

Human Rights - continued

But suppose the tourist speaks only French, or suppose the tourist is black. How do we react? Is there any difference in the way we stop to give directions? What about storekeepers, hotel clerks, hairdressers and restaurant waiters and waitresses?

In the case of those who are in commercial establishments, there is more involved than having a clear conscience. The law has input here too. The Ontario Human Rights Code offers the same protection to visitors as to Ontario residents under its "public accommodation" provisions. These provisions prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex, marital status, and nationality in access to public facilities and services where the public is customarily admitted.

Unsympathetic people sometimes jump to the conclusion that this means a proprietor may not refuse anyone. Not true. You can pitch your standards of dress, decorum, apparent financial responsibility, as high as you wish, but the same standards have to apply to everyone, regardless of their race, religion, etc.

This is no hardship for the proprietor. In fact it amounts to a good business practice. Tourists are relaxed when they travel; only the proprietor who receives them may be up tight. Tourists enjoy meeting people of different backgrounds and find it stimulating. Remember, we're assuming many of them would have gone to really "foreign" places if they had been able to afford it.

So "same standards for all" is not a hardship, but it's not optional either, and the customer will very likely know this too. The Ontario Human Rights Commission, which administers the Code, runs an extensive campaign to inform tourists that they are entitled to lodge a complaint if they feel they have been the victims of discrimination.

It need hardly be pointed out that such complaints are not good for Ontario's reputation and cancel out much of the tax-supported advertising of Ontario as a vacationland par excellence. (You see how easy French is?!)

Given all this, the motto for the summer seems to be "Be nice to every tourist." You may have some pleasant surprises that will give a warm feeling for a long time afterwards. Let's help Ontario build up a reputation for its friendly people as well as its scenic beauty. That's the kind of inflation that will benefit us all.

For further information contact: Bev Young, Northern Affairs Officer, Marathon, Ontario

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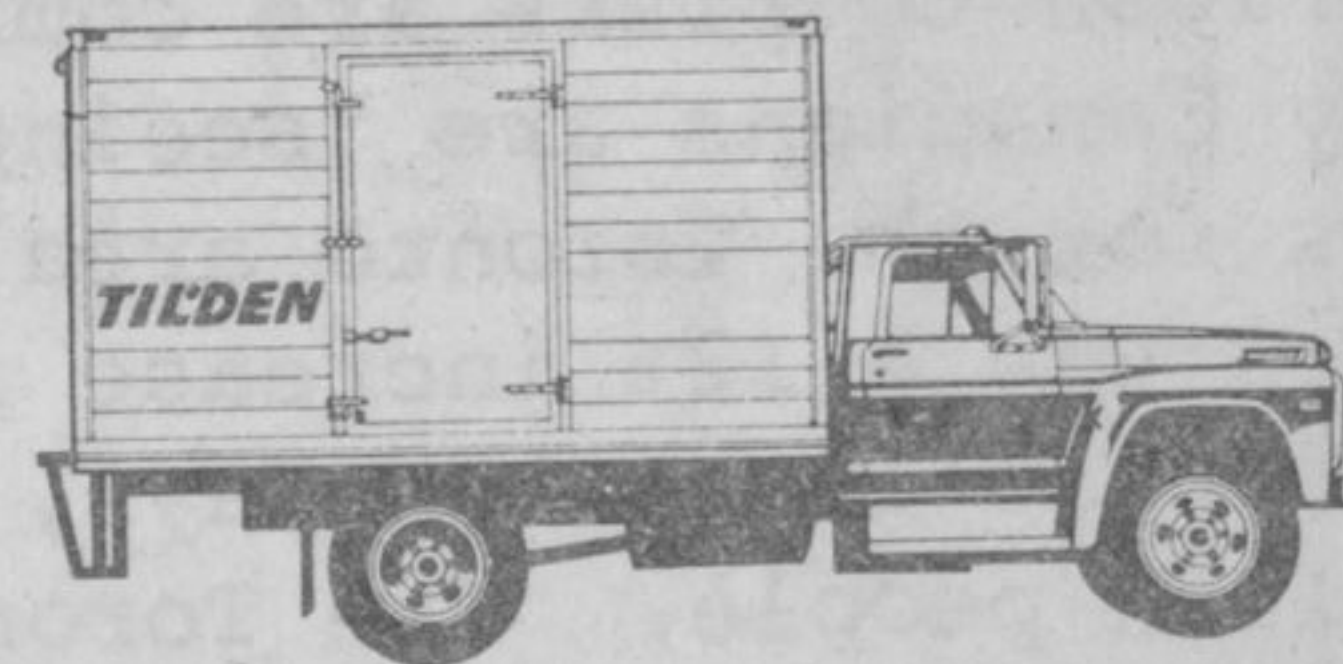
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