

VANCOUVER CIVIC UNITY ASSOCIATION

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To improve intergroup relations and to strive for the elimination of prejudice are two of the main objectives of the Vancouver Civic Unity Association.

In the fall of 1950, leaders of church, intercultural, international, labour and ethnic groups in the city met to discuss some basis of co-ordination in their anti-discrimination programs. A steering committee was set up to propose a constitution and finally on December 11, 1950 the Vancouver Civic Unity Association came into being. Since then it has been working quietly and effectively, with tact and perseverance, to bring about tolerance and understanding.

The general aims of the Association, as laid down in 1950, have remained virtually unchanged. They are briefly: to promote understanding and goodwill among the various ethnic groups comprising the community, to promote measures favourable to the achievement of unity among Canadians, to promote in all ethnic groups familiarity with the best Canadian traditions and to develop among them a consciousness of their rights and obligations as Canadian citizens, to expose and counteract influences which reflect ethnic antagonism or are likely to lead to prejudice.

Counselling Service

These objectives are translated into action through a variety of projects. One of these is a confidential counselling service which is concerned with investigating cases of alleged discrimination in employment, housing, accommodation or public services. This counselling service is available free to anyone who feels discriminated against. During 1957 the Chairman and Executive Director held a total of 70 conferences with people who appealed to the Civic Unity Association for help. The Association feels that the majority of these complaints were solved to the satisfaction of all the people concerned.

The value of these interviews was stressed by the Chairman, W. G. Dixon, in his annual report for 1957. "I have had the opportunity of participating in a number of conciliation sessions," he remarked, "and there is a real sense of accomplishment in the whole process. As you know, Civic Unity does not berate an offender in a public way but seeks to review the situation so that change will result. Probably for the first time in his career the person interviewed bumps up against his conscience in relation to a discriminatory practice that he and others have taken for granted. The exploration of moral values almost inevitably reduces the initial hostility directed against 'busy-bodies'."

The Association considers an educational program an essential part of its work. In this connection it distributes a monthly newsletter and other free literature on human relations. It is also organizing a Speaker's Bureau of ethnic group leaders and local authorities in the field of intergroup relations.

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