

300 in Lower Canada (Quebec).

Black slaves were used to clear fields, chop wood, build ships, houses and buildings for the white settlers as well as being employed as domestic servants and agricultural workers.

The institution of slavery was given legal recognition as early as 1709 and was incorporated into the text of the Treaty of Paris, permitting the French to continue owning slaves in New France even after the area passed under British rule.

Slavery was legally sanctioned in all of British North America (B.N.A.), including Nova Scotia. A British imperial law introduced in 1790 acted to "encourage British immigrants to come to B.N.A., the Bahama and Bermuda with their slaves and other property."

Slaves were bought and sold in the markets and at auctions in Montreal, Halifax and other cities. Newspapers carried announcements of Blacks for sale. Such advertisements appeared as early as 1749. The following was published in the *Royal Gazette and Nova Scotia Advertiser* of September 7, 1790:

"Sales at Auction by William Millet, at his Auction-Room, on Thursday next, the 9th Inst, at 12 o'clock. About Two Tons of Ship Bread, A Few Barrels of Pork, Indian and Rye Meal, Some Household Furniture, A Stout lively Negro Man and Sundry other Articles"

Clearly Blacks were seen as nothing more than chattels, workhorses.

They were advertised as strong, hearty field hands or tradesmen such as carpenters, sailmakers and ropemakers.

Though Canadian slavery did not expand and flourish to as great an extent as in the United States, it was no less harsh and brutal in its treatments of Africans and Amerindians. "Slavery in Canada had all the traits associated with the dehumanizing treatment meted out to human beings in bondage."

Instances of excessive violence and sadistic torture of slaves by Canadian masters have also been recorded. *Canada and Its People of African Descent* documents this:

"A small child of Windsor, Nova Scotia, was instantly killed when his holder struck him in the head with a hammer. A slaveholder from Truro, Nova Scotia, in order to punish his slave who had tried to run away, made a hole through the lower lobe of the slave's ear, passed the end of a whiplash through the hole, knotted it, jumped on his horse, dragged the victim who died shortly afterwards."

Blacks repeatedly defied and resisted slavery, frequently by escaping their masters. This prompted the enactment of a Canadian fugitive slave law in 1709 which, among other things, called for the imposition of a heavy fine of 50 pounds on anyone caught aiding a slave to escape.

Here in Montreal, one of the most defiant acts of resistance occurred on the night of April 11,

1734. Slawewoman Marie Joseph Angelique set fire to her mistress' residence on St. Paul Street. The fire ended by destroying 46 buildings including the Hotel Dieu, convent and church. Angelique was captured, dragged through the town and publicly put to death in July of the same year.

Intense opposition to slavery encouraged Lt.-Governor Graves Simcoe to make Upper Canada the first British territory to legislate against slavery.

"From the moment that I assumed the government of Upper Canada, under no modification will I assent to law that discriminated by dishonest policy between the natives of Africa, America or Europe," Simcoe proclaimed.

He passed a law in 1793 that prohibited the importation of Black slaves into Upper Canada. Simcoe's Act limited but did not abolish slavery. The law also stipulated that children born after the Act was passed were to be free *upon reaching the age of 25 years old*. The weight of such a stipulation must be seen in the ironic light that due to the harshness of slave conditions, the average life span of a slave was 25.2 years.

Many American fugitive slaves and Black Loyalists were profoundly disheartened by the reception they got in Canada. Free Blacks were repeatedly mistaken for enslaved ones and all too often the British Crown's promises of free land and full equality to loyal Blacks went unfulfilled.

When they were honoured, Blacks were given smaller lots on the poorest lands and generally left to fend for themselves without any initial government assistance. In 1792, 1200 Blacks left Canada in search of a better life in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

Though most slaves escaping their masters were fleeing the United States to come to Canada, there was at least one instance, in 1777, in which slaves in Canada escaped to Vermont where slavery had already been abolished.

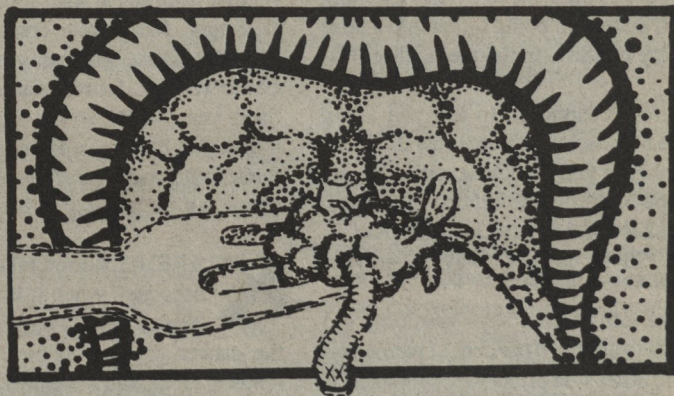
On August 28, 1883, the British Parliament officially abolished slavery in all British territories, including Canada. The law came into effect at midnight on July 31, 1884. August 1st, Emancipation Day, is still celebrated by Black communities in Southern Ontario and in the Maritimes.

Canadian slavery was in no way "more innocent" or incidental and it should never be overlooked or dismissed; rather it should be remembered as an extremely important part of our history. Slavery played a significant role in the development of Canada. It must not be minimized or glossed over.

In 1910, Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier said: "We see in the United States what grave problems may arise from the presence of a race unable to become full members of the same social family as ourselves."

Evidently, Wilfred failed to see that roots of racism were already homegrown. ●

Bugs, good for the heart



VICTORIA (CUP)--

Most people only eat insects accidentally.

But Dr. Richard Ring, a University of Victoria entomologist, fries up mealworms in garlic and olive oil in his office. And all his students get to try them.

Ring says Western society doesn't see so-called "creepy crawlies" as a real source of nutrition because of ignorance.

"We think we're such an enlightened society," he said. "But we have so many prejudices."

Ring says we're blinded to the nutritional potential of insects because we think of them as "hairy, small, fast and elusive."

But insects fed on plant material are a rich source of protein and essential fatty acids. And as for the indigestible exoskeleton, "modern refined diets like a little roughage anyway," Ring said.

Although insects may contain some traces of pesticides, large amounts would kill them anyway, he said. In any case, insects could be gathered from organic locations. ●