Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900-1932

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This study examines two movements of Caribbean blacks to Canada between 1900 and 1932 from a political economy perspective. The first group of workers migrated to Nova Scotia to work in the coal mines and the coke ovens of the Sydney steel plant. Second, domestic workers were recruited from Guadeloupe and the British Caribbean to help fill the demand for cheap labour in Quebec, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. The essay demonstrates that the process of immigration control was structured by a dialectic of economic, political, and ideological relations: the demand of employers for cheap unskilled labour and the state's desire to exclude blacks as permanent settlers. Perceiving blacks as likely to create permanent economic and race-relations problems, immigration officials sought to avoid the problem by restricting the entry of black settlers to those whose services were in urgent demand.

Cet article analyse d'un point de vue politique et économique deux mouvements migratoires de la population noire des Caraïbes vers le Canada. Tout d'abord, l'immigration de cette population en Nouvelle Écosse pour travailler dans les mines de charbon et les hauts fourneaux de l'usine sidérurgique de Sydney. Le recrutement, ensuite, d'ouvriers de la Guadeloupe et des Caraïbes Britanniques pour répondre à la demande d'une main d'oeuvre à bon marché au Québec, en Ontario et en Nouvelle Écosse. La politique canadienne d'immigration en ce qui concerne la population noire des Caraïbes était organisée autour d'une dialectique de relations économique, politique et idéologique: la demande des employeurs pour une main d'oeuvre non spécialisée et à bon marché, et le désire de l'état d'exclure les noirs comme colons permanents. Ceux-ci étaient perçus par les fonctionnaires des bureaux de l'immigration comme risquant de créer de façon permanente des problèmes économiques et des relations conflictuelles entre les races.

Introduction

The history of the labour migration of Caribbean blacks to Canada in the early 1900s has been largely ignored in social science research in favour of the Oklahoma black migration to the prairies and the recent movement from the Caribbean.1 This study examines two migrations of Caribbean blacks to Canada between 1900 and 1932 from a political economy perspective. The first group of Caribbean immigrants went to Nova Scotia, especially to Sydney, to work in the steel mills and coal mines. The second group comprised female domestic workers recruited from Guadeloupe and the British Caribbean to help fill the demand for cheap domestic labour in Quebec, Ontario, and the Maritimes.² This paper provides insight into Canadian immigration policy and official attitudes towards blacks, particularly black women, in Canada between 1900 and 1932. It also offers a background for understanding immigration policies relating to other groups of black men and women, and facilitates the general analysis of Canada's racialized and gendered immigration policies from an historical perspective.

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Canada's immigration policy regarding Caribbean blacks between 1900 and 1932 was structured by a dialectic of economic, political, and ideological relations: employers' demand for cheap labour to do unskilled and domestic work was set in tension with the state's desire to exclude blacks as permanent settlers.3 Caribbean blacks provided a reserve army of labour; they were employed in a split labour market where they were paid less than white workers for doing the same work.4 For example, in 1910-11, Caribbean domestics in Quebec were paid less than half the monthly wage received by their white counterparts, though employers reported favourably on their performance. In the submerged, split labour market operating in the Sydney steel plant, blacks were restricted to working around the coke ovens or blast furnaces, relegated to the hottest, most physically demanding, and lowest paid jobs in the plant.⁵ This situation demarcates a colour line beyond which only white workers are able to advance.6 During economic contraction in the early 1900s, blacks were the first to be fired by most employers. As W.D. Scott, Immigration Superintendent, stated to the minister of immigration in 1918, "Coloured labour is not generally speaking in demand in Canada and it is not only regarded as the lowest grade, but it is the last to be taken on and the first to be discharged in most enterprises." These discriminatory hiring practices demonstrated blacks' subordination in economic, political, and ideological relations and helped to fuel Canada's discriminatory immigration policy against blacks. In turn, this policy further reinforced the subordinate status of black workers.

International labour migration was spurred by the uneven development associated with European colonialism and imperialism.8 This development was marked by the massive accumulation of capital and the concentration of productive resources in some countries, together with underdevelopment and dependence on those countries by others. For the Caribbean countries, the economic legacy of colonialism and slavery in the early 1900s was underdevelopment; a single cash crop of sugar was the extent of development in most of the islands. High levels of unemployment, limited opportunities, and low wages in Caribbean economies, coupled with a demand for cheap labour in the more developed capitalist countries like Canada, resulted in long traditions of emigration for Caribbean women and men.9 Caribbean governments and agencies encouraged emigration as a means of reducing their respective surplus populations and unemployment, stimulating economic growth through remittances sent home by emigrants, as well as improving the economic conditions of emigrants and their families. For example, in 1923 and 1924 the governor of the Leeward Islands asked Canada to take in 1,000 Antiguans as migrant harvesters in order to relieve Antigua's unemployment.10 Moreover, in 1928, Jamaica's Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) proposed to the Canadian government that an "intelligent, superior class of domestics" be trained with the understanding that the Canadian government would recruit them.11

While the Canadian state regarded immigration as a way of resolving labour

shortages and a source of future permanent citizens, its definition of suitable permanent citizens was structured by race, class, and gender. Section 38 of the 1910 Immigration Act empowered the governor-in-council to prohibit entry of immigrants belonging to "any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character." 12

Blacks were stigmatized as mentally, morally, physically, and socially inferior and a potential social problem in Canada. It was feared that any influx of black immigrants would cause economic and race-relations problems similar to those experienced in the United States.¹³ Immigration officials thus sought to avoid the problem by restricting the entry of black settlers. They argued that the importation of black labour as a temporary expedient to meet unusual demand pressures was not in the country's long-term interest if the immigrants were to remain permanently in Canada.¹⁴ As Scott argued in 1915,

It seems to me that Canada would be adopting a very short-sighted policy to encourage the immigration of coloured people of any class or occupation. At its best it would only be a policy of expediency and it is altogether unnecessary, in view of the present upheaval in Europe, which will unfortunately throw upon the labour market a large number of women of a most desirable class, who can be utilized for the permanent advantage of Canada ...[;] the Department is determined to shut down on any class of immigration which constitutes a serious problem and ... these coloured domestics ... are bound to meet with difficulties.¹⁵

Scott's statement indicated that the process of racialization and the ideologies of racism, sexism, and classism played a key role in the state's decision to restrict the entry of Caribbean blacks. Unlike British domestics who were expected to be prospective wives and mothers for the ideal Canadian home and thus contribute to Canada's "nation-building" enterprise, Caribbean women were seen as economic and social liabilities.¹⁶

The racialized, class-oriented, and gendered immigration policy concerning black people was based on the assumptions that they were biologically incapable of adjusting to the Canadian climate, incapable of assimilating themselves into Canadian society, and incapable of succeeding in its competitive, capitalist economy.¹⁷ As late as 1955, the director of immigration argued against the immigration of Caribbean domestics, rehearsing an argument familiar during the period 1900 to 1932. In his words

It is from experience, generally speaking, that coloured people in the present state of the white man's thinking are not a tangible asset, and as a result are more or less ostracized. They do not assimilate readily and pretty much vegetate to a low standard of living ...[;] many cannot adapt themselves to our climatic conditions. To enter into an agreement which would have the effect of increasing coloured immigration to this country would be an act of misguided generosity since it would not have the effect of bringing about a worthwhile solution to the problem of

coloured people and would quite likely intensify our own social and economic problems.¹⁸

Another assumption in Canada's immigration policy was that working-class Caribbean women were "immoral," likely to become single parents, and eventually public charges. These stereotypes of the "bad" black woman were used to justify the restriction and exclusion - even deportation - of Caribbean domestics. For instance, in July 1911, eight Guadeloupean domestics were denied entry to Canada when it was judged that they were likely to become a public charge because they were single parents. The immigration officer surmised that they were likely to become pregnant again and would probably become a drain upon the public purse. In that year, the domestic scheme (which had encouraged the immigration of Guadeloupean women to Quebec) was closed to further entries on the grounds that they were morally and physically unfit.²⁰

These racialized, patriarchal, and class-based assumptions encouraged the belief that the economic and social cost of black immigration far outweighed the economic benefits. Thus, the entry of black immigrants was severely restricted except when there was an urgent demand for their labour. For example, in 1916 the Dominion Iron and Steel Company in Nova Scotia was given permission to import 1,000 Caribbean labourers because suitable labour was not available from other sources. As Scott explained to the Inspector of Immigration Agencies in the Maritimes, "The production of steel and coal must go on even at some expenses to the country, and the concession is made on the principle of being the lesser evil. You can readily understand how unwilling we would be here to make the concession under any but the strongest reasons." However, the evidence suggests that most of the labourers were recruited from among "Austrians" released from the Ontario and Quebec internment camps. From 1915 to 1918 only 177 Caribbean blacks were admitted to Canada.

The main source of data for this paper is the files of the immigration branch which exercised control over migration to Canada between 1900 and 1932. These files give an indication of the state's aim in forming immigration policy and the actual practices of state officials. Given that these documents were not initially intended for public consumption, they provide a more accurate picture of social processes than the public documents of state agencies.²³ However, they offer an incomplete picture of the extent of deportation of Caribbean domestics.

The discussion is organized as follows: the paper examines Canada's immigration policy and the migration of Caribbean blacks to Nova Scotia, particularly to Sydney. Second, it investigates the migration of Caribbean domestics.

Immigration of Caribbean Blacks to Nova Scotia

Caribbean blacks began migrating to Canada in very small numbers at the turn of the century. They travelled on schooners that traded in the Caribbean

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and landed in Halifax, Nova Scotia and other Maritime ports. The schooner captains increased their profits by selling passage on the return run for \$20 to \$30, the passengers providing their own food and hammocks. Since they had no difficulty meeting immigration regulations - "good" character, physical, and mental health, and the \$25 fee - they were admitted. The collector of customs at Port Hawkesbury described those arriving at his port as members of "the better class"; most of them had trades such as carpentry and mechanics. Many were Barbadians whose transportation costs were subsidized by their home government.²⁴

Despite their skills, most of them were restricted to jobs in the Sydney mines and the steel plant's coke ovens because of the segregated workforce and the myth that blacks could withstand the heat better than whites. Some Caribbean blacks worked in service occupations (restaurant waiters and domestics), in trades, and in the shipyards in Halifax and Collingwood, Ontario. Their numbers were small, however, and there was no indication that any became public charges. Those who did not find work in Nova Scotia soon migrated to Boston.²⁵ The chief of police in Sydney, where the majority of Caribbean blacks found employment, spoke of them in 1909 as "always well-dressed and as being very civil in their manners."²⁶ Condescending as this acknowledgement was, it indicated that there was no cause for concern.

The Dominion Iron and Steel Company (DISCO) also imported Caribbean blacks to work in the mines and around the steel plant's coke ovens. The company relied on cheap and controllable immigrant labour to reduce its costs in order to compete effectively with American iron and steel producers. However, its isolated location, low wages, undesirable working and "wretched" living conditions made it difficult for the company to maintain a steady supply of cheap labour, particularly during busy periods of full employment. For example, Alabama blacks recruited by DISCO in 1899 to work around the coke ovens left Cape Breton shortly after their arrival.27 Thus, from time to time, the company sent ethnic agents to recruit fellow immigrant workers. Between 1912 and 1914, management sent two Barbadian steel workers to Barbados to recruit labourers. The company paid the workers' transportation costs, which were later deducted from their wages. In the fiscal years from 1912 to 1915 more than 200 Caribbean blacks were admitted to Canada annually, predominantly to Nova Scotia. In 1920-21, DISCO also recruited 61 labourers from the Caribbean to work in the mines.28

Despite favourable reports about Caribbean blacks and employers' continuing demands for their cheap labour, the immigration branch was determined to exclude black immigrants who were deemed "undesirable." As Scott stated in 1914,

The government does not encourage the immigration of coloured people. There are certain countries from which immigration is encouraged and certain races of people considered as suited to this [country] and its conditions, but Africans, no matter where they come from are not among

the races sought, and, hence, Africans no matter from what country they come are in common with the uninvited races, not admitted to Canada.²⁹

In order to stop Caribbean blacks from entering the Maritimes, the immigration branch decided to tighten up local inspections by means of strict enforcement of immigration regulations. When this strategy failed, immigration agents were privately advised to exclude Caribbean blacks even when they complied with the Immigration Act. As the Inspector of Immigration Agencies in the Maritimes suggested to Scott, "every obstacle is to be put in their way, and if everything else fails ... reject them under subsection (g) of Sec. 3 of the Act, as 'likely to become a public charge.'"30 Caribbean blacks who complied with every immigration condition - health, money, assured employment, and relatives in Canada - were rejected as liable to become a public charge, particularly during the 1914-15 economic recession. It was reported that hundreds of Caribbean blacks were employed by DISCO while thousands of steel workers, including scores of Caribbean blacks, were laid off. Blacks were identified as potential public charges because of economic reasons and racism in immigration policy and employment. Blacks were more likely than whites to be unemployed during economic recession. At the same time they were blamed for taking away jobs from Canadians.31 The immigration branch justified the exclusion of Caribbean blacks on the grounds that the government was encouraging only farmers and domestics to immigrate rather than those "whose presence in Canada would tend to add to the congestion of our towns and cities."32

However, the immigration department's concern over unemployment was partly an argument designed for public consumption. Immigration officials were unwilling to permit the entry of black immigrant labour even when there were labour shortages in Canada. For example, in January 1916, Scott refused to give DISCO permission to import 150 Caribbean blacks to fill labour shortages in its mines in Springhill and Sydney. He concluded that there "was absolutely no hope" of bringing blacks from the Caribbean or anywhere else, and suggested the company recruit miners from Newfoundland.33 As for farmers, he argued that the record of American blacks showed that very few blacks did farming in Canada and they were generally unsuccessful. Though they were in demand as domestics, they were not likely to succeed in Canada. Thus, Caribbean blacks were excluded partly because of humanitarianism. After "years of experience," the state "decided not only in the interest of Canada, but also in the interest of coloured people themselves, not to encourage their settlement in this country."34 The immigration branch was trying to stop Caribbean immigration while making it appear that they were not making decisions based on race.

In addition to barring blacks at the port-of-entry, the immigration branch tried to stop black immigration at its source. Steamship agents were strongly urged to discourage Caribbean immigration (for example, to stop selling tickets to blacks except merchants, students, and tourists), and they were expected to

comply. Apart from the risk of having to return immigrants rejected at the portof-entry, steamship agents could be liable for the cost of detaining passengers and returning deportees within three years (five in 1919) of their arrival in Canada.35 Nine Caribbean blacks who arrived on the Chaleur at Saint John in July 1914 were detained as likely to become public charges. Despite protests from the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company that the passengers left the Caribbean before the immigration branch asked the shipping agencies to discourage black immigration, and the agency's promise to obtain guaranteed employment for the men, all nine appeals against deportation were dismissed. Scott argued that the assurance of employment was insufficient reason for admission, given acute unemployment. The jobs could be filled by Canadians. This incident and information from immigration officers that they were instructed to reject all blacks led steamship companies to conclude that the risks of having to return rejected immigrants, the cost of detaining passengers, and the cost of returning deportees after three years were too great. Thus, they refused to sell tickets to Caribbean blacks unless they had a "permit" from the Canadian government.36

This discriminatory immigration policy antagonized Caribbean people. The Barbados Advocate and Guyana's Demerara Daily Chronicle protested against Canada's "illegal discrimination." They argued that it was likely to hinder Caribbean-Canadian relations. Though the governor-in-council had authority under Section 38 of the 1910 Immigration Act to prohibit the entry of immigrants deemed undesirable, there was no regulation prohibiting the entry of blacks. The exclusion of black settlers was illegal. The Demerara Daily Chronicle's editor further argued that, since Caribbean people were fighting in France to defend the British Empire, they could adapt to Canadian climate and society. He suggested that if the Canadian government did not give a satisfactory explanation for excluding Caribbean people, the Guyana Chamber of Commerce should abolish the reciprocity treaty and institute a trade boycott against Canada.

These reports dismayed influential institutions with interests in Canada. For example, members of the West Indian League, which included corporations with trade interests and investments in the Caribbean, were particularly concerned. The league's secretary complained to Scott that the immigration branch's actions would hurt Canadian-Caribbean trade. He warned that immigration officials must take steps to clear up the impression that Canada did not want black immigrants. Some employers also expressed concern. For example, DISCO argued that it had an urgent demand for Caribbean miners in Springhill and Sydney.³⁸

The mulattoes or "coloured" people, who occupied an intermediary position between whites and blacks in the colour stratification in the Caribbean, were alarmed about Canada's discriminatory immigration policy. They asked what "degree of mixture in the blood" would qualify an individual for admission? As Rev. Cropper from Guyana's Presbyterian Church explained:

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These coloured people are to all intents and purposes white, and would rank as such in a community where the racial question was not raised ... the situation is not helping forward the relations between Canada and these Colonies where so large a section of the population is of mixed blood of every variety of degree and where the white man from England and Scotland does not hesitate to marry the coloured lady of education and refinement.³⁹

These complaints were to no avail. Before the 1950s, Caribbean blacks did not have the economic and political power resources to hinder Canadian investments and Canadian-Caribbean trade. The immigration branch denied that it discriminated against Caribbean blacks. However, Scott sought to avoid further criticisms by advising his officers to be more diplomatic in public. He wrote

I notice in a number of Board cases the cause of rejection includes the statement that the person rejected is a Negro and that instructions have been received to prevent the entry of Negroes in every possible way. While it is true that we are not seeking the immigration of coloured people ... I do not think it is advisable to insert any notice of the instructions or policy of the Department in a Board decision or any other correspondence.... I am sure you will appreciate the view I have expressed and will understand the reason therefor.⁴¹

In the immediate post-war years, Canada enacted more restrictive immigration regulations because of the country's high unemployment rate, instances of labour unrest (for example, the Winnipeg General Strike), and the desire to restore the Anglo-Saxon character of the population. One of the most effective regulations used to restrict Caribbean blacks and other people of colour from the British Empire was Order-in-Council P.C. 717 of 1922, which prohibited the landing of immigrants except farmers, farm labourers and domestics, the wives and children of residents in Canada, and British subjects from white English-speaking countries (Britain, Australia, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and South Africa), and American citizens.⁴² Since blacks were stereotyped as not adaptable to farming, the regulation excluded Caribbean blacks except "dependents" and domestics slated for assured employment. Caribbean blacks were continuously rejected at Maritime ports under P.C. 717 of 1922. For example, seven Caribbean blacks, including five who travelled first-class on the Caraquet, and whom the steamship agent thought were qualified under the regulations, were detained entrance at Saint John, in September 1922. Thus, the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company concluded that it was unsafe to bring Caribbean blacks regardless of class, occupation, or gender.43

Caribbean people's concerns regarding Canada's discriminatory immigration policy were exacerbated by the five-day detention in 1925 of a 16-year-old Jamaican woman in Montreal who did not obtain a "permit" to enter Canada. It was reported that she had a nervous breakdown after being treated

like a prisoner while in detention. A stinging editorial in the September *Daily Gleaner* of that year argued that Canada's lack of frankness about its immigration policy was likely to cause a protest against Canadian-Caribbean trade and Canadian investments in the Caribbean. As the *Daily Gleaner* put it

We need the Canadian market and Canada needs our market quite as much. Canada is doing us no favour to trade with us on a preferential basis, for unless Canada received a preference in the British West Indies she would be completely shut out of our markets. Canadian banks are established here, and it is well-known that a large amount of West Indian capital is sent by these banks to Canada for the development of Canadian agriculture. We have no doubt that, if all the facts were known, it would be seen that West Indian capital was doing more to develop Canada than Canadian capital was doing to develop the West Indies; consequently there is no reason why the British West Indies should assume towards Canada a spaniel's attitude, or why Canada should imagine that it is conferring more benefits upon these colonies than we confer upon the Dominion. This being so, we should always approach trade questions in a practical and sensible manner, and emigration questions in a similar fashion. We for one do not confuse the two.⁴⁴

Though Caribbean blacks did not have the power to pressure Canada to liberalize its discriminatory immigration policy, Canadian trade commissioners in the Caribbean felt embarrassed when dealing with complaints from prospective immigrants, particularly middle-class mulattoes who satisfied the requirements of the immigration act. The commissioners' real problem was how to tell Caribbean people that they would not be treated as desirable immigrants while the Canadian government was advocating a closer relationship between Canada and the British Caribbean. The trade commissioner in Jamaica, made this clear in posing several questions to the deputy minister of immigration in 1925:

Just what are your requirements in regard to immigrants from Jamaica to Canada? ... It is doubtless very convenient to place the responsibility on the intending immigrant, but it puts me in a very awkward position here when they come and complain. All the time the people are reading that Canada wants desirable immigrants, and a closer rapprochement between Canada and the British West Indies is loudly advocated. Can I tell Jamaicans that they are not wanted in Canada? The situation is doubtless difficult What I want is something cut and dried, so that I do not have to continue hedging.⁴⁵

The deputy minister was blunt in his reply: appeasement of Caribbean blacks was unnecessary. He replied that if the commissioner must be frank, he should tell Jamaicans that Canada was seeking closer trade relations with the Caribbean; she was not seeking immigration; and non-whites were not wanted. However, the immigration branch was more diplomatic when dealing with influential people in the Caribbean who could jeopardize Canadian-Caribbean

trade. For example, when a retired American businessman in Jamaica advertised in Canada for capable and willing Jamaican domestics for an advanced \$150 fee, the assistant deputy minister of immigration asked the Department of External Affairs to inform him diplomatically that Canada did not encourage black immigration.⁴⁷

In sum, immigration of Caribbean black settlers to Canada was severely restricted even when there was a demand for cheap unskilled labour. Caribbean blacks protested against this discriminatory immigration policy. Because of unequal economic and political power relations between Canada and the Caribbean, Canada furthered its economic interests in the British Caribbean while strongly discouraging immigration of Caribbean blacks.

Immigration of Caribbean Domestics

To return to the matter of domestics Caribbean women began migrating to Canada at the turn of the century. By 1909 there were several Caribbean women working as domestics in Nova Scotia. Some were recruited as cheap and dependable workers by employers who visited the Caribbean. Like other immigrant women, they were in great demand as domestics since few Canadians were attracted to this work; indeed, most Canadians left such work as soon as possible because of deplorable working conditions - low pay, long hours, hard labour, low status, isolation, and lack of independence and respect. Unlike European women, most Caribbean women remained in domestic service since other areas of employment were closed to them.

In 1910-11 the first Caribbean Domestic Scheme, which involved 100 Guadeloupean women, helped to fill the demand for cheap labour in Quebec. These Guadeloupean women were recruited by J. M. Authier, a former American consul in Guadeloupe, on behalf of Quebec's middle class. The \$80 fare to Canada for these women was pre-paid by their employers in return for two years of service at a monthly wage of five dollars compared to the wage of \$12-15 paid to other domestics. ⁵⁰ Even with the transportation costs from Guadeloupe to Quebec, Caribbean domestics were cheaper to employ.

The first group of 16 domestics arrived in Montreal in September 1910 to work in Trois-Rivières, Montreal, and Quebec City and seemed to have attracted little attention. However, the expected arrival of two larger groups in 1911 prompted the immigration branch to take action to prevent "too much" black immigration. New York and Montreal immigration officials were instructed to examine the women very carefully and make detailed reports in order to determine their desirability as immigrants and their likelihood of success as domestics. Fifty-eight women from Guadeloupe arrived in Montreal on 7 April 1911. Many were experienced domestics. They were strong, healthy, and intelligent; over 70 percent were literate. Immigration officers also described them as "a good class" of immigrants who were likely to succeed, given the demand for domestics. ⁵²

About the same time that the western boards of trade were petitioning the

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federal government to stop American blacks from taking up Canadian homesteads, the *Montreal Herald* reported that the 58 "dark-skinned" domestics were the advanced guard for others to follow." Forty-eight Guadeloupean women were expected on the next trip. Evidently, some Canadians were opposed to what they perceived as an influx of undesirable women and future "unfit" mothers. As an Albertan wrote to C.A. Magrath, Member of Parliament,

Are there many negro women who are desirable immigrants, they will certainly all be mothers some day? We may not be able to forbid negroes from entering Canada, though we do stop Chinese, Japs and E. Indians, but importing them wholesale, paying their passages, finding places for them is another matter.⁵⁵

Such a stereotypical statement implies the devaluation of black women as mothers, a view that had its origin in slavery. The dominant ideology of motherhood ("purity" and making and caring for children within the context of the "ideal" nuclear and patriarchal family) constructed some locations within social relations of race, class, and citizenship that were more appropriate for motherhood than others. The portrayal of black women as undesirable immigrants and as less deserving of motherhood reinforced their subordination.⁵⁶

In keeping with the stereotype of black women as immoral, Collier's Magazine reported in 1911 that Guadeloupean domestics were met at the Windsor Station by red-light district women who spirited them away to serve as prostitutes. However, a special police investigation found the story unfounded. Actually, the domestics were met at the train station by their employers, "some of the best ladies in Montreal" who brought them warm coats. None of these women were employed in the red-light district.⁵⁷

The immigration branch did a half-hearted survey of the 96 employers of the Guadeloupean domestics only two months after their arrival to find out whether they were satisfied with their new employees' performance and conduct and whether further immigration of Caribbean domestics was desirable. Of the 55 replies in the departmental files, most employers expressed satisfaction with their employees because they were cheap, intelligent, industrious, devoted, fond of children, docile, polite, submissive, and, unlike some white domestics, "they knew their place." Moreover, they were devout Catholics and spoke French. A Supreme Court judge commended his two employees for reading and learning English during their spare time. Some employer frankly wrote

I am happy to reply that the two servants whom I had brought over from Guadeloupe, give me entire satisfaction in every respect; they are clean, docile, attentive to their work, and their moral conduct leaves nothing to be desired. There is a great difference between the service that they give us and that we have from the greater number of the whites who have been in our employ during the last 30 years. The fact is that housework has become almost impossible with regard to the whites, the intelligent girls work in the shops and factories and there remain for us a small

number, at exorbitant prices, of prostitutes and imbeciles who spoil everything The importation of the creoles is a benefit and the Government should favour their importation.⁵⁹

Employers' responses indicated the demand for exploitable domestic labour. They also reflected stereotypes about black women (for example, the "black mammy"), the maternalistic mistress-servant relationship, and the fragmentation of gender along racial and class lines. Employers ranked the personality of the domestic worker and the kinds of relationships they were able to establish with them as important or more important than job-performance considerations. As Judith Rollins points out, the personal relationships between employer and domestic worker make domestic work more "profoundly exploitative than other comparable occupations."

Employers suggested that the scheme be continued as a solution to the "servant problem" and that men be included to work as coachmen and domestics. An employer was so satisfied with her employee's performance, she sent for two male domestics. However, some added the proviso that Caribbean women remain in the country as domestics; they should be carefully selected because there were rumours that some had "illegitimate" children. One of the domestics who had a baby shortly after her arrival in Montreal was dismissed from her first job because her employer felt she spent too much time with her new-born baby. However, she was subsequently employed by a city physician, who was pleased with her work. 62

A few employers were dissatisfied with their employees' performance and conduct. For example, one complained, "I do not believe that these girls will ever be capable of rendering any good service to our Canadian families or others, they do not wish to submit, have not a good will and are very exacting." Another fired his employee after a month's trial, "having established the fact that her climatic indolence was backed by a strong dose of bad will which rendered her quite unsuitable."

Despite favourable reports from most employers, Scott recommended to Frank Oliver, the immigration minister, that the Caribbean Domestic Scheme should be discontinued because the women were "not all of good moral character." Such a view clearly demonstrated the conflict between the demand for cheap and controllable domestic labour and the state's racialized, gendered, and class-based immigration policy. Given that domestic labour was not part of capitalist production, immigration branch officials thought that the admission of Caribbean domestics was unnecessary. Scott also emphasized to Oliver the need to exclude black immigrants, especially Americans going to Saskatchewan and Alberta as homesteaders.

The immigration branch sought legislation in order to exclude blacks. An Order-in-Council, P.C. 1324, was passed in 1911 under Section 38 of the 1910 Immigration Act to prohibit black immigration for one year. However, the order was cancelled for political reasons. Such an order would have raised undesirable diplomatic problems with the Caribbean and American

governments. It would have antagonized black voters in Ontario and Nova Scotia who had traditionally supported Liberal candidates. Moreover, the informal restrictions instituted by the department were probably considered sufficient to exclude blacks.⁶⁷

In June 1911, Scott rejected Authier's application for the admission of 150 Guadeloupean domestics to meet the increasing demand. However, since he had already given him permission to bring in a smaller group, those emigrants would be admitted if they arrived before 30 June 1911. Scott warned him that if any further domestics arrived after that date, they would be rejected if that action could be taken legally. In July 1911, 10 domestics from Guadeloupe arrived in New York destined for Quebec. All were rejected as likely to become a public charge - two for medical reasons and eight because they were single parents. The scheme was closed to further immigration with the excuse that the Guadeloupean women were physically and morally undesirable.

Some of the Guadeloupean domestics were subsequently deported as likely to become public charges because of "tuberculosis, insanity, and immorality."11 Evidently, some were deported because they had "illegitimate" children in Canada. Some Caribbean domestics who had lost jobs could not find work during the 1914-15 recession when it was reported that there were scores of unemployed Canadian women in cities and towns willing to do domestic work. In addition to expelling immigrants deemed "undesirable," deportation helped the state to reduce costs for social services (such as child rearing and education) and maintenance of unemployed Caribbean domestics by redirecting these costs back to the Caribbean. In 1913-15, Caribbean blacks had the highest deportation rate in Canada: 91 were deported.72 For decades, such statistics were used to justify the restricted entry of Caribbean blacks, particularly women.73 Behavioural and physical characteristics such as mental disorder and tuberculosis, which were associated with such structural and psychological factors as isolation, loneliness, stress, and poor living and working conditions, were attributed to racial characteristics. Except for the YWCA which assisted some Jamaican domestics in the late 1920s, immigration societies did not provide social services for Caribbean domestics as they did for British ones. Unlike the latter who were regarded as preferred immigrants, and thus likely to be "fit" mothers who would contribute to the material, ideological, and physical reproduction of the Empire, Caribbean women were recruited solely for their labour power.74

The evidence suggests there were fewer deportees among Caribbean miners and steel workers in Cape Breton than among Caribbean domestics. During the 1914-15 recession, some Caribbean miners and steel workers returned to the Caribbean until they were recalled for work. Thus, they were in effect migrant workers. This concealed migrant-worker system offered significant economic and political advantages to employers and the state. In a migrant-labour system, the costs of renewing the work force are passed on to the sending countries while the receiving country is responsible for maintaining workers only during

periods of employment. Moreover, mining and steel production were capital-producing industries and considered more important than domestic service which was not regarded as productive work. Thus, Caribbean domestics were more expendable. Miners and steel workers also had support systems: their families, neighbourhoods, and black political and social organizations (for example, by 1921 Saint Philips African Orthodox Church and two branches of the Universal Negro Improvement Association). Since immigration officers were instructed to exclude all Caribbean blacks even when their applications were in compliance with the immigration act, the number of unwarranted deportation cases is unknown.

The demand for Caribbean domestics, particularly in the rural areas, increased during World War I as Canadian women increasingly left domestic service to work in the war industry, replacing the men who had joined the military. The supply of British domestics was also cut off during the war. The superintendent of immigration in New Brunswick, James Gilchrist, pleaded with Scott, Ottawa's superintendent, to allow the importation of Caribbean domestics:

Our rural districts are simply starved for the want of domestic help. While there is a fair supply in our cities and towns, it is impossible to get a girl to work in the farm house, no matter what the conditions or pay, as they are determined to stay in the towns, and I am positive that if we had one hundred of these coloured girls in the country districts, they would not displace any of our own help, but would be a great blessing to our women in general.⁷⁷

However, the immigration of Caribbean domestics continued to be strongly discouraged, particularly since the state expected an influx of British domestics after the war. Some employers asked their members of Parliament to assist them in getting permission to recruit Caribbean domestics. Scott explained to a member that if the immigration branch allowed all blacks entry, there would be a black domestic in every other home.

The Department has always depended on the national spirit of our people to assist in keeping this country for the classes best-suited and most wanted here. I trust that those who are pressing you to assist them in getting coloured help from the West Indies will take a wider view of the situation and decide to support the policy ... which I am sure appeals to the good judgment of Canadians generally.⁷⁸

Thus, he expected Canadians to "suffer some little inconvenience" until the end of the war, rather than admit Caribbean domestics who would be a permanent problem.⁷⁹

When the anticipated influx of British domestics did not occur, there was active recruitment and encouragement of domestics from continental Europe. However, employers continued to request permission to recruit cheap domestic labour from the Caribbean, particularly with the return of prosperity in 1923. The number of Caribbean domestics admitted to Canada increased from 24 in

1924-25, to 67 in 1927-28, to 152 in 1929-30. Between 1927 and 1931, domestics comprised 78 percent of the 499 black Caribbean immigrants. The national immigration and travellers' aid secretary reported in 1928 that employers in Toronto were very satisfied with the performance and conduct of Jamaican domestics. However, some Jamaican domestics in Toronto who tried to negotiate a contract that specified the working conditions they wanted (for example, "no washing," "no children," "all evenings off") were facing at that time keen competition from Finnish domestics who seemed willing to accept any kind of domestic work. With the beginning of the Depression in 1930-31, only 89 Caribbean domestics were admitted because of restrictive immigration regulations. During the Depression itself immigration almost ceased. For example, only 15 Caribbean immigrants, including two domestics, arrived in 1931-32.

Conclusion

This study of Canada's immigration policy regarding Caribbean blacks between 1900 and 1932 supports the view that immigration policy was structured by a dialectic of economic, political, and ideological relations: the demand of employers for cheap labour and the state's desire to exclude blacks as permanent settlers. The immigration branch perceived black people as likely to cause difficult economic and race-relations problems in the country. Thus, the immigration of Caribbean blacks was severely restricted. Only 2,378 Caribbean blacks were admitted to Canada between 1904 and 1932 mostly as labourers to work in the steel plant and coal mines in Nova Scotia and as domestics.⁸³ Given the historical importance of the domestic service for black women in Canada, further research is needed on the lives of these early Caribbean domestics and the impact of that labour migration on the black community.

NOTES

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