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Letter to Chancellor McNeil from Madeleine Giguère

Madeleine Giguère

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FA,PS-14

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE *at Portland - Gorham*

Department of Sociology

96 Falmouth Street
Portland, Maine 04102

December 9, 1971

Donald R. McNeil, Chancellor
University of Maine

Dear Dr. McNeil:

Both as a woman and a minority group member, I was delighted to read that the Board of Trustees had reaffirmed at their November 18 meeting the policy of non-discrimination "on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, age, or national origin" and that the Board had authorized the hiring of a member of the Chancellor's staff to direct the development of Affirmative Action Programs throughout the University. It is to the content of these Affirmative Action Programs that this letter addresses itself.

It is my understanding that the implementation of Federal Executive Orders 11246 and 11375 as amended in Department of Labor, Office of Federal Contract Compliance 41CFR, Part 60-2, August 31 1971, requires detailed consideration of local population and labor-force characteristics as well as the relevant labor pools, both regional and national.

I believe that the discrimination against women within the University of Maine system has been sufficiently documented. Therefore I address myself to the national origin part of the Federal Executive Orders and the University of Maine policy of non-discrimination with particular reference to the Franco-Americans, i.e. Americans French-Canadian origin.

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The available evidence would indicate that the Franco-Americans are the most disadvantaged of the larger groups of white ethnics in New England and in the United States with the exception of the Spanish surname groups.

Documentation of this disadvantage is to be found in the Special Report P-E No. 3A of the 1950 United States Census of Population entitled Nativity and Parentage; in U. S. Department County and City Data Book, 1962; in U. S. Department of Labor, Employment and Earnings and Monthly Report of the Labor Force, recent years; as well as in such journal sources as Bernard C. Rosen "Race, Ethnicity, and the Achievement Syndrome" in the American Sociological Review, Vol. 24, No. 1, February 1959, pp 47-60; Leon F. Bouvier "La Stratification Sociale du Groupe Ethnique Canadien-Francais aux Etats Unis" Recherches Sociographiques, Vol.V No. 3, septembre-decembre 1964, pp 371-379.

Among the thirteen largest groups of white Americans of mixed or foreign parentage examined in Special Report P-E No. 3A Nativity and Parentage, the Franco-Americans were second from the bottom after the Mexican Americans in terms of median income, and third from the bottom in terms of education for the United States as a whole. In New England the second generation Francos were at the bottom of the nine groups studied both in terms of education and income.

Later data on the disadvantaged position of the Franco-Americans can only be inferred since the Bureau of the Census stopped distinguishing French-Canadian Origin from Other-Canadian Origin with the 1950 census. Thus the Francos are not only a "forgotten" but an "invisible" minority from the point of view of official statistics. Indirect measures must now be used. Thus, in 1960 of the United States cities of 25,000 or more inhabitants, only 10 cities had equivalent or lower educational levels than Lewiston; two of these cities were southwestern Spanish cities (Brownsville and Laredo, Texas); three were southern cities with large black populations (Bessemer, Alabama, New Iberia, La. and Gastonia, N.C.) two were New Jersey cities (Hoboken and Garfield); and two were New England cities known to have large Franco-American populations (New Bedford, Mass., Woonsocket, R.I.). One would expect that comparable results would be found for the smaller Franco-American centers of Maine were the data available.

That this educational disadvantage of the Francos is solely the product of the Franco-American culture (which highly values education, incidentally) will be hotly denied by anyone who has experienced the pervasive prejudice and unthinking discrimination so evident to the sensitive Franco-American.

As to economic disadvantage, I cite the fact that Lewiston's hourly and weekly earnings are regularly reported at bottom or near bottom of the list of Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the Department of Labor's Employment and Earnings and Monthly Report of the Labor Force.

In the light of the above and what we know of the psychology of other minority groups, especially the Blacks and the Indians, it is not surprising that the substantial economic and educational disadvantage of the Franco-Americans is correlated with low achievement orientation. Rosen in his study of six northeastern ethnic groups (French Canadians, Greeks, Jews, Negroes, Southern Italians, and White Protestants) found the French Canadians at the bottom in terms of "achievement training", "achievement value orientation" and "educational aspiration." The only measures in which they were not at the bottom were "independence training" where the Southern Italians were at the bottom, and "occupational aspiration" where the Negroes placed last. The Francos ranked next to the last in these latter categories. Overall then, Franco-Americans were the least achievement oriented of the six groups, a characteristic, as we know, of minority groups whose upward mobility has been blocked.

Leon Bouvier documents the lower mobility of Franco-Americans in his secondary analysis of the 1950 data. For the four ethnic groups he studied (French Canadians, Irish, Italians, and Poles), the Francos had increased their education level the least as between first and second generations; they stood next to the bottom in terms of improvement in median income - the Italians being the lowest group. Finally, in regard to the Duncan Index of Occupational Stratification, persons of French-Canadian origin had the lowest index of the four ethnic groups.

Today in Maine, when one looks at the occupational opportunities available in Franco-American population centers (Lewiston-Auburn, Biddeford-Saco, Kennebec County, the northern St. John River Valley

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Oxford and Somerset Counties), one can only conclude that the chances for upward occupational mobility of Franco-Americans are disproportionately limited. The occupational distribution of the parents of French-surname graduates of one Maine Public High School in 1970 would tend to confirm this.

<u>Occupational Strata</u>	<u>Non-French Surname Percent</u>	<u>French Surname Percent</u>
I (highest)	31	14
II	23	18
III	23	19
IV	16	23
V (lowest)	<u>7</u>	<u>26</u>
Total	<u>100 (105)</u>	<u>100 (311)</u>

As with other Maine natives, the upwardly mobile Franco-American is often forced to leave the state to engage in his chosen occupation. But I believe that this choice is more often forced on the Francos than others in the state because of the prejudice and discrimination which the Franco-Americans experience.

✓ How many Franco-Americans are there in Maine? We don't know really since the Census only counts foreign-born and those of foreign or mixed parentage and there has been no separate enumeration of Americans of French-Canadian origin since 1950. At that time there were 89,919 first and second generation Francos in the state, 9.8 percent of the Maine population. That does not take into account third and later generation persons. Given the high fertility of the early generations of Francos, a conservative estimate would add six to ten percent for the third and later generations, thus making sixteen to twenty percent of the Maine population of French-Canadian origin in 1950. Has the proportion changed much in twenty years? I think not. The higher fertility of the Francos as compared to the rest of the Maine population undoubtedly compensated for the lowered immigration of French Canadians in the period 1930-60.

Do the employment patterns of the University of Maine reflect the Franco proportion of the population? Are one fifth of the employees of the University of Franco origin? Is one sixth or even one tenth? I think not. A count of the possible French surnames in the Personnel roster of the 1971-72 Catalogue of the University of Maine Portland-Gorham yields 19 persons, or 6.2 percent of the teaching faculty and administrative personnel with surnames which are probably French in origin. My estimate is that only half of these are of Quebec origin, e.g. Monique Crochet is undoubtedly of French origin; I would doubt that she is of French-Canadian origin.

Similarly, a count of the 1970 University of Maine OPAL Catalogue yields forty-three surnames (including women with French middle names) of possible French origin. This represents 4.8 percent of the personnel listed. Since this roster includes extension agents and part-time CED instructors, the percentage of full-time faculty with French surnames is undoubtedly less. Also, since this French-surname list itself includes names only doubtfully French, we can assume the actual French-lineage names to be somewhat fewer. The Franco-American component of full-time faculty and administrators may be as low as two percent, with only three or perhaps four tenured faculty members of Franco-American origin on the Orono campus!

In the U.S. in 1950 there were already 20,750 first and second generation Franco-Americans who had professional and technical occupations, well over half of whom were New England residents. When one takes into account third and later generation Francos like myself, the pool of professional and technical Franco-Americans was substantial then and must be even greater by now. And some potential administrative personnel must be included in the 12,000 managers, officials and proprietors who were enumerated among the French-Canadian stock in 1950.

The lack of generally available data on classified employees does not permit me to say anything about the extent to which Franco-Americans are represented among them. I do think that this is an area which should be thoroughly researched by persons who have access to the requisite information. Should Franco-Americans be well or even overly represented in these "traditional" jobs, this would not, according to my understanding, release the University from the obligation under its non-discrimination policy and the Federal Executive Orders to recruit in ranks where Francos are under-represented.

Dr. McNeil

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Certainly it would appear that two units of the University of Maine system have not recruited Franco-American professionals and administrators in numbers anywhere near approaching the sixth of the population of the state, which I believe the Francos to comprise. This may or may not be true of the other campuses, but it should be investigated.

I also believe that the trained personnel are available if they are recruited and made to feel welcomed. I hope that the University of Maine will write its Affirmative Action Program with specific reference to and targets for the Franco-Americans, as well as for the women whose efforts are so largely responsible for the initiation of this Affirmative Action.

I am, of course, most interested in your reaction to the content of this letter and hope to hear from you in the not too distant future.

Sincerely yours,

Madeleine Giguere

Madeleine GIGUERE
Associate Professor
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