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M.A. Thesis Assessment

Jazykové politiky Kanady: Zhodnocení Trudeauovy politiky oficiálního bilingvismu

The linguistic debate in Canada has been hotly debated by scholars over the years. Ondřej (Ondra) Malý has written a very detailed analysis of the official bilingual policy instituted by Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Ondra has produced a work containing an introduction, five main chapters, and a conclusion.

In the introduction, Ondra states that bilingualism has not resulted in the unified Canadian national identity that Trudeau had envisaged. What is impressive about the introduction is that it gives the reader a clear idea about the line of argumentation as well as the sources utilized. Insofar as sources are concerned, Ondra has demonstrated his mastery of the internet. However, he has not failed to find wonderful printed sources as well.

The first main chapter addresses the theoretical background of bilingualism. I feel that the chapter more than suffices for Ondra's purposes. After all, his stated goal is to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of bilingualism in Canada. Any deeper discussion of theories would have thrown the dissertation off course and bored the reader to tears.

In the second main chapter, Ondra discusses the road to bilingualism in Canada. I am glad that he presents a balanced view of what transpired up until Trudeau managed to push through federal bilingualism. Ondra challenges the notion that French-speaking Canadians were victims of the English-speaking majority. He points out the darker side of Quebecois petty nationalism, which, in my view, should be seen as Quebecois chauvinism.

The third main chapter delves into the implementation of bilingualism on the federal level. The positive and negative results of this policy are discussed. Though Canadians

on the whole seem to have reconciled themselves to bilingualism, the Quebecois have tended to be dissatisfied.

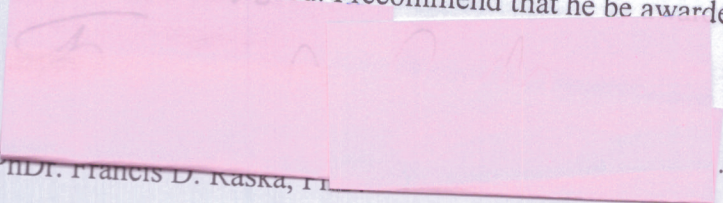
Matters in Quebec represent the topic of the fourth main chapter. It is clear that for bilingualism to be a fair policy for everyone, the French-speakers would have to respect their English-speaking fellow citizens. In Quebec, it is obvious that over the past several decades, the provincial authorities have done their utmost to support French at the expense of English. English-speakers have had to resort to legal action in response to chauvinistic pro-French policies on the local level. The federal government has been bending over backwards to appease Quebecois demands for the sake of preventing Quebecois secession and recent referendums regarding secession have been close anyhow. English-speakers are moving out of Quebec and the demographic changes might not bode well for pro-Canadian forces. Though there is no plan to hold another referendum on secession anytime soon, the French-speakers in Quebec will do their utmost to complicate the situation and make further demands on the federal government. Personally, I don't feel that there is much more the federal government can do without alienating other provinces, especially in the western part of Canada.

The fifth main chapter discusses the linguistic situation in other Canadian provinces. French-speaking communities outside Quebec are dwindling and aging. I would like to make the personal comment that, as most immigrants to Canada are not from French-speaking countries, those outside Quebec will almost certainly encourage English as well as their native vernacular. And why shouldn't they?

Ondra concludes that bilingualism has gained acceptance among the Canadian electorate, but that this should not be mistaken for the emergence of a pan-Canadian identity. Unlike Ondra, I am not so optimistic about the future of Canada. The growing political and economic power of the western provinces could signify a backlash against excessive

Quebecois demands and some wise economists just might present convincing arguments against the dubious, costly policy of bilingualism.

Ondra Malý has produced a fine M.A. thesis. His argumentation is sound and his sources are very good. I recommend that he be awarded an **excellent** mark.


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Prof. Francis D. Kaska, Ph.D.