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Reports

REPORT OF FINDINGS COMMITTEE OF STATE INTER-RACIAL CONFERENCE

HELD ON THE CALL OF GOVERNOR MORROW IN

LOUISVILLE, JULY 23, 24, 1920.

PREAMBLE:

Not in passion or prejudice, but in the broad spirit of those seeking patiently and in faith to find a solution of the delicate inter-racial problems that menace the peace and divide in hurtful antagonism the energies of our people, we desire to mobilize the better sentiment of both races in the state for the removal of the causes of friction and strife, to the end that equal justice may be secured to all and the energies of the two races may be joined in the great common task of building a better world for our children and our children's children to live in.

The responsibility for settling the inter-racial problems and settling them right rests on both races alike, and cannot be shirked by either race or by individuals of either race, without incurring the righteous judgment of God.

It should constantly be borne in mind that the races must live side by side, and therefore no solution of their problems is possible except such as are reached through hearty cooperation. One essential condition of this solution is that the better elements of both races be constantly associated to this end.

LAW.

The Negro is entitled to the same representation on the jury panel which the white man has, and no measures should be used by the County or State Officers, such as separate lists, to prevent this. The necessity of having his name on the assessor's list in order to be drawn for jury duty should be an incentive to the acquisition of property, and should be so used by the leaders of the Negro race.

Both races should see that it is to their interest that every man, regardless of race or color, receives justice in the courts.

The strong stand taken by Governor Morrow against the unspeakable crime of lynching is worthy of the most emphatic commendation, and it is to be hoped that the example will stimulate others to act. The final solution, however, will only come with the education of the whole people, North and South, in respect for the sacredness of law, and in self controlled waiting for its operation. We urge that pulpit, press, and every other available means be used, first in bringing the popular mind to a point where it will be clearly seen that lynching is a crime against the whole community, and where it will be made impossible, and second to compel abolition of the too frequent delay and evasion of justice in the courts and to cause reliance to be placed on the orderly process of law.

Especial care should be given to sub-normal persons whose conduct easily becomes criminal. We recommend that intelligent and positive action be taken to segregate the feeble minded of both races and sexes to the end that society may be protected from the consequences of crimes of violence and that these unfortunate ones may have such opportunities for development as a Christian state should give.

EDUCATION.

White people, especially educators, should acquaint themselves with the conditions of Negro schools, especially in the rural communities. The state should heartily cooperate with the efforts of those outside its borders in providing adequate buildings and other school facilities.

Since the Negro is required to measure up to the standard of citizenship set up for the white man, and since the public schools are the chief means of preparation for citizenship, simple justice demands that the Negro be given equal facilities for preparation to meet the standard, and we recommend (a) that all welfare agencies at work in the state join in the movement now being pushed by the Educational Department of the State of Kentucky to improve the condition of the rural schools, (b) that county high schools or a contract high school be provided for the Negro youth in every county where there are sufficient Negroes to justify it and that in counties where there are small numbers of Negroes the schools be so far as possible combined as to provide adequate educational facilities for every colored child, the state providing transportation therefor, (c) that in order to make the Negro farmer more efficient, contented and prosperous, greater emphasis be placed on courses in Home Economics, Agriculture, Sanitation, Recreation and Supervised Play, (d) that the colored high schools be so standardized that they may be accredited by the state authorities.

We recommend the appointment of a commission on each of the several general topics discussed by the conference, the duties of these commissions being to make surveys of actual conditions and to report at such time and in such manner as may be decided upon by the Inter-racial State Committee of the Conference.

We urge that in every county where an Inter-racial Committee can be organized a rural survey committee be appointed by this committee and the result of the survey be given county and state-wide publicity through the press.

HOUSING.

Segregation must be condemned, for purchase and sale must be free. Living in alleys should be discouraged in every possible way, and all means employed to promote sanitary living. But mere housing and sanitary regulations will not wholly meet the case. The Negro must be taught to desire better things, a task for the leaders of both races.

It should be noted that a desire for education and for better living conditions does not in the least mean a desire for so-called social equality. The Negro is developing a racial spirit which should be encouraged.

Findings Committee (3)

ECONOMIC JUSTICE.

We recommend the principle of equal wage for equal work regardless of color, race or sex as the principle of justice by which wages shall be determined. We recommend that opportunities for advancement be based on ability, and that these opportunities be not determined by race, color or sex.

EQUAL RAILROAD FACILITIES

We recommend that the law requiring equal accommodations on railroads and other common carriers be enforced and that the commission to be appointed on this question take this matter under careful consideration.

HOSPITALS AND NURSES.

We recommend that the providing of hospitals and training of nurses adequate to reach the service of the Negro department of the city be taken up by the Committee on Sanitation and Housing.

PERPETUATION OF RESULTS.

In order that the results of this conference may be perpetuated and conserved and that the studies suggested may be continued we recommend the appointment of sub-committees by the State Inter-racial Committee as follows:

1. Justice before the law.
2. Educational Facilities.
3. Sanitation, housing and health conditions.
4. Recreational Facilities.
5. Economic and Industrial problems.
6. Traveling Facilities.
7. Religious cooperation.

Respectfully submitted:

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Committee on Findings.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE CONFERENCE.

The conference enthusiastically voted thanks to Mr. Dix for his fair and impartial ruling and to the committee on arrangements for the success of the conference and the excellent program rendered.

Judge H.W. Robinson was heartily thanked for vacating the Criminal Court Room for the conference, holding his court in another place.

By unanimous vote Governor Morrow was commended for his interest in the inter-racial movement expressed, especially in his call convening the Inter-racial Conference.

On morion it was voted to recommend the observance this fall of what is known as Inter-racial Sunday, when all of the ministers of the State will be urged to preach sermons on race harmony and cooperation. The State Inter-racial Committee was authorized to set the date.

R E P O R TW O M A N ' S S E C T I O NCOMMISSION ON INTERRACIAL COOPERATIONSTUDY OF NEGRO HOMES.

Dr. Robert E. Speer, President of the Federal Council of the churches of Christ in America, in bringing greetings of the Christian Churches of our nation to the Eighth National Young Women's Christian Association Convention held in New York City in May, made this statement:

"After all there are just two great questions before our world to-day, are they not? First: Is Jesus Christ Lord? and Second: How great a Lord is He? There are many who call Him Lord who still would bar Him out of great areas of human life. The agency which we represent here believes that He must be Lord of everything or He will consent to be called Lord of nothing, and that our business is to bring all of human life to Him and to carry Him to all of human life, to claim for Christ His place of lordship over all the lives of the world."

According to the 25th chapter of Matthew the real test of our Christian life is not our attitude toward God; it is our attitude toward our fellow man. When the Son of man shall come in His glory to judge the nations of the earth what shall be His standard? He has answered this question for us in the 25th of Matthew, not by creed and church questions but by our human relations, by the reality of our social feeling. If we lived in the presence of hunger, loneliness and oppression, in the same country with child labor, race contempt, rack rents, just earnings withheld by power, if we saw such things and remained apathetic - out we go you and I - to the right or to the left. Is it easier in our glorious America to preach brotherhood than to practice it in the neighborhood?

The Women's Section of the State Interracial Commission voted last December to make a study of the Home of the Negro and of conditions affecting his home-life. A chairman for this study was appointed. Throughout the state in cities and towns women were selected from Missionary Societies and from women's Clubs to make observations and to report on what they had found. For the want of a better plan they were requested to describe the home and conditions affecting the home-life of three types of Negroes - the well-to-do, the middle class and the poor class.

As these reports came in it was surprising to see how similar the conditions were in all parts of the state.

The "well-to-do" class was found to be from 5 to 6% of the Negro population in each community, the middle class 19 or 20%, and the poor class from 60 to 75% of the whole.

In the "well-to-do" class apparently religion, education, and hard work are the contributing forces that lift the Negro to a position of prosperity, poise and peace. He owns a good spacious home with all modern improvements, is keeping it in good repair and his premises are above criticism. His family standards are excellent. Music, books, friends, culture are there to cheer him. He spends his money wisely and has a surplus for up-lift work - He has his automobile and enjoys his well-earned recreation. He is zealous to promote the cause of education among his people and supports the church to a generous extent. In every sense of the word he is a good citizen.

The middle class, living usually in rented quarters, have about four or five rooms which are in a bad condition when he gets them. The house is very old - the owner will not repair it - perhaps because he thinks his tenant will not take care of his property. Perhaps the rent is too high - to help him pay the rent rooms are sub-let and at once there is overcrowding. Ventilation is poor, perhaps partly due to the plan on which the house is built and partly to a desire of the tenant to avoid drafts. Roofs are leaky, there are no foundations, only wooden posts, rotted and uncertain, walls are damp, plaster falls, dirt accumulates, premises are poorly kept, garbage, in many instances not collected at all - vaults in close proximity to the house - bodily ills develop - life is difficult. He spends his money unwisely - He consumes all his wage and is often in need.

We pass on to consider the third or poor group:

This group lives usually just outside the limits of the smaller city and town back in some muddy lane perhaps, or in the stable lot on a white man's property where the Negro's children must share the premises with the animals. The house consists of a moderate-sized room and a very small "lean-to" without windows and with cracks a half inch wide between the boards. There is no foundation - the house is almost ready to topple over. The roof leaks - a grate fire in the bed room is all the heat they have. There are holes in the floor - Water must be carried hundreds of yards from the white folks' house. An open vault, in a miserable condition and trash of every description on the premises complete this picture. From 6 to 15 persons are actually living to-day in each of these homes. In winter the mud prevents attendance at church or school. The children are extremely thin, have very little clothing even in severe weather, frequently no shoes at all. They are ragged, dirty, rough, cruel. Perhaps parents are in-temperate. Of this class come the girl loiterer, the indolent boy the shiftless man and most of the offenders in court. With these Negroes the need is the same as it is in this class of every race - the need of human brotherhood the world over. So much for the conditions outside of Louisville.

Louisville with a Negro population of 45,000 belongs in a class with Detroit, Cleveland and Pittsburg rather than with other cities and towns of Kentucky. It is dealt with separately in this report.

Louisville's 45,000 Negroes live in 8,000 homes of which 500 have recently been investigated by the Urban League to whom we are indebted for many facts in this report.

In 60% of these 500 homes conditions are extremely bad. Some 200 houses have been condemned. About 2/3 of these houses are frame and 1/3 brick, ranging from 30 years to 60 years of age. It is a very rare thing for a Negro to have a new house. Not more than 5% of these old houses have basements and their foundations of cedar logs have rotted to the ground. Roofs leak, guttering is full of holes and on rainy days the water pours down in streams to seep under the rooms where the family must sleep. Walls and ceilings are damp and plaster falls. Soft coal is burned in stoves and with its generous supply of soot and smoke does its best to darken walls and ceilings and to permeate the clothing of the inmates. Rents are too high, work is irregular, wages low, house over-crowded - Adults all go out to work, children are unsupervised, and destructive and there is no playground near. Garbage is only partially collected and in some instances not collected at all.

Contrast this condition with that of the white working-man's home in a newly developed sub-division in which he is purchasing his property. As you turn from the concrete sidewalk to enter the yard your eye is delighted by the closely cut green lawn, and the snowy white concrete walk, steps and porch. You enter the house - You are greeted by snowy white walls, fresh new paint, clean new floors, basement, furnace, laundry, bath, in this five-room bungalow. There is sewer connection, streets are made, are well lighted and policed. There is every inducement to live a clean, healthy, moral life and to instill the same in his growing children.

We will return to the old section of the city and visit a frame tenement for Negroes. Here each room or each two rooms houses a family. There is a common kitchen which is scarcely more than a shed and is as bare as one. It contains only a cooking stove. Each family carries its cooking utensils back and forth. In the halls piles of ashes are to be seen and one must step through them to reach his destination. Garbage, ashes, trash of every description are found in the yard.

Then there is also the poorly constructed alley-type of house with its leaking roof, bad cellar, awful vault, and up-stairs room with its outside incomplete stairway that is dangerous to him who should make a mis-step and fall through. Again garbage is poorly collected and rats and other vermin are a constant annoyance to the occupants. Again rents are too high and repairs are withheld.

As usual one cannot tarry long to praise adequately the successful Negro in our city life who has bought a splendid home and is maintaining it in a way that is above criticism. His standards

are the highest, his home-life ideal and his contribution of time, means, and energy to social and church work most generous. He has solved the problem of right living and is helping others to reach the goal.

To return to facts that need correcting. In one of Kentucky's larger cities, name withheld by request, in which the Negro population is 30% of the whole, 600 Negro homes were investigated. They are on 80 streets. Only 10 streets of the 80 have sewers. The houses are in a state of general collapse due to old age. Water supply is drawn from old cisterns of which 23 cisterns have recently been condemned and a large number cleaned out. This survey surprised the city Garbage department with the news that of 54 streets in another Negro section only 7 streets had any garbage collection whatever. In one street of 40 houses only 6 of them could pass inspection and it is an interesting thing to note that all 6 belong to one landlord. He and his tenants are co-operative. He keeps up the property and they take care of it and keep it clean. There is a splendid spirit of friendship and of mutual helpfulness, the landlord even helping his tenants over difficult problems at times in their home-life. The rental, too, is right. The rule works both ways - a good landlord has good tenants - good tenants have good landlords.

Much of the Negro property is owned by very wealthy people who put it in the hands of agents and never see conditions. In this same city a white man is building 8 new brick houses for Negroes, in a court. He is putting in a private sewer connection and with all modern conveniences. The Negroes are clamoring to rent these new homes.

And now a few facts and statistics along health lines. In the recent health report on Louisville's situation made by Dr. Haven Emerson of New York City, on statistics gathered from the records of the Louisville Women's City Club and the State Board of Health, it was brought to light that Tuberculosis and infant mortality are greatly effected by bad housing.

A survey was made of the houses where 2 or more deaths from T. B. had occurred in the same house over a 10 year period. The homes of white people were surveyed by the Women's City Club. Those of the Negroes by the Urban League. They have found 169 such houses for white population and 103 for the colored, showing 40% for the colored population although Louisville's Negro population is but 16 2/3% of its total population. The housing situation particularly the age of the houses, overcrowding, and poor ventilation are the chief causes. Poor ventilation is due to a poor building plan and to overcrowded lots, shutting out air and sunlight.

Of all deaths from T. B. in 1923-24, 33% were colored though the Negro population is but 16 2/3% of the whole population. Of the whole number of deaths, 30% were known to physicians less than 6 months prior to their death. All might have been saved had they submitted to treatment at the beginning of the disease, instead of waiting until they had reached the advanced stage.

belonging to the Negroes themselves that will be invested in large numbers of new brick houses that the working man can purchase on easy terms. There is no influence so far reaching in its effects on the life and morals of any family as that of bad or good housing. Bad housing is the fundamental cause of much evil. Good housing contributes vastly toward good health, good morals, good conduct and success.

It behooves the Christian to ask himself the question which Paul 2,000 years ago asked of the early Corinthian Christians: "And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" To help make real in the lives of others blessings and opportunities which one has himself received, to be willing to help plant the banner of Christian brotherhood a few furlongs ahead in a world of strife and hatred - these, it seems, would be purposes well pleasing to Him under whose banner we serve.

Respectfully submitted,

Chm'n Com. on Study of Negro Homes in Ky.