

\$5.00

CURRENTS

READINGS IN RACE RELATIONS

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SPRING 1985

VOLUME 3, NO. 1

Published by THE URBAN ALLIANCE ON RACE RELATIONS



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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 toward 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 focusing 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: Education Institutions; Legislation; Media; Law Enforcement.

All correspondence, including letters to the editor, subscription requests and changes of address should be addressed to:

CURRENTS, 229 College Street, Suite 302, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R4. Telephone (416) 598-0111.

The subscription rate is \$15.00 per year.

Membership fees to join the Urban Alliance on Race Relations are:

Students &
Senior Citizens
\$5.00
General Membership
\$20.00
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\$50.00 & over

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Articles offered for publication are welcome. They should be typewritten, double spaced, with adequate margins for notation.

All enquiries about advertising should be directed to the Editor.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations wishes to acknowledge the financial support of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture.

International Standard Serial Number ISSN 0715-7045

2nd Class Mail Registration Number 5972

July 1985.

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Municipal Government and Race Relations

IN MANY WAYS the municipal level of government is the most important institution in Canadian society in being able to help eliminate racial discrimination.

Municipal governments can be influential in improving race relations in Canada for a number of reasons:

As *service providers*, municipalities are responsible for many of the key services that determine the quality of life in a community and influence a person's opportunities and life chances. Municipalities have an unparalleled degree of precise knowledge of local conditions as a result of the experience and expertise gained in providing such diverse services as transportation, streets and roads, utilities, water and sewage, policing, personal and property protection, social welfare, health services, education, art and culture, parks and recreation, energy conservation, historical resource conservation, environmental protection and land use development. As an indication of the scale of municipal activity, total municipal expenditures amounted to almost \$33 billion in 1982, representing over 9 per cent of Canada's gross national expenditure.

As *employers*, municipalities are often the largest employers in their area. Without counting seasonal employees or those employed by municipal enterprises, utilities or local school authorities, the municipal workforce is over 287,000 which accounts for almost 25 per cent of all public sector employees in Canada.

As *influencers of public opinion*, municipalities are well positioned to positively affect community attitudes and practices. Because of the immediacy of the municipal presence in people's daily lives, local government's have the capacity to identify specific local issues and needs. In many ways they are much more able than the senior levels of government to develop consensus and mobilize action.

As a *purchaser of goods and services*, the municipality has the capacity to influence the employment practices of local employers. As an indication of this power, the annual municipal procurement budget is estimated to be well over \$7.5 billion, which is 25 per cent greater than that of the federal government.

As a *grant-aiding authority*, municipalities can ensure that its financing and grants are equitably allocated to meet minority needs.

As the *most direct, open, accessible, accountable and flexible level of government*, municipalities have increasingly become the most important vehicle for resolving the community's most pressing concerns.

Initiatives

There are a number of steps which municipalities can take to eliminate racial discrimination within their community:

They can adopt a formal policy of equality of opportunity and employment equity.

They can set-up a committee of elected council members to review race relations work.

They can establish an interdepartmental staff working committee to monitor progress and develop action plans.

They can consult regularly with local minority communities.

They can appoint specialist staff both for the municipality as a whole and for individual departments to monitor race relations policies.

They can ensure that employment equity procedures are implemented that will ensure the full participation of minorities in the municipal workforce.

Some of the larger municipalities in Canada have already begun to undertake some of these initiatives to develop local strategies to improve the climate of race relations. However, by and large, municipalities have been very tentative in pursuing the policies and practices that are required, and that they have the mandate and capacity to pursue, to ensure racial equality. There is much that municipalities can do to adjust their organization and operations at little cost. Municipalities have a special responsibility to set an example and provide leadership.

Comprehensive race equality policies can be developed and implemented by municipalities for everyone's benefit. It requires not a half-hearted approach but a whole hearted, unequivocal political resolve and determination.

The purpose of this issue of *Currents* is to explore in further detail some of the initiatives that municipalities have and can pursue to improve race relations as an employer, as a purchaser of services, as a provider of services, and as an influential institution in their communities.

TIM REES

Local Government, Race Relations Policies & Structures: Beyond Mayor's Committees?

The response of municipal government thus far in Canada to the issue of racial equality appears to be largely towards the creation of a Mayor's Committee, or a Race Relations Task Force, or a Community Relations Advisory Council, or some such similarly named group. The cities of Vancouver, Ottawa, Peterborough, Toronto, North York, East York and Scarborough have one, and the concept is presently being looked at in Etobicoke, City of York, Peel County, Hamilton, Halifax, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Surrey. Before we get hypnotized by what appears to have become the Canadian conventional panacea for every social problem, it is perhaps useful to be distracted for a moment by reflecting on what such community committees can and cannot do.

Whatever they are named, the experience in Canada thus far, indicates that they generally have been given broad, largely non-controversial goals that give precedence to creating good or harmonious community, race and ethnic relations. This has largely been done by bringing together a select group of people who are asked to pursue this goal through a process of mediation and conciliation. Is there a danger here of relegating and marginalizing the goal of racial equality and of not directly and rigorously combatting the facts of racial discrimination?

- With vague terms of reference, sitting outside the normal decision-making process, and rarely with adequate staffing or research resources, are they structured for failure?
- To what extent can they monitor, scrutinize

and publicly criticize local government policies? How much of an influence and impact can they have on municipal policies?

- To what extent can such Committees provide the eyes and ears for the local bureaucracy. Can they ever be in the position to make the kind of thorough investigation of the local area which the municipality should require?
- Are these committees going to find themselves permanently on a knife edge between maintaining the quiet acceptance of the status quo which might satisfy the municipality, and asserting a strong anti-discrimination line which would satisfy the minority communities?
- Are they overly dependent upon the support of the Mayor for their existence? Does the Mayor allow it to operate as an effective critic of local government policies?
- In the composition of these committees, is there undue emphasis upon bringing together representatives of the minority elite? Are the articulate spokespeople from the minority communities too readily prepared to enjoy this 'elite strategy'?
- Can such Committees truly represent the views of the minorities themselves? Will they be seen as a substitute for the active participation and advocacy activities of minority group organizations? Is the very existence of such Committees in danger of proving a hindrance to direct access, participation and development of such minority self-help groups?

- Are Committees a substitute for action, given that they generally lack strategic importance and the necessary institutional approach to result in meaningful change? Are they in danger of acting as agents of social control rather than social change?

Local government should be beware of establishing a local community committee to

the detriment of clear thinking and vigorous questioning about objectives and policies.

The following articles describe some of the community councils that local governments have established in Canada to tackle racial discrimination. It is important to assess these initiatives with the above concerns and questions in mind.

*A Tale of One City: Advancing Human Rights Through Civic Committee Action **

Charles S. Ungerleider

This article examines the work of the Special Council Committee on Race Relations in the City of Vancouver; appraises some of the strengths and weaknesses in the areas of police ethnic relations and equal employment opportunity; analyses the factors facilitating and impeding the Committee in accomplishing its goals in those two areas; and makes some suggestions which other committees may wish to consider.

Introduction

Charles Dickens chose to open his historical novel *A Tale of Two Cities* with lines signalling the vast and confusing nature of the social and political changes occurring in England and France during the late eighteenth century:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of Hope, it was the winter of despair...

It is from that Dickens' novel that the title of this article was drawn and I am as confused by the changes occurring in my time as some were by the changes which occurred two hundred years ago. I am confused by those who

would tolerate the preaching of hatred or the purveyance of pornography on the grounds of free speech and press. While I would not for a second wish to change places with the victims of injustice and oppression in England and France of the late eighteenth century, I am made fearful by the atavistic notion that the individual rather than the state must protect human rights.

Nowhere in North America is that notion more evident than it is in British Columbia. The primitive acceptance of inequality and the emphasis on the individual's own resources and resourcefulness are evident, for example, in the changes which the government of British Columbia has brought about in human rights. It is important to recognize the changes occurring in the socio-political context which affect human rights because they both circumscribe what may be accomplished at the municipal level and make what occurs at the municipal level extremely consequential in determining the quality of life in local communities.

**This article is extracted from a paper presented to Rights and Liberties - Creating Social Change. A Conference sponsored by the University of Victoria and The Canadian Rights and Liberties Federation, Victoria, B.C., 22 and 23 March 1985.*

The Special Council Committee on Race Relations

During the Fall of 1981, the Mayor of Vancouver, the Honourable Michael Harcourt, proposed the establishment of a committee concerned with race relations. A report about the feasibility, terms of reference and composition of the committee was prepared by the Director of Social Planning. Several months later, on 23 February 1982, Vancouver City Council approved the establishment of a committee composed of two Aldermen and eighteen citizens, "people appointed on the basis of their knowledge of and interest in the field of race relations." It was envisioned that the Committee would advise, monitor, advocate and liaise in order "to foster and improve race relations in the City of Vancouver." In its terms of reference, the Committee was given the mandate to:

1. propose to City Council short and long term strategies and actions to promote social harmony and reduce racial tension;
2. review and comment upon proposed and current legislation, policies and practices designed to combat racism and promote multiculturalism; and
3. liaise with Civic and outside Boards, Commissions, Departments and agencies concerning race relations.

During its initial monthly meetings, the members of the Committee discussed racism in general terms and tried to identify specific areas of concern where the Committee could have an impact. The Committee eventually decided to concentrate its efforts at the civic level, focusing on "how the City, through its mandate as an employer, provider of services and legislator could improve race relations." To that end, four subcommittees were formed with the responsibility for making recommendations in the following areas:

1. Police: Recruitment, selection, training, complaints procedure, community relations;
2. Civic Services: Access to services and information by ethnic minorities;
3. Equal Employment Opportunity (in Civic Departments and Boards): Hiring, personnel practices, staff training, promotion; and

4. Civic Policies and By-laws: Appointments to Boards, Civic grants to community groups, City contracts, Business License criteria, Anti-discrimination By-law.

Since 1981 the *Special Council Committee on Race Relations* has met once per month, carrying out its work through the subcommittee structure and through various specialized committees which have been established from time to time. The Committee is a working committee. Most Committee members are encouraged to hold membership on one of the subcommittees where virtually all the work is carried out. The Committee and its subcommittees are assisted in their deliberations by a part time Multicultural Coordinator from the Department of Social Planning, the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator from the Personnel Department, a representative of the Health Department, and the Community Relations Officer from the Police Department. At the monthly meetings, a clerk from the City Clerk's office takes minutes and attends to the Chairman's correspondence. (City of Vancouver, 1982; Yee, 1984)

Obstacles to Change

The experience of the Vancouver Police Department in dealing with race relations is different from the experience of other departments in the civic bureaucracy. While the Police Department is not exemplary, change appears, at this early date, to have proceeded more rapidly and have been more far reaching in this organization than in other civic areas.

Nevertheless, there appears to be a regular sequence of changes in the way institutions respond to the problem of systemic discrimination. During the initial phase of contact between those who advocate change and those within the organization who would be affected by the changes proposed, the insiders deny that the problem exists. When, for example, it is pointed out to, say, a local police department that there are relatively few visible minorities on the force, one may be told that visible minorities do not seem to want to be police officers. If one persists by claiming that the proportion of visible minorities on the force ought to generally reflect their proportion in the general population of the com-

munity, one may meet with resistance which is affected by the degree to which the insider identifies with the organization and possesses a sense of corporate responsibility. During this initial phase, the insiders often feel that criticism directed toward the institution is directed at them as individuals. Thus, one is often asked, "Do you think I'm some kind of racist or something?" "Are you saying that the police discriminate?"

It takes time and effort to overcome the initial defensiveness engendered by contact between the insiders and outsiders. As time passes, there is typically a gradual change toward a grudging acceptance that systemic discrimination is a problem which affects institutions, especially those in other jurisdictions. As the insiders come to entertain the possibility that the institution of which they are a part is affected by systemic discrimination, there is discernible shift toward blaming the victim rather than changing the institution. The absence of visible minorities in the workforce is attributed to the visible minorities, themselves, who are seen to lack the skills and or initiative to get the job. Hence, one is sometimes told that they have affirmative action in the States where, for example, it was necessary to lower the standard to make it possible for minority group individuals to enter the police forces. "That," it is aggressively asserted, "is reverse discrimination."

If one is able to get beyond the abstract discussion of principles to the discussion of specific barriers, one may encounter another form of resistance. When, for example, it is pointed out that uniform regulations prohibiting the wearing of beards and turbans for Sikhs act as a barrier to their employment as police officers, one is told, "If they really want the job, they'll shave." "I can't wear a beard either." "We haven't had that problem here, they don't seem to want to be police officers."

With persistent effort, the existence of systemic discrimination within the institution is eventually acknowledged. It is often the case, at this point, that obstacles — expenses and logistics — are identified which are beyond the institution's control and which prevent solving the problem. In the case of the employment of turbaned Sikhs, the obstacle is

the uniform regulation preventing the wearing of beards and turbans. The regulation is controlled by the Police Commission, a provincial body outside the immediate control of local police departments. If one is fortunate, the fifth phase is eventually achieved. It involves genuine acceptance of the problem and the responsibility for addressing the problem.

An example from policing was simply used to illustrate the obstacles to change within organizations which are being directed toward addressing systemic discrimination. There are differences between institutions affecting the rate at which the members of the institution accept responsibility for the problem. For example, in Vancouver there are differences between the acceptance of changes within the Police Department and the other civic departments, with the differences favouring the Police Department. The differences are attributable to the responsibilities, structures and working of the departments.

The responsibility for race relations in the Vancouver Police Department is vested in a high ranking position which can call upon organizational resources including personnel and access to the Chief Constable. The responsibility in City Hall rests in a middle management position which is located within the Personnel Department. While access to the City's chief executive officer, the City Manager, is available to the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator, the location of the position within the Personnel Department places the Director of Personnel as an intermediary between the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator and the City Manager.

It is also the case that the Police Department has been more cognizant of the multicultural character of the City of Vancouver than other agencies and it arrived at the realization earlier than other departments. The nature of the role of the police puts the problem of responding to diversity at the forefront of their consciousness in a way that is not characteristic of other civic employees. In general, the departments in city hall do not have the visibility the Police Department has nor are the individuals who work within the civic bureaucracy as visible as the police.

Relatively low visibility to outsiders protects the individuals and the institution from the demands of those who seek to change organizational practices.

Some Lessons for Other Communities

Given the general climate surrounding human rights, it is desirable that cities establish their own committees to address race relations. Few cities have sufficient expertise to address issues of race relations without involving the public. The establishment of the committee itself is a statement about the importance of harmonious relations within its jurisdiction. It is important to insure that the committee is composed of people with the background, time and willingness to work at developing policies and procedures which will advance race relations. (Bruce, 1983; Canada, House of Commons, 1984)

Although it is a necessary ingredient, public participation is not sufficient to improve race relations. It is also necessary to commit human and material resources to the effort. The staff people responsible for race relations should have access to and the support of the chief executives in the civic bureaucracy. They should possess institutional resources commensurate with the tasks which face them, including support staff and an adequate budget.

There is little question that symbols are important elements in human relations. However, in a social environment where substantive issues such as employment and fair treatment are matters of concern on a daily basis, symbols are not likely to satisfy people for very long. Thus, cities contemplating the establishment of race relations committees ought to consider whether their intentions are primarily symbolic or material. If they are both material and symbolic, they might consider the following recommendations.

Recommendation One: Council should hire a Race Relations Officer and provide additional technical assistance and support for race relations.

Race relations and the work of the *Special Council Committee on Race Relations* have not enjoyed an appropriate level of staff support.

At present, the City employs one person as an Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator, devotes less than a full time staff person to the coordination of Multicultural efforts, and only provides clerical assistance to the Special Council Committee on Race Relations (i.e., not to any of its subcommittees). The efforts of the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator, the Multicultural Co-ordinator and the clerk's office are typically generous. Despite the individual generosity and hard work of the incumbents of those positions, there is need for additional support for the Special Council Committee on Race Relations, its subcommittees and the City's work in race relations.

In November 1983, the Race Relations Committee recommended that: *The role of the Equal Employment Opportunity Co-ordinator be expanded to include the Ombudsman status with the powers to investigate and recommend corrective action similar to the Anti-Discrimination Directorate of the Public Service Commission.* Council had approved a much narrower role definition for the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator position when the position was established. The Director of Personnel Services did not support the recommendation. Although he acknowledged that "there is a need for such a position at the senior government level, ... in a smaller, relatively accessible and responsive organization such as the City, it should not be required."

There is nevertheless a need for a person who has the power to investigate and settle complaints received from citizens about alleged abuses or capricious acts by civic officials. Such a person would act as a neutral third party in investigating complaints about discriminatory treatment by either the City or its departments.

Recommendation Two: Council should provide for technical assistance: in the area of race relations.

The various Departments of the City are typically cooperative about providing the help and information which the Committee needs. However, their assistance is generally above and beyond the call of duty. In recognition of the need for help for the work of the Committee, the Committee contacted the deans of

several faculties (Commerce, Law and Social Work, Education) within local universities about assigning students to the Committee as unpaid interns. During the 1984-1985 academic year internships were arranged for six students from the Faculty of Commerce of the University of British Columbia. While the arrangement appears to be mutually advantageous, it is, nevertheless, a less satisfactory means of providing technical assistance to improving race relations. There is a need for additional technical assistance for the Special Council Committee on Race Relations. Among the tasks which would be of assistance to the Committee are:

1. Reviewing literature and materials bearing on the work of the subcommittees.
2. Providing statistical analyses of data of interest to subcommittees.
3. Preparing Reports and drafting recommendations on behalf of committees.

Recommendation Three: Council should issue a written equal employment policy statement.

Council ought to issue a very firm public statement that equal employment opportunity for all people is regarded as a economic, social and legal necessity requiring special action to overcome the consequences of past discrimination such as the setting of specific goals with monitoring and evaluation. Council should indicate that department heads will be held responsible for the policy as it affects their departments in the same way they are held responsible for the tasks which their departments perform for the city and/or the public.

Recommendation Four: Council should develop goals and timetables to improve the employment and distribution of target group members in the workforce:

At this juncture in its history, the Equal Employment Opportunity Program would be substantially augmented, if civic departments were required to set goals for the employment of members of designated groups (visible minorities, women and the disabled). A small number of people may object to such action, making a variety of fallacious arguments which are easily rebutted.

Establishing targets for the employment of members of designated groups is **NOT** Affirmative Action. The joint Committees are asking for the voluntary establishment of realistic goals for its Equal Employment Opportunity program. It is not obligatory for departments to reach those goals at the times they set out. Establishing goals is both sound organizational practice and a sign of good faith to those groups who are concerned with equitable treatment. Affirmative Action programs require mandatory goals and timetables. Under affirmative action programs, when goals are not met in specified times, penalties are imposed. The program we are talking does not involve mandatory goals and timetables. It is voluntary, involving no more than moral persuasion to achieve its ends.

Equal Employment Opportunity programs which establish goals are **NOT** guilty of reverse discrimination. According to the Canadian Charter of Rights [section 15(1)]: *Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.* Furthermore the Canadian Charter of Rights goes on to say that [section 15(2) subsection (1)]: *does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.*

A small number of people may argue that, by making the Equal Employment Opportunity program an active and visible program, the City is creating and exacerbating racism and discrimination. The argument is identical to the proposition that the police, by vigorously enforcing drunk driving laws, are increasing the amount and intensity of drinking in our community as well as people's desire to drive while under the influence of drink. This argument confuses causes and consequences, reversing the order. It is racism and discrimination that create the need for Equal Employment Opportunity programs. If people did not drink and drive, the police would not need to vigorously enforce the drunk driving laws.

An equally small number of people may say that the employment of members of the target groups, especially visible minorities, will result in the abandonment of the merit principle. This assertion is offensive. It implies that members of the target groups cannot meet the City's standards. People who make this assertion should be compelled to provide carefully gathered evidence. If fact, careful reviews of personnel journals have never turned up evidence in support of this claim. Treated as an empirical claim, the City should be obliged to carefully test the proposition. There are people who are most willing to use their talents as researchers to investigate such a proposition.

Recommendation Five: Council should develop and implement specific programs to achieve goals, including review and action in the following areas:

1. Recruitment: All personnel procedures.
2. Selection procedures:
 - a. Job requirements
 - b. Job descriptions
 - c. Standards and procedures
 - d. Application forms
 - e. Testing
 - f. Interviews
3. Promotion system:
 - a. Assignments
 - b. Job Progressions
 - c. Transfers
 - d. Seniority
 - e. Promotions
 - f. Training
4. Wage and salary structure
5. Benefits and conditions of employment
6. Terminations:
 - a. Layoffs
 - b. Recall
 - c. Terminations
 - d. Demotions
 - e. Disciplinary action
7. Union contracts

Recommendation Six: Council should evaluate progress and report to the public about progress in each aspect of the program on an annual basis.

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Peterborough: Mayor's Committee on Interracial Relations

After a number of racial incidents in 1981, the Mayor established a committee of 18 members representing a broad cross-section of citizens from industry, the church, education, labour and law enforcement, to investigate the situation.

The report to the Mayor in June 1982, made a number of recommendations. These included the need for the City Council to announce a policy statement, and the establishment of a structure for coordinating race relations programs and services. It was proposed that the Director of Community Services act as a resource centre and to liaise with and coordinate the efforts of groups and organizations in the community working towards improved race relations. In addition, it was recommended that the Mayor establish a Community Committee with representatives from those

groups with most direct contact with visible minority groups. This would include representatives from education, police, clergy, labour, industry, the chamber of commerce, media, service organizations, as well as ethnic and racial groups. The Committee would liaise with the Director of Community Services and provide input about the needs and concerns of the various groups within the community.

The Council is presently reorganizing itself as it moves towards the establishment of a Peterborough Multicultural Centre.

References:

Report of Citizens Committee on Interracial Relations. Presented to Mayor Robert Baker on behalf of the citizens of Peterborough, June 1982.

City of North York: Committee on Community, Race and Ethnic Relations:

Established in 1979, the Committee's objectives are to:

- a) To advise and consult with the Mayor and Members of Council on matters involving community, race and ethnic relations and equal employment opportunity.
- b) To formulate and recommend to the Mayor and Members of Council appropriate policies and programs which will reduce tensions and enhance community, race and ethnic relations in the City.
- c) To work actively with the North York Board

of Education, the Metropolitan Separate School Board, the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force, the North York Parks and Recreation Department, the North York Library Board, universities, colleges, and other relevant institutions and voluntary organizations in promoting mutual trust and respect among the City of North York's racial and ethnic groups and the institutions and agencies serving them.

- d) To encourage minority and local groups, both public and private, to engage in pro-

