

...But they still face problems of living in a racist world



Sylvester Anthony, TWSU president

(Cont'd from pg. 4)

I say uncritical because this was largely a response to a black North American fashion. In several instances it was no more serious than the turn to Afro hair-dos and the subsequent turn away from Afro hair-dos."

For third world students, there was something more serious at stake, says Otu, who used to wear an African dashiki far more often than he does now — "even when it was too cold" — perhaps because he himself was a bit tipsy with a hangover from the 60s approach. For Third World students an investigation of Marxism "was a response to the consolidation of neo-colonialism. The neo-colonial experience teaches that... exploiters and oppressors, sometimes with genocidal tendencies, can be black as well as white."

But a few more years have gone by, which brings us to the sagging present. Otu continued:

"Largely speaking there is a depoliticization of student consciousness and interest — this is of course reflective of the larger society.... What might be called the Disco Generation is color blind and not interested in affirming any black specificity."

This is not the whole story, however. Otu sees some activists, "very militant Marxists, who instead of actually thinking of the issues of underdevelopment and neo-colonialism, unfortunately find it necessary to become devotees of Peking, Moscow, or more recently Albania. They see and analyze the world in terms of proverbs they collect from these three countries."

But there is another sort of Third World student today, who fits neither the picture of an ambitious careerist or of an indoctrinated ideologue. Take Sylvester Anthony, the president of the Third World Student Union. A 24 year-old major from the island of Saint Lucia in the Caribbean, Anthony is deeply concerned with the activities of the Immigration Department. He sees the current Immigration act, Bill C-24, as "one of the most repressive pieces of legislation ever passed."

He worries about the Act because the decision to permit an immigrant to enter the country "is made totally by the immigration officer you meet at the airport... it depends on how well the guy slept the night before or how good a breakfast he had."

Bill C-24 "puts the burden on every Canadian citizen to be a watchdog for the immigration department," say Anthony, adding that "the rights given to common criminals are denied the person considered to be an illegal immigrant. He can be arrested and deported without the right to a lawyer, without a hearing."

Anthony is also concerned about the recent publication of bigoted

views on blacks, Jews and homosexuals in a Metro police newspaper.

"I'm unable to make a distinction between what a staff sergeant writes and how he deals with minority groups. I'm not sure that people write things they don't believe, and if they believe it, it affects their lives."

Anthony feels there is "an extreme amount of racism within the police."

"At a Bob Marley concert for instance, the visible presence of the police, of Emergency Task Force vans, is much greater than at the appearance of a white pop group like the Electric Light Orchestra."

Anthony's worries about the police and Immigration authorities are shared by Otu, and by Har- clyde Walcott, a member and organizer of the TWSU. All see a good deal of racism in the society around them.

Walcot described one ludicrous event that occurred in a York classroom a couple of years back. A professor, who is still at York, told his class that while driving in Barbados, where Walcot is from, he lost his way and "two natives jumped out of the bush" and directed him on his way. A twenty minute argument between the prof and Walcot ensued and which was resolved with the prof declaring that "I'm the professor in this class."

"He's an expert," commented Walcot wryly, after recounting the incident.

As to how he deals with this sort of thing on a continuing basis Walcot said, "it's no use beating a dead horse. Your purpose in life can be to become an anti-racist, which could lead you into a one dimensional type of development."

As to the future, both Anthony and Walcott are concerned about condition in the Caribbean. In Anthony's Saint Lucia, electricity, the water supply, livable housing are all problems "You've got people who've never seen an electric light," he said.

Oddly enough, the regions politicians tend to avoid such areas at election time because, as Anthony puts it, "these are thorny problems and you don't discuss them on a political platform because you tend to lose."

Walcot is opposed to Barbados' dependence on the tourist industry:

"All you need to kill a tourist industry is a rumour of and epidemic, or social unrest, and it throws the whole thing helter skelter."

He disputes the financial value of tourism for his country, maintaining that "75 per cent of each tourist dollar finds its way out" of the island.

All three of those interviewed pointed to reasons for optimism about the political situations in their countries. Anthony said that though the old colonial urge "to 'whitewash yourself'" remains in

the subconscious, incidents of, for example, a woman saying to her daughter 'you must marry a man much lighter than you are,' are diminishing.

A growing political maturity is evinced in the changing attitudes of the young people of the West Indies to Cuba.

"Cuba was generally thought of as being an enemy of the Caribbean..." says Walcot "but I can speak for young people generally, there's a more honest approach to the situation. People analyze what Cuba has done and the problems they've walked into as a result of financial dependence" on the Soviet Union.

Similarly, when Otu returned to Ghana for a few weeks last summer, he noticed a new political realism. There was a military coup, and the people did not rush into the streets and celebrate as they had the past; rather they looked on their new rulers with a cool eye.

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