

Robin W. Winks

NEGROES IN THE MARITIMES:

AN INTRODUCTORY SURVEY

WHILE THEY ARE NOT nearly so numerous in the Maritime Provinces of Canada as the Scots, the Acadians, the French Canadians, or indeed the Americans, Negroes have been involved in the history of the Maritimes for nearly as long as with the history of the United States. Although the first Negroes were brought to the New World in a Dutch ship in 1619, the first recorded sale of a Negro slave, a Madagascar black, in what was to become British North America, occurred in 1628 in Quebec, and Negroes may be presumed to have moved along Maritime shores not long thereafter. But the story of the Negro Canadian has differed in intensity and sometimes in kind from the long story of the Negro American. A common North American environment and a relatively common or generalized experience in Canada and the United States with laws, social systems, and opportunities that were meant primarily to serve the needs of the white man, have created many areas of common response.

The single most significant adjustment on the part of the North American Negro through response to this common environment has been that today in the United States the black man is pressing his claims not because he is a Negro, not because he views himself as a member of a transplanted minority from Africa in an alien land, but because he knows himself to be an American demanding his full rights as an American demands them. And the Negro Canadian, while less clamorous for civil rights because less well-organized, less well-led, and given fewer provocations, may also have come to know himself as a Canadian first and as a Negro by chance. If he has reached this conclusion, however, he has reached it by a different path.

The general Canadian response to environment, to immigration, and to cultural pluralism has differed in two important respects from the response in the United States. As a result the Negro Canadian has come to occupy a rather different position in Canadian society from that of his counterpart in American society. The first difference arises from the fact that many Cana-

dians still think of themselves as transplanted Europeans, and this was even more strongly the case in the nineteenth century. While the American has consistently asked Crèvecoeur's question, "What then is the American, this new man?", a question which has led to an historical industry second to none, assuming by the question that the American is, in fact, a new man, many Canadians have continued to assert with equal vigour that they are representatives of European man and European civilization. Given this feeling, the Negroes in their midst are related to their origins as the MacGregors, the O'Farrells, or the Thomases may relate themselves to their Scots, Irish, or Welsh origins. To white Canadians, the Negro was an African, as they were Europeans, and as such he was and is a sport, an exotic in a commonly-shared alien environment. In short, while in the United States the Negro was the object of discrimination and even hatred, he was viewed (colour nationalists aside) as a natural part of the American landscape, while in Canada, although the Negro may have achieved a measure of equality, he was nonetheless deemed foreign to the landscape—equal but alien.

Related to the tendency of many Canadians to seek no new man in the New World is a second cultural response of white Canadians to their environment, one which has influenced the Negro Canadian as well. One goal of newly-arrived immigrants to America traditionally has been to shed the old world and its ethnic badges of identity as quickly as possible. Those of the second generation of immigrant stock, as is well known, are the most nationalistic of Americans. The immigrant to the United States from Greece, Scotland, Germany, or Sweden often wanted nothing more than to assimilate. This, too, has been one Negro goal. Immigrants to Canada have been far less eager to assimilate into some amorphous, anonymous Canadianism. A bi-cultural society has encouraged what has become a highly plural society. If French Canadians are now in revolt, for example, surely their goal differs in one important respect from the goals of the Negro American. What the French Canadian wishes for, he wishes for *as* a French Canadian. Rather than assimilation, the French Canadian wants preservation of his separate identity. And other Canadians retain a justifiable pride in their own ethnic and past national heritages. The Negro Canadian shares this view, for he does not talk of assimilation (even as he is assimilated). The white society surrounding him assumes that it is natural that he should be left alone, that he should be self-segregated.

Left alone and self-segregated the Negro Canadian often is. Tiny Negro settlements dotted the Canadian landscape from the Salt Spring Islands

in British Columbia to Amber Valley in Alberta, and Maidstone, Saskatchewan; from Oro Bay, Wilberforce, Elgin, and Buxton in Canada West to Lake Otnabog in New Brunswick. But unlike the white Canadian, the Negro Canadian has no national heritage to fall back upon for self-identification in an increasingly anonymous world, for there were no African nations when Canada was being populated from Europe. The Negro Canadian lacks the sense of ethnic and national pride which gives reason and purpose to the broader Canadian tendency to cherish rather than to bury ethnic and national ties. The Negro Canadian is alone.

The Negro Canadian is alone for an additional reason, which grows out of these two circumstances of his social environment. He is in no way united; there is no monolithic Negro identity in Canada for there is no institutionalized, law-empowered discriminatory South against which he can stand united. In the United States the Negro may, on the whole, assume a basically common background and experience arising from slavery, a plantation economy, and a Civil War which made him a centre of at first unconscious and deferred but now conscious and imminent attention. The Negro Canadian has few shared historical experiences. Even today Negro Canadians refuse to unite as a group, for they are stratified by class lines of their own creation.

There is, in fact, no generalized body of Negro Canadians or of Negro Canadian opinion, since four major groups exist, each with a sense of historical identity of its own. Smaller sub-cultures parallel with these larger groups are also present. The West Indian Negro, most recently arrived on the scene, regards himself as British or Bajan but not Negro and refuses to mix with the local "coloured". The descendants of the Negro slaves brought to Nova Scotia and the Canadas by the Loyalists at the end of the American Revolution tend to think of themselves as among the founders of the nation, British North Americans who, after all, were Loyalists too. Both these groups feel themselves superior to the descendants of the Black Refugees of the War of 1812 who, brought from the Chesapeake Bay region to Nova Scotia by British ships, were a charge upon the colony into the 1850s, eking out a precarious living back of Halifax, at Preston, Hammonds Plains, and elsewhere.

A fourth major group comprises descendants of fugitive slaves who fled from the slave states into all of British North America, but primarily Canada West, from the 1830s to the 1860s, and especially after 1850 when the American government passed a stringent Fugitive Slave Act. Estimates vary widely but perhaps as many as 40,000 black men sought freedom in the

Canadas by 1861. The descendants of these fugitives are viewed by the line of Loyalist slaves as outlanders; the fugitive line in Ontario, in turn, looks down upon the Nova Scotians who were aided in their escape by the British government, not having to fear the breath of pursuit from Simon Legree and the hounds (of which Harriet Beecher Stowe never wrote) when Eliza carried the Negro race northwards with her to freedom "under the paw of the British lion".

But there were other Negro migrations as well, and the greater the variety of initial impulses for entering Canada the less the degree of past and present unity among Negroes. Many were descendants of slaves held by the French who, although slavery was illegal in France, permitted the enslavement of blacks and of *panis* in the New World. Some, especially in Nova Scotia, were free blacks who entered at the time of the American Revolution, men who had formed a corps of Black Pioneers and who had little in common with the slaves who accompanied the Loyalists as property. Nova Scotia was also, for a brief period, the home of a group of Jamaican Maroons, transported from the British West Indies by an unwise British government to starve among their black-skinned compatriots before moving on, as many did, to Sierra Leone in West Africa. In 1858-59 a substantial group of free Negro businessmen from San Francisco moved on to Vancouver Island, where they were of the greatest significance in the early development and defence of Victoria.

Even in the twentieth century, Negroes have found Canada attractive, for two additional large-scale migrations added to the diversity of the Negro Canadian's background. Between 1908 and 1919, hundreds of Negroes from Oklahoma and Kansas, wise in the ways of dry-land farming and wise too in the ways of border-state discrimination, journeyed into Alberta and Saskatchewan to meet the call of the Canadian government for thousands of immigrants to people the plains. When red-faced Canadian border officials tried to turn them back, the Negroes quietly persisted in pointing out that the Canadian government had offered free entry to all Americans and that they, too, were Americans.

Finally, in the 1920s a large body of Harlem Negroes, chafing under the restrictions of America's ill-fated experiment in social control by legislated national prohibition, joined the flow of thirsty men and women who sought solace at the feet of the gods Labatt, Molson, and Schenley. These Negroes, urban, sophisticated, disdainful of the law, in search of what they called "sport" (to which some would give more abrupt Anglo-Saxon names), came to dominate the St. Antoine district of Montreal. Carried by the train from

Montreal into Saint John, Moncton, Amherst, Truro, and Halifax, the Harlem Negroes found black men there before them who wanted no part of their imported culture. Eventually this group was to restrict itself to Montreal but not before their vocal, sometimes wild, activities had drawn attention upon the Negro Canadians that most neither deserved nor wanted. As a result, Negro Canadians chose not to associate with their Harlem, their American, or—for other reasons—their West Indian counterparts. Widely dispersed nationally, if clustered locally, and brought to Canada in differing waves of immigration, waves which provided little common experience, and well aware that they would best avoid discrimination by attracting as little attention to themselves as possible, Negro Canadians not only failed to unite, but viewed Negro unity as the greater danger.

The Negro in the Maritime Provinces shared this experience of ambivalence, division, and powerlessness.

The Negro runs through Maritime folklore and place names, from Bog, back of Charlottetown, to Negro Island off Port Clyde, from Bible Hill in Truro to Elm Hill near Queenstown. He has become part of the general Maritime story in the person of Maurice Ruddick, the "singing miner" of the Springhill disaster in 1958, in Thomas McCulloch's *Stepsure Letters*, or in Else Reed's novel, *A Man Forbid*, in which a man of "appalling darkness" stalks the streets of a Nova Scotia seaport until, we are informed, "the well-ordered community becomes a place of horror where primitive emotions were unleashed." His imprint is present in the daily speech of white as well as black Nova Scotians, and it is rooted deeply into Nova Scotian folklore and folk songs. While set apart by circumstance and choice, Nova Scotia Negroes share motifs and tales with Negroes from Louisiana or Georgia, tales which remind one that Negroes have no delusions about their second-class status.

Negroes came to the Maritimes as slaves, and slavery persisted throughout British North America well after it had been abolished in most of the northern states. Ironically, between 1787 and 1800 in particular, fugitive slaves from British North America fled south into New England and the Northwest Territory to find freedom, reversing the popularly recognized direction of flow. Slavery was introduced by the French and initially preserved by the British, and for 210 years the area that was to become Canada was legally slave territory.

An indigenous Canadian abolitionist movement began almost immediately after the American Revolution. Hardly a movement in fact so much as a sentiment, this local attack on slavery appeared at approximately the same

time in Nova Scotia and in the Canadas. Among the Loyalists there were many New Englanders who had opposed slavery at home and who saw no good reason to change their views in another setting. Many of the older residents also resented the general ascendancy of property which was represented by the arrival of the slave-holding Loyalists. Religious attitudes joined with a quick and sweeping anti-Americanism in some quarters to add to the growing condemnation of slavery. The British North American colonies should not, some thought, support an institution identified with the new Republic.

The first to introduce slavery, the French were also the first to let the practice die a natural death. In the 1780s and 1790s there was an increase in Negro complaints of being held illegally as slaves, and many observers were noting that slavery as a mass system required an agricultural staple production far beyond that which British North Americans could achieve. Gang labour was uniquely unsuited to the fur trade, to the seigneurie, or to the cod fishery. In the early 1790s the *Quebec Gazette* began a limited but unequivocal campaign against slavery, and in 1792 a bill of abolition was introduced into the House of Assembly of Lower Canada. The bill failed to pass, but on July 9 of the following year both Houses prohibited further importation of slaves into the province. The number of Negroes in the Canadas does not appear to have declined, however, for as the former slaves gained their freedom they tended to remain. The last recorded public sale of a slave in Lower Canada was in 1797, and thereafter advertisements offering rewards for runaway Negroes, which once had been relatively common, no longer appeared.

By the end of the century slave owners obviously felt that their property rights in slaves were not sufficiently known or protected. In January, 1799, a group from Montreal petitioned to secure their rights as masters over their slaves—only to have their petition rejected. In 1801, James Cuthbert, a leading member of the Lower Canadian House of Assembly, proposed a bill to regulate the conditions of slave life, to limit the term of slavery, and to prevent any further introduction of slaves into the province. Cuthbert's bill failed to pass, and two years later, when he brought in a bill to "remove all doubts relative to slavery" in Lower Canada, a committee of five members (soon expanded to seven) was appointed, deliberated, and arrived at no legislative draft. By this time the courts, and notably the Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench at Montreal, James (later Sir James) Monk, had so undermined slavery as to remove any hope among the owners that it would continue for long. In 1798 Monk had ordered the release of two slaves, Charlotte and Jude,

in two separate decisions, and in 1800 in *Dominus rex v. Robins alias Robert* (a black), Monk had entertained a memorial from the accused slave and had discharged him. These three decisions clearly placed a stay upon any further growth of slavery in the province.

Much the same process was followed in Nova Scotia to end slavery, and Monk, who had been Solicitor General in Nova Scotia, was much influenced by the views of two anti-slavery Haligonian jurists, Thomas Andrew Strange and Sampson Salter Blowers. As in Lower Canada, slavery fell into general disuse and, while not legally abolished until the general Imperial act of 1833, was virtually outlawed by judicial decision. The situation was not identical, however, for while only a minority of slaves in French Canada had been Negroes, nearly all were in Nova Scotia, and the institution was identified, as in the seaboard colonies to the south, with a single race. There were considerably greater numbers of Negroes in Nova Scotia, most of them freemen, and in the Halifax and Shelburne areas whites had shown much anti-Negro feeling. The contest, therefore, was somewhat sharper and the lines more clearly drawn than in Lower Canada, and slavery lingered more persistently.

By 1800, as we have seen, at least four different groups of Negroes had moved into Nova Scotia. Those Loyalists who attempted to take their slaves into the area west of the Saint John River encountered immediate hostility, however, from a group of Quaker Loyalists from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. In June, 1783, the Quakers of Beaver Harbour formed an association and placed at the head of their agreement the admonition "No Slave Masters Admitted." Elsewhere, Loyalists with slaves were accepted, and American slave and free Negroes lived side by side.

In 1791-92, the balance was tipped in favour of slave Negroes when a substantial body of free Negroes from Halifax and the coast southwards, with the support of Thomas and John Clarkson and the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, moved *en masse* to Sierra Leone. In 1789 the free blacks of Port Roseway and Shelburne, as well as many at Halifax, had become a charge upon the public, for through a combination of misfortunes the Negroes had been unable to establish themselves on their land, and the local Overseers of the Poor, to whom they fell, petitioned the magistrates of Shelburne to devise some plan to free the infant colony of the recurrent burden of indigent Negroes. Even after the migration to Sierra Leone, a large portion of the Negro population drew from the public purse until well into the 1850s.

Slavery throughout Canada was on the outer margin of a dynamic world

of European expansion. Slavery as an institution was not essential to that expansion in this remote part of the Empire, and clearly not adaptable to the marginal existence that most Nova Scotians were to win from the sea and their forested, often bleak, land. Most slaves were body servants, and they could and generally would remain in this capacity even if given their freedom. Under the circumstances, indeed, owning a slave had few advantages and several disadvantages, and many of the Loyalists were quick to see this and to give their slaves freedom. Attitudes of piety and emotional proximity to Britain provided positive justifications for ending slavery, just as climate, soil, and sea seemed to speak of negative reasons for no longer favouring the practice.

Quite early several ministers took an anti-slavery position, and one of these, an Anti-Burgher Presbyterian, James MacGregor, set off a major controversy which was discussed throughout the colony. MacGregor settled in Pictou in 1787. Then twenty-eight years of age, he had arrived directly from Scotland, where anti-slavery sentiment was already strong, and he at once entered into public controversy with local slave holders. He purchased the freedom of two slaves, using £20 of his initial year's receipts of £27 to pay the first of three installments on one Die Mingo, and he persuaded the owner to free a third slave without payment. In 1788, MacGregor sent a private letter to the Reverend Daniel Cock, slave-owning minister to the Burgher presbytery of nearby Truro, which he then had published in Halifax as *A Letter to a Clergyman Urging Him to Set Free a Black Girl He Held in Slavery*. His attack was motivated by doctrinal conflicts as well, and of the eight sins MacGregor found against Cock, most involved minute questions that were chiefly of interest in Scotland. Nonetheless, the resulting exchange of opinions was a remarkable one, especially at that time and in that place, for MacGregor's letter was a clear attack on an institution which still had much public acceptance. He found "Protestants, Presbyterian ministers, who of all others should keep farthest off from [Babylon] . . . publicly committing fornication with the Great Whore, drinking themselves drunk and stupefying their consciences with their filthy wine! But blessed be God, though hand join in hand, the Negroes shall be free." MacGregor took up the four chief defences of slavery as he supposed Cock would make them, and demolished each to his own quite evident satisfaction. He denied that the Negro's blackness showed him to be of the devil, for "the devil being a spirit can have no colour." If, he asked, it is better for the Negro to be slave than free, why do we not become slaves as well? He demonstrated that arguments from Jewish law were irrelevant,

for if one people choose to forfeit liberty, all do not, and he found that the curse of Canaan did not apply to Africans. "You are more likely to be of the seed of Canaan [Genesis x, 15] than they", he told Cock.

Nowhere else in British North America did anyone write with such fervour at this time, and while many condemned MacGregor, there were many who agreed with him. Cock did not reply, but the Reverend David Smith of Londonderry did so for him in a lengthy statement which reflected many of the views later to be put forward in defence of southern slavery. The slave girl remained with the Reverend Cock until she died, but MacGregor had written not only the sharpest attack on slavery to come from a Canadian pen even into the 1840s; he had also begun a public debate which soon reached the courts.

During this time, until he was sent to Bombay in 1797, Chief Justice Strange had publicly attacked slavery while carefully avoiding a formal adjudication, and his successor, Blowers, was of the same mind. As a student Strange had been much influenced by Lord Mansfield, the Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench in England who, in 1774, had rendered in the Somerset (Summerset) case his famous decision concerning slavery in England. In Nova Scotia under both Strange and Blowers there were several trials in which the jury's decision fell against the slave owner, and Blowers described his and his predecessor's policy on slavery as an attempt "rather to wear out the claim gradually than to throw so much property, as it is called, into the air at once. . . . This course," he wrote to Ward Chipman, later a judge of New Brunswick's supreme court, "has so discouraged the masters that a limited service by indenture has been very generally substituted. . . ."

In 1801, a case in Nova Scotia produced the only known public defence of Canadian slavery to be published in British North America. A slave, Jack, had escaped from his owner, James DeLancey of Annapolis, and had been hired by one William Woodin of Halifax. DeLancey demanded Jack's wages and his return, and Woodin replied that all Negroes in Nova Scotia were free. In the subsequent legal action DeLancey obtained a favourable decision in the high court, but Woodin's counsel, the noted Richard J. Uniacke, moved the court to arrest judgment on the grounds that no Negro could be a slave in Nova Scotia. The hearing on this motion was set for the following year, and DeLancey asked Joseph Aplin, a former Attorney General of Prince Edward Island, to prepare an opinion to be submitted to authorities in England. Aplin's statement, *Opinions of Several Gentlemen of the Law on the Subject of Negro Servitude in the Province of Nova Scotia*, was published in Saint John in 1802.

He contended that no law was required to establish slavery—indeed, neither Antigua nor Virginia had created slavery by a specific code—provided that laws recognized the state of slavery, as those of Nova Scotia had. He pointed out that insurance was sold on slave cargoes, and that which could be insured could be sold. The English authorities Aplin consulted agreed with him but DeLancey died before he could regain his slave.

Since no general judicial decision was ever given against slavery in Nova Scotia, it remained technically legal but little practised. In 1807, Governor James Henry Craig's duties included compiling a census of Negroes "free and unfree, and slaves". In the same year a group of slave proprietors from Annapolis County was driven to petition the General Assembly in such a manner as to show how effective the courts had been: "Your petitioners are far from pretending to advocate Slavery as a System . . . [but] owing to certain doubts now entertained by The King's Courts of Law in this Province, [slave] property is rendered wholly untenable by your petitioners, whose Negro Servants are daily leaving their service and setting your petitioners at defiance." With resignation the twenty-seven slave owners, who held 84 slaves among themselves, concluded that if their property were to be sacrificed for the public good, they should receive compensation. In Nova Scotia slavery was starved by being denied the full sanctions of the law.

Only in nearby Prince Edward Island was slavery abolished before the Imperial act. In 1781, slavery had been confirmed indirectly by an act which declared that baptism of slaves did not free them. In the early nineteenth century, transfers of slaves continued to be noted in the registry office in Charlottetown, but the act of 1781 was repealed in 1825 and, since the original had sanctioned slavery, the new act added that slavery, being at variance with the laws of England, "should be forthwith repealed, and Slavery for ever hereafter abolished in this Colony." A desire to be in harmony with English law had produced British North America's most forthright nullification of slavery.

Where slavery was legal but had few defenders within the legal profession it waned; in New Brunswick, where a leading jurist, George Duncan Ludlow, defended slavery, it survived scarcely longer. Ludlow was a Loyalist from New York who argued that slavery was soundly based on the common law. Nonetheless, two later court cases in New Brunswick virtually brought slavery to an end there as well. The first, in 1800, involved the right of one Caleb Jones to hold a Negress as a slave. The trial ended in no judgment, and Jones retained his slave, but the Fredericton judges were sharply divided

on the question of whether the laws of the colony could differ substantially from those of England, and one, Isaac Allen, who contended that slavery could not be recognized in New Brunswick, attracted public attention by freeing his own slaves at the end of the trial. Two challenges to duels, one involving Stair Agnew, actual owner of the slave, created additional popular excitement, although there appears to have been little public concern with the legal questions involved. The anti-slave jurists in New Brunswick were in the ascendancy thereafter, and although slavery remained technically legal, through the efforts of Isaac Allen and Ward Chipman it was little practised. But in New Brunswick advertisements for runaway slaves continued to appear at least until 1816, and as elsewhere in British North America (with the exception of Prince Edward Island), slavery was not abolished until the Imperial act of general emancipation in 1833, which became fully effective on August 1, 1838. The last Canadian born into slavery died in Cornwall, Ontario, in 1871, and with his passing an era was gone.

What of the Negro who was not a slave? There were two substantial groups of free Negroes in Nova Scotia before the 1830s, and both have been the subject of careful study by Maritime scholars. The first of them, the Loyalist blacks, were transported to Sierra Leone in 1791-92, and their story from the Nova Scotian side is told by Sir A. G. Archibald in the *Collections* of the Nova Scotia Historical Society for 1889-91. While much remains to be said of this migration from the African side, the entire movement is a subject for a more detailed paper than this. The conditions which confronted the Refugee Blacks who were brought to Nova Scotia in 1814 to 1816, and the problems which they in turn created for the colony, have been dealt with fully by C. B. Fergusson of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Dr. Fergusson's transcripts of materials in the Nova Scotia archives are exceptionally accurate, and there will be no need to tell again the sad story of how the refugees slowly descended into a state of recurrent dependency and tutelage.

From roughly 1830 to 1861, British North Americans were involved in a continental anti-slavery movement. This involvement drew British North American and the Northern free states together temporarily in a common contest against what was regarded as the Southern slaveocracy. As the *Toronto Globe* declared, the "duty of preserving the honour of the continent" against slavery also fell to British North Americans. After 1850, when the Fugitive Slave Act propelled thousands of Negroes into the provinces, and especially into Canada West, Maritimers were involved in a continental convulsion. The

Civil War that was to result was to be shared by the Maritime Provinces as well.

Indeed, by the 1850s the provinces could not prevent being a part of the larger, continental whole, and Canadians inevitably found themselves involved in continental problems. Fugitive slaves fled to where freedom was. Their destinations changed with the times, and the times changed with European diplomacy, the rise of evangelical and dissenting sects, or fluctuations in the cotton market. An "underground railroad" which was as much myth as reality did bring thousands of Negroes northward. While the provinces had been free of slavery for less than two decades, and while many British North Americans patently disliked Negroes, the fugitive slave did enjoy complete legal freedom in many areas north of the border. This may have been only the freedom to starve, but the Negroes starved on their own and not on their masters' time.

British North American ideological affinities to the abolitionist movement have been over-stressed, and British North American geographical proximity to the free-soil states has been undervalued. The Canadas, at least, were part of the Valley of Democracy and could not avoid it. That John Brown should have held his pre-Harpers Ferry meeting in Canada West may seem obvious for ideological reasons, especially since British North America as a goal of the Underground Railroad has been numerically exaggerated, but Brown had equally obvious geographical reasons for meeting in Chatham: trace his route from Kansas through Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan, and it strikes like an arrow into Canada West. Rather than consciously choosing British North America, Brown would consciously have had to avoid it on his way to upper New York.

While there were, moreover, short-lived anti-slavery societies in Toronto and Halifax, such societies could be formed very easily, as bird-watching clubs or Unidentified Flying Objects groups may be formed today. There were 1,006 anti-slavery societies in the United States in 1837—213 in Ohio alone, and 33 in Maine—and in that year there was but one in all of British North America. Nor should one forget that during the Civil War, which in the final analysis was fought because of slavery, British North Americans generally were anti-Northern. While George Harris was re-united with Eliza in Canada, one must remember that Mrs. Stowe speaks of his plans to press on to Africa. Fugitive slaves were harboured in the provinces but on the whole not accepted, and aside from the attempts at providential, self-help, or communitarian experiments by church mission and Negro organizations in Canada

West, comparatively little was done in any direct way to aid the cause of abolitionism. Most Maritimers were spectators, not participants, in the abolitionist crusade.

The British North American anti-slavery groups, whether in Nova Scotia or in Canada West (where the Canadian Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1851), seldom had enough money, or enough direct contact with the daily routine of the anti-slavery struggle, or enough followers to have any real influence. Indeed, Canadian abolitionists in general seemed cut off from the mainstream. Individuals, such as the Reverend William Sommerville, a Reformed Presbyterian from Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, spoke out to excoriate slavery, but most were content to see what might come to them to do. The Negroes in the Maritime Provinces seem to have played little part in the Civil War, for while several from Canada West enlisted in the Northern armies, few from the Maritimes appear to have done so. Ultimately the inchoate British North American anti-slavery movement suffered from the same divisive influences that operated in Britain and the United States: religious dissension, "the woman question", unreliable agents, growing anti-Americanism, and increased attention to unrelated local political questions which seemed of far greater urgency. Most important, however, in explaining the failure of the abolitionist movement in British North America to spread or have any far-reaching effect even on the condition of the Negroes already present in the provinces was the fact that the movement could gather little strength from the chief political preoccupations of the leaders of society, for it was not related organically to a political party as it was to be in the United States. While local by-elections in Canada West involved "the Negro question", provincial elections never did, and no British North American political party championed the Negro.

Following the Civil War, many of the fugitives, now free men, returned to the United States. From the 1870s to the 1930s the condition of the Negro Canadian declined. Nova Scotia Negroes in particular fell into a chronic state of depression, and they were soon trapped in the classic pattern of a vicious cycle: badly educated and often physically ill, they were unable to find steady employment and, unable to find employment, they were in no position to rid themselves of ignorance or disease. Slums developed around Halifax, first in the harbour-hugging self-segregated community of Africville and later in the middle of the city. Preston and New Road Settlement, nearby, were communities of degradation, as was the poverty-stricken village of Elm Hill, on the Saint John River.

But Negroes did prosper as individuals. In Saint John the ice trade fell to a Negro, and in Truro, Amherst, Sydney, and Halifax the occasional Negro businessman could be found. There was little question, however, that the Negro Canadian experienced conditions roughly similar to those he might have encountered in Massachusetts, except that he had fewer opportunities for employment. Not surprisingly, therefore, Maritime Negroes migrated into New England as white Nova Scotians did, or joined the Canadian railways first to travel and ultimately to move to Montreal or, in greater numbers, to Winnipeg and Calgary. The Negro community in Amherst grew to be almost entirely dependent on railway employment, and the community prospered or declined with fluctuations in the railway's fortunes.

Throughout Canada the period between 1870 and 1930 proved to be a difficult one for Negroes, as it was in the United States. In 1850, Canada West had passed a Separate Schools Act—which remained on the books into the 1960s—by which groups of five or more Negro families could request segregated schooling, and anti-Negro whites in Simcoe, Chatham, London, and elsewhere had quickly discovered that this permissive legislation could be made socially mandatory if sufficient pressure were brought upon the Negro community. Many segregated school systems were created as a result, despite the initial opposition of the Superintendent of Schools, Egerton Ryerson.

Nova Scotia also provided for separate schools, and to this day four communities have separated educational systems. Jim Crow was present in Nova Scotia in the nineteenth-century schools, and since schools are a major instrument for transmitting traditional patterns of life, Jim Crow remained present in the twentieth century. The heritage of Canada West's school bill of 1850 was especially felt early in the twentieth century, when Nova Scotia Negroes petitioned to have several separate schools abolished, but to no avail.

Negroes also tended to be segregated in their own churches. Often this was by their own choice, as with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Nova Scotia, and sometimes it was through community pressures. On the whole, Negro preachers in both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries preferred segregated flocks, for the Negro tended to want a type of service which few whites professed to enjoy, and in any case, segregation was one means of keeping control of the congregation. Neither Negro schools nor Negro churches were likely to produce any major Negro leaders in the Maritime Provinces.

White prejudice reached a peak during and immediately following World War I. During the war, Negroes attempted to enlist and were rel-

egated to a corps of foresters who, when sent to France, were assigned to manual-labour tasks. At Gagetown, New Brunswick, Negroes were segregated from whites, and the local commanding officer wrote that no Canadian fighting man could be asked to sit next to a coloured man. At the end of the war a group of white soldiers attacked the Negro settlement in Truro, stoning houses and shouting obscenities. In 1919 the Colored Political and Protective Association of Montreal lost an attempt to win orchestra seating for Negroes in Loew's Theatre in Montreal, for the Court of Appeal ruled that theatres could impose restrictions on seating as they saw fit. Almost immediately theatres in Nova Scotia and, to a lesser extent, in New Brunswick relegated Negroes to the balcony, and segregated seating patterns continued to be followed in New Glasgow until the 1950s. Hotels and restaurants were commonly out-of-bounds to Negroes, although no clear pattern of discrimination emerged.

Negroes were not, of course, the sole or even the major object of Canada's rising racist sentiment in the war years and those immediately after, but they caught much of the flak that was sent up against other targets. A respected popularizer of Canadian history, Agnes C. Laut, wrote in 1917 of how Canada faced "dangers within, not without . . . dangers of dilution and contamination of national blood, national grit, national government, national ideas." Self-seeking "Jews and Polacks and Galicians" would corrupt Canada. "Theoretically", she noted ". . . the colored man should be as clean and upright and free-and-equal and dependable as the white man; but . . . practically he isn't." Agnes Laut, in writing of the Jappy-Chappy, the Chink, and Little Brown Brother, probably spoke for a substantial body of Canadian opinion at the time.

Elsewhere, Negroes attempted to organize against the rising wave of prejudice. In Ontario and Saskatchewan they were faced with local branches of the resurgent Ku Klux Klan; in Halifax and Saint John with implacable barriers of job and housing discrimination; near New Glasgow with physical attacks upon their property; and in British Columbia with an irrational white identification of Negroes with the much-feared Hindus. In the face of the greater provocation, Negroes organized in Ontario a Canadian Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In the face of generally quieter patterns of discrimination in the Maritimes they withdrew increasingly into their self-segregated communities, churches, and schools.

Negro leadership, on the whole, was inadequate. The first genuine effort to provide leadership in the Maritimes came in the 1870s to the early

part of the present century from A. B. Walker, a Negro barrister and journalist from Saint John. In 1878, Walker—who had been born in British Columbia and who claimed, erroneously, to be the first Negro admitted to the Canadian Bar—organized the Negroes of Saint John into a political club. Seldom had Canadian Negroes attempted to use their numbers for political influence, except in Chatham and in St. John's Ward in Toronto, but Walker was more successful, and for eighteen years he delivered the Negro vote in Saint John to the Conservative party. In 1896 he bolted temporarily to Wilfrid Laurier, thinking that the Prime Minister would make him a Queen's Counsel, but within five years he had reverted to his earlier persuasion. The Negro vote in the Maritimes has remained basically Conservative even to the present time.

Walker's leadership accomplished little, for by his own admission eighteen years of loyalty to the Conservative cause brought the Negroes of New Brunswick but one menial assignment in the Saint John Post Office. But Walker continued to attempt to elevate the Negro race by founding, in 1903, a journal of "Literature, Science, Art, Philosophy, Jurisprudence, Criticism, History, Reform, Economics". This journal, *Neith*, was named for an Ethiopian deity of liberty, wisdom, and justice. Through it Walker expressed his own brand of racism, and wrote of the "pure Abyssinian lineage" that he could trace back 58,000 years. While he denied that the magazine was meant to be for Negroes, its lead articles dealt with "the Negro Problem, and How to Solve it." He also delivered uplifting lectures in which he posed as a Canadian Russell Conwell, virtually promising the Negro that "Acres of Diamonds" lay about his feet if he would but look.

Walker was typical of the failure of Negro leadership in Canada. He attacked Booker T. Washington for doing little more at Tuskegee than turning out "intelligent black hewers of wood and drawers of water". "All that the oily-tongued, two-faced wisecracks have had to do", he declared, "has been to command [Washington] to dig and bleed, and he has immediately lifted his hat and made an obeisance, and, without even a sigh or a frown, set to digging and sweating and bleeding." Yet, while Washington's solutions to the Negro's debased status may, from the perspective of the present, be seen to have been unwise, the Negroes of Walker's Maritime Provinces could not, in 1903, even dig, draw, and hew effectively, for they lacked the most rudimentary training. Walker argued that the only solution to "the Negro Problem" was colonization, preferably in Africa, and he solicited support for a colonization society. Such schemes had been common earlier in the nineteenth century, and Walker claimed to have won Sir John A. Macdonald's

approval for his plan. By the twentieth century, however, colonization was demonstrably impracticable, a counsel of despair which served not to help but to confuse the Negro Canadian and to support white Canadian prejudices.

Although Walker professed to like even Southern Americans, he was in fact intensely anti-American, and this sentiment led him to combat any attempt to give strength to the Negro Canadian by making him a part of the growing North American Negro movement. The English, he wrote, were "a chosen people who cling to [God's] Right Hand", and the Negro Canadian should cling with the English. Again, a pattern established at the turn of the century was to persist in the Maritime Provinces, for while the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, with its base in Washington, was able to win some followers in Ontario, Negroes in the Maritimes refused to reach out for the added strength that such a union might have given them. They were Canadians first and wanted no part of an American movement; they would solve their problems as Canadians or not solve them at all.

By the 1930s the Negro Canadians were beginning to respond to other sources of leadership. One came from their own ranks: Negro preachers who, in Halifax or Toronto, Montreal or London, were able to command a following not only within their own congregations but throughout the province. By the late 1930s and into the 1950s each enlarged Negro community was producing one or two men who could be said to speak for the entire community. Often, in fact, these men did not speak for the community but only for a portion of it, but whites, eager to have an intermediary through whom they could reach the Negro, thrust upon these single Negro leaders presumptive powers which they did not have. On the whole these leaders were responsible and sometimes educated men but they also tended to remind their congregations that the Lord would provide at times when the Lord too often manifestly was not providing, and they were often unduly cautious, eager not to offend the whites who had brought them into prominence and who were so slowly giving Negroes at least the form if not the spirit of equal opportunity.

But Negro leadership in Nova Scotia, in particular, was to give the Negro some growing sense of pride in himself as an individual. Moderate leaders such as the Reverend William Oliver in Halifax, or more militant leaders such as John Davidson in Amherst, both emphasized the necessity for Negroes to seize opportunities to assert their self-respect. By 1956 the Negro temper in Nova Scotia had turned so far that a popular article in *Maclean's* which emphasized the tawdry and immoral in depicting Negro life at New

Road Settlement brought down upon both magazine and authoress a storm of protests from Negro and white alike.

Ultimately the most effective leadership of the Negro Canadian appeared to be coming from outside the ranks of the Negro. While it is still too early to judge, one must stress the work of the Canadian Labour Congress and its Human Rights Council, now the National Committee on Human Rights. In 1957-58, and again in 1959, the Council urged upon Negro leaders in Nova Scotia the necessity of making use of the letter of the law and, where the law was discriminatory, the necessity for changes in the law. Fair Employment Practices and Fair Accommodation Practices Acts were passed, often under pressure from the Council, in many although not all Canadian provinces. The rise to active positions of leadership of a younger generation of Negroes who were prepared to use these laws as weapons, coupled with a growing interest at the universities in Canadian racial problems, as well as the establishment of a Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People, have served to create a new ferment among the Negroes of the Maritime Provinces. In the last few years the Human Rights Council has conducted extensive educational campaigns to inform Negroes and whites alike of the nature of the anti-discrimination legislation, and actions against discriminatory landlords and employers have been taken throughout the provinces. While in Canada there is no equivalent of the so-called Negro revolt now taking place in the United States, Negro Canadians are beginning a quiet attack, moderate in tone and realistic in goals, on the remaining barriers to genuine Canadian equality.

But the Negro in the Maritime Provinces still has far to go. Too often he remains quiescent in the face of overt discrimination; too often he says that the racial situation is worse "over there", "over there" usually being the next town. But "over there" always is irrelevant except as a rationalization for inaction. The Negro American might well say that "things are worse" in South Africa but this does not affect his responsibilities to himself. The Negro Canadian can genuinely say that "things are worse" in the United States but the remark serves only to indicate how far the Negro Canadian still has to travel on his own journey towards self-respect.

White Canadians, of course, enjoy their own rationalizations as well. They know of the many Negro achievements in Canada and use them to generalize to an insecure conclusion. Anyone engaged in research into Negro history is always in danger of being submerged in either a catalogue of grievances or a litany of individual accomplishments. Congratulatory ref-

erences to "the first Negro V.C. in Canada", William Hall of Hantsport, Nova Scotia, or to the first Negro lawyer in Canada, Delos Davis of Sydney; to the first Negro policewoman in Canada, Rosa Fortune, of Annapolis Royal, or to New Brunswick's Negro hockey player, Willie O'Ree, and the jazz pianist Oscar Peterson, are comforting and irrelevant. Too often such articles naïvely hide from the white reader the problem that lies in wait.

Any study of the Negro in the Maritime Provinces impinges upon the present. When this prolegomena to the history of the Negro Canadian is told in full, it must deal with the recent past no less than with the days of slavery. And all of us will deal with the implications of that past for the future of our provinces, states, and nations. If full equality remains in the future for the Negro in the Maritime Provinces, it is nonetheless surely in that future. Then perhaps the words of the Nova Scotian folk song will be true:

When I go up to Shinum place,
See white man, red man, black man face,
And Jesus good and kind.
And Jesus good and kind.

NOTES

This article is based on a paper read before the Canadian Historical Association at Charlottetown.

A mimeographed bibliography of primary and secondary sources on *The Negro in Canada* was compiled in 1967 by Shushil Kumar Jain, Reference Librarian University of Saskatchewan, Regina, and Christine Horswell, Regina Public Library. It includes a list of some general books related to the Negro in America, and a select list of libraries in the United States and Canada with strong Negro collections.