

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL STAFF COMMITTEE
TO REVIEW PROGRAMS COMBATING RACISM

John Steidl, Chairman
John Davis
Seymour Flinn
Carman Hunter
Richard Johns
Robert C. Martin, Jr.

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Executive Council
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I. PROGRAMS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
DIRECTED TOWARD THE ELIMINATION OF RACISM
October 1967 - March 1969

Program

1. FUNDING of organizations working to combat white racism
For guidelines used to reach decisions re funding see Appendix I.

Examples:

People Against Racism (Detroit and National) PAR

Committee for One Society (Chicago) COS

Citizens Organized for Urban Progress (Oakland, Calif.) COUP

Evaluation

These are young organizations with young constituencies and do not seem to reach those over 35. They are doing good research but not moving fast or forcefully enough to effect massive change.

Program

2. STAFF WORK with the organizations above to encourage them to work on joint national strategies and priorities and consultation in order both to learn what they are doing and to share experience and insights with them.

Examples:

Cooperation in sponsoring two national conferences for representatives from these organizations.

Evaluation

Our contact with these organizations has impressed upon us the importance of the definition and understanding of racism on which any movement for change is based. They differ among themselves and thus their strategies differ widely.

Program

3. Staff participation in PLANNING AND ADMINISTERING CONFERENCES designed to enable individuals and groups to face their own racist attitudes and behavior, to work on changing them and to become catalysts in

Programs of the Executive Council Directed Toward the Elimination
of Racism (page two)

working with their own families and communities.

Examples:

Litchfield, Conn. (Appendix 2)
Memphis, Tennessee (Appendix 3)
Maryland training program for community leaders

Evaluation

This and many similar conferences concentrate almost entirely on attitudes and behavior of individuals. They are worthwhile but highly ineffective as they do not get at the roots of the problem in institutions of society. They produce a sense of individual guilt but do not enable persons to bring about change.

Program

4. CONSULTATION by mail, phone and in-office interviews offering assistance in the design of conferences and programs.

Examples:

Western Massachusetts (Appendix 4)
Others include consultations with priest at Brooklyn College,
Penn State, etc.

Evaluation

We never know how well the event being planned "comes off." As above, this kind of help is generally related to changing individuals.

Program

5. Acting as a "SWITCHBOARD" i.e. discovering what is being done, helping organizations, both Church and secular to discover other organizations and groups in their own area where they might get resources and help.

Examples:

A variety of diocesan leaders have been directed to PAR and other organizations. We have consulted with individuals from the business community offering suggestions about where they can find help.

Evaluation

Such contacts may be extremely helpful where they occur but they are not part of an overall strategy; therefore their impact is slight.

Program

6. DEVELOPMENT AND/OR DISSEMINATION OF RESOURCES, bibliographies, etc. to be used by groups for study, discussion and action.

Examples

- Seabury Press
 book, filmstrip, record (Appendix 5)
- Test program for use with families, and groups of families.
 Introductory Unit on The Negro in American Life (Appendix 6)
- Crisis in American Life and other NCC programs (Appendix 7)
 (in 1969 Episcopal participation limited to "Operation Impact")

Evaluation

Written materials for study and possible action are chiefly useful in alerting individuals to aspects of racism in society of which they have not been aware. The training and background of the leaders can make a big difference. However, there is no way to guarantee any kind of "results" other than guilt. Increased attention needs to be given to linking study and action.

Program

7. ENCOURAGING PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS which may not have as their chief purpose combatting white racism, but may have an effect upon it.

Examples

- Projects of Church-sponsored Day Care Centers, Tutorial programs, etc., where Church members can serve as volunteers
- Summer camping programs where racial and cultural groups are re-

presented in obvious numbers for interrelations

- Citizenship participation programs regarding civic public issues where racist positions are exposed

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II. WHITE RACISM - A WORKING DEFINITION

"Racism" can be a diversionary word in that, standing by itself, it can invite the incautious to construct generalized descriptions of the oppression of one people by another. The more one inspects the actual use of the word in the United States, the more apparent it becomes that what is intended by most uses of the term is "White Racism." For the purposes of this report, therefore, wherever "Racism" appears "White Racism" is an accurate synonym.

Any attempt to evaluate Executive Council or National Council of Churches programs (Part I), or to project new possibilities for attacks on racism (Part III), depends to a considerable extent on how one defines racism. Therefore, the following working definition is suggested:

White Racism is the institutional as well as individual subjugation, exploitation, and paternalistic treatment of the colored races by the white race. It is based on a long history of traditional assumptions of white "civilized" superiority.

While this is not a perfect definition, nor one with which it is particularly comfortable to live, any brief review of white European and American relationships with the "colored" majority of the world makes it pretty clear that it is accurate.

For example, in the U.S.A., under the banner of "civilizing" the country, the Indian population which was in the way of westward expansion was either destroyed or herded into what are euphemistically called reservations. With considerably less "justification," but with the same assumption of superiority, whites have brutalized blacks in this country for 400 years. During World War II Japanese Americans in the West were herded into relocation camps, their property expropriated and all semblance of constitutional rights simply overlooked.

These national experiences are explicitly grounded in a definition of white people as superior to anyone of color. It has been assumed by white that persons of color are less than human. At one time, they were even defined legally as "3/5's of a man." Until recently this definition has enabled whites to rationalize individual and institutional exploitation of those who are black, brown, or yellow. Fortunately, not only black America but the "colored" majority of the world is no longer prepared to let whites continue in this fantasy.

There are several important implications of this brief analysis, which make a difference in the kind of recommendations which can be made:

a). The focus of racism is not the condition of black people and what white people do for them; rather, it is how white people see themselves, and whether some white people are prepared to challenge vigorously the system of white superiority in this country.

b). Whites today are the product of a long history of racism, which has become imbedded in all of the institutions of our society. Because white Americans have had a great proclivity for defining social problems in individual rather than institutional terms, it is very difficult for them to recognize anything but the most blatant and bigoted individual behaviour as racist. However, it is not individual, bigoted attitudes which produce institutional patterns of racism, nor is it possible to terminate pervasive institutional forms of racism by changing individual attitudes.

To recognize the reality of institutional racism means to recognize that although there are well-intentioned individuals whose attitudes are acceptable, they have not changed the behaviour of the institutions through which racism manifests itself. For instance:

--- Individual white home owners are willing to sell to black people, and some have; but this has not changed nor influenced the real estate system that excludes and exploits black and other colored persons.

--- The schools may have dedicated and understanding teachers; but this neither improves the quality of ghetto education nor produces the imaginative plans that are needed to cope with today's challenges to urban schools.

--- Responsible, sensitive individual whites are to be found in every major company; but this has not to any great extent resulted in the appearance of black people in policy-making positions. (A recently released study by Chicago's Urban League revealed that in business corporations, government and key professional roles in Cook County, black people held 45 out of 7,919 jobs that were identified as policy-making positions - less than 6/10 of 1%.)

--- Black men know that though there are individual white doctors and nurses who do not have racist attitudes, the health institutions of our country provide inferior service to black people, so much so that the black infant mortality rate has increased to alarming proportions and is not improving. (In 1940, the non-white infant mortality rate was 70% higher than for white; in 1960, it was 90% higher. The maternal mortality rate in 1940 was 2.4 times the white rate; in 1960, it was 3.8 times higher.)

The same indictment can be made of our governmental institutions, our religious institutions, and, in fact, all of our institutions. Any effective attack, therefore, on the problem must of necessity take into account these implications. That is, the foci must be

- a) white people, not blacks or groups of whites and blacks; and
- b) the diagnosis and changing of institutions rather than the alleviation of individual bigotry.

III. STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. (internal to Council staff) That the Staff Program Group immediately:
 - a). direct a review of internal operations using as its criteria the resolutions passed by the Council at its meeting in September 1967;
 - b). direct the committee planning the staff conference to provide ways of diagnosing what racist practices exist in this staff and commit its (SPG's) members to work to change them in collaboration with minority group persons presently employed.
2. (external to Council staff, but within the Episcopal Church):
 - a). That the SPG offer a "special order" to Council members at the earliest possible date (December) directed to analysis and diagnosis of racist components in Council actions;
 - b). That the SPG direct Section III to collaborate with Section I in expanding Section III's present experimental program with Church-related social agencies (to alter their Board and program arrangements in accordance with the principle of "client participation") into a strategy which will assure that a majority of Dioceses and Parishes will examine their own procedures and programs to diagnose and correct racist practices.
3. (external to the Episcopal Church):

That the SPG instruct the personnel of the Council to seek out organizations similar to PAR; and to commit themselves and the resources of their Sections to active cooperation with such agencies.
4. (Review): That SPG require a review of all action taken as a result of the recommendations (above) in December 1969 and every six months thereafter.

Commentary

Recommendations 1 (a & b) and 2a entail subjecting our own organizational standards, and our own behaviour as operators of that organization, to a consistently embarrassing and self-conscious scrutiny.

It is essential, however, that those recommendations be identified as the irreducible minima prior to issuing invitations to other agencies either within or outside the Episcopal Church. The Council cannot afford to make recommendations about attacking racism in any other organization before our own organization has moved well into the process of stern self-analysis and self-correction.

The following standards and assumptions are minimal for the responsible execution of recommendations 1 and 2a:

- 1). The assumption that the organization is probably racist to a degree and in specific ways unknown to its white personnel.
- 2). The assumption that disclosure of data indicating racism will be embarrassing, much as a physical examination is sometimes embarrassing -- but necessary for precisely the same reason that a physical examination is necessary.
- 3). The recognition that the Council employs a sufficient number of aware black people that there is data enough; the problem being to ask for it responsibly and to deal with it the same way.
- 4). Determination to focus attention on the values, assumptions, and practices of a white institution, rather than allowing individual white persons to be "put on the spot."

The standards can probably be expanded in number, and in detail, but they do represent minimal essentials for undertaking a diagnostic analysis and a therapy for our own organization. In the absence of a firm, consistent determination on the part of senior white officers and of the majority of the Council's members to work to these standards (and to encourage each other at every opportunity to do so), there is little point in attempting either diagnosis or therapy.