

COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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No black and white

In the wake of riots in Toronto some Canadians have been toppled from their comfortable racial pedestals in the recent past, those same bastions from which they scorned our southern neighbours whenever such violence flared in the United States. It turns out a good many minority Canadians aren't too keen on the status quo either.

Racism has never been institutionalized in Canada the way it was in the United States until the 1960s, but that doesn't mean it has been a foreign concept, either. Many blacks, and others, will state categorically that they have felt the subtle or blatant swipe of racism here in their everyday lives.

One of the questions we face is how to come to grips with our racial differences and tensions. In this time of economic restraint those pressures are probably as pronounced as they have ever been.

Typically, whites have three major elements of concern with regard to other races. These are crime-related fears, worries about the rate of immigration and frustration with the promotion of multiculturalism.

Nothing pits black against white in such stark relief as crime, for a variety of reasons. Blacks are often quick to point out that most of the people stopping police bullets in the Toronto area (and beyond) seem to be black.

Whites often argue, privately at least, that if the people in question weren't doing anything wrong in the first place they wouldn't get shot. Some go as far as to contend that blacks in general are predisposed to committing crimes.

Blacks and members of other minorities say multiculturalism is a tool to help people assimilate. Whites often dismiss it as tax money being frittered away to help foreigners stave off integration into Canadian society.

Some whites support keeping crime statistics by race or ethnic origin, saying it's logical to isolate criminal types demographically, if possible. Many blacks argue that the idea is borne of racism.

There are no pure and simple answers to these questions, but perhaps a few observations are in order.

Keeping crime statistics by race is a bad idea, because it does promote the concept that people are racially prone to committing crimes. But that's not to say that certain people, who tend to be immigrants, don't commit more than their fair share of wrongdoings.

Crime is largely a tool of the disadvantaged, the poor, the underclass. And that by definition is what immigrants are. Most immigrants are hard working and honest. Some aren't. The ones who aren't tend to be highly visible.

So, crime is rather heavily concentrated among the underclass, the underclass is occupied by a good many immigrants, and most immigrants are minority members.

The downside is that with immigration comes highly visible crime. The upside is that the benefits of immigration, largely more hidden, outweigh the costs. Also, purely from a numbers point of view, Canada needs immigration.

With a declining birth rate, we aren't replacing ourselves even fast enough to maintain our 27-million population.

As far as financing multiculturalism goes, the way we hear it defended most often these days is as a tool to help people fit in, not stand out. If that's the case, then let's not call it multiculturalism funding, because it isn't.

Let's call it assimilation funding, and make sure it serves its purpose.

People don't object to that, but they do object to multicultural funding by the state.

And they're right to do so.

LOOKING BACK



The pool at Kelso Conservation Area which closed about 10 years ago was welcomed by a crowd of bathers on its opening day, July 12, 1992. The new local attraction provided employment for three lifeguards, two of whom would be on duty at one time.

PAGES OF THE PAST

One Year Ago

From the May 15, 1991 issue

□ A search and rescue team was called in to help a trapped hiker at Rattlesnake Point while members of the Milton Fire Department had their hands full saving a seriously injured rock climber at Kelso Conservation Area. In an hour-long rescue effort which began just after 2:30 p.m., the Milton Fire Department hoisted Christopher Biasini, of King City, from an approximate 50-foot drop. Within 20 minutes of the Kelso accident, 19-year-old Caroline Diorio of Brampton lost her footing on a hiking trip at Rattlesnake Point, and slipped 20 feet to a ledge.

□ Three former students of Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf have told police they were sexually abused by two teachers in incidents dating back to 1972. The accused teachers, who now work at the Robarts school for the deaf in London after being transferred several years ago, have been suspended with pay.

□ The scales of justice may tilt in favour of Halton Regional Police soon, and that will probably weigh heavily on the minds of some truck drivers. Halton Region and the four area municipalities are chipping in to buy four portable scales which will be used to track down and ticket drivers who overload their rigs.

20 Years Ago

From the May 17, 1972 issue

□ Milton Council found itself in the position of many taxpayers recently when councillors agreed with a suggestion they are paying (themselves) too much in taxes for the town-owned bakery building at the corner of Main and Charles streets. Councillor Dr. I. A. Hunter brought up the subject. The building is only worth \$13,500 but the town's taxes are nearly \$500, he claimed. "I think the tax is too high for that bakeshop," he added, noting that three-quarters of the bakeshop

land is a "green belt."

□ On a 5-3 vote, Milton Council recently approved plans for a Soft-Spra car wash to be built on Commercial Street just south of Main Street, provided the developer brings in a suitable siting plan, erects a planting strip on the south side of the property, and agrees to a maintenance clause.

50 Years Ago

From the May 14, 1942 issue

□ Mrs. N. A. Sinclair was elected president of the Milton Ladies' Lawn Bowling Club. Other officers are: vice-president, Mrs. F. McNiven; secretary-treasurer, Mrs. Wm Anderson; convener of games committee, Mrs. Fred Robinson and convener of entertainment committee, Mrs. E. Storey.

□ The streets in Milton have been scraped with the county road scraper and are now in good condition for the summer.

□ If a truck driver passes you by when you are trying to thumb a ride or fails to pick up a soldier when there is a vacant seat in his cab, don't blame him. Truckers have received a form from the department in Toronto forbidding them to give rides to anyone. Trucks must not in future carry passengers, and only an assistant can legally ride in the truck cab with the driver.

□ Local gardeners and farmers throughout the surrounding district took a bad beating Saturday night, when heavy frost covered the entire locality for the third time since spring seeding started. Fall wheat was touched, but worst damage in the southern part of the county is in the loss of early vegetables, particularly beans, early flowers and climbers.

□ Arrangements have been made with the Postal Department so that good reading books may be left with your local post office. These books are then sent to a central depot and distributed to the various military camps in Canada. At this housecleaning time of the year surely you can find books you can donate.

PUD

BY STEVE NEASE

