

SPECIAL MEETINGS--COLORED DELEGATES

April 11, 1944

G. E. Peters

We shall need the guidance and direction from the General Brethren from time to time. This is a safeguard that all our colored leaders appreciate. I am certainly glad that this is here.

In the past year we baptized and added to the colored department over 1000 souls. We made our tabulations by writing to the conference treasurers and we are proud of our membership and financial report that we have submitted to you.

In coming to this meeting I had no set thing in mind of what form of organization ought to be voted. I had a clear conviction that we should not remain status quo. I wrote to the General Conference officers asking them to tell me what they had in mind to offer as a form of organization. They had counselled among themselves, but they could not be definite in their decisions. There is one thing that I am grateful for, and that is, we didn't come here as a group of workers to make demands. We were the invited guests of the General Conference to listen to what they had proposed.

This is not the same spirit that was in the 1930 meeting. I now feel confident that the time had not come in 1930 for this enlargement. There is a spirit of unity among the colored workers, now, that did not exist, then. We must be very careful in going back to our field of labor that we give the right setting to this thing. Don't present it so that our people will become over elated and stop everything else. I think we ought to be conservative in presenting the matter. We should remember, all the way through, this thing is to propell a greater evangelism. We ought to go back to our field and assume a more careful and humble attitude than ever. All eyes will be turned upon us. We ought to go to work, and work harder for souls and missions than we have ever done before.

I have asked Elder McElhany to come and speak a few words to us. We have always looked upon Elder McElhany as a God-fearing man, and one that stands for principle. We certainly appreciate his leadership and what he has done for us.

J. L. McElhany

I think you are all conscious of the fact that I have not had time to prepare a speech. I will have to talk to you from my heart. I am very glad indeed to have this opportunity to meet with you. When Brother Peters spoke to me about coming, I felt at once that it was the thing I would love to do.

J. L. McElhany

I think those of you who were here in the large committee meeting remember my speaking of the growth and development of the colored people; especially since 1930. From that time to the present, I have watched this work with great interest. I am here to tell you that I feel happy over the way things have developed in the colored department. I have recognized for sometime that there must be some forward steps made in providing for a greater enlargement and the growth of our work. I came to this meeting with an open mind. I didn't anytime try to fix in my mind any definite thing; only that I felt we ought to plan in such a way that we should see growth and advancement for the colored work. As I listened to the speeches and counsels of our brethren, it became very clear in my mind that the Lord was leading us in the right direction. I thank God for that. If there was anything that we needed, it was the encouragement in our hearts to see that the Lord was leading.

It is wonderful to know that when something is to be done, when some situation is to be mapped out, some way the Lord just works things around so that everything in the situation goes together. I have felt that the Lord has been here with us and helped us in working out these plans. It gives me great joy in my heart, for I realize that the Lord is leading.

I think you can see very definitely that the action taken concerning the conferences is going to create a situation that will call for careful study and planning. Just by way of illustrating: The Illinois Conference has always regarded the group of colored believers as an important part of their membership. When they are set off into a conference, it will create an adjustment in the affairs of the Illinois Conference. I know they recognize the importance of the colored believers. It will take the brethren a little time to make these adjustments.

I am also conscious of the fact that all over the field in the churches the members will be very anxious to know what was done. I think it is highly proper that you should acquaint them with what was done in the right manner. In doing this, I believe you can lead the churches to deeper consecration to the Lord. Help them to realize that the Lord is leading. Help them to maintain a courageous heart, and a spirit of patience. For example: One of the lay men here, told me we were wrong in planning for the conferences. He was especially concerned that some of the brethren would be carried away by their ambitions. I tried to help him to see that it is operating in other places and that it is working successfully. Furthermore the Lord was leading us in finding ways and means of greater advancement for the work. What are you going to do with men like this? The cooperation we receive from men like this, will largely be from the way you relate yourselves to the situation. I don't believe there are selfish ambitious men here. If anyone of you ever get in office you have a great surprise. If a man knows what leadership requires he will never run after it. The man that has it certainly has a large share of heartaches and troubles and problems to settle.

I think of the laymen who tried to attend the special pre-council meeting to which they were not invited. I told them that if it was a personal matter I could see them myself, but since this meeting was called

by the General Conference committee and they had made arrangements for this meeting, there was only one alternative for me. If they insisted on attending it, I would have to make a motion to adjourn and call a meeting of the General Conference Committee and they would decide if they could attend. There are times when we have to be firm.

At the meeting that was held in 1930 we reached certain conclusions that seemed to clarify the situation then. If the Lord give us fourteen more years to work in this world, I have no doubt the brethren will look back to this meeting held in Chicago and say that the Lord was with us in that thing, and the Lord was evidently leading.

I am hoping that as these new organizations take affect that we have the fullest cooperation and confidence of our laity. This is of inestimable value. I believe this new organization among the lay members ought to be put out of existence as soon as they go back. A lay members organization, such as this, was begun among the white people of New Jersey some years ago; but after we counselled with them they disbanded their organization.

Don't do anything that will discourage our lay members. I am going to help as many brethren as I have an opportunity to talk with. I believe the good Lord will help. Try to bring about a spirit of unity. Just as fast as the conferences ask for this commission, the General Conference will appoint the men that have been suggested and give council in these things. There are some enthusiastic people who will want the entire thing finished before next Sabbath. It will take time.

The primary purpose of existence of the church in the world is to win souls in the kingdom of God. I know you brethren will all feel that the greatest and highest privilege that can come to anyone is the winning of souls. The happiest hours that I have ever spent in this work was when I was an evangelist. I spent a number of years as an evangelist before I ever had even much to do with any of our churches. I have often felt that it was the best kind of experience that could have come to me. It is a wonderful experience.

I thank you for the privilege of talking with you and telling you a few of the things that were on my heart. I will be glad to work along and bring these things about in the most ordinary way.

G. E. Peters

We thank you very much for your remarks. We brethren have watched you very closely through your administration. We have come to realize in our hearts that you are a man of God and deeply interested in the colored work. We thank you for your patient and forbearance with us. We know we have made mistakes. Many times we have contributed to your headaches, but it was not done intentionally.

Bringing about this organization, we feel that we need experience. We need the experience of leaders like you to help us. It is our purpose to keep the objective in view. This new organization is not to push someone

to a great station. The object in view is to bring more souls in the true.

We thank you for your words again. We want to assure you that we want to give you the assurance of our loyalty.

F. L. Peterson

I think this is one of the most outstanding moves that have ever been made for us. I am not in the habit of criticizing Seventh-day Adventist for all the things they do that I don't like. All that I am and ever accomplished is because I depended on God. I am grateful for what is being done. The thing that has impressed me is the fine spirit in which this organizing of colored conferences has been done. I believe that it is going to have a wholesome affect on all our people throughout North America.

Whenever we used to say colored conferences many people thought we meant separation. I feel that it will be a very fine thing to give an explanation in the Review of this organization, so that our people will know that this is something that has been handed down by the General Conference to us. If this is done it will help us. They will understand that this is a General Conference idea..

I don't hand out many flowers. I would like to say that during the eleven years I was secretary of the department, and at times it seemed that we weren't going to get certain things; I have always felt I could go to Elder McElhaney and he would bring it about.

This organization will bring the young people courage and something to look forward to in the denomination. They can look forward to more than just teaching school.

I think this is a very fine thing that we have come to. I believe that this means we are going to finish the work. I was told never to mention conferences. Don't ever mention them! I am glad I didn't mention them. I am more than glad that it is now here.

M. A. Burgess

I realize through Elder Peters great things have been done for our department. He has also helped me to do what I have accomplished. At this time, I would like to have us show our appreciation for his leadership by rising.

DELEGATES STOOD FOR VOTE OF APPRECIATION

G. E. Peters

I thank you for your vote of appreciation. I have only made accomplishments through God. I do want you to remember, however, that if our people believe that we are divided on this thing, we will bring about a great deal of confusion.

April 12, 1944

Dr. Olsen, of the Home Study Institute, spoke concerning the Bible Home Study Plan.

RIVERSIDE SANITARIUM

Motion: O. A. Troy: "In each church ask the Medical Missionary Secretary, and those who do not have one, to elect a Medical Missionary secretary to represent Riverside each Sabbath in receiving donations.

Seconded: M. A. Burgess

April 13, 1944

MESSAGE MAGAZINE

^{R.}
E. Crawford--Circulation Manager of the Message Magazine.

Note: "As far as the single copies are concerned, the "Message Magazine" sells as much as "Life & Health," "Health" and Watchman put together."--R. E. Crawford

Finis

T. H. Coopwood

There is no question that this is God's way and the only way in these last days.

I happen to have in my possession, at least in my pocket, a letter. This person is insisting that we continue with what we have. Two years ago a white brother said, "I don't see why the General Conference doesn't take over the colored work and run it." There are some of our group who look forward to conferences because of exalted places and authority. There may be some of the other group who don't want to be bothered with us. Perhaps this is the reason they would like to have colored conference to get rid of us.

We should come together like the disciples. They realized their trouble. There was strife among them. They put it away and all their difficulties and the HOLY SPIRIT came upon them. (Joel 2:15-17.

The colored conferences is not in my mind what we need. We need to get closer together and have a more cooperative spirit. We have now a form of organization to last until the Lord comes.

Hooper

The laymen think that the head officials are not interested whether the colored receive a higher education. My son made application to P. U. C. They sent him the forms and he filled them out. After received the application at P. U. C., they must have decided the picture had stayed in the oven too long. Perhaps this racial difference is the thing that we are trying to solve. We are not asking for equal social opportunities. We want the same educational opportunities as the white.

I am positive that God will frown on us if we do not do the right thing. I am not here to apostatize. Let us have our colored conferences if we please. Perhaps our preachers haven't gotten a vision. They need a vision. I am helping to pass on to you this vision. Let us have the same success as the white people have in their conferences. There is nothing wrong with a colored brother being over a colored conference. He has the same kind of brain if the opportunity presents itself. I can't do anything unless I have an opportunity.

God loves me just as much as he loves a white person. We should unite together and finish the work. We are living in a time of the judgment and it should be our desire to finish the work quickly. Let us work together and put over this program. It CAN BE DONE. A colored conference can be managed by colored brethren.

G. E. Peters

I am not in favor of maintaining a status quo form of organization. I haven't got wisdom enough to decide while on the floor the kind of organization that we should have. Any one person's ability is not sufficient to decide this matter. I have studied my people. I wrote the General Conference and mentioned that we should come with something definite in mind so that we could avoid confusion. I did this because I know my people from infancy. We ought to decide on a policy that spells progress and give it to our friends. This is a serious matter. I don't believe that this is a time for office seeking. The salvation of the 13,000,000 colored souls in the United States is at stake.

In 1930 I listened to more speeches against the progress of the colored people than we have had today. Fortunately the speakers today are sincere. We have confidence in them. In 1930 several of the men who fought against the advanced step of the colored work are not in the work today. Those same men were not bringing in souls. They were doing a very small work. They were not in touch with the Negro to a great extent. They thought if they would say something to the white folk, they would then be sure of a job for life. Everyone is present today, of those who stood for progress in 1930.

I am not a radical. I am not an agitator. Nothing is accomplished without God. Pardon my personal reference, but I have through the help of God brought in about 3,000 souls. In one meeting I baptized 145 without stopping. At the close of the meeting 250 souls were won to Christ. God has given me the ability to lead. I suppose that I have erected more churches than any of the brethren, but yet I am standing for progress TODAY.

I maintain that it stands out very clearly, if we continue to maintain the Status Quo form of organization, that we need something for the colored people in the Southwestern. This is shown very definitely. It is also quite evident that something new is needed where my good friend, Clarke, is located. For example, in the Southern New England Conference there are only 349 colored Adventists, this shows that something is needed to propell the work to our colored people.

What am I to say that we should have colored conferences? Whatever it is that takes to bring all classes of Negroes into this message, that is the thing that I am after. We must have a greater evangelism. It is not a matter to insure one's bread and butter as the years go by. We should have some organization that will give us a future. It is not a matter of simply pleasing public sentiment. That does not ring with God's people.

God gave Eldar Blunden a vision for his publishing department. LOOK how under this plan our colored men have advanced. This shows that colored people can lead. Today is a high day for our men in the publishing department. We can also look at Oakwood and see what God has done with colored leadership. We are proud of Oakwood.

I remembered how the colored people cried when they were taken out of the white church herein Chicago. Now the colored church is the largest we have in the Lake Union. It shows how God can bless under your own leadership.

G. E. Peters (cont.)

We should decide whether we should have a colored conference. It ought to be very carefully considered. I don't believe that we should try it in the whole field at the same time. I believe our people have leadership. We aren't ashamed of our progress. I don't believe that we should continue under the present plan of the Status Quo.

J. Gershom Dasent

A strong protest arose against the employing of a Negro Secretary for the colored work some years ago. I came to this country just about that time. The denomination decided to let us have a colored leader in the Department. We have had three colored leaders and God has blessed the work under their leadership. Oakwood is managed by a colored president. We have more students there than we have ever had before. We look at the "Message Magazine." God has set His stamp of approval upon it.

We are living in a time when the Negro is seeking for something more and better than political, economical, social and church affairs.

We shouldn't continue the Status Quo. What we should do is to take a stand for something different. We have tried everything save a colored conference. This shows that something should be done. If we have tried everything else why not try a colored conference?

In 1930 I stood against this very thing of a colored conference. I believe the time has come when we need something more than what we have. The greater work is in front of us. May the Lord give us wisdom and guidance that whatever decisions we arrive at, might be for the furtherance of His cause.

J. H. Williams

We have grown too large to be satisfied with so little. The present plan is far from being satisfactory. I am in favor of making a move that we have colored conferences, if we have the men to handle them. If the local Conference is not in favor of it, it would be just an ornament. It is quite true that something is needed where I am located.

E. S. Dillett

If we have twenty conferences it would not take care of the present issue that is confronting us. I am for progress. If you should organize a colored conference at this meeting and the majority ruled, I will be

E. S. Dillett (cont.)

glad to go along with it and sell books and do the janitor work if it is necessary to make the conference set-up a success.

I am not a race man, even though I am in the race. I am against my race if my race is wrong. I love my brethren. Recently at the meeting held in Topeka the white brethren did not let me know that I was a Negro. We had a wonderful meeting. I have eaten dinner with my conference president, and sat between he and his wife. They were most cordial and did not let me know that I was colored. In St. Louis the Young People of my church go to the White church and have programs. We are made to feel at home.

I am anxious for my people.

(Mentioned the conditions and prejudice that exist in our colleges)
We do not have a copy of the paper prepared by him and read at this time.)

J. G. Thomas

I believe we have in the Southern Union the best plan for colored people. We have today a strong leadership among our workers. I don't believe there is a better fellowship anywhere than among the men in the Southern Union. We appreciate the spirit of cooperation that is manifested among us. We are headed to success.

When I came to this meeting I wondered what it was about; but since being here and noticing the sympathetic spirit of our general brethren, and that they do not think we are agitating for a separation, I am seeing this conference idea in a different light. They along with us are looking for a solution to the problem. I do realize one thing and that is there can be some help given to our work. We are not displeased or disgruntled. We are working together.

We do face one thing. In my evangelism, when we are dealing with the better class of colored people, we find that it is not our church doctrines that keep them from accepting this message; it is questions they ask concerning the position our men hold in the denomination. It is hard for us to explain our situation to them along that line. I have been against the colored conferences; but since I see the General Conference brethren, as plainly seen by all of us, in favor of revising and giving more responsible positions to us, and if this calls for organizing colored conferences I don't see anything wrong with it.

Personally, I don't want any administrative work. I don't think the conference idea is a dangerous one. If the conference plan should go through, we should go home and talk the matter over with our members in an enlightening manner. I believe we should help them to see this thing in the correct light.

H. H. Wagner

I think it is a good thing to have opposition. There is opposition in our political government. Our general brethren want me to be honest and sincere. They want me to have enough foresight and vision to enter in any kind of plan that will promote the work among our people. We have some of the finest men working in the Columbia Union. I have done some evangelistic work in many places and God has blessed.

I believe we should adopt a plan that will be an advanced move for our people. In my recent effort held in Washington, D. C., a lady who was a member of one of the chain stores, cornered me and said, "We believe in the Sabbath and that it is the right day. We can't get around that, but you are a minister in your denomination and how far can you go beyond that? What else is offered the colored people?" It was hard for me to answer that. I offered some kind of weak excuse. We must realize that there are certain things that we can do that will make it easier to reach our better class of people. By organizing conferences it will give us a great advantage in reaching this type of people.

Referred to Vol. 9, pages 205, 207, 210.

When the Emancipation Proclamation was received through President Lincoln, it was through God's leadership. When the slave owners told the slaves that they were free, the slaves still wanted to stay with their masters. They didn't realize what the emancipation meant. I don't mean that we are in slavery; this illustrates that because we have a difference of opinion, it doesn't mean that we are not on the right course. We preach of the United States in prophecy and we can see that he came up just at the right time. God ordained the country by raising it up at that time. It was for people who were looking for freedom.

Whether we have conferences or not, the work will not advance as much until something new is started.

S. O. Cherry

I believe that we should give more power to the present plan that we have now. The Southern Union Plan is the best plan we have, but it is void of power. If our leaders had more executive power they would be happy.

T. M. Rowe

I believe that we have outgrown the Southern Union Plan. I believe the time has come for something different.

H. D. Dobbins

There is a motion before the house. I believe that we should form a committee to study which plan of organization we should operate under. Since we do not seem to want to remain under the status quo, I wonder if Elder Fountain will withdraw his motion.

T. M. Fountain:

I believe in progress, but our very attitude showed that we believed in the Status quo because we didn't do anything about the others. Whatever organization is selected, I assure you, that I will cooperate with it one hundred per cent. We have come here at great expense to the cause of God. We should get something started. If it will help any, I will withdraw that motion.

E. S. Dillett:

Withdraw the seconded.

H. D. Dobbins

I move that we appoint a committee to study the conference plan and bring back recommendations.

J. G. Dasant

Seconded the motion.

W. A. Spicer

I hope that this body will set its approval on the Conference plan.

J. J. Nethery

I believe that we should appoint a body that will look with favor on giving additional strength to the organization of our colored work and possibilities of local conferences. I believe in Local Conferences for our colored people. I believe in progress. I believe in a good strong organization which is not anything else, but good cooperation.

J. J. Nethery (cont.)

I am serious about how we are getting along in this denomination. I think a number of things should be looked into and helped. We need a closer organization.

We organized into conferences when there were only 15,000 members. This was less than we have colored members now. It has worked. In 1880 we had 640 churches with 15,000. That meant an average of 24 members to a church. In those days we had 15,000 members and had 24 conferences. That was an average of 648 in each conference.

I don't think that we should think of 17,000 colored members and making 30 conferences. You can take your 17,000 members, or at least the membership in a few conferences, you could build a good conference with these members. If we take the membership in twenty churches, we probably would have about 2,200, and this little territory could be organized into a colored conference. A good man that knows how to manage a church with a large group, should make a good leader for a conference. A territory where there are three or four colored pastors we can use one as a President. We might have to pick another man from another field. By having a colored President, they will be able to save more souls in their territory.

I haven't any prejudice in my soul against the colored man. They accuse me of being a colored man. My wife knows I like to go to colored churches. We are all a related family. I believe this talk, of the organization trying to get rid of the colored people, ought to be stopped. This is not the truth. The Union brethren should be in favor of a colored conference under this arrangement. If we tried and failed, YOU WILL FORGIVE.

It may be that we cannot organize a colored conference in every Union. Why not start with one or two and with the help and council of the brethren we can see how it works and later on we can start in another Union.

I hope you will think kind of us for we believe in this proposition.

H. M. Blunden

We have had a great expansion in the Publishing Department. We have multiplied our leadership under this new plan. At Oakwood recently an institute was held, since it was a colored institute we turned the entire program over to the colored men. They assigned the program to the others. The General men and Union men took no part in the Council. Speaking frankly, it was a fine institute and fine instructions on salesmanship was given. It was just about the finest institute I have ever been to.

I don't see why this new conference set up couldn't work. The colored men in the Publishing Department are progressing. Of course, at first problems will be created but we can work it out.

The Committee was appointed to bring back the recommendations to the large body of delegates.

J. H. Wagner

Moved that the agenda be referred to this committee.

April 10, 1944

The Special Committee appointed for the Colored work brought back the following recommendations:

1. Advanced School in the North:

We recommend, 1. That a school be established in the North where advanced training can be given our colored youth; and,

2. That a commission be appointed to give study to this plan and report to the 1944 Autumn Council.

2. Sanitarium in the North:

We recommend, That a commission be appointed to give study to providing for the medical and nursing education needs of our colored constituency in the North, this commission to report at the earliest possible date.

3. Future of Riverside Sanitarium:

We recommend, That the commission on the Riverside Sanitarium be requested to further consider the work and future of that institution and endeavor to report during this Spring Council.

4. Publishing Work:

We recommend, 1. That the Southern Publishing Association secure a colored editor for the Message Magazine.

2. That plans be laid to establish a small periodical for the colored constituency, somewhat comparable to the Union Conference papers in size and style, which will carry church news and promotion material.

5. Conference Organization:

WHEREAS, The present development of our work among the colored people in North America has resulted, under the signal blessing of God, in the establishment of some 233 churches with some 17,000 members; and,

WHEREAS, It appears that a different plan of organization for our colored membership would bring further great advance in soul-winning endeavor; therefore

We recommend, 1. That in unions where the colored constituency is considered by the Union Conference Committee to be sufficiently large, and where the financial income and territory warrant, colored conferences be organized.

2. That these colored conferences be administered by colored officers and committees.
3. That in the organization of these conferences the present conference boundaries within each union need not be recognized.
4. That colored conferences sustain the same relation to their respective union conferences as do the white conferences.
5. That the General Conference Committee appoint three members of a commission to join with other members to be appointed by each Union Conference committee concerned, for a study of the colored work in the respective unions; these commissions to report to the respective union committees, and that in cases where it is found necessary for any union committee to request additional appropriations, organization of colored conferences be deferred until after the 1944 Autumn Council, in order to ascertain whether or not this will be possible.
6. That the 1930 plan of colored organization for the Southern States be adopted for all territories in North America with sufficient members, but where the constituency is not sufficiently large to warrant the organization of colored conferences.

N.B. These recommendations were submitted to the delegation at the April Spring Council, 1944, and were unanimously adopted.

Finis

The Meeting adjourned.

SPECIAL ASSEMBLY COLORED DELEGATES

April 11-13, 1944

Chicago, Ill.

G. E. Peters, Secretary
NORTH AMERICAN COLORED DEPT.