

Where Were You *Then*?¹

I can understand your tears about the Canadian government's refusal to recognize *The Banner* as a "bona fide Canadian publication" (8/9/82 or 9/8/82, depending on which side of the border you live). Of course, you want your magazine to get the best economic deal possible for your Canadian subscribers. It can make a difference in your circulation. So you urge that CRC-Canada should make it clear to the government that the CRC is indeed international and as fully Canadian as it is US. All of a sudden a representative of a denominational agency insists on the international composition of the church!

Alas, if only the denominational agencies had always insisted on the CRC being equally Canadian and US! Some of us Canadians who have served a long time with the Christian Reformed World Mission (CRWM) can testify to the struggle we have had with that board concerning problems that arose directly from our undeniably US organization. The Canadian government refused to recognize us as Canadians serving a Canadian organization abroad. They recognize(d) us as working abroad for a *foreign* organization, a fact that has caused us problems with pensions and taxes. In fact, I was led to sell my property in Canada for this reason. (I wish to make clear that some of the folk in the Grand Rapids office of the CRWM now fully support us in this matter.)

During this struggle, we appealed for help from our compatriots via two avenues. The first was a letter sent to all Canadian members of the board and signed by all Canadians serving in Nigeria, except one. The other was an open letter from yours truly to CRC-Canada published in *Calvinist Contact* a few years ago. I have every reason to believe that you read that letter. It dealt with the same issue that now confronts you.²

My question to you is, *Where were you then?*

¹ *The Banner*, Oct. 4/1982, p. 16. *Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, pp. 259-260.

² *Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, pp. 116-117, 156-157.

I have been assured by a member of the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada that the Council would deal with all these issues. We missionaries should not worry; the home front will help us out. So far, I have noticed little help. In fact, one member of the office staff in Grand Rapids expressed his irritation at the nonchalant attitude of *Canadians* on this score.

At that time no one at home seemed worried about the problem we faced. It seemed to involve only a few individual missionaries. In that open letter, Canadians were warned that under present arrangements, the CRC will never become an indigenous Canadian church and neither will it ever be recognized as such, but no one listened when such warnings were sounded – until now that you yourself are faced with the same problem and have begun to feel the pinch of truth. However, if we Canadians had all the while been working towards becoming a truly indigenous Canadian church that does not have all or most of its money flow to the USA, the Canadian government would not now doubt your claim to be a Canadian magazine.

As to *The Banner*, your cover shouts out its US nature by the way you indicate the date of issue. You know that when US citizens write 8/9/82, as you do on the cover, Canadians, Europeans, Nigerians, and so on, would write 9/8/82. How can you expect the Canadian government to believe that yours is a Canadian magazine when you fail even to adjust the date on the cover to a mutually acceptable way of indicating dates?

I must confess to being glad you are facing this problem. Perhaps some good will come out of it, now that you are also bringing it to the attention of the denomination. However, the basic solution does not lie in Canadians reminding their government that the CRC is also Canadian. *It lies in becoming a Canadian church, also in our denominational structures and financial operations.* The government should be able to see that we are a Canadian church without further explanation. And the reason we ought to move in that direction is not first of all to solve the problems of missionaries and *Banners*, but for the sake of Christ's mission through the CRC in Canada. I am *not* suggesting a severance of CRC-Canada and CRC-USA, but we do need a restructuring of our relationships so that

CRC-Canada can indeed behave like a Canadian church and be perceived as such by Canadians. This holds true also for *The Banner*.