

OUR COLORED POPULATION

In and about Seattle there are between 4,000 and 6,000 colored men, women and children or about 1,000 distinct heads of families. The above figures, however, are but estimates, it being almost impossible, at least without great expense, to get an accurate number, owing to the fact that Seattle covers a vast amount of territory, ten miles from north to south and six miles from east to west, and, unlike cities in the East, the colored citizens are not congregated together, but are found in every resident districts. Seattle has a number of inter-urban lines on which many colored folks live some ten or fifteen miles in the country and come to work in the city every morning. They too, live up and down the Sound and are able to reach the city in time for their various occupations on the mosquito fleet, small boats plying up and down the Sound. The last U. S. Census is so inaccurate as to the number of colored persons living in and about Seattle that it is not half true, and if for no other reason, hundreds of colored persons have flocked to Seattle within the past fifteen months to fill the splendid positions as laborers that have been given to them on account of the many strikes on the part of organized labor.

For the past twenty-five years the colored population of the city were forced to do such odd jobs as came their way in order to make both ends meet, but those odd jobs came so regularly that they made almost as much money as if they were regularly employed, and a great majority of them did as did their white neighbors, purchased real estate on the installment plan, which has enhanced in value to such an extent that many of them in the very near future will find themselves, if they care to dispose of their realty holdings, with a sufficient sum of money to go to the suburbs and purchase a piece of acreage on which they can live at ease the balance of their days. Within the past fifteen months conditions have greatly changed for the working black man hereabouts, and hundreds of them are finding steady work at splendid pay.

Behind the blackest cloud a bright sun shines and the colored man for years asked and was denied work that would enable him to maintain his family, not in luxury, but in comfort, but organized labor fought him to a finish and prevented him from making any terms with the employers, but a change came all of a sudden, when organized labor had its longshoremen to strike about fifteen months ago and a large number of colored men succeeded the strikers in the work. According to Lieutenant Rostom there are at present about 300 colored men employed on the waterfront, who make a general average of \$6.00 per day, that is, where they put in a number of hours overtime. For eight hours they get four dollars and for all overtime they get seventy-five cents per hour. To say the least, this means about fifteen hundred dollars per day that is being taken in by colored men working on the waterfront, not a cent of which were they getting fifteen months ago. While there are not so many employed at any other place in the city, yet here and there they are employed in ones, twos, tens and twenties until at present not one need be idle and at wages that makes your heart beat quick and fast. Yes, of course many of them throw their money away like water, but a majority of them are investing it in real estate, which is always a valuable asset and will return some day, like bread cast upon the waters, in an hundred and perhaps a thousand fold.

While the colored population for the most part is without a definite line of work and in the past able to get employment only at those kinds of work that the working white man would not have, yet many of them, yea a great majority, have done whatever their hands

found to do and made the best of an ugly situation. But they soon entered into the spirit of thrift and push so common to this city, better known as the Seattle Spirit, and took advantage of every opportunity. The boot black in some of the barbar shops, where he is whistled to, when wanted, and who is known as Rastus by the barbers and customers, in many instances owns more valuable real estate than the owner of the shop, and ten fold more than the white journeymen, which reminds the writer of a case in question. A white barber shop owner, who employed a "Colored Rastus", wanted to see him on Sunday and having his house number, called at his home. When he reached the street and number, which corresponded to Rastus' direction of his home, he stood on the street in front of the door and refused to even ring the door bell, so sure was he that he had been given the wrong address. He went by, but not wanting to return without having seen his man, he went back and rung the bell, and to his chagrin as well as good luck, Rastus opened the door and invited him in. Mr. Jones, (Rastus) for want of a better name, lived in a fashionable part of the city, owned a \$4,000 home, which was well furnished with perhaps, a \$400 piano, whose wife played classical selections, while her husband talked to the stranger in his smoking den. The journeyman in the shop heard the news the next day and thereafter Rastus was Jones and the barbers either called or went after him when he was wanted. As in this, so in many other instances, where the colored man, on account of the prejudice against giving him employment the same as white men, is forced into doing odd jobs, such as the white will not do, but he makes the best of the situation and rises triumphant to the top in spite of his handicaps.

TO FOSTER BUSINESS ENTERPRISE

With a view of promoting business enterprises among themselves and with the further view of rendering each other such assistance in their business efforts as lie within their power, a number of colored men within the present year got together and organized for the work and sent forth the following address:

Association begets thought, thought fosters strength and strength is the bulwark of defense. United we stand, divided we fall. Ideas must be exchanged if master minds are produced. As pure gold comes from the melting pot so do controlling geniuses from the assembly room of deliberation. If men would really know themselves they must first study their neighbors. To grow mentally, morally, socially and commercially our lives must be thrown together.

Briefly, these are cardinal points in the routine of human affairs that must be carefully observed by every race, nation and class of the human family, if sociability is to succeed savagery. Realizing that there is a lack of many if not all of these vital truths in the lives of the Negro population of this community is largely responsible for the organizing of the Negro Business Men's League, with the view of forming a nucleus around which it will gather the dissenting elements now repelling each other and thus move grandly on to the goal of success. The charter members hereof being: Z. L. Woodson, apartment house operator; D. T. Cardwell, successful physician and surgeon; Benjamin F. Tutt, leading tonsorial artist; Andrew R. Black, attorney at law and real estate operator; F. B. Cooper, successful dentist; Frank Smith, club man; William Chandler, coal and wood dealer; Harry Legg, successful grocer; F. D. Wright, tailor and clothier; Samuel H. Stone, caterer and confectioner, and Horace R. Cayton, publisher.