

## Racism In Canada

"Black people in Canada are suffering from white tokenism. This society is basically racist" This statement was made by Horace Campbell, a Jamaican student at York University. (1)

How racist is Canada? How racist is the evangelical church? This question I discussed with my friend Mr.. Bill Solomon, an American negro presently studying in Toronto. Bill's wife is a nurse from Jamaica and works in a Toronto hospital. Mr. Solomon is also engaged in church work and is in touch with regress across Canada.

"In Canada today, we still have the chance for change without upheaval and it would 'be a pity if we failed to seize the moment through timidity or lack of foresight.'" (2)

Will there be a racial upheaval in Canada? The Black Panther movement is operating in Canada as well as in the U.S.A. Mr. Solomon believes that the influence of the Black Panther movement will increase as the racial problems increase. The white people should not pretend that there is no problem here. As the racial issue increases in the U.S.A. so will the' racial issue in Canada increase. Right now the negroes are still scattered but more are getting into Canada from the U.S.A. and the West Indies. With the influx of the negro immigrants the economic factor will enter the race issue. Why do negroes leave the U.S.? First of all, black people leave because of the draft and their militancy. Some whites are also leaving the U.S. because of the race problem. Both the negro and the white bring their racial prejudices with them when they cross the Canadian border.

Is racial discrimination fact or fiction? Mr. Solomon feels that there is a definite, subtle racial prejudice here. It is not something you can pick out. It is hidden below the surface. There is not too much prejudice job wise. However, it is 'becoming increasingly difficult to rent an apartment. A friend looked for an apartment for Mr. Solomon. He was told "We don't rent to black people." Six or seven years ago this was not heard of. Not only Solomon's friend but the representative of the Human Rights Commission was told the same thing. The race issue is increasingly becoming a problem in Canada. Let us remember that is it a problem of racism rather than "the race problem." (3)

"Just be what you say you are, a Christian: then no one will have to tell you what to do. You'll know." (Thomas Merton).

What is the church doing or going to do about racism? Last year the Canadian Council of Churches made a grant of \$10,000. to the National Black Coalition to assist in establishing work programs. Mr. Solomon believes that the Canadian Council made a mistake by designating money. This money donation does not help the negroes. There

is actually no officially organized group with a listed membership. There is no information available on projects begun or which are in the planning stage.

The designation of funds can foster the feeling of paternalism towards the negro. Personal involvement is important and takes more fortitude. The Rev. Renforth Bryant, a negro and Executive Assistant of the General Secretary, United Baptist Convention of Atlantic Provinces, asked at the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada "Will negroes be able to have pulpits?" This is an important question. Will evangelical churches be willing to **call** men into the ministry regardless race or colour?

Or will they limit the work of the Holy Spirit to the white race? What can evangelicals do for black people? Mr. Solomon suggests the following: First of all, be intelligently informed. Know what the problems are through reading and personal contact. Secondly, treat black people as other people, as real persons. This is the Biblical way. Tom Skinner, the negro evangelist expressed the same idea with the words "Treat me as a human being. Accept me for what I am. Accept or reject me based on my qualifications and not the colour of my skin. Allow me to sit in the classroom with you and learn from the same professor and take the same examination. Then judge me on the basis of what I have done or performed, not on the basis of what I look like. If you want me to work for you, then pay me the wage that everyone else is making for doing that same work. Don't give me <sup>a</sup> scaleddown salary because of my colour of skin." (4)

How can evangelicals deal with the race issue? Treat others as persons, regardless race or colour, with Christlike love and concern.

(1) Time, April 6, 1970

(2) Contrast (Serving the Black Community Coast to Coast).

(3) cf. John Howard Griffin, The Church and the Black Man.

(4) Tom Skinner. Black and Free, p. 143.

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