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A REPORT TO GOVERNOR LUTHER W. YOUNGDAHL

BY

GOVERNOR'S INTERRACIAL COMMISSION
OF MINNESOTA

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THE NEGRO WORKER'S PROGRESS IN MINNESOTA

A REPORT
TO
GOVERNOR LUTHER W. YOUNGDAHL
OF
MINNESOTA
BY
THE GOVERNOR'S INTERRACIAL
COMMISSION

June 30, 1949

This is the fifth of a series of reports to the Governor on various racial and religious situations which may affect the public welfare of Minnesota.

THE GOVERNOR'S INTERRACIAL COMMISSION



LUTHER W. YOUNGDAHL
Governor

REVEREND FRANCIS J. GILLIGAN
Chairman

RABBI DAVID ARONSON

MRS. MABETH HURD PAIGE

MISS I. MYRTLE CARDEN

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MR. S. VINCENT OWENS

REV. CARL F. ZIETLOW

DR. CHARLES NELSON PACE

MR. TALMAGE B. CAREY
Secretary

CLIFFORD E. RUCKER
Informational Representative

A Foreword

by

*Governor Luther W. Youngdahl
of Minnesota*

In the world of today it becomes more and more apparent that there will be a tomorrow for civilization only if men learn, and learn quickly to live together in peace and unity.

This was expressed well by Dr. Arthur H. Compton, head of atomic research at the University of Chicago during the war and now Chancellor of Washington University, when he said:

“We live in a day when a nation’s safety no longer lies in the ability of its armed forces to repel invasion. Safety against attack now demands that we make our services so essential to our neighbors that they cannot afford to fight us. The admonition ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor’ thus becomes a universal imperative and service-to-others is synonymous with survival-of-self. For if in the near future all peoples and all nations do not begin increasingly to share in the good life, none may!”

If we are to build this needed understanding and trust among the nations of the world, the place to begin must be right here at home. In America, in Minnesota, in every community, in every family, church and school, we must fight prejudice and discrimination in all its varied forms.

It is to this grim task that the Governor’s Interracial Commission seeks to give guidance. It fulfills this mission by providing for our citizens the true facts that will overcome the ignorance which breeds bigotry and intolerance.

This report, then, is one more means of helping to create better human relations in our state through providing accurate information. Attention here is focused on the progress of the Negro worker in securing employment in Minnesota.

It is gratifying to note the advances that are being made in many industries and vocations by our Negro citizens. On

the other hand, however, there are also still entirely too many signs of prejudice, which bar the Negro from jobs or prevent him from being upgraded as he deserves. As a result of such injustice our state loses the contributions that could be made through the skills and intelligence of an important group of citizens.

Furthermore, democracy suffers tragic defeat and the fate of mankind becomes a little more insecure every time a member of our society finds the door of opportunity closed to him because of the color of his skin or the nature of his religious faith.

Our Negro worker asks only that he be judged for a job on the basis of his qualifications to perform that job. He asks for nothing more. He deserves that consideration as a fellow human being and, when we fail to give it to him, we can be rightly accused of failing to practice the principles of democracy.

I urge all citizens of Minnesota to take the time to study and discuss this valuable analysis of one of our pressing problems in human relations. From its pages we can gain an insight into the task that lies ahead for us if we are to do our full part in helping all people in our state share in the "good life" — an essential to our survival and the survival of mankind.

Letter of Transmittal

April 11, 1949

The Honorable Luther W. Youngdahl
Governor of Minnesota
Saint Paul, Minnesota

Dear Governor Youngdahl:

In the spring of 1945 the Governor's Interracial Commission submitted to Governor Edward Thye a report on the employment conditions of Negroes in Minnesota. It was later published as a booklet under the title, *The Negro Worker in Minnesota*. The supply of copies has long since been exhausted, and many requests have been made for a new edition.

Yet, during the past four years there have been considerable changes in the types of employment available to Negroes and in the attitudes of white employers and white employees. It seemed to the Commission, then, that current data should be collected and presented.

For that task there were secured the services of two specialists in this field: Mr. Whitney Young, the industrial secretary of the St. Paul Urban League, and Mr. William Seabron, the industrial secretary of the Minneapolis Urban League. They collected the data and prepared the material for the Commission. The changes during the past four years have been so significant that the Commission judged that this second edition should carry a new title, *The Negro Worker's Progress in Minnesota*.

The Commission now submits the report to you. In it, an earnest attempt has been made to present not merely facts, but facts in their proper proportion and perspective.

Respectfully yours,

Francis J. Gilligan
Chairman
The Governor's Interracial Commission

Introduction

I. *The Negro Comes to Minnesota*

As early as 1825 it is certain there were Negroes on parts of the land which is now designated as Minnesota. It is probable that in years prior to that date in the far north there were three or four trappers who were colored. The Negroes who were here in 1825 came as slaves of the Indian agent and of the army officers at Fort Snelling. Even Dred Scott was in the state for a short period. Sailing up the river, those Negro slaves saw a vast wilderness inhabited by 25,000 Sioux and Chippewa Indians, who held legal title to the land, and by a few hundred French and Swiss traders and settlers, some soldiers, and a few English speaking civilians who were agents for the fur trading companies. Those few slaves were quickly liberated and most of them chose to remain as free men. They were here before Minnesota was legally a territory.

Between 1850 and 1860 some free Negroes migrated into the territory, coming originally as workers on the steamboats which traveled up and down the rivers. The Minnesota regiments returning after the Civil War were accompanied by a few Negroes who had joined their ranks on Southern battlefields and were mustered out at Fort Snelling. Within five years after the war the Negro migration into the state was relatively heavy. It is recorded that in 1870 they were supporting their own newspaper. Ten years later there were approximately 2,000 within the state. Most of them were employed as waiters and porters, but some operated service businesses such as barber shops, two were governmental employees, and one was teaching in the public schools. But as the river traffic declined, so did the migration of Negroes. In 1900 there were only 5,000.

Whereas the first Negroes may have come unwillingly within several years after the Civil War, literally, hundreds migrated freely into Minnesota seeking not merely work — since work was available in the South — but “the betterment

of the condition of the Afro-Americans, the opening of new avenues of gaining a livelihood, and material assistance for the Afro-Americans in the South.”

They came to Minnesota thinking that the beliefs of the Minnesotans were such that they would enjoy greater political and economic freedom. There was a basis for that belief. The Governor of the State, Alexander Ramsey, was in Washington on the day Fort Sumter surrendered. On that day he offered to the War Department 1,000 men from Minnesota, “The first tender of troops from any quarter.” There was a basis for that belief in the pioneering spirit of the Minnesotan, and the Negroes thought that the men who could pioneer in the land development so courageously would also pioneer in the development of better economic and political patterns. Although they may not have read it, they caught the spirit of the legend on the great seal of territorial Minnesota.

II. *The White Immigrant Travels to the Northwest*

Between 1845 and 1880 while that thin line of Negro migrants was timidly flowing into Minnesota, a much more turbulent and spreading river of immigrants from Europe was pouring in. In the year 1845 there were less than 5,000 white settlers here. But the census for 1880 showed a population of 780,773. There was first a small tide in 1848 made up of land-hungry persons from the states on the Atlantic seaboard. But great tides followed, the Germans, the Irish, the Swedes, the Norwegians, the Danes, the Slavs, and lastly the Finns.

Seventy-one per cent of the population in 1880 was composed of Europeans of the first or second generation. Those immigrants came from a desire for political freedom. They came from a desire to be free from the economic barriers of Europe. They took possession of the state. The few French and Swiss settlers were absorbed, and the original holders of the land, the Indians, were eliminated either by purchase or by force. Today there are only about 12,000 of the Chippewa tribes living on reservation in the north and 500 of the Sioux to the south. Undoubtedly though, there are others who have mixed their blood with the Negroes and the white immigrants.

III. *The Current Population Statistics*

All immigration virtually ceased in 1920 and the white population now numbers 2,768,982. Yet it is interesting to note that by the census of 1940 there are in Hennepin and Ramsey counties alone over 106,000 persons who are foreign born. Of those, 28,000 came from Sweden; 15,000 from Norway; 11,000 from Germany; and 5,000 from Poland.

According to the census of 1940, there were 9,928 Negroes in Minnesota, and most of them were concentrated in the Twin Cities. There were 4,646 in Minneapolis, constituting about 0.9 per cent of the population, and 4,139 in St. Paul, constituting 1.4 per cent of the population.

During the preceding decade, the Negro population increased by only 482 persons. But a decadal federal census can never give a completely accurate statement of a situation. Populations shift from one year to another. Furthermore, in the matter of races, the census taker sometimes can err, classifying light-skinned Negroes as white persons. In such matters the testimony of trustworthy members of minority groups is valuable.

It is asserted by the leaders of the Negro group that between 1926 and 1940 many of the younger Negroes who had graduated from Minnesota high schools migrated from the state because of limited job opportunities. It is also conservatively estimated by them that in 1944 the Negro population of the state was about 12,000 persons. In Duluth the Negro population in 1940 was 314. At present it is estimated at 300 or 70-80 families.

In 1948 the estimated Negro population for the state had risen to 12,500. This increase was due mainly to population shifts occasioned by migrations for war work and unrest among returning veterans in southern states.

It was necessary that these population estimates be secured from the employment agencies, social agencies and Negro leaders working in the field as the U. S. Department of Commerce reports that no breakdown has been made according to race since the 1940 census.

IV. *The Governor's Inter-Racial Commission*

During war periods, emotions become tense and animosities which smoulder at other times frequently break into great conflagrations. At the end of World War I a wave of serious race riots swept the nation. In Chicago, Washington, East St. Louis, the riots lasted for days, hundreds of lives were lost and millions of dollars worth of property destroyed. It was immediately after this World War also that the Ku Klux Klan was revived and, stemming up from the south into many northern states, it spread its destructive poison of racial and religious hatreds into the minds of millions of Americans.

It has been the custom in the past that after such riots the governor of the state or the mayor of the city involved would appoint a commission to investigate the causes of the riots and make recommendations for the correction of injustices in order that such calamities might be avoided in the future. Certainly such courses of action have effected improvements, though they had about them the quality of a post-mortem procedure.

Fortunately Minnesota has been relatively free from the grosser disturbances that spring from apathy to existing social wrongs.

Believing that preventive measures are always preferable to remedial ones, Governor Edward J. Thye in December of 1943 appointed a Governor's Inter-Racial Commission to study the situation in Minnesota. Since the election of Governor Luther W. Youngdahl in 1946, the work of the Commission has continued and expanded. The addition of an informational representative (a paid staff worker) to interpret the work of the Commission and present the problems of minorities to groups throughout the state has made possible a sustained action program. Eight new booklets and pamphlets have been prepared and there is considerable demand for them both in and out of the state. These additional studies reveal that minority groups in Minnesota are faced with many complex problems. The Commission, however, proposes to look into the status of the Negro worker in the post-war era to deter-

mine the extent to which he has made and maintained economic gains that will definitely lessen his total problem within the state.

V. *The Nature of the Problem*

In some respects the patterns of inter-racial relations which the Negro encounters in Minnesota is decidedly better than the patterns prevailing in many other places. In Minnesota he can vote without interference. He can ride public conveyances without hindrance. He can walk the streets without being molested. He can send his children to the public schools.

a—*Civil Rights*

Certainly however, in the purchase of food, refreshments, lodging and sometimes hospital service he encounters discriminations. The degree varies from block to block and the discriminations themselves are often arbitrary. But they do persist. To a white citizen discussing the matter academically, these discriminatory practices may not seem significant; to a Negro encountering them day after day, they are intolerable.

Objectively, they are violations of the civil rights statute of the state which prohibits public discriminatory practices. The remedy rests in part upon greater vigilance among law enforcement officials and in part upon some educational work among white consumers. Some success has recently been achieved in those fields by the work of private agencies.

b—*Housing*

Efforts to determine the housing situation for Negroes in Minnesota were recently undertaken by the Commission and published in the pamphlet, "The Negro in His Home in Minnesota." This study reveals that while the housing problem for Negroes is acute, it has not yet approached the deplorable situation found in other metropolitan areas. Restrictive covenants and "gentlemen's agreements" among loan companies and property owners exist and are resulting in residential segregation, and if allowed to continue, will result in dangerous overcrowding and subsequent community problems. In-

creased population shifts among Negroes must be anticipated, and necessary measures should be taken to prevent the occurrence of these conditions.

A few veterans have found housing in municipal constructed quonset and pre-fabricated housing projects, but this has not alleviated the situation. A recent Negro sponsored housing development and an inter-racial cooperation project in St. Paul have expanded the opportunities there somewhat. A supreme court decision in 1948 outlawing the legal enforcement of restrictive covenants has not as yet had a direct effect on the real estate market, but it should eventually be a factor in providing more living space for Negroes.

c—Employment

Whereas the Commission must give serious study to the problems of civil rights and housing, the more immediate practical problem at the present time seems to be that of job discrimination. The Negro's ability to buy a new house and other things depends largely upon his possession of a job in keeping with his skills and ability.

Loss of jobs is more serious for the Negro in Minnesota. Some of the white group can return to farms which their families operate, and many white persons operate businesses which provide employment. In Minnesota the Negroes are urban dwellers and employees. There are only 40 or 50 in the professions and about 100 who operate small businesses such as dry cleaning, barber shops, beauty shops and other personal services.

The regret has been expressed that the Negroes have not settled on the good farm land of Minnesota. Speculatively, that is true. The racial groups that have remained on the good farming soil are the groups that have grown in numbers and in economic resources. Practically though, the Negroes never acquired enough money to buy good land, and even if they attempted to buy farm homes, they would have encountered racial antagonisms.

Job discrimination can be a lethal type of restriction for the members of any minority group in the United States.

There are communities in the United States where inert custom or studied policy limited Negroes to domestic service and porter jobs. In those places, they can vision no dream of advancement. Often even those service jobs do not give full employment and in times of depressions the white group absorbs those.

As a consequence, the educated Negro youths who would be the future leaders either migrate from the community or, if they remain, become cynical, discouraged and ofttimes receptive to revolutionary philosophies. Many of the older members inevitably lose initiative and become charges upon public agencies.

It seemed important then to the members of the Commission that an effort be made to secure accurate and factual answers to four questions:

1. What is the Negro's opportunity for securing employment in Minnesota?
2. Who prevent Negroes from working in Minnesota and why?
3. How valid are the reasons given for not employing Negro workers?
4. Can equality of opportunity be realized in Minnesota?

VI. Procedure of the Commission

In arriving at the answers to these questions in the first survey the Commission mailed concise and specifically prepared questionnaires to 2,231 employers and 452 labor unions. Through these questionnaires an effort was made to ascertain the places where Negroes were employed, the type of work they did, the employers' opinions of Negro workers, and the attitudes of labor unions in regards to Negro members.

Even though the returns were not numerically complete (109 unions and 601 employers) they were sufficiently substantial to give insight into the mind and practices of industrial Minnesota regarding the employment of Negroes. They

constitute the bases for inferences as valid as most made in the field of human contacts.

Many employers also wrote extended letters explaining more fully their attitudes, practices and opinions.

In some sections of this study, references are made to specific employers and specific labor unions. That is done because there is a decided disadvantage in remaining exclusively in the field of abstractions and statistical summaries.

Yet when concrete references are made, the source for such information is not one of the returned questionnaires. The Commission preferred to keep the names of the respondents anonymous. The source is some public fact which usually has been the subject of conversation within the Negro community for months and years. To those facts the Urban Leagues stand as witnesses. For example, the employment practices of the Twin Cities Ordnance plant as operated by the Federal Cart-ridge Corporation are known and discussed by many.

The St. Paul and Minneapolis Urban Leagues contributed to the initial report much of the knowledge they have in this area. Four years have elapsed since this original report was published. During this period the Negro worker has sought employment in an inflated peace time economy where he has competed with other workers for jobs. There is practically no factual material available to indicate how successful have been his efforts. It was with this in mind that the Commission undertook this revision hoping through actual research to determine the present status of the Negro worker.

The services of the Industrial Secretaries of the Twin City Urban Leagues were engaged for this revised edition. Their first hand, day to day contact with these problems in the post-war era makes them the logical source of information on the status of Negro workers in Minnesota at this time. The following chapters, which deal with changes in the employment patterns in Minnesota for Negro workers, are the result of their close observance of the problem.

CHAPTER I

“What Is the Negro’s Opportunity for Securing Employment in Minnesota?”

I. PRE-WAR YEARS

Between 1930 and 1940 there were many white persons unemployed in the state. But in terms of proportions and percentages, there was no parity with the colored unemployed. In St. Paul, for example, from a study of relief rolls made by the Community Chest in 1936 it was found that 62 per cent of the Negro population was on relief or had a dependent status, whereas only 23 per cent of the white population was in that category. In 1938 in the same city, exclusive of single persons and those receiving old age pensions, 69 per cent of the Negro families were on direct relief or on W.P.A.

The explanation for the phenomenal unemployment during that great depression is threefold: First, that a considerable number of Negroes were already unemployed prior to the stock market crash. Second, that those few that had succeeded in securing employment in industry became the victims of the last hired—first fired policy. Third, the fact that the large majority of those who worked were engaged in personal service occupations which were the first to contract in the face of a threatened depression.

For example, in the study of St. Paul relief rolls in 1936, it was found that 40 per cent of the Negroes had been in domestic or personal services and 19 per cent in unskilled work. In Minneapolis in 1930, according to Abram L. Harris, former Urban League Secretary, in his study entitled “The Negro in Minneapolis,” two-thirds of the colored workers were employed in three hotels as waiters, maids or housemen. He also found that 75 per cent of all Negroes in that city were in domestic work.

When the depression came, white workers occupied some of those domestic jobs. For example, in several hotels white girls were substituted for Negro men as waiters—partly because of a change in dining customs and partly because it was assumed the customers would prefer white girls.

A. Where Negroes Did Not Work

The gravity of the Negro unemployment situation prior to the war is probably best depicted by recording specifically some of the places where custom or prejudice kept them from working at any job above the status of a janitor. The specific mentioning of these classifications, however, is not done in the spirit of an indictment.

The purpose of these subsequent paragraphs is to indicate the plain fact that in some places Negroes were not upgraded and sometimes did not even work. We are aware that in a few instances, management was not entirely to blame but rather assumed there would be opposition from other workers or consumers. It is even possible that in some instances Negroes never approached the management because they mistook an existing custom for a deliberate managerial policy. Also it is undoubtedly true that in one case or another a Negro may have been employed for a few months and the Commission was not informed of that fact. But despite those exceptions the Commission is satisfied that these statements are substantially accurate.

The Public Utilities

Out of 2,500 employees only 25 Negroes were employed. They were used mainly as porters, matrons, and elevator operators. One man was, however, employed as a fireman.

Mail Order Houses

Approximately 15 Negroes were employed as either matrons or porters in the Twin Cities combined. Each city has at least one nationally known Mail Order House.

Producers of Beverages

Out of 1,500 persons employed, only one Negro who was a locker room attendant was employed in this important industry.

The Department Stores

Despite the fact that here was an avenue of employment for thousands of people, few stores utilized Negro workers. Those that did, hired them as porters or maids. In some cases Negroes were used as stock clerks or wrappers. Duluth represented an exception to this in that they gave several Negro girls opportunities in sales work.

Manufacturing

This area provided little or no employment for Negro workers above the service level. All efforts to increase their utilization were of no avail.

Local Transportation Industries

The corporation which operates the streetcars and buses in the Twin Cities employed, in 1938, three Negroes in its shops and upgraded them. But until the war came, Negroes did not act as operators of buses or streetcars.

Transfer and Trucking

Only two companies made even a gesture of employing Negroes in this field.

The Printing Industry

With the exception of one company hiring a Negro this industry was completely closed to Negro workers.

Large Offices (Clerical)

Negro girls were given only limited opportunity for clerical employment in large offices. Some churches and social agencies, however, did have a more liberal policy.

The Milling Industry

Minneapolis, recognized as one of the milling centers of the world, employing many thousands of workers, used only

a handful of Negroes as janitors and unskilled laborers prior to the war.

B. Where the Negro Did Work Before the War

It would appear from the above material that Negroes were completely denied the right to work. However, statistics show that about 30 per cent were employed. Where did they work? Here and there they found jobs as attendants in clubs, service workers in hotels or domestics in private families and as janitors. There were some large industries that in terms of numbers hired many Negroes, though even here, there appeared to be a definite ceiling and the perpetuation of the idea of "a Negro type job." However, they are to be commended for at least recognizing that Negroes, like other people, need a job in order to provide the necessities of life for themselves and their families.

The Railroads

At least 500 Negroes were employed as porters, dining car waiters, red caps, car cleaners and a few other miscellaneous jobs. Of private businesses this industry stood out, toward keeping Negroes alive during the depression.

The Packing Plants

For many years before the war, some of the packing plants gave employment to Negroes. It was estimated by the writer of a survey in 1934, that 169 Negroes were employed in the plants about South St. Paul.

Industries

The Ford Plant and Minneapolis Moline hired together around 20 Negroes prior to the war and upgraded them to skilled jobs. In Duluth American Steel and Wire Company employed some Negro workers.

United States Postal Department

Besides the railroads and the packing plants, no private industry gave employment to any considerable number of Negroes. Ranking next to those industries was the postal de-

partment of the United States Government. In the St. Paul office, there were 41 Negroes employed before the war. Of that number 32 were either window or postal clerks; eight were carriers, and one was a supervisor. In Minneapolis there were 30 employed in various classifications, ranging from freight handling to the office of branch superintendent. In the Duluth post office there was one Negro postal clerk and one Negro custodian, although years ago there were 11 employed.

Other United States Agencies

In some other Federal departments, there were a few Negroes employed. In St. Paul, the Department of Internal Revenue had three or four Negroes; in the Office of Price Administration, there were two Negro clerks; and the United States Employment Service had one Negro interviewer in the local office and one Negro addressograph operator in the state office. In Minneapolis, the United States Employment Service had one interviewer and one clerk-typist and the Federal building had several Negro charwomen. The Department of Agriculture had several Negro veterinarians and several lay inspectors.

The State Government

For over 40 years in the Governor's Office or Executive Department there has been employed one Negro executive aid and an assistant.

In the Minnesota State Department of Conservation, there was one Negro game warden. The Secretary of State's office had one Negro typist supervising the opening of first-class mail, and one typist and five clerical workers by appointment. The State Department of Highways had one Negro janitor foreman, 11 Negro janitors and one custodial helper. The Department of Administration (Division of Public Property) had one Negro steam fireman (under Civil Service), one Negro mechanic, seven janitors and four janitresses. The State Unemployment Compensation had one Negro employee. In the State Civil Service Commissioner's office there was one Negro clerk-typist; in the Taxation Department, there was one Negro clerk, and in the Adjutant General's office there was one Negro holding the rank of Major in the state home guard.

The County Governments

In Ramsey county there was one colored clerk in the County Auditor's office, one clerk in the County Treasurer's office, one Negro matron and one assistant Negro jailer in the County Sheriff's office; in the County Welfare Board, one Negro interviewer, and one colored clerk-typist; in the Ramsey County Probation Office, one Negro receptionist, one file clerk in the County Division of Child Welfare.

Hennepin County had one Negro Deputy Sheriff in the County Sheriff's office and two Negro stenographer-typists in the County Welfare Board, and in the Recorder of Deeds' office there were two Negro clerk-typists.

The Municipal Governments

Minneapolis had in its Law Enforcement Department four Negro officers, three serving as policemen and one as a detective. Forty years ago there were approximately 12 Negro firemen, but the number has gradually dwindled to none. The Minneapolis Relief Department had one case worker and did have one Negro who was a director.

St. Paul had two Negro employees in the city architect's office, one of these being a chief designer of the city and the other a senior architectural draftsman. There were two policemen in the Law Enforcement Department and five Negro firemen. The Department of Public Works had one Negro engineer; in the City Hall there were several colored custodians; in the public schools, several school janitors and one public school teacher. This woman, incidentally, was for years the only Negro teaching in any public school in Minnesota. The Public Library had one Negro assistant librarian, one library clerk, one elevator operator, and two janitresses.

In Duluth there was one Negro working as custodian in the court house, another as custodian in a public school, and a third as a truck driver for the city.

* * * *

Some of these jobs in the state, county and municipal governments were excellent. They provided a good income to the

worker. To the Negro youth in Minnesota, they constituted an objective basis for hoping that by earnest study and industry they could be appointed to jobs above the status of mere service and janitorial occupations to which so many of the race had been restricted. Yet the number of jobs above custodial work was not large and the sum total of all governmental jobs was not such that it affected the grave unemployment problem during peace times. The complete total did not surpass the number of Negroes employed in two of the smaller defense plants.

In summary then, with the exception of the railroads, the packing plants, and the Ford plant, there were very few jobs in private industry open to Minnesota Negroes before this world war. With few exceptions these jobs are still held by Negro workers. Additional gains in these fields will be cited in another section.

II. WAR YEARS

With the advent of war and the subsequent increase in defense manufacturing, the Negro worker in Minnesota became for the first time an industrial worker and in addition the number on relief decreased to an almost negligible figure. A number of reasons explained this change. Perhaps the most important of these are:

(1) A definite shortage of manpower especially in the more skilled jobs.

(2) Executive Order 8802 setting up a Fair Employment Practice Commission which prohibited any employer holding a war contract to deny employment to persons based on race, creed or color.

(3) Continued activity by the Twin City Urban Leagues who were constantly working with labor and management to integrate Negro workers.

(4) Finally, but perhaps equally important was the increased campaign to promote patriotism which tended to develop a sense of unity among American citizens, surmounting even racial prejudice.

While it was definitely true that the majority of Negroes were employed in the newly organized plants such as Twin Cities Ordnance and International Harvester Company, many of the pre-war industries, recognizing the success of these initial experiences, hired Negro workers in production roles for the first time.

It is difficult for persons who have never known what it means to be denied decent jobs, to fully appreciate the psychological effect this change had upon Negro workers. For the first time Negro citizens could fully utilize their skills and most important they could provide their families with some of the necessities of life. With much enthusiasm they went to their work confident that the pattern had been changed, and they could look to the future with hope.

While it is impossible to name all the industries that employed Negro workers during this period, we would like to name a few, particularly those employing over ten.

THE TWIN CITIES ORDNANCE PLANT operated by Federal Cartridge Corporation, hired the largest number, having at one time over 1,000 out of a total of 20,000 employees. Negroes were employed at practically every level including personnel, clerical, inspectors, engineers, machinists, job training instructors, nurses, etc. In every case Negroes and whites worked side by side, and in many cases Negroes had the responsibility of supervising white workers.

THE NORTHWEST AIRLINES, INCORPORATED did not employ Negroes before the war. Over 26 Negroes were employed during the war, working at a variety of jobs and were upgraded when they manifested the proper qualifications.

THE MUNSINGWEAR, INC., OF MINNEAPOLIS, manufacturers of clothing, had no experience with Negro labor until the war. When the company undertook war contracts, it accepted and conformed fully to the President's executive order 8802. The services of the Minneapolis Urban League, along with the aid of the C.I.O., were solicited in the selection of Negro workers. Negroes were introduced into departments

and integrated without any substantial reverberation from the white employees. It was the company's policy to upgrade qualified persons within limits of their skills and ability. Qualified Negroes held jobs as follows: Office file clerks, messengers, knitters, order fillers, inspectors, sewing machine operators, shipping department attendants. At one time over 55 Negroes were employed.

INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER COMPANY at first employed only a few Negro janitors. The events of war necessitated an expanded program, more Negroes were employed and upgraded in occupations where they had not been employed previously. They were employed in such jobs as inspectors, operators, adjusters, machinist set-up men, etc. This industry made a cooperative effort to give full employment to Negro citizens, hiring over 75.

GRIGGS, COOPER AND COMPANY, manufacturers and wholesale grocers, holding a war contract, employed Negroes on a thoroughly integrated basis. The company was a strong advocate of fair play in its employment policies. Over 65 Negro women were employed.

RAYMOND LABORATORIES, INC., prior to the war manufactured cosmetics and employed only one or two Negroes as janitors. During the war they employed Negroes in war production activities, and indicated they would use Negroes after the war. Over 55 Negroes were employed at one time.

BROWN AND BIGELOW, INC., printers and manufacturers of advertising specialties and an employer of many hundreds of persons in peace time, used Negroes only as janitors before the war. With the development of defense projects, it employed Negroes in some assembling and processing occupations, building maintenance and cafeteria work. At one time over 18 Negroes were employed in this work.

D. W. ONAN AND SONS, manufacturers of electric generating equipment, employed no Negroes before the war. During the war, however, Negroes were engaged in production activities. Over 32 were employed.

THE SEEGER REFRIGERATOR COMPANY prior to the war manufactured boxes for electric refrigerators and did not employ Negroes. Negroes were engaged in production work with the advent of war. At least 65 Negroes were employed.

SUPERIOR METAL PRODUCTS COMPANY prior to the war manufactured milk containers and did not employ Negroes. They subsequently integrated over 10 Negro workers.

NORTHWESTERN AERONAUTICAL CORPORATION was not in existence before the war. Over 20 Negroes were employed, most of them in janitorial work, but from the beginning one Negro had been employed as an accountant.

THE A. O. SMITH CORPORATION, a new concern manufacturing airplane parts, employed over 20 Negroes in production, some holding responsible positions.

THE STRUTWEAR KNITTING COMPANY, manufacturers of clothing, did not employ Negroes before the war. They did, however, employ a number during the war hiring over 16.

THE MINNEAPOLIS HONEYWELL REGULATOR CO. used Negroes prior to the war for janitorial work and similar tasks. Eventually they used both Negro men and women in their production departments, at one time employing over 20.

At Duluth the United States Steel and Wire Company employed over 28 Negroes. The Butler Brothers Ship Building Company employed six as laborers and one as a master mechanic. The C.I.O. maritime union employed one Negro girl as a stenographer. In so far as it could be ascertained most of the other Negroes in Duluth with ten or so exceptions were employed as domestics or janitors.

There are other instances of plants hiring Negroes for the first time during the war and giving them an opportunity to work in jobs comparable with their skills. In the case of some

smaller places Negro girls were given the chance to work as clerical persons. Some industries like the meat packing plants increased the number of Negro workers.

It must be borne in mind, however, that these gains did not come about overnight. In the majority of cases they were the results of numerous conferences involving the Urban Leagues, labor unions and other interested persons.

III. POST-WAR YEARS

This section intends to answer the question, "What happened to the Negro worker after the war?" Back in 1945 the Commission wrote: "What will happen when peace comes again? What will happen when the Twin Cities Ordnance Plant in New Brighton closes and places about 1,000 Negroes on the labor market? What will happen when over 700 Minnesota Negroes in the armed forces return to civil life? What will happen when the Northwest Airlines, the International Harvester and other plants must discontinue their war work and, in reducing employees, release many Negroes?"

"Prophecy regarding future events is an extremely hazardous activity for uninspired persons. No mortal man can foretell how much employment will be given to Negroes in the post-war world. Some Negroes will retain the new jobs they acquired during the war. But the Commission seriously fears that the amount of unemployment among Negroes will be tremendously high in terms of percentages unless some definite change can be effected in peace time industries. It is to peace time industries that the Negro worker must go."

Subsequent high employment levels for Negro workers, however, have proven the Commission's original fears of mass unemployment to be unfounded.

It does not necessarily follow that the retention of Negro workers indicates a definite change in the employment policies of peace time employers. One must consider several

other factors which contributed to this continued high level of employment for these workers, such as:

(a) Consumer demands required maximum production, which meant that industries would need all the workers they could get.

(b) There was now present among the Negro labor market many workers who had acquired valuable skills.

(c) The war experiences with Negro workers had proved false many of the original fears and myths regarding employee opposition and job performance.

(d) An increased spirit of acceptance for these new workers by the general public.

The real test as to whether or not Minnesota's industries have accepted the Negro worker as an integral part of the labor market will only come when the present high levels of employment return to normal with its resultant competition for jobs. The satisfactory experiences which many employers had with the Negro worker during this period will do much to enhance his opportunity in this competitive period. The Commission has secured its material directly from those persons who daily work in this area of Negro employment. Their contacts with all types of employers, labor unions and practically the whole Negro labor market should give a definite validity to this information.

In describing the post-war picture we shall again make use of categories to show in every instance what the situation actually is for the Negro worker. Specific examples of some industries whose employment practices offer definite opportunities for Negro workers will be cited.

A. Where Gains Have Been Retained and New Progress Made

Public Utilities

Gains have been noted in this area of employment, especially within the transportation and communication industries. The Twin City Transit Company has successfully employed

12 Negroes as motormen and conductors, positions which no Negroes held prior to the war. There are no bus drivers as yet although one operator has recently applied for transfer to this service. The company has established a firm policy and it is being implemented by the consideration and employment of all applicants on the basis of need and ability. Negro mechanics are also employed.

The Northwestern Bell Telephone Company with a total of 7,943 in the state gives employment to 55 Negro workers. In the twin cities since the war they have placed four Negro girls as switchboard operators and three girls also work as clerks in the St. Paul office.

The Department Stores

In Minneapolis according to a 1947 survey over 15,000 people were employed in downtown retail stores. In St. Paul there are over 77 large retail stores employing thousands, but up until January, 1948, Negro workers when used, served only as porters, matrons, elevator operators and occasional stock clerks. However, since that date eight large department stores in the Twin Cities have hired a total of 14 Negro salespeople. The first to break this pattern was Schuneman's. Others to follow were The Golden Rule and Field-Schlick in St. Paul. In Minneapolis the stores are Powers, Daytons, Donaldsons, F. W. Woolworths and the Baker Company. In Duluth, Freemans' Department Store employs one Negro salesgirl. Gradually, it is felt that other stores will change their policies and give qualified Negro workers an opportunity for employment.

Manufacturing

The Commission would like to mention a few of the Twin City plants who from every source of information are making rapid strides toward the use of workers based on merit alone:

THE SEEGER REFRIGERATOR COMPANY, manufacturers of electric refrigerators and employing over 2,000 persons utilize Negro workers in every department in the plant. There are over 100 Negroes presently employed.

TONI COMPANY, manufacturers of the Toni Cold Wave and other cosmetics, employ over ten Negro workers in a variety of jobs including maintenance, assembly, inspectors and supervisors.

RAYMOND LABORATORIES, INC., manufacturers of hair cosmetics, have a total of 650 employees. They employ over 30 Negroes who work throughout the plant. One University graduate was recently upgraded to a Chemist and a Negro girl is a laboratory technician.

GRIGGS COOPER & COMPANY, manufacturers of wholesale groceries and candies, employ approximately 450 people. Over 30 Negro women are being used in production work.

U. S. BEDDING, manufacturers of springs and upholstering, have a total of 225 workers in their factory, 20 of whom are Negroes. The Negro workers are used in all departments.

AMERICAN HOIST & DERRICK, manufacturers of machinery, have a total of 1,427 employees. They have over 33 Negroes employed as janitors, shippers, helpers, and laborers. Efforts are being made to include Negro workers in other departments.

FORD MOTOR COMPANY, who assemble cars and trucks, employ 15 Negroes in a variety of jobs ranging from maintenance to instructors.

MINNEAPOLIS HONEYWELL, manufacturers of heat control equipment, employs 39 Negro workers in eight of a possible thirteen departments in the plant. They are used in assembly work, as machine operators, plastic molders, punch press operators, etc. Two operate automatic screw machines which represent the highest skilled work in production.

STRUTWEAR, INC., women's hosiery and underwear manufacturers, has 15 Negro workers. Positions held include a re-dye clerk, pre-boarders, seamers, and an inspector in the underwear department.

GENERAL MILLS (MECHANICAL DIVISION), producers of electrical appliances, irons, steam attachments and toasters, also operate an industrial machine shop. They hire 15 to 20 Negro workers on a variety of jobs, among which are milling machine operator, stock handlers, polishers and buffers, etc.

ELECTRIC MACHINE MANUFACTURING CO., manufacturers of electric motors and generators, have a total of eight Negro employees. A welder, millwright, and oiler represent some of the positions held by these workers.

MINNEAPOLIS-MOLINE, producers of farm machinery equipment, have used Negro workers for many years. Some 50 to 60 workers are now employed in their foundry, stock and electrical departments.

D. W. ONAN COMPANY, manufacturers of engine driven portable electric generating plants, have also used Negro workers for some years. During the war they employed some 48 of these workers and in November, 1946, there were still 45 employed. Their occupations include, supervisor in paint and parts cleaning department, spray painters, machine operators, precision surface grinders, and a coil taper in the generator department.

From the standpoint of different job opportunities offered Negroes, and of almost complete integration of them at all levels, the garment industry is perhaps the most outstanding in Minnesota. In addition to employing Negroes as maintenance workers, power and special machine operators in production, they are also used as bookkeepers, typists, and receptionists. Butwin Sportswear, Simon-Mogilner and B. W. Harris are the notable examples in St. Paul. In Minneapolis they are Ladies Leader Garment Company, Supack and Sons, Liman Manufacturing Company and Northbilt Company.

Printing Industry

Since the war this industry has given another Negro an opportunity as a skilled printing ink specialist and The Aug-

burg Publishing Company of Minneapolis has apprenticed a book binder.

Large Offices

In St. Paul, approximately 6 Negro clerical workers and one accountant are employed by Group Health Insurance Co., and the American Farmers Mutual Co. employs four clerical workers. Midland Co-op in Minneapolis employs Negro girls in clerical capacities. Two trained workers are employed by Long and Thorshov, Inc. and R. D. Thomas & Associates respectively. One, an engineer, is a graduate of the University of Minnesota and the other holds the position of draftsman.

Federal Agencies

The postal department has provided the only new gains in employment opportunities for Negro workers in the federal government service. There are, at present, four additional supervisors and approximately 30 new clerks and carriers.

The State Government

The State Government, influenced by the present Governor who has publicly encouraged fair employment practices, continues to make rapid progress in the utilization of qualified Negro workers.

At present on the state payroll is the Inter-racial Commission's informational representative, a newly created position whose chief responsibility is interpreting the problem of minorities throughout the state. The State Department of Highways has added four clerical workers. There is one Negro typist in the State Department of Education, one in the State Library and two in the State Welfare Department. The State Employment Offices have one interviewer, two order takers, and two clerical persons. In addition to hiring two Negro instructors, the University of Minnesota has given as many as 10 Negro girls opportunities for clerical work.

The County Governments

In Ramsey County there is one Negro member of the County Welfare Board and four social workers and one file

clerk in the County Division of Child Welfare. There is one Negro nurse at Ancker Hospital.

In Hennepin County there is one typist in the Treasurer's Office, one draftsman in the Auditor's Office, one typist in the Old Age Assistance Office, two case workers and one supervisor in the Welfare Office. The University of Minnesota Hospital has a doctor in X-Ray therapy, a graduate nurse who is assistant head in the surgery ward, a physio-therapist and several clerical workers.

The Municipal Government

In St. Paul there are four additional Negro firemen, bringing the total to nine. In the City Auditorium there is one accountant; in the public schools there are four additional full-time teachers and several substitutes. There is one Negro playground director and in the Public Library there are two professional workers, two pages, one clerk and several janitors.

In Minneapolis there is one additional case worker in the relief department and two additional patrolmen in the Police Department. There is one teacher in the public school system and three persons employed above the level of custodial workers in the City Library. General Hospital has two Negro girls in general nursing and one student technician.

In Duluth there is a Negro girl employed as clerk in the water and light department and another is a teacher in the adult education department of the Board of Education.

Private Agencies

In St. Paul a number of private agencies have included qualified Negroes among their staff. Family Services have one Negro supervisor, three clerical workers and two case workers; Wilder Charities has a Negro statistician; the Y.W.C.A. has an assistant Physical Education Director; the Red Cross has one nurse, one stenographer and one typist. Westside General Hospital has one medical technician and Miller Hospital has one nurse. St. Joseph's Hospital also has one Negro nurse. The Community Chest has one Negro clerical worker, and Capital Community Center has a Negro cleri-

cal worker. In Minneapolis the Y.W.C.A. Director of Teen-Age Activities is one of few Negro women employed in this field. They also have an office secretary. The Family and Children's Service employs one social worker. St. Barnabas Hospital has two Negro nurses, Northwestern Hospital employs a medical technician and some others give girls training as student technicians. The Sister Kenny Institute also employs several Negro technicians and packers.

B. Where No Gains Have Been Made

Public Utilities

The corporations dispensing gas and light, with total employees of approximately 1,400, give jobs to eight Negroes. In St. Paul a Negro is apprenticed in the gas meter division on small repairs. There is a fireman employed in each of the gas making divisions in the Twin Cities. These companies have, however, lagged far behind the new trends developing in this field. While these new patterns unquestionably represent progress, the Negro yet finds it difficult to obtain equal consideration in all occupations.

Mail Order Houses

In both cities Negro workers have been used only as maids and porters regardless of qualification or the constant demand for workers. The store located in St. Paul has employed one Negro presser and is now using Negro waitresses in its cafeteria. These positions, however, follow closely the traditional pattern of accepted Negro employment.

Producers of Beverages

Much beer is produced in St. Paul and Minneapolis for consumers within and without the state. No Negroes at present work on the production of this beverage, although several thousand persons are employed by these breweries. The soft drink industry would also fall in this area and despite the fact that several nationally known companies produce and distribute their products in the Twin Cities, no Negroes are hired above the level of janitorial work.

Manufacturing

This category provides, perhaps, the largest avenue for employment in Minnesota. All types of inducements are presented by employers to secure workers, and yet in the large majority of cases the Negro worker is completely overlooked. In St. Paul at present, only 105 out of a total of 800 manufacturing firms have ever hired Negroes in any capacity. Of these, only about ten hire Negro workers in keeping with their abilities or upgrade them in keeping with normal upgrading procedures.

In Minneapolis of 1,770 plants listed in the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association bulletin as "Minneapolis Industries" only 117 or six per cent are known to employ Negroes in any capacity.

Transfer and Trucking

Minnesota is one of the very few states that fails to utilize the services of Negroes as drivers and maintenance workers. The test of the Negro's efficiency in this area was best demonstrated in World War II where his reliability and efficiency have been praised by all. One of the few exceptions to this practice in Minnesota is The Wolk Trucking Company who employ three Negro drivers. There are at present approximately nine Negroes who own and operate small businesses in this field.

Milling Industry

Everyone thinks of Minneapolis as the milling capital of the world; and though it has lost some of its mighty empire, it still produces many of the important nationally advertised flours, cereals, and feeds. Through the years Negroes have not been employed above the level of porters, janitors and grain shovelers, if used at all. One large concern has a Negro messenger and another, a draftsman in its research department, both of whom held these positions prior to the war.

Located in the same city are several corporations which manufacture popular breakfast cereals. One or two of them

at various times carried on their advertisements pictures of Negroes. They employ no Negroes.

Printing Industry

In the Twin Cities, there are large printing corporations which manufacture and distribute calendars and novelties across the nation. Thousands of people find employment at good paying jobs in these concerns. In St. Paul of 98 firms operating in this field there is to be found but two Negroes employed above the menial levels of work. In Minneapolis, with an even larger number of plants, a comparable situation exists.

Large Offices

At no time in history has the demand for skilled office workers been so acute. Yet despite the fact that many Negro girls have been trained for office work they must rely for the most part on social agencies and church organizations for employment. Located in St. Paul are the home offices of many large insurance firms, however, only three have hired Negroes. Out of 30 banks no Negroes are hired in clerical capacities. No opportunities in St. Paul are offered accountants or draftsmen. In Minneapolis the situation is similar with no Negroes employed in banks or insurance companies although some have applied. In both cities many qualified Negroes have applied for office work.

Railroads

This industry while it does employ hundreds of Negro workers uses them only as porters, waiters, red caps, and laborers. Some of these jobs pay good salaries, but it is still unfortunate that it is considered unthinkable for a Negro to aspire to be an engineer, fireman, brakeman or a conductor. The Railroad Brotherhoods must accept the responsibility for this condition, along with management.

Food Processing

Dating back to the early migration of Negroes to Minnesota the packing houses have offered employment to hundreds of Negroes, though investigation reveals they are usu-

ally placed in the less undesirable jobs and little opportunity given for upgrading. Armour & Company has the largest number with Swift's and Cudahy's next. In other food processing industries such as the producing of candies, coffee, potato chips, etc., Negroes are denied any opportunities for employment other than service. Griggs Cooper & Co., manufacturers and wholesale grocers who employ a number of Negro women, are an exception to this policy.

Government

While many Negroes have secured employment in government agencies, occasionally situations arise where well qualified Negroes are denied employment and upgrading to the more responsible, higher level positions. At least one department in the state refused to employ qualified Negro applicants for an existing vacancy because of "employee resistance." Recently, much concern has been voiced over the inability of Negroes to be upgraded to superintendent positions in the postal service. Many Negro men are eligible for these promotions based on seniority and knowledge of the job.

CHAPTER II

Who Prevents Negroes from Working in Minnesota and Why?

The material in the preceding section indicated that the Negro finds it more difficult than the white man either to secure work or to be upgraded. The cause clearly is race discrimination, either actively deliberate or calcified in the form of inert custom.

Yet, race prejudice does not exist by itself as does a stone wall. It exists as a quality in human individuals. It is proper, then, to say that prejudiced individuals keep the Negro from working. They control the door to employment. In terms of categories, they are the employer, the employee, the staff members of vocation schools, governmental officials, labor unions, employment agencies and those persons responsible for apprenticeship programs.

I. THE EMPLOYER

Normally if a white worker wishes to work, he goes to the employer, his manager or personnel director and files an application. The white worker knows that if he has the proper physical and mental qualifications, he enjoys a fair chance of getting a job. If there is a need for workers, if his application is satisfactory, the door is opened and he is taken to a department, presented to the foreman, and shown where he can hang his coat.

If a Negro seeks a job, the employer sees—not an individual applicant whose qualifications must be ascertained—but the American Race Problem. Immediately, he goes through a mental process quite different from that when the applicant is white. Figuratively, he puts on a different robe, a different mask, and plays an entirely different role. He views this applicant in the light of the American race dilemma and usually he refuses employment.

The Negro applicant is placed in a disheartening position. He may be stronger than Samson, he may have a college education, he may have a higher I.Q. than many of the whites, he may have special dexterity for the job, yet he is seldom considered. His only request is that he be judged on his personal qualities. Yet, the employer sees the race problem and often politely refuses employment.

This refusal is tragic for the Negro. For the employer holds a position of social responsibility. He opens or closes the gate to food, clothing and shelter, for it is only through the wage check that the average urban dweller can obtain any of these goods. The employer may think of himself merely as a private individual and may intend to run his own business without assuming any community responsibilities. But regardless of his thinking, he assumes a position of social responsibility by the very act of becoming an employer. He becomes a steward for distributing the nation's wealth. If employers as a class judge that they cannot hire Negroes, then Negroes are denied access to the nation's wealth.

During the war years, a fair number of employers were so pressed by the need for manpower that they disregarded the race problem and hired the applicant. In pre-war years some employers were always ready to give employment in janitorial service. A smaller number entertaining strong convictions about the evils of prejudice showed great courage, hired Negroes and upgraded them regardless of the attitudes of others. Most employers, however, judged that they could not hire them.

The individual Negro who is refused employment can do little by himself. However, there are organizations in each of the Twin Cities supported by the Community Chests to which the Negro can go, namely, the Urban Leagues. Yet the Urban League often has the same experience as the individual Negro when the agency solicits a job.

In Minneapolis, one branch of a large concern refuses employment to Negroes in production work while another branch of the same company uses Negro workers in produc-

tion with excellent results. Efforts by the Minneapolis Urban League to change this situation have been to no avail.

The Motives of Some Employers

From some of the employers' letters, returned questionnaires and personal comments, an effort might be made to get behind the attitude of the employer and to determine the factors influencing his thinking. Here are reproduced the opinions of various employers as transmitted to the Commission through letter, questionnaire, or personal interviews held by industrial secretaries of the Urban League with employers.

Personal Convictions

1. Their own personal convictions on race relations constitute the determining factor for some employers.

"We hire all new employees with the thought of training them for positions as salesmen, office, stock supervisory, etc. Negroes could not qualify for this work."

"To me, there is not a more perplexing problem today than the one of a Negro successfully dovetailing into our working lives. Although we have never had any experience with Negroes in our plant, our feeling has always been that the fact they were black would make absolutely no difference with us, but the regrettable fact is that from an ambition standpoint the Negro is definitely quite a different person from the white person. This is his heritage and to change it means to remake a race."

"We have never had an opportunity to hire Negroes, but the writer worked a number of years ago where we had colored help, but as soon as they had been taught the routine, they became arrogant and self-reliant, and acted as the white generation does today. 'Give them an inch, and they will take a mile.' I spent six weeks in Miami this winter, and the colored people down there were becoming a problem, just like a gas that has been released from compression."

"Would not consider working Negroes alongside of white in Minnesota. The writer understands the Negro fairly well and has no dislike for them. However, it has been very evi-

dent that Minnesota is just too far North for the white worker to understand the Negro and get along with him properly."

"I think Negroes should go on the farms; they need them in the Dakotas and the farmers' boys leave the farms. Negroes would do well, I believe, as share croppers—for the next ten years farming is the best business, and it is a respectable business. We need good mechanics and could not take chances."

"I don't want anything to do with Negroes—as I'm really afraid of them. In large plants where they have foremen over them, no doubt they could get employment."

A large communication company official stated to the Industrial Secretary of the St. Paul Urban League:

"I feel that Negroes should set up their own business like the white man has done and then employ his own people."

The Industrial Secretary of the League was also told by an official of a large candy manufacturing company:

"In our plant where there are no other Negroes working, I am sure if we hired a few they would get awful lonesome."

Employee Opposition

2. Fear of employee opposition was the factor more commonly mentioned, and allied with it in the mind of some was the belief that the introduction of Negro workers would necessarily involve the expense of constructing separate dressing and wash rooms.

"Our own employees will not allow them here. We have five Japanese-Americans working here, but the employees draw the line on Negroes. It is only because of them that we cannot hire Negroes. We have a fine group of employees, but they are prejudiced. Please do not send anyone here to talk to our employees. It will only hurt us as we do not want them to know that it is only because of their prejudice."

"I am afraid some women in the plant may not care to work with Negroes."

"If a Negro having seniority rights were placed in authority over white men, trouble might result."

"There are certain vocations to which Negroes can be adapted without conflicting with whites. I would hesitate personally to introduce any colored help into our plant, owing to the fact that we employ about 50 per cent of women who are all native of this North country."

"Our experienced whites do not care to work alongside of colored. There should be enough porters, cleaners, helpers jobs available to colored who now refuse such work. We have had no colored help for the last 12 years."

"We believe that white employees do not like to use the same rest rooms as the colored people."

"We have no separate accommodations. Our present Negroes were stokers when they started and that work has been done away with."

"We have had no experience with employment of Negroes within the last 20 years. At that time our employees reacted unfavorably; so we have not tried it since."

Some employers declared they checked sentiment in the plant before deciding not to hire Negroes.

"Our employees feel that this is a white man's job, and Negroes have no more right to work on it than whites have a right to work as Pullman porters."

"I understand that in addition to Negroes having a distinctive body odor, the disease rate, particularly V.D., is much higher."

"We have social clubs within our organization, and I am afraid that if we hire Negroes, the white employees would object to their becoming members of these clubs."

Negro's Workmanship

3. Unfavorable judgment about Negro's workmanship influenced some employers.

"Our experience with Negroes was far from satisfactory, as they usually work for a day or two and then would be absent for various periods and finally fail to show up at all without giving any notice of intention to quit to the superintendent at the plant where employed."

"We have tried to get Negro help. But they do not seem to wish this kind of work. They have stayed too short a time to even class them as employees. The most an hour. We first asked our men, and then the Union. Both agreed. We have known Negro men personally, have asked them if they wished to work in the shop, machine and wood work; but none have shown up for work. We would like some Negro men who understand working with tools; we would gladly train them. We personally believe the Negro is a great deal responsible for the lack of cooperation."

"Traditionally Negroes have been laborers, service workers or farmers, and as such don't have the necessary aptitude for mechanical or clerical work."

"Negroes are by nature lazy and less ambitious than white workers."

"Negroes are too aggressive."

Customer Opposition

4. Customer opposition is also a matter of consideration.

"Negroes do not fit into bakery work. Their appearance in a bakery does not appeal to the public."

"Would have no personal prejudice against having Negroes employed. However, until the public is educated, because of our size there would be apt to be a feeling we were hiring them to save money. There might be a feeling the quality of our service was below that of our competitors."

"In our business of dealing directly with 99 per cent white housewives, I am afraid Negroes would not be acceptable."

"The majority of our employees are salesmen serving housewives. We might employ one Negro salesman to call

on the colored trade exclusive and would be glad to discuss this with a representative of the Urban League."

"Our customers for the most part represent the best people in town. They would regard it as an insult to have Negroes wait upon them."

Labor Union's Position

5. Doubt about the Labor Union's position is also a motive.

"We will hire Negroes if acceptable to Unions. Okay with management."

"Some employees said they would quit or strike. We have a closed shop and all help is supplied by the Union."

"Our help is entirely unionized and their organization does not admit Negroes."

"Our help is unionized. Certain rights for promotion become automatically effective as to each individual when once employed. It would be only a matter of time when supervisory jobs would be open to Negroes which would put them over whites. That would create an impossible situation from the standpoint of employing white help thereafter to work under Negro bosses."

"Would ask Union. Could be employed in most departments."

"At one time we attempted to hire Negro workers and a union committee reported that they would be unacceptable to their membership."

"We are perfectly willing to hire, but the representatives of the Union refused to train Negro drivers."

* * * *

Appropriately, the Commission might be asked what percentage of Minnesota employers will give jobs to Negroes. Prior to the war, a considerable number of employers denied

employment to Negroes. Even during the war some employers continued that policy. Only 601 out of 2,231 employers answered the questionnaire. Possibly the failure of many to respond may be attributed to a prejudicial attitude or indifference.

Of the 601 replying, 117 said they employed Negroes in some capacity or other. Three hundred twenty-one said they would be willing to employ; 89 said they would not; and 64 were undecided. One hundred twenty-one omitted the answer.

It should be noted that while these questionnaires were being mailed, the manpower shortage became acute. That factor may have had some influence.

In response to the question whether they would give employment to returning Negro soldiers, 265 said they would, 67 said they would not, and 65 were undecided, and 204 did not answer the question.

In terms of numbers, only a small percentage of the employers committed themselves regarding attitudes. Four hundred fifty-five said they had no experience with Negroes and would not then express reasons about Negro employment. Fifty-five thought whites would not work with Negroes, and 112 thought whites would. One hundred nineteen employers judged that Negroes were efficient, and 17 thought they were not. One hundred twenty-eight thought they would be honest and nine otherwise. Twelve thought customers would object and 69 thought customers would not. Twenty-six thought Negroes would be tardy and three thought they would be punctual.

In an effort to determine what the situation is at present as contrasted with the earlier study in 1945, the Commission worked directly with the Urban League Industrial Secretaries of Minneapolis and St. Paul, who in the majority of cases have had some contact with all of the employers questioned in the original study. They have stated that despite the fact, many defense industries closed and many other companies who had hired Negro workers during the war discontinued this practice, the total number of employers hiring Negroes

continues to increase. The Urban League in the last three years can personally be accredited with the opening of 130 new jobs in which heretofore Negroes had never worked. A number of companies have also changed their policies on their own initiative.

A most liberal estimate of the percentage of employers who hire Negro workers in Minnesota would be around ten. A much smaller percentage hire them free of any restriction as to type of job, upgrading, etc. These facts represent surveys actually conducted by the Urban Leagues.

II. EMPLOYEES

Anyone acquainted with the problems of obtaining adequate employment for Negro workers recognizes that employee opposition, whether real or imagined, definitely curtails their opportunities.

Obviously, next to the employer, the white employee holds the strategic position in the matter of employment for the Negro. Even if the employer is willing to hire all applicants, he feels powerless if his skilled workers are adverse to working with Negroes.

Some proportion of the white workers are definitely prejudiced. A few have strong personal prejudices. The determining factor with many of them, however, is that by working beside a Negro or in the occupation they lose self-respect or social standing. The Negro came to this nation as a slave. Since the Civil War he has been restricted largely to service occupations. By working with him, employees believe they lower themselves to a servile capacity. Sometimes they are even taunted by their families.

In one large public utility handling communication in Minneapolis a Negro veteran felt the full force of employee opposition when, on returning from the service, he attempted to get upgrading from his former position of messenger. Although he had seven years' seniority and union membership, the employer still elected to consult the group which he desired promotion to and inquire as to their willingness to

work with him. Although many of them knew him and his service to the company far out-ranked men in this group, yet they decided against his upgrading. This would indicate that employee resistance can be very real, especially when handled in such a negative manner.

III. THE LABOR UNIONS

Prior to 1932, relatively few white workers were members of labor unions. They were, nevertheless, prejudiced and often refused to work with Negroes. Gradually, as the white workers were organized, they carried into the unions their former prejudices.

The formation of large industrial unions, which many times ignored trade lines, accelerated this organization process until today millions of workers are unionized. These unions have become very powerful and exercise considerable influence on employment practices. Few employers will go contrary to what they believe to be the union's position in this respect. Craft unions organized about the various trades have also increased. Since they control the flow of skilled workers into many fields they are important to the Negro worker.

The trade union movement is fundamentally an association of workers for their mutual protection in their dealings with employers. As an economic organization it seeks the improvement of the standard of living of its members through collective bargaining. In varying ways it attempts degrees of control over such practices as hiring, training, promotion, lay-offs, wages, etc. It follows then that the union has tremendous influence, within its bargaining rights, on the availability of job opportunities for minorities. Consequently, its policies, practices, and attitudes toward such minorities are crucial in determining the positions of minorities in plants and trades and will influence their ability to make a living commensurate with their qualifications.

Examples of how an unfriendly attitude or policy by unions can prevent Negro employment are disclosed in the following incidents. Recently, a conference was held with a large union

in Minneapolis to fix the responsibility for the reluctance of the industry covered by their contract to employ Negro workers.

It was disclosed that some years ago an independent employee communications union had officially objected to the number of Negro janitors and matrons which were being employed by this company. Other points raised by the union during the discussion such as quotas for Negro workers based on population figures and the inadvisability of placing a Negro in a job which took him away from the city in a mixed crew all made it difficult for the company to hire on an equal basis.

According to the Minneapolis Urban League, a Negro bartender applying to the Bartenders' Union for registration by telephone was assured that upon presentation of the necessary references and union fee, he would be accepted and assigned to employment. Upon presenting himself with his references and fee, he was told by the union agent that the union could not use Negroes.

When pressure was brought upon the union agent, the prospective member was told to first get an employer to assure the agent he would give the Negro applicant employment at which time a card would be issued. A canvass by the applicant of possible employers revealed the procedure was to employ only persons referred by the union agent. Several employers indicated willingness to employ the Negro applicant, but expressed fear of reaction from the business agent.

Furthermore, some of the unions bar Negroes from membership by constitution or other devices; for example, the Brotherhood of Blacksmith, Drop Forgers and Helpers, the Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders, Welders and Helpers, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees, and the Sheet Metal Workers' International Association.

Anything less than full membership in unions in Minnesota with its attendant privileges and responsibilities tends to prevent Negroes from obtaining employment.

IV. APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Most craft unions use apprenticeship programs to control the entrance of new workers to the trade and thereby maintain standards from overcrowding. Restrictions on equal access to these employer-union sponsored programs results in Negroes being denied opportunity for membership in many trades. These programs make up the largest single organizational channel through which new skilled workers flow into industry.

In Minnesota the building trades and printing industry provide apprenticeship opportunities for thousands of workers, and rank first and second as apprenticable trades. Although many young Negroes apply for apprenticing there are to be found but two of record in the printing trades and none in the building trades.

When we note that in the Minneapolis self-survey, a project designed to determine the amount of inter-group prejudice existing in that city sponsored by the Mayor's Human Relations Council, employers reported "lack of necessary skills" as the main reason for refusing to hire Negro workers, it becomes evident that this whole area of apprenticeship training is vital to the inclusion of skilled Negro workers in the community labor force. While one-third of the unions reporting on the survey had apprenticeship training, only from 5 to 18 per cent had minorities in these programs and in all cases Negroes fared worst. This indicates that apprentice training programs are not now a significant source of vocational training for Negroes.

Recently, the Industrial Department of the National Urban League commenting on critical areas in which more and more effort must be made if Negro workers are to enjoy expanded employment opportunities stated that apprenticeship and "on the job training" programs must be enlarged.

V. VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

At times the Negro seems to be caught in a vicious circle. The employer and the labor union state they cannot accept the applicant since a highly skilled craft is involved. Yet in

vocational and other high schools, the Negro student is often told by vocational guidance counselors or other officials that he must not take training in certain trades because they are barred to Negroes. The counselor justifies this type of guidance on the grounds that it saves time and protects the Negro applicant from disappointment.

Yet the circle must be broken at some point, and the school is a good point at which a start might be made. It seems that Negro students should be counseled according to their interest and ability. Later, if employment is refused, other agencies can conduct a practical campaign to place him. To do otherwise is to lay the first wall of a segregation policy.

In St. Paul, a trade school was reluctant to accept a Negro girl for beauty culture until they had another Negro girl enrolled for her to practice on. Although this is an exception to the general policy present in vocational schools, however, it does nevertheless demonstrate how unsound thinking can limit training opportunities, as it presupposes that Negro beauty operators may find employment only in Negro shops. Actually, in St. Paul there are at least two Negro operated beauty shops with primarily white customers.

VI. EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Public

One of the most serious and yet most elusive obstacles to fair employment for Negroes is discriminatory practices by recruitment agencies.

Despite top level understanding and cooperation some employees of public employment agencies discriminate when they fail to properly register, classify, and refer occupationally qualified applicants to jobs because of their race, color, creed, etc. Many interviewers feel that they spare the feelings of Negro applicants when they refuse to send them to places or jobs known to be discriminatory. What actually happens, however, is that the labor market for this group is limited and circumscribed by this action.

One of the job recruitment field services, rendered by these public agencies, produced the following incident which demonstrates what can happen to hamper Negro employment. A field representative from a local agency called on an employer to discuss his need for men to fill a highly skilled position. After obtaining a description of the qualifications and skills which the position required he prepared to leave. As an after thought he asked the employer, "I don't suppose you would consider a Negro on this job?" The employer was indignant and stated that he wanted qualified men and that was the only important factor. This negative approach to employment for Negro workers definitely limits his opportunities. Many employers report that over long periods of placing non-discriminatory orders with the employment service they have never received a Negro applicant.

Because the employment agency forms the initial contact between employer and prospective employee, it is in a strategic position either to promote fair employment practices among employers or to hamper them. The elimination of such practices, however, depends finally upon the action of employers since they control the channels of recruitment through which the great majority of workers are employed and also have the final right to accept or reject applicants from any agency.

Private

A large bulk of the more skilled occupations such as accountants, draftsmen, salesmen, etc., are filled through orders placed with the private employment agencies. Past experiences have shown that unless an employer literally insists on a Negro applicant, he never receives one. Not only do these agencies accept discriminatory orders, but there is no evidence to indicate that any effort is made to change an employer's attitude. These agencies feel, with little justification, that a practice of referring people based only on skills would cause them to lose orders and, consequently, money. Actually one or two agencies have tried referring Negro applicants and finding it successful have consequently secured a new market for business.

VII. GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

The branches of the various governmental agencies within the boundaries of Minnesota—federal, state, and local—employ as many persons as any large corporation. The specific statements in the preceding sections indicate in what governmental agencies Negroes are employed. As was obvious there, the Negro finds a wider range of occupations open to him in government service than in any other area. However, from time to time, specific complaints are made, and some when investigated indicate the presence of discrimination even in government service.

A major problem in the matter relates to Civil Service. Usually the appointing officer has the right to select one out of three and if the appointing officer has prejudice, the qualified Negro is not appointed. There have been two prominent examples in the past year. One Negro, possessing a Bachelors Degree in Economics from the University and having had over five years of responsible administrative experience in Washington, was unable to get appointed even at a much lower level. Another, a young woman well qualified and ranking high on a long list of applicants for the position of interviewer, was completely by-passed even after temporary workers were employed.

Certainly if there is any place where discrimination against Negroes is least tolerable it is in a governmental agency. The primary function of government as we know it is to promote justice.

There is one fact to which the Commission can bear testimony from its experience; namely, that Governor Luther Youngdahl is ever conscious of these problems and is anxious to know the facts.

He has demonstrated that any existing injustices brought to his attention will be dealt with forthrightly.

* * * *

In summary, then, we have seen the Negro worker in the pre-war years (1930-1940) when jobs were at a premium de-

nied the opportunity to employment based on his ability and have noted the patterns which confined him to the menial levels in the few places where he was able to find work. In 1939 over 60 per cent of the Negroes in the Twin Cities were in some way or the other on relief as compared to around 20 per cent for white persons.

With the advent of World War II and its subsequent demand for manpower to produce enough goods and munitions to stem the enemy, we find the Negro for the first time in Minnesota given an opportunity for mass industrial employment. The result of the experience of employers in war plants such as Twin Cities Ordnance Plant and others, with Negro workers set the stage for the improved post-war employment opportunities. It has had a direct affect upon the new acceptance for many of these workers in peace time industry. The post-war years have produced some encouraging signs in Negro employment, but behind every gain there has been much organized effort.

A review of the categories of work described in this chapter leads us to conclude that although the Negro profited by his opportunity for skilled work during World War II, and these gains are not to be minimized, he still finds today that minority status is an important factor in employment and that with a few exceptions, there are few private industries open to him. True, more Negroes are employed in diverse jobs since the war, and this is encouraging for the future, however, let us remember that employment levels have remained high for all workers and the real test of the gains he has made will come when the employment market shrinks and competition is keener for jobs. The Negro worker must continue to make gains while employment levels are high and so ingrain their progressive patterns into the labor market of Minnesota that no economic recession can remove them.

The nature of the problem has definitely changed for the Negro worker since the pre-war years. It is no longer one of mass unemployment but rather one of his inability to get upgrading.

CHAPTER III

How Valid Are the Reasons Given for Not Employing Negroes?

At present, many employers assume an attitude of reluctance in hiring Negroes, and employees an attitude of reluctance in working with them. Yet, to the extent that employers and employees act rationally, they must have reasons for their attitudes. Some of those reasons were previously cited.

But all reasons are not valid. Some are true and some false. Some are sound, others, unsound. If a fair-minded man can be convinced that the reasons underlying his attitude are false, then there is a fair chance of persuading him to change his attitude.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and to weigh the reasons which motivate discriminatory attitudes in industrial Minnesota. The factual material for this analysis is in a considerable measure the material presented in the first two sections, though additions are made intermittently. The Commission is of the opinion that the material yields some definite conclusions. The approach is dominantly that of drawing the threads out, and weaving them together.

A. *Is It True That the Negro Is a Less Efficient Worker?*

All white workers do not possess similar qualifications. Some are bright, others dull; some industrious, others lazy. The employer does not expect them to be equal. He scrutinizes their qualities and selects the properly qualified. Likewise, all Negroes are neither all highly gifted nor all dull. Yet, is there a racial factor which makes the average Negro applicant inferior to the whites, so that an employer would be justified in showing preference to whites?

Across the nation in the past 20 years there have been numerous studies made about this point. The conclusions do not warrant any discriminatory policy.

This report, however, pivots about Minnesota employers and Minnesota Negroes. Pertinently, then, some Minnesota employers should be consulted, since the employer is an excellent judge of a worker's efficiency; a laboratory test does not always reveal the moral qualities essential to a good employee.

During the war, the International Harvester Company of St. Paul permitted the Committee to quote it that "Its Negro employees have been as efficient as other members of their personnel."

The D. W. Onan and Sons asserted that the Commission may quote them explicitly that they have found Negroes as efficient as white workers.

The Griggs Cooper and Company also stated that the Commission may quote them to the effect that Negro workers are the equal of white workers.

* * * *

The following statements taken from the questionnaire which were returned by the employers in the original survey also indicate employer observations on the efficiency of Negro workers.

A supply company in Duluth wrote: "From this report you will note that we have one Negro employed by our concern and that he is given the same treatment throughout the plant in his many duties as any other employee now working for us. We find his services very satisfactory and certainly would not hesitate to employ more Negroes on exactly the same plane as we employ whites."

A hat manufacturing company in Minneapolis stated: "We have employed Negroes, and found that their reaction to work, etc., is identical to that of whites. Some like to work and some don't. As far as being ambitious and progressive is concerned, they feel they have been employed too long in

the capacity of porters, and would prefer to do work that has some future advantages."

"We did have some white boys who resented working alongside of Negroes, and did not hesitate to come up and tell us about it. Since the Negro boys were doing their work without complaint, and were good clean-cut kids, we didn't hesitate to let the white boys go. We do not wish to employ anyone who is race-conscious."

"In so far as honesty is concerned, given the same opportunities, we believe that race or color doesn't make any difference. We had no trouble with the colored boys; as a matter of fact, they work with rhythm, sing as they work, and make it pleasant for all around."

It is interesting to recall that at the Minneapolis Honeywell plant during the war, a foreman with a high production schedule to meet asked his personnel department for more Negro workers because their efficiency was making it possible for him to meet this schedule.

A milk and ice cream company from Duluth wrote: "All Negro employees have done fine work. Our only reason for not employing more is the Dairy Employee's Union has not as yet accepted them to membership. I think that everything that can be done along this line is fine and real American. Keep up the good work."

Since the war there have been continuing contacts with employers by the Industrial Secretaries of the Urban League. The following statements represent a sample of their reactions in the post-war era.

Raymond Laboratories, who have Negroes hired in practically all departments, assert that Negro workers in every respect compare favorably with other workers.

Seeger Refrigerator Company, which employs a large number of Negroes throughout their plant, find Negro workers are no different in over all workmanship from others.

Toni Company has reported that its Negro workers are ambitious and easy to get along with.

The Golden Rule Department Store in St. Paul has reported that after the first month, their first Negro saleslady has consistently received a bonus for sales and, in addition, has designed several dresses used in advertisements.

The saleswomen employed by Schuneman's Department Store have been reported by management to have good sales records.

Some employees have stated that because of previous limited opportunities, Negroes when hired in better jobs tend to appreciate them more and, as a result, are more anxious to make good. This is evident in low turn over, personal cleanliness, punctuality and work efficiency.

Recently, a foreman at the Minneapolis Honeywell Plant, when faced with the problem of laying off 35 employees with equal seniority, retained two Negro girls for the four remaining positions. This same situation recently occurred at the National Battery Company in St. Paul.

* * * *

It may be helpful to present here sketches of a few individual Negroes who have attracted attention in Minnesota industrial life. It should be noted in this regard that these successes have been made in spite of the handicaps and barriers which the Negro worker faces.

Mr. James Hughes has 29 years of service to his credit with the Consolidated Printing Ink Company, St. Paul. He makes rollers for all types of printing presses. By virtue of his continued service, initiative, skill and ingenuity he has been upgraded to superintendent of the roller department. On many occasions, because of his experience and training, he is used as a technical adviser for roller problems in printing plants in the Twin City area.

Mr. Frederic Jones, chief engineer at the United States Thermo Control Company in Minneapolis, has worked approximately 21 years with this company. Acclaim has recently come to him by inventing the automatic mobile refrigerator, making it possible for servicemen to have fresh vegetables,

meat and ice cream on their menus in the most remote and obscure places on the battle front. Mr. Jones was elected to the American Society of Refrigeration Engineers and has been called to the Bureau of Standards in Washington to consult with the office of the quartermaster general. Mr. Jones is given credit for being one of the first exploring in the field of sound equipment. It is said that 75 per cent of the theatres in the Northwest use sound equipment developed by him.

Mr. John Banks has been employed by the Ford Motor Company in St. Paul for 18 years. He started as a janitor and has gradually been upgraded to his present position of General Utility Man for the paint department. In this capacity, it is necessary that he have complete knowledge of all machines, as he serves as a general trouble shooter. In addition, he is the instructor of all new men in the department. The Ford Company hobby show is his creation, and he acts as chairman of this project which has attracted much attention and has become a vital factor in maintaining plant morale.

L. Albert Scipio, a young veteran of World War II, is employed as a civil engineer by Long and Thorshov, Inc. Engineers, Minneapolis. He holds degrees of Bachelor of Science in Architecture and Bachelor of Civil Engineering, University of Minnesota, Institute of Technology. Recognition has come to him through his election to the American Society of Civil Engineers, Alpha Kappa Mu and Phi Beta Sigma, honorary scholastic engineering fraternities. He excels in his preferred fields of structural design and analysis.

For many years Mr. Wallace Rodney has been in charge of the shipping department for one of the largest wholesale grocery concerns in Duluth. He has a number of employees under his supervision.

B. Is It True That White Employees Will Not Work with Negroes?

Some white workers hesitate to work with Negroes. Some few absolutely refuse. But many in Minnesota, despite per-

sonal preferences, will work with Negroes when the employer indicates that such is his will. The evidence:

1. Pre-war Years

In the post offices, white men worked at the same jobs that Negroes were doing. Indeed in a few cases the white postal employees had colored supervisors. The postal clerks did not object to working with a Negro when such was the condition for obtaining a job at the post office.

There was presented above a list of some office and secretarial jobs held by Negroes in the federal, state and county and municipal offices in the Twin Cities. White men and women wanted jobs in those places, so white clerks did work at them even though a Negro was in the office. In the county hospital in St. Paul, in University Hospitals, in St. Joseph's, and probably in others there were colored girls training for nursing. They worked alongside of white trainees and white graduate nurses and no person gave it a second thought.

2. In War Years

In the Twin Cities Ordnance Plant, the International Harvester Company, Griggs Cooper & Company, D. W. Onan & Sons Company, etc., thousands of white people are working alongside Negroes doing the same jobs quietly. They work together and use the same washrooms. It is also worthy of note that in those plants the management succeeded in integrating Negroes at a time when a white worker could quit with much greater hope of getting a job than he would have in peace times.

3. Post-war Years

At present Negro and white employees work harmoniously together in many industries and businesses in Minnesota. Seeger Refrigerator Company, The Toni Company, Electric Machine Manufacturing Company, Northrup-King Company, Raymond Laboratories, Schuneman's, The Dayton Company to name a few.

The facts, then, seem to be that, regardless of theory, some white persons will work alongside of Negroes without any

objection. Many others will do it when the management takes a firm position.

Many white workers in opposing the employment of Negroes do so because of widespread misconceptions and stereotyped ideas. The fear of displacement and economic competition typifies this problem. The whole concept of limiting individuals and groups from equal competition for jobs, however, is foreign to our American belief in free enterprise. Competition for economic advantage is a normal part of our economy which must be preserved.

Another factor in Minnesota is the low percentage of Negroes in the general population which would certainly militate against any competitive overcrowding of occupations.

The worker who feels a loss of status when a Negro is employed on his occupational level displays a superiority complex which can only be attributed to a master race attitude. If he observes his community he will find Negroes in many occupations, both above and below his job level.

Negroes and whites go to the same high schools, the same colleges, and the same state university and play on the same football teams. Working with a Negro later in life should not be a drastic innovation implying disgrace.

Actually the neighbors of the white postal clerk do not feel that the clerk has become a pariah because he worked with Negroes. The neighbors of the hundreds of white workers who are working alongside of some Negroes do not seem to think that those workers have become social outcasts.

In the white worker himself, indeed the fear of the loss of prestige from racial contact has a balloon-like quality. If there is a rumor that a Negro worker is to be introduced into a factory, the quality expands rapidly under the heat of conversation. But if the cold piercing prospect of losing a good job becomes acute because of the refusal to work with Negroes, then that quality seems to shrink so extremely that it is easily hidden and carried without burden.

Contrary to the opinion of some white workers that the Negro worker constitutes a health hazard, there is no proof that the innate susceptibility of the Negro to disease is greater than any other group in the general population. Even if this were true, as many persons believe, the physical examinations given previous to hiring would serve to prevent their employment. It would also seem to follow here that if Negroes were health hazards, their employment in domestic work with its intimate home contacts would be eliminated; the truth, however, is that they are in demand for this employment. The State Department of Health reports that the amount of venereal disease and tuberculosis among Negroes in Minnesota does not constitute a problem. Where differences do exist in this regard, they are mostly environmental and not racial.

Some workers feel that working with Negroes creates certain social implications which will be carried over into their private lives. This is not true of all of their white fellow workers, and it does not follow that it would be true of Negroes. It is interesting to note in this connection that in the study "An American Dilemma" by the noted Swedish educator, Gunnar Myrdal, he found that while most white believed that the Negro wanted social equality most, the Negro himself placed it last naming equality of economic opportunity first. The small number of inter-racial marriages in states where there is no legal barrier to this relationship further indicates the lack of these social implications in the utilization of Negro workers.

Recently in a discussion of the successful integration of Negro girls in sales work, a floor walker at the Powers Store in Minneapolis paid a particular compliment to their dress, cleanliness, and general appearance. Here again if Negroes were objectionable in this regard, they would not be acceptable in homes and on trains where they give service today. The common experience of Urban League Industrial Secretaries and others, engaged in the work of integrated Negro workers into business and industry, reveals that whenever

the employer takes a firm stand in this regard, white workers do work successfully with Negro workers.

C. *Is It True That Customers Do Not Wish to Be Served by Negroes?*

There are some white people who do not wish to be served by Negroes. Yet the objection is not too widespread.

Daily in the dining cars that cross Minnesota and in three hotels people are served at the table by Negroes. The Negroes handle their food and their liquids. No objection is heard. In the better clubs, much of the serving is done by Negroes.

If people do not object to a Negro handling bread in a dining room, it does not seem they would object to a colored girl's selling them stockings or hats. If people do not object to a Negro delivering mail, it does not seem they would object to a Negro bus driver or a Negro trucker.

The readiness with which white people accept Negroes in the few capacities through which they do have contact with consumers seems to outweigh any theoretical fears on this score.

Schuneman's, Powers, The Golden Rule, Dayton Co., Donaldson's, Field Schlick, F. W. Woolworth (Mpls.) and the Baker Co. department stores, in the Twin Cities, that now hire Negro salespeople have reported that few complaints have been voiced by customers who were served by Negroes. On the contrary, these employees have received numerous favorable comments from customers.

Butwin Sportswear Company in St. Paul, which has a Negro receptionist, has received only compliments on her pleasing reception given customers.

Customers are interested in courtesy, interest shown, sincere desire to be helpful, personality and knowledge of article. These characteristics are not the sole property of any group of people as present examples indicate.

That Negroes can sell to white people is evident by the experience of The Mounds Electric Company of St. Paul whose house to house Negro salesman had a clientele 75 per cent of which is white. Negro lawyers, doctors and dentists have many white patients.

D. *Is It True That Employers Must Provide Separate Facilities?*

Many employers give as their reason for not employing Negro workers the fact that they have no separate facilities such as toilets, showers, and locker rooms. Actually, nowhere in Minnesota are there accommodations set aside "For Colored," "For White." Negroes and whites share the same facilities, beginning in the primary schools and continuing in the secondary schools, colleges and the university. This is carried over into every public building or institution in the state and on all transportation. If the employer insists on separate accommodations, he thereby initiates a new policy in Minnesota. In some rare cases, unions and even Negroes, themselves, have requested separate accommodations. This still does not justify such a practice, and the employer should be equally firm on insisting that this is an undemocratic procedure the company will not tolerate.

E. *Is It True That Labor Unions Sometimes Resist the Employment of Negro Workers?*

In a previous chapter it was noted that labor unions have considerable influence relative to Negro employment.

If all industries were covered by closed shop agreements in the Twin Cities and Duluth, the responsibility for job discrimination could be placed entirely on the unions.

Yet all industries do not have even preferential shop agreements.

Some labor unions in Minnesota, however, either by constitutional provision or by delaying tactics, keep Negroes from jobs and thus actually exercise a racial monopoly over skilled

jobs. That is especially true in the metal trades. Such specific cases could be stopped by publicity for concrete cases in the daily press or, if necessary, by a legislative statute.

With the exception of a small and diminishing minority of unions, internationals generally espouse a policy of non-discrimination.

Precise generalizations about attitudes of labor unions might be imprudent, since only 109 out of 450 answered the questionnaires in 1945. The failure of the others may be attributed possibly to prejudice or indifference. Yet, regarding those responding, there are a few interesting figures.

In the 109 unions reporting, there are 646 Negroes and 54,334 white persons.

In response to the question: "Will your local accept Negroes to full membership?" 101 answered yes; three replied in the negative, and three did not know. To the question: "Do the Negroes have the same privileges as white applicants for apprenticeship training?" 83 said Yes, six said No, and five did not know.

To the question: "Would you accept Negroes if the employers would put them to work?" 90 said Yes, and three said No.

To the question: "Are separate locals organized for Negroes?" Ten said Yes, and 88 said No.

Ten out of 96 also said Negroes held offices in their unions. To the question: "Do Negroes drop out of unions?" 13 said Yes; 35 said No, and 61 did not answer the question. Regarding taking in returning Negro soldiers, 88 said Yes; four said No, and three did not know.

These answers indicate that there is considerable union acceptance for Negro workers in Minnesota.

In Minnesota there have been cases where central labor bodies in the Twin Cities have used their influence to protect Negroes. In 1937 when a hotel in St. Paul decided to

drop all Negro waiters and substitute white waiters taken in from St. Louis, the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly informed the hotel that it would take all the craftsmen out of the hotel if such a policy were activated. The Negro waiters stayed.

In 1948 the Laundry Workers Union in Minneapolis was requested by a large hotel, in which they have a contract, to send a man to take a skilled job in their laundry department. The union referred the next qualified person on their list who happened to be a Negro. When the applicant reported to the job, he was immediately informed that this particular job had been filled and was offered another position which Negroes had always filled in the hotel. He courteously refused the alternate job and reported the entire situation to the business agent of the union. A check on the availability of the job revealed that it was yet open, and the union was requested to send another person. The business agent protested this refusal to hire a competent Negro worker and requested that the company employ the Negro applicant. Following a conference on the matter the hotel agreed to do so.

While it is true that some unions do resist the employment of Negro workers, many others (as in the incident described above) actually assist them with their problems.

Some unions include a clause in their contracts which calls for the employment of qualified applicants by the employer with no restrictions based on race, color, creed or national origin.

F. Is It True That Negro Workers Cannot Be Employed Because of Community Patterns?

Some employers give as their reason for not employing Negroes the fact that they must follow the general community pattern which is one of discrimination. Actually with the exception of employment he finds that in Minnesota Negroes and whites go to school together, they participate in sports together, they go to the same theaters, hotels, and other public places together. In many cases they live in the same

neighborhoods and go to the same stores. Negroes may be found in some of the white churches and vice-versa or as members in inter-racial singing groups. There are inter-racial settlement houses, nurseries, and other agencies. Negroes and whites go to the same hospitals, and in practically every other conceivable area the pattern is one of integration.

It would seem then that any pattern of discrimination or segregation that exists is one imposed by employers and does not follow the ordinary spirit of fair play, which is so present in our great state.

CHAPTER IV

Can the Economic Status of the Negro Worker in Minnesota Be Improved?

I. *Current Status*

A comparison of employment opportunities for Negro workers prior to 1940 with their present economic status reveals that definite progress has been made. Over a period of ten years he has risen from a domestic and service worker to a position where some industries and businesses now regard him as employable on higher levels. While this change is readily appreciated by the Negro worker and those who espouse his cause, an examination of factual data indicates that in far too many areas he is still short of the goal of complete acceptance as an American worker. Perhaps the most unfortunate thing in this respect is the almost complete disregard of the Negro workers' qualifications and skills as evidenced by his limited mobility within his present employment or to other employment situations. Specifically we refer to the inability of Negro workers to be upgraded or to have access to a variety of jobs available to white workers. The most tragic effects of this situation are felt by Negro youth who many times become indifferent and lack the incentive to prepare himself to the utmost of his abilities.

II. *Reasons for Change*

There are those who are quick to ask why we are so anxious to change what has been an apparent existing pattern for decades. Why has the elimination of discrimination in employment become almost an obsession with a growing number of people in this state? Our reasons are similar to those found in the President's Report on Civil Rights. They are those of conscience, of self-interest and of survival in the threatening world. To put it simply we have a moral reason, an economic reason and an international reason.

A. Moral

Our American creed, which we try so hard to impress upon our children in the classroom or upon adults later in life, is based on respect for the dignity of man. It asserts that all men are created equal with certain inalienable rights.

Our religious teachings are based on the brotherhood of man and the recognition of a supreme being, under whom all men are equal.

If either of these noble ideals is to become meaningful, it must become a part of our everyday living or else the basis for our whole moral life is in danger. We, in Minnesota, cannot afford these burdens on our conscience resulting from the failure to practice what we inherently believe.

B. Economic

America has become the source of necessities for people all over the world. Minnesota's industries play no small part in meeting these demands. The skills and abilities of every worker is vitally needed as never before. Yet prejudice denies to many Negro workers the right to make their contributions, and to employers the utilization of minority worker skills. Not only are they lost as workers but also as consumers. Lack of purchasing power will in time affect even the white workers who are producers. Other factors such as expanded relief program, increased crime rates and health costs are also expensive items.

Perhaps the most tragic economic loss to the community is the loss of ambitions, Minnesota-educated Negro youth, who leave the community to go to other states where they can use their abilities.

Minnesota cannot afford these losses to its economic structure.

C. International

World peace is dependent on the cooperation of many people representing a variety of cultures, races and religions. This cooperation cannot be achieved at a four power conference

or at a meeting of the United Nations unless it is working in the smaller communities. What chance is there for world cooperation if we here in Minnesota cannot work together?

In our efforts to sell democracy throughout the world, we should not lose sight of the fact that two-thirds of the world's population is non-white. To these people our democracy is measured directly by the treatment we accord non-whites right here at home.

The ideologies of other countries are a direct threat to the democratic way of life. We will retain our democracy only by being interested and active, not just in theory, but in practice.

The surest defense for American principles is to make those principles apply to all Americans in every sphere of life.

III. CONSTRUCTIVE FORCES

The Commission recognizes that no hard and fast solution can be given for such a complex and emotionally-toned problem as racial discrimination. However, it feels that on the basis of its study of the problem that these discriminations, within a few years, could be eliminated if some of the constructive forces became more active within our state.

A. Educational

Much of the prejudice which retards the progress of the Negro worker is based upon misunderstanding and ignorance. Since prejudice is largely a question of attitudes, an effective change can be realized only when constructive educational forces attempt a concerted effort in this direction. There is latent good will in Minnesota which, when properly organized and directed, will correct many of the discriminations which exist in our state.

1. **THE RELIGIOUS GROUPS** are the most effective educational agencies for furnishing enduring motives. They have been responsible for developing in the white persons a realization that all men have equal rights. They have been successful in developing a general attitude of reverence for

the Negro. Yet their religious instruction needs to be correlated more definitely with the industrial picture, so that both employer and employee will realize that a problem of conscience is involved when a Negro applicant appears.

2. **EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS AND TRADE GROUPS** give employers much information and guidance about labor relations and kindred matters. In some measure they carry on some propaganda work. Necessarily they should concern themselves with the introduction of Negroes into industries. Since the employer has a position of social responsibility, he opens and closes the gate to jobs and thence the gate to food, clothing and shelter. In most cases, if he takes a firm stand, the white employees will work with the Negro. If he refuses the colored applicant a job, the Negro does not work. The employer is the first hurdle the Negro must overcome.

3. **OF THE LABOR UNIONS**, many through their national bodies pass resolutions in favor of human rights and write letters to Congress protesting against poll taxes and the like. But too often their educational work is limited to resolutions and pronouncements. One excellent type of education is learning by doing. The presence of Negroes within the unions means much more than resolutions. Action is the test of sincerity.

4. **THE SCHOOLS:** The civil governments in the interests of society make education mandatory for youth and in some measure regulate the subjects that are taught. In the school systems today, there could be greater effort towards correcting these false reasons or motives which are behind prejudice against the Negroes, especially in regard to industrial life. Fittingly in the State Department of Education there could be a definite department that would concern itself with stimulating inter-cultural education. This applies to both urban and rural schools, since in some of the cases the white workers refusing to work beside Negroes had left rural areas of Minnesota only within the past four years.

The schools can be commended for including Negroes as teachers on a larger scale, and placing more emphasis on

inter-cultural education. This provides students with a real experience that has a tremendous educational value.

5. **NEWSPAPERS AND RADIO:** These are media through which many persons are reached. Their attitudes on this problem and treatment of releases can do much good or much harm. We have been fortunate in the Twin Cities in having the press and the radio stations show an increasingly positive responsibility in this area. The St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch and the Minneapolis Star and Tribune, through their editorials and policies of reporting news without racial references, have aided greatly in this educational program. In addition, the Minneapolis Tribune has employed a well qualified Negro on their Editorial Staff. The refusal of the Twin Cities paper to carry discriminatory "want-ads" relative to commercial employment has had a constructive effect.

Examples of this cooperation was evidenced by the presentation of several radio documents dealing with problems of discrimination, such as radio station WCCO's series "Neither Free Nor Equal," KSTP's national network presentation "Lest We Forget," and local programs on stations WMIN, WTCN, WLWL, and KUOM.

6. **CIVIC GROUPS:** Consumers are unorganized except for a few cooperative societies; yet, if organized, they could exert tremendous changes in regard to the employment of Negroes. Service and luncheon clubs, whose memberships include many respected and influential persons, could do much to positively affect these problems. Recently, in Minneapolis a cross-section community group called the Joint Committee on Employment Opportunities was created to assist in obtaining job opportunities for minorities. Its program of education and conferences with employers has resulted in new openings in the department stores and demonstrates the potentialities of civic organization movements.

7. **THE URBAN LEAGUES** in the two cities are organizations of white and Negro citizens having full-time secretaries and supported by the Community Chests and their almost exclusive concern is that of widening the job oppor-

tunities for Negroes. It is largely through them that new jobs are opened for Negroes. Their financial programs need to be expanded, so that more time can be given to making contacts with employers and also examining the qualifications of the persons that are sent to work. The Urban League is an excellent corrective of the tendency on the part of some white groups to do things for Negroes rather than with them.

8. **THE NEGROES:** Any group which has faced repeated denials and widespread unemployment is in danger of becoming cynical, indifferent and neglectful of habits indispensable to healthy industrial life. In Minnesota the leaders of Negro communities through churches, lodges, clubs and community houses have worked heroically to keep alive those habits even when there was no objective hope that they would ever be exercised. The leaders of the community must continue those efforts, since punctuality, courtesy and constant application may still be the factors which will spell success in the post-war world.

Minnesota is fortunate in having Negro papers, which while ever alert to protect against all injustices to Negroes, have been ready to direct attention to the failings of its own group. This indeed requires vision and moral courage.

9. **VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS:** Since the war these organizations have become a responsible public force. Minnesota had over 700 Negro veterans return, and it seems extremely fitting that those who served with the Negro soldier, and in some cases saw him make the supreme sacrifice, should be active in the abolishment of job discrimination. Recently, the State American Legion passed a resolution endorsing a State F.E.P.C. Other veteran groups like the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Veterans Committee have taken equal firm positions in this regard.

10. **OTHER ORGANIZATIONS:** In recent years two organizations, the Minneapolis Mayor's Council and the St. Paul Council on Human Relations, have been created, and at present, are doing constructive work in the matter of overall education in this area.

Other organizations such as the Minnesota Jewish Council, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Conference of Christian and Jews also offer good educational resources.

B. Legal

In addition to education, the people of the state have used legal methods to correct this injustice.

1. **STRENGTHENING PRESENT LAWS:** Minnesota, at present, has a statute forbidding discrimination on jobs covered by state contracts. More careful observation of the functioning of this law will do much to broaden job opportunities.

Minneapolis has had a Fair Employment Practice law for two years. It has been severely handicapped by lack of funds and personnel but has done much good work. More employers and applicants should avail themselves of this law and efforts should be made to secure more funds for its administration.

2. **ENACTMENT OF NEW LEGISLATION:** In the summer of 1947, the Commission advised Gov. Edward J. Thye about the need for a fair employment practices statute and he in turn so counseled the members of the state legislature. When he left office, his successor, Gov. Luther W. Youngdahl, in his inaugural speech, also recommended a statewide F.E.P.C. The proposed statutes places emphasis on conciliation but carries provisions for judicial review and enforcement when conciliation fails. The Commission still believes such legislation is necessary for Minnesota and the Governor has again, in 1949, recommended that anti-job discrimination legislation be passed.

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In closing this report, the Commission would like to make one final observation:

Too often, in attempting an objective analysis of a problem such as this, we ignore the human element. It should help one's thinking to remember that we are talking about

human beings who have the same ambitions, the same desires for their families, and the same ideals of America that we all hold so dear.

* * * *

This is the Centennial year. So again the Commission concludes with the paragraphs written first in 1945. They seem to be especially appropriate at this time.

The early settlers of Minnesota were pioneers. They developed the land and cleared the forest. Great waves of immigrants came after them and their children in numbers now dominate the state. Some Negroes were here with the early settlers before those waves of immigrants came in. Because of prejudice, Negro children have suffered while the children of immigrants prospered.

The children of both the early settlers and of those immigrants could pioneer now, not in land but in new patterns of job opportunities for the Negroes. To all the citizens of Minnesota, the Commission suggests the legend which was on the great seal of territorial Minnesota:

"I am resolved to see what lies beyond."