

## THE NEGRO AND THE LABOR UNIONS

BY BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

WHEN the Negro boy from the Southern states leaves the plantation or the farm and goes up to the city, it is not work, in many cases, that he is looking for. He has labored in the field, beside his father and his mother, since he was old enough to hold a hoe, and he has never known the time when he, and every other member of the family, could not find all the work they needed and more than they wanted. The one thing of which he has always had plenty at home has been work. It is very likely that a promise that he would earn more and do less has turned his steps from the farm; but at bottom it is not the search for easier work or higher wages that brings the country boy to town; it is the natural human desire to see a little more of the place he has heard of over yonder, beyond the horizon — the City.

The thing that takes the country boy to the city, in short, is the desire to learn something, either through books and in school, or in actual contact with daily life, about the world in which he finds himself. One of the first and most surprising things the country boy learns in the city is that work is not always to be had; that it is something a man has to go out and look for. Another thing he very soon learns is that there is a great deal of difference between skilled and unskilled labor, and that the man who has learned to do some one thing well, no matter how small it may be, is looked upon with a certain respect, whether he has a white skin or a black skin; while the man who

has never learned to do anything well simply does not count in the industrial world.

The average Negro learns these things, as I have said, when he comes to the city. I mention them here because in considering the relation of the Negro to the labor unions it should be remembered that the average Negro laborer in the country districts has rarely had the experience of looking for work; work has always looked for him. In the Southern states, in many instances, the employment agent who goes about the country seeking to induce laborers to leave the plantations is looked upon as a kind of criminal. Laws are made to restrict and even prohibit his operations. The result is that the average Negro who comes to the town from the plantations does not understand the necessity or advantage of a labor organization, which stands between him and his employer and aims apparently to make a monopoly of the opportunities for labor.

Another thing which is to some extent peculiar about the Negro in the Southern states, is that the average Negro is more accustomed to work for persons than for wages. When he gets a job, therefore, he is inclined to consider the source from which it comes. The Negro is himself a friendly sort of person, and it makes a great deal of difference to him whether he believes the man he is working for is his friend or his enemy. One reason for this is that he has found in the past that the friendship and confidence of a good white

man, who stands well in the community, are a valuable asset in time of trouble. For this reason he does not always understand, and does not like, an organization which seems to be founded on a sort of impersonal enmity to the man by whom he is employed; just as in the Civil War all the people in the North were the enemies of all the people in the South, even when the man on the one side was the brother of the man on the other.

I have tried to suggest in what I have said why it is true, as it seems to me, that the Negro is naturally not inclined toward labor unions. But aside from this natural disposition of the Negro there is unquestionably a very widespread prejudice and distrust of labor unions among Negroes generally.

One does not have to go far to discover the reason for this. In several instances Negroes are expressly excluded from membership in the unions. In other cases individual Negroes have been refused admittance to unions where no such restrictions existed, and have been in consequence shut out from employment at their trades.

For this and other reasons, Negroes, who have been shut out, or believed they had been shut out, of employment by the unions, have been in the past very willing strike-breakers. It is another illustration of the way in which prejudice works, also, that the strikers seemed to consider it a much greater crime for a Negro, who had been denied an opportunity to work at his trade, to take the place of a striking employee than it was for a white man to do the same thing. Not only have Negro strike-breakers been savagely beaten and even murdered by strikers or their sympathizers, but in some instances every Negro, no matter what his occupation, who lived in the vicinity of the strike has found himself in danger.

Another reason why Negroes are

prejudiced against the unions is that, during the past few years, several attempts have been made by the members of labor unions which do not admit Negroes to membership, to secure the discharge of Negroes employed in their trades. For example, in March, 1911, the white firemen on the Queen and Crescent Railway struck as the result of a controversy over the Negro firemen employed by the road. The white firemen, according to the press reports, wanted the Negro firemen assigned to the poorest runs. Another report stated that an effort was made to compel the railway company to get rid of the Negro firemen altogether.

Shortly after this there was a long controversy between Public Printer Donnelly and the Washington Bricklayers' Union because, so the papers said, Mr. Donnelly would not 'draw the color line' in the employment of bricklayers on a job at the Government Printing Office. It appears that an additional number of bricklayers was needed. Mr. Donnelly drew upon the Civil Service Commission for the required number of men. A colored man was certified by the Commission, whereupon the white bricklayers struck, refusing to work with a Negro. Other Negroes were hired to take the strikers' places. The labor union objected to this and threatened to demand that President Taft remove Mr. Donnelly. These are some of the reasons why Negroes generally have become prejudiced against labor unions.

On the other hand, many instances have been called to my attention in which labor unions have used their influence in behalf of Negroes. On the Georgia and Florida Railway the white and colored firemen struck for higher wages. Mobs composed of both white and black men held up trains. It was reported that the Negroes were as violent in their demonstrations as the

whites. In this instance the strikers won. A recent dispatch from Key West, Florida, stated that the white carpenters in that city had struck because two Negro workmen had been unfairly discharged. The members of the white Carpenters' Union refused to return to work until the Negroes had been reinstated.

At the 1910 National Council of the American Federation of Labor, resolutions were passed urging Negroes and all other races to enter the unions connected with the Federation. Since that time I have learned of activity on the part of the Federation in organizing Negro laborers in New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Pensacola, Richmond, and several other Southern cities. In spite of the impression which prevails generally among colored people that the labor unions are opposed to them, I have known several instances in which Negroes have proven enthusiastic trade-unionists, and in several cases they have taken a leading part in organization and direction, not only in the colored, but in the white unions of which they chanced to be members.

Notwithstanding these facts, some of which seem to point in one direction and some in another, there seems to be no doubt that there is prejudice against Negroes among the members of labor unions and that there is a very widespread prejudice against labor unions among Negroes. These are facts that both parties must reckon with; otherwise, whenever there is a strike, particularly among those trades which have been closed to Negroes, there will always be a considerable number of colored laborers ready and willing to take these positions, not merely from a desire to better their positions as individuals, but also for the sake of widening the race's opportunities for labor.

In such strikes, whatever disadvantages they may have in other respects,

Negroes will have this advantage, that they are engaged in a struggle to maintain their right to labor as free men, which, with the right to own property, is, in my opinion, the most important privilege that was granted to black men as a result of the Civil War.

Under these circumstances the question which presents itself to black men and white men of the laboring classes is this: Shall the labor unions use their influence to deprive the black man of his opportunity to labor, and shall they, as far as possible, push the Negro into the position of a professional 'strike-breaker'; or will the labor unions, on the other hand, admitting the facts to be as they are, unite with those who want to give every man, regardless of color, race or creed, what Colonel Roosevelt calls the 'square deal' in the matters of labor, using their influence to widen rather than to narrow the Negro's present opportunities; to lessen rather than to magnify the prejudices which make it difficult for white men and black men to unite for their common good?

In order to get at the facts in reference to this matter, I recently sent a letter of inquiry to the heads of the various labor organizations in the United States, in which I asked the following three questions:—

What are the rules of your union concerning the admittance of Negroes to membership?

Do Negroes, as a rule, make good union men? If not, what in your opinion is the cause?

What do you advise concerning the Negro and the Trade-Unions?

I confess that I was both interested and surprised by the number and the character of the replies which I received. They not only indicated that the labor leaders had fully considered the question of the Negro laborer, but

they also showed, in many instances, a sympathy and an understanding of the difficulties under which the Negro labors that I did not expect to find. A brief summary of these letters will indicate, better than anything I can say, the actual situation.

In reply to the question, 'What are the rules of your union concerning the admittance of Negroes?' nine unions, all but two of which are concerned with transportation, stated that Negroes are barred from membership. These unions are: the International Brotherhood of Maintenance-of-Way Employees, Switchmen's Union, Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, Order of Railway Conductors of America, Order of Railway Telegraphers, American Wire Weavers' Protective Association, and the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders and Helpers of America.

Fifty-one national labor organizations, several of which are the strongest in the country, reported that there was nothing in their constitutions prohibiting the admittance of Negroes. In fact, many of the constitutions expressly state that there shall be no discrimination because of race or color. This is the case, for example, with the Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers' Union. The constitution of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners contains the following statement: 'We recognize that the interests of all classes of labor are identical regardless of occupation, nationality, religion or color, for a wrong done to one is a wrong done to all.'

Mr. Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, replying to the question concerning the admission of Negroes to labor unions wrote: 'Realizing the necessity for the unity of the wage-earners of our

country, the American Federation of Labor has upon all occasions declared that trade unions should open their portals to all wage-workers irrespective of creed, color, nationality, sex, or politics. Nothing has transpired in recent years which has called for a change in our declared policy upon this question; on the contrary, every evidence tends to confirm us in this conviction; for even if it were not a matter of principle, self-preservation would prompt the workers to organize intelligently and to make common cause.'

With two exceptions the answers to my question, 'Do Negroes in your opinion make good Union men?' were that they do.

Mr. Ralph V. Brandt, of Cleveland, secretary-treasurer of the Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers' Union, wrote: 'I regret to say I must answer "no" to this question. We have had several locals in the South,' he continues, 'where the membership was made up either exclusively of Negroes or a large majority, and we have had only two out of the entire number that have made a success. One of these locals is in Savannah, Georgia, and the other in Charleston, South Carolina, and, as it happens, both of these are among the earliest locals chartered by our organization. I have had this situation come under my personal observation in our locals in this city, of which I am a member, and I must say that the Negro lathers in Cleveland have failed absolutely in meeting the general requirements of union men.'

The letter goes into details, describing the various efforts, all of them unsuccessful, which the local unions made to induce the Negro lathers to re-affiliate. They were promised recognition in the governing board of the union and, at the suggestion of some of the colored lathers, one of their number was recognized as a contractor, but

these measures also failed of their purpose.

Another letter to much the same effect was received from the secretary of the Tobacco Workers' International Union. The secretary wrote: 'Our experience has been that very few of them have turned out to be such [good union men]. They have a large Union in Richmond, Va., all colored men, and only a few of the whole membership are what I would call union men. They do not seem to grasp the significant feature of the trade-union [movement].'

Mr. B. A. Larger, general secretary of the United Garment Makers of America, said: 'I think the Negroes working in the trades do make good union men, but I do not think that the Negro waiters make good union men, as I have had some experience in trying to organize them. They would be well organized and apparently have a strong organization, but in a short time it would go to pieces. Among them there would be some good loyal members, but not sufficient [in numbers] to keep up the organization.'

'I am unable,' he adds, 'to give a definite reason except, perhaps, that it might be the fault of the head waiter, who would induce some person to go into the organization and break it up. Nevertheless, it is true that they are the most difficult to organize of any class of people.'

A somewhat different light is thrown upon the situation by a letter from Mr. Jacob Fisher, general secretary of the Journeymen Barbers' International Union. This letter is so interesting that I am disposed to quote from it at considerable length. 'In my opinion,' Mr. Fisher writes, 'Negro trade-unionists make as good members as any others, and I believe that the percentage of good trade-unionists among the Negroes is just as high as of any other class of people; but the percentage of

Negroes of our trade belonging to our organization is not as high as among other classes. One of the greatest obstacles we have to confront, in inducing and urging the Negroes to become members of our organization, is a general current rumor that the white barbers are trying to displace and put out of business the Negro barbers. There is no foundation whatever for the rumor, but it has become generally spread among the Negro barbers, and this feeling has been urged upon them more strongly than it would otherwise be, by Negro employers, who do everything they can, as a general rule, to keep their employees from joining our trade-union. We have tried for years to impress upon the minds of Negro barbers that their best hope for better conditions lies in becoming members of our organization. But the feeling that exists among them has been so impressed upon their minds by no one else except the Negro employer, as to make it a very difficult matter to induce individual Negro barbers to become members of our organization.'

Mr. Fisher adds that a few years ago a large percentage of the barbers were Germans. In more recent years Jews and Italians have been getting into the barber business in large numbers. Barbers of all of these nationalities are 'rapidly becoming educated' in the trade-union movement, and are active in bringing other members of the trade of their nationalities into the union. 'On the other hand,' he continues, 'the Negro barbers, while loyal to the movement and active in the affairs within the organization, do not direct their attention to the unorganized Negro barbers and use their endeavors to educate them in trade-union matters.'

The Mine Workers' Union has the largest Negro membership of any of the labor unions. Mr. John Mitchell,

the former president, states that, 'while there are no exact statistics as to the number of Negro members of the United Mine Workers of America, it is safe to say that not less than 30,000 of the 300,000 members are Negroes. Many important offices are filled by colored members.'

'The Negroes who are mining coal in the Northern states,' he adds, 'make first-class union men. In the Southern states where Negroes are employed in large numbers in the mining industry, unionism is not so strong. This, however, is in part accounted for by the fact that the mine-owners oppose strongly the organization of their workmen, and the miners are so poor that they cannot contend successfully against the corporations unless they are supported financially by the organized men in other states.'

Mr. Edwin Perry, secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers of America, replying to the question, 'Do Negroes make good union men?' wrote: 'I say unequivocally, "yes," and point with pride to the fact that the largest local branch of our organization has at least 80 per cent colored men. It is progressive and up to date in all things. This local is located in my home state at Buxton, Iowa.'

'It is possible,' he adds, 'that misguided individuals may, in some isolated instances, discriminate against the Negro, but when our attention is called to the same, we endeavor to overcome that condition by the application of intelligence and common sense. The time is not far distant when the working men and women of our country will see the necessity of mutual coöperation and the wiping out of existence of all class lines.'

Mr. John Williams of Pittsburg, president of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, stated that the laws of his association

provide that 'all men working in and around rolling mills are eligible to membership.' No line of demarcation is drawn. He was of the opinion that Negroes, if given the opportunity, make good union men. He also advised that Negroes should be educated in the principles and ideals for which the labor-union movement stands.

In view of the newspaper reports from time to time concerning the discrimination against Negro chauffeurs, the statement of Mr. Thomas L. Hughes, general secretary-treasurer of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen and Helpers, concerning Negroes in labor-unions is particularly interesting.

'I have had considerable dealing with colored men as members of our trade-union,' he writes. 'In every instance where the colored men have been organized, we find them to be loyal to our union in every shape and manner. To say that they make good union men is only putting it too lightly. We have local unions composed entirely of Negroes in certain parts of the country that are a credit to our international union.'

In many localities Negroes, Mr. Hughes asserts, belong to the same organization as white men and get on satisfactorily. In many of the large local unions, where there are both, the colored membership is large. The officers of the organization are also colored.

The secretary of the Amalgamated Meat-Cutters and Butchers' Workmen, replying to my question, 'Do Negroes make good union men?' said, 'I will say that the Negro averages up with the white man and I cannot see any difference, as it is all a matter of education. Both classes improve as they become more familiar with the work. I might say, incidentally, that one of the best and most conscientious officials we have is a Negro member of

our local union in Kingston, N. Y. He is a man who not only has the entire confidence of his associates in the organization, but is held in the highest esteem by the entire community and, as an officer, stands second to none.'

The answers to the question, 'What do you advise concerning the Negro and Trade Unions?' were practically unanimous in advising that the Negro be organized and educated in the principles of trade-unionism. Even the leaders of those unions which bar out the Negro advised that he be organized. The president of the Switchmen's Union, Mr. S. E. Heberling, wrote: 'The laws of our union will not permit Negroes to join, the constitution using the term "white." However,' he adds, 'I advise that the Negroes in all trades organize to better their condition. This organization, in reference to Negroes following the occupation of switchmen, has advised the American Federation of Labor, with whom we are affiliated, to grant the Negroes charters as members of the Federal Labor Union. I hope your race will take advantage of the opportunities afforded them.'

Mr. H. B. Perham, of St. Louis, president of the Order of Railroad Telegraphers, wrote: 'The Order of Railroad Telegraphers is a white man's organization, that provision having been in its constitution since its inception twenty-six years ago. I advise the organization to help the poor man to a better standard of living, better education, resistance of injustice and the like. As the Negro, generally speaking, is poor, he needs organization.'

Mr. John J. Flynn, of Chicago, secretary and treasurer of the Brotherhood of Railroad Freight Handlers, wrote: 'I believe that a campaign of education should be started among the Negro workers of the country, this education to dwell principally on the fact that in organization there is strength

and that the surest way to rise above their present condition is to become members of labor organizations that their craft calls for. In short, the best way for the Negro to improve his present condition is to become a member of a branch of the labor movement which covers his craft.'

Mr. James Wilson, general president of the Pattern Makers' League, said: 'I would advise that the Negro be taught to join the union of whatever occupation he is following, and if there is no union of that calling, that he organize one, for there is no greater educational movement in the country for all wage-earners than the trade-union movement.'

Mr. E. J. Brais, general secretary of the Journeyman Tailors' Union, wrote: 'Our opinion is and our advice would be that the Negroes should organize trade-unions by themselves under the jurisdiction, of course, of the American Federation of Labor, being governed by the same rules in all their trades as the white mechanics. We believe in that case, if they organize into separate locals in the various trades and insist upon the same scale of wages as their white brethren, it would be a source of strength to both elements.'

Mr. James Duncan, international secretary of the Granite Cutters' International Association of America, replied in substance as follows to my inquiry: 'I advise concerning Negroes and trade-unions, that they be organized the same as white people are organized, mixed with white people, where that is advisable, but in local unions by themselves where circumstances make it advisable for white people and Negroes being in separate organizations.'

Mr. Duncan stated that the rule did not prohibit Negroes joining the union, but throughout the South granite-cutting was usually considered a 'white man's trade.' Because of the feeling

in the South he believed that Southern granite-cutters would not be disposed to work at that trade with Negroes.

'This,' he added, 'is sentiment, and forms no part of the rules of our association.'

I have quoted at some length the statements made by the labor leaders, because it seemed to me that these statements not only disclose pretty accurately the position of the labor organizations as a whole, in reference to the Negro, but indicate, also, the actual situation of the Negro at the present time in the world of organized industry. In this connection it should be remembered that the labor unions are not primarily philanthropic organizations. They have been formed to meet conditions as they exist in a competitive system where, under ordinary circumstances, every individual and every class of individuals is seeking to improve its own condition at the expense, if necessary, of every other individual and class. It is natural enough, under such conditions, that union men should be disposed to take advantage of race prejudice to shut out others from the advantages which they enjoy.

The leaders of the labor movement, however, see clearly that it is not possible permanently to close, to the million or more Negro laborers in this country, the opportunity to take the positions which they are competent to fill. They have observed, also, that race prejudice is a two-edged sword, and that it is not to the advantage of organized labor to produce among the Negroes a prejudice and a fear of labor unions such as to create in this country a race of strike-breakers. The result has been that in every part of the United States where Negro laborers have become strong enough in any of the trades to be able to hold their own, the Negro has been welcomed into the unions, and the prejudice which shut

him out from these trades has disappeared.

As an illustration of this fact, I cannot do better than quote a few paragraphs from the report of the English Industrial Commission in 1911 in regard to labor conditions in the Southern states, which gives a very clear and, I think, accurate description of local conditions in cities to which it refers.

Concerning the Negro labor unions in the Birmingham district, the English Industrial Commission reported: 'It is not owing to the existence of any very sympathetic feeling between the white men and the Negroes that the latter are allowed to join the union; it is simply because the white men feel that their interest demands that colored men should be organized, as far as possible, so as to prevent them from cutting down the rate of wages. Wherever a sufficient number of colored men can be organized, they are encouraged to form a union of their own, affiliated to the white man's union, but where there are not enough to form a separate union, they are allowed in the South to become members of the white man's organization.

'The building and mining industries,' the report continues, 'are the two in which the white and colored races come into the most direct competition with each other, yet it cannot be said that in either of these industries a situation exists which occasions friction. No doubt in both industries the white men would like to monopolize the skilled work for themselves, but they recognize that that is impossible and make the best of the situation. . . . The white men make it quite clear that their connection with the colored men is purely a matter of business and involves no social recognition whatever. It is in the mining industry that the relations between the two races, though working side by side, in direct compe-



tion, are smoothest. They acted together in the great strike of 1902, and in fact the good feeling between the whites and the colored men was used with great effect by the opponents of the strikers, who charged the white miners with disloyalty to their race.'

In New Orleans the Commission found a very interesting situation which is described as follows: 'It is probable that in New Orleans there is a larger number of white and Negro people in very much the same economic position than in any other American city, or anywhere else in the world. The industries of New Orleans are of a kind which employ mainly unskilled or semi-skilled labor, with the result that both white men and Negroes are found doing the same kind of work and earning the same rate of pay. . . . The various unions combine in maintaining the Dock and Cotton Council, which dominates the entire business of compressing, carting, and loading cotton. . . . By arrangement between the Dock and Cotton Council and the employers, work has to be impartially apportioned between the white compress gangs and the colored gangs.'

In the letters from which I have so far quoted the writers have been content, for the most part, simply to answer the questions asked them, and sometimes, when they have not come into contact with the racial problem involved, have been disposed to discuss the advantages of labor organizations in the abstract. More interesting are the letters which I have received from labor men who have come into close quarters with the problem, in their efforts to organize Negro labor in the face of existing conditions.

As these letters indicate better than any discussion on my own part, the way the problem works out in practice, it will be well, perhaps, to let the writers speak for themselves,

One of the most interesting letters which I received was from Mr. M. J. Keough, of Cincinnati, acting president of the International Moulders' Union. Mr. Keough wrote that one of the national officers of the Moulders' Association, who was a Southerner by birth, had been devoting a very considerable part of his time in trying to organize the Negro Moulders of the South. In Chattanooga, for example, there were between six and eight hundred moulders, whom they had been trying, with no great success, to get into the union.

'Of course you are aware,' he continues, 'that there is a certain feeling in the South against the Negro, but we have succeeded in overcoming that, and have educated our members to the fact that if the Negro moulder of Chattanooga is not brought up to the level of the white man, he, the Negro, will eventually drag the white man down to his condition. It is our purpose to continue the agitation in order to have a thorough organization of the Negro moulders of Chattanooga.'

'We find there is considerable opposition on the part of the employers in Chattanooga to the Negro moulders joining the union. I might state we have a shop on strike in which practically all of the men were Negro moulders and are being supported by our organization. The employers are having these Negro moulders out on strike arrested for loitering, etc., and have put us to considerable expense in keeping our Negro members, who are on strike, out of jail. In conclusion let me state that we are very anxious that the Negro moulders should become members of our organization and enjoy all its rights and privileges.'

Another important letter in this connection was received from Mr. John P. Frey, editor of the *International Moulders' Journal*. He said: 'As I made

many earnest efforts to organize Negro moulders in the South some twelve years ago and met with almost complete failure, owing to what appeared to be the Negroes' suspicion as to the genuineness of our intentions, it is but natural that I should still be interested in the question. While a Northerner, I have spent sufficient time in the Southern states to become familiar personally with the several phases presented by the question of the Negro status, both socially and industrially.'

In his further reply to my question, Mr. Frey referred to an editorial in a recent issue of the iron-moulders' official organ. In this editorial the statement was made that the fact that there were so few Negroes in the Moulders' Union was due largely to race prejudice.

'As the years rolled by,' the editor continues, 'our members in the South realized that the question of Negro membership was an industrial one. The castings made by the Negroes were worth as much as those made by white men, but they might be sold for less in the open market because the Negro was forced to work for much smaller wages. It was not a question of social equality, but a question of competition in the industrial field. Other trade-unions in the South have faced the same problem and have been even more ready, in some instances, to take the Negro mechanic or laborer into their ranks. Not long ago the largest union in the South, No. 255, of Birmingham, Alabama, gave the question thorough consideration, with the result that it decided to take qualified Negro mechanics into membership. Their action may not have been in line with the sentiment of twenty years ago, but it was in line with justice to themselves and to the Negro who had learned the trade, for industrial competition pays no heed to questions

of social equality. In our trade, the Negro has become an industrial factor in the South, and the wise policy of giving him the benefit of membership in our organization will not be of value to him alone, but to every one who works at moulding. To expect that race prejudice and social questions will be eliminated or adjusted in a generation or two, is to expect too much; but the question of the Negro moulder is neither one of race nor of social equality; it is purely one of industrial competition.'

Mr. Frey referred, also, to an article by Mr. Nick Smith, who is a Southerner by birth and training, has worked all his life as a moulder in the South, and is now organizer of his union. In this article Mr. Smith said in part: 'If we want to make the Negro a good union man, we will have to grant him the same privileges and the same treatment in the shop that is enjoyed by the white moulder. Treat the Negro square; allow him to work in our shops when he presents his union card, and we will take away from the foundryman his most effective tool, the Negro strike-breaker. Refuse the Negro this privilege and the foundryman will continue to use him to trim us with when we have trouble. The Negro is here, and here to stay, and is going to continue to work at moulding, and it is for us to say whether he shall work with us as a union moulder, or against us as a tool in the foundryman's hands and a strike-breaker. When a Negro comes to your town, do what you can to see that he gets a job, and is treated as a union man should be treated. Refuse to do this and you force him to allow the foundryman to use him as a club to beat us into submission. The I. M. U. has spent considerable money and time to get the Negro moulder educated up to the point where he is to-day, and the refusal of the white moulder to work with the Negro will undo all that has

been accomplished. Brothers, it is up to us to think it over.'

Mr. William J. Gilthorpe of Kansas City, secretary-treasurer of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders and Helpers, said: 'Being a Southern man myself, in breeding and education, I naturally think that I am acquainted with the colored people. I served, in 1880, in New Orleans with the colored delegates to the central body, and I want to say that the colored delegates were as true and loyal to the principles of true labor movement as any delegate in that body. They make the best of union men. There is no trouble with them whatever. In answer to your question I say this: The rules of this organization do not permit them to be initiated into this order. Now I am one of those who advocate the organization of the colored men, as well as the white men. I possess a few followers, but this is a principle that is going to live, and it is going to be an established fact, in this order, sooner or later. As far as my advice goes, and humble efforts, I would say organize them in every case where they are eligible.'

Mr. Frank Duffy, general secretary of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, wrote: 'I wish to inform you that we do not draw the color line in our organization, as is evidenced by the fact that throughout the Southern states we have in the United Brotherhood twenty-five unions composed exclusively of colored men. We have found in our experience that where there are colored carpenters in great numbers, it is an absolute necessity both for their advancement and for the welfare of the white carpenters as well, to organize them. We have a colored organizer in the South, Mr. J. H. Bean, who has done splendid work in getting the colored carpenters together.'

In order to find out what were the experiences and views of colored union men, I communicated with Mr. Bean and received a very interesting reply. He wrote that he had been connected with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America for more than twelve years and had been a delegate to every national convention but one since 1902. Since October, 1908, he has been continually engaged as general organizer for colored carpenters in nine Southern states. 'During that time,' he added, 'I have met with some opposition from both races, until they saw that one carpenter is largely dependent upon another, and to organize our forces in the right way is not only helpful to one but to all engaged in similar work. Then their opposition ceased.'

One of the easiest things in the world, I have found, is prophecy, and there have been a good many prophecies in regard to the Negro. Some persons have said there is no future for the Negro, because, in the long run, he cannot compete with the white man, and, as a consequence, in the course of time the Negro will be crowded out of America and forced to go to some other country.

Other persons say that the future is dark for the Negro because, as soon as it appears that the black man is actually able to live and work alongside of the white man in competition for the ordinary forms of labor, racial prejudice will be so intensified that the Negro will be driven out of the country or he will be reduced to some form of industrial servitude and compelled to perform the kind of work that no white man is willing to do.

While the letters I have quoted do not tell the whole story of the Negro and the unions, they at least throw some light upon the value of the predictions to which I have just referred.

They indicate, at any rate, that the Negro, as a matter of fact, can and does compete with the white laborer, wherever he has an opportunity to do so. They show also that, on the whole, the effect of this competition is not to increase but to lessen racial prejudice.

It is nevertheless true, that the prejudice of the Negro against the unions, on the one hand, and of the white man against the black, on the other, is used sometimes by the unions to shut the Negro from the opportunity of labor, sometimes by the employer to injure the work of the unions. In the long run, however, I do not believe that, in the struggle between capital and labor, either party is going to let the other use the sentiment of the community in regard to the race question to injure it in an industrial way.

When, for example, the capitalist, as has sometimes happened, says that Negro and white laborers must not unite to organize a labor union, because that would involve 'social equality,' or when, as has happened in the past, the white laborer says the Negro shall not work at such and such trades, not because he is not competent to do so, but because he is a Negro, the interest in 'social equality,' so far as it refers to those particular matters mentioned, tends to decrease.

So long as there is any honest sentiment in favor of keeping the races apart socially, I do not believe the unions or the public are willingly going to permit individuals to take a dishonest advantage of that sentiment. On the contrary, so far as the labor unions are concerned, I am convinced that these organizations can and will become an important means of doing away with the prejudice that now exists in many parts of the country against the Negro laborer. I believe that they will do this not merely, as Mr. Gompers has said, from 'principle,' but be-

cause it is to their interest to do so. At present, however, that prejudice exists and it is natural that individuals should make use of it to their own advantage. If proprietors of Negro barber shops seek to prejudice their workmen, as is reported, against the white unions, so that they may pay them less wages, it is likewise true that some white unions take advantage of the existing prejudice wholly to exclude colored men from some of the trades in which they are perfectly competent to work.

There is, in my opinion, need for a campaign of education not only among Negro artisans but among white artisans as well. With every such effort of the labor leaders to create a sentiment among white men, as well as colored, which will permit both races to work together for their common good, I am heartily in sympathy.

In spite of all that has been said to the contrary, we are making progress in the solution of this, as of other problems connected with the relations of the races in this country. To say that we are not is pretty much the same as saying that, in spite of all our efforts, the world is growing worse instead of better. Justice, fair play, and a disposition to help rather than to injure one's fellow are not only good things in themselves, but in the long run they are the only things that pay, whether in the case of an individual, a group of individuals, or a race.

It seems to me that the letters to which I have referred in this article show clearly that the leaders of the labor organizations fully realize what the masses of laboring men must inevitably come to see, namely, that the future belongs to the man, or the class of men, who seeks his own welfare, not through the injury or oppression of his fellows, but in some form of service to the community as a whole.