

September 10, 1969

Interview with Rev. Donald Skier by Harry Wells

H. W. - Rev. Skier one of the first questions I would like to ask you, what organizations are you a member of , or do you participate in? What is your position?

S - I am a Baptist minister in the Preston area. I am also a school teacher in the Preston area, a member of the local Ratepayers Association, the Home and School Associations, I'm a council member of the Black United Front, and also a member of the NSAACP.

H. W. - What does BUF hope to accomplish, what are your intentions for this organization, and how do you feel toward this?

S - The Black United Front is something new. It just started here within the last ten months. It has grown out of a need for Negro people in theHalifax-Dartmouth area and also throughout the province to come together in a common effort to promote their welfare and social status, and to work at a unity. Prior to this we were not united except within the church, ~~the-political-organization~~, the Afro, the African Baptist Association, but we have had no provincial body speaking for the entire province ~~es~~ for Negroes, andthis is why BUF has come into being. As I said, it is relatively new and therefore not too many people are too well aware of what its aims are. Some are perhaps even don't know, even afraid of what its aims are because of the way it grew, it grew out of the presence of the Black Panthers when they were here last November and because of their presence, the situation was becoming so acute, there was a great need for such an organization and because of this Act also many people have fears that it is an offshoot of the Black Panthers.

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movement, but I believe that in time as the people become more aware of the aims of the BUF we can play a very positive step in our advancement here.

H. W. - What effect do you think the visit of the Black Power advocates had on the Nova Scotian situation?

S - It made us realize that we were faced with a problem here and it was more or less subtle, it was under the surface, but with their presence what others thought they were going to do, made us aware of our problems.

H. W. - How do you think Black people responded to the Panthers?

S - Well, locally there was a great deal of apprehension. Many people had their doubts about them. They, there was a great deal of newspaper publicity about them, and about their methods and what they intended to do and consequently poisoned the minds of many people, and I think because of this, it has sort of added to the Negro population here.

H. W. - Do most people still feel that way about the Panthers, are their minds still

S - I think that the average Negro perhaps is still not too well versed in what the movement is, but I think on the other hand, you will find that there is some fear of the Panthers, yes.

H. W. - In terms of your own present thinking or your own perspective about the struggle among our people, what factors have influenced your thinking?

S - About the plight of the Negroes today?

H. W. - And the fight, the problems, the struggle.

S - Well the thing that has hurt from my personal feeling, the thing that has hurt the people, is that we have never had a ^{real} sense of pride in ourselves. We have accepted what has been given to us

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We have been victims of ~~propaganda~~ propaganda and we have never stopped and thought of ourselves as a people, and I honestly believe that the last ten months, this thing has undergone a tremendous change, particularly on the part of our younger people. They are beginning to realize now that they are some one.

H. W. - Before I go on I should say this, I interviewed Dr. Oliver and the rest of the people, I am also doing another study that I came out here professionally to do. This is my own thing. I have to mention on which I have to get on this new consciousness, a new attitude among our people in this area will be given to .BUF to do whatever they like. I think too long people have done research on poor people and Black people, and they have shelved the information. Did you think the American experience had any effect on the

S - Definitely so, not only American, but I think this whole world-wide problems of race have affected us. It only takes a casual observer who reads the newspaper or sees television to realize that Black people, I mean by that, people of all darker races, are certainly coming to the fore and it would be idiotic for anyone to think that the status of the Black man hasn't changed over the past two years. It has definitely and the situation in the United States has certainly had an effect on the Black people here in Canada.

H. W. - You talked about dark people the world over. Do you see all non-whites as having similar problems?

S - Definitely

H. W. - Could you expound on their problems?

S - Without perhaps using some expressions perhaps, but it is white against the rest of the world, that is my impression. The white people have ruled everything, as long as we can remember and

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internationally or nationally, or community-wise this is definitely changing now. The change in Africa itself is something that opens our eyes. The pendulum is swinging now towards these darker countries.

H. W. - You talked about the darker people. Do you see the poor whites as having the same problems? Do you see them as part of our struggle too?

S - Yes and no. In spite of the fact that white people, poor white people share the same sense of poverty as Black people may share, I don't seem to think they really understand what Black people have gone through. Their colour, in spite of the fact that they have many hardships, yet, they are still white. It is not the same to my way of thinking anyway.

H. W. - What local problems have shaped your present position?

S - For one thing our problems go back many, many years. The fact that we were settled here in these isolated communities, the way we have been has been a handicap to us. We have been denied in the past proper educational facilities. We have been denied the opportunity of building better homes, our men have been denied the opportunity of better employment, and have had to get the poorer types of jobs, our income has always been at marginal level, consequently it has given the average Black man in our area, as I said a moment ago, he is given the sense of he has never been given the opportunity to realize who he is and what he can do. He just took what was handed to him and he just thought he had to be thankful for that, but I think this is changing now, the educated young ^{Negroes} ~~Negroes~~ today just aren't accepting this; they realize that they can be put

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on the same standards and same level as anyone else and they are striving for it. Now, it is coming rather slowly although within the past 25 years there has been a big change educationally, I mean, now our young people are getting into the high schools. They are going to universities, whereas 25 years ago there was only the exceptional child got into university, very few got to high school, they got as far as grade six and that was it.

H. W. - What books oriented to Black people have you read in the past two years?

S - Of course, I read the Ebony, I read "Black Rage" Black psychiatrist, I read some of the books of James Baldwin, and now I forget some of them, I haven't read too extensively on it. Unfortunately, we don't have the opportunity of buying them.

H. W. - Did you ever get a chance to go through books like "Malcolm X"

S - I read excerpts from his books, I haven't read them through. I understand that it is a very fine book.

H. W. - Carmichaels

S - No I haven't read that.

H. W. - You stated that you read Ebony, Do you take any other periodicals, or magazines that are oriented to Black people.

S - The only two that I know of that come into our area are "Sepia" and "Ebony", those are the only two I know.

H. W. - How do you take the subject matter. Let me explain it this way. How do you feel about these books and how do you apply it, the subject matter of these books to the Nova Scotian situation?

S - I think basically, they tell the same story. From the American

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scene of course it is on a much bigger scale but basically, I think the problems of Black people are the same no matter where you find them. They may be more pressing in the larger ghettos, in Los Angeles and other cities like that, but we have them here, and racial prejudice is as acute here as it is anywhere else.

H. W. - It seems that most Nova Scotians are beginning to sense this. I was talking to another fellow this afternoon, it was so subtle, you just couldn't find it.

S - I think, also, onething too that has engendered a great deal of interest on the subject is the fact a number of Black people are beginning to feel what they have to do. They are not sitting down now and just taking handouts. They are realizing that they too have to do something to better themselves, and they are doing it. It may not be as widespread as we would like but things take time it is not going to change overnight.

H. W. - What other source do you use to get information oriented to Black people?

S - We do not have too many sources here. Unfortunately, we don't have much of a media here for getting information out of Black people.

H. W. - What about friends and relatives. Do you talk seriously with friends and relatives.

S - They come over from the States and we talk onthose subjects and we have people who have cme over here from Boston, they have been coming for a number of years, and visit down here, and in his conversation we can sense a difference in the past two or three years. Before he would just talk on light subjects, now he says you can sense the tenseness in the conversation that even the average Black man in the States must be keyed up to the situation. I realize that when I talk to people like that.

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H. W. - When you see and hear about riots in the United States how do you react?

S - Unfortunately, again, I must admit that we kget one side of it then again, you might get Ebony magazine and you get the other side. Just for an example, I think there was a case in Detroit here a few months ago in which the kids made a raid on a church, but the side that we got here was that these people were conspiring to do some harm and the police were justified in what they did. Then when I read the article in Ebony I got a different slant on the whole situation so therefore many of the stories that we get regards to these riots are all slanted, we don't get the real story at all.

H. W. - I mean when you ~~see people~~ see people in the streets, they storm buildings, they take property and merchandise, what emotion does it have on you?

S - Like any riot I suppose it gets to the point where it gets ridiculous. You realize, of course, that there is destruction there and waste, but as I have been told, with many of these establishments businesses are Negro owned, I don't seem to understand why they would be destroying their own but like any riot, it reaches the point where it just becomes, there is no rationale to it all really. As I say, ^{are re} we moved from the scene in the States, there may be justification for rioting in the United States. We don't know it here, and if we were on the scene and we were experiencing what these people are going through maybe there is no other recourse but to do what they are doing, whereas here in Canada we can get the same thing but not in that way.

H. W. - This is sort of off the point but in the first place when we said that those businesses are owned by our people I went to the Los Angeles / riots and I say, and in places like Buffalo, N. Y. this

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store would be burned here and this store would be up, this store would be burned, and this store would be up, and this store would be burned next to it, so you can see that some stores

S - And these are Black stores that were not

H. W. - That's what I say, but I'm not sure about that. I know in Los Angeles when the riot was going on and a lot of white store owners were saved because Black had worked at these stores

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

S - That was it, it just reached a bottleneck. The bitterness that night and we are not even Americans, but the bitterness that swept through the average individual was terrific even my own feelings, there was just no justification for it and reading about what happened afterwards, I can understand it. That was going too far. That man preached ~~brotherly~~ brotherly love and concord and all that, all the other things I think that was the feeling of most of the Negro people here. He was a symbol and they destroyed him, it made you wonder, just what did they want, so that was my reaction to it.

H. W. - Are you still interested in the idea of the struggle of the Black leaders today?

S - Yes, I am, I realize of course that the Black leadership is going through an internal struggle and I suppose it is natural that we like any other race of people, they have their differences ~~in~~ approach to different problems so why shouldn't we as a people have a different approach, but ultimately I think that all Blackleaders want the same thing. They may use a different approach and use

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different ways but they all want the same thing and even at our Baptist Association meeting this year we had a speaker from Chicago one of our local boys Peter Parris and he gave up a different insight about the Panther movement. From what we hear of the Panthers we are told that they are destructive, revolutionaries, wish to overthrow the government, whereas he was telling us that the most humanitarian thing that they were doing, feeding young people and students and caring for the aged and other things like that. We don't get that aspect of it at all.

H. W. - That's the news media again.

S - So therefore, when the word "Panther" is spoken here, it immediately causes one reaction to the average person, and that is, they are violent people and wish to overthrow whereas they are young Negroes like any other young Negroes.

H.W.

S - What American Black leader do you like now, everyone seems to have followed Martin Luther King?

S - Well Martin Luther King was the symbol there is no doubt there and I don't know if I could say I follow any particular leader at the present time because there isn't any particular one, there is none that has taken his place but I only hope that the different factions in the States could come to some sort of unified effort. I hope so, even Stokely has severed relations with the Panthers now. You depend upon how you approach the whole struggle I suppose. The NSAACP, maybe their methods are a little bit too slow for the younger generation, I don't know, but I think a combination of all groups are worthwhile the urban they stress the labour or the working aspect of the struggle, then the NSAACP they are more sophisticated and the nationalistic groups, I think ultimately they

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all want to get the kind of thing really.

H. W. - I want to know what you think of the use of the following tactics/ as a means of solving problems: letter writing, phone calls to officials.

S - I think this has an effect if you are in a place where enough letters, phone calls are going to have an effect, but I don't know if they would play much of a part here in Canada. In our area anyway I don't think there are that many Black people that would, I would say that it has its place but, I think that though if our people come together as a group as they are doing in the Black United Front and speak as one unit, I think it would have more effect than letter writing.

H. W. - You think organization has a great effect

S - I think this has been our problem down through the years. We have not been organized as we should be. We have too many leaders and not enough followers.

H. W. - What about marches?

S - Again, I don't think we have the numbers here that would have that effect. It might, the effect might open up the issue, make them aware of our problem but I don't know whether the average person here in Nova Scotia is that much taken up with the problem to go on marches as they go elsewhere.

H. W. - What about civil disobedience?

S - Well, if there are places where there is overt, active discrimination, I think that civil disobedience has its place.

H. W. - What about boycotts?

S - In those areas where it can be effective.

H. W. - Do you see it being effective in Halifax.

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S - It hasn't here because there hasn't been any organized effort to ever put a boycott into effect but I think it would if it could have a place.

H. W. - What about the one every one is talking about - violence?
How do you see violence as a tactic?

S - I don't think it would work here in the Halifax-Dartmouth area I don't think violence is the answer. For one thing, we haven't got the numbers and I don't think we can truthfully say that what we go after we have been denied by negotiating.

H. W/ - Do you ever see violence as being important.

S - I do, yes. There is a place for it.

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

S - At the present time I would say yes. I think that this is something that we have to create within the younger people, an image of themselves. Too long they've had the image of the white man consequently we have never really had pride in ourselves and that is what is badly needed now, the image of ourselves and it must come through our leaders.

H.W.-

§ - How long have you been thinking this way, I was wondering?

AS S - The last two years I would say. All of us, when I say all of us I would say from the very top down. We have all been victims of white propaganda and I think this whole new feeling of race has certainly touched everyone of us within the past two years.

H. W. - What word do you prefer to call yourself?

S- It doesn't particularly matter. I'm not offended by the word "Black" and I'm not offended by the word "Negro", "Coloured". I have always considered myself as "Negro" and its pretty hard to adjust to another name but I think the word "Black" goes beyond the colour of a man's skin creating within an individual a sense of pride.

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as a whole philosophy of life to my way of thinking. It is not just a matter of a Negro getting in and calling you Black, it is putting black alongside of white.

H. W. - How do you instruct your kids, do you tell them that they are Negro

S - I told them that they don't have to be ashamed of the word Black. I think they are hearing enough of it now to realize that they don't have to be ashamed. When I was coming along it was a derogatory term but the younger generation today are accepting it as something different.

H. W. - Do you consider yourself as an African living in Canada? I really believe myself as being of African decent, I do. I don't believe in this idea of - Africa is over there and I'm here and there is no I really believe that my forebears came from Africa and the same way the white man prides himself when he goes back hundreds and hundreds of years, I think I should be proud of my background when I go back to where they came from.

H. W. - When people ask you in terms of nationality, how do you rank yourself?

S - Canadian

H. W. - Black Canadian, Black African,

S - I've never had the experience of explaining myself that way but I have no objection to Afro-Canadian, or Canadian with African decent descent, I have no objection to it at all.

H. W. - Do you perceive a militant self-help program as being necessary if the Black man is to proceed in his struggle?

S - In certain areas, yes. In areas of the south where I don't think some white areas are going to give up the struggle, I believe

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the Black man will have to show some militancy.

H. W. - What about in Nova Scotia?

S - I don't think we have any areas in Nova Scotia, as far as I know anyway, where militancy will have to come out in that way but I do feel that Black people will have to be firm, definitely firm, they will have to stand pat on what they believe in, what they want and that will be it, but I also believe too, that is more than just a matter of demanding this, it is also a matter of qualifying ourselves and preparing ourselves for it. It is just going to take an effort on the part of mothers and fathers to keep their children in school, educate them

H. W. - I'm having trouble with some people. They are asking me what is the militant self-help program? I guess I wasn't thinking it through as much as I should have but I think in terms of economic organization

S - Here, it would be good to have Black businesses and Black stores but I'm afraid they couldn't thrive on Black patronage alone we haven't got that number, that could keep them going. We would have to have an integrated clientele, if you put it that way, that would be my feeling on it. We could have little stores in our little Negro communities, grocery stores, but any large businesses, I don't think the Black people could keep them going.

H. W. - To me in a society of prejudice, who has to be changed, the prejudice and the discrimination, who has to be changed, the white man or the Black.

S - Definitely, the white man has to change. There is no doubt in my mind about this, he has to be made to realize that he is only another man like all other men, he hasn't any God-ordained superiority

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and this isn't going to come easy with him because as you know in your history he has been riding the roost for so many hundreds of years, he has to be made aware of this fact, that he is just another man that is all. God has given him no privileges and as for the Black man himself I think the Black man also has to undergo a change in getting a higher understanding of himself as a man. This takes some ^{expression} on his part to realize what he is worth, and to realize that he is capable of getting what other people can get. There is no limitation to what he can do and I think that as far as I can see in our area here in the Preston area this is definitely one thing that we have to do. We just can't be satisfied with just a little, this has been our situation for years, anything goes with us.

H. W. - Which of the two tactics do you think is the most appropriate fostering individual excellence ^{or} ~~by~~ strengthening the community power; which one would you push for?

S - If only to foster individual excellence and if by doing this these people are going to contribute something to the community I think that both go hand in hand. W One of our troubles has been that individuals have been able to do much for themselves but they have been of no help to the local community, they have gone off, may have married across the line, they have taken their economic status across, they have been no good to the Black man; they have gone away to the larger cities for which you can't blame them for that as long as our individual excellence is going to be taken away ~~from~~ from the community, it is not going to benefit the community at all.

H. W. - In terms of devising a strategy let's say to in terms of East Preston which would you try to do first, would you try to get

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a few individuals make them return to the community help the community, would you try to make sure the community was strong, in individual development.

S - It is very difficult to answer that question. I don't know. Community-wise, there is lots to be done. As I see the situation here, it would have to be done on an individual basis. I don't think the community itself would change ~~but~~ ^{for} some time but individuals perhaps you can make changes in them in a reasonable time.

H. W. - What do you think the most important qualification for a Black leader today?

S - Love of his people. I don't care what else he has, education is all right, leadership all right, but he has to have a love for his people and anything other than that ^{to my way of thinking} is only benefitting himself.

H. W. - That's very funny, you are one of the very few people to say that. I've only interviewed about five people and I agree with you, that he must have love for his people to represent his people and I think education, some great people have not been educated

S/- That's right, formal education educated in the mind. Most people seem to think that education is more important.

S - I don't agree with that either. We have educated people in Nova Scotia but as I said, we had boys who have gone off to university and they graduated, some of them married white, they don't make any contribution to the Black community at all. Here again you are getting into a personal matter, but one of the problems in these areas, in North Preston, Cherry Brook and in East Preston has been to get Negro teachers. White teachers were hesitant about coming out here and we have had to put up with teachers who

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were less trained than the normal teacher simply because we couldn't get anyone else and then when we get qualified teachers they would look for opportunities in the city. We lose them. Of course I suppose self preservation has its place but what were they contributing to the upbuilding of Black people. It would only take a bit of a sacrifice on the part of some people that it is just love for their people and they make a sacrifice to help better the people but they take their qualifications and education and go off somewhere else, and it still leaves us back here with nothing.

H. W. - I would like to ask you a number of statements, and would you let me know whether or not you disagree with these statements Most whites want to keep Blacks down as much as they can.

S - I feel that most whites feel that Blacks have a certain place and that is as far as want to keep them. I don't think that the average white feels that Blacks are on a level with them. That is my reaction to that one.

H. W. - Some people say that there are white stores that take advantage of Black customers. Would you agree with this and how many white stores would you say are like this?

S - In the Dartmouth area, there are a few but I think on the whole the larger stores are not too dependent upon Black patronage. I don't think they are. You may find some of the smaller stores that are but I think that in these larger chain grocery stores, I don't think they are depending too much upon Black patronage.

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

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S - I would disagree with that. I would say that there are exceptions to every case. I think that there are many, many white people who are really concerned and really dedicated to the struggle of the Black man but they are in the minority and I suppose where you would find suspicion on the part of the Black people, this has only been the result of what has come up over the years. It is rather hard for the average Black to think of the white man to be sincere with him. This is part of his make-up and it has not been his fault, it is something that the white man has made him come to that point. But I do think that there are some white people who are really interested in Black people, but then again, I qualify that, because even sometimes liberal white people, some of the expressions that they use makes me realize that even they cannot shake off their ideas on race. This common expression they use - "you people".

H. W. - Which one would you say were in the majority, the ones going around saying "you people" or the one just interested in Blacks, in the human situation?

S - I think the majority of those who say "you people." They try to sooth their guilt, they have a guilty conscience, they know that their past isn't glorious, they are trying to make amends for it some of them are doing in in a rather sloppy way.

H. W. - What type of neighbourhood do you prefer to live in/ if all were equally well kept up, a mostly Black neighbourhood, mixed neighbourhood, mostly white or you don't know?

S - I think that you will find different levels of people whether they are Black or whether they are white. I think a person should

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be allowed to fit in that level where he is most comfortable and Black is Black. I think that I would rather live in a Black neighbourhood.

H. W. - I came here on a professional job to sort of document what happened to the people of Africville when they were suppose to move and I would like to get your opinion on what do you think of the Africville relocation?

S - That was something that was sunk, planned for years, it was a very ideal locality and I think in the long-range planning in the city of Halifax they looked forward to the day when they were going to remove "those Negroes," for they wanted that area. They didn't do anything to help those people do anything for themselves. It was planned, it was deliberate and when the time came to move them, Africville was right in the city limits and those people were denied the basic things that they should have been receiving.

H. W. - Did you ever preach in Africville?

S - Yes, I served in there for two years.

H. W. - Was the community a very stable community?

S - Yes it was, it was a very stable community but over the past years it just went down and the many of the young people just lost hope and lost faith and that was it, but when I was a young boy coming along Africville was a beautiful little spot. You go there and hoe tickies on the Basin shore, but in later years you couldn't do that. Again, unfortunately, I think that this was, although I'm not absolving the civic authorizities for their lack of initiative and effort, but also I think again this would also show a lack of pride on the part of the Black man too. Of course, again, you get a reaction because you can bat a man off so far but he just loses hope in himself, you know, and he gets the idea of what's the use, what's the use.

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That is the answer to many of our young people, what's the use, and that is what I think has happened in the last number of years has really put a stop to this and practically the Black man has begun to realize that it is a struggle, they are not going to get anything for nothing, it is struggle for us.

H. W. - Do you think the people in this area learned from the Africville experience.

S - Some of them are learning from it, some of them realize that if they don't pull up their breeches and look into their deeds and get their businesses in order, the same thing could happen here that happened in Africville. Halifax cannot expand any further. If there is any expansion in this area it is going to be in the Dartmouth area, over here on the number seven highway and we have a number of Black homes on the main highway, in fact I think we have one of the few Negro communities in Nova Scotia where Black people are still living on the main highway, so in time, if the area expands, if those Black people don't get themselves in order they will be pushed back into the woods.

H. W. - Could you tell when you were in Africville, could you tell whether or not the community was more or less a cohesive group, was there a distinction between the regular people, the church-going people and sort of the outside transient-type people?

S - There were no transient people there, they all lived there. The church was the only organization that they had but unfortunately they didn't have any community organization. Everyone just spoke for him or herself. There was no getting behind an organization voting it, and pushing it for their own group.

H. W. - Are you talking about before relocation?

S - Yes, before relocation.

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H. W. - Could you give me an example of something like that where there was no community organization?

S - Well the only organization they had in the community was the church, and then the church only had a few people who were interested. I think that if Africville had had a community consciousness and an organization that they might have been able to fight for the thing that they needed but they didn't have this. Everyone just went to see it all and spoke for "him" and they were divided. Unfortunately, the average Nova Scotian Negro hasn't had faith in himself, I don't know if I am giving you the right feeling or not, but he is more willing to listen to what the white man tells him than he was willing to listen to what his own tell him. If you stood up and wanted to speak on his behalf, well, there would be a backlash, you know, who does he think he is talking he is not talking about me, and all this. This has been our experience for years. We have had no real cohesiveness, we have had no real sense of organization, to realize that in strength there is power.

H. W. - Do you think the people have the sense of strength now?

S - In a sense but even now it is not as it should be, that is why the leaders of BUF are going to have a hard time of it, they are going to have a hard time to get all the segments all put together and say, "we are speaking for the people;" it is going to be those who will try to scuttle it anyway.

H. W. - Will be doing this for the white man

S - Indirectly they will be doing it for him and there will be whites going around who will plant the seed in the minds of many too. I think there are lots of white people who don't want to see the thing work and I think there are all so afraid of the fact that what has happened in the last few years can be a threat to them and I believe they will

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do their best to try to scatter the whole thing.

H. W. - You say that in the last ten months there is a new feeling among this area, I'm not sure what caused that, you say that the Panthers made the situation more acute

S - It was coming. NSAACP had been struggling to make our people aware of different problems. They weren't getting any where. There was another movement in Halifax, I think Rocky Jones, he had a group too in the city and they were gathering together and there was a ferment there, and then the Human Rights Conference was held in November, just focussed the whole thing, then of course the Black Panthers came in, there were those who came down from Montreal, there were rumours flying, here, there and everywhere, the press became concerned, the Premier realized that here was trouble, and it just centred right in on it. It was so tense you couldn't even walk down the street before some average white person would come to you and ask you seriously if there would be any trouble. That is how acute the situation got, and I think with all this focus the local Black people it made even the average Black man who didn't have any interest in these things, made him aware of what was going on. He got a new awareness of of who he was, otherwise before this there were just old conferences, meetings, meetings, meetings, talking about the same old things, -housing, employment and all the rest of it but here, everyone was in on it; the Premier, keynote speakers came out here, Dr. Cartwright from Boston, and this other chap from Ontario, they all came down; the T. V. focussed everything on it, and this is where it came out, that was the focus part and it was a good thing. I don't think that anything has happened in the past fifty years that really opened

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the eyes of our people than that one incident.

H. W. - You mean the incident of the Panthers ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~Human Rights~~
~~Conference~~

S. - The Panthers and the Human Rights Conference

H. W. - I haven't heard too much about that Conference, did the people suddenly become interested, did they suddenly recognize that they had to go about it a different way or what.

S - It started out as just an ordinary Human Rights Conference except for the fact that were going to bring in these key-note speakers and then of course the presence of the Panthers it just made it that much more tense because, they thought that the Panthers coming in made it that much more tense because they thought that the Panthers coming in, and the Conference was all tied together and they thought it was going to be a jumping off point for violence, in fact, some thought that the stores were going to be wrecked and there were going to be riots on Creighton and Maynard Streets, even had a rumour that there was 200 of them flying in. That is how bad the rumours were. Then there was a rumour that the Dominion Government was going to station troupes on the border and that they were to stop them from coming across the border. However, they picked up a few guns here and a few cars were searched and they picked up a few guns and that just made it worse, but apart from that aspect, it was a good thing.

H. W. - This could be interpreted in the sense more coverage
more headlines

S - Yes, that's it. That in itself was something, front-page news. We weren't relegated to the third page, we got front-page news.

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News reports on the radio, television, focussed all on this.

H. W. -

S- This is something that we have been labouring under for so long you know, that we've always had to come with our head in our hand and always had to stand in the back of the line or if we had to have an appointment with some one, we've always had to come in stuttering unable to express ourselves and all this foolishness so let's hope ^{we'll} and trust that this as Mrs. Carrie Best said on Saturday morning when we organized the BUF and the council met for the first time, she said, "Let it be known here and now that Uncle Tom is dead," and that was it.

H. W. - I tried to catch up with her when she was down in Halifax to interview. She is coming down the next month so I'll try to interview her.

S - She is quite a live wire. She has been in the fight for this thing for years. She had a paper here some years ago, she published news, she has been in the vanguard of this thing for a long time.

H. W. - no more questions to ask you unless you want something to say

S - I was hoping, I hope this thing will help you in your thesis and that it will give you a new evaluation too of our problems. Our problem is basic, it is the same as yours no doubt.

H. W. - I know the problem is basically the same but I am trying to figure out the differences, the structural differences in Nova Scotia and I am trying to find out why the Nova Scotian approach cannot be the same as the United States although there is the same problem, racism and so on, - Nova Scotia is going to have a different solution, I guess. I was thinking that it might be the small number of people here, something like that, I am trying to

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think through what I should take into account when I show the Nova Scotian situation or the Nova Scotian Blacks are doing.

S. - Well, educationally there have been improvements not as big as we would like, we have, I don't know how many, local Blacks at the university before the Blacks that we had at the university were the Blacks who came from the West Indies, or Blacks from Africa. In housing, there still has to be a lot done there. Our housing situation is very, very poor and of course this is attributed to the fact that many of our men are not educated, do not have the higher paid jobs, their economic situation is low so they live in the poorer types of homes, other than that, I would say that ~~they have made~~ there has definitely been some advances made among our people. As you said, the solution to them may not be the same as they would be in the States. I don't think they will be the same. I don't think that the white people here in Nova Scotia those that amount for anything, count for anything. I don't think they think the same as the whites in the States. I'm not too sure of this though. I honestly think, and this may be hard to accept, that many white people are just not aware that the Blacks were having difficulties. They just never thought about it and this may seem hard and you say, the Blacks are under their eyes all the time, why wouldn't they know it, they just see you going along in a happy merry way and didn't think you were troubled with anything. You came as a domestic into their kitchen you did their work, got paid, and seemed happy, in fact there were people who said when the Africville situation came out in the paper "They didn't realize that Black people were living that way," and now that is hard to believe. This was the responses that many of them gave, so I don't know. Maybe it is the same way with us.

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I often think of it in this way. The Jews have great difficulty and I never give them any thought of the problems they have, I always think they are getting along well and good. Maybe if I looked deeper into it I may realize that they do have problems, so maybe that is the way white people look on Black people, they never took the time to think about it.

H. W. - It wouldn't be so bad if we were in the position of the Jews because ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ terms of anti-group in the whole of North America, in terms of standard of living

S - And of course they could get along without the white man he has a lovely home as you said, he has his own business

END OF TAPE