

RIGHTS

ADL REPORTS ON SOCIAL, EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATIONAL AND HOUSING DISCRIMINATION.

VOSBURGH AND CAMELBACK

WHEN Louis S. Vosburgh, president of the Lincoln Extension Institute in Cleveland, decided last December to spend a brief winter holiday at Camelback Inn, near Phoenix, Arizona, he had no way of knowing what a painful indoctrination in the practices of discriminatory resort hotels lay ahead of him. Mr. Vosburgh was unaware that for many years, Camelback Inn had systematically barred would-be guests who were, *or seemed to be*, of the Jewish faith.

Mr. Vosburgh did not get an accommodation at Camelback Inn, but he did get an education. He was unprepared for the experience, for he traveled in the most socially acceptable circles and came from an unimpeachable background. His forebears from Holland settled on these shores not many years after the landing of the Mayflower. But to the operators of Camelback Inn Mr. Vosburgh's name apparently had a suspicious ring.

In December, Camelback manager John Stewart offered Mr. Vosburgh an accommodation for the latter part of February. At the same time, he wanted to know Mr. Vosburgh's church and club affiliations.

Mr. Vosburgh replied that he and his wife were not members of any particular church "at the present time," although they were church-goers "to some extent and have had two or three affiliations in the past."

Mr. Vosburgh added that, generally speaking, he had not been a club joiner, but cited his membership in the Mid-Day Club, an affiliate of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, and the Clearwater Yacht Club and the Carlouel Club, both of Clearwater, Florida.

The hotel responded promptly, assuring Mr. Vosburgh that he and his

wife "are the kind of people we would be very happy to have among our guests." But it wanted more information from him—what was his nationality?

"Unfortunately," the management declared, "we do not know the clubs you mention, and while this is not our personal feeling in the matter, our guests demand that we cater only to those who can be entirely a part of their tastes and interests."

Mr. Vosburgh's patience was put under a severe strain by the hotel management's labored amenities.

"I feel compelled to tell you," he wrote back, "that in all my life it has never been necessary to subject myself to such close scrutiny in order to obtain hotel accommodations for a short period of ten days."

Further, Mr. Vosburgh questioned that "the majority of a strictly high class clientele would subject themselves to such third degree tactics."

He asked if these methods were a protection against undesirables, and if they didn't drive some of the most desirable away.

"I happen to own a motel in Florida," he pointed out. "We too strive for a certain class level in our guests—but we never subject newcomers to such close scrutiny as to inquire after their nationality, etc."

Mr. Vosburgh expressed an interest in knowing what nationalities the Camelback Inn considered among the elite.

"As for myself," he said, "my ancestry is Holland Dutch, the original Vosburgh family having settled in Albany, New York, in the year 1642. My mother was Pennsylvania Dutch with a little French thrown in. If this is objectionable—I'm sorry—I couldn't help it. The Roosevelts and many of

America's leaders were of this stock . . . My wife was born and reared in Kentucky. She is of English ancestry—but I hope you will not hold that against her."

Mr. Vosburgh said he was sorry he was not more specific in his last letter regarding his church affiliations. Is church membership a requirement? he asked.

"Since you did put the question—it might be well for you to tell me which ones are on the approved list. We go to various churches—but as I stated in my last letter—we do not now belong to any particular one. We like some better than others though—so if you will tell me the ones that are on the approved or disapproved list I can tell better whether we would be compatible with your group."

Mr. Vosburgh felt slightly exhausted. "Well," his letter concluded, "this is quite an ordeal to have to go through in an effort to get a room for ten days. Maybe it will be worth it—I don't know. Anyway, whether I win or not, the account of the effort will be one well worthy of a place in my history book."

Camelback Inn's reply to this letter came as a shock to Mr. Vosburgh, who was now informed that there was no space for the period he requested. Other "very attractive" resorts in the Phoenix area were recommended to him.

Mr. Vosburgh was surprised that the hotel would cancel his tentative reservation while the details were being completed.

"Now if it be true that you are not trying to discriminate against us," he again wrote the hotel, "suppose we talk about another period for our reservation. I find that some friends of ours, Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Hill, are

planning to be there for a period of two or three weeks commencing January 25th."

Mr. Hill had completed all arrangements for staying at Camelback Inn and was on the point of forwarding his \$150 deposit. But he learned of the hotel's rejection of Vosburgh's request for an accommodation and was "astounded" by the incident. Whereupon Mr. Hill wrote to Camelback Inn seeking some clarification of the situation affecting his friend.

"Now, I consider Mr. Vosburgh one of the finest men I have ever known," Mr. Hill wrote, "one who is fully worthy of any grade of hotel accommodation he might see fit to request. It seems to me that your hotel has been most unjust and inconsiderate toward Mr. Vosburgh."

Mr. Hill added that he failed to see why Camelback Inn wanted specific information regarding Mr. Vosburgh's church and club affiliation and nationality, while in his own case it did not seek any such information.

"I feel sure," he said, "you knew no more about me than you did about Mr. Vosburgh. This inconsistency and discrimination puzzles me. I might not feel as contented at a hotel where a good friend of mine was not also welcome—especially when he is of the high type of Mr. Vosburgh."

And Mr. Hill declared that he was holding back his deposit until he had some satisfactory reply.

The Camelback Inn manager replied: "We didn't like Mr. Vosburgh's last letter, and did not feel we would be happy having him as our guest."

"You see, we operate a small family-type resort where personalities and their feelings toward us are important."

"In view of your letter, which, I very strongly feel, pries into something which doesn't concern you, we don't feel we would be happy having you at Camelback Inn either. Consequently, please keep holding your check for \$150.00."

Mr. Hill felt convinced that Camelback Inn, "from the tone of this letter, apparently needs a refresher course in public relations." He told his friend

Vosburgh that he felt impelled to tell the Camelback management that he is "a veteran member of the Cleveland Advertising Club and will see to it that this letter is posted on the bulletin board of our club rooms for all to see."

Coincidentally, the city of Cleveland is also the location of the Lincoln Electric Company. John C. Lincoln is president of Camelback Inn. Obviously, there is no connection between the Lincoln Electric Company and Mr. Vosburgh's Lincoln Extension Institute.

RED CROSS REJECTS BIAS COVENANTS

THE last few years have witnessed in the District of Columbia dramatic changes in the breaking down of racial and religious barriers to equality of opportunity. The success achieved in the desegregation of the public schools in Washington has marked a new level of social adjustment to changing conditions and has set a pattern for other sections of the country.

One of the principal holdouts against acceptance of changing conditions is the W.C. & A.M. Miller Development Company, which built and developed Spring Valley, an exclusive residential section of Washington where some of the nation's notables live.

The Miller Company has written into all of its property deeds in Spring Valley racial and religious covenants which have been a source of embarrassment to the purchasers of homes in the area. One of these restrictive clauses prescribes that every resident of Spring Valley must be approved by the Miller Company. But the most rigid of its covenants sets up religious and racial bars. It reads:

"No part of the land hereby conveyed shall ever be used, or occupied by, or sold, demised, transferred, conveyed unto, or in trust for, leased, or rented, or given, to Negroes, or any

person or persons of Negro blood or extraction, or to any person of the Semitic race, blood, or origin, which racial description shall be deemed to include Armenians, Jews, Hebrews, Persians, and Syrians . . ."

The United States Supreme Court ruled in 1948 that restrictive clauses based on race or religion are not enforceable because such enforcement would violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. The Court observed that while home owners could make such restrictive private agreements, they could not call upon the courts to enforce them.

Nonetheless, these restrictive clauses are still carried in deeds such as those of the Miller Company.

The American National Red Cross recently underscored the urgent need for the discontinuance of this practice. In January, the Red Cross was considering purchasing for its new president, General Alfred M. Gruenther, the Spring Valley home of Pan-American Airways' official, Henry Beardsley. The price of \$70,000 for this home at 4915 Glenbrook Road, N.W., located in a row of the most stately residences in the District of Columbia, was not unusual.

But the Red Cross finally decided not to go through with the purchase, and one of the factors in that decision was the Miller Company's restrictive covenants.

While the Red Cross was negotiating for the purchase of the house, General Gruenther said that he was "naturally against" any racial or religious discrimination and would only approve a "valid covenant."

A Red Cross spokesman explained that this meant a covenant legally recognized, one that did not contain restrictive clauses based on race or religion. The spokesman pointed out that such restrictive clauses have been declared unenforceable by the United States Supreme Court and have thus been given no legal recognition.

The Washington Evening Star (Feb. 8) lauded the Red Cross for making a "wise decision" in not permitting itself "to become a party to racial discrimination in any form."

RIGHTS

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