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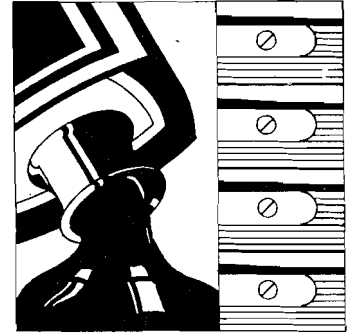
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Editorial



The media have often been criticized for sensationalism and negativism. As part of the media, *The Asianadian* is no exception.

Our "sensationalism" takes the form of potentially explosive Asianadian "gut history". Publicizing, even propagandizing the horrors, injustices and suffering of the past to an unenlightened Canadian public is admirable and meritorious. The often scandalous and perverse treatment of Asian Canadians in the last one hundred years (and to some extent today) adds perspective to what is commonly accepted as Canadian History. The danger, however, and we should not be oblivious to it, is in being overly preoccupied with

past traumas. This would be unhealthy and unproductive. Energy and talent which could be otherwise used to shape future history are expended in excavating for the injustices and presenting old arguments in new variations.

The Asianadian's tone has often been inordinately negative. Perhaps, it is the case that Asian Canadians are doomed forever to racism, discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping in one form or another, and as such we have perfectly good reason to be pessimistic. For example, Bobby Siu, in "The Bubble Bursts" posits that though Chinese Canadians may be highly educated professionals, they've unintentionally trapped themselves within socially dead-end niches.

This magazine was originally conceived as a response to the mass media, which gave little coverage to Asian Canadian issues. When it deigned to do so, misconception, ignorance, unconscious racism and

defamation were the order of the day. *The Asianadian* represented an alternative. Just as the media have a special responsibility (theoretically) to be fair and objective, *The Asianadian* for the sake of credibility must do the same. Double standards should not be tolerated. In this regard, writers should not use *The Asianadian* as launching pads for personal vendettas but whenever possible, use objectivity and encourage the positive.

Alan Wang's "Six Years in Canada: A Personalized Philosophy" points out what has been missing in *The Asianadian*: Balance and Positive approach. Wang's article dwells on development of life skills geared to the Asianadian or, in a broader sense, Asianadian self-actualization. Wang poses some legitimate questions: Why can't we use stumbling blocks as stepping stones? Why should we dwell on the past when there is so much to be done now? Why can't we share positive as well as negative experiences?

It's always easier to put down real or imagined opponents (take your choice of government institutions, the media, bureaucracy, conservatism, reactionism) but much more difficult to offer solutions. Sensationalism, negativism and pessimism have overstated themselves. We as Asianadians are in a unique position to give constructive criticism, challenge existing structures and develop strategies to overcome the problems we face in Canadian society. If we are ingenious enough, we'll use the stumbling blocks for stepping stones. If not, we'll remain in our mental straitjackets, theorizing about our unhappy past and gloomy future.

Danny Lee

ASIANADIAN AIMS

- 1) To find new dignity and pride in being Asian in Canada.
- 2) To promote an understanding between Asian Canadians and other Canadians.
- 3) To speak out against those conditions, individuals and institutions perpetuating racism in Canada.

- 4) To stand up against the distortions of our history in Canada, stereotypes, economic exploitations, and the general tendency towards injustice and inequality practised on minority groups.
- 5) To provide a forum for Asian Canadian writers, artists, musicians, etc.
- 6) To promote unity by bridging the gap between Asians with roots in Canada and recent immigrants.

the bubble bursts:

THE COMING CRISES OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY

bobby siu

If we place the Chinese community within the larger changing structure and see it as a part of the historical process, it may not be difficult to find that the position of Chinese in Canada is actually on shaky ground. Several crises are expected to hit the Chinese community. These crises are: (1) the incapacity of Chinese to translate their education investment into economic rewards; (2) the Chinese are getting occupations where demotion, lay-offs, and/or bankruptcy are forthcoming; and (3) the incapacity of Chinese to convert their accumulated wealth into political power.

According to Statistics Canada, Chinese and Jews are the most educated groups in this country. However, for some reason, the Chinese never got the economic rewards the Jews did. Based on the 1971 Census of Canada statistics, Peter Li (1979) argued that if we rank ethnic groups in this country by their average income, the Jews ranked first and the Chinese 18th (earning an average income of \$1,025 below the national average which was \$6,004 in 1971). The rank of the Chinese was just below that of the Black, and just above those of the West Indian and Native People.

One may argue that factors such as family background, present occupational status, age and years of residence may contribute to such income discrepancy. Goldlust and Richmond (1973) in a study on the income of male household heads in various ethnic groups in Toronto, challenged the validity of such an argument. They found that after taking into consideration all these factors as well as educational levels that English and Jewish male immigrants still earned \$3,800 more than Asian and Black counterparts. At that time, based on factors mentioned above such as family background, the Asian and Black immigrant men should have earned \$10,200, but they actually earned \$7,300.

*A modified excerpt from the article of the same title which appeared in *Rikka*, vol. 9, no.1 (1982).

A more recent study on educational levels and incomes of Jews, "Majority Canadians" and Chinese in Metro Toronto (1978-79) showed that while their years of education were 14, 13.9 and 13.9, their average incomes per year were \$16,350, \$15,200 and \$14,000 respectively.

The above studies point out the fact that the Canadian economy failed to reward Chinese financially in spite of their investment in education. In other words, unlike the Jews and the majority of Canadians, the Chinese were not able to translate their educational investment into economic rewards.

As suggested previously, the educational level of the Chinese continued to climb in the 1970s and early 1980s. Unfortunately, the unemployment rate is also climbing. (As a matter of fact, the number of unemployed steadily increased since 1965). In December 1981, the unemployment rate reached 8.6% on the national level and this figure was on the low side as it did not include the "hidden unemployed".

Based on the 1976 census data, a study done by the Metro Toronto Social Planning Council showed that Chinese (age 15 and over) had an unemployment rate of 8% compared with that of the English, 6%. This means that the Chinese are harder hit during the high unemployment situation.

In the context of economic hardship, the situation of underemployment is equally alarming. People may be able to find jobs but the kinds of jobs found do not usually require their educational qualifications. In other words, some people are overqualified for their jobs. The highly educated Chinese fall into this category but from the study by Boyd, *et al.* (1981), it appears that most Chinese are underemployed. This is due to the fact that most Chinese in Canada are immigrants. According to the study, the Canadian-born men receive more occupational status per unit of education than foreign-borns. This is especially true when the educational level goes beyond undergraduate training. The study showed that for foreign-born men

with graduate education, there is a diminished ability to convert educational attainment into occupational status compared to their Canadian-born counterparts.

Being underemployed, the Chinese have to bear the consequences associated with it, such as under-utilization of skills, underpayment, fewer fringe benefits, poorer working conditions, higher degree of alienation, lower chance of advancement, higher likelihood of demotion and dismissal, less job security, less power in decision-making, less prestige and many other related issues.

The conclusion one can draw from the above discussion is that the Chinese tend to get less benefit from their educational investment than some other ethnic groups. This is being manifested in unemployment and underemployment of Chinese. To overcome this problem, the Chinese tend to follow two routes: (a) heavy investment in education in certain professional fields which are of high demand on the job market, and (b) establishing their own small business usually tailored for Chinese clientele.

Pending a comprehensive survey, one may note that, increasingly, many educated Chinese are moving to professional fields which are perceived as of high demand on the job market. Engineering and computer science are two relevant examples that are popular among Chinese. However, these two fields, though still highly demanded by governments and corporations, are in the process of de-skilling. The de-skilling process is likely to reduce the status of engineers and computer scientists to semi-skilled workers who can be trained in a matter of months or weeks. As more Chinese head toward these two fields, such de-skilling will affect the Chinese community more than others.

As Harry Braverman quite convincingly articulated in his famous book, *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (1974), two processes are now operating in engineering which may undermine its traditional prestigious status as a profession: (a) the fragmentation of tasks within the occupation and (b) the intrusion of electronic data processing (edp) into the engineering occupation.

Increasingly, engineering projects, whether large or small, are broken down into segments of technical specialties and design work. Engineers are hired and allocated by a management team to do certain segments of engineering according to their trained specialties. The management team provides the framework, ground rules of operation and (sometimes) financial budgets for these engineers. The engineers merely follow the routine of designing. The traditional function of engineers of designing a whole project is lost and they are gradually subordinated under the grand conception of the management team. To a great extent, this phenomenon is already quite common in big corporations.



With the invention of the electronic data processing instruments, human engineers may soon be redundant. Some of the graphic design of engineers can now be translated into numerical forms which are being processed in computers. By processing designs with the help of stored data (calculation formulae, standard information and so on), computers are now taking over some of the designing function of engineers. Instead, engineers in the form of computers may become more popular. Just as we have "machine tellers" in banks which may ultimately displace human tellers, engineers may suffer a similar fate.

In future, as more engineering data are fed into computer systems, the management may take control of conceptual and design knowledge, and hire machine operators and data entry clerks to do the engineer's traditional work. These "new engineers" are easier and cheaper to train and easier to replace than the present university-trained engineers.

What is happening in engineering is also found in the field of computer science. Like traditional engineers who design comprehensive systems to process data, the systems analyst's tasks will also be fragmented and de-skilled in a similar manner as discussed above. At present, there are signs which show that de-skilling is going through the profession of computer programming.

Under the instruction of systems analysts, the programmers would translate the system of data processing into a set of instructions for the computer. These instructions are increasingly predigested and can therefore be mechanically fed into the system. Through advancements in data processing, the programmers' job may become fragmented and de-skilled. They could also be trained in a much shorter period which means, in strategic terms, they can be easily replaced. In future, it is therefore likely that some of these programmers' tasks will be subcontracted to other firms or end up increasingly performed by temporary workers

