

REGION'S BLACK COALITION LEADER: CANADA'S PROBLEMS NOT UNIQUE

by Dianne Jordan
of The Free Press

The two year old National Black Coalition Movement in Canada, although experiencing the birth pains of any new organization, is having some success in uniting the black people of Canada, according to Kathleen Livingstone, the organization's Ontario region chairman.

Mrs. Livingstone, a Torontonian, was in London Wednesday to speak at the fourth annual fellowship service at Bethanuel Church.

Participating in the service were the Centennial and Wellington United Church Women, and members of the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society of Bethanuel Church.

In an interview Mrs. Livingstone said the church's voice "can help create an awareness of black awareness."

There is no one specific issue affecting all of Canada's black people, she said, since their problems vary with their regions.

"Priorities vary with the area," she said. "For example in New Brunswick the first thing to do was getting Huckleberry Finn out of the (school's) curriculum . . .

"In Toronto we're having problems trying to get a location for a black centre," she said.

She described problems in housing and education faced by blacks as "not unique. There're pretty parallel with any (minority) group."

The difference between the blacks and most minority

groups, is the blacks are now prepared to tackle their problems themselves.

"We resent others trying to do it," she said quietly. "The blacks want to develop their own affairs."

As a beginning, the National Coalition Movement and interested individuals presented a brief to the Ontario Human Rights Commission in March claiming discrimination in housing and job opportunities for blacks.

"Our charter is just coming through now," she said, and added financial support for the organization's activities will come mainly from the federal government.

She said there are very few, if any, black performers in Canadian media.

The fact that there may not be many black performers from which to choose in Canada is a poor excuse according to Mrs. Livingstone.

"Let's have the few who are there given a chance. Let's have all visible minority groups given a chance in the media," she said.

The thinking of advertisers may be that white housewives may not want to buy detergent, for example, if it were advertised on television by a black woman, she said.

HOUSING OUTLOOK

A study submitted to Urban Affairs Minister Robert Andras in Ottawa yesterday says Canadians are better housed than ever before, but a future housing crisis is certain unless current transportation, zoning, taxing and building code policies are changed. The study was carried out by Professor Lawrence Smith of the University of Toronto's department of political economy.

A little boy stopped in front of an abstract painting in a gallery exhibition.

"It's supposed to be a picture of a child and his dog," his mother explained.

"Well," demanded the boy, "why isn't it?"

Or because there are so few black performers in the country, there may be a fear of overexposing them to the public.

But Mrs. Livingstone says the real reason black performers are not hired is just discrimination on the part of the employers.

She expects the findings of the committee studying the brief to the Human Rights Commission will be presented shortly.

The black people are not striving for diminution of the country, nor are they starting a revolution, she said.

"We're not trying to rule. We're looking at issues concerning blacks, specific areas and issues."

There are many black organizations in Canada, just as there are many white organizations, she said. The purpose of the National Black Coalition Movement is not to destroy or overrule the existing black organizations, but rather to get these organizations to relate to the Coalition Movement and still retain their individual authority.

"When black people are so united under one umbrella, they can speak with a stronger voice, with more thrust," she explained.

"We're not set up for violence in Canada as in the United States. There are 22 million blacks in the States. If we say we have 100,000 blacks in Canada that's really using your imagination, and they're so spread out.

"We haven't got desegregation of schools to go against. We haven't got the Klu Klux Klan to deal with. Discrimination here is very subtle," she said.

Education is one area in which this subtle discrimination shows up.

"There are a number of guidance teachers who still have the old attitude that the black student should be geared to a lesser paying job. The student often finds in his interview this is what's suggested, some very menial type of job. This attitude can be quite detrimental if the youngster has faith in his guidance teacher."

Mrs. Livingstone believes the best way to change this attitude and the misconceptions held by many white people

about black organizations is through dialogue.

"If you can get it down to an honest dialogue without the frills, I think it can be very beneficial," she said.

"This can be a beginning to understanding liaison which friendship and understanding gets built on."

The National Black Coalition Movement in Canada is not by any means Mrs. Livingstone's sole interest. She is an actress and has appeared on television and radio dramas. In fact, she began her

acting career with the London Little Theatre.

She is on the national board of the YMCA, is a member of the Toronto branch of the United Nations and served as chairman of the women's section of the UN's National Office and on its national public relations committee.

She teaches drama at a Toronto public school, and has raised five children.

In her spare time, she travels throughout Ontario talking to church groups and students.



Mrs. Kathleen Livingstone of Toronto, left, Ontario region chairman of the National Black Coalition Movement, was in London recently to speak at the fourth annual fellowship service at Bethanuel Church. With her, in front of the church, is her sister, Mrs. Evelyn Johnson, London.



Baseball fan Cornelius Vanderbilt Blackman, 75, of Chicago, sporting a hat topped with tickets from the 92 World Series and All-Star games since 1929, waits in line at Tiger Stadium in Detroit for tickets to an All-Star game.

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