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CURRENTS

READINGS IN RACE RELATIONS

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Currents: Readings in Race Relations is the quarterly magazine of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations, formed in July 1975 "to promote a stable and healthy multiracial environment in the community," is a non-profit organization made up of volunteers from all sectors of the community.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations is an educational agency and an advocate and intermediary for the visible minorities. It works towards encouraging better race relations, increased understanding and awareness among our multicultural, multiracial population through programmes of education directed at both the private and public sectors of the community. It is also focussing its efforts on the institutions of our society including educational systems, employment, government, media, legislation, police, social service agencies and human services, in order to reduce patterns of discrimination and inequality of opportunity which may exist within these institutions.

The work of the organization is carried out through working committees such as: Educational Institutions; Legislation; Media; Law Enforcement.

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THE URBAN ALLIANCE ON RACE RELATIONS is very pleased to be publishing the first race relations journal in Canada. As practitioners working in this field, we have been deeply concerned about the lack of an integrated, comprehensive and consistent approach to meeting the needs of our multiracial society. While there is an increasing number of professionals who have the responsibility of developing policies and programmes in the general area of race relations, they do so often without the necessary knowledge and skills. Moreover, they have little access to the information that does exist in the form of research, models and projects dealing with important aspects of race relations. The volunteer sector has also suffered from the lack of access to these kinds of essential resources.

It is our hope that the publication of *CURRENTS: Readings in Race Relations* will help reduce some of these gaps and that it will provide a vehicle for the exchange of new ideas, strategies and programmes which have been developed here and elsewhere.

Equally important, we envision that the Journal will serve as a bridge between the theoretician and the practitioner, the professional and the volunteer, the institutions and the community.

The Urban Alliance believes that the sharing of knowledge and skills is the first crucial step in achieving a more just and harmonious society.

Carol Tator

EDITORIAL

WELCOME TO THE FIRST ISSUE OF *CURRENTS: Readings in Race Relations*. The intent of this new publication is to provide a regular medium for the sharing of information, ideas and skills in the field of race relations. Our hope is that it will provide a vehicle for serious discussion of current issues to all of you who are concerned, interested and professionally involved in improving race relations.

As the report, *Now Is Not Too Late* chaired by Walter Pitman stated: "Effective services must be built on a solid base of research and information. The present lack is part of the reason for the absence of coordination and planning, of programmes taking on a crisis orientation reaction stance."

This analysis is no less true today than when it was first made in 1977. What we want to do through *CURRENTS* is to seek out, analyse and disseminate such a solid base of information to individuals and organizations who have a concern for improving race relations. We thus want to strengthen the level of expertise necessary to reduce racial discrimination, and support the growing level of professional competence evident in the field of race relations work in this country.

This first issue focusses upon employment and economic development as it pertains to minorities. Although it is not the intent at this point in time to approach every issue on a thematic basis, one hopes to avoid being overwhelmed with too eclectic a collection of articles on all the many issues of current concern in race relations.

A note on terminology and terms of reference. One of the difficulties of discussing race relations is that of finding appropriate terminology to identify groups, such as "white", "non-white," "blacks," "ethnic," "racial," "visible minorities," "disadvantaged" and so on. Definitions to these terms vary considerably, and unfortunately it is beyond the capacity of this editor to resolve this conclusively. It is hoped that as our understanding of the issues evolve, so do our definition of terms.

As practitioners in the field, it is important to receive your reactions to this journal along with any suggestions for improvements. If this publication is to be useful to you, it is vital that you provide us with your reactions. For the following issues it is our intent to have an extensive "Letters to the Editor" column. Please respond.

Tim Rees

Race Relations Today

The State of the Art

Wilson A. Head

An examination of the state of race relations, sometimes labelled "the race relations industry," must begin with at least a brief historical overview of relations between the various racial and ethnic groups in Canadian society. An adequate analysis of these developments would require at least one and probably several volumes. This brief overview must be considered as severely limited and of course suffering from a degree of over generalization. Given these limitations, however, it is to relate in general terms the factors which support the development of negative racial attitudes and behaviour in Canadian society.

Misconceptions

First, it is necessary to clear away many of the misconceptions and myths which many Canadians so ardently accept and believe. Many Canadians, possessing little or no knowledge of the history of racism in Canada, are shocked to learn that slavery was not exclusively an American phenomenon. Slavery also existed in Canada from its earliest beginnings. The bondage of blacks in Canada, although small in size and scope, continued from the early 18th century until its abolition by the British Parliament in 1834. It should be remembered that this action was taken only 31 years before the abolition of slavery following the American civil war in 1865.

The thousands of American slaves who had escaped from bondage and had found freedom in Canada, were no longer welcomed when they were free to return to the United States. However, many thousands did return to their former homeland, leaving greatly reduced numbers of blacks living in scattered towns and villages and on farms in Ontario and Nova Scotia.

These black former slaves began to face a new form of racism. They were subjected to a

variety of types of discrimination in many parts of the country. Several attempts, many unsuccessful, were made to establish all-black communities, so that they could escape the negative attitudes found in the general community. In spite of protests and demands for equal rights these attitudes and behaviours persisted until the mid twentieth century.

Treatment of Other Minorities

Racial problems in Canada however were not limited to mistreatment and denial of rights to blacks. Other non-white groups also faced a variety of types of ill treatment and denial of democratic rights. Following the arrival of the Chinese and South Asians in the mid-nineteenth century, these groups also faced prejudice, hostility and harassment in Canadian society, particularly in British Columbia where they were most numerous. The Chinese and South Asian population initially came to Canada in the mid-19th century to perform the hard, dirty work of building the railroads, working in the mines and forests, clearing the fields for farming, and other difficult and dangerous work.

Chinese and South Asians experienced little difficulty when their numbers were small and largely unnoticed. This situation changed dramatically when numbers increased and these groups were perceived as an economic threat to unskilled, unemployed workers seeking hard-to-find work. For example, several thousand Chinese workers brought to Canada to help build the Canadian Pacific Railroad, found themselves harassed and even assaulted when they sought other employment. Potential Chinese immigrants were subjected to an unprecedented "head tax" in order to prevent them from migrating to Canada. The federal government joined this

TO BE SOLD,
A BLACK WOMAN, named
PEGGY, aged about forty years ; and a
 Black boy her son, named **JUPITER,** aged
 about fifteen years, both of them the property of the
 Subscriber.

The Woman is a tolerable Cook and washer woman
 and perfectly understands making Soap and Candles.

The Boy is tall and strong of his age, and has been
 employed in Country business, but brought up prin-
 cipally as a House Servant—They are each of them
 Servants for life. The Price for the Woman is one
 hundred and fifty Dollars—for the Boy two hundred
 Dollars, payable in three years with Interest from the
 day of Sale and to be properly secured by Bond &c. —
 But one fourth less will be taken in ready Money.

PETER RUSSELL.

York, Feb. 10th 1806.



Advertisement courtesy of the Ontario Black History Society.

campaign of discrimination and hostility by enacting a "Chinese Exclusion Act" which effectively put an end to the immigration of the "yellow hordes" said to be destroying the country.

Even worse treatment was directed against the South Asians, most of whom were initially Sikhs. They were subjected to unparalleled hostility by residents of British Columbia in the early 20th century. "Hate literature" designed to arouse hostility was regularly distributed. That hostility finally resulted in the worst race riot in Canadian history when the Sikhs were forcibly driven from their homes, beaten up in the streets, and forced to flee for their lives.

The Japanese-Canadians have also been subjected to racist hostility and attack by Canadian residents. Being small in numbers, Japanese were to some extent, largely ignored during the early part of their residence in Canada. As their numbers increased and their hard work resulted in increasing prosperity, they also came under attack. However, they were spared the degree of hostility experienced by the Chinese and South Asians, that is, until the outbreak of World War II. The forcible detention of the Japanese, citizens and immigrants alike, in so called "resettlement camps," constituted perhaps the most flagrant

denial of civil and human rights in the history of Canada. This population was forcibly removed from their homes and properties without compensation and without the slightest concerns for their rights as Canadians, allegedly because they were considered a "threat to national security." No evidence was ever found to substantiate this allegation.

It is clear then, that alleged concern of Canadians for "law, order and good government" has not always been extended to its minority groups. Nevertheless, sociologists, historians and others who study the experiences of ethnic and racial groups in Canada generally concede that these problems are not as severe or widespread as those found in the United States and Great Britain. It would be difficult, however, to support the contention that this situation exists because Canadians are more tolerant or accepting of racial minorities than the residents of other countries.

Reaction to Change

The major reasons why the attitudes and behaviour of Canadians appear to be less racist than the populations of the United States and Great Britain are first; the numbers of so called "visible minorities" in Canada were relatively small, and second; they did not constitute an

economic or political threat. Restrictions on the immigration of non-whites by the Canadian government resulted in only a trickle of non-whites entering the country until changes in the Immigration Act in 1967. These changes removed the most blatant provisions of the former Act which had virtually closed the door to immigration by non-white individuals particularly from the so called "Third World" countries. Most of the small number of South Asians, Chinese and blacks who did manage to be admitted to Canada were from lower social economic groups; domestics, labourers, and other poorly educated and unskilled workers. These groups did not constitute a threat to the economic, social and political domination of the majority white population. Thus Canadians could enjoy the myth that Canadian society was less racist and less prone to overt prejudice and discrimination than American society.

This situation has changed drastically since the late 1960's. Changes in the Canadian Immigration Act noted above, have permitted increasing numbers of non-whites to migrate to Canada from non European countries. For example, in 1961, approximately 45% of immigrants came to Canada from Great Britain; less than 5% came from the West Indies. In 1976 British immigration had dropped considerably while almost half of all new immigrants came from so called "Third World countries."

In addition, while Canada still attracts some non-skilled workers, including several hundred domestics, there has been a large increase in the number of highly educated professional and business men and women arriving from non-white countries. The result has been a dramatic change in the racial characteristics of the Canadian population. Many Canadians, as Tienharra (1974) notes, "appear to have a mental image of an immigrant as a poor, starved, pathetic creature grateful to be given a new chance in our country...an image quite out of keeping with the high proportion of skilled and successful immigrants in Canada."

It is obvious, however, that many Canadians do not like the new situation. The numbers of non-white immigrants is increasing and many more non-white immigrants are

more visible and competing for high status occupations. Many new immigrants are demanding equal access to the benefits of living in a modern affluent society. The increasing overt discrimination, including physical assaults against the black and South Asian population is one result of these developments.

Studies of Prejudice

A number of recent studies, i.e. Roth (1967), Hughes (1970), Kallen (1974), Ramsharan (1975), Anderson and Grant (1975), Pitman (1977), Ubale (1977), and Head (1975 and 1981), clearly document the perceptions and experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination against non-whites in Canadian society. A perceptive study by Henry (1978) found that approximately 16% of a sample of white residents of Metropolitan Toronto expressed strongly racist attitudes. Another 35% reported mildly racist attitudes. Thus slightly more than half of all respondents expressed some degree of racism.

A recent poll conducted by the Gallup organization under contract with the Multiculturalism Directorate of the Secretary of State indicated that among other findings respondents generally approved the fact that Canada is a multicultural country. Many want to maintain a fairly open immigration policy, and feel that non-white immigration has made Canada a "culturally richer country." On the other hand, more than a quarter of these respondents would rather see non-whites "back in their own country." A majority of almost three-fifths would "limit non-white immigrants and those permitted to enter would have to prove themselves before they were entitled to government services." It appears that these findings from other studies reflect what is labelled as "cognitive dissonance," or the fact that Canadian racial attitudes are based on conflicting values. First, many Canadians tend to believe in the "democratic creed," while, at the same time, not wanting to face the challenge which flows from this belief. Whatever the merits of these speculations, the non-white population of Canada is clearly demonstrating increasing resistance to accepting a "second class" position in Canadian society.

Resistance to Discrimination

While resistance to racist attitudes and behaviour is not new, and was frequently expressed in writings, speeches, and initiation of abolitionist societies during the early and mid-nineteenth centuries, it has only been in recent years that this resistance has taken on a more specifically organized form. The major organized attacks against Canadian racism have largely occurred since the second world war. In general these attacks have come from two basic sources; voluntary organizations and official public agencies. The voluntary organizations were first on the scene. It was the action of voluntary black organizations and their allies which pressured the Ontario Government to enact legislation forbidding discrimination in employment during the 1950's. Continuing pressure led to the enactment of an Ontario Human Rights Code in 1961, and the establishment of a Commission

in 1962. These developments did not occur in a vacuum; they were the results of sustained organized activity by minority groups over a period of time.

The Ontario Human Rights Code, the first of its kind in Canada, forbids discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, sex, national origin and a number of other grounds. Discrimination is prohibited in housing, employment, public accommodation and other areas. Similar codes have been enacted by the other nine provinces and by the federal government. It would be difficult to argue, however, that the establishment of human rights commissions has led to any considerable reduction in the nature and extent of prejudice and discrimination in the country. In general, the work of the commissions are based on the "conciliation model," that is, documented violations of the codes are not treated as "criminal behaviour" and subject to trials in courts of law. Individuals must file in-

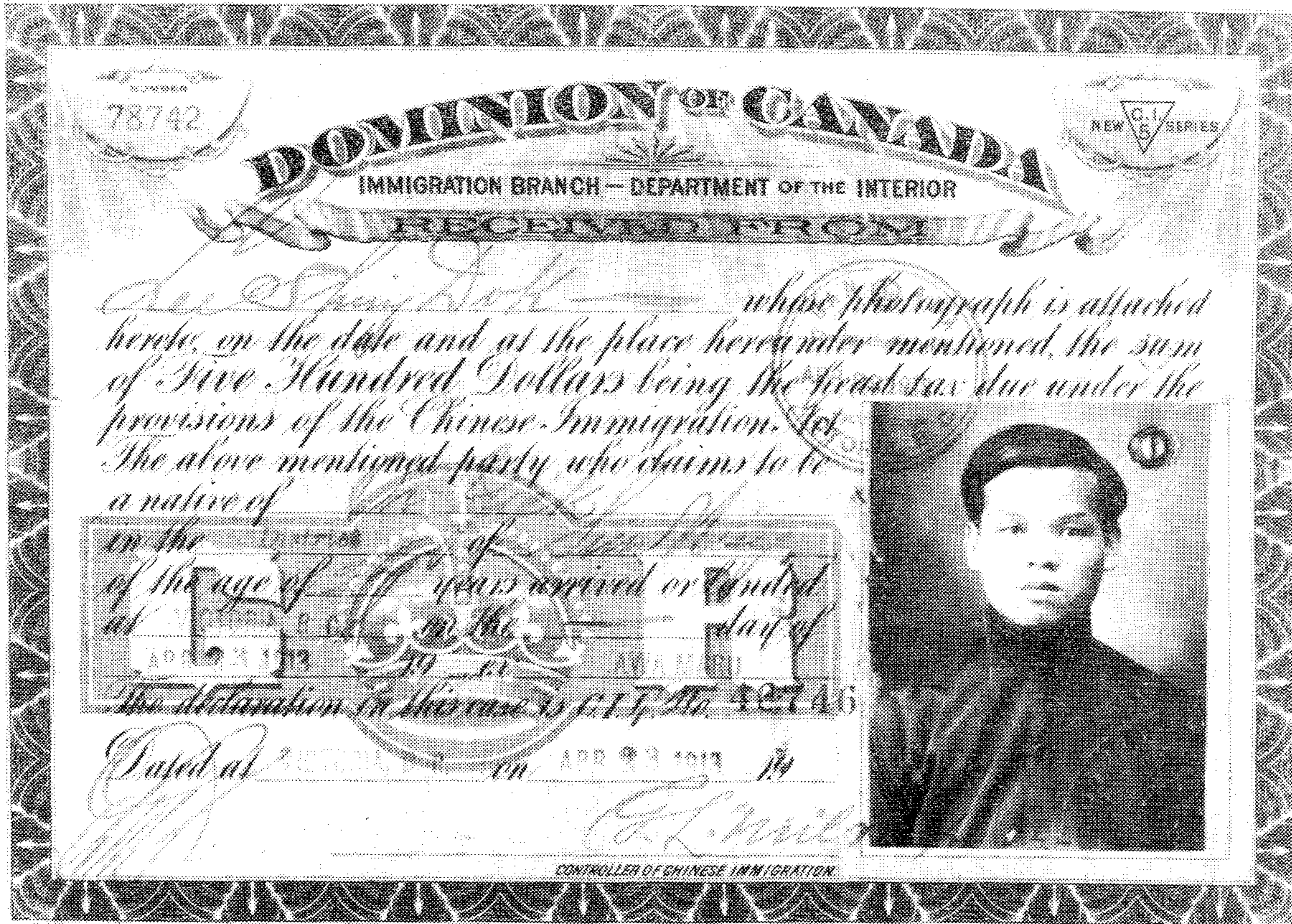


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