

ALONG THE INTERRACIAL FRONT

OBSERVATIONS BY GEO. EDMOND HAYES

Migrant workers are remaining in the Northwest Pacific in the face of the attitudes of large numbers of older residents in Portland, Ore., Seattle and Spokane, Wash., that they should leave now since the war work is over. The Negro war workers and returning Japanese resettlers are causing racial tensions.

Portland leaders have begun to realize that probably more than fifty per cent of the Negroes who came to build Liberty Ships will remain and possibly more will come. They number now between 18 and 20 thousand. There were less than 2,000 before World War II. Many of them still live at Vanport, the nearby suburb which Kaiser built to house his shipyard workers, and at Vancouver, just across the Columbia River in Washington State. Salem, the capital, fifty miles from Portland, has no Negroes and only a few Japanese-Americans. The latter have settled mainly in the adjoining farming area. Negroes feel the effect of the fears and prejudices against people of color

added to the attitude that all war workers should now return whence they came.

Yet a healthy trend in public opinion is developing. The City Club of Portland approved a report of a special committee to study White-Negro, headed White-Negro relations, headed by J. C. Plankinton, a well-known business man. This excellent report contained nine significant recommendations, among them that the governor of the state and mayor of Portland should appoint interracial committees to work "for the harmonious integration of all elements of our population into the life of our community"

The appointment of a full-time Race Relations Director by the Portland Council of Churches which was an active Interracial Commission and the organization the Portland Urban League with an Executive Secretary to work on industrial problems have given strong impetus to constructive action. The Council of Churches with the co-sponsorship of ten

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other organizations held a Race Relations Clinic in September under the writer's direction with attendance of more than 120 leaders from organizations and agencies. They endorsed the City Club recommendations and agreed upon a program of action on housing and employment to be carried out by the cooperative planning of all interested agencies and groups.

Seattle, More Democratic

Seattle, Wash., has a long tradition of democratic relations. There seems to be less of the attitude that the newcomers should leave forthwith. With the lead of the Seattle Council of Churches and a strong movement to receive returning Japanese-Americans was developed. The Negro population has more than doubled and is now estimated at more than 15,000. Mayor Devin of Seattle openly expressed his view at the Interracial Clinic sponsored by the Seattle Council of Churches that the fears back of racial tensions be brought out into the open and intelligently faced. County Sheriff Callahan told the Clinic that law and order would prevail against any element that attempted to molest or harm minority group members. He cited action he had already taken to protect returned Japanese-Americans.

There have been no acts of violence in the county. The major has appointed a committee on civic unity with a strong business man at its head to guide the community toward interracial peace.

The two-day interracial clinic in September under the auspices of the Council of Churches with the cooperation of many other organizations, faced the facts about

housing and employment conditions of the Negro, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino minorities. agreed upon action that should be taken and authorized the setting up of an interracial council to clear the action through all interested agencies. It is significant that leaders from 173 organizations and agencies, including 98 churches, 10 high schools and 65 civic, labor, business and social work groups approved plans and voted to meet again in six months to check up on results.

Spokane Less Favorable

Spokane, Wash., is one of the most promising rich agricultural areas of the Northwest, now greatly increased by the irrigation waters and electric power from the Grand Coulee dam, 90 miles from the city, has a population of about 150,000 in the county. Negroes from about 3000 and those of Japanese extraction about 1300 of the total city and county population. There is strong anti-Japanese feeling and decided color bars against Negroes. An Interracial Council of liberal citizens and the young Council of Churches are both taking up the task for democracy and brotherhood. They face strong opposition even among the city commissioners. They are studying their problems, however, and courageously taking steps to meet them.

These glimpses of the three committees of the Northwest that are trying to face their racial problems give ground for hope. With the churches, social, civic and economic groups making similar efforts in other cities of our land we shall make headway even in the face of many obstacles toward mental health and social policies that will in time integrate these social minorities and their returning service members into a really democratic way of life.