

The Public Hearing . . .

Possibly never before in the history of Dresden has the town been in the national spotlight to the extent which it was last Monday, September 27th., when about twenty or more newspaper men and photographers together with radio and television representatives converged on the Memorial Arena to cover the public hearing into the alleged infringements of Ontario's Fair Accommodation Practices Act. We feel that possibly never again will those newspaper men, et al, witness a more orderly, well-conducted inquiry, especially into a subject which could well have given rise to ill temper and bad feeling.

For nearly five hours about three hundred townspeople patiently and quietly endured the hardest benches we have ever encountered while they listened intently to the questioning of witnesses and the argument of counsel. Only once during this long time had Judge William Schwenger to remind spectators to observe due decorum, and this reminder was issued only to restrain a tendency on the part of a few onlookers to titter while evidence was being taken.

We noticed that almost every section of the community was represented at the hearing — merchants, farmers, business men, the clergy and the housewife, they were all there. Had the hearing been held on a half-holiday we have no doubt that an even greater representation of townspeople would have been seen. Such keen interest surely bodes well for the happy settlement, eventually, of a problem which has teased the minds and sensibilities of men and women of goodwill for generations.

Judge Schwenger, in his closing remarks, highly commended the audience for their behaviour during the hearing, and added some very pleasant remarks on the attractiveness and apparent prosperity of the town. No doubt his comments will do much to counteract some of the ill-informed opinions of the town and its inhabitants which have recently appeared in a number of daily newspapers.

But, timely as were the Judge's remarks, perhaps the most sagacious comment on the day's proceedings occurred when a group of newspaper men overheard one old-timer say, during a brief recess:

"There they are," he said, "a great bunch of whites and coloureds sittin' all mixed up together on them benches — now why can't they do that in the cafes and fergit all this clap-trap they're talkin' about today?"