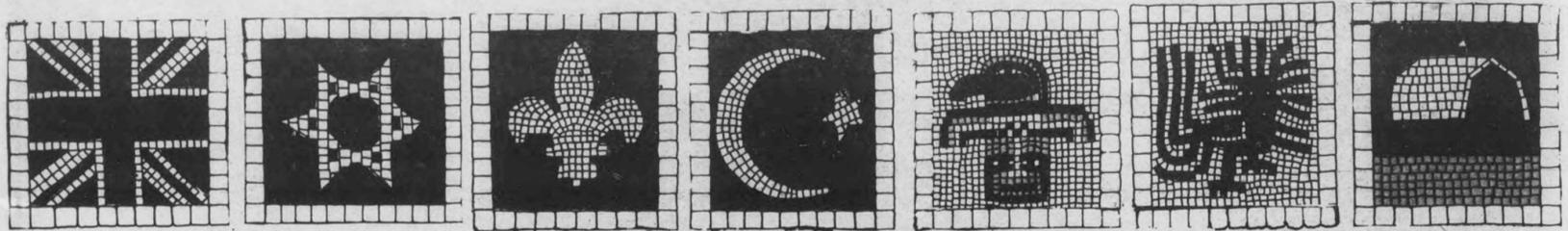


Faith and culture form basis of STU symposium October 26-28

Event is first of its kind in Canada



In New Brunswick, Moncton schoolteacher Malcom Ross is the focus of an inquiry by the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission after complaints that his anti-Semitic writings violate the Human Rights code.

In Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia, a confrontation between black and white students leads to charges being laid under the Criminal Code.

In Winnipeg, a 54 year old Cree Indian woman is humiliated when she awakes from an operation to find hospital staff treating her like a sideshow exhibit. Her surgeon had laced coloured beads onto the stitches closing her incision.

By Melynda Jarratt

In communities all across Canada, incidents of overt discrimination such as these are becoming more commonplace everyday. Yet not all Canadians are willing to accept injustices based on culture or religion as the inevitable result of life in a multicultural society.

A national symposium to be held next weekend at *St. Thomas University* is a part of a series of community initiatives that represent a step in the right direction for interfaith dialogue in Canada, claims Dr. Abdul Lodhi, Director of the Atlantic Human Rights Centre and co-organizer of the symposium along with Dr. Thom Parkhill.

"For the first time on a national level, a symposium will address the role of religion in the promotion of multiculturalism," said Dr. Lodhi. In his view, the symposium *Interfaith Dimensions of Canadian Multiculturalism* signals a willingness on behalf of Canadians to share in the humility it will take for all of us to live together in peace and with justice.

"This event is also significant because it will formulate the basis of a 'Code of Etiquette' for our multicultural society," Dr. Lodhi said. He explained the 'Code of Etiquette' is actually a set of guidelines for conducting day to day relationships within our culturally and religiously diverse society. These guidelines are expected to evolve over a period of time, he added.

Scheduled for the Edmund Casey Hall next Thursday, Friday and Saturday, the symposium brings together men and women of different religious and cultural backgrounds from universities, government and non-government organizations. According to Dr. Parkhill, Chair of Religious

Studies at STU, the long term objective of the symposium is to set the basis for a Canada that is characterized by both religious diversity as well as mutual respectability and acceptance.

"The symposium will identify sensitive areas in the Canadian multifaith milieu, such as education for example," Parkhill said. "Once these areas are identified, the next step is to address issues of religion and culture. By doing so we will lay down the building blocks of mutual respect and justice between people of many faiths and cultural backgrounds"

Public lectures are slated throughout the two and one half day symposium. They feature well known figures in the areas of religion, multiculturalism, and human rights, including Dr. Lois Wilson, President of the World Council of Churches and former moderator of the United Church of Canada. Dr. Wilson will deliver a lecture on Thursday evening, October 26 at 7.30 pm entitled, "Canadian Pluralism- A Two-Edged Sword".

Nine separate workshops will be spread over the duration of the symposium. Covering a wide variety of topics ranging from issues with a distinctly Canadian context to issues with a global scope, such as the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Religious Intolerance, the workshops will provide an opportunity for a healthy and meaningful exchange of ideas.

The national symposium on *Interfaith Dimensions of Canadian Multiculturalism* continues St. Thomas University's practice initiated in 1979, of hosting a conference in conjunction with Fall Convocation.

Interested persons who wish to attend the workshops are encouraged to register by phoning the Atlantic Human Rights Centre, 452-0549. There is no registration fee for the lectures or workshops.

To understand each other, we must communicate with each other, and to communicate with each other with even a modicum of hope of success we must know who to speak with, and how to speak with them.

Mosaic

(This is part of a lecture to be presented this Thursday, October 26 at 2.30 pm in the Ted Daigle Auditorium at Edmund Casey Hall, STU).

Canadians have moved a huge cultural distance since the 50's. The widely postulated and widely accepted beliefs that some peoples were superior, or were "Canadian" religions while others were not, that those who were unemployed, or underemployed, deserved their status, are no longer acceptable mores in current Canadian society.

We have in this decade, learned that living in a multicultural society is a lot more than the tolerance of ethnic food and ethnic dance, and that all Canadian citizens cry out, and deservedly so, for equality. Not equality for the next generation, or in some future century, but equality now. These Canadians are responding to promotion of a Multicultural policy that promises to treat all Canadians as full and equal.

In the past, we have judged certain religions to be valid in Canada, and others were not acceptable here. This was even reflected in the laws of the Provinces that governed the taxation of places of worship. Our frame of reference is widening. In this current broader framework, can we be satisfied with the dialogue that is taking place between Canadians of different belief systems?

While the ways in which we have looked at religions has changed, the entire matrix of Canadian society has also been changing. To understand each other, we must communicate with each other, and to communicate with each other with even a modicum of hope of success we must know who to speak with, and how to speak with them. In this regard we cannot divide the lives of people into artificial compartments, and issues in our society such as changing sexual mores have to be taken into account.

There is a new skin colour on the Canadian face. It is no longer the pink hues of the past, but increasingly the world's palette of brown is making its presence felt. And the browning of Canada is not a temporary summer tan, but a permanent feature that is growing as our immigration inevitably increases from the continents of Asia and Africa.

As the generations mix, first in our large cities, and then, inexorably across this land, what was foreign, and often despised or slandered, is now next door, and the person next door is increasingly beoming the parent of one's own grandchildren. Not only must we now dialogue differently, but we must also recognize that the people we wish to dialogue with are not people to be perceived as others, but as ourselves.

-- Jamshed Mavalwala

