

September 9, 1969

Interview with Dr. W. P. Oliver by Harry Wells

H. W. - First, Dr. Oliver I would like to know are what organizations are you a member of, or do you participate in, and what are your positions in these organizations?

O - First of all, I participate in the African Baptist Association of Nova Scotia which is a church organization. I hold a number of executive positions in that organization and the treasurer, the senior counsellor, the chairman of the Board of Trustees and the chairman of the Rural and Urban Life Committee. I belong to several fraternal organizations, masons, oddfellows, as well as the Canadian Legion, from a professional point of view, I'm involved as the Interim Chairman of the Black United Front, a new emerging organization within the Black community of Nova Scotia. Prior to that I was involved in the development of the Community Council concept in Halifax County where the eight communities in the county have representatives that meet monthly in order to coordinate programs and to feed information into the local communities and as an agency to develop local leadership. I find that within the last few years that I have been eliminating a great many public organizations, the community organizations that I was involved in because of my present positions and there was a time when I served on the welfare council of Halifax and Dartmouth, rehabilitation council; I am still a trustee and a director of the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children but there are so many of these well worthwhile organizations that one could be serving on but you would have to establish priorities and ask yourself where are you making the most effective contribution? and it has almost reached the point where I have been zeroing in on our Black organizations, the last year I was president of the Canadian

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Association of Adult Education, Nova Scotia Division. and enjoyed that exercise because it was within the range of my profession, but I think that probably the top thing right now is my exercise with the Black United Front.

H. W. - How do these organizations shape up in terms of Black Power or Black consciousness?

O - I would think probably that the BUF is the most positive in terms of Black consciousness. I think this is basic to the whole concept of the Black United Front. At our meeting last weekend with representatives of twenty-three of the Black communities across Nova Scotia that polarized many new faces, many new individuals who do not normally meet in the gathering of people, we had a fresh atmosphere, and a sense of a new determination and I think it is going to result in the change status of Black people which is in reality the main objective of the BUF.

H. W. - Do you see the BUF as a sort of new exciting phenomenon for Black people in Nova Scotia? Do you see the BUF as the way the Black people will finally hopefully achieve equality in Nova Scotia?

O - I think there is every possibility of that because it starts first as you have suggested in this Black awareness and then we move in with the opportunity now for self-determination and as a consequence of this it will build confidence and it will give us an opportunity to develop essentials of leadership in our own community. Too long, there has been the feeling that we can't do it.

H. W. - I'm interested in this idea and I would like to know your opinion on this. This is sort of off my scheduled guideline, but do you think of the BUF as having long-range implications throughout all of Canada for the poor people?

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O - Yes I do, because simply from this premise that it is a matter of status of Black people and if we can do anything or establish anything in this area, I think it will be relevant to all Black people in the Dominion of Canada. This is one of the basis of our presentation to the federal government, it was an exercise in citizenship, and we have 60,000 Black people in Canada today. Six years ago we used to talk about 23,000.

H. W. - What do you think the BUF. Do you think they recognize the long-range implications that the .BUF will have on Blacks and probably Indians and all non-whites of Canada

O- This is simply my own opinion I feel they see in it what may be considered a new approach to the whole line of poverty, the whole welfare system and if we can establish ~~xxxxxxx~~ certain things it may result in a whole lot of changes. I think what we are dealing with are the problems of people and people power, how they bring about change in their own lives/

H. W. - Are you still optimistic even though ?

O - I think all of this was good, it separated the boys from the men and I'm beginning to see this thing now. What I ~~thoughtxxxxxx~~ saw Saturday and the Board of Directors that came out of that thing was choice terrific, these are people who are committed and have ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ who competence.

H. W. - For a man who has been all around Nova Scotia do you see all these other isolated communities as really in step with the BUF really excited and really recognizing the creative potential of the BUF.

O - I don't see any problem coming about. They don't know too much about it right now. The meeting over the weekend was more or less the unveling to the community through their representatives. Their

Their representatives are 100% committed, they will go back and tell them. Now in the interval we are able to get the organization set up, that is, the staff and the workers out and they in turn politimize and explain. This is when the results will come and I have a feeling that competent people approached in the proper manner that there will be no problems. Now mind you, we still have some coloured people

H. W. - One more question on the BUF and this one out of curiosity. When I came to Nova Scotia I drove through Guysborough County, Lincolnville and all those places, and I find it very hard to conjure up; anything in my own mind the way that you could really relieve the problems. It seems like such a desolated place, but I guess again, it is only for the people to decide what is their problem.

O - I think you've answered your own question. This is why we say self-determination and I have a feeling, every confidence, that given the proper opportunity and set up the right atmosphere that they will come up with what they consider to be a solution to their problems and then it is up to the BUF committee, BUF agency to get together to help them to make them present their proposition, ~~xxxxxx~~ to push for what is required to implement it.

H. W. - In the area, it is such a poor economic area, may be it seems like Guysborough County was, well how could they really do anything, the area is so poor in general, could you escalate your policies to ask for economic development of this whole area?

O - Again, that would be something that would have to come from the people themselves. I think they would recognize the potential where they were, whether they needed a greater input, this is the thing, and you have to deal with it on the basis of the age groups

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I wouldn't venture to suggest anything that might happen. I am prepared to leave it until you get down with these people.

H. W. - I think you made a wise choice . Let me change the subject.

For a man who has been interested in Human Rights for years and years, what has shaped your perspective on life. Could you isolate to do with this ^{anything} mainly interest in the ^{cause} ~~xxxx~~ of human rights or the cause for Black people.

O - I don't want to get into a long story. For the first 25 years of my life I lived in a white community where I was the only Black child. I went to school, high school, recreation, church Sunday school. As I grew older, I noticed certain social differences ^I ~~that~~ stayed ~~through~~ in the same community and through university and my post-graduate work and then I moved out into the broader community when I was about 25, to Halifax, where there was a concentration of Black people. I saw the differences, it meant all the difference in the world, to be Black and to be white so I dedicated myself to try to develop programs within the Black community, to inspire, to encourage Black people to do things on their own so that they might establish, they might negate the image that was being cast, that they might show themselves to be equal to all men, not as sort of an anti-white but I believe in our people. The colour has nothing to do with your competency, and it is a matter of training, of will, of fate and character.

H. W. - In those first twenty-five years did your family, or any member of your family make you the type of person that you are.

O - Other than my father, who was a hard worker, ~~xxxxxxxx~~ conscientious, and was quite an economist. He was brought up that you should work that you should provide a home for the family. Probably one of the first things I did before I got out of college was to buy an insurance

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H. W. - Has the American experience shaped your present perspective?

In ~~terms~~ terms of where you are ~~now~~ today, has the American experience had any effect on this?

O - Yes, I have always had high admiration for the American Black community. Very early in life I followed the American Black press Lincoln University, Howard, this is the only thing I could ^{relate} ~~relate~~ to when I was a kid growing up. I became terribly shocked and disappointed when I moved out of my own community and could not find anything comparable in Nova Scotia. Not that we were unhappy in high school, I ended up captain of the football team, captain of the hockey, in the clergy I was president of the Atlantic Baptist Convention, went in on the first ballot, but there still wasn't my full need as a Black man. I could I suppose allow that to go to my head and say "you're different" and forgot about it. I can't do that.

H. W. - How interested are you in the struggle and ideals of American Black leaders?

O - I don't think it is purely American, I think it is universal. I think that the ideals they have are for the Black man universally. I think this whole matter is the status of Black men.

H. W. - Are you saying that all Black people have similar problems the world over.

O - I would think so, I would say yes, basically. that would take into consideration certain specifics but by and large the fundamental thing is this matter of Black and whites.

H. W. - What books concerning Black people have you read within the past two years?

O - I read them and I don't remember them. Well, the one that

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interests me most was "Black Rage", 'Black and white confrontation' and several of Bennett's books, and every now and then I go back to Gunnar Myrdal the American Dilemma . I see, my youngsters had some of the more recent books, two of Cleaver's books, but they don't have the time to follow them through exactly. Much of my reading the major portion is in the area of human relations and organization and community organization, and the working with people, and the Black awareness of it is good psychologically but the techniques that are used are universal, they are not necessarily Black because I believe that Black people are human.

H. W. - I agree with that

O - So we try to organize Black people to meet their needs with the same techniques, the same principles are binding, when we try to organize the fishermen down here at Terrence Bay, to meet their needs, the same way I would work with a class of teachers and bring them to a meaningful awareness of the problems of the Black students when they go back to their schools.

H. W. = Do you take these ideas from these/different books and try to apply them to the Nova Scotia situation?

O - The human situation?

H. W. - Did you read a lot about Dr. King and did you try to

O - No, I watched the television. I have to admit this. I am not a tremendous reader. It is an ordeal for me to read, - my wife reads and she tells me but I only read when I am really pressed to read certain articles, but I do a great deal of thinking.

H. W. - What other sources do you use to get information about Black people. You know, like you said - well you answer that question and I'll ask you another question.

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O - The people themselves

H. W. - Could you elaborate on that?

O - I can listen to you, and many others, and many of the people who come in here and many of the communities where I go and set up situations whereby, it becomes a learning opportunity for me, I'm giving to them, but I am also learning. You see, I'm very selfish about this.

H. W. - Do you think you get most of your information about Black people through your contacts?

O - Depends largely upon them because that is really factual. I'm concerned about how humans behave. It is sort of a sensitivity thing and I suppose that applies to Black and white. You see, I have this great contrast in my life 25 years on this side where I practically lived as a white man, and you live on this side you are living as a Black man. It takes you a long while but you get inside.

H. W. - What about soul sessions? Do you use different soul sessions Do you discuss with friends and relatives problems concerning Black people?

O - Mainly, we have a sort of a family council.

H. W. - How many people are involved in this?

O - About half a dozen or so, sometimes eight or nine, when my sons come home. Their professions are in the legitimate disciplines and you can look at it from so many different angles. Then there is the social workers, the law, the school teacher, and they all have their different points of view. I think maybe I have a unique family. I like that term "soul" and we get into that too and we feel very keen about that. We feel that this is one of the things that our churches have lost. I tried it out last New Year's Eve. We have what is called

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a watch service, watching the old year out and the new year in and I said we are just going to put these old hardecovers ~~him~~ hymn books away and we are going to sing the songs of our fathers. We started out, and I always remember the first or the second line of a great many spirituals and they follow in. At first, their memories began failing them but they began to come back and suddenly an old lady back in the church broke out in a real wailing and this sent a spirit all over the church, it was a tremendous experience, but it was soul.

H. W. - I can give you a couple of ways to develop this. We have this minister in Los Angeles named Reverend Chamber and what he does, every Easter he preaches from the coffin, there he is on the stage with the coffin, that's what they call real soul.

H. W. - What magazines or periodicals or magazines do you use to get information concerning Black people?

O - They are many and varied, Harris, because the lady next door who is director of information services, I may sometimes not even notice the title, any article that has any relevance to Black people all of the people channel it here to me. Of course, we subscribe to "Time" "Readers Digest" but the division here has a number of periodicals that come in, the New York Times and all this sort of thing they clip and watch for these, and many times I xerox and send it on to many people.

H. W. - Do you subscribe to Jet or Ebony?

O - We pick Ebony off the news stand. I used to get the ~~Amsterdam~~ Amsterdam ~~News~~ but the circulations department is so terrible. We would

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get a two-year subscription and then we would only get it for about six months and it would stop, so I gave up.

H. W. - When you see or hear about rioting in the United States how do you act?

O - I may be incensed but it didn't disturb me too much. I didn't get frightened, neither did I, well I suppose, there was no real reaction until I heard until ~~if~~ I heard of some Black person being killed.

H. W. - In speaking about riots, generally do you condone them or do you think they are a necessary evil or what?

O - Well, I'm never too sure what is a riot, when a riot is a riot. You see, there are so many times, what may be an ordinary protest it oftens turns into a riot, associated with violence. I would hate to be too quick to make pronouncements on this sort of thing because this business of communications is a very subtle thing and we have to recognize that change is taking place, the march, the protest, whatever it may take, may be a view to communication. There may be things that you just don't like but what do the conditions of the time/demand. Sometimes you wonder as you think of some of the results of what have been described as riots. Some of the results are very positive. You would never have come, people would never have paid any attention, and I think that there a great many people all over the world who are suffering and agonized and nobody hears them, nobody pays any attention to them. I think this whole business of social power, the ability to do something about your own lot, is a tremendous thing and I think right here in Nova Scotia, the Black and white and many people who see themselves as slipping in a

position beyond their control, they just don't know what to do. People unable to provide housing, in some cases it is not a lack of money. If you are earning, well you are earning too much, and one lady said, "No wonder the husbands are living in one province and the ~~and the~~ wives in the other so the wives can say that their husbands have deserted them so they can get relief/"

H. W. - What effect did the assassination of Martin Luther King have on your thinking of the Black man in America?

O - I don't know if I ever thought of it in just that way. I know that I was tremendously disturbed by his death, and by the assassination. I, some of the subsequent events that I saw, taught me a great deal when I saw some of the various factions within the Black community sort of polarizing and identifying with one another although in their outward ideologies they were different poles, yet there seemed to be a common ground where their Blackness brought them together which made me realize how unfortunate it is for Black people although you may have different ideas that there should be a common ground where you can meet with a common sense of loyalty because no group is homogeneous if there was, we don't like to have to admit there was a feeling of saying well, "it will be a long time before we will get another one just like King." He had the brains, the intelligence, the patience.

H. W. - What effect did his assassination have on your own consciousness which is a word too vague for this, how did you personally interpret it in terms of your fight for human rights.

O - I would say this. I think that probably focussed up the importance of demanding the dignity of the human person. I think King was assassinated because he was a superb human being; as a Black man he was too superlative. The white community would not apply?

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H. W. - Were you pessimistic, optimistic, about the struggle for the Black man? in America?

O - No, I feel that that is like Christ being crucified.

H. W. - Let me ask you some questions about tactics? What do you think of the use of the following tactics? as a means of solving problems, letter writing, phone calls to public officials. How do you feel about this as a tactic?

O - I'm not so sure you can get a blank answer because so much depends on, I'm the sender and here is the receiver over here; the effectiveness of it depends upon where that receiver stands, what is its position, so there are occasions when a letter would be effective, when I would use it because I know that individual over here and the same thing applies to the phone calls and there are times when I would prefer to use a phone call rather than put it on paper.

H. W. - The man on the street, do you think this is an effective tactic for him to use, like you were having some problems accosting public officials to ask them for help. Do you think his needs would be met, his cries would be answered, or what?

O - Well to me that is sort of personalized. I don't think that is really a manifestation of the dignity and of the rights of a man. Now if I understand your question rightly. If this official is someone who happened to be at the top of the line and I go to him to do something rather than go to the machinery that is set up for all citizens, I go and present my case to that and get my answer and my recourse, that is all well and good. That is a citizens right but when I have to go around a side door or go to some official to pull a few strings for me for what I am, and put

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It can be just like a mosquito. Depends on how much power you represent. You may have to use another strategy.

H. W. - Would you use civil disobedience as a strategy?

O - Here again, it is a matter of your strength. You have to be able to sit down and count the costs, the strength that you have. How much can you muster. Let us assume that you brought together first, look at the 80,000 Blacks in Nova Scotia with the 850,000 whites scattered over 600 miles. How best can you utilize this image of 80,000 strong, what impact can you make on this 800,000. Are you going to alienate yourself. How are you going to do it? Are you going to enhance your own image? your own strength? how are you going to tap that big pot with the resources of the country. We did it in one way by bypassing and striking at a national level and speaking not of 18,000 but of 60,000 Black people, with more coming. All the time we have to paint a picture that ~~we~~ we are helping ourselves but there are by-products that are going to help people which is true, and we as a people have something to contribute. We have an intellect, we have the most creative and imaginative people in the world, if given the opportunity,

H.W. - I think that is true.

O - We haven't believed it you see

H. W. - We've known it because we have survived.

O - Somebody said, "You folk were supposed to be dead sixty years ago,"

H. W. - This is what Rocky said, one time I saw him on T. V. he said, "You never treat Black people as you did other people" and I think that is true, we've been around and we suffered for four hundred years and we are not ready to lie down now

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Do you think violence is a good tactic to use?

O - I haven't really come to that stage in my thinking, what I am trying to do is to try to explore the potentials of the normal organized processes and I suppose as they say, I justopped out and let things take their course, I think that is the position I've been taking. I don't think I've been noted as being a violent person myself. I'm not apathetic or coward, I've always defended myself as a kid coming along but some how or other I'm satisfied to try myintellect. I realize that in history there have been stages where there have been violence but then it has moved out but I think the greatest boom has come when people have been trained and educated and used their intellect. I think all been physical.

H. W. - It seems that it has been intellect ~~and~~ ^{then} physical.

O - Yes

H. W. - Do you think only Blacks should be leaders in organizations that are fighting for their rights?

O - No, and I put it this way. I think it is right at the present stage in Nova Scotia. I think Blaëks need to have a Black organization, they need Black awareness, they need their psychological needs that have to be met, canonly be met through a Black organization I think once they come through that phase, I think thereis a place for organizations like NSACP which is integrated. I think that they can go parallel. We envisioned that there would be an organization the friends of but I think that Black people at the present stage have beenled by the nose for 200 years, get out and ~~max~~ exercise themselves as full=fledged citizens.

H. W. - It seems that in one way you are saying it is good to have parallel activities and coalition with different groups

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than in terms of speaking for ourselves, only Blacks can speak for themselves.

O - What I say is, I think when it comes down in the area of whites the problem is within the white community. He has his creed, his theology, he maintains one thing, and yet practices another. Even when he exhorts his own to conform ~~me~~ to what they think he's

H. W. - In ~~xxxx~~ In terms of racial prejudice who has to be changed, the Black or the White man?

O - This is it.

H. W. - It seems this is a white problem, not a black problem. Which word do you prefer to describe yourself, Black, coloured, or Negro? Do you consider yourself to be an African living in Canada?

O - I never thought of it. I realize that my origin stems to Africa but my culture, or what ever I have today, I suppose is Canadian. There was a time the term Afro-American. It is a thing that one would have to think about. It doesn't trouble me at all, as a matter of fact it gives you a sense of pride that I am an African that three or four generations removed from Africa, That is about the only way you can establish a homeland. I probably don't even know where my homeland was, East Africa, West Africa.

H. W. - The reason I asked this question was because currently people are saying we are not Black Americans, you are not a Black Canadian, or any ~~xxxx~~ anything like this but you are an African, just like people ask you, you are an Irishman or a Frenchman.

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O - I think that makes sense. That is why these I think it is a marvellous thing to see them going back to those Afros.

H. W. - The only thing the clothes get pretty expensive. Do you see the militant self-help program as necessary if the Black man is to succeed in his struggle?

O - I'm not hedging, but I suppose, but it all depends on what you mean by militant. I think aggressive. There is a lot of connotations in militancy but granted, we talk about the church militant and we sing "Onward Christian Soldiers", well, if that is what you mean by militant I say yes.

H. W. - I think there is a certain amount of militancy in christianity today that everyone should have.

O. - When that goes out you have nothing, you just get a middle-class social club.

H. W. - I think the word to use is very suitable, the ^{the idea} word aggressive. To me that word connotes that you are not waiting you just take.

O - Yes, somebody said, "Don't wait for the man to tell you to get up to bat, you just get up and grab the bat."

H. W. - What are the two tactics do you think are most appropriate fostering individual excellence, or strengthening community power?

O - That is a tough one. In many instances it is easier to foster individual excellence with the hope that it will come back and make a contribution. It takes patience and understanding to bring along a total community. Somebody said that it is sociological impossible to raise a whole mass of people and actually I don't think you do, even when you are approaching communities somehow or other

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I think you zero in on a certain little group and you rely upon them to influence and lead. I think that you have to have a combination of both.

H. W. - In terms of the strategy towards uplifting the Black people in Nova Scotia, what would you lay more emphasis on the fostering of individual excellence.

O - Yes

H. W. - In terms of the strategy to bank on towards uplifting the Blacks in Nova Scotia what would you place the greatest emphasis on, the fostering of individual excellence, or the strengthening of community power.

O - I would have to look at then what I have been doing because we have been doing a little bit of both and I suppose that it is evident that community power with the hope that they in turn would direct themselves to the matter of the individual because if you are going to get massive approaches, efforts, you are going to have to have the community. This is the way our political society moves. Now in turn, I realize this, that the efforts of 20 or 25 years ago have enabled us to polarize for our Board of Directors, people with fresh accompancies? because back there somebody saw fit to work with individuals and to give them the opportunity to get the skills. We wouldn't have been able to have done anything as some people said, "Oh the Blacks don't have anybody." Leadership is important.

H. W. - Let me ask you this. The reason I ask this question I perceive, tell me if I'm wrong, that the major difference between the Civil Rights Movement and the present consciousness in the civil rights movement everyone was saying that if enough

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of our individuals get together and you go ahead and make the best of yourself, then this would uplift our whole race, all of our people. Now people are saying, well, this is a different emphasis, well, we will get community strong, then there will be individual development. This is why I cannot perceive what is the difference between what is happening in the '64, '65 civil rights movement and what is happening now.

O - Your picture was so different when the Civil Rights movement moved out into the streets, you opened the doors of Black universities with thousands. We don't have that here. We've got an educational problem. Take a city like Halifax now, I couldn't tell you how many high school students we have but they would be under a hundred. We were happy this year that we were able to give 17 bursaries, entrance bursaries, that is as opposed to five last year.

H. W. - I'd like to talk about the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Basically people were talking in terms of power thinking in terms of people's power and this is what I perceive is happening now. Before we always had individuals to push up but now, and I am speaking of Halifax, seems there is more grabbing of power for the average Joe than for the people and then they let people develop individually, which before I never thought would happen. I may be wrong in that, I was trying to explore it for my thesis.

O - I suggest to you that we are looking at the Civil Rights or the Human Rights concept, the Black community is looking at ~~you~~ white Human Rights from a different point of view than the ~~Black~~ man. Again, I go back to the whole business of the dignity of the human being, the status of Black people. This is the real emancipation

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of the Black man, he is really recognized as a human being and fully arrested these processes of dehumanization where he is no longer assessed as three-fifths of the white man. This is basic to the whole thing and the only way you want to do this is through social power, groups, but if that group is to move you not only need this social power but there must be compensies and scales within the group. Take the housing situation and I don't like to speak like this, it's a healthy situation for the Black community if they could have a construction company run by a Black man and owned by a Black man. He may hire white, black, green, whatever he requires. Why does he have to be just an employee. You never alter the status.

H. W. - This is one problem I had worked out in my mind, but I am trying to wrestle with this problem to find out where the different dimensions of this consciousness now than it was before, and I thought about this community power and being an important dimension but I haven't really decided on that yet. Let me go to the next question.

O - To illustrate this, it seems to me, when you get into this business of community power, especially as far as Black people are concerned, then we are running into the counter-power. The society that possesses certain things, they are all right as long as it is politically and economically expedient and then justice and piety goes aboard and until the major group can see this as being a part, this is the reason why discrimination and racial prejudice, they are part of the culture, the American culture, inherited, and whose and who is going to bring about the change.

H. W. - What do you see are the most important qualifications of a Black leader today?

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O - They are legion. Oh, I would say first of all he should have youth and strength, good knowledge of the social political sciences. He should be able to understand people, the unapproachables and if he is going to function in Nova Scotia, he should know not only the Black Nova Scotians, but the white Nova Scotians. I suppose there are other things. He's got to be tough, can't be thinking of himself. If he were he would never be in this game.

H. W. - In terms of abilities, which abilities would you rather see a Black leader possess, a very good education, the ability to make alliances with non-Black people, or for the man to represent or identify with his people. If you look at all three of those alternatives which would you say is the most important.

O - If you take those three, there is the danger of one nullifying the other.

H. W. - I knew you were going to say that. That is the same answer from Jules, too.

H. W. -

O - I think he has to be a person, I knew you were going to say that and I understand what you mean. Jules really knocked me down a little too.

O - Jules is quicker than I am. I'm really dense.

H. W. - Jules and I had a power play going on like, he has done a lot of research he was answering the questions, he was knocking my research down. Do you see all non-white people as having similar problems?

O - Yes. I think this problem of poverty and discrimination this whole business of social power is aimed against them. We get it more when you get a little slack white It is a matter of expediency.

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H. W. - What effect did the visit of the American Black Power have on the Nova Scotian situation?

O - I think, for many, it frightened them to death and drove them to the skirts of their white masters; and others, it gave them a sense of pride and determination, and aggressiveness.

H. W. - Did it cause any systematic changes, do you think by their visit more Black people saw in terms of changing the whole system.

O - Haven't given enough thought to it. They were concerned with the whole issue of whether there would be violence or whether there wouldn't be violence, whether I would offend my white friend or not.

H. W. - This isn't on my questionnaire, and I won't ask anybody else this. Now that you are a few months away from their visit what effect did it have on you personally?

O - None other than to help me realize the universality of the problem of Black people and the importance of applying myself to try to understand our own situation and to try to understand the basic issues and try to do something positive, realizing that if I didn't, we too would have problems.

H. W. - I would like to have your thoughts about this local issue. The Africville Relocation. What do you think about the relocation of Africville?

O - I suppose over the years I have had different opinions and they are probably recorded some place or another, when I think back to their position, their condition, it wasn't anything pleasant. I suppose the question now is, what the change to their advantage? I'm not satisfied that they were involved very much in the decision making. I am inclined to feel that there was an element of manipulation and it was not really their decision. Now whether time would have allowed, if sufficient time for that type of approach

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where it involved the people and they arrived at decisions, I would like to have seen the bargaining processes done on a community basis, rather than an individual basis. The settlements with the stronger members of the community first and all that part of thing, I would like the people to make the decisions as to where they should have gone. I regret the fact that so many of them had to relocate in other provinces. I understand that this is really what happens in relocation cases, that 40% of them move away to other areas altogether and you don't have to worry about them, once you get the process moving. I gather that the major premise was once these people had settled and integrated that their situation would be better. I'm not sure that it was accompanied by sufficient follow-up and that there was sufficient provision made to increase their resources to meet the increased overhead, as a consequence, the costs have risen tremendously since the project began, many of these people are now welfare people, whereas prior to that they were not. So they have become dependent, whereas before they did not have rent to pay. I ~~ju~~ realize that you can't just continue on in a nomadic condition but when somebody tells me that Shell Oil wants to locate there I said that maybe if they had been organized and bargained as a group, the individuals in the long run could have done far better and may have been able to purchase individual holdings, or as a group, put in new homes.

H. W. - Do you think it could happen now? To another Black community

O - This is one thing we are apprehensive of, this is one of the things that causes us to move because it is my feeling that many of the Black communities are threatened by development and development

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is here in Nova Scotia and I am not satisfied that our master plan takes in consideration the Black community, all of the maps or plans that I have studied always seem to skip the Black communities, they are not included in the overall planning as a consequence they are left barren and become the municipal dumps and once they are depreciated to that extent they are bought for little or nothing and the Black people are moved off. So the planning of our people, any program that we set up, people must include this whole business of community planning and people who are knowledgeable of the long-term planning so that our communities can be included in the development processes as the land values, so the land values of the Black land likewise should increase in value. You see all over the world this whole business of squatters, the land is allowed to depreciate and people are allowed to do whatever they like. Building codes are ignored and health regulations are ignored, until development comes and then all of a sudden there is a push and they are pushed off. Sometimes it is difficult to awaken people who have lived this easy way, to warn them of what is coming.

H. W. - Brings another question to mind, is that one reason that Carlyle Warner is on the BUF front? I say this kind of jokingly but I imagine a long-range planning guy associated with and organization like this is very important.

O - Very tremendous, this is basically our whole problem.

H. W. - I read over the list of people and I saw his name and I knew who he was and I think he is a very valuable person to have.

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O - This is it, because once your land is taken away from you and many people can't buy land, this was all granted to them, then they are put off into public housing; once your salary goes up, your rent goes up. A lady said yesterday here, "I don't know where I'm going to go. My house is up for sale and if I go into public housing our combined earnings would mean a rent of \$180.00 per month.

H. W. - What are some of the other major problems facing Black people in this area?

O - Well I suppose next to this business of housing would be maximum employment on the basis of their potential.

H. W. - The idea that a guy on Creighton Street doesn't get a job unless it is a very poor job.

O - Yes, someone else who is no more competent than he can get a fairly decent job.

H. W. On the way up here today I saw some of the old Africville guys coming, a guy around myage, but Leo had been out looking for a job this morning, and I feel that all these guys will have a hard time being employed. They have arrest records and I guess because of their circumstances you would expect a guy like that to have some kind of an arrest record but an employee doesn't understand that. He can't understand why this guy can't read or write, so I guess jobs are a pretty important thing. I want your reactions to these four different statements, "Most whites want to keep Blacks down as much as they can." Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

O - I disagree with that. I think that many just aren't concerned

H. W. - Do you think somewhere in their subconsciousness that there is an attitude that "we're on top, we're going to stay there", do

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you think most whites have this?

O - Well, yes. The very moment that Blacks begin to polarize there is always the fear that it will take something from them, there is that subconscious.

H. W. - Some people have said that there are white store owners who take advantage of Black customers. Do you agree with that and how many stores would you say operate in this way?

O - I couldn't speak in percentages. I had an experience over the week end. We ordered chicken and ~~meat~~ rolls for our council. The rolls came mouldy, not only on one side but on bottom and top. It may have been an oversight, but they were pretty mouldy. They were going to Beechville.

H. W. - Do you think most store owners take advantage of their Black customers?

O - That's a hard question to answer because you make a statement like that you are being biased and I certainly wouldn't want to believe that was a fact. I think here again that kind of ^{reasoning} ~~reasoning~~ you would be guilty of what he is. That is sort of racism.

H. W. - Most whites who take part in civil rights demonstrations aren't really interested in the problems of Blacks.

O - In my opinion, there are fringe benefits they get out of it. There are some ego needs they have to have met and they become involved. And on the other hand there are those who are generally committed.

H. W. - How would you stack it up against each other. There are people who are committed, and there are other people who are in in for their own profit. Which would you say, which group dominates in civil rights.

O - Well ~~that~~ there aren't that many involved from my experience in Nova Scotia.

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When you start to consider the invested interests you would take each individual, ^{just what is their motive,} is it political, have they got a chip on their shoulder, is it to use the Black man to embarrass somebody else; is it to salve their conscience, is it something way back in their own lives to try to compensate for. I have to deal with each one individually before I come to a conclusion. Now, twenty-five years ago I wouldn't have done that and may be this is one of the casualties one of the wounds that I bear from the process. You have to take every man as an individual.

H. W. - I think we should ~~xxxx~~ operate individually but politically operate

O - Yes, you see there are so many people. This may be just a matter of an assessment an evaluation of these people

I think there is what we call a Black mentality, and a white mentality and I think you've got to be able to distinguish the whole value system. I don't think he can be with you until he has some appreciation of the Black mentality, how the Blackman thinks, but if he refuses to recognize this he is still trying to impose and then there are those who figure, get in there among them

H. W. - What type of neighbourhood would you prefer if all were equally kept up, mostly Black, mixed, or no difference, mostly white, or you ~~don't~~ know.

O - No, I think the thing that would determine ~~xxxxxxx~~ where I lived would depend on my own economics. That is the way it is today, I can live practically any way I want. * I prefer the countryside where I can fish, I can hunt, and I can just get far enough away from the city.

H. W.- End of tape

side 2

H. W. - In terms in differences between Black Power in the United States and Black Power in Nova Scotia one of the basic differences is to see the representative power behind Black leaders. Black leaders in the United States seem to have a mandate from the people. In essence, they seem to have grass-root power when they are dealing with the needs of the people and more or less grow out of the same human experiences that the people suffer daily, but in Nova Scotia most of the Black leaders seem to be involved in institutional power. People like Warner, Oliver, are people who are part of the system who are part of the institutional power and are trying to apply institutional power to the problems of the Blacks around the province. Another difference to bring in is that the fact of the educational level of the Blacks in the United States and the Blacks in Canada the low level of education in Nova Scotia. This idea of spreading Black consciousness seems to be hindered by this inability of people to read and relate to their problems. Also, the communication between various Black people seem to be at its highest in the United States where letters and books from around the world eventually end up in the hands of Black people of United States, they read or hear about their brothers in other areas of the world. In Nova Scotia if a person like Rocky didn't know about the Black Panthers, it shows that a Nova Scotian is typically isolated and the communication doesn't service his needs, he wants to learn about other Black people.

End of Side 2