

Book Reviews

Pour une politique de population

Jacques Henripin

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Professor Karol Krotki always referred to Jacques Henripin as the “dean of Canadian demography.” The title remains very legitimate. After publishing his dissertation as *La Population canadienne au début du XVIII siècle* (P.U.F., 1954), he produced one of the longest lasting products in the 1961 census monograph series, as *Tendances et facteurs de la fécondité au Canada* (1968), then with Evelyne Lapierre-Adamcyk, the results of a fertility survey in Quebec as *La Fin de la revanche des berceaux: Qu'en pensent les Québécois?* (P.U.M., 1974). For the green paper on immigration he did *L'immigration et le déséquilibre linguistique* (1974), which was later expanded as the classic *La Situation démographique du Canada: évolution passée et prospective*, with Réjean Lachapelle (Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1980).

The second fertility survey in Quebec was published as *Les Enfants qu'on n'a plus au Québec* (P.U.M., 1981). Four further books followed his retirement from the University of Montreal: the cunningly entitled *Naître ou ne pas être* (1989), *Souvenirs et réflexions d'un rochon* (1998), *Les Enfants, la pauvreté et la richesse au Canada* (2000), *La Métamorphose de la population canadienne*, before this volume on *Pour une politique de population* (2004).

As with the other more recent publications, this is a “think piece”, well informed by the evolving demographics. He starts by observing that any policy is necessarily a judgement accompanied by an intervention, and that a judgement

needs to be preceded by analysis. He sees population policy as having two objectives: either correcting the undesirable elements of population itself, or adapting the society to undesirable demographic developments. The 'problems' in the Quebec population are listed as: population decline, large increase in proportions elderly, decline of the family, and population composition by ethnic, linguistic and occupational groups.

The first chapter lists the undesirable aspects of the demographic evolution. These include the prospective population decline, which has already started in outlining regions of the province and in the population under 45, and the decline of the relative share of Quebec in the population of Canada. The projections are those of the Institut Statistique du Québec for 2004. It is worth noting that the analysts at ISQ are finding that their medium assumptions were too low. Who knows, this may show the impact of Jacques Henripin who has been alerting people about the undesirable demographics for some time. In discussing the evolving ethnic composition, he warns that 'xenophobia is well installed in the hearts and minds of humans'. On language, he does not see that French is in danger, partly, he proposes, due to Bill 101, of which we now see that certain provisions had unnecessary rigor. On learning languages, he proposes that schools have 'immersion semesters' in the other national language. In terms of occupational composition, he observes that possibly a quarter of university students are not particularly engaged, that there are certain areas where there are more students than needs in the society for these occupations, and that there are too few persons at CEGEPs taking specialized technical training.

The chapter on the role of migration analyses the relative impact of migration and fertility on population change. The author proposes that, depending on emigration levels, it would take well over 50,000 immigrants per year to prevent population decline in Quebec with a total fertility rate of 1.6 births per woman. He proposes a modest 'balanced' approach with an increase to a fertility of 1.8, and an international immigration of 30,000 to 40,000.

Turning to fertility and the causes of low fertility, Henripin pays initial attention to economic factors, especially the deteriorating relative situation of young persons, and young men in particular, along with the costs of children and the reduced standard of living that comes with the birth of a first child, due in part to the lower incomes during parental leave. He then considers marital insecurity and various factors associated with individualism. The 'principal tenants of a moderately pro-natalist policy' include: financial support from the state (family allowance and tax provisions), child care, parental leave, but also policies related to work (flexibility), school (longer hours of child supervision at elementary school ages) and health care (free dental care).

Policies relating to aging include both attempts to change the demographics (through immigration and fertility) and adaptations to the changed demographics

(higher proportions working, later retirement, better capitalization of public pensions, capitalization also in the health sector, and reducing the costs of care).

Bravo to this 'tour de force' on population policy. It expresses well the wisdom of someone who has long studied the dynamics of population, especially fertility, immigrant and demo-linguistics. We have here the basic analyses through which to make judgements on the undesirable elements of population dynamics, and an excellent panorama of areas to consider both to change the demographics and to adapt to the evolving situation. We also have the clear judgements of someone who does not hide his own views.