfield* for the United States Army, the film company approached the Canadian Jewish Congress to publicize the film in Canada. The Jewish agency responded by promoting the film among Jewish and non-Jewish groups throughout Ontario and beyond. Also in the mid-1940s, the Canadian branch of the Jewish Labour Committee helped distribute information on the Springfield Plan, often by working quietly through the Joint Labour Councils Against Racial Intolerance located in Southern Ontario.⁴² Meanwhile, in 1946, the Ontario Department of Education sent two of its staff to Massachusetts to observe the Springfield Plan in operation and report back to the minister.⁴³

Of course, Jews were not alone in promoting this new approach to “group relations.” The Plan and its aims were also embraced by other Canadian voluntary organizations. By 1945, the Civil Liberties Association of Toronto, headed by George Tatham (a geography professor at the University of Toronto), helped launch the Toronto Committee for Intercultural Relations, which explicitly promoted the Springfield Plan and included representatives from groups such as the Canadian Association for Adult Education, the Church of England, the Canadian Welfare Council, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation, and African-Canadian organizations, as well as the Canadian Jewish Congress.⁴⁴

While the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) came to play an especially notable role, a careful reading of the CAAE’s approach to citizenship reveals that questions of racism and discrimination did not assume an important place in its agenda until after World War II. Moreover, minority groups such as

40 Ontario Jewish Archives [hereafter OJA], Joint Public Relations Committee [hereafter JPRC], File 160.6, Oscar Cohen to Rabbi Eisendrath, Resume of Conference between Dr. Silcox, O. Cohen, and Dr. McArthur, Deputy Minister of Education, April 8, 1940; Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, p. 64.

41 OJA, JPRC, reel 1q, file 1: JPRC notices, agendas and minutes; file national JPRC, n.d., minutes, April 29, 1946; file 70: Civil Liberties Association, 1942-6; JPRC box 72, file 1945-6, minutes, October 31, 1945; Abraham Feinberg, *Storm the Gates of Jericho* (Toronto: Marzuni and Munsell, 1964), p. 299.

42 Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee National Archives [hereafter CJCCCN], ZA 1945, Box 2, file 19, Minutes of JPRC, Toronto, July 25, 1945; Reva Joshee and Lauri Johnson, “Historic Diversity and Equity Policies in Canada” in Kim Tolley, ed., *Transformations in Schooling: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 116.

43 “Virtues of Tolerance Taught in Schools,” *Welland Tribune*, February 23, 1946.

44 Joshee and Johnson, “Historic Diversity,” pp. 115-116; Ross Lambertson, *Repression and Resistance: Canadian Human Rights Activists, 1930-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 127.

Japanese Canadians and Jewish Canadians played a key role in bringing about this change. Representatives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, in particular, were prominent among the CAAE's members at this time. They provided the association with pertinent materials and with financial aid to publicize anti-discrimination programs.⁴⁵ In addition, when George Tatham, one of the chief public advocates of the Springfield Plan, travelled to Welland to talk about it, his visit was sponsored by the Council of Jewish Women of Canada.⁴⁶

The role of minority activists in the Ontario Ministry's development of a citizenship education program is worth underlining because it has received insufficient attention from scholars. Yet, without considering the role of minority activists, we cannot understand either the character of—or the changes in—post-1945 Anglo-Canadian attitudes toward “race” and citizenship. Minority activism was crucial to bring discriminatory practices to light and to expand notions of Canadian citizenship to encompass racialized minorities more fully within it.⁴⁷

Application in Welland

The Welland Tribune, which offered extensive coverage of the Plan, explained in an early article, “Welland residents themselves are likely to feel that this is a wise choice because there is hardly another spot in Ontario with such a concentrated melting pot of races, creeds and economic groups. Therefore it is believed this city presents an ideal experimental spot for a program intended to emphasize tolerance and democracy.”⁴⁸

According to John R. McCarthy (one of two local school inspectors when the Springfield Plan was introduced), however, government officials selected Teck Township and Welland in order to fight the influence of communism in Ontario. Government officials, who saw communism as the chief enemy of democracy, believed that support for communism was especially strong in both places. With respect to Welland, their views were not unfounded.⁴⁹ The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Union (UE), whose leadership was communist, was the dominant union in Welland. Communists were also elected to positions in municipal government in Crowland, just outside Welland. As John McCarthy remembered, a long-serving chair of the School Board in Crowland was a communist.⁵⁰

It is noteworthy that the school inspector pointed only to communism, and not to Nazism or fascism, as a threat to democracy in the immediate aftermath of the

45 See, for example, AO, CAAE, Citizens' Forum General, 1944-70, box 5, file: Isabel Wilson; LAC, CAAE, MG 28 I 400, Vol. 1, “Food for Thought,” file: Group Findings: Canadian Jewish Congress; vol. 2 file: Pamphlets, 1947-48; OJA, Records of the CJC, Chronological Correspondence Files, 1947-1949, file: CAAE, Ben Keifetz to Rabbi Feinberg, November 29, 1949.

46 *Welland Tribune*, October 26, 1946.

47 For a more detailed discussion see Patrias and Frager, “This is Our Country.”

48 *Welland Tribune*, April 13, 1946. See also the editorial on April 15, 1946.

49 Bob Davis, “A Brief History of Social Studies in Ontario High Schools and an Even Briefer History of Immersion Citizenship Education, 1937-1957, a conversation with Dr. J. R. McCarthy,” in Davis's *Whatever Happened to High School History: Burying the Political Memory of Youth, Ontario: 1945-1995* (Toronto: Our Schools Our Selves, 1995); Joshee and Johnson, “Historic Diversity and Equity Policies in Canada,” p. 117.

50 Davis, *Whatever Happened to High School History*, p. 27. McCarthy was probably referring to Ukrainian-born John Petrochenko.

Second World War. It is also telling that he did not mention at all that a central goal of the Springfield Plan was to combat racist prejudice and discrimination. This omission suggests that McCarthy may well have been among those Canadians who did not believe that racism constituted a serious problem in Canada.

In the Cold War context, some Canadian and American human rights activists argued that minority groups needed to make gains because, if members of these groups had equal rights, they would reject communist overtures. More broadly, they maintained that a reinvigorated, more inclusive democracy would help safeguard “the Free World.” Yet paradoxically, as the Cold War intensified, some conservatives on both sides of the border were profoundly suspicious of anti-discrimination campaigns because they associated them with communist recruitment machinations and communists’ self-defence—not with fighting against communism. Indeed, as historians Ross Lambertson and Dominique Clément have each demonstrated, Canadian communists had been playing key roles in fighting against racism and against violations of civil liberties; by the 1940s, intense struggles had broken out between communist human rights activists, on the one hand, and social democratic and liberal human rights activists, on the other. At the same time, as Kristina R. Llewellyn has pointed out, the development of the Cold War prompted Ontario educators to emphasize the teaching of democracy and citizenship within the province’s schools to combat the threat of totalitarianism.⁵¹

While some Queen’s Park politicians and bureaucrats, as well as some important educators, may have supported the Springfield Plan as an anti-communist measure, the Plan’s strongest supporters in Welland did not share their goal. Reverend Harvey Forster, superintendent of the United Church’s All People’s Mission on the Niagara Peninsula and member and chair of the Welland Board of Education, was one of the municipal officials who visited Springfield and promoted the Plan’s introduction in Welland. Although he was a social democrat, Forster was a strong supporter of the UE. Having worked closely with immigrant workers, he had become acutely aware and highly critical of their unacceptable working conditions and the discrimination they faced. As he explained in the 1943 annual report of the All People’s Mission: the mission’s staff “have identified themselves with the needs of the workingman, have espoused the trade union movement, and have co-operated freely with left-wing groups.” Forster was one of the few Anglo-Canadians in the 1940s who believed that members of working-class minority groups should be involved in the shaping of policies that affected them. He held that, although the university professors on whom the government relied to learn about minority groups in Canada possessed a knowledge of the

51 Ross Lambertson, “‘The Dresden Story’: Racism, Human Rights, and the Jewish Labour Committee of Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail*, vol. 47 (Spring 2001), pp. 207-215; Dominique Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937-82* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), pp. 36-55; Kristina R. Llewellyn, *Democracy’s Angels: The Work of Women Teachers* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), pp. 22-32. For a detailed account of many aspects of the Cold War’s impact in Canada, see Reginald Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); however, this study does not deal with school systems.

languages and history of such groups, they had “no knowledge of the thinking and needs of the great masses of people of other tongues in Canada.”⁵²

Forster's views on immigrant workers were influential in the Niagara region and elsewhere. His two books on non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, *The Church in the City Streets* and *Calling All Canada*, had secured his place as an expert on “new Canadians” within and beyond the United Church of Canada. In 1945, for example, the Ontario official in charge of school readers at the provincial department of education asked him to contribute stories about “your people” for the readers.⁵³ Although as a social democrat Forster was well aware of the obstacles to individual opportunity in Canada, he did believe that higher education among the children of immigrants would permit them to break out of the lowest socio-economic ranks to which their parents had been restricted and permit them to better the lives of their ethnic communities at large. As a member of the Welland Board of Education (for a decade by the time of the Springfield Plan experiment), he was “able to facilitate the education of these boys and girls in many ways.”⁵⁴ Forster encouraged immigrant parents to let their children go to high school, and the children themselves to go to university.⁵⁵ His annual reports noted with pride the number of Welland high-school students of non-Anglo-Saxon parentage who won scholarships.⁵⁶ Once these young people had completed high school, he pleaded with local employers to give them access to white-collar employment.⁵⁷ Forster also emphasized the importance of hiring non-Anglo-Saxon teachers for Welland's schools.⁵⁸ The new dignity the Springfield Plan would confer on minority cultures and the psychological gains for pupils from such backgrounds were the aspects of the Plan he emphasized to fellow school-board members upon his return from Springfield, Massachusetts.⁵⁹

Reverend Fern Sayles, with even closer ties to immigrant radicals than Forster, and consequently an outspoken critic of what he saw as the anti-communist “hysteria” emerging in post-war Canada, was also very supportive of the Springfield Plan.⁶⁰ He believed that the Plan was succeeding in combating ignorance and suspicion, encouraging friendship among pupils of all national origins, and fostering active participation in Welland. Accordingly, he was later disappointed when the “early tempo” of the Springfield Plan “faded” in his community.⁶¹

School inspector Clare MacLeod, a key figure behind the implementation of the Springfield Plan in Welland, also saw the elimination of racism, rather than anti-communism, as a central goal of the Springfield Plan. In *Citizenship Training*, his book about the Plan based in large measure on his experiences in Welland, MacLeod continually stressed the importance of “unswerving loyalty

52 *Welland-Port Colborne Evening Tribune*, February 22, 1943.

53 United Church Archives, Forster Fonds, J. E. Stothers to Forster, March 12, 1945.

54 United Church Archives, All People's Mission, Niagara Presbytery, Annual Report, 1945, p. 4.

55 *Ibid.*, 1939, pp. 6-7.

56 *Ibid.*, 1945, p. 4.

57 *Ibid.*, 1941, p. 2.

58 *Ibid.*, 1937, p. 2.

59 Welland Board of Education, Minutes, April 11, 1946.

60 *Welland Tribune*, February 19, 1946.

61 Fern Sayles, *Welland Workers Make History* (Welland: published privately, 1963), p. 198.

to democratic ideals” and the ways in which prejudice undermined democracy. Although he referred once or twice to “dictatorship” and fascism as the opposite of democracy, the book focused intensely on shoring up democracy by combating “the race haters, the bigots, the snobs, and the ‘scapegoaters’ [who] are quite numerous in our society.” MacLeod did not mention communism, nor did he mention the Soviet Union.⁶² The nuanced thinking and complex reasons that motivated Welland activists to support the Springfield Plan suggest that as historians we may at times do a disservice to innovators during the Cold War Era by too readily invoking anti-communism to explain their plans.

The understanding of “race” and prejudice then prevalent among American scholars clearly shaped the views of Welland’s educators. MacLeod, who played the greatest role in publicizing the program, adopted the language of disease in discussing the origin and spread of prejudice. Thus he maintained that prejudices “are not inborn, but we catch them in our day to day contacts with people, like we catch the measles.”⁶³ He stressed that specific forms of education were badly needed to “immunize our pupils against the germs of prejudice and ill-will.”⁶⁴ This focus on reforming public education to combat prejudice reveals that, by the 1940s, key Canadian and American educators and human rights activists understood racist and religious prejudice as systemic.

This emphasis on immunization was incorporated into the curriculum, often in the form of materials brought from the United States. The 1946 teachers’ manual, for example, recommended that Grade 8 pupils learn about the causes and consequences of prejudice and discrimination in their English classes through dramatizations, such as Gretta Baker’s radio play “How Did He Get that Way.”

Published in the United States by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the play was only slightly revised for Canadian audiences. The words “Canada” or “Canadian” were substituted whenever the play referred explicitly to the United States. The play retraced the developments that led Joe Foster, “a Canadian boy,” to throw a brick through the window of an old synagogue. The immediate cause of his action was anger and frustration that, having failed his history exam, he would not be able to play in an upcoming basketball game. Joe was angry with Jews partly because the boy who would be replacing him on the basketball team, Sam Finkelstein, was Jewish, but Joe’s prejudice had deeper roots. He and Sam Finkelstein had once been friends, but this had changed when Joe’s mother told him that he could not invite Sam to his birthday party. Although Joe’s mother did not explain her objection to Sam, Joe gradually absorbed “the feeling that something [was] wrong with Sam.” Attitudes learned from his parents made Joe prejudiced and thus prepared him to take such an “un-Canadian” act as breaking the synagogue window. More broadly, the play constituted a strong statement against scapegoating.⁶⁵

62 C. R. MacLeod, *Citizenship Training: A Handbook for Canadian Schools* (Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1949), pp. 22, 25. See also pp. 23-24, 34, 53, 116.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

65 We consulted the guide at the Welland Public Library in the 1980s, but it has since gone missing. The play also appears in Appendix C of MacLeod, *Citizenship Training*, pp. 240-249.

In his book, MacLeod pointed out the dire consequences of prejudice. While stressing that members of “minority groups” were widely seen as constituting “out-group[s],” he wrote that those who did “not fit in with the pattern of the so-called dominant group, whether English or French,” were “frequently designated as ‘foreigners.’” He emphasized that they found “many economic positions closed to them,” and consequently often lived in “sub-standard economic conditions,” while being excluded from various social clubs.⁶⁶ It is noteworthy, however, that MacLeod tended to limit his discussion of racialized minorities to groups of European origin. In his introductory chapter, “The Canadian Scene,” for example, there is no mention at all of Canadians of non-European origin.⁶⁷ Such Eurocentrism was characteristic of the views of Anglo-Canadians such as Robert England, Watson Kirkconnell, and Claris Silcox, influential commentators on Canada’s ethnic pluralism, who denounced racism, including anti-Semitism, and yet continued to see Canada as a “European” and “Christian” country. Their views constituted a Canadian example of the ongoing reliance on the concept of



Figure 2: Clare McLeod, a school inspector in Welland when the Springfield Plan was introduced, made almost no mention of Canadians of non-European origin in his account of the citizenship program.

Source: Courtesy of Welland Public Library.

⁶⁶ MacLeod, *Citizenship Training*, pp. 41-42.

⁶⁷ See MacLeod’s Introduction to *Citizenship Training*. Similarly, MacLeod’s Appendix on “Famous Canadians” included only those from European backgrounds, and his Appendix on “Famous Men” focused only on Europeans. However, he did refer to Chinese culture at a few other points in the book (see pp. 174, 181).

“race” by the very scholars who attempted to demonstrate the dangers of “race” thinking in the mid-twentieth century.⁶⁸ Such views also illustrated that, as long as “race” continued to be used as a meaningful classification, it had the potential to marginalize some groups, especially people of colour.

Perhaps because many Anglo-Canadian residents of Welland did not believe that prejudice and discrimination constituted serious problems in their community, the focus on racist intolerance as the central force undermining democracy was less consistent in Welland than in Springfield. In some of the local teachers’ discussions about developing the Plan, for example, racism was apparently not mentioned. When Inspector MacLeod spoke about the Springfield Plan to various groups of Welland citizens, he did not always emphasize its goal of eliminating racist and religious intolerance. Although he mentioned trade unions, MacLeod did not endorse the rights of workers to unionize as his American counterparts in Springfield had done. He focused on the Plan’s other, less controversial aims such as civic involvement, cooperation, courtesy, and the promotion of healthy minds in healthy bodies. At times he seemed intent on minimizing the Plan’s innovative features and the adjustment that it would require in the school curricula.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, when the local newspaper covered teachers’ discussions of areas such as music, art, vocational training, and guidance, as well as adult education, racism was scarcely mentioned.⁷⁰

Indeed, there were some highly critical reactions to the Springfield Plan among Welland’s Anglophone residents. In a letter to the *Welland Tribune*, one critic expressed serious misgivings about teaching tolerance in schools at the taxpayers’ expense: “The prodigal son was not reformed at the taxpayers’ expense. Blaming the children for the ills of mankind by making them an apology of our sins and turning schools into a confession box for our inequities is education gone mad.... Every public leader ... who is using the schools to propagate new issues [should know]how to write out their resignation.”⁷¹ Concern that such criticism would find sympathetic ears among Welland taxpayers may help to explain why MacLeod sometimes downplayed the Springfield Plan’s innovative content.

MacLeod did appear to follow Springfield’s democratic approach when he introduced the Plan in Welland’s public schools. After he called a meeting of all elementary school teachers and explained the plan to introduce citizenship training in the curriculum, the teachers joined newly established committees that focused on injecting citizenship training into the teaching of various school subjects. Working with the elected heads of these committees, the teachers searched books and other publications for relevant materials and also prepared original submissions for

68 Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Colour*, chap. 3; Patrias, *Jobs and Justice*, pp. 113-123.

69 *Welland Tribune*, April 15 and September 21, 1946. In contrast, when MacLeod spoke to the Regional Conference of the Home and School Association, he discussed the Springfield Plan and stressed the importance of teaching pupils to fight against racist and religious prejudice. See *Welland Tribune*, October 24, 1946.

70 “Seek to Work In Adult Education in Welland with Springfield Plan,” *Welland Tribune*, April 20, 1946; “Education Week—Citizen’s Forum, Guidance Discussed,” *Welland Tribune*, November 4, 1946; “Art Supervision in School: Adult Education Opportunity,” *Welland Tribune*, November 5, 1946; “Parts Played by Music and Student Councils in School,” *Welland Tribune*, November 6, 1946.

71 Frank A. Overholt’s letter to the editor, *Welland Tribune*, April 20, 1946.

citizenship training. Their suggestions were submitted to an editorial committee that prepared a teachers' manual. A copy of the program was then distributed to all Welland public school teachers with the request that they provide the coordinating committee with their impressions of how well it worked.⁷²

Efforts to make democracy a lived experience extended to pupils as well. In Welland, as in Springfield, students formed their own committees. Student committees focused on issues such as citizenship, health and safety in the school buildings, school beautification and cleanliness, and the publication of school newspapers. Student committees needed to have significant authority; if the teacher were to serve as "a benevolent despot," the students would not really be learning about participatory democracy. At the same time, the teacher had to take care not to hand "all decisions over to the children who are too immature to make judgments which should be made by adult minds." To gain exposure to the practice of democracy outside their schools, students attended meetings of the school board and the city council. On occasion they also contributed articles to the city's newspaper.⁷³



Figure 3: The Springfield Plan attempted to foster good citizenship by allowing student committees to have a say in school life. A student committee in action at Ross School, Welland.

Source: Courtesy of Welland Public Library.

The emphasis on democracy and civic responsibility, however, was by no means exclusively an American import. In Canada, as in the United States, the years following World War II saw a great upsurge in programs designed to encourage civic participation.⁷⁴ In this country, the Citizens' Forum groups played a significant role. These groups, based on neighbourhoods or schools, had been

⁷² Frank M. Burwell, "Experiments in Education in the Public Elementary Schools of Welland, 1945-1960" (qualifying research project for admission to course leading to a Doctorate of Education, University of Toronto, 1961), chap. 2.

⁷³ MacLeod, *Citizenship Training*, pp. 197-203; Minutes of Welland School Board, April 18, 1946.

⁷⁴ Ron Faris, *The Passionate Educators: Voluntary Associations and the Struggle for Control of Adult Educational Broadcasting in Canada, 1919-1952* (Toronto, 1975).

established during World War II with the help of the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) and the CBC, and they were linked to a national public affairs program. Having received pamphlets providing background materials on topics discussed on the radio, the groups discussed the particular radio programs and submitted their responses to the CBC.⁷⁵ The Welland High and Vocational School Forum was established in 1943. Despite its appeal to Welland's adults to establish their own groups, the students' group remained the only one in the town. Meanwhile, in keeping with the CAAE's initial neglect of racism, this students' group did not address questions of prejudice and discrimination until a few years following its establishment.⁷⁶

Demise

Despite the great effort invested in its introduction and the support it enjoyed locally, the Springfield Plan had disappeared from Welland schools by 1950, and it failed to spread to other Ontario locales. Frank Burwell, principal of a local school that participated in the program from the beginning, set out to discover why it was discontinued after only a few years. He concluded that the departure of the school inspectors most committed to the program and the continuing loss of teachers who had participated in its establishment were important reasons for the end of the Springfield Plan in Welland schools. A survey among four former school officials and 15 of the 60 teachers who had participated in the introduction of the experiment revealed that, contrary to the emphasis on democratic participation by the program's founders, some of the teachers believed that the Plan was imposed on Welland's schools from above. As one of them explained, "the programme was dominated by status officials and it did not generate its own leaders because of this. When status leaders left, the machinery to carry on bogged down. Essentially it was dealing with democracy and attempting to implement it by authoritarian means. This worked against its success because you cannot introduce democracy by autocratic means."⁷⁷

Most of the survey's participants believed that pupils who had participated in the experiment learned the lessons of good citizenship: "tolerance, good will, responsibility, courtesy and pride in their Canadian heritage." The most positive responses suggested that some of the techniques developed during the experiment with the Springfield Plan continued to be employed in Welland's schools even after the program was discontinued.⁷⁸

A broader historical analysis of this experiment suggests additional reasons for its short life. An important reason for the Springfield Plan's failure to take root in Welland was that it was ill-suited to the needs—and, indeed, the rights—of Welland's French Canadians, who at 11 per cent of the town's population in 1941 constituted its largest minority.⁷⁹ Admittedly, there were fairly large

75 Leonard B. Kuffert, *A Great Duty: Canadian Responses to Modern Life and Mass Culture, 1939-1967* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), pp. 69-70.

76 Minutes of Welland School Board, November 4, 1946.

77 Burwell, "Experiments in Education," p. 13.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

79 *Canada Census, 1941*, vol. 2, Population: Local Subdivisions, p. 440. Since more French Canadians

numbers of French Canadians in Springfield, Massachusetts, as well. However, their position there was very different from that in Welland. In the American city, French Canadians were just one of many groups of immigrant origin. The school curriculum included suggestions for studying French Canadians' reasons for coming to Springfield and their contributions to the community, as it did for other ethnic groups.⁸⁰ In Welland, however, French Canadian saw themselves, and were recognized by law, as one of Canada's two "founding races," with special rights. Although one of the few surviving photographs of Welland's Springfield Plan shows French Canadian pupils dramatizing the contributions of the French to the establishment of New France,⁸¹ some French Canadians had strong reservations about the program.

By 1946 French Canadians had fought hard for, and had succeeded in attaining, a distinctive status for their children in Welland's public schools. Such gains must have seemed fragile, however, particularly in view of the earlier imposition of Regulation XVII, an Ontario law that had limited the use of French—as a language of instruction and communication in Ontario schools—to the first grade. Although this 1912 law had finally been abolished in 1926, French Canadians often continued to view the Regulation as confirmation of English Canadians' alleged goal of completely assimilating them.⁸²



Figure 4: Performance celebrating French Canadian heritage as part of the Springfield Plan at Ross School, Welland.

Source: Courtesy of Welland Public Library.

migrated from Quebec to work in Welland's factories during the war, their numbers were even greater by 1946. Unfortunately, the 1951 census does not provide a breakdown of the town's population by ethnicity.

⁸⁰ Chatto and Halligan, *The Story of the Springfield Plan*, pp. 177-178.

⁸¹ Welland Public Library, vertical files.

⁸² In their submission to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the mid-1960s, Welland's French Canadians pointed out that the "ill-famed" regulation revealed "outright assimilation" of French Canadians to be the goal of English Canadians. For French Canadians, they explained, the right to French-language, Catholic education was a "matter of survival." See Centre de recherche en civilisation

In 1919, Toronto's Archbishop Neil McNeil sent Father Rosario Tanguay to Welland to establish a French Canadian parish. Like many other leading Franco-Ontarians in the early-to-mid 1900s, Tanguay subscribed to the conservative Catholic nationalism that held the rural parish as the best guarantor of a distinctive French Canadian identity. As French Canadian migrants moved from Quebec to the factories in the Niagara Peninsula, however, they settled in towns and not on the land.⁸³ In this context, they especially feared that the preservation of a distinct identity would not be possible without French-language, Roman Catholic schools. In response to Tanguay's request for advice in 1920, the Association Canadienne Française d'Éducation d'Ontario (ACFEO) expressed the belief that Tanguay had been sent by God to safeguard the Catholic religion and French Canadian nationality in Welland. "You are witnessing," the letter added, "the obvious proof that Anglicization is a prelude to apostasy."⁸⁴

The education of Welland's francophone children then assumed an unusual course. Although the ACFEO recommended that Father Tanguay participate in the founding of a separate school board in Welland, the priest was not convinced that a Roman Catholic school board dominated by Anglophones would look after the distinctive interests of their French Canadian pupils.⁸⁵ Instead, he established a private school for young French Canadians. Ineligible for public funds, the school thus depended on contributions from parents who, like immigrants in the town, were generally employed in low-paid jobs. The payment of a modest monthly fee became impossible for many parents by the 1930s. Hence Father Tanguay turned to the leaders of the public school board to request that the Board take over his school. They agreed to do so, thus becoming the only public school board in Ontario that looked after the distinctive religious and language needs of French Canadian pupils.⁸⁶

Concerned about their minority status, Welland's Francophones remained deeply committed to preserving their French Canadian identity, and their conviction that their children were entitled to French-language, Roman Catholic education was unremitting. Their ranks were augmented during the Second World War when more French Canadians arrived from Quebec to take up jobs in local war-related industries. A significant number of these newcomers settled not in Welland's "Frenchtown" but in neighbouring Crowland (on the

canadienne-française [hereafter CRCCF], Fonds Fédération sociétés Saint-Jean-Baptiste de l'Ontario [hereafter FSSJBO], C19/16/27 Welland. For a discussion of Regulation 17, see Marcel Martel and Martin Paquet, *Speaking Up: A History of Language Politics in Canada and Quebec* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012), chap. 2.

83 CRCCF, ACFEO, localité Welland, R. C. Tanguay to ACFEO, January 7, 1920.

84 CRCCF, ACFEO, localité Welland, interim president to Tanguay, May 19, 1920.

85 CRCCF, ACFEO, localité Welland, R. C. Tanguay to Ed Cloutier, Secty, Association des droits des Français Ontariens, February 16, 1920.

86 Welland Board of Education, Minutes, January 8, October 16, and December 10, 1931. French Canadians continued to send their children to the public school system in this town, and by 1955, a French Canadian physician was elected president of Welland's public school board. See CRCCF, fonds FSSJBO C19/16/27 Welland, unidentified clipping, probably from Ottawa's *Le Droit*; Romeo D. Parent, "The Development of Bilingual Schools in the City of Welland, Ontario" (MA thesis, Niagara University Graduate School of Education, 1969).

outskirts of Welland) where they fought to establish a bilingual school within the public school system.⁸⁷ Although the school was established and new grades were added as needed, the area's Francophones continued to believe that their educational rights were vulnerable.⁸⁸

To maintain the harmonious relationship with French Canadians, the Welland School Board stayed carefully away from any potential conflict over religion even though the government of Ontario introduced religious education in the province's public schools in 1944. Thus, for example, in 1947, the board prohibited religious announcements in public schools. Furthermore, "owing to the many religious preferences in our schools," the board also refused a request to give Grade 5 pupils copies of the Gideon Bible (which differed from the specifically Catholic version of the New Testament).⁸⁹ Similarly, when the CBC program "Canadian Forum" scheduled a radio broadcast from Welland Vocational and High School on the topic of "Racial Prejudice and How to Combat It," the school board's chair, Reverend Harvey Forster, advised that matters of religion, especially religious education, should not be discussed.⁹⁰

Yet, in 1946 in Welland, rumours of plans to establish a middle school (a junior high school) designed according to the Springfield Plan alarmed some French Canadian residents and led them to contact the ACFEQ. In response to these disturbing plans, the association's president visited Welland. President Charbonneau believed that such a development would be detrimental to the local French Canadian children; instead of attending a public school whose student body was entirely French Canadian and whose teachers were all French Canadian and Roman Catholic, the pupils would be placed in a "neutral" school starting in Grade 7. Charbonneau was convinced that such a development could only lead to the children's assimilation into the dominant culture.⁹¹ Such assimilationist goals conflicted with the French Canadians' special status as one of the country's two "founding races."

Another reason for the Springfield Plan's unsuitability for Welland was that its scheme for community participation could make little headway among working-class immigrants from eastern and southern Europe who made up the largest segment of Welland's minorities. Because of their limited knowledge of English, unlike the residents of Springfield, Massachusetts, they were unlikely to participate in the type of adult education programs and public forums envisioned by the Plan's Welland proponents. By the time this state-initiated

87 CRCCF, ACFEQ, localit  Welland, 34 Francophone residents of Crowland to George Drew, Minister of Education, Ontario, n.d.

88 See, for example, CRCCF, ACFEQ, localit  Welland, Pierre Germain to Roger Charbonneau, January 26, 1953.

89 Minutes of the Welland School Board, March 13 and December 4, 1947. For information on Catholic hostility toward the Gideon Bible in this period, see Kevin M. Schultz, "Favoritism Cannot Be Tolerated": Challenging Protestantism in America's Public Schools and Promoting the Neutral State," *American Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 3 (September 2007), pp. 565-591.

90 AO, CAAE, Citizens' Forum General, 1944-1970, box 7, J. W. Teskey, Secretary-Administrator of Board of Education, Welland, to I. Wilson, October 31, 1949.

91 CRCCF, ACFEQ, localit  Welland, Louis Charbonneau, Pr sident du Comit  p dagogique, Visite   Welland le mercredi, 7 ao t 1946.

experiment in citizenship education was launched, moreover, some members of these overwhelmingly working-class groups had in any case succeeded in finding alternative avenues and agencies for asserting their rights: labour unions foremost among them.⁹²

An early example of immigrant workers' attempts to assert their rights through a labour union had occurred more than a decade before the introduction of the Springfield Plan to Welland. In September 1935, workers at the local Page Hersey Tubes plant—the majority of whom were of eastern and southern European descent—struck for higher wages and for recognition of an independent union. When the strike was settled and the company signed a six-month contract with the union, the union's constitution specified not only that all wage earners in the plant—irrespective of their trade, nationality, "race," creed, or political opinions—were eligible for membership, but also that they would have the right to express their views in their native languages. The intent of these clauses was to enable members of minority groups, who faced discrimination and lacked familiarity with the English language, to participate in decisions mainly concerning their workplace, and, at times, concerning the wider community as well.⁹³ However, the company's president soon succeeded in replacing the union with a joint committee consisting of representatives of both the employees and management. In contrast to the union, the joint committee allowed only employees who were "able to read and write the English language" and who were British subjects to run for office.⁹⁴

During the Second World War, when some of Welland's employers exploited the diversity of the town's population as a way to undermine working-class unity, industrial unions went out of their way to assure immigrant workers of their commitment to ending discrimination. An honorary member of the UE, Reverend Fern Sayles (of the All People's Mission), testified about these dynamics before Ontario's Select Committee to Inquire into Collective Bargaining between Employers and Employees. Sayles explained that he had gone in and talked to managers about cases of discrimination on an individual basis, and he had concluded that "only as labour is organized" and "management recognize[s] labour [rights] ... can the problems we have had all through these years be solved."⁹⁵

During the 1940s and 1950s, the UE and other industrial unions strove to ensure that non-English-speaking workers would become aware of the unions' determination to end racist employment discrimination by publicizing their plans through foreign-language posters, leaflets, and newspapers and through utilizing foreign-language interpreters during union meetings. Their efforts paid off. Despite potential dangers such as the blacklisting of union activists, members of the immigrant generation joined unions with enthusiasm, and their

92 Patrias and Savage, *Union Power*.

93 Sayles, *Welland Workers Make History*, p. 136.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

95 AO, Select Committee to Inquire into Collective Bargaining between Employers and Employees, RG 49 116, vol. IX, March 11, 1943, p. 791.

children became some of the most committed and effective union activists in Welland. As Serbian-born Mike Bosnich, the local UE business agent for many years, explained: immigrant workers supported his union because it gave them “a say in their wages [and] working conditions” and “a modicum of control over their futures.” The union gave them “the chance for self-respect and ...decency.”⁹⁶ Although union leaders did not always live up to ideals of inclusivity, the role of unions in incorporating minority workers into the Canadian polity and community life did not stop at the workplace.⁹⁷ In Welland and Crowland the UE activists helped to organize tenants' associations among residents in working-class immigrant neighbourhoods who in turn elected people of non-Anglo-Celtic background to represent them on municipal councils and local school boards.⁹⁸ In the midst of the war, the UE even called on the federal government to criminalize racist and religious discrimination.⁹⁹ Particularly in the immediate post-war years, union locals in the Niagara region pushed for anti-discrimination clauses in collective agreements.¹⁰⁰

In the mid-1980s, when Carmela Patrias conducted interviews with Welland residents of eastern and southern European descent who had been adolescents or young adults in the 1940s, none of them remembered the Springfield Plan experiment in Welland. By contrast, most of them mentioned the importance of labour unions as providing minority group members with a voice in their community.

Conclusion

Despite its brief influence in Welland and its failure to make significant inroads elsewhere in Ontario, the school experiment modelled on the American Springfield Plan reveals a great deal about Canadian understanding of citizenship and diversity in the mid-twentieth century. First, it reminds us that, whenever French Canadians settled outside Quebec in sufficient numbers, their view of Canada as a bilingual and bicultural—indeed a “biracial”—nation played an influential role in defining notions of citizenship. The struggle by Welland's and Crowland's French Canadians to assert their constitutional rights to Francophone, Roman Catholic education was an important reason for the American Springfield Plan's unsuitability as a citizenship education plan for Welland. In fact, tensions between the goals of the Springfield Plan's advocates and the aims of French Canadians in Welland in the late 1940s foreshadowed Québécois opposition to the introduction of the federal government's policy

⁹⁶ Interview with Mike Bosnich, Welland, November 1986.

⁹⁷ See, for example, AO, Proceedings of Ontario Select Committee to Inquire into Collective Bargaining between Employers and Employees, RG 49 116, vol. IX, March 11, 1943, pp. 869ff. See also Wendy Cuthbertson, *Labour Goes to War: The CIO and the Construction of a New Social Order, 1939-45* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012), pp. 77-91.

⁹⁸ Patrias, *Relief Strike*, pp. 31-32, 45.

⁹⁹ Cuthbertson, *Labour Goes to War*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁰ Patrias and Frager, “This is Our Country,” p. 20. Although some human rights historians have examined aspects of the Jewish Labour Committee's anti-racist activism, they have been slower to examine the roles of other union activists in postwar human rights campaigns. On the Jewish Labour Committee, see, for example, Lambertson, “The Dresden Story,” pp. 43-82.

of multiculturalism in 1971 on the grounds that it was designed to destroy the foundation of English-French dualism in Canada. Second, the diluted version of the Springfield Plan introduced in Welland tells us about the failure of influential, well-meaning Canadians to recognize the pervasiveness and seriousness of prejudice and discrimination in their country. Not only were some of the Plan's potentially most effective measures against discrimination abandoned, such as withholding information about the religious and national background of graduates seeking employment, but its main purpose of fighting prejudice and discrimination was downplayed. Instead, the Plan's much more general, and hence less controversial, promotion of civic participation and responsibility was highlighted.

Third, Welland's experimentation with the Springfield Plan reminds us that state-supported plans of citizenship training cannot fully explain the historical development of Canadian citizenship. In the case of the Springfield Plan, minority activists were far more aware than public officials of the limited potential of cultural and educational programs to integrate racialized minorities into the polity. The Jewish activists who promoted the introduction of the Plan to Ontario's schools did so precisely because they believed that the myth of racelessness presented a serious obstacle to the attainment of full citizenship rights by Canada's minorities. For them, the Plan's purpose was to spread awareness of the damaging consequences of racism among Canada's dominant groups and to offer comfort to minority group members through public recognition of the obstacles they faced and through the promise of access to equal rights.

However, as Rabbi Abraham Feinberg explained at a conference of American Reform rabbis: "Despite brave and sometimes effective ventures into progressive project-teaching methods, visual education and inter-cultural group experiments, such as the Springfield Plan ... techniques of good-will are in the main hortatory. Rabbis know the futility of preachment. It is difficult to detect a cause-effect line from programs of direct good-will indoctrination to revise discriminatory practices."¹⁰¹ Feinberg, like most Jewish activists after the war, came to believe that legislation offered more effective means of promoting tolerance and countering discrimination. Campaigns to introduce human rights legislation were built on the recognition that, rather than simply being a manifestation of prejudiced attitudes that could be cured through education, racist discrimination reflected the unequal diffusion of power in Canadian society.

Over the next decade, when minority group activists and their Anglo-Canadian allies campaigned for the introduction of fair practices acts that prohibited racist and religious discrimination in employment, housing, and the provision of public services, they were in effect demanding the broadening of citizenship rights so as to afford greater access to power for racialized minorities. Even following the enactment of such legislation, when these

101 Jewish Labor Committee, New York, box 30, file 15, Abraham Feinberg, "A Re-evaluation of the Good-Will Movement" (paper delivered at Central Conference of American Rabbis, June 25, 1947), pp. 8-9.

activists saw that only rarely were fair practices acts used effectively to combat discrimination, many of them continued to believe that state prohibition against racist and religious discrimination carried greater weight than good-will campaigns to promote tolerance.

Yet the lessons that the fate of such programs as the Springfield Plan taught minority activists had little impact on the state's citizenship programs. When Pierre Trudeau's government introduced the federal program of multiculturalism in 1971, its agenda was largely cultural. The policy recognized that non-British, non-French cultural communities were essential elements of Canada. It promised to assist such groups to "grow and contribute to Canada," to overcome "cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society," and to "promote creative encounters and interchange" among Canadian cultural groups.¹⁰² Not until the arrival of large numbers of immigrants of colour following the elimination of overtly racist criteria from Canada's immigration act did anti-discrimination become an official—though not well implemented—feature of the federal government's multiculturalism policy.

¹⁰² Statement by Prime Minister Trudeau in the House of Commons, October 8, 1971, cited in Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott, *The Challenge of Diversity: Multiculturalism in Canada* (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1992), pp. 281-282.