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ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY OF THE DETROIT URBAN LEAGUE, 1916-60

By

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VOLUME I

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ABSTRACT

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This study focuses on the Detroit Urban League, one of the National Urban League's major branches. The study begins with a discussion of the existing works on the Urban League and an overview of the early history of the movement; it then traces the Detroit Urban League's history by examining its actors, purposes, mission, philosophy, policies, programs, and the major events that shaped the agency since its founding in 1916 to 1960, when its most important director retired. Using archival materials the study covers the League's organizational history as it evolved its various functions and roles in relationship to both its corporate supporters and black clientele.

With the support of Detroit's power structure, the League quickly became an important organization in the city. During its first two decades, the League served a dual role--socializing black migrants to adhere to the social and work habits required by the industrialists; and meeting the needs of black migrants arriving to Detroit from the rural south. It tried to find jobs, shelter, health provisions, recreational fulfillments for black migrants; and promoted interracial cooperation. Its corporate patrons shaped the League to provide industrial and domestic workers and help to reduce black crime.

Its policies made it quite difficult to protest against racial discrimination--precisely the main issue at the center of the black problem. Its board of directors was made of many conservative individuals who were unwilling to push strongly for certain interests

of the black community. During its first two decades when racial attitudes were difficult to change and other possibilities for social progress were inconceivable, the strategy of moral persuasion and avoiding pushing hard for civil rights of blacks enabled the League to maintain a position of leadership within Detroit's race relations. However, during the late 1930s, 1940s and 1950s as the League continued its traditional methods, other alternatives for meeting black needs emerged. Other organizations began to bypass the League in addressing racially-based problems. By 1960 the League was competing with other black organizations working in behalf of the black community. By the time of John C. Dancy retired, the league had become one of the oldest organizations in the black community as well as one of the most conservative on certain racial issues. Yet it had played an important role in bridging the gap between industrial Detroit and the black community.

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DEDICATION

**In memory of my grandfather, Mzee Karurie Wa Kamweridhie, who prophesied my
being conferred what he described as "three degrees"**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: RATIONALE FOR STUDYING THE URBAN LEAGUE'S HISTORY

The study of the National Urban League (NUL) and its local branches offers an excellent opportunity to examine a twentieth century interracial organization for improving the social and economic conditions of African-Americans. Few scholarly studies on this organization exist at present. Moreover, the few existing works have created a heated debate about the interpretation of the Urban League's history. Works by Nancy Weiss and Thomas Moore present the main basis of conflict in the scholarly debate about the Urban League.¹ Given the national influence of Booker T. Washington in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it is not surprising that a great deal of the debate on NUL centers around that figure. Weiss looks at the Urban League history as greatly influenced by Booker T. Washington's philosophy of conservatism. Moore contends that the history of the Urban League was influenced by numerous ideologies and not exclusively by Booker T. Washington.

Such a debate cannot be resolved without contributions from the study of as many local cases of the Urban League as possible. Case studies of the important local branches

¹Nancy Weiss, The National Urban League, 1910-1940 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1974) and Jesse Thomas Moore, A Search for Equality: The National Urban League, 1910-1961 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981)

could expand greatly our knowledge about the Urban League, as well as highlight several topics in African American Urban history. Given that Detroit has been one of the most important local branches of the NUL, its study would meet an important need in the Urban League's history and, in general, Black Urban history in the twentieth century. This chapter reviews the existing literature on the NUL and its local branches. It highlights the major issues, debates and themes in the historiography of the NUL and its branches. The chapter also introduces some topics in American twentieth century history that are tied to the history of the NUL and its branches, calls for more monographs on the organizational history of various local Urban Leagues, such as the Detroit case and concludes with a rationale for the selection of Detroit as subject, and the nature of the available data.

The Literature on the NUL and its Branches

The earliest writers of the NUL were the Leaguers themselves who sought to justify their efforts and broaden their support base.² They also wrote in response to the critics and supporters of the League. Shortly after it was founded in 1911, the NUL received some favorable comments from its earliest admirers who viewed it as "a new

²The NUL's supporters, for instance, have from time to time produced several publications to tell the story of their organization. As early as 1924 L. Hollingsworth Wood, the second President of the League wrote a paper in the Journal of Negro History 9 (April 1924):pp.119-134. In 1938, 1956 and 1961 the NUL published accounts of its history. See Moore's A Search for Equality P. 215. Guichard and Brooks work as well as Moore's account may also be viewed as contributions of the League's supporters. Guichard and Brooks had themselves been associated with the NUL as committee and staff members. See the back side of the jacket in their book, Blacks in the City.

stage in constructive social work among Negroes."³ A decade later, L. Hollingsworth Wood, the third chairperson of this organization, wrote an article in the Journal of Negro History on the NUL pointing out that the League had been "a bright spot" in Chicago during the famous race riot of 1919.⁴ To demonstrate the influence of the Urban League's work, Wood called attention to the endorsement of the organization from Governor Lowden of Illinois. Wood praised the work of his organization in glowing terms:

The successful service of the National Urban League and its local branches is a tribute to the men and women of both races who have been willing to place the betterment of the community above the interests of any one group, and who live and work in the faith that men and women of the white and colored races by pooling their intelligence and enthusiasm can solve any problem in interracial relations.⁵

By the 1930s the Urban League began to attract the attention of scholars. In 1930, for instance, Sterling D. Spero and Abraham L. Harris strongly criticized the NUL and its affiliates for its opportunism and expediency. These young scholars also criticized the League saying that it "never reached down to the rank and file, but has confined itself to dealings with high officials of the trade union movement."⁶ In the late 1930s Gunnar Myrdal, the famous Swedish economist and sociologist responded to these charges. He spoke very favorably of the NUL and disapproved the idea of criticizing its work. In a

³Moore, p. 48.

⁴L. Hollingsworth Wood, "The Urban League Movement", Journal of Negro History 9 (April, 1924), p. 123.

⁵Ibid., p. 126.

⁶Sterling Denhard Spero and Abraham L. Harris, The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931) p. 143.

chapter devoted to an analysis of the NAACP, the Urban League and the Commission on Interracial Relations, Myrdal regarded these three organizations as "the three most important" organizations concerned with "protest and betterment" of the African Americans.⁷

Ralph Bunch also did some study in concert with Myrdal on the Urban League movement.⁸ Franklin Frazier has, as well, addressed the subject of the types of blacks associated with the work of the Urban League in his book on "the black bourgeois."⁹ In addition, Robert L. Allen has discussed the nature of the Social Work of the Urban League in his study of the history of reform and racial question in the American history.¹⁰

The earliest definitive study on the Urban League was Arvarh E. Strickland's History of the Chicago Urban League,¹¹ published during the middle of the Civil Rights Movement. This work was not only the first serious study to be published on the NUL, but also the first and the only existing major historical study on any of the approximately one hundred and fourteen affiliates of the NUL. In this study Strickland praised the

⁷Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma; the Negro and Modern Democracy (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) p. 812.

⁸See Chapter 39 of American Dilemma: The Negro and Modern Democracy by Myrdal, especially on pp.840 and 1407-1408.

⁹Edward Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1957).

¹⁰Robert L. Allan, Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States (Washington, D.C.:Howard University Press, 1983)

¹¹Arvarh E. Strickland, History of the Chicago Urban League (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1966).

Chicago Urban League:

the surprising thing is not that the Urban League's growth has been slow but that it has been able to maintain almost continuous operation for nearly fifty years as a 'voice crying in the wilderness.' During this period, the League, in its small but significant way, has been able to help in directing the course of inevitable changes in race relations.¹²

The first study devoted exclusively to the NUL was published in 1971 under the title Blacks in the City: A History of the National Urban League.¹³ Its authors, Guichard Parris and Lester Brooks, were members of the NUL, and wrote to appraise the organization they had served and loved. Parris and Brooks also praised the Urban Leaguers saying:

The founders of the Urban League were among those social workers, progressives and reformers who scored this victory, and so many others of fundamental, historic importance in the fields of housing, health and education. These men and women had the divine effrontery to believe that they could solve the problems of blacks in America's cities in the same manner that they so vigorously and successfully used to clean up other social problems. If they knew, they refused to be intimidated by the fact, that they were tackling the most complex and sensitive matter in American life. The problems in this area expanded far beyond their capacities and they failed. It was a noble, not ignominious, failure and it was not surprising. Even the immense power and prestige of the government of the United States of America failed in this...The League, like most social movements, has been geared to performance. Its monuments have been its accomplishments and these have been changed lives- the lives of black constituents directly improved and enhanced by Urban League action, and the lives of unaware hundreds of thousands in the cities who, but for League action, would have suffered even more from the inevitable consequences of unmitigated black migration.¹⁴

¹²Ibid., pp. 260-261.

¹³Guichard Parris and Lester Brooks, Blacks in the City: A History of the National Urban League (Boston, Little, Brown, 1971).

¹⁴Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, pp. 472-473.

It was not until 1974, when Nancy Weiss wrote The National Urban League, 1910-1940, that a scholarly study on the NUL was conducted by a trained historian dedicated to the study of the NUL for its own sake. Weiss emphasizes the social service aspect of the Urban League's work and attaches great importance to the organization's philosophical foundation. She especially highlight the influence of Booker T. Washington in the development of the organization.¹⁵

Another major published work on the NUL, A Search for Equality: The National Urban League, 1910-1961, came out in 1981. Its author, Jesse Thomas Moore, produced an account of the NUL with the objective of presenting the organization as a civil rights agency.¹⁶ He stresses the similarities between the NUL and NAACP arguing that the two organizations were twin civil rights agents.¹⁷

The NUL and its branches have been referred to and discussed many times elsewhere. In their studies of African-American urban experience, a number of urban historians and other urbanologists have discussed or made reference to the urban league movement. Most of the historical and sociological studies of African-Americans in cities, especially of the north, which have increased tremendously over the last three decades,¹⁸

¹⁵Weiss is the best representative of this kind of scholars. See especially Chapters 3 and 4 of her National Urban League, 1910-1940.

¹⁶Moore is perhaps the best example of such scholars. See Chapter 3 of his A Search for Equality.

¹⁷See Moore, A Search for Equality, chapter 3.

¹⁸Kenneth L. Kusmer, "Black Urban Experience: A Review of Literature." In The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present and Future (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986) PP.91-122.

have discussed or made references to the National Urban League and its local branches. Kenneth L. Kusmer's study on the African-American community in Cleveland, for instance, makes frequent references to the National Urban League. He also discusses the local branch of the Urban League in Cleveland.¹⁹ According to him the NUL's role was important because it helped urban blacks during a time in which they were unable to establish separate race institutions without at least some white assistance. Kusmer pointed out that the NUL and its branches gained prominence as a result of the World War I migration.²⁰ He found the Urban League's main importance as that of providing jobs to blacks in Cleveland.²¹

Peter Gottlieb's study of the Southern Black's Migration to Pittsburgh between 1916 and 1930 has also called attention to the importance of the Urban League. He points out the importance of the Urban League in documenting housing problems experienced by blacks in Pittsburgh.²² The League also gave advice and information to southern blacks desiring to move to northern cities.²³

James R. Grossman's Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great

¹⁹Kenneth L. Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976). Kusmer makes references to the National Urban League and the Cleveland Urban League in connection to the Great Migration. See especially on pp. 154, 204-205, 207-208,

²⁰Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape, p. 154.

²¹Ibid.

²²Peter Gottlieb, Making their Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p. 71.

²³Ibid. pp.52-53, 103-104.

Migration also gives attention to the Urban League.²⁴ According to Grossman, white organizations used the Chicago Urban League as a dumping ground for blacks during World War I. He points out that the Chicago Urban League made itself a clearing house for all problems experienced by black migrants.²⁵ The emergence of the Chicago Urban League pushed other black organizations out. One of those organizations that the Chicago Urban League pushed out of work was the Negro Fellowship League, one of the women's agencies created by Ida B. Wells. It had been established in 1910 for the social work of caring the black migrants during the Great War.²⁶ White philanthropists refused to support Wells organization in favor of the Chicago Urban League. This made Wells furious and she subsequently criticized the black middle class for leaning towards the white interests.²⁷ In any case, the Urban League in Chicago became the leading social service agency in Chicago, due to its ability to attract the leading philanthropists in Chicago.²⁸ Thus the Chicago Urban League was one of those institutions that philanthropists, city leaders, and professional leaders believed to be reliable as a black community leader. In fact, Chicago's leading whites viewed the Urban League as the most attractive organization for handling black community's problems.²⁹ The League

²⁴James R. Grossman, Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration (Chicago:The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

²⁵Ibid. pp. 133-134.

²⁶Ibid., p.141.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., pp 142-143.

²⁹Ibid., p. 173-174.

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²⁴James R. Grossman, Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration (Chicago:The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

²⁵Ibid. pp. 133-134.

²⁶Ibid., p.141.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., pp 142-143.

²⁹Ibid., p. 173-174.

became by far the largest employment agency in Chicago during the Great Migration.³⁰

In his study of the African-American community of Milwaukee, Joe William Trotter, Jr., makes several brief comments on and references to the Milwaukee Urban League. He identifies the League's importance in documenting the condition of blacks during the period following the Great Migration.³¹ The Milwaukee League supplanted the Booker T. Washington Social and Industrial Center which had been the only industrial club in Milwaukee dealing with boarding, lodging and the recreational needs of the black community.³² The League played a key role in black community's life not only during the Great Migration, but also during the Great Depression. During the Depression the League sought relief and domestic employment for black migrants.³³ The Milwaukee Urban League also worked closely with the Milwaukee National Negro Business League, an organization formed under Booker T. Washington's leadership in 1900.³⁴ Whites were interested in the NUL because it "served as an instrument for labor recruitment during a period of labor shortage."³⁵

Arnold R. Hirsch draws attention to the role of the Chicago Urban League in anti-

³⁰Ibid. 186.

³¹Joe William Trotter, Black Milwaukee: the Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), passim.

³²Joe William Trotter, Black Milwaukee, pp. 64-65.

³³Ibid. p. 66.

³⁴Ibid. p. 98.

³⁵Ibid. p. 137.

discrimination campaigns, riot control, housing problems and black-white relations.³⁶ He sees the Chicago Urban League as very involved in documenting the housing problems of blacks during the 1940s and 1950s.³⁷ Its importance was demonstrated by the fact that the black middle class complained to the Chicago Urban League urging it to take a stand and publish about their housing problems.³⁸ Hirsch ranked the Chicago Urban League, together with the NAACP, as a leading organization on black affairs. It was one of the agencies that negotiated with property owners in regard to the relocation problems affecting Chicago's blacks. Chicago Urban League worked with the mayor's office, and other groups, to deal with racial relations matters. Urban League seemed to be the main organization in Chicago that consistently dealt with the housing problems of the African-Americans during the 1940s and 1950s. It conducted reports and publicized them, especially to the city's Housing Commission during the housing hearings connected with the urban renewal and slum clearance projects.³⁹

In an article published in Michigan History in 1977, Richard W. Thomas discusses the history of the Detroit Urban League from 1916 to 1923.⁴⁰ In this article, Thomas asserts that the story of blacks migrating from the rural Southern states "would have been

³⁶Arnold R. Hirsch, Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960 (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

³⁷Ibid. p. 18.

³⁸Ibid. p. 33.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 38, 44, 59, 85, 121.

⁴⁰Richard W. Thomas, "The Detroit Urban League, 1916-1923", Michigan History (Winter 1976): pp. 315-338.

drastically different and certainly more tragic had the Urban League not existed."⁴¹ In a book recently published by Indiana University Press, under the title Life for Us Is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945⁴², Thomas devotes a full chapter on a discussion of the role of the Detroit Urban League from 1916 to 1945. Throughout the chapter, Thomas puts the Urban League affiliate in Detroit at the center of certain stages in what he calls the "community building process."

Another work that has discussed the Urban League affiliate in Detroit is David Allan Levine's Internal Combustion: Races in Detroit.⁴³ Levine sees the role of the Urban League as similar to that performed by the Americanization Education Movement designed to instill in black workers the capitalist work ethic and values.

Aside from these published works, there has, over the years, been a number of unpublished studies on the NUL and its affiliates. Most have been conducted by students doing their Masters and Ph.D. degrees. A few papers on the NUL have also been written and read at professional meetings. But scholars have not found these unpublished works useful in understanding the NUL and its branches.⁴⁴

Topics, Issues and Content in the Debate about the Urban League

⁴¹Ibid. p. 315.

⁴²Richard W. Thomas, Life for Us is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indian Publishing Press, 1992). See especially Chapter three.

⁴³David Allan Levine, Internal Combustion: the Races in Detroit, 1915-1926 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1976).

⁴⁴Moore, A Search for Equality, p. 216.

An important debatable point in the history of the NUL is the question of its origins. Moore views the NUL as a continuation of the racial advancement activities and organizations of the antebellum and postbellum era.⁴⁵ He considers the Urban League as a part of the long and widening struggle for black equality. To him the Urban League was a product of the dialogue about the best strategy to deal with the problems of African-Americans in general.⁴⁶ Weiss, on the other hand, makes a distinction between the problems the NUL attempted to solve and those that black leaders in the South dealt with. She insists that the League's founders were those individuals who became aware of the special black problem in Northern cities.⁴⁷

Weiss and Moore also disagree sharply on the question of the League's ideology. Weiss contends that the NUL, unlike the NAACP, developed a special programmatic orientation based upon the teachings of Booker T. Washington. She points that, whereas the NAACP followed a more militant orientation and was dominated by W. E. B. DuBois, the League failed to challenge the basically racist structure of the economy and the black's treatment by American capitalism as a perpetual marginal labor force. The NAACP according to Weiss, struggled to change the system through direct protest and confrontation.⁴⁸

Weiss uses the term "conservative" to describe the NUL's philosophy of

⁴⁵See Moore's Search For Equality, chapter one.

⁴⁶Moore, p. 34, 45 and 199-200.

⁴⁷Weiss, National Urban League, p. 9.

⁴⁸Ibid., Chapter 3.

negotiation, persuasion, education, investigation and gradualism as the main weapons for improving the well-being of African-Americans. This philosophy, she contends, postponed the attainment of political and civil rights to the more immediate goals of moral and economic progress. Emphasis was on self-help, industrial education, economic accumulation and cultivation of morality. This conservative philosophy temporarily accepted social inequality but advocated access to economic opportunities in accordance to a person's abilities. It praised the work ethic of the Puritans and valued their ideas of morality. Radicalism philosophy, on the other hand, advocated the use of protest, agitation, lobbying, legal challenges and immediate granting of civil rights.⁴⁹ Radical philosophy made political, civil and social rights the priority. It emphasized the immediate attainment of voting rights and other citizenship rights. It exalted both intellectual and industrial training simultaneously and valued the human dignity as worthy of preservation.⁵⁰

In sharp contrast to Weiss, Moore asserts that the African-American intellectual founders of both the Urban League and NAACP were ideological descendants of many thinkers including Frederick Douglass.⁵¹ He insists that progressive reform ideas influenced the founders of the NUL, the early leaders of the NAACP and most subsequent mainstream civil rights leaders. He argues that the rise of scientific social work and not Booker T. Washington's ideology gave birth to the NUL's strategies for combatting civil

⁴⁹Ibid., p.59.

⁵⁰Ibid.,p.36, 59.

⁵¹Moore, p. 199.

inequality.⁵² He minimizes Booker T. Washington's influence on the NUL pointing out that the so-called Booker T. Washington's representatives in the NUL board were not in reality his loyal supporters. He gives the example of Fred R. Moore, as an case in point of individuals who joined the League as representatives of Washington yet who had questionable loyalty to Washington. Moore points out, also, that Reverend Reverdy C. Ranson was a Washington critic and charter member of Niagara movement.⁵³ To Weiss's argument that lawyers joined NAACP while educators followed Washington's tradition of joining the NUL, Moore responds by listing lawyers who joined the NUL, and teachers who joined the NAACP.⁵⁴ To demonstrate the NUL's radicalism Moore emphasized the socialist link to the NUL. He pointed out that the League's early period was characterized by restraint from militancy because its leaders knew that the time was not yet ripe for such a strategy. He emphasized the League's potential for militancy, which manifested during the 1940s and 1950s. Moore argued that black and white founders of the NUL were diverse in their political and racial ideologies; some were socialists whereas others were politically conservative. While others had allegiance to Washington others were W.E.B. Dubois's allies.⁵⁵

Controversy has also ranged on the NUL's relationship with the NAACP. Whereas Weiss found friction, Moore emphasized harmony between the two agencies.

⁵²Ibid., p. 53.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁵⁴Ibid., 52.

⁵⁵Ibid.

Moore did not find any correspondence between these two organizations suggestive of any acrimony between 1911 and 1940.⁵⁶ He found that the African-Americans in both of these organizations demanded nothing less than equality and equal justice. According to Moore blacks used a strategy of social change that they believed was acceptable to the dominant society while at the time imposing the middle class values on black urban masses.⁵⁷ Moore recognized the use of gradualism approach by the NUL as opposed to the immediate demand for civil rights; he explains it in terms of the NUL's realism not the influence of Washington's ideology.⁵⁸

Another debatable point about the NUL regards the purpose for which it was founded. According to Weiss, the founders of the NUL set out to solve black urban problems like unemployment and underemployment; to prepare African-Americans for urban life by educating and providing them with social services. She found that the NUL set out to improve housing, health, sanitary services, recreational facilities of the urban blacks and to protect black women from the exploitation of employment agencies. To Weiss, the NUL also set out to help African-Americans improve their skills and find better jobs. Citing its constitution, Weiss stated that the NUL's Mission was "to promote, encourage, assist and engage in any and all kinds of work for improving the industrial, economic, social and spiritual conditions among Negroes."⁵⁹ She criticizes this objective

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 54.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 54-55.

⁵⁹Weiss, p. 71.

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for being too broad and vague of a definition and responsibility. She contrasts the NUL's objective with that of the NAACP, which she praised as clearer and specific, by pursuing anti-lynching legislation and overturning the Jim Crow laws.⁶⁰

Moore, on the other hand, found that the League set up to protect and expand the political rights and to advance economic and social status of African-Americans. He found a more radical goal of the NUL. For example, he points out that urban racial reformers turned to social work, the social sciences and education, "using them in the hope of creating a new and radically urban community."⁶¹ Specifically, Moore pointed out that the NUL set out "to carry on constructive and preventive social work among the blacks," to improve their social and economic conditions in the urban centers, to coordinate and operate with other agencies associated with blacks, to develop other agencies and to carry out league's objectives through studies in cities.⁶² In contrast to Weiss's view of NUL's objectives, Moore praised Haynes's interpretation of the league's statement of purpose saying that it was focused on social work, community organization and the reforming of the existing governmental structures. Moore found NUL role as that of a community planning agency as well as a political reform instrument.

Strickland found that the NUL set out to ameliorate the effects of the social order not to reform the society or the conditions that brought about the social dislocations. He believed that the NUL was a relief, not a reform organization, aiming at the effects of the

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Moore, p. 47.

⁶²Ibid., p. 49.

system rather than changing it. He pointed out that although the social workers in the United States between 1900 and 1917 were dedicated to both reform and relief, the NUL set out to eliminate suffering and not to set up institutions for change. The NUL according to Strickland was interested in race relations and improvement of the living conditions among urban blacks. Like Weiss, Strickland found the NUL's purpose to be too broad.⁶³ He also suggested that "the improvement of economic conditions was accepted by the NUL as its principal mission, but in the early years more attention was given to the immediate social service demands caused by the Great Migration."⁶⁴

According to Weiss, the NUL in its social work activities emphasized scientific investigation and fact gathering.⁶⁵ Rather than trying to overturn the American system the NUL attempted to win a place for African-Americans in it. It emphasized opportunity and not justice.⁶⁶ According to Weiss, the Leaguers efforts to fit the African-Americans into the American system was "all but total imperviousness to significant changes frame the history of the NUL during its first 30 years."⁶⁷ Use of social work approach according to Weiss made the NUL's "efforts during its corresponding first decade" to appear "much quieter and less controversial than those of the NAACP."⁶⁸ Moore found

⁶³Strickland, p. 13.

⁶⁴Ibid. p. 14.

⁶⁵Weiss, p. 68.

⁶⁶Ibid.,pp. 68-69.

⁶⁷Ibid. p. 70.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 66.

that the League was radical in its work.⁶⁹ Strickland found that the League was more radical in its social work even though it did not attempt to be radical. He also found that the NUL's approach to the urban black problems was based on the assumption that black unemployment was due to the lack of skills and efficiency and not prejudice and discrimination. NUL's initial solution to black's employment problem was to provide new skills and increased efficiency. Strickland found that the NUL's social work was failed to attack racism and discrimination. According to him the housing problem was tackled by trying to create living conditions within the framework of existing pattern. The NUL advocated a policy of segregating reputable and disreputable persons. It urged blacks to pursue moral consciousness and educated them to be good neighbors. It urged the real estate to cooperate in constructing affordable houses for blacks and make more profits.⁷⁰

Social work in the NUL history has been given considerable attention by all commentators of the NUL. Strickland also pointed out that juvenile delinquency programs such as Big Boys/Big sisters, Boys/girls clubs, summer camps, recreational playgrounds and juvenile park protective league aimed at making the urban blacks acceptable according to the white way of thinking.⁷¹ Weiss found that social work before the founding of the League was primarily focused on the white Americans. She identified the fact that the NUL changed the focus of the social work in the United States

⁶⁹Moore, p. 15, 202

⁷⁰Strickland, pp. 16-17.

⁷¹Ibid.

by extending it to African-Americans. During its first years, the NUL initiated a program to train black social workers. Its initial social work activity constituted of employing a travellers' aid worker to meet the migrants who arrived in cities by boats and trains; helping them to find their way and offering them direction, relief and help to recover their baggages. The travellers aid also tried to protect black women from unscrupulous men. It was in the later time that the NUL's social work activities began to include offering personal counsel, shelter, and employment assistance to women new to the city. The League soon initiated the Big Brother and Big Sister, imitating the national movement that had began in 1901. Home visiting cases and organization of neighborhood unions and individual case work with immoral girls were later incorporated into the NUL's activities of social work. The NUL also promoted girls and boys clubs in addition to wholesome instructive amusements. In some instances the NUL provided court appointed probation workers and provided a temporary detention home for delinquent girls.⁷²

In the area of general welfare, scholars have found that the NUL counselled African American in behavior like dressing, sanitation, health and homemaking. Some scholars have attributed the League's obsession with dressing codes of the migrants, and their general personal cleanliness as motivated by black middle class needs rather than of the migrants. Gottlieb points out that black middle-class elitism influenced their attitudes and programs for black migrants. Gottlieb explained the creation of the dressing and cleaning programs was meant to prevent whites from turning against all blacks.⁷³

⁷²Weiss, pp. 17-18.

⁷³Gottlieb, p. 196-198.

Grossman too found that black elitist attitude naturally led to a conflict between black migrants and black middle class.⁷⁴ Thomas argued that stress the League's emphasis on dressing and general cleanliness was for the benefit of both black middle class as well as the migrants: "Washington's seeming overemphasis on southern migrants' impression on whites was not totally due to his own class and cultural bias....During these all too precarious years of black industrial breakthroughs, black leaders had to make good impressions on white society if they wanted assistance in opening doors to opportunities and keeping them open."⁷⁵

Scholars have also pointed out that the NUL attempted to meet food and shelter emergencies of the needy migrants. A housing bureau to investigate exorbitant rents identifying and cautioning against bad tenants, encouraging tenant-landlord cooperation, and inspecting housing adequacy was set up among black neighborhoods. Weiss the League to be devoid of creativity in its social work as well as in meeting needs. To her the League's programs were mainly an imitation of other organizations; its Big Brother and Big sister program, boys and girls clubs, camps and settlements were not original activities of the NUL. An attempt to reduce infant mortality by promoting public health consciousness through lectures and other educational events was also an imitation of other organizations.⁷⁶ Weiss argued that the immigrant societies and the settlement movement

⁷⁴Grossman, Land of Hope, p. 154.

⁷⁵See Thomas, Life for Us Is What We Make It, p. 57.

⁷⁶See Weiss, National Urban League, Chapter 5.

were League's chosen models.⁷⁷ Weiss's image of the League was that of an imitator rather than a creative organization. Kusmer also found that the Cleveland League had more in common with Charity Organization Society in that it fostered the view that poverty and economic woes as a result of the lower class failure to pursue the ideals of the middle class. He saw the League's chief purposes as geared towards the black migrant's improvement of efficiency, thriftiness and cleanliness.⁷⁸ Thomas found that the Detroit Urban League was ingenious.⁷⁹

The question of funding in the NUL's history is of great importance to the scholars. Some scholars have argued that the NUL's financial dependence on whites determined its philosophy, techniques, programs and effectiveness. Weiss points out that NUL "avoided policies that were likely to antagonize businessmen-philanthropists."⁸⁰ She also says that its insufficient funding kept its program on a small scale.⁸¹ Kusmer has asserted that the Cleveland branch of the Urban League's "close ties with white industrialists and its need for their financial support made it difficult for blacks associated with the organization to protest discrimination in public services or company hiring practices."⁸² The Chicago League was destroyed in the 1950s because its financial

⁷⁷Ibid., p.88.

⁷⁸Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape, p. 256.

⁷⁹See Thomas, Life for Us Is What We Make It, p.58.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 161.

⁸¹Weiss, p. 161.

⁸²Ibid., p. 256.

supporters refused to contribute to its programs when it leaned into a more radical stand.⁸³ Pittsburgh Urban League, according to Gottrieb, encouraged black migrants to stay consistently in their jobs and served the interests of the industrialists because the salary of its two workers was paid by Carnegie Steel Company during the World War I.⁸⁴ Grossman's work, too, supports this general theme. He points out that the Urban League in Chicago served the needs of the employers by screening applicants, exhorting newcomers to adopt industrial values and work habits, providing consultants when problems developed involving the black workers in the factories. Grossman has explained the existence of this situation by pointing out that the League was dependent on the employers for donations.⁸⁵ Thomas argued that the League's capacity to tap the resources outside of black community was a source of its strength: "the DUL could not have contributed as much as it did to the community building process had it not been able to augment its resources via effective networking."⁸⁶ Strickland found many whites willing to contribute to NUL and rather than to the NAACP.⁸⁷ Weiss also suggests that John D. Rockefeller gave very little to NAACP "because he felt its tactics and leadership were too controversial to be effective," 5 per cent what he gave NUL.⁸⁸

⁸³Hirsch, Making the Second Ghetto, p. 199, 214.

⁸⁴Gottrieb, pp. 192-194.

⁸⁵Grossman, pp. 202-203.

⁸⁶Thomas, Life for Us Is What We Make It, p. 81.

⁸⁷Strickland, p. 35.

⁸⁸Weiss, p. 247.

Weiss is emphatic in pointing out that the League's main donors like John Rockefeller, Julius Rosenwald, Alfred T. White had connection with Booker T. Washington. She says that the NUL's main financial contributors supported the agency out of their support for causes that reflected Booker T. Washington's values and interests. Weiss pointed out that Rockefeller gave to NUL partly because he had been influenced by the Baldwins. Rosenwald too had been extremely influenced by Washington. Rosenwald's meeting with Washington in 1911 created his interest in supporting causes that aimed to uplift blacks. Alfred T. White was "one of Washington's warmest and most helpful friends."⁸⁹ The NUL's appointed extension secretary to promote financial support among blacks had worked closely with Washington as director of the academic department at Tuskegee Institute until 1915.⁹⁰

Agreement exists on the fact that the NUL relied heavily on a few donors like the Rockefellers. According to Weiss, Julius Rosenwald was the main donor to the Chicago Urban League, but withdrew his financial support to it on the eve of Depression.⁹¹ Carnegie Corporation began to support the league in the mid-1920s. Between 1924 and 1930 Altmann foundation contributed an annual gift of \$75,000. Other contributions came from Julius Rosenwald, Agnes Brown Leach and V. Everit Macy. Weiss believed that NAACP financial support was much more broadly based than the NUL.⁹² She

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 82.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 158.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 97-98.

⁹²Ibid.

points out that the NUL's "dependence on a few individuals tied it closely to the views." Weiss also pointed out that the League's financial dependence on a handful individuals limited its capacity and made it undependable.⁹³ Because of financial constrains, Weiss argues, the NUL's social service programs and its ability to develop affiliates in the years before the Great Migration was negatively impacted.⁹⁴ During the Depression the League "came to depend on Rockefeller and other foundation philanthropies," more than ever.⁹⁵ The League barely avoided bankruptcy. Depression made most of League's benefactors difficult to contribute.

When the affiliates were founded, the NUL required them to pay a \$5 joining fee and \$5 in annual dues thereafter.⁹⁶ In December 1918, the affiliates were required to contribute to the NUL two per cent of the gross amount received for its annual budget. In 1929 the local staff members were expected to make a financial contribution to the NUL: executive secretary were to pay \$10; each employed staff of the affiliates paid \$1; local league president gave \$5, and the local board members were required to pay \$1. Weiss points out that NUL received very little support from its affiliates, which contrasted sharply with the NAACP's strong support by its affiliates.⁹⁷

Another point of agreement on the NUL's financial question is that the

⁹³Ibid. p. 83.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid. p. 242.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 155.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 155-156.

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⁹³Ibid. p. 83.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid. p. 242.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 155.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 155-156.

organization never had sufficient funds. According to Weiss the NUL's operating budget during its first year was \$2500. She points out that the League's financial aspect was its "basic problem." She notes that "it never raised money easily, nor did it attract a large group of benefactors."⁹⁸ Its fiscal year 1912 was under \$15,000. From its founding until 1918, its largest simple contribution in any twelve month period was only \$35,000.⁹⁹ Strickland, too has pointed out that the Chicago Urban League had a financial problem. The financial conditions of the CUL became very good in the 1960s.¹⁰⁰ The Chicago Urban League's lack of money was to Strickland one of its major reason for ineffectiveness.¹⁰¹

Did blacks financially support the league? This has been debated and much agreement exists. Strickland points out that Chicagoan blacks contributed only 10 per cent of the total income even though they formed 75 per cent of the Chicago Urban League.¹⁰² When J. R. Lee campaigned among blacks in 1922 received only 8 per cent of NUL's income. Weiss views the black's meager financial support for the NUL as their lack of interest in the organization. The League's policies expressed most loudly the views of the Rockefellers, Carnegies and Rosenwald, who were their most important sources of funds. Weiss suggests that "the NUL's course was shaped as much by its

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 80.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Strickland, p. 258.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 260.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 34.

objectives as by sensitivity to its contributors."¹⁰³

Commentators on the NUL debate also about the changes that occurred within the organization as time passed. Moore believes that the NUL "altered its course somewhat by continuing its social service orientation, as well as enlarging its programs to include sustained political programs to include sustained political pressure, efforts to reform existing governmental structures, and civil rights."¹⁰⁴ He argues that during the 1920s and 1930s Urban Leaguers basic philosophical thrust altered. To Moore between 1921 and 1940 the NUL and its affiliates broke new ground in its attempt to reform governmental structures, waging war on industry, labor and management in an effort to end the discriminatory hiring practices against the Negroes. By undertaking lobbying efforts to reform existing governmental structures the NUL manifested its new direction. However, Moore says also that the NUL refrained from tackling political equality directly between 1910 and 1949.¹⁰⁵

Weiss, on the other hand, finds continuity in the League's philosophy and approaches. According to her "the Urban League in the postwar decade continued to work for social amelioration and uplift."¹⁰⁶ She asserts that post-war League "eschewed active reform."¹⁰⁷ What the NUL did during these years, according to Weiss, was that

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 159-161.

¹⁰⁴Moore, p. xiii.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁰⁶Weiss, p. 163.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

"it strengthened and broadened the social service efforts it had begun during the 1910s."¹⁰⁸ She gives the example of the League's expanded fellowship program to train the black social workers rather than create new approaches. Basically, Weiss finds the League in the 1920s as duplicating the service efforts of settlement houses of that period only that they focused on the blacks. She finds that among most of the voluntary agencies, NUL was the only one that had not yet realized the importance of pursuing active social reform. During the late 1930s Weiss found that "the NUL still declined to engage in lobbying for legislation," choosing instead to emphasize social service rather than social change during this period.¹⁰⁹

However, Weiss found that "the NUL adopted a new national focus in the wake of the migrations" by beginning "to address itself to the fundamental forces affecting black employment."¹¹⁰ She also found that between World War I and the Great Depression, the NUL started to grapple with question of discrimination in organized labor¹¹¹. Weiss suggests that the NUL began to realize the importance of organizing the black workers to achieve employment in the 1930s due to the Depression. To her the NUL changed from a tactical point of view not philosophical or ideological. It accepted advocacy rather than lobbying and other social actions pursued by other organizations. According to Weiss the League's advocacy meant preparing workers to be the advocates

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 174.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 203.

¹¹¹Ibid.

of their own cause. Thus the League began in the 1930s its new labor program aimed at showing blacks the value of collective action in solving labor problems.¹¹²

The issue of NUL-affiliates relationship has received inadequate attention from scholars. Issues about the differences between northern and southern affiliates is one of the few points raised on this point of the debate. Scholars have pointed that whites opposed the NUL in the south with the result that the finances for southern leagues were difficult to obtain.¹¹³ Community chests were not well received in the south as in the north. Strickland finds that southern whites opposed the League even though it was conservative. According to him white opposition forced southern league's boards to be composed of only one race.¹¹⁴ This meant that many southern branches of the League were "all-Negro controlled" during the NUL's early history.¹¹⁵ Some affiliates during this period also died, but the Great Migration and the World War I race riots helped to increase the birth many Urban League affiliates.

Moore suggests that several local affiliates pushed the spirit of progressivism beyond its traditional Era which concludes with the start of world war I.¹¹⁶ He suggests also that the NUL addressed national questions; the local affiliates concerned themselves

¹¹²See Ibid., chapter 13.

¹¹³Moore, p. 57.

¹¹⁴Strickland, p. 23.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Moore, p. 50.

with local problems.¹¹⁷ Such a statement can only be at the level of hypothesis requiring an examination of as many local affiliates as possible. Moore suggests also that the executive directors whether of the NUL as well or of the affiliates "ran the organization."¹¹⁸ Again this, too, is too sweeping a statement which would require more case studies on the local urban League affiliates.

Central to the Urban League's debate is the question about its effectiveness. Was it effective or did it achieve its desired goals? What are the basis of evaluating this effectiveness? Whether in its social service work or its efforts to find jobs for the blacks, Weiss concludes that the NUL accomplishments were very small. Her evaluation is based on the immensity of the black problem against the accomplishments made by the NUL. It is also based on the fact that the NUL did not fulfil its original mandate. Weiss placed the League against other organizations in order to makes some judgements. In evaluating the NUL's effectiveness in its social services during the 1920s, Weiss points out that "it touched only a comparative handful of the blacks who lived in the (20) cities its served."¹¹⁹ She says that they were "useful services, but unspectacular results."¹²⁰ In the employment field, Weiss says: "in terms of affecting over-all employment patterns of blacks in the United States, its impact had not been significant."¹²¹

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 58.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Weiss, p. 174.

¹²⁰Ibid. p. 175.

¹²¹Ibid. p. 297.

Responding to those who overpraise the agency, Weiss write: "what the League actually accomplished was considerably less spectacular than their enthusiasm suggests."¹²² She summed up her judgement of the league by saying: "the truth about the Urban League lies between these extremes of praise and condemnation."¹²³ To her the few accomplishments the NUL made were in creating a body of professional black social workers, documenting the urban black life, creating a more favorable climate for black workers, placing few blacks in positions they never held before and providing a catalytic effect to blacks during critical periods. However, Weiss blames the NUL for helping to concentrate blacks in domestic services and unskilled labor by pursuing disadvantageous approaches while measuring the progress by "tiny dents" at the time millions were being oppressed.¹²⁴

Moore, on the other hand, argues that the NUL made major achievements. He particularly calls attention to the fact that NUL illuminated the problems of black life, significantly contributing towards improvement of interracial understanding, reminding all Americans that all have a responsibility to the problem of segregation and racism. Unlike Weiss, Moore praised the League's approach to the black problems because it was of intelligent discussion rather than inflammatory discourse, and calm analysis rather than hate.¹²⁵

¹²²Ibid., p. 304.

¹²³Ibid. 305.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 307.

¹²⁵Moore, p. 212.

Strickland argues that the NUL acted "as a voice crying in wilderness"¹²⁶ assisting to maintain racial balance and helping to win more supporters for blacks among employers and thereby more jobs for black community. He also points out that the NUL helped in the adjustment of blacks from rural settings to urban centers and helped them to be accepted as permanent residents.¹²⁷

Kusmer believes that the League in Cleveland was "very successful" in helping newcomers obtain employment, especially during periods black labor demand.¹²⁸ However, he maintains that the Cleveland League during the 1920s was "highly influenced by white businessmen whose attitudes toward black migrants were at best paternalistic, at worst exploitative."¹²⁹ He asserts that the League's effectiveness was limited by the discrimination practices of its chief white supporters and the League's "theory of social work then in vogue," and its conceptualization of poverty as a problem in individual cultural adjustment rather than one of socioeconomic inequality or racism. In dealing with the needs of black migrants, the Cleveland Urban League focused on the failure of individuals rather than injustices of the social system. Kusmer believes that the failure of the League's was proved by Depression's lay-offs of black workers even though they were more efficient and skilled at that time than before.¹³⁰ Trotter, believes

¹²⁶Strickland, p. 260.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 261.

¹²⁸Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape, p. 255.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid. pp. 256-257.

that the Milwaukee League failed to eliminate abuses because of its reconciliatory approach.¹³¹

Professor Richard W. Thomas applauds the Urban League for its role in race relations which he sees as constituting the more progressive element of its time. His assessment of the Leagues's contribution in the life of the blacks in Detroit is expressed in these words:

Between 1916 and 1945, the Detroit Urban League played a key role in the community building process in black Detroit. It contributed to the stabilization and adjustment of southern black migrants by providing them with assistance in finding housing, jobs, and wholesome recreation. As thousands of black peasants arrived in Detroit with neither friends nor relatives, the League became their guardian. The League staff met them at trains and shepherded them to their destinations. When they needed someone to speak on their behalf or needed to find a relative or a place to sleep, the migrants turned more often to the League than to any other organization or institution in the black community....While the League failed to place many blacks in jobs for which they were qualified, they did place them in jobs which they could at least survive until a better day.¹³²

To sum up, studies of the Urban League movement have led scholars to present two basic conflicting images. Some authors have seen the League as a servant of industrial capitalism.¹³³ According to this interpretation the League was not designed to seriously assist African Americans. This view considers the NUL and its affiliates as servants of the interests of the Industrial capitalists. Such a view sees the NUL's true mission as that dedicated to the preservation and expansion of capitalist values and practices. Other scholars have painted a picture of an agency composed of altruists

¹³¹Trotter, p. 66.

¹³²Richard W. Thomas, Life for Us is What We Make it, p. 86-87.

¹³³David Allan Levine in his Internal Combustion : The Races in Detroit 1915-1926, and Robert L. Allen are probably among the best examples of such scholars.

sincerely committed to the improvement of the African-American social and economic status.¹³⁴ This proposition attributes the League's ineffectiveness to the lack of financial and moral support from the majority of the whites.

The NUL and Twentieth Century American history

Scarce and controversial as it is, the literature on the NUL beg an understanding of a variety of topics essential to an understanding of twentieth century American history. An expansion of knowledge of the NUL would therefore further our understanding of American twentieth century history. An expanded knowledge of NUL would illuminate many topics in American history. Attempts to trace the origins of the NUL, for instance, have given rise to the need for revisioning the Progressive Movement. Nancy Weiss has seen the potentiality of the NUL's study to an understanding of Progressive Era if examined from a racial reform perspective.¹³⁵ In her monograph, The National Urban League 1910-1940, Weiss devoted an entire chapter discussing the relationship between the Progressive Movement and racial reform in the context of the NAACP and the NUL. Like Moore, Weiss asserts that both NUL and NAACP were "authentic" products of the Progressive Era.¹³⁶ She argues that both NUL and NAACP used tactics, methods, and personnel drawn from the spirit of the Progressive Era. However, she points out that

¹³⁴Those that probably falls in this category include Parris and Brooks in their Blacks in the City; Arvarh Strickland in his History of the Chicago Urban League; Myrdal in his American Dilemma; Jesse Thomas Moore in his A Search for Equality.

¹³⁵Weiss, p. viii.

¹³⁶Ibid. p.47 and Moore, p. 54.

progressivism "went hand-in-hand with outright racism."¹³⁷ Thus, Weiss's discussion of the progressive movement, as illumined by the study of the NUL, emphasizes the progressivists's social justice, mixed with outright racism.

Another aspect of progressivism related to a study of the Urban League Movement concerns the question of periodization. Traditional historiography of Progressivism points 1917 as the end of the movement. Weiss finds that NUL continued Progressivism beyond post-war period. Thus, the study of NUL has, also, an effect on our thinking about the periodization of Progressivism in American history.¹³⁸

Details of NUL history also has the potential to add not only our knowledge on what is known about Progressivism but also the histories of labor movement. Although it has frequently been pointed out that the labor movement in the United States was characterized by racial segregation and discrimination not much is known about the role the played by the Urban league in this story. Early in the 1940s, Myrdal placed the NUL in the controversy between labor unionists and African-American activists. Myrdal pointed out that the Urban League was in favor of black workers joining labor unions.¹³⁹ He also argues that the Urban League was powerless to achieve its goal of prejudice free labor unions. However, some African-American thinkers such as E. Franklin Frazier felt in 1942 that the League was not interested in empowering black

¹³⁷Weiss, p.47.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 173.

¹³⁹Myrdal, An America Dilemma, pp. 840-841.

workers.¹⁴⁰ Myrdal's about the role of the Urban league was based on the situation in the 1940s. At that time, as other scholars have suggested, the NUL opposed blacks joining labor unions. Publicly, though, the NUL expressed desire for the blacks joining the labor movement; privately it supported strike-breaking activities.¹⁴¹ However, because only a few affiliates have so far been studied our knowledge on this vital subject remain to be fully developed.

Among the few cases that has shed some light on the local leagues's relationship to labor unions is Trotter's study of blacks in Milwaukee. This study found that the Milwaukee Urban League was against the use of blacks as strike-breakers.¹⁴² But the Milwaukee League became decidedly pro-unionism only when it became clear that unions had become dominant. Thus only in 1937 did the Milwaukee members of the Urban League join the CIO.¹⁴³ Kusmer states clearly that the Cleveland Urban League had an uncritical stance toward business interests." This attitude led Cleveland Urban League to serve as a convenient reservoir of cheap labor for local industrialists and to sanction the use of blacks as strikebreakers.¹⁴⁴ Grossman has found that the Chicago Urban League had a pro-union flavor due to the influence of Anold T. Hill, a leading League staff member who urged blacks to join labor unions. However, the NUL and Chicago

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 841n.

¹⁴¹For a detailed account of the position of NUL on the question of Labor unionism see chapters seven and eight.

¹⁴²Trotter, Black Milwaukee, p. 57.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 163- 164.

¹⁴⁴Kusmer, A Ghetto takes Shape, p. 256.

together with other middle class blacks did not support the unions publicly because they were dependent on the industrial employers for the financial and program support rather than labor union leaders.¹⁴⁵ This debate indicates that a detailed account of the League would shed some light on the history of labor union movement; and the instruments used in the struggle to end racial discrimination practices within the local unions.

Black Migration is another topic in the American twentieth century history that more studies on the Urban League would illuminate: What were the attitudes of the Northern white Americans and black middle class towards the increasing black rural migrations? Who supported these migrations? Who opposed them and why? A thorough study of the history of the Urban League movement would help to answer these questions. The debate among scholars in regard to the position of the NUL on this issue provides a context for such a study. For example, Gottlieb study found that the Urban Leaguers gave advice to blacks from the south not to come to the north during certain periods; advised men to migrate came first in order to get prepare to receive their wives and children.¹⁴⁶ During the 1928 and 1929 the Pittsburgh League urged blacks to stay away from cities due to the unemployment.¹⁴⁷ Weiss finds that the NUL initially was opposed black northern migration. She argues that the League's views were similar to, and influenced by, Booker T. Washington, who opposed black northern migrations.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵Grossman, Land of Hope, pp. 237-239.

¹⁴⁶Gottlieb, Making their Way, pp. 52-53.

¹⁴⁷Ibid. pp. 103-104.

¹⁴⁸See Weiss, p. 62; and Strickland, pp. 41, 56-59.

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¹⁴⁶Gottlieb, Making their Way, pp. 52-53.

¹⁴⁷Ibid. pp. 103-104.

¹⁴⁸See Weiss, p. 62; and Strickland, pp. 41, 56-59.

However, since neither the League nor Washington were able to stop black migrations, the League later, stressed its role as that of addressing the immediate problems of rural migrants who moved into the cities. Although the Urban Leaguers were initially opposed to black migrations it was the Great Migration that gave their organization significance. Grossman has suggested that the Chicago Urban League encouraged black migrants to migrate into north during the Great Migration yet its members saw the migrants as a potential threat to black middle class life. They considered black migrants a burden capable of disrupting the community and an embarrassment to the race and Chicagoan middle-class black life. In Grossman's perspective black middle class had an ambivalence welcome towards black migrants into Chicago.¹⁴⁹ To study the relationship between the NUL and black migrations in the twentieth century is, therefore, to shed light on an important theme in American history.

A study of the National Urban League and its affiliates provides also an excellent opportunity to understand the concept of dual labor system, which gave blacks only the jobs that whites did not want. What kinds of jobs did the Leaguers help to open up for the blacks? What jobs did they train them for? Why those jobs? This story need to be told and the NUL and its affiliates are at the center. Such a line of inquiry would help to shed light on the factors that encouraged the development of black concentration in certain areas of jobs and work. Trotter, for example found that blacks got the lowest paying jobs in Milwaukee.¹⁵⁰ Is it true, as Gottlieb suggests, that employers allowed

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¹⁵⁰Trotter, p. 58.

blacks to join industrial employment at the lowest level while closing door for upward mobility because they wanted to "perpetuate mutual distrust among workers and thus inhibit unionism"?¹⁵¹

The study of the Urban League would also help to learn more about the role of private agencies in the politics of the New Deal during the Great Depression.¹⁵² It has been pointed out by some commentators that the NUL and its affiliates made enormous efforts to assist blacks cope with the effects of the Great depression. Weiss, Parris and Brooks suggested that the League worked closely and associated with Roosevelt Administration.¹⁵³ But more needs to be known on how the affiliates related to the Roosevelt Administration and his New Deal programs. What role did the League play in either opposing or supporting the political shift of blacks from Republican party to Democratic? What the role of Depression in fostering or lessening the social cleavages within the black urban communities. Trotter has suggested that it helped to lessen friction between black migrants and the black middle class in Milwaukee.¹⁵⁴ Such a topic is central to an in depth understanding of race relations, interracial cooperation and the black urban history in the twentieth Century.

In addition to the above mentioned topics, a great deal of intellectual history could be developed and expanded by more studies on NUL. For example, what are the different

¹⁵¹Grossman, pp. 206-207.

¹⁵²Weiss, P. viii.

¹⁵³See Weiss, chapter 17; and Parris and Brooks, chapter 24.

¹⁵⁴Trotter, p. 164.

images the Leaguers have of the American society, those in power, the minorities and of the intellectuals? Reading the story of the Urban league makes us aware of racial views held white middle class as well as black elites.

Our knowledge of the Civil Rights movement, especially the complexity of its leadership and organizations cannot be complete without a thorough knowledge of the history of NUL. The question of the League's role in the development of the Civil Rights movement is partly answered by a carefully examined story of the NUL and its affiliates. Contemporary scholars of the Civil Rights Movement view the Urban League as a civil rights organization, yet its initial role was that of a social service agency. Before 1960s the NUL refused to label itself as a civil rights agency.¹⁵⁵ How and why did the league become transformed into a civil rights organization? Answers to this question highlight the some of the internal factors that plunged the United States into its inevitable revolutionary spirit of the 1960s.

Another link of the American history to the early history of the NUL, is about the immigrants into the American cities. The movement into cities of European and Asian immigrants as well as from the rural south of the United States is closely linked to the history of the NUL. Programs set up for European immigrants were applied by the League's founders to situation of urban black rural migrants.¹⁵⁶ Yet these people had as much difference as similarity. To make an inquiry into this matter is to link the history of the NUL and an important theme in American history.

¹⁵⁵See Myrdal, p. 840, 1407-1408.

¹⁵⁶Weiss, p. 137.

that the Milwaukee League failed to eliminate abuses because of its reconciliatory approach.¹³¹

Professor Richard W. Thomas applauds the Urban League for its role in race relations which he sees as constituting the more progressive element of its time. His assessment of the Leagues's contribution in the life of the blacks in Detroit is expressed in these words:

Between 1916 and 1945, the Detroit Urban League played a key role in the community building process in black Detroit. It contributed to the stabilization and adjustment of southern black migrants by providing them with assistance in finding housing, jobs, and wholesome recreation. As thousands of black peasants arrived in Detroit with neither friends nor relatives, the League became their guardian. The League staff met them at trains and shepherded them to their destinations. When they needed someone to speak on their behalf or needed to find a relative or a place to sleep, the migrants turned more often to the League than to any other organization or institution in the black community....While the League failed to place many blacks in jobs for which they were qualified, they did place them in jobs which they could at least survive until a better day.¹³²

To sum up, studies of the Urban League movement have led scholars to present two basic conflicting images. Some authors have seen the League as a servant of industrial capitalism.¹³³ According to this interpretation the League was not designed to seriously assist African Americans. This view considers the NUL and its affiliates as servants of the interests of the Industrial capitalists. Such a view sees the NUL's true mission as that dedicated to the preservation and expansion of capitalist values and practices. Other scholars have painted a picture of an agency composed of altruists

¹³¹Trotter, p. 66.

¹³²Richard W. Thomas, Life for Us is What We Make it, p. 86-87.

¹³³David Allan Levine in his Internal Combustion : The Races in Detroit 1915-1926, and Robert L. Allen are probably among the best examples of such scholars.

sincerely committed to the improvement of the African-American social and economic status.¹³⁴ This proposition attributes the League's ineffectiveness to the lack of financial and moral support from the majority of the whites.

The NUL and Twentieth Century American history

Scarce and controversial as it is, the literature on the NUL beg an understanding of a variety of topics essential to an understanding of twentieth century American history. An expansion of knowledge of the NUL would therefore further our understanding of American twentieth century history. An expanded knowledge of NUL would illuminate many topics in American history. Attempts to trace the origins of the NUL, for instance, have given rise to the need for revisioning the Progressive Movement. Nancy Weiss has seen the potentiality of the NUL's study to an understanding of Progressive Era if examined from a racial reform perspective.¹³⁵ In her monograph, The National Urban League 1910-1940, Weiss devoted an entire chapter discussing the relationship between the Progressive Movement and racial reform in the context of the NAACP and the NUL. Like Moore, Weiss asserts that both NUL and NAACP were "authentic" products of the Progressive Era.¹³⁶ She argues that both NUL and NAACP used tactics, methods, and personnel drawn from the spirit of the Progressive Era. However, she points out that

¹³⁴Those that probably falls in this category include Parris and Brooks in their Blacks in the City; Arvarh Strickland in his History of the Chicago Urban League; Myrdal in his American Dilemma; Jesse Thomas Moore in his A Search for Equality.

¹³⁵Weiss, p. viii.

¹³⁶Ibid. p.47 and Moore, p. 54.

progressivism "went hand-in-hand with outright racism."¹³⁷ Thus, Weiss's discussion of the progressive movement, as illumined by the study of the NUL, emphasizes the progressivists's social justice, mixed with outright racism.

Another aspect of progressivism related to a study of the Urban League Movement concerns the question of periodization. Traditional historiography of Progressivism points 1917 as the end of the movement. Weiss finds that NUL continued Progressivism beyond post-war period. Thus, the study of NUL has, also, an effect on our thinking about the periodization of Progressivism in American history.¹³⁸

Details of NUL history also has the potential to add not only our knowledge on what is known about Progressivism but also the histories of labor movement. Although it has frequently been pointed out that the labor movement in the United States was characterized by racial segregation and discrimination not much is known about the role the played by the Urban league in this story. Early in the 1940s, Myrdal placed the NUL in the controversy between labor unionists and African-American activists. Myrdal pointed out that the Urban League was in favor of black workers joining labor unions.¹³⁹ He also argues that the Urban League was powerless to achieve its goal of prejudice free labor unions. However, some African-American thinkers such as E. Franklin Frazier felt in 1942 that the League was not interested in empowering black

¹³⁷Weiss, p.47.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 173.

¹³⁹Myrdal, An America Dilemma, pp. 840-841.

workers.¹⁴⁰ Myrdal's about the role of the Urban league was based on the situation in the 1940s. At that time, as other scholars have suggested, the NUL opposed blacks joining labor unions. Publicly, though, the NUL expressed desire for the blacks joining the labor movement; privately it supported strike-breaking activities.¹⁴¹ However, because only a few affiliates have so far been studied our knowledge on this vital subject remain to be fully developed.

Among the few cases that has shed some light on the local leagues's relationship to labor unions is Trotter's study of blacks in Milwaukee. This study found that the Milwaukee Urban League was against the use of blacks as strike-breakers.¹⁴² But the Milwaukee League became decidedly pro-unionism only when it became clear that unions had become dominant. Thus only in 1937 did the Milwaukee members of the Urban League join the CIO.¹⁴³ Kusmer states clearly that the Cleveland Urban League had an uncritical stance toward business interests." This attitude led Cleveland Urban League to serve as a convenient reservoir of cheap labor for local industrialists and to sanction the use of blacks as strikebreakers.¹⁴⁴ Grossman has found that the Chicago Urban League had a pro-union flavor due to the influence of Anold T. Hill, a leading League staff member who urged blacks to join labor unions. However, the NUL and Chicago

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 841n.

¹⁴¹For a detailed account of the position of NUL on the question of Labor unionism see chapters seven and eight.

¹⁴²Trotter, Black Milwaukee, p. 57.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 163- 164.

¹⁴⁴Kusmer, A Ghetto takes Shape, p. 256.

together with other middle class blacks did not support the unions publicly because they were dependent on the industrial employers for the financial and program support rather than labor union leaders.¹⁴⁵ This debate indicates that a detailed account of the League would shed some light on the history of labor union movement; and the instruments used in the struggle to end racial discrimination practices within the local unions.

Black Migration is another topic in the American twentieth century history that more studies on the Urban League would illuminate: What were the attitudes of the Northern white Americans and black middle class towards the increasing black rural migrations? Who supported these migrations? Who opposed them and why? A thorough study of the history of the Urban League movement would help to answer these questions. The debate among scholars in regard to the position of the NUL on this issue provides a context for such a study. For example, Gottlieb study found that the Urban Leaguers gave advice to blacks from the south not to come to the north during certain periods; advised men to migrate came first in order to get prepare to receive their wives and children.¹⁴⁶ During the 1928 and 1929 the Pittsburgh League urged blacks to stay away from cities due to the unemployment.¹⁴⁷ Weiss finds that the NUL initially was opposed black northern migration. She argues that the League's views were similar to, and influenced by, Booker T. Washington, who opposed black northern migrations.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵Grossman, Land of Hope, pp. 237-239.

¹⁴⁶Gottlieb, Making their Way, pp. 52-53.

¹⁴⁷Ibid. pp. 103-104.

¹⁴⁸See Weiss, p. 62; and Strickland, pp. 41, 56-59.

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¹⁵⁵See Myrdal, p. 840, 1407-1408.

¹⁵⁶Weiss, p. 137.

The first four decades in the Urban League's history is also linked to the development of social work as a field of study and practice. A number of the League's founders and supporters were either social workers or theoreticians in the field.¹⁵⁷ A history of the NUL would increase our knowledge about the development of their thinking and an understanding of Social work as a scientific field of study and practice. A history of NUL helps us to understand how Social work was extended to the African American urban dwellers and the evolution of black social workers.

There are many more subjects that the study of the NUL would shed light on. For example, the issues of underclass, racism, segregation, desegregation, urbanization, industrialization, world war I, World War II, radicalism in American society, religion, philanthropy, black urban communities, black-white cooperation and many more are intimately connected with the history of the NUL. The few topics introduced in this chapter are sufficient to reveal the need and value for more quantity and quality work about the NUL's history. A point has been made that such knowledge would prove beneficial to the understanding of the general twentieth century American history.

The Detroit Urban League as a Case Study

So far we have noted that despite of the importance of the National Urban League and its branches in the black urban experience so little work has been done. We have also noted that problematic disputes in understanding the organization abound although

¹⁵⁷Ibid., Chapters 2-5; Moore, A Search for Equality, Chapter 3; Strickland, History of Chicago Urban League, Chapter 1; and Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, Chapters 1-4.

little work on the subject presently exists. It seems useful, therefore, for scholars to make as many case studies on the subject as possible. One approach is to look at the NUL from one narrow theme or topic. Another is to examine the movement in a much shorter period. A third option is to examine as many local leagues as possible. Such case studies would contribute to the discussion of the organization, and therefore, of the Urban history in the united States. As Kusmer points out "detailed studies of black leadership and institutional development" in the Northern "cities during the Progressive era are lacking."¹⁵⁸

The Detroit Urban League (DUL) is selected as a study case for a number of reasons. It was one of the most important local branch of the NUL and no definitive study on it exists. Its leading Executive Director, John C. Dancy, has been credited as one of the most influential local League director in the Urban League Movement. Besides no definitive study on its organizational history exists to date.

This study focuses on the organizational history of the Detroit Urban League from 1916, the year it was founded, to 1960, when John Dancy retired. It focus on the organization's actors, mission, policies, programs, events, the historical and cultural influences that shaped its development. The study seeks to examine each stage of the DUL's evolution reflecting its various functions, roles, source of funding, relations among its supporters, programs, structure and the growing pains and dilemmas.

The study is based mainly on a wealth of primary materials deposited in the Michigan Historical Collection at Ann Arbor, Michigan. This collection, known as the

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Detroit Urban League Papers, consist of minutes and reports of the Director and other staff members to the Board of Directors, memoirs, correspondences from the NUL and a range of individuals including friends, business executives, politicians, organizations leaders, and many others. There are two basic problems of these sources. In the first place it is difficult to identify the dominant sentiment of the migrants. The data available overwhelmingly reflect the views, values, and testimony of the black middle class and the league members. This means that the present study uses data mostly internal in its essence. The external sources are extremely few.¹⁵⁹ The second problem is to find a way to determine the league's effectiveness in shaping perceptions, attitudes and behavior of the migrants. This again is the result of the first problem in that there is no way to listen to the migrant's voice; this makes it extremely difficult to measure the league's success. This weakness is somehow lessened by the availability of an immense internal data, which makes it possible to look for consistency and contradictions, in order to get an impression of the silent voices. The material available is sufficient to trace the main events in the League's history. Further, the material is rich in details about the league's program activities. These conditions make the examination of the DUL's organizational history possible.

¹⁵⁹For a fuller critic of the sources, see the bibliographic note at the end of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RISE OF URBAN LEAGUE MOVEMENT, 1890S-1900S

More social movements, national in scope, have been organized during the last ten years than the sum of all the movements organized before that date and still surviving...[changes caused by] shifting of races and nationalities within the city are perhaps the most striking and the most rapid of those which we have to do¹.

Mary E. Richmond (1910)

For many decades collective activities to address the needs of the African Americans moving into and residing in cities remained confined in the hands of a few black volunteers supported by black churches. Then, during the 1890s and 1900s a number of individuals, both whites and blacks, male and female, began to focus on the condition of black urban dwellers. Different groups and individuals emerged showing interest in the African American urban dwellers for a variety of reasons. Some wrote about the problems of slums in which African Americans lived; others developed educational and recreation programs for use by black children. A few made effort to establish employment bureaus for blacks seeking jobs in cities. However, many of these activities were short-lived. The men and women whose efforts proved to be more enduring attempted to mobilize philanthropists and urban leaders calling attention to the need for national programs and organizations that would address the perceived problems of the African Americans living in and coming into cities. These groups hoped to

¹Mary E. Richmond, "The Inter-relation of Social Movement," National Conference on Charities and Correction, Proceedings (1910) pp. 212f, Quoted in Parris and Brooks, p.3.

coordinate all the efforts and activities that addressed the problems of the African American urban dwellers. The group that emerged as the chief coordinating agency in the collective effort to aid in the survival and progress of the African-American dwellers assumed the name of the National Urban League.

According to scholars, the founders of the Urban League Movement represented an array of backgrounds, professions, aims and ideologies. As noted in chapter one, Nancy Weiss calls them "urban racial reformers," whereas Robert L. Allen described them as "reluctant reformers." We have noted, also, that many scholars, consider the founders of the NUL as a part of the "progressive movement" that emerged at the turn of the century. Nonetheless, regardless of what historians have described these men and women, we still need to know why they appeared on the horizon at this time. What prompted them to arise? What did they hope to achieve? What did they, actually, do? Why and how did the Urban Leaguers organize themselves? What function did they serve in the American social order? As noted in chapter one, there is no agreement of opinion among scholars on the interpretation of the founders of the Urban League. Therefore, the answers to some of the questions posed here, especially those that deal with the aspects of their motivation are difficult to find.

A look at the circumstances that surrounded the emergence of these individuals, however, gives the impression that their appearance on the American scene was not something that just happened suddenly. These men and women who became interested in the condition of black urbanites during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emerged as a result of a very complex network of certain forces that had been

at work since the end of Civil War. Two of the most significant forces that shaped the world that produced these men and women were industrial capitalism and racism. Seeds sown by industrial capitalism amidst racism after the Civil War and the Reconstruction period germinated between the last decade of the nineteenth century and World War I leading to the emergence of the individuals that founded the Urban League Movement. The triumph of industrial expansion, the intensification of racism, increase of black urban dwellers, and the deterioration of slums occupied by most blacks coincided with the rise of several organizations that focused on the problems faced by blacks in cities. This chapter to highlight the influence of these factors in the rise of the men and women who founded the Urban League. The thesis, maintained here, is that all these factors came about as a response to the national social problems created by industrialization and racism which had been developing for some time since the Civil War and the Reconstruction period.

The World in which the Urban League was founded

Among the most dominant features shaping the last quarter of the 19th century is the triumph of the American industrial capitalism and racism. Before Civil War, the most politically and ideologically influential individuals in the American society were the plantation farmers who owned slaves. After the demise of slavery, their power was broken. Within a short period, they were quickly replaced by the rapidly rising white northern industrialists. By the end of the nineteenth century the industrial capitalists had gained the upper hand in the control of the American society and its institutions. The

consequences of the triumph of the American industrial capitalists were felt in the social structures, values, attitudes, institutions, politics and indeed in the entire society.

The triumph of industrial capitalism led to the rise of many very wealthy white men. Among the most famous of them included men like Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jay Gould, James Hill, John D. Rockefeller, J. Pierpont Morgan, Andrew Carnegie and others. Blacks were not in position to benefit from the advantages made available by the rising power of industrial expansion. Majority of blacks were trapped in the sharecropping system and had no capital for business investment since most of them had just been emancipated. For those blacks who may have had some capital, the strengthened Post-Reconstruction system of racial prejudice and discrimination of white Americans was sufficient to prevent their participation in a highly competitive environment. Blacks, however, participated primarily through their labor. This situation, therefore, partly explains why all the railroad and other industrial "barons" were whites. Given that the ownership of the means of economic production was held by white men, social programs requiring financial support came to be dominated by white wealthy men. The kind of projects these wealthy individuals supported had a better financial position to last longer. However, such projects were likely to be attuned according to the world view and interests of white men. Therefore, the problem of racism and racial discrimination, at the time industrial expansion was taking place, helped to set the stage upon which the late 19th century social reformers, who led the struggle against the problems introduced by

industrialization and urbanization, were to act.²

Industrial expansion had other features which are crucial to an understanding of the context in which the late 19th and early 20th century reformers emerged. Industrial expansion was characterized by a situation of sharpened social division among the urban dwellers. The gap between the poor and the rich became very large and began to constitute a major problem that, as we shall see later, could not be ignored.

One important positive result of accumulation of much wealth in a few hands in America was the rise, in the late 19th century, of great philanthropists who contributed significantly to the increase of many institutions and professionals. The rise of graduate education among whites and blacks was one interesting highlights that developed as a direct result of increased power of industrialists. The industrial capitalists helped, financially, in the establishment of many educational institutions. Historian Franklin has observed that the "period between 1860 and 1900 witnessed the founding of 260 institutions of higher learning, many of which were primarily white institutions."³ In contributing huge sums of money, wealthy individuals enabled the United States to produce many professionals and dramatically increased the size of middle class. Increased number of professionals created a search for arenas to put professionalism into practice.

Another significant consequence of the rise and triumph of an industrial-based

²See John M. Blum, and others, The National Experience: A History of the United States., (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981) Chapter 18.

³See John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans (New York: Knopf, 1980) and Robert Wiebe's A Search for Order.

strong economy--and one that helped in setting the stage for the development of a concern for the black urbanites--was the increase in urban populations during the period between 1880s and 1910s. Unlike agriculturally based economy the developing industry was centralized in urban centers. Contrasts "between rural ills and urban attractions" provided the necessary push and pull forces for migrations and immigrations.⁴ Those attracted by cities came from the American countryside as well as overseas. Cities in the north-east, especially New York and Philadelphia, were among the greatest recipients of these migrations and immigrations. Between 1860 and 1910 about 14 million immigrants flowed into American industrial cities. By 1900, 40% of America's 76 million people lived in towns and cities.

Negative consequences of industrial expansion and increased urbanization of American society were numerous and called the attention of the middle class. Although wages were raised at times, and prices of goods lowered, the factories were not pleasant working places. Owners of factories had the best of times since they had a lot of wealth and control over so many individuals. In 1850, Cyrus McCormick's reaper manufacturing plant in Chicago, for instance, employed 150 but by 1900 it had 4,000. Ethnic, racial, class neighborhoods developed like cities within cities. Segregation increased the intensity of prejudice and tension. Moreover, as a result of the availability of better transportation system, the wealthy americans separated themselves geographically from the poor masses. Huge cores of poverty surrounded by rings of affluence began to show

⁴Blum, The National Experience, p. 474.

up in many cities.⁵

Increased population of both people from many ethnic backgrounds and races at a time in which segregation based on income, race, ethnicity and class was being emphasized created serious housing shortage. The housing problem led to the creation of the tenement houses, began in 1879 in New York.⁶ By 1890 one half of this city's population lived in tenement houses. Construction of tenement houses created an environment conducive to the flourishing of prostitution, organized gangs, gambling, drinking, lawlessness, extremes of human misery, degradation and many other anti-social behaviors.⁷

The appearance of saloons soon became the arena of class conflict. The presence of saloons affected negatively the well-to-do urbanites who soon began to demand their destruction. However, the poor masses saw such places as opportunities for free or cheap lunch. As one author has said, "The saloon was the poor man's club, his social center, and the Labor union meeting place."⁸ For the middle class, the saloon being associated with drinking and the immigrants from the Eastern and southern Europe, was a place to be deplored by all the "civilized" people. The ministers of religion were the most anti-saloons. Such a situation created tension between the saloon owners, on one hand, and

⁵Blum and others, The National Experience, pp. 478-479.

⁶Dickens is now the name of the "Old New York."

⁷Blum and others, pp. 478-479.

⁸Josiah Strong, The Challenge of the City (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham; Eaton and Mains, 1907) pp. 150-157.

the protestant clergymen and their followers, on the other.⁹

Overcrowding became even more serious after the skyscrapers were built in the cities. This problem worried the middle class and the upper class more than it did to the poor mass of the urban dwellers who were much more concerned about mere survival.

Given these conditions, it was not long before many individuals, especially, those who were not poor became dissatisfied with the negative aspects of industrialism and urbanization. Some middle class persons began to feel compelled to attack and challenge the richest Americans for living an unusually luxurious life amidst extreme poverty. In 1879, for instance, Henry George wrote Progress and Poverty condemning the working conditions of the poor and placed the blame on the most wealthy.¹⁰

All these problems associated with tenement houses, saloons, over-crowding, labor-management conflict and economic depressions bothered the American middle class and motivated them to increase their concern for the well-being of the poor and the disadvantaged. The worsening condition of slums, amidst palaces, brought the urban crisis into the foremost agenda item and one of the most urgent national issue during the last quarter of the 19th century. The fact that the municipal governments were overwhelmed by these developments and that many of the officials were corrupt, gave the professional middle class a greater opportunity, impetus and authority to take up the lead in the reform enterprise. Too, these educated people needed to utilize their skills and

⁹Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁰Henry George, Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions and the increase of Want With increase of Wealth: The Remedy (New York: The Modern Library, 1905.

knowledge. The unity of trained professionals and the rich philanthropists made it possible in the founding of many organizations aimed at addressing the urban crisis that developed in the wake of an expanding city population.

The journalists began to play a crucial role in motivating the middle class to focus on the poor and the disadvantaged. For example, in 1890 journalist Jacob Riis of New York published his shocking study of the slums, How the other Half Lives.¹¹ In the same year Ward McAllister published his Society as I Have Found It,¹² and condemned the New York elite's extravagance. Needless to say, with so many institutions of higher learning established and the development of social dislocations reaching an intolerable level, an era of professional reformers came into being.¹³

Fighting slums among immigrants was the chief motive behind the founding in 1880s of the Settlement Movement in the United States. Settlement Workers acting as Social workers emerged mainly for the purpose of addressing social problems of the urban America during the last quarter of 19th century. The community centers which they called Settlement houses were established in the immigrant's neighborhoods. They opened day nurseries for little children, gymnasiums, playgrounds, club rooms, libraries and social activities for young and the old; and established classes for the immigrants. The first settlement House in the U.S was founded in 1886 in New York city. The most

¹¹Jacob A. Riis, How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among Tenements of New York With Illustrations Chiefly for Photographs taken by the author (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1903)

¹²Ward McAllister, Society as I have found it (New York, Cassell Publishing Company, 1890)

¹³Blum and others, p. 479.

famous of all Settlements was established by Jane Addams in Chicago in 1889 under the name Hull House. Between 1886 and 1900 fifty or more Settlement Houses were established in the northern and eastern cities.¹⁴

An interesting characteristic of the majority of these settlement workers was that they were young females who had graduated from college. Industrial expansion had opened many opportunities for women to obtain higher education but had not allowed them to utilize their talents in careers other than in the areas of social work and teaching. Thus, many of them obtained jobs in Settlements and in the other social work organizations that emerged at that time. Among those organizations were Travellers' Aid, Employment Agencies, Y.W.C.A., Y.M.C.A., Fresh Air Movement, College Settlements Association, Fellows of the Bureau of Social Research, Armstrong Association. Their goal was, at least, partially, to put their professionalism into practice in the only place they were allowed by the society. Until a decade later, these white young middle class women did not attempt to provide assistance to the black migrants.

There was sufficient reason why these social workers initially focused only on the European immigrants and disregarded the condition of blacks. According to one scholar,¹⁵ the immigrants were the more threatening of the poor. The blacks were a subjugated group and, numerically, they were in a minority in the cities during this period. Thus, the settlement workers preoccupied themselves mainly with the immigrant problem. Only later would they concern themselves with the problems encountered by

¹⁴Ibid., p. 482.

¹⁵Daniel Fox, "Black America and the politics of Poverty, 1900-1970" in Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience, pp. 213-214.

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¹⁴Ibid., p. 482.

¹⁵Daniel Fox, "Black America and the politics of Poverty, 1900-1970" in Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience, pp. 213-214.

black migrants into the cities. Even Charity Organization which was founded in 1870 as well as other social service organizations neglected the blacks and focused on the old and new immigrants.¹⁶

Religious groups assists black urbanites

The failure of the settlement women to pay attention to the black migrants caught the attention of a few religious groups. Seeing the pitiful conditions of urban blacks, the Quakers, a religious organization with the longest tradition of assisting blacks in the United States, sponsored one of the first social service agency among black urban dwellers. Such an agency was established in New York city by a group of Quakers in the 1880s and continued to exist in the 1890s. Borrowing the programs of the settlement workers and applying them to the black migrants the Quaker's organization known as New York Colored Mission, operated an employment bureau, a nursery school, a boys' club and a night school. It also provided temporary lodgings and meals for newcomers and offered services of social workers, visiting nurses, and doctors.¹⁷

Another church benevolent movement to come to the aid of black urbanites and armed with the ideas borrowed from the settlement social reformers came into the scene in 1892, when the Children's Aid Society started the Henrietta Industrial School for Negro children, followed by the Henrietta Evening Trade School for adults in 1909. At the turn of the century, the Protestant Episcopal Mission Society opened St. Cyprian's

¹⁶Doman Lum, Social Work Practice and People of Color: A Process-Stage Approach (Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1992) pp. 1-24.

¹⁷Weiss, National Urban League, p. 13.

Parish House and Chapel on San Juan Hill. It offered Negroes vocational training, and employment bureau, instruction in homemaking, a soup kitchen, a visiting nurse, and recreational activities.¹⁸

Middle-Class Black Women Focus on Black Migrants

Another important group of individuals that became motivated to assist blacks migrating into cities were the black women. They, too, imitated the middle class white women's settlement movement ideas. In 1890 the white women had formed their General Federation of Women's Clubs an action which was soon imitated by black middle class women. As black migration into urban centers increased at a time the settlement workers concerned themselves only with European immigrants, black women began to apply themselves to the task of helping their fellow-poor blacks arriving from the rural areas into the cities.

Black migrants into the city, like in the case of other migrants and immigrants, were acted upon by push and pull factors. Some of the push factors that led many of these blacks to move into the cities included southern white racism, disfranchisement, lynching, and loss of other civil rights. Better opportunities in the Northern cities for schools, perceived availability of jobs, comparatively better civil rights, and amusements accounted for the pull forces. Black urban migration to the cities began to be noticeable in the 1880s. Gottlieb has found that between 1880 and 1910 black populations in major cities increased each decades. For instance, Atlanta, Memphis and Richmond increased

¹⁸Ibid.

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by 48.7 per cent, 57.2 per cent, and 20 per cent, respectively.¹⁹ Many scholars have traced the development of several ghettos in the period between 1870 and the Great Migration.²⁰ Such a development reflected a trend characterized by an increasing black population in American urban centers.

To put their talents into use, and partly motivated by the desire to alleviate the social problems created by this migration of blacks into cities black women established their famous Black Women Clubs. In 1892 Colored Women's League of Washington was organized and did considerable rescue work. The Black women club movement reached a climax in 1895 as a result of the organization known as National Association of Colored Women with its motto "Lifting as We Climb." It had local clubs set up girls homes, hospitals and other social agencies. The ones established in Chicago and Washington maintained Kindergartens, day nurseries, sewing and cooking classes, mothers' meetings and penny savings bank. In addition, the Chicago one helped friendless and homeless girls and ran an employment bureau. In New Orleans the Phyllis Wheatley Club sustained a training classes for nurses and contributed to an orphan's home. In New York Victoria Earle Matthews established the White Rose Mission and Industrial Association with Traveller's aid activities to guide the migrant girls coming from the rural areas and protecting them from exploitation by bad labor agents and the allurements to

¹⁹Gottlieb, Making Their Own Way, p. 31.

²⁰See works such as Kusmer's The Ghetto Takes Shape; David M. Katzman, Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit In the Nineteenth Century (Urbana:University of Illinois Press, 1975); WEBDuBois, The Philadelphia Negro, A Social Study, (Philadelphia:Temple University, 1899; and Seth M. Scheiner, Negro Mecca: A History of the Negro in New York City, 1865-1920 (New York: New York University Press, 1965)

prostitution. Other programs she offered included employment advice, temporary lodgings for girls, classes on sewing, cooking, simple arts and crafts, kindergarten mother's club.²¹

Black women, though the most important group to concern themselves with the problems of black urban dwellers in the decade of the 1890, were by no means the only ones doing something. In 1895, New York Kindergarten Association began a Free Kindergarten for Blacks offering programs in kindergarten, library, and clubs for boys, girls and mothers.²² But the individuals who made the most lasting impression in their effort to come to the aid of black migrants were the very white middle class women who, a decade earlier, had concerned themselves only with European immigrants to the exclusion of black migrants. These women succeeded partly because they had "strong professional aspiration"²³ and partly because they obtained stronger support from philanthropists and other powerful figures.

The motivating force behind the efforts of these white women in focusing on the problems of blacks in urban centers is, at best, unclear and mixed. They waited until a decade later since the existence of their Settlement Houses before these women became interested in the conditions of urban African Americans. Moreover, most of them, but not all, were less vocal in advocating social change as they had done in their relationship to the immigrants.

²¹Frazier, From Slavery to Freedom, pp. 277-303 and August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), pp. 121-138.

²²Weiss, National urban League, p.13.

²³Weibe, A Search for Order, p. 116.

Serious interest by settlement workers among black urban dwellers began in 1895, when Susan P. Wharton contacted Charles C. Harrison, the provost of Pennsylvania University, and requested him to cooperate with W. E. B. DuBois in a research on the condition of the Blacks in the Philadelphia City. Whites, in general, reacted differently to black migrants than the blacks. In most cases whites were more concerned about the problems of crime, slum conditions, diseases, and other problems associated with overcrowding. Most middle class whites believed and feared that the slum conditions in the black communities were likely to spill over into the areas that whites resided if more crime prone-rural migrants joined their black brothers in the cities. Their desire to prevent crimes from effecting their neighborhood should be give a major credit in propelling most whites into the activities aimed at focusing on the conditions of blacks migrating in cities at the turn of the century. Older black residents in the urban areas, on the other hand focused on black migrants to with a view to transform the newcomers into the mold which would be acceptable to the whites and thereby minimize the possibility of increased racism. Blacks who had a longer history residing in the northern cities, therefore, tended to received black migrants reluctantly due to the fear that the rural black migrants would make whites to intensify discrimination among all black people.

That middle class whites began to focus on black migrants partly in order to fight black crime is illustrated by the case of Susan P. Wharton's interest in focusing on the Philadelphia blacks. Eliminating slum condition was probably among the major motivating factors that led her to pay attention to the Philadelphian blacks. Most of the Blacks in this city were concentrated in the Seventh Ward. The Provost as well as Susan

P. Wharton, herself, lived in this seventh Ward. Many whites believed that the Seventh Ward was the nerve center of dirt, drunkenness, poverty, crime, and murder. The study suggested by Susan P. Wharton was viewed as the first laboratory of Negro problems in Philadelphia Negro.²⁴

Another possible motivation that led these young and educated white women to focus on black urbanites was that more and more social workers were being trained and needed a field to put their knowledge into practice.²⁵ Some of them were even willing to emphasize interracial cooperation in order to legitimize their involvement in the field of black social work, a field, at the time, was dominated by black middle class women. By the middle of the first decade of 20th century a number of these white women from the Settlement Houses had become so interested in the condition of blacks that they joined some black radicals, led by Dr. DuBois, in establishing the NAACP.²⁶ They were also interested in assisting the black migrants into the city out of compassion. Thus, their motivation was quite mixed.

Involvement of White Journalists in Black Migrants

As more and more blacks were, at the turn of the century, being pushed by the Jim Crow laws into segregated neighborhood that were invested with crimes, violence, prostitution and other appalling conditions, some leading middle class whites, of whom

²⁴See the introduction section of DuBois's The Negro in Philadelphia.

²⁵See Wiebe's A Search for Order.

²⁶Judith Ann Trolander, Settlement Houses and the Great Depression (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975) pp. 24-25.

Henry Baldwin was chief, became more sensitive to the question of preventing the spread of such social conditions throughout the entire city. Race riots of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, which led to the founding of the Niagara Movement, may also have prompted many whites to focus on the blacks in the cities. Journalists were among the first category of white individuals to intensively draw the attention of the nation on the problem of black migrants into the urban centers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁷ Some of them became known as Muckrakers, a name given to individuals who tried to rake or investigate problems or muck during the period in the American history commonly referred to as the Progressive Era.

Like social workers, journalists began to concern themselves with black migrants into cities with a variety of motives. They, too, initially had concentrated their work on the European immigrants and had become interested in the blacks later on. There is no doubt that the increased black urban population exerted its pressure on whites and motivated them to show concern for black migrants. In fact, Don S. Kirschner in his paradox of Professionalism, has suggested that lessened flow of the immigrants and the increased flow of black migrants as a possible reason.²⁸

Regardless of what might have motivated them, the impact of the journalist's involvement in black problems was enormous. Strickland suggests that the journalists created a climate of opinion conducive to an atmosphere of sympathy of whites for blacks. He also points out that the mob violence directed on blacks created some fear

²⁷See Chapter 1 of Strickland's History of the Chicago Urban League.

²⁸Don S. Kirschner, Paradox of Professionalism: Reform and Public Service in Urban America, 1900-1940 (New York: Knopf, 1976).

about the future of democracy.²⁹ Perhaps Ray Stannard Baker was the most celebrated journalist to become involved in black migrants in the early 20th century. Like most white journalists who focused on the condition of blacks during this time, Baker was concerned about lawlessness in relation to lynching. His concern was not so much for the pitiful condition of blacks as his fear of mob rule in the United States. In a similar vein, John R. Commons published in 1907 his Races and Immigrants, calling race relations the most fundamental of all American social and political problems concerned with the fate of democracy. In 1908 R. S. Baker advised that race problem be dealt by education, time and patience.³⁰

In the same year, 1908, William English Walling concerned about race riots of Springfield, Illinois, sounded to his fellow-Americans an alarm of political death of the democracy in the United States. In the same year Albert E. Pillsbury wrote on "Negro disfranchisement as it affects the white Man."³¹ William English Walling spoke of his concern for poor whites. Charles Edward Russell addressed on importance of constitution.³²

Entry of Black Men into Professional Social Work

Apart from the Quakers, black women, white middle class women and journalists,

²⁹Strickland, pp. 1-7.

³⁰See Strickland, Chapter one.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

black men also began to show interest in addressing the problems of black migrants in the urban centers. While Black women concentrated their attention on their clubs most black men leaders promoted the philosophy of self help and racial solidarity. Their chief spokesman was Booker T. Washington. But the period between 1865 and 1900 was characterized by so many serious problems for the Black people that it was difficult to know which problem to focus on. This was the time of increasing lynching of the black people, of legal denial of their citizens rights, of hardship through the Share-cropping system and tenant system, of convict leasing, of segregation and discrimination in employment and in labor unions as well as denial of social services. This made some black leaders, led by Booker T. Washington, to emphasize self-help. Others like Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, began to revive the idea of emigration. Still others, like Dr. DuBois, stressed protest. Under the Afro-American League, Thomas Fortune was a key figure in the championing of the protest strategy. The black women emphasized social work and education of children.³³

In the meanwhile, another factor was developing which put the focus of blacks in the city on a new level. Black professionals who were, later, to take over the work of social welfare from the black women began to emerge. Like black women, the black professionals were also following the lead of the mainstream white society. Partly, due to the fact that the white middle class urban reformers concerned themselves only with the immigrants and did not focus on the problems faced by the black urbanites, the black community began to raise up some professionals of its own.

³³The material on this section is based on the works by Weiss, Strickland and Moore.

If the black social work professionals were to succeed in replacing the so-called non-professional workers emphasis on professionalism was necessary. The social workers such as those represented by black women clubs, who had been helping urban blacks for some time, were now regarded as unprofessional and were to give way to the more professionally trained and the experts.

The development of black professionals began to intensify during the reconstruction period. It increased greatly during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. During the Reconstruction period, black people were permitted to attend schools and philanthropists began to support a number of black institutions of higher education. By 1876, there were three hundred and fourteen graduates. Of this number, nine six held professional degrees. Most of the black professionals between 1868 and 1880 were clergymen and teachers. Although a few physicians and dentists existed after 1870, it was not until the period between 1890 and 1900 that their number increased from 909 to 1,734. By 1910 there were total 3,409 physicians and dentists African Americans. During the Reconstruction a few African American lawyers emerged. Social workers began to appear at the turn of the twentieth century. Basically the African Americans professionals have been concentrated in the lines of medicine, teaching, and clergy.³⁴

As will be discussed later, involvement of black men in the condition of urban blacks was first given serious attention at the turn of the century by a man named

³⁴See G. Franklin Edwards, The Negro Professional Class (Glencoe, Illinois:Free Press, 1959).

William Buckley. The activity intensified with that rise of a Doctoral student in sociology, George Edmund Haynes, who completed the requirements for such a degree in 1912. Dr. Haynes, had began examining academically the conditions of Urban blacks in 1909. This was a short time after Dr. DuBois's publication of his study on the Philadelphian blacks.³⁵

Black migrants began to impact deeply on the black urban professional elites as the 20th century opened. These old residents of the city felt that their newly arrived brothers lacked a sense of cosmopolitanism. They viewed the rural folks, the rural ways of life, and the rural migrants' problems as dangerous to their already well established community. They feared that the migrants would disturb the delicate racial balance that existed in cities. In other words, these old black residents of the city saw the new and rapidly increasing migrants as a threat to their peace and the few privileges they enjoyed in the Northern cities. And they were right because discrimination and segregation in Northern cities intensified at the turn of the century and coincided with the increasing black migrations from south.³⁶ In Detroit, for example, the black shown resentment at the arrival of the rural migrants in the early twentieth century.³⁷

But some of the black professionals, such as Buckley and Haynes expressed some compassion for these migrants and wanted to assist them. Moreover, they found that they

³⁵John H. Ed. Bracey,Jr. and others The Black Sociologists: The First Half Century (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 1-12.

³⁶See Florette Henri, Black Migration: Movement North, 1900-1920 (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1975).

³⁷See David M. Katzman's work, Before the Ghetto.

could actually be of assistance to the migrants and also that their careers could actually be enhanced by serving the increasing blacks in the city. More urban blacks could mean more business opportunities for black professionals such as teachers, lawyers, doctors and social workers. These professionals, therefore, began to focus at these newly arriving blacks into the city as an opportunity and not as a liability. Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, an increasing number of black professional men in cities began to sympathetically focus on the condition of the migrants.

Early Twentieth-Century Effort to Aid African-Americans in Cities

By the first decade of the twentieth century, the migration of blacks from south to the northern cities, especially, New York, was becoming a subject of concern from many quarters. We have noted, so far, that some religious groups, Black women, white women social workers and black occupational elites had begun to focus on black urban migrants. As more and more blacks moved into the cities creating pressure on the city's leaders, efforts to deal with them intensified. In the meanwhile a new development arose which was to determine the nature of the program and leadership of the struggle to uplift the black urban dwellers.

Such a development came about as a result of the influence of racism. In the efforts aimed at diagnosing and formulating solutions to the problems confronting the urban blacks, industrialists gave more attention to the programs that were initiated by whites and not by blacks. This had the consequence that the destiny of blacks in the city was being placed in the hands of white leaders and their black supporters.

As we have noted, although other factors were considered, crime was the chief focus of most whites who became interested in dealing with black migrants. This, among other reasons, had led some white women like Miss Wharton to initiate programs aimed at alleviating the spread of the slum conditions in the neighborhood occupied by the Philadelphian blacks. Individuals who concentrated on the crime problem of blacks were reluctant to associate their efforts with the issue of segregation and racial discrimination as the chief barriers to the progress of blacks. Programs that attempted to focus on racial discrimination were unlikely to receive attention from most whites including philanthropists. Such a situation opened a door of expansion in favor of white initiated programs focusing on urban blacks. Black initiated projects began to fade away and began to operate in the shadow of white initiated and better financed programs.

The formation of the Urban League movement represented a fading away of black initiated social welfare activities, especially of the black women, in cities. This does not mean that such self-help programs disappeared, but they received less and less attention in comparison to those that were supported by professionals and the "almighty dollar." Black professional men and white middle class women assisted by white philanthropists soon began to occupy the center stage in the field of "racial advancement" in the American cities. Black women still continued to offer their humble services but were in no match for the programs supported by the white philanthropist dollar.

The National League for the Protection of Colored Women

One of the strongly supported and white initiated program came into existence

through the efforts of a young woman named Frances A. Kellor. Kellor was born in 1873. Her parents were well-to-do middle class members from Columbus, Ohio. By any standard, Kellor was a highly educated woman. She obtained her undergraduate education at the University of Chicago. Kellor possessed a law degree from Cornell in 1897. Typical of most women educated at the time obtaining jobs other than that of social work or teaching was not easy during those days. She therefore enrolled at Chicago for an advanced degree in sociology but left in 1902 for the New York School of Philanthropy where she received training in social work. Kellor made social work her life's career.³⁸

Like most white social scientists interested in addressing the problems of urban blacks Kellor was initially concerned with the crime aspect of blacks. She began to study the condition of the blacks in the cities in 1902 analyzing their criminality. According to her work, blacks were more likely to be criminals because of the environment in which they found themselves in. She believed that the criminal condition of blacks could be eliminated if stable family life-styles, wholesome recreation, social outlets, adequate education and skilled labor were provided. Kellor continued to examine the condition of black criminals and in 1904 she published her first studies on blacks. In these studies Kellor discovered and complained that black women were lured into moving in a criminal environment by the New York's city employment agencies. Her research report, Out of Work, described the way the employment agencies brutally treated the employees. She found how these agencies housed the employees in filthy tenements linked with saloons,

³⁸Weiss, p. 15.

brothels and gambling centers.³⁹ This was the same year another famous Settlement House champion woman, Mary White Ovington, began, also, investigating the condition of blacks in New York. Her studies led Ovington to join DuBois and others in the formation of the famous Niagara Movement.

In the following year Kellor with some other individuals formed the Inter-Municipal Committee on Household Research, an organization designed to look into the problem of the scrupulous employment agencies of women. With her as the general director, Miss Kellor helped to organize associations in New York and Philadelphia aimed at protecting black women who were helpless, friendless, penniless, inefficient from being sent to the northern cities.⁴⁰ For those who did migrate, Kellor and her association planned to aid them from being led into prostitution by stationing matrons at the various ports and to establish lodging houses and training schools the cities of the North. They worked closely with the Traveller's Aid Society.⁴¹

In 1905, Kellor and her allies proposed the formation of a national organization that would be concerned about the condition of black migrant women. The Organization she proposed was established under the name of National League for the Protection of Colored Women (NLPCW). The main emphasis of this organization was to prevent the black women from coming to the North. However, since it was clear that many of them would still come anyway provision was made to protect them from getting into

³⁹Ibid., pp. 16-17.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 17.

⁴¹Ibid. pp. 17-18.

prostitution. The League established Traveller's aid branches in several cities in the North such as:Memphis, Norfolk, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York. They sponsored recreational and social clubs, employment information services, and vocational education.⁴²

Interestingly enough, a couple years before Kellor had initiated her program, black women had conducted activities that focused on the same issues she was addressing. In fact, Victoria Matthews had vigorously campaigned against the mistreatment of black women by the labor agents. She had even taken the matter before the Armstrong Association only to discover that there was not much they could do about the matter. However, unlike Victoria Earle Matthews, Kellor had many white philanthropists on her side. Wealthy individuals such as Elizabeth Walton and Ruth Standish Baldwin and other who were very concerned about the problem of saloons gave her moral and financial support.⁴³

Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of Negroes

Another white-supported program that aimed at eliminating the crime conditions of blacks in New York and received strong support from many wealthy individuals was an organization that came to be known as the Committee of Industrial Improvement of the Negro of New York (CIINNY). It was initiated by William H. Baldwin, Jr., President of the Long Island Rail Road in 1903. Mr. Baldwin, concerned about the conditions of

⁴²Ibid., p. 19.

⁴³Ibid. p. 20.

blacks in New York city, called a conference on January 4, 1903. The venue was the Mount Olivert Baptist Church. During the conference, a number of issues were discussed in regard to the problems of blacks in the city, however, no action was taken at the time. Unfortunately, Baldwin died prematurely without realizing his dream.

Baldwin's efforts were carried on by a black man known as Dr. William L. Bulkley and his widow, Ruth Standish Baldwin. Bulkley was born in 1861 by free blacks after which he was able to acquire education through the means of working in all sorts of menial jobs until he was able to obtain a PhD. In 1901 he got a job in Manhattan as a principal of a predominantly black high school and later in a predominantly white school. During his early career life in New York Bulkley after observing the influx of both European immigrants and blacks into the city became convinced that blacks entry into criminal situation was forced on them by circumstances beyond their control. He had come into this realization when he noted that the Europeans migrants had no difficult obtaining jobs whereas the blacks were having so many obstacles in making their lives meaningful. Without jobs, Bulkley, believed, the blacks were likely to enter into illegal activities. Thus, in 1905 he started a night school offering industrial and commercial courses such as cooking, millinery, dressmaking, carpentry, cabinet work, mechanical drawing and stenography.⁴⁴

After short time, Bulkley was unable to justify his industrial educational program. It was very visible that no matter how well blacks learned their skills as urged by the black elites they couldn't get jobs. Faced with this obvious criticism, Bulkley proposed

⁴⁴Parris and Brooks, p. 12.

a meeting of the "leading blacks and whites to consider this fundamental problem."⁴⁵ On April 19, 1906, the group met and Bulkley presented a paper about the economic problems the black urbanites faced. Mary White Ovington also gave a report on her findings concerning the living conditions of Negroes in New York. Following a discussion it was proposed and agreed that a permanent organization be formed "to consider the political, economic and social condition of the Afro-American."⁴⁶ On May 11, 1906 a permanent committee was formed composed of 40 whites and 20 blacks. On June 19, 1906 the Committee was formally organized under the name Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of Negroes in New York (CIICNNY).⁴⁷

Surprisingly, even Bulkley who was a charter member of the Niagara Movement, and later a founder of the NAACP, did not associate the joblessness of blacks with the question of racial discrimination. He simply urged that the problem of blacks was mainly their lack of training, thrift, initiative, and self reliance. In neglecting to address the problem of racial discrimination Bulkley was simply echoing the views of Booker T. Washington and his friends. Among Dr. Buckley's friends included the president of the Armstrong Association, William Jay Schieffelin, who was named as the chairman of the new organization.

The new organization held its first public meeting on September 20, 1906.⁴⁸ At

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid. p. 15.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 17.

that time Booker T. Washington attended the meeting and gave a speech. The Committee planned to do investigations on how "the glamour of a great city, housing conditions, and restriction to menial employment are having a decidedly harmful effect upon the majority of Negroes who have come north."⁴⁹ Another effort the new committee attempted to focus on was to keep a file of the names and specialties of all skilled black workers.⁵⁰ Reports and meetings were constantly held to report on the conditions of the blacks. Most of such reports were held in black churches. The committee made very little success in substance.⁵¹

Committee on Urban Condition Among Negroes

The movement of blacks into cities caught the attention not only of the white urban leaders but also of black scholars. In 1909, as noted earlier, George Edmund Haynes, became interested in studying the causes and consequences of black migrants from the rural to urban centers. As he got deeper and deeper into his studies of black migrants into cities, Haynes began to interpret the needs of blacks in a way that would place his profession at the center stage of urban leadership. Haynes was a southern by birth. After graduating from Fisk University and receiving an M. A. degree from the Yale University Divinity School, he enrolled at Columbia University for a doctoral degree

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 18.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 18-19.

in 1909 and graduated in 1910.⁵² Just before he completed his dissertation the young scholar began to entertain the belief that the solution to the problems of black urbanites was to train black social workers. In a sense, Haynes, although compassionate to the black migrants, was actually creating a job for himself.

My research suggested that in a period of less than 30 years one-half the Negro population of the nation would be living in the urban sectors. It was obvious, therefore, that the Negro educational institutions should begin training social workers and other leaders to serve city newcomers and that general welfare agencies should be encouraged to place and utilize these trained workers to help the newcomers to learn to live in town.⁵³

Being young and without material means, Haynes decided to contact individuals whom he thought could be convinced to sponsor his project. Mrs. Baldwin and Kellor of NLPCW agreed with Haynes in regard to the importance of training black social workers and educating black migrants to adjust into the urban life.⁵⁴ Leaders of CIICN, however, rejected Haynes ideas.⁵⁵ The rejection of CIICN to sponsor a project of training black social workers led Haynes and Mrs. Baldwin decide to form, at once, their own organization which would also incorporate Haynes ideas. To do so they called a meeting on May 19, 1910 at the New York School of Philanthropy. At that time the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes of New York (CUCANY) was formed.⁵⁶

⁵²Moore, p. 42.

⁵³Quoted in Strickland's A History of the Chicago Urban League, p. 11.

⁵⁴Weiss, p. 40.

⁵⁵Strickland, p. 11.

⁵⁶Parris and Brooks, p.27.

Several academicians associated with Haynes joined this new organization. This led to an emphasis on research and education in addition to seeking, for black migrants, improved housing, health, sanitary services, and recreational facilities in the black neighborhood, as well as protecting black women from exploitation and helping blacks to improve their employment skills and better jobs.⁵⁷ In other words, this new organization had a much broader focus than the other two. Haynes was chosen to be its Executive Director. However, after he had completed his PhD, Haynes accepted a teaching job at Fisk University as an associate professor of Economics.⁵⁸ He, therefore, proposed to do part-time work in New York for the CUCANNY. As time passed by a need for a full-time worker was sensed. Emanuel W. Houston was employed as a field secretary but replaced, on April 10, 1911, by Eugene Kinckle Jones.

Eugene Kinckle Jones, was born on July 30, 1885. After graduating from Virginia Union and Cornell University got a job in Louisville as a high school Teacher. There he taught vocational education.⁵⁹ When he joined the CUCANNY he was designated the Field secretary. Being a full-time employee, Jones made his professional destiny with the success of this infant organization. He was later named the Associate Director and finally the Executive Director.⁶⁰ Jones was quite an ambitious young man which ultimately led to a deterioration with Haynes. Their conflict was mainly over the control of the new

⁵⁷Weiss, p. 42.

⁵⁸Parris and Brooks, p. 27.

⁵⁹Moore, p. 56.

⁶⁰Strickland, p. 12.

organization. Eventually, Jones prevailed in becoming the chief executive of the organization.⁶¹ Of more significance, was the fact that, unlike Haynes, who already had a secure job as a professor at Fisk University, Jones had to expend all energy to see that the organization was a success no matter what. His job and income was dependent on the success of this organization. Unfortunately, this situation of need led Jones to be too financially dependent on the individuals that were wealthy.

The Founding of the National Urban League

The founders of CAUCANNY soon realized the importance of a unified effort by the three interracial organizations concerned with the condition of black urban dwellers. Representatives of the three organizations met in April, 1911, and discussed the possibility and advantage of consolidation. The CIICN was the main stumbling block in regards to the accepting the new constitution. Its members did not like the idea of another supervising body above their organization. The problem was solved by manipulating semantics in the document of unification. On September 26, 1911 terms of consolidation were finally accepted by the three interracial organization that focused on black urbanites. On October 16, 1911, the group not only elected the officers, and approved a budget and a plan of action but also chose the name National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, a name later shortened to National Urban League (NUL).⁶² Professor Edwin R. A. Seligman was chosen to act as the Chairman 1911-

⁶¹Ibid. p. 59.

⁶²Parris and Brooks, p. 34.

1913. George Haynes was to be the Director and Jones was chosen as Field Secretary.

That day which marked the formation of the NLUCAN was hailed as landmark in the history of black social work and that it represented "a definite, through and continuous campaign to bring about cooperation among the various social agencies working with Negroes in this country."⁶³ Branch organizations in several cities were to be established. In addition, expansion of the training of black social workers was to be vigorously pursued at Fisk University and other selected black colleges.⁶⁴ The program pursued by the new federated organization focused on the agenda of three formally organizations which now were to operate as three standing committees of the NLUCAN. NLPCW became the Committee for the Protection of Women, CIICNNY became the Industrial Committee, and CAUCANNY would constitute the committee on General Welfare.⁶⁵ Thus, the newly combined effort basically amounted to an attempt to conduct its industrial studies and traveller's aid work as well as "promote, encourage, assist and engage in any and all kinds of work for improving the industrial, economic, social and spiritual conditions among Negroes."⁶⁶ On March 26, 1913 the League was incorporated with thirty board members and ten making a quorum.

The Urban League's Financial Supporters

⁶³Ibid. p. 36.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid. pp. 33-35.

⁶⁶Strickland, p. 13.

Such a an organization installed and supported by powerful influential figures caught the attention of some major social service agencies in the nation. Among them was the Charity Organization Society of New York and the Association for the Improvement of Conditions of the Poor and the New York School of Philanthropy, who approved of it.⁶⁷ Only a week after the new organization came into being The Survey, formally Charities, and later, Charities and the Commons, the contemporary social work professional journal, said of the NLUCAN, "with the consolidation of three bodies committed to constructive social work among Negroes, a new epoch opens in the effective consideration of this phase of the American City Problem."⁶⁸ The media on that same October and December and again in January of 1912, the media spoke favorably of this new organization viewing it as "a new stage in constructive social work among Negroes." The media considered the founding of the organization as a new chapter in social uplift, and predicted that the organization would study urban ills, and would assist the African Americans in meeting the demands of a modern industrial society.⁶⁹

Such a situation brought an eclipse of the black initiative and helped to place the control of urban blacks into the hands of those personalities committed to the preservation of status quo. It also meant that the new social work organization was in a position to receive financial help as well as respect of the nation's white and black leaders. Until this time social work among the African Americans had not received any attention from

⁶⁷Parris and Brooks, p. 35.

⁶⁸Survey, October 28, 1911 p. 1080, cited in Parris and Brooks, pp. 35-26.

⁶⁹Moore, p. 48.

such powerful quarters.

Of more importance, was the fact that the NLUCAN obtained the backing of industrial capitalists such as John D. Rockefeller, Julius Rosenwald, Alfred T. White, Mrs. D. Willis James, Godfrey Hyams, Ruth Standish Baldwin, Paul and Felix Warburg, Andrew Carnegie, Cleveland Dodge, the Seligman brothers, George Foster Peabody and others.⁷⁰ The most important financial benefactor of the newly created organization was John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The second largest donor was Julius Rosenwald, the Chicago Philanthropist who owned Sears, Roebuck. The third major donor was Alfred T. White.⁷¹ Although most scholars believe that the League did not receive much financial contributions,⁷² yet no other organization connected with the welfare of urban blacks had anywhere near the amount of contributions the white philanthropists made to the NUL. The first year of its existence the new organization had a total income of \$15,488.70.⁷³

The Earliest Programs

During its first year of existence, the NLUCAN gave the training of black social workers its highest priority. The aim was to produce probation officers, settlement workers, Kindergarten directors, executive secretaries of civic betterment organizations,

⁷⁰Parris and Brooks, p. 39.

⁷¹Weiss, pp. 81-83.

⁷²See Parris and Brooks, p. 40 ; and Moore, p. 56.

⁷³Parris and Brooks, p. 39.

institutional church workers, church and charity visiting workers, and home as well as foreign missionaries.⁷⁴ This was done by cooperating with Fisk University in the provision of the training. Scholarships were offered to selected black college students and fellowships were awarded for graduate study in New York. Between 1912 and 1913 Haynes attempted to train young black scholars. Courses in Economics, Sociology, Negro History and Social Investigation and Guest lectures by Social Work experts were offered. In the school year of 1913-1914 field work training was given to black student seniors in sociology through working in a settlement, Bethlehem House, established by the Woman's Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁷⁵

In 1914 the League held a scholarship contest open to students at Howard and Virginia Union Universities and Talladega, Morehouse, and Paine Colleges. In 1915, only one graduate of Fisk had completed the full course for social workers. But New York had produced six.⁷⁶ The training program gave a greater impetus for national expansion in order to place the newly graduated social workers.

In addition to the program of training black social workers, the new organization exerted great effort to combat the problem of crime. Efforts intended to address the criminality of blacks included programs for correcting and preventing them from criminal behaviors. Up to 1915, the organization gave probation supervision of offenders before the Court of General Session of New York. Much action, though, was concerned in

⁷⁴Strickland, p. 19.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 18-19.

⁷⁶Ibid. p. 20.

preventing black youth from becoming criminals. Big Brother and Big Sister program was started and enlisted volunteers. The purpose of this program was to place black boys and girls who were likely to get into trouble with the law under the "wholesome adult supervision." The drive of the League to provide recreation was a part of this social control mechanism. Immediately after it was organized the League embarked on a campaign to get the city of New York to provide playgrounds in Harlem. Social clubs for boys and girls were stressed at the outset. Juvenile Park Protective League was established to spy out the youth offenders and gangs. In addition, a tradition was inaugurated under the Fresh Air work program to take boys aged 12-16 for a two-week outing each summer.⁷⁷

In dealing with the issue of employment the Urban League founders contended that the blacks were failing to obtain jobs not because of racial discrimination or prejudice but due to their lack of efficiency.⁷⁸ Thus, most of the initial League's programs to assist black urbanites in achieving economic opportunities were based on such a premise. Even in their approach to organizing black workers their paramount goal was to increase the efficiency of blacks. In 1913, the League organized Colored Public Porters Association in order to raise their efficiency standards. The Association screened men who entered these jobs of porters to see who was efficient and who was not. Only the efficient ones were to be accepted.

The League experienced its first crisis when it came to organize the Colored

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 17-18.

⁷⁸Ibid. p. 14.

Chauffeur's Association because at that time the question of discrimination came up. It was criticized by whites why they would organize a group that was likely to fight discrimination. Not to offend white supporters the League pointed out that its overriding goal was efficiency.⁷⁹

Other efforts related to the problem of employment concerned with placement office. The League initially intended to act only as "clearing house." By the end of its first year it had placed seventy-four persons. In 1913, the organization began to encourage blacks to get night industrial training. Workshop for the unemployed with money given by the Mayor's Committee on Employment of \$8,340 was held in 1914. Men were trained to prepare bandages and surgical dressing and women were given household arts and paid \$3 each.⁸⁰

In regard to the problem of housing the organization refused to address the real problem, namely the question of housing discrimination and segregation. In fact the League accepted racial discrimination and segregation as a matter of fact. All it did was to compile a list of good tenants that would be given to reputable blacks who sought shelter. Blacks were divided into reputable and disreputable categories. Those who were described as reputable would be segregated from the disreputable ones. A program aimed at educating tenants in fostering sanitation, proper upkeep, and knowledge of city services and regulations was designed. Black families with questionable morals were to be evicted. Finally data was to be compiled calling attention to the need for black housing

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 14-15.

and the possibility for profits to get real-estate leaders to construct housing affordable to the poor individuals. Health work was not made a part of the new organization until the World War I came.⁸¹

When the Great War came the League achieved a national prominence because many northern cities were interested in its services. Jones began a strong effort to develop and cultivate affiliates. At first, in most cases, the League followed the views of Booker T. Washington in opposing the black migration. The Great War, however, forced it to change this policy and soon began to encourage black migration into the Northern industrial cities such as Detroit.⁸²

NUL's Effort at National Expansion Before 1916

As soon as the new organization came into existence, the NUL founders envisioned an organization with as many branches as possible scattered throughout the country. NLPCW, one of the three forerunners of the NUL, already had a national orientation with some activities in a couple of cities such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, Norfolk and Memphis. Such activities proved helpful to the NUL by providing the initial contacts in the national expansion efforts.⁸³ In addition to such opportunities, the presence of other organizations with a similar philosophy and goals as the NUL, also

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 16-17.

⁸²Ibid. p. 15.

⁸³Ibid. p.21.

provided the contexts for the initial contact activities.⁸⁴ For example, in St. Louis an agency concerned with the kind of social service work related to that of the NUL became the contact point for Haynes. In less than two weeks of the founding of NUL, Dr. Haynes wrote Roger Baldwin, the secretary of that agency encouraging him to be affiliated with the Urban League. Haynes assured Baldwin that the affiliation of his St. Louis organization with the NUL would not jeopardize the local autonomy while remaining in full partnership with the national office.⁸⁵ Contacts were also made in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Norfolk, and Memphis through agents working on behalf of the NLPCW. Within a year of its founding, the NUL was able to claim branches in Philadelphia, St. Louis, Memphis, Nashville and with traveller's Aid workers in Baltimore and Norfolk. By 1914 Savannah and Augusta had been added to that list. However, Memphis had died.⁸⁶

In spite of these apparent success in the national expansion efforts of the NUL during the initial five years of its program at national expansion, the enterprise was met with several frustrating experiences. The newly founded branches were not only unable to create program activities any comparable to those conducted by the mother branch in New York City but, also, that most of them had died by 1919.⁸⁷

The NUL founders, aware of the failure to establish many and successful branches

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 21-23.

⁸⁵Weiss, p.91.

⁸⁶Strickland, p. 24.

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 22-23.

in the country, attempted to offer an explanation why it was so. The most frequently cited reason was the lack of financial and manpower resources.⁸⁸ In 1913 Mrs. Baldwin spoke against a too rapid expansionist impulse. She viewed it as unhealthy.⁸⁹ In his annual report of 1915, L. Hollingworth conceded to the failure of creating more League branches when he said that "Because of the shortage of funds, early in the year the executive Board of the League decided not to attempt to form new organization in other cities, but to concentrate on the organizations already formed."⁹⁰

Another reason provided for the failure of the pre-war national expansion efforts of the League was the opposition of the whites in the south. Yet most efforts at establishing affiliates was concentrated in the south where most of the blacks lived.⁹¹ According to this view, the southern whites opposed the establishment of a League branch in their cities because they felt that the NUL, a northern organization, was attempting to mess up with the southern way of life.

Impact of World War and the Great Migration on the NUL

In order to understand why some Northern urban whites changed their attitude towards the work of the League, it is necessary to know what sort of changes occurred in the urban condition of the American Northern cities between 1911 and 1916. When

⁸⁸Ibid. p. 22.

⁸⁹Weiss, p. 92.

⁹⁰Parris and Brooks, p.74.

⁹¹Strickland, History of Chicago Urban League, pp. 22-23.

the NUL was founded the black presence in the north, when compared to the period following the break of the World War I was not strong at all. At the time, immigrants from Europe provided industries with very cheap labor. In fact the years 1913 and 1914 saw one of the greatest European immigration into the United States.⁹²

A few blacks lived in the cities, of course. Since the time of the Reconstruction, the number of blacks moving from the rural areas into the cities had increased slowly but steadily. Yet before the Great War their number was small. Industrial employer during this time refused to employ blacks in the industries. Thus most blacks living in the cities were concentrated into the janitorial work. In times of strikes they were used as strike-breakers. As a result of the lack of employment opportunities for the blacks few of them moved in the Northern cities. However, a trend had developed of a slowly and progressive migration of the Southern blacks to the Northern cities. In Detroit, the black population grew from 6,000 in 1900 to 15,000 by 1916.⁹³

As soon as the war broke, the supply of the cheap immigrant labor which the industrialists were accustomed to was cut off. Moreover, some of the immigrant workers who were already in the United States returned to their native countries as soon as the war began. At the same time that the industrialists were experiencing a labor shortage, the warring Europeans supplied the American industries with plenty of armament contracts which required more labor. The combinations of these developments introduced

⁹²See Thomas, Life for Us Is What We Make It, chapter two.

⁹³See page 332.

the greatest labor shortage crisis in the history of the American capitalism.⁹⁴

In anticipation of this unusual sharp labor shortage, many white northern industrial capitalists began to turn their attention to the African Americans--that neglected and untapped labor pool. Some employers sent labor agents to recruit the southern blacks in order to fill the desperately needed war producing factory-job positions. Others sponsored ad in the newspapers to allure the southern blacks as well as whites to take up the many jobs that were calling in the northern cities. Such activities excited many rural blacks who were at this time experiencing a number of social, political and economic problems. Many of them eagerly seized the opportunity to migrate to the northern cities. Such a situation helped greatly to increase the black presence in the cities in the North.⁹⁵

It was, precisely, during that time and under those circumstances that many Northern white urban leaders became interested in the work of the Urban League hoping to use it as a potential instrument in alleviating the labor shortage and to deal with the problematic racial consequences introduced by the presence of many blacks in a city. This makes sense given that most of these cities had no experience with such a concentration of blacks. Thus, the demands imposed by the war economy and the increase in black presence are two of the significant factors directly related to the interest that developed among the whites in the work of the NUL.

Fortunately, for the white industrial capitalists, the leaders of the NUL, having become aware of the opportunities introduced by the war for national expansion of their

⁹⁴See Thomas, Life Is What We Make It, chapter two.

⁹⁵Ibid.

organization, were now beginning to seek allies in the northern industrial cities. Aware of the unusual migrations of many blacks into the cities of the North-east, the NUL leaders began to sell the League idea with a package aimed at attracting the Northern industrial capitalists. The NUL leaders offered the industrialists in the northern cities a program of facilitating a smooth integration of the blacks into the war production activities as well as helping to make the blacks more efficient, disciplined, loyal and subservient to the industrial capitalists. They offered to make the African Americans an asset, and not a liability, to employers and urban communities. If the industrial cities would financially and morally support a league branch, the league leaders promised to do everything required to prevent the occurrence of an urban race riot and other problems that worried the leaders of the White Urban community. In other words, the NUL promised to deal with the industrial and the race relation crisis introduced by the demand of the black labor and its subsequent increase in black migration from the rural south to the northern cities. Such a program advertised at the right time made many white urban leaders in the northern cities begin reconsidering the work of the Urban League. They saw it as a program and cause worthy of support and promotion. Like in other cities such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, Columbus in Ohio, Cleveland, Newark, and Milwaukee, the founding of a League in Detroit is an excellent illustration of such a development.

Summary on the Founding of the League Movement

Thus, to combat the urban problems that emerged as a result of industrial expansion and rapid urbanization white middle class women assisted by philanthropists

founded several social welfare organizations. Their programs were copied by religious groups, black women who applied them to black urban migrants. Soon white settlement women and white journalists began to focus the attention of black crime condition in cities. With the emergence of black professionals a number of interracial organizations were founded focusing on the condition of black urbanites. However, these organizations tended to ignore the issue of racial discrimination and segregation which was on the rise. The founders of the Urban League Movement separated civil rights and political issues from those of the social and economic well-being. They lacked the sincerity in identifying the real issues and suffered from the problem of selectivity in the kind of agenda item they focused on. In many cases, they tended to shy away from the so-called controversial programs.

The struggle to expand nationally, was aided by the coming of the World War I, which forced many white leaders in the Northern cities to embrace the program of the NUL. The Detroit white leaders are a case in point of the existence of such individuals whose attitudes towards the League was dramatically transformed by the conditions imposed by the break of World War I. This war helped to introduce a new attitude towards the League's work. The attitude of many white leaders in Detroit changed from a condition of indifference to that of being in favor of the League. In fact, the white leaders, themselves, decided to establish, support and defend a League branch in Detroit. That is the subject of chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FOUNDING OF THE DETROIT URBAN LEAGUE, 1915-1916

I have come to Detroit at the request of the Associated Charities Board, to discover the needs of the colored people of Detroit, and to interpret them to the public. Mr. Henry K. Stevens of the Associated Charities is the chairman of the Committee. The Committee will be financially responsible for my work, and will act as consultant for my policies.¹

Forrester B. Washington (1916)

As noted in chapter two, before World War I, few American cities shown any significant interest in the work of the Urban League. However, the conditions introduced by World War I dramatically transformed the attitude of several Northern white urban leaders towards that organization. In Detroit, Michigan's largest city, popularly known as the "Motor City," a group of influential whites became interested in the work of the League at the beginning of 1916. The presence of so many black migrants from Southern States into Detroit forced the City's leaders to consider the possibility of establishing an Urban League affiliate. An influx of rural Southern blacks into Detroit had been increasing steadily during the first decade of the 20th century. It increased dramatically

¹Letter, Forrester B. Washington to J. M. McIndoo, PhD, June 9, 1916. General File, June 1916[1-6], Box 1, Detroit Urban League, Michigan Historical Collection (to be referred henceforth as DULP-MHC). In the same file is a similar letter that Washington sent during that same month of June to the Associated Charities and the heads of several other social service agencies in Detroit.

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during World War I. Many who came had been attracted by Ford's \$5 a day pay. Others had been encouraged by labor agents from the North and the advertisements for jobs in Detroit.² Among those white leaders in Detroit who sought to do something about the black migrants and became interested in the work of the Urban League included Detroit's philanthropists, Social Workers, Professionals and industrial leaders.

The presence of many southern rural blacks in the streets and factories of Detroit raised the question of racial adjustment in the city's social and economic institutions. Social institutions established by whites in Detroit, like elsewhere in the United States, cared only for the European immigrants. One Scholar has suggested that the reason for this situation was the fact that the European immigrants were more threatening to the urban social structure and smooth functioning of its system.³ The city's institutions refused to assist blacks who, before the Great Migration, were only a tiny number. Now that more blacks were arriving into Detroit and many of them brought by white labor agents sent by the city's industrial plants⁴ a need of dealing with black migrants was felt by some white leaders. During that same time, the NUL was busy selling its program of

²See Thomas, Life for Us Is What We Make It: Building a Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945, pp. 22-27.

³See Daniel Fox, "Black America and the politics of Poverty, 1900-1970" in Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience, pp. 213-214.

⁴A letter written by Mr. Boyd Fisher, Vice-President of the Executive's Club of the Detroit Board of Commerce revealed that Detroit's industries were bringing Southern blacks to their city. The letter clearly states that "One plant in Detroit has recently brought to Detroit two cars of negro workers. They report that they are well satisfied with the service of these colored men." See a circular letter, Boyd Fisher to Mr. Butler:Morgan Wright Co., June 27, 1916, Secretary's General File, June-July, 1916, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

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adjusting black migrants to various cities throughout the country. Detroit's white leaders became attracted by the work of NUL and decided to establish an affiliate in their city in the summer of 1916.

The city's white leaders, in concert with representatives of the NUL, made the initial effort to establish such an organization in Detroit. It was Detroit's white leaders, not blacks, who financed and morally sponsored the establishment of an Urban League affiliate. This chapter discusses the conditions that prompted some Detroit's white men and women to join the NUL leaders in the effort to found an Urban League branch in the "Motor City." It traces the process and the means by which the Urban League was organized and became a part of the Detroit community. It introduces the type of people behind the effort to establish the League and discusses the organization's philosophy, mission, goals and policies. It also, briefly, describes the nature of the League's earliest program activities highlighting the founder's priorities, values, needs and interests. Finally, the initial respond of the black community is brought into focus.

The NUL's Search for a Detroit Sponsor

Before 1916 both white and black leaders in Detroit City shown little interest in the Urban League Movement. Although the Great War, by starting a tremendous migration of rural southern blacks into northern cities, had created a new situation in American race relations, most leaders in Detroit did not initially consider the need for an Urban League. Black migration did not stir strong feelings of uneasiness in Detroit until early 1916. In the Spring of 1915, Eugene Kinkle Jones, the Executive Secretary of the

NUL, made some attempts to interest the leaders of Detroit in the Urban League idea but failed miserably. Jones' efforts to mobilize support for the establishment of a League affiliate in Detroit were part of a campaign he had begun in 1913⁵ and a continuation of the NUL's national expansion program initiated by Edmund E. Haynes.

In his quest for an Urban League sponsor, Jones tried, in the spring 1915, to sell the League idea, first, to the black leaders of Detroit represented by the leading black ministers and laity. In a meeting called by Reverend Robert Bradby, Detroit's leading black clergyman, and the Pastor of the Second Baptist Church, Jones called attention to the flow of black migrants from the Southern states and the hardships they were experiencing in Detroit due to, what he believed, the lack of professional black social workers and traveller's aid workers. Jones talked about the work of the National Urban League in dealing with the problems of the migrants and then urged the black ministers and laity to support the establishment of an Urban League's affiliate in Detroit.⁶

To his dismay, the "elder citizens and clergy" opposed Jones telling him that Detroit did not need a League. They said to him that Detroit had no race relations problems and that the black migrants were well taken care of. They especially resented "an outsider telling them the need for such an organization to meet the impact of the migration from the south."⁷ However, a few black youth agreed with Jones that an

⁵John C. Dancy, Sand Against the Wind: The Memoirs of John C. Dancy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966) p. 88.

⁶Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, pp. 74-75.

⁷50th Anniversary of Detroit Urban League, Newsletter, Volume 1, No. 24, 1966, Michigan Historical Collection, Ann Arbor.

organization such as the Urban League, was needed in Detroit.⁸ Some of those youth included C. Henri Lewis, Birney W. Smith, Cecil Rowlette, William Kemp, George Smedley. They met with Jones at Mrs. Maxwell's Brush Inn, a famous meeting place at that time.⁹ Unfortunately, for Jones, these black youth had little no influence and could not bring about the establishment of such an organization without the help of the older Black elites of the city. But the older elites, described by one historian as "Old Guard blacks", drove Jones out of the city viewing him as a messenger of doom.¹⁰

Actually, what the Detroit's black elites were worried about was that Mr. Jones might have been presenting a program which had the potential to invoke the displeasure of whites whom these "Old Guard blacks" were so dependent on.¹¹ Such a situation, these black leaders feared, could create unnecessary breakdown of the delicate balance of race-relations that had existed for some time.¹² But, Jones did not understand the psychology of these blacks. He simply thought that they were uncooperative. Yet, as we shall see later, many of these same black elites were to be among the chief supporters of

⁸Ibid. p.75.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰David Allen Levine, Internal Combustion: The Races in Detroit, 1915-1926 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976) p.54.

¹¹David Katzman has pointed out that the Detroit's black elites were accustomed to the patronage system. Moreover, the black community during those early days was quite small and lacked any political strength. See Katzman, Before the Ghetto, pp. 176-179, 184; and also Clarence Odell Hooker, "Builders of the Model T: Some Aspects of the Quality of Life and Social History of Highland Park, 1910-1927," Ph.D Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1988, pp.208-212.

¹²Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 54.

the League once Detroit's whites gave the new organization their blessings and support.

Seeing that Detroit's black leaders had rejected his proposal, Jones turned his attention to the City's white leaders for assistance. He contacted members of the Associated Charities, an organization established, in 1879, by Detroit's civic leaders to coordinate the work of different charitable institutions and to raise funds to meet the City's community welfare needs.¹³ Jones spoke to Lee Greenwood, the organization's Acting Secretary. However, no results came out of that encounter except that he was given the name of Henry Glover Stevens as someone who might be willing to help.¹⁴ In short, like Detroit's black leaders, and perhaps for different reasons, no one at the Associated Charities in the Spring of 1915 saw anything to be gained from supporting Jones and his Urban League work. Therefore, he left Detroit without any concrete promises or assurance that his dream of establishing an League branch in Detroit would come true.¹⁵

Meanwhile, the white industrialists in the Northern States began to anticipate a period of great labor shortage, forcing them to send labor agents for the purpose of recruiting southern rural blacks as possible workers. This development led to a tremendous influx of black migrants into Detroit--which became an issue of concern to many people in that City. Moreover, Jones continued to make further attempts to interest

¹³Introductory remarks on the Series I, Associated Charities of Detroit, Box 3, United Community Services Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University (to be known henceforth simply as ALUA-WSU).

¹⁴Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 75.

¹⁵Ibid.

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the leaders of Detroit's welfare work with the Urban League's idea through correspondence from his New York office as well as another visit. On October 11, 1915, for instance, Jones wrote to the Associated Charities urging them to financially sponsor an Urban League in Detroit.¹⁶ In the following month of November, Jones made a 24-day missionary tour on the behalf of the NUL that took him to various cities in the Northern States which included a stop in Detroit.¹⁷ In January 11, 1916 Jones wrote to Greenwood, requesting an opportunity to meet with the members of her Board, especially Henry G. Stevens, its vice-chairman.¹⁸ As in other instances, Jones failed. Although these efforts lasted for nearly a year, Jones hoped to convince the influential white leaders in Detroit that an Urban League affiliate in their city was absolutely necessary and would be of great assistance. Yet, in spite all his endeavors, the Associated Charities of Detroit failed to respond.

Associated Charities Becomes the Sponsor:

Fortunately, the demand for black labor created a situation in which the Associated Charities became the sponsor of the Urban League in Detroit. The Associated Charities'

¹⁶Letter, Eugene K. Jones to Secretary of Associated Charities of Detroit, October 11, 1915, quoted in the 50th Anniversary of Detroit Urban League, Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 24, 1966; John M. T. Chavis and William McNitt, A Brief History of the Detroit Urban League and Description of the League's Papers in the Michigan Historical Collections, p. 8. Michigan Historical Collection, Ann Arbor.

¹⁷John M. T. Chavis and William McNitt, A Brief History of the Detroit Urban League (Ann Arbor: Michigan Historical Collection, 1971) p. 2.

¹⁸Letter, Eugene K. Jones to L. Greenwood, January 11, 1916 quoted in the 50th Anniversary of the Detroit Urban League, Newsletter, volume 1, No. 24, 1966; Chavis and McNitt, p. 8. Michigan Historical Collection, Ann Arbor.

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decision to support the DUL was primarily due to the problems associated with the sudden influx of blacks into Detroit. For years, the Associated Charities through its Research Bureau which collected data and prepared reports on the various public and private welfare agencies and on social and economic conditions in Detroit had acted as a sort of a barometer for the city in regards to race relations.¹⁹ This organization, which represented the city's social welfare bureaucracy, was a constant 'watch-dog' over the problems related to the increasing influx of black migrants into Detroit, and the implications of such a development.

Although 1917 was the peak year of this wave of migration attention to it in Detroit increased in the year 1916.²⁰ Some black Southerners, as noted already, were recruited by the Northern labor agents. In 1907, for instance, the Employers' Association of Detroit placed "advertisements in nearly 200 newspapers across the country, encouraging both skilled workers and immigrant laborers to come to the Motor City."²¹ Between 1908 and 1916 the demand for labor in the Automobile industry increased dramatically. In 1908, for instance, the Automobile industry employed about 7,200 workers. In the following year that figure rose up to 17,000. In 1915 there were about 81,000 workers employed in Detroit's Automobile industry. In 1916 the figure jumped

¹⁹Introduction to the Associated Charities of Detroit materials, Box 3, United Community Services Collection, ALUA-WSU.

²⁰Carlson, "The Negro in the Industries of Detroit," p. 40.

²¹Steve Babson, Working Detroit, p. 23

to 120,000.²² Shortage of labor forced the industrial agents to recruit not only the rural whites but also the black rural southerners. Whereas in 1910 there were about 5,600 blacks in Detroit, 17,000 constituted their population in 1916. White migration invoked very little comment from the white population in the Motor City. However, the black migrants stirred strong feelings of uneasiness among. As Carlson has pointed out, the "presence of 'a certain number of Negroes... in a community was viewed as constituting 'a problem.'"²³

The chief problem faced by the Associated Charities in 1916 was its lack of experience in handling an unusually large influx of southern rural black migrants. Although the city's industries sent their labor agents to encourage the rural blacks to migrate to northern cities, it was difficult for many migrants to obtain jobs and shelter. Labor shortage became critical in Detroit in 1917 when the United States entered World War I. Before the war, racial discrimination prevented most blacks from obtaining jobs in the industries except as strikebreakers. Moreover social service agencies, like the Associated Charities followed a "white only" policy.²⁴ Yet many Southern rural blacks flocked and roamed to the city. Their presence was viewed as a potential threat to the

²²See Sydney Glazer, Detroit: A Study in Urban Development (New York:Bookman Associates, 1965) p.79.

²³Carlson, p.5.

²⁴For years Associated Charities of Detroit had a tradition of refusing to assist black migrants. When one of its social service agency was asked if they would accept blacks in their services its official replied that "Bay Court Home is a summer home for white mothers and children. We have never had colored mothers and children because we were afraid they would not be contented." See Letter from Margail B. Munn to F. B. Washington, June 13, 1916, Secretary's General File, June 1916, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

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smooth function of the city's activities. To the discomfort of the City's white leaders, these migrants could not be returned back to the southern states because the labor agents of the business leaders were among those recruiting them.

City leaders who were members of the Associated Charities became interested in seeing a sort of a black community that would develop in such a way to prevent any disruption in the usual pattern of race relations. With Jones offering an answer for adjusting the black new comers into the city, Detroit's white leaders decided to establish an Urban League affiliate. Thus, after almost a year of Jones persistence to sell the League idea to Detroit's leaders, a sudden interest emerged. This happened in 1916, precisely the period many citizens of Detroit were becoming very concerned about the unusual strong presence of black migrants.²⁵

Unexpectedly, while at his New York office, on February 14, 1916, Jones received a telegram from the Associated Charities of Detroit. The telegram invited him to a meeting the following day in Detroit to meet with some individuals who had become interested in the idea of establishing a League branch in the "Motor city." Although Jones's train was delayed, Stevens was able to maintain the interest of these people till the League's Director arrived. At this meeting, and unlike others that Jones had held in Detroit previously, the interest in the work of the Urban League on the part of the city's whites was so great that the Associated Charities arranged another one, in the office of Alexis C. Angell, its President, during the following morning. Jones, the Board Members of the Associated Charities and a few black youth, who, in the Spring of 1915, had

²⁵Carlson, p. 40.

expressed interest in the work of the League, decided to seriously start, at once, the necessary steps of forming the proposed organization. At this meeting, the Associated Charities of Detroit, having become absolutely convinced that the League's work in Detroit would be an asset, decided to financially and morally sponsor the establishment of a League branch in the city.²⁶ The organization, even agreed "to appropriate \$580.68 to cover the cost of its operation for the first four months."²⁷

From that moment on the Detroit's white leaders, represented by the Associated Charities, became committed to the establishment of a League branch in their city. The activities designed at translating such an interest and commitment into reality intensified and accelerated at a rapid pace. Henry G. Stevens was the man who worked the hardest to see that this organization was established. Stevens was the vice-president of the Associated Charities and an influential philanthropist.²⁸ In fact, with his assistance, two weeks later, the Associated Charities called another meeting of the City's welfare organizations in order to create a stronger support base for the establishment of a League affiliate in Detroit.²⁹ By April of that year, 1916, Greenwood, the Acting Secretary, promised Jones that her organization, the Associated Charities of Detroit, had agreed in principle to the idea of sponsoring the establishment of an Urban League branch in the

²⁶See Parris and Brooks, pp. 75-76; Letters from Jones to Dancy and from Dancy to Professor Angell, DULP-MHC.

²⁷Chavis and McNitt, p.2.

²⁸More about this man will be said later.

²⁹Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 76.

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city.³⁰ Jones, on his part, wrote to Greenwood that he would bring, to Detroit, Forrester B. Washington, the man the NUL had chosen to be the first Director of the proposed Urban League affiliate.³¹

On June 5, 1916 Jones arrived in Detroit together with Washington for the purpose of officially organizing an Urban League branch in Detroit. At this meeting the Associated agreed to provide Washington a salary of \$1,200 per year in return of his services as an employee of the Associated Charities. The Associated Charities was to assist, direct, guide promote and protect Washington's efforts of laying the ground work of the newly formed organization.³² Initially, the organization was known as a Committee of the Associated Charities. The name "Detroit Urban League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes" was, officially, adopted eight years later, when the organization became a legitimate part of the city.³³ Henry G. Stevens, the real driving force behind the organization of the new agency, was to act as the chairman of the

³⁰Letter, L. Greenwood, Acting Secretary, Associated Charities, to Eugene Kinckle Jones, April 15, 1916, Quoted in the 50th Anniversary of the Detroit Urban League, Newsletter, Volume 1, No. 24, 1966, Michigan Historical Collection.

³¹Letter, Eugene Kinckle Jones to Miss Lee Greenwood, May 23, 1916, 50th Anniversary of the Detroit Urban League, Newsletter, Volume 1, No. 24, 1966, Michigan Historical Collection; Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 76.

³²Parris and Brooks, p. 76; Budgets and Financial Records, 1917 Box 4; Forrester B. Washington to J. M. McIndoo Ph.D Supt., June 9, 1916, General File, 1916 [1-6], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

³³Letter, Theresa M. Carroll to L. E. Beans, May 29, 1948 Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

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committee.³⁴ June 5, 1916 is, therefore, considered as the date in which the Urban League of Detroit was founded.³⁵

The Committee On the Urban League for Social Welfare Among Negroes, a name, later, shortened to the Detroit Urban League (DUL), was formed by Detroit's whites leaders with little involvement of the City's black community. The only blacks invited by the Associated Charities in the organizational meeting was the small group of black youth, mentioned earlier. The decision to form the organization was made by the Board of Directors of the Associated Charities of Detroit. Involvement of Detroit's older black leaders in this newly created agency came after its actual founding had taken place.

The process in which DUL was established contrasts sharply with the founding of Chicago Urban League.³⁶ The Chicago one was established after a number of leaders in the white as well as blacks communities were "sold" to the ideal of the Urban League Movement. DUL was established before black leaders were consulted. The variation is mainly due to the fact that DUL was supported by an organization, rather than individuals per se, and, therefore, its founding did not require the trouble to convince its worth to a diverse number of individuals. Moreover, DUL was established first as a Committee of the Associated Charities, funded initially by that same agency made the process of its establishment much faster. The main forces that led to the establishment of both Leagues,

³⁴Letter, Forrester B. Washington to J. M. McIndoo, Ph.D supt., June 9, 1916, General File June 1916[1-6], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

³⁵Letter, Theresa M. Carroll to Mr. L. E. Beane, May 29, 1948, Executive Secretaries General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

³⁶For a full account on the founding of the Chicago Urban League see Arval Strickland's The History of the Chicago Urban League, chapter two.

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though, remained the same and were associated with the demand for black labor and its subsequent mass migration of the blacks from the rural south to the northern cities.

The Board Members of the Associated Charities

Before a discussion of the League's mission and philosophy a brief introduction of the individuals that constituted the primary sponsoring organization of DUL is necessary. A closer look at the essential characteristics of the Board members of the Associated Charities indicates that nearly all of them were connected with Detroit's industries. First and foremost was Henry Glover Stevens, the Associated Charities's vice-president; and, as noted previously as, the star player in the establishment of DUL in 1916. Stevens not only became the Chairman of the Committee that was to direct the League on behalf of the Associated Charities, but also became the man who played the most important role in shaping the new organization's policy. He became the longest-serving chairman of DUL's Board of Directors. Stevens was a very wealthy businessman who owned many properties in Detroit. He was considered a leader in the field of civic concerns and philanthropy. The source of his wealth was obtained mainly through inheritance from his father. Stevens's father had become very wealthy through the Western Mining business.³⁷ Stevens was one of the most important single financial donor of this new organization.

He obtained his undergraduate education at Yale University, majoring in forestry. Apart from his hobbies in tennis and arts, he devoted plenty of his time and energy in

³⁷Levine, The Internal Combustion, p. 73; Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 94.

charities and philanthropist activities. He was a member of numerous Social Charities in Detroit. In addition, he and his brother, Williams P. Stevens managed the Stevens Estates.³⁸

Other members of the Associated Charities connected with the City's industries included Frank M. Klingersmith, vice-president and treasurer of the Ford Motor Company, and the treasurer of the Associated Charities of Detroit; Richard H. Webber, president of the J. L. Hudson Company, chairman of the finance committee of the Associated Charities; Frank S. Bigler, Vice-president and general manager of the Michigan Bolt and Nut Works; Member of the Americanization Committee of the Detroit Board of Commerce.³⁹

Another important figure connected with the Employers Association and DUL was Fred M. Butzel, a lawyer, deeply involved with local Jewish charities and considered one of the city's champion of progressive improvement. He was also a member of the Americanization Committee of the Detroit Board of Commerce. Although he did not become a member of the DUL's board until 1919 he was one of the League's earliest financial supporters. In the later years his advice to organization on legal matters, budgets, and the most sensible, economical ways of expanding the League's services was an important factor in placing the agency on a respectable, business-like footing.⁴⁰

George T. Hendrie and William P. Stevens, a real-estate man and the treasurer of

³⁸Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 74.

³⁹Ibid., p. 77.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 75.

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the Stevens Land Company and brother of Henry G. Stevens, respectively, represented the Real-Estate industry of Detroit on the Associated Charities Board of Directors.⁴¹

Mrs. Roscoe B. Jackson, a member of the wealthy Hudson-Webber family became one of the staunch financial supporters of the newly organized agency. The representative of the Ford Motor Company at the Associated Charities was Horace H. Racknam of the Americanization Committee of the Board of Commerce. Joseph B. Schlotman, a retired treasurer and general manager of the Ray Chemical Company, director of the First and Old Detroit National Bank, and full time financier and socialite also sat on the board of the Associated Charities. John J. Whirl, the secretary of Employers' Association of Detroit in 1902-1916, was another individual connected with Detroit's industry and sat on the Board of the Associated Charities.⁴²

The only four individuals not directly identified in the record as having specific connections with big business were: Attorney Luman W. Goodenough; Alexis C. Angell, a noted attorney, who acted as the organization's president; Lee Greenwood, Claire M. Sanders, a Social worker by profession and the secretary of the Associated Charities for many years.⁴³ With so few representatives from social workers and so many connected with industries DUL seemed to be in contrast with the Board members of the Chicago Urban League who were recruited mainly from the Social Workers.⁴⁴

⁴¹Ibid., p. 77.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 74-77.

⁴³Ibid., p.77; Associated Charities of Detroit, Box 3, United Community Services Collection, Series I, ALUA-WSU.

⁴⁴See Strickland, p.27.

The Detroit Board of Commerce, established on June 30, 1902 was another key organization contacted to promote the work of DUL. Not that this agency was concerned with the welfare of the black migrants but it wanted the League to serve the interests of the employing class. The Board of Commerce had an employment bureau which employed only whites. Yet in 1916 it joined the Associated Charities in establishing the credibility of Washington and DUL by endorsing the League's work and its Director. As soon as Washington arrived in Detroit he wrote to Boyd Fisher, the Vice-President of the Board of Commerce's Executive's Club, asking him for assistance in reaching out to the key white leaders in the city.⁴⁵

Fisher responded very positively and accepted to endorse the work that Washington was attempting to do in Detroit. In a circular letter-questionnaire, Fisher urged the manufacturers and other industrialists to support and cooperate with Washington. Soon Fisher became the chief connection between the Board of Commerce and DUL. When needed, the Detroit Chamber of Commerce provided its office building and from time to time offered material resources to DUL. Occasionally, the Chamber of Commerce gave to DUL the assistance of manpower. It also provided advice to DUL's Director. As noted in the list of the members of the Joint Committee, the Chamber of Commerce was strongly represented in the Board of Directors of the DUL. On its part, DUL, as we will see later, was to encourage the black migrants to adhere to the ethics of work demanded by the employers. As it will become clear later, the League was also

⁴⁵Letter, Boyd Fisher to Butler: Morgan Wright Co., June 27, 1916. A copy of this letter was circulated to many Manufacturers of Detroit. See the Secretary's General File, June-July, 1916, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

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to support projects initiated by the Board of Commerce. The League's alliance with the Board of Commerce was to be continued for several decades.

Another significant organization that came to act as an associate sponsor of DUL was the Employer's Association of Detroit, formed also in 1902. By 1904 this powerful organization in Detroit, representing 67 firms, had a motto "prevention is better than cure."⁴⁶ Together with the Board of Commerce, the Employers Association was very anti-union.⁴⁷ Its most important function in the early history of the League was its contribution of \$180 per month. The money was used for the running of an employment bureau at DUL's office. The agreement was reached in May of 1917 and maintained faithfully for a period of fourteen years, after which the Depression made that service irrelevant in 1931. The Employers Association made an agreement that its members would only employ those blacks who sought jobs through DUL.⁴⁸ Chester Culver, the Manager of the Employers Association represented the organization in the Board of Directors of DUL. The DUL-Employers' Association relationship continued throughout the period covered in this study. Like the Associated Charities and the Board of Commerce, the Employers's Association of Detroit practiced strong discriminatory hiring practices. Its employment bureau was for whites only, a practice it carried till up to the 1950s.

The need for alliance between Detroit's employers of blacks and DUL was mutual.

⁴⁶Levine, Internal Combustion, 78.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸See Chapter Four.

The Associated Charities and Washington knew that to get the money they needed to carry out their program it was necessary to obtain the support of Detroit's employers. Recognition of this fact led DUL to attempt recruiting the non-Board "Friends" of DUL. The Detroit's employers also needed an agency that would help to recruit cheap labor and perform social control activities. In addition, under the umbrella of the Associated Charities some other two important organizations in Detroit came to play a key role in the early history of DUL. Organization connected with Juvenile Delinquency and recreations of youth became allies of the League. The police Department was also recruited into the little band of "friends" of DUL. Thus an alliance was forged between DUL and several other Detroit's institutions.⁴⁹

Forrester B. Washington: The First Director of the DUL:

These white leaders of Detroit were fortunate in that Washington, the man Jones provided the Associated Charities with as the first Director of the new organization, was just the kind of a black man they needed. He was trained in the art of research and Social Work. Washington had graduated from Tufts College in 1909. His graduate work had been done at both Harvard and Columbia receiving an M.A. from the latter institution in 1917. He had been one of the NUL's fellows sponsored to be trained as a social work. During the time he was the DUL's Director Washington conducted the research for the

⁴⁹The link between these organizations and DUL were their representatives who served on the Joint Committee. For a glance at the names that represented these agents in their alliance with DUL see the section in this chapter that introduces the names of the Joint Committee of the League.

thesis for his M.A. degree. In 1918 he accepted a job as a supervisor of Negro Economics in the United States Department of Labor. The members of the Associated Charities of Detroit liked him so much that they offered him a job as the Director of the Research Bureau of the Detroit Associated Charities in 1920. Later on, he was asked by the same organization to return to Detroit and conduct a study on blacks in the Mid-1920s. In 1926 his The Negro in Detroit, a two-volume study of the black condition was published by the Associated Charities. Eventually, Washington became, in 1927, the director of Atlanta School of Social Work at Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia.⁵⁰

The first action in equipping Washington and perhaps the most significant role the Associated Charities played in the history of the newly-founded organization, was the decision of its Board members to nurture the infant organization until it became an accepted member of the city's organizations. This was done by considering DUL as a Committee of the Associated Charities during its formative years.⁵¹ The plan called for the formation of a Joint Committee which would direct the work of the new organization on behalf of the Associated Charities. It was called a Joint Committee because it combined representatives from the Associated Charities Board and a number of very carefully recruited individuals from the city. Washington was to be the Secretary of this

⁵⁰Joseph J. Boris, ed., Who is Who in Colored America:1924-1928 (New York: 1929, pp. 384-385.

⁵¹The League requested permission from the Associated Charities and the Community Fund, an organization that provided financial support to the League (through the Associated Charities) to incorporated as an autonomous Social Welfare agency in February, 1924. Approval was given and the League's Board signed the Incorporation papers on April 24, 1924. See Minutes of the Board of Directors of DUL, February 21, 1924 and April 10, 1924, and Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Urban League, April 24, 1924, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

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committee. He was to act, also, in the capacity of the Executive Director of the DUL.

Recruitment of the Members of the Joint Committee was of considerable importance in the formative stage of DUL. The individuals invited to become the Members of that Committee would use their influence to make Washington acceptable to Detroit's white community and to some extent by the African-Americans. In addition, the Committee members were to raise the fund for the income required to support the activities of the League. Of more importance to the League's history, these individual would establish the traditions of the League along the lines envisioned by the Board of Directors of the Associated Charities of Detroit. Although Washington was intimately involved in lining up the Members of the Joint Committee much of the suggestion for the potential candidates was accomplished mainly by the Board Members of the Associated Charities. Washington was a newcomer to the Detroit scene and did not know the key individuals to contact. Probably his input in the choice of the Members of the Joint Committee was in selecting the black members. But even there, he still had to rely on the names given by those who had been in Detroit longer than himself. Moreover, he was really an employee of the Associated Charities and not an autonomous leader of his organization. In fact, the majority of the initial members of the Joint Committee of DUL were friends and colleagues of the Members of the Associated Charities. The Associated Charity officials, themselves, used to encourage staff members of its member agencies to become involved in the work of DUL by serving in the Joint Committee.⁵²

⁵²See Correspondence and Reports July-December, 1916, Associated Charities of Detroit, Folder 3-7, United Community Services Collection, Series I, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

Winning the city

From the beginning it was established that this Joint Committee was to be composed of blacks and whites. This was in conformity with the philosophy and principles upheld by NUL. In examining the types of people Washington and the Associated Charities recruited for the membership of the Joint Committee reveals that the new organization was bound to be dominated by and reflective of the values and interests of the industrial employers of the city.

The representatives from the Associated Charities on the Joint Committee of the DUL were led by Henry Stevens, noted previously as, the Committee Chairman and the key player in the drive to get the League started. He was also the vice-president of the Associated Charities. Other members from the Board of Directors of the Associated Charities who were to be in this Joint Committee included Greenwood, Claire Sanders, Roscoe B. Jackson. Greenwood was the acting secretary of the Associated Charities at the time Jones was attempting to look for a League's sponsor. She was also associated with the Investigation Bureau and the Federated Clinics which were member agencies of the Associated Charities. Sanders was the secretary of the Associated Charities for many years. She worked for the Juvenile Court. Jackson was a member of the wealthy Hudson-webber family and a board member of the Visiting House Keepers Association. Years later she became the president of the Associated Charities.⁵³

Other members of the Joint committee affiliated with the Associated Charities

⁵³Correspondence and Reports, 1932, Associated Charities of Detroit, United Community Services Collection, Series I, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

were Clara T. Livermore, chief probation officer, girls' division, Wayne County Juvenile Court; Rachel Haviland, Social worker, The House on High Street, a clubhouse for working girls. The house offered instruction in domestic science and the social graces. Other whites in the Joint Committee of DUL included August Helbig, wife of a real estate and investment broker; Julian H. Krolik, wife of a Detroit real-estate and investment broker. As we shall see later, Julian H. Krolik would play a leading role in shaping the League's program activities. Almost a year after its founding, Fred M. Butzel, a lawyer involved in local organizations and a member of the Americanization Committee of the Board of Commerce and later a member of the Board of Directors of the Associated Charities joined the League's Board of Directors. The Reverend Eugene Rodman Shippen, Pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Detroit joined the Joint Committee but was not directly connected with the Associated Charities. According to Levine, Reverend Shippen was the most radical member of DUL. However, he did not remain a Member of the Joint Committee of the League for more than a year.⁵⁴

Among the blacks recruited to join included Lillian E. Bakerman, a physician's bookkeeper; Roscoe S. Douglas, bank clerk; Eva Loomis, notary public; George E. Smedley, editor & publisher of The Detroit Herald and also the owner of Smedley Reality Company; William P. Kemp, a printer and the editor and publisher of The Detroit Leader. Smedley and Kemp were recruited to help in the publicity of the new organization by offering a space in their newspapers. Other black Detroiters invited to serve in the League's Joint Committee included Mrs. Charles S. Smith, wife of Bishop Charles S.

⁵⁴Levine, pp. 75-76.

Smith of AME Church; Laura Pelham, the wife of Benjamin B. Pelham who belonged to one of the Detroit's oldest black elite families; Birney W. Smith, a postal carrier who later became a probation officer for the Wayne County Juvenile Court; George H. Green, a postal carrier who later became an undertaker.⁵⁵

Two of Detroit's leading black physicians, Dr. Albert H. Johnson and Dr. Charles F. Green also joined the Joint Committee. Both of them lived in an all-white neighborhood. Green was "so light in complexion" that the white did not know he was black.⁵⁶ His wife was also a member of the Joint Committee. Two lawyers also were invited to serve in the League's Joint Committee. Their names were C. Henri Lewis and Cecil L. Rowlette, a graduate of Virginia University Academic Department who later attended Howard university for law courses. Both of these lawyers practiced law in Detroit as partners.⁵⁷

William C. Osby, trustee and secretary of the Second Baptist Church at the time of the founding of the League, also joined the Joint Committee. Osby was a building engineer, self-educated in electrical and steam engineering. When Dunbar Hospital was founded on May 16, 1918 he became a trustee and its general manager. He was chosen to be on the Joint Committee because he represented an important black institution. Between 1911 and 1916 he served as the president of the Detroit branch of NAACP. Osby's consciousness of his place in the social structure of the black community is

⁵⁵Levine, pp. 81-82.

⁵⁶Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p.221.

⁵⁷Levine, p. 82; Letter, Dancy to Mr. Albon L. Holsey, September 18, 1929, Secretary's General File, Box 1, September 1929, DULP-MHC.

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revealed in a statement he once made that "the Negro people knew all the outstanding men of their race, of course I kinda stood out, like the lawyers, like the doctors, like the other professional people...The Negro community was small, and we knew one another and knew well, you know, and everything we had I was in on it."⁵⁸

Members of the Joint Committee became the Board of Trustees in 1924 when the League was incorporated as a separate institution from the Associated Charities.⁵⁹ From the beginning membership into the League's Board of Directors was almost for life.⁶⁰ Of course, new members were recruited if there was a membership vacancy. Such vacancies occurred if a member resigned for various reasons such as relocating, having too much responsibilities or died. During the first few eight years, the Associated Charities had to approve any new board member who was suggested by the Board of Directors. Several Board members were replaced by individuals from their family.⁶¹

⁵⁸Tape-recorded interview of William C. Osby by Alex Baskin, Detroit Michigan, July 20, 1960, cited in Levine's Internal Combustion, p. 83.

⁵⁹For evidence of the fact that the League had stopped using the name of Joint Committee of the Urban League in favor of the name Detroit Urban League see in the minutes following this date. As evident in the Annual Report for the year 1924 given in the early 1925 the Board of Directors were now known as the Trustees of the DUL. See in the Minutes of the Board of Directors, File [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁰A significant number of the individuals who participated in the membership of the Board of Directors of DUL died during their tenure as members.

⁶¹Board Members replaced by family members included: Henry Stevens who was succeeded by his niece; Dr. Haley Bell who was replaced by his wife; G. Mennen Williams, Sr. was elected to replace his son, Governor G. Mennen Williams, Jr; Willard Pope retired and his place was filled by his wife, Willard Pope; Mr. John O'Brien replaced his wife Mrs. John O'Brien; Sgt. Stanley P. Ecclestone was replaced by his father, Stanley Ecclestone, Sr; Julian P. Rodgers, Jr. succeeded his father, Mr. Julian P. Rodgers, Sr; Dr. Johnson was replaced by his wife. This list is not exhaustive, but it is enough to make undisputable case that DUL was directed by

Thus the original founders of DUL became self-perpetuating. This meant that the League was to be dominated by the same type of people for a long time. Thus, many of the policies, programs and traditions established by these early Board members persisted throughout the period covered in this study.

Initially, the members of the Joint Committee met in the offices of the Associated Charities. When an office space was rented a few weeks after, the Associated Charities agreed to pay for the rental cost. Some Detroit's philanthropists helped in providing for office furniture. Income for running the work from June 5 to October 1, 1916, the first four months of the League's existence, as already noted, was provided by the money contributed the Associated Charities's of Detroit.

The DUL's office opened with three full-time workers. Therefore, a way had to be found to generate a regular income to run the organization's program activities. Paying the staff members including Washington, the Director receiving a salary of \$1200; Olga Douglas, the stenographer with a salary of \$480; and William Robinson as the Janitor getting \$75 required a new source of income. The employee salary plus, the cost of utilities and supplies led the first year's budget starting October 1, 1916 and ending October 1, 1917, to be set by the Associated Charities at a total of \$2,432. This was less than that of the Chicago Urban League which had as its first year's budget of about \$3,000.⁶² During the middle of 1917 a new employee, John Ragland, whose salary was

individuals with common backgrounds and interests. For identification of individuals in the membership of the Board of Directors of DUL, See names usually listed in the stationary of the correspondences and minutes/reports of the Board of Directors, in the DULP-MHC.

⁶²Strickland, p.30.

paid by the Employers Association for the purpose of running an employment office, raised the yearly budget to \$2,782.05.⁶³ At that time, the Chicago's budget was \$4,075.⁶⁴

Articulation of the League's Mission and Policies

The mission and goals that the founders of DUL set out to accomplish were based on their fundamental assumptions about the society and their community. Like the NUL's founders, the initiators of DUL believed that the well-being of the city could not be ensured as long as the needs of the black community were ignored. The Associated Charities emphasized that DUL was established to make the black migrants an asset to the entire Detroit's community. In his appeal for financial assistance on November 22, 1916, Stevens said that the purpose of DUL was to deal with the influx of the black migrants. He pointed out that "the Negro population is still increasing more rapidly than ever with nothing done to adjust these strangers to their new environment." As he saw it "an active interest in the improvement of the living and working conditions of the Negro will make him an asset to the Community." To him the purpose of this newly-formed agency was that of "trying to aid in the assimilation of these newcomers."⁶⁵ Meeting the needs of the black community was, therefore, one of the means of making

⁶³Budget and Financial Records, 196-1919, File [14-21], Box 14, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁴Strickland, p. 37.

⁶⁵Letter, H. G. Stevens to Mr. James Hayes, November 22, 1916, Correspondences and Reports, Detroit Urban League, 1916, Associated Charities of Detroit, Series I, United Community Services Collection, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

them productive and valuable to the entire community in Detroit.

To meet the needs of the black community in Detroit and thus make it an asset to the entire city, the situation of the migrant's employment, recreation, housing and health needs had to be addressed. This goal and mission of DUL was made public by the Associated Charities at their report for the year 1916. Among the "two young and growing activities capable of definite expansion," the Associated Charities reported, was "the Detroit League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, organized to open to the Negro Industrial and recreational opportunities."⁶⁶ The Associated Charities, proposed that

the Urban League could increase its budget \$3000.00 the coming year, with the greatest advantage to the community. Assistance for Mr. Washington in answering office demands for employment and recreational situation, opportunities for meeting local and national demands regarding the housing situation, for assembling facts concerning children and their needs and creating facilities to meet needs, all these, need the most interested support of Detroit. The Board is in the formative state and would gladly welcome new members.⁶⁷

Washington emphasized that the League was established to solve the problems of the black community. "I have come to Detroit at the request of the Associated Charities Board, to discover the needs of the colored people of Detroit and interpret them to the public,"⁶⁸ was his first public statement regarding his understanding of his role as the

⁶⁶Correspondence and Reports , July-December, 1916, Associated Charities of Detroit, Folder [3-7] United Community Services Collection, Series I, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Letter, Washington to J. M. McIndoo, Secretary's General File, June 1916, Folder [1-6], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

Director of a new organization. To him, making black migrants productive and efficient workers was a strategy of improving their well-being. Washington also stressed that "interest in the welfare of the Negro is interest in the welfare of the whole community. The League hopes to make better citizens and more efficient workers of the Negro."⁶⁹

The League's goals coincided with those goals of his future corporate sponsor:

To-day as a result of the war, the fullest development of every possible source of labor concerns the whole democracy. The Negro can contribute enormously to the future product of labor if he is given two things, both of which are denied him in Detroit. The first is encouragement in a more thorough preparation for work. The second is opportunity of employment in the type of work which develops efficiency and better standards of living. It is the purpose of the League to strive to obtain both of these things for the Negro in Detroit.⁷⁰

Both Washington and the Associated Charities believed that the needs of the black community could only be met intelligently if appropriate need's assessment were conducted and followed with corresponding programs. The League's Director stated that it was "the purpose of the League to investigate constantly the living and working conditions of the Negro in the city."⁷¹ The Associated Charities, itself, initially expected Washington's role to be that of a consultant "in difficult problems" of the black community. Greenwood wrote: "Mr. Washington feels with us that his greatest value to the community will not be in the emphasizing of case work." In general" She continued

Negro cases are handled by the Children's agencies, the courts and other organizations as previous to the establishment of the Urban League, but

⁶⁹Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee of the DUL, October 16, 1916, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

Mr. Washington is used as consultant in difficult problems by all agencies. The opening of educational, industrial and recreational opportunities to the negro is our main interest.⁷²

There were other more goals and purposes attached to work of DUL which were uttered over and over during the first six months of the organization's founding. They attempted to make the League appear as an organization for addressing all the issues related to black life in the city. One of them was given by Washington in a report speech delivered to the members of the Joint Committee on October 16, 1916:

although the League is primarily an organization for the solution of the general rather than the specific problems it has received many cases which could not be turned over to any existing social agencies and in the each of these cases it has made an investigation and carried out a course of treatment which has put the family or individual on their feet and has made them as comfortable as possible."....In pursuance of its purposes to get into more skilled and better paid processes of industry it has persuaded a prominent garment and manufacturing concern to open a factory in which they will employ only colored help."....The League feels that so far it is justifying its existence in that it is finding all the work it can do along the very line for which it was organized. In this connection it might be well to state again the purposes of the League. The League purposed to devote its time and energy to the solution of the peculiar problem of the Negro which have come into existence in Detroit as the city's population has reached the size and heterogeneity of a great metropolis.⁷³

Another of the League's goals was "to get the various public and private civic and relief organizations to approach their work with the realization that to be effective they must deal with the urban problem as a whole whether they apply to whites or blacks". And still another purpose he offered was that "where any necessary social agencies among

⁷²Letter, Lee Greenwood to Miss Edith L. Spurlock, February 14, 1917, Correspondence and Reports, 1917, Detroit Urban League, Associated Charities, Folder [3-18], United Community Services Collection, Series I, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

⁷³Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee of DUL, October 16, 1916, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Negroes are not existent, the League proposes to establish such agencies either directly or by persuading some other organization to establish them." Co-operation was another goal the agency was to pursue. "The League proposes to serve the few existing social agencies among Negroes by facilitating co-operation and co-ordination among them," Washington stated. In addition, he suggested that "the League proposes to train Negroes to become capable social workers among their own people."⁷⁴

The League, Washington pointed out, "realizes that the Negro has been more or less overlooked in the schemes of race betterment." He then told the members of the Joint Committee that the DUL was "interested primarily in the physical and material side of the Negro's life. It believes that you cannot do much for a man spiritually until you have given him a healthy and wholesome physical environment." Using what became one of his favorite slogans, Washington remarked: "in other words, 'you cannot grow lilies in ash-barrels.'"⁷⁵ To conclude his speech on the goals and objectives of DUL, the director summed it up this way: "the League aims to act as a sort of clearing house for social work among Negroes and as an agency for improving every phase of the living and working side of the Negro's life."⁷⁶

The League's goals became more and more tied to those of the industrial employers. In fact, towards the end of 1916 and the beginning of 1917 the officers of the Associated Charities linked the purposes of the DUL to the recruitment of black labor.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

Greenwood, speaking on behalf of the Associated Charities of Detroit, summarized the goals of DUL as "to interpret the negro to the community and the community to the negro expresses the general aim." But she also stated that the newly created recreational projects and the industrial activities that DUL had initiated had been established "to call the attention of the public to Negro labor."⁷⁷ The industrialists also understood the value of DUL to them. This is revealed in a letter that John Green, an important industrial manufacturer, wrote in response to a letter he had received from the Chairman of the newly formed Joint Committee of DUL:

We have carefully noted your letter of the 9th inst. [sic] and believe the movement which you have started for the improvement of conditions in connection with the negro [sic] race of our city is a very commendable one and should prove of great benefit to the race itself, as well as to the employers of negro labor.⁷⁸

In December 1916, Washington pointed out that the League was intended to deal primarily with "the preventive side for social work, rather, than on the remedial side".⁷⁹ By "the side for which it was primarily intended", he meant "the lines of employment recreation and cooperation."⁸⁰ But not wanting to mislead them, he stressed that the pursuit of preventive side did not "mean, however, that case-work, in the form of special

⁷⁷Letter, Lee Greenwood to Miss Edith L. Spurlock, February 14, 1917, Correspondences and Reports, Detroit Urban League, 1916, Associated Charities of Detroit, Series I, United Community Services Collection, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

⁷⁸Letter, John Green to Associated Charities of Detroit: Attention to Mr. Henry G. Stevens, Joint Committee, August 11, 1916, Secretary's General File June 1916 [1-6] Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁹Monthly Report of Director to the Joint Committee of the DUL, December 12, 1916, Folder 11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁰Ibid.

investigations of families and individuals, relief, etc, have been neglected."⁸¹

Washington reminded the members of the Joint Committee that "it is one of the purposes of the League to get Negroes into the more skilled, the better paid and the more healthy processes of industry".⁸² Pointing out the benefit of pursuing such a goal, he said:

Wherever this is accomplished the Negro is able to maintain a better standard of living and is consequently less apt to become dependent, and delinquent or destitute. Moreover, the more trades and occupations that the Negro becomes familiar with, the greater asset he is to the community.⁸³

Looking at the development of the League's activities, Washington disclosed that "the work of the League was beginning to fall chiefly along these lines for which it was intended, prevention and education rather than relief."⁸⁴

The League's founders hoped to accomplished these goals within a framework of three specific policies.⁸⁵ One of these policies stated that the League's work was to be carried out without dealing with matters of discrimination. Such matters were left to the NAACP.⁸⁶ This was also in keeping with the policies of the NUL.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee of DUL, October 16, 1916, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee of DUL, October 16, 1916, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁵The evidence to demonstrate the existence of these three basic policies of the DUL appear more explicit in the later years.

⁸⁶In January of 1917, for example, Mr. Washington told the Members of the Joint Committee that the work of handling cases of discrimination belonged to the NAACP and not the NUL. See Monthly report of the Director to the Joint Committee, January

The second policy concerned membership to the Board of Directors. The Associated Charities had to approve all names of the potential Board Members.⁸⁷ A few years later, the League passed the policy that junior social workers could not be members of the Board of Directors of the League.⁸⁸ In accordance with the policies of the NUL, the Board of the Joint Committee had to be composed of members drawn from the white and black Community. The DUL had initially about thirteen members of each race. In most cases membership to the League's Board of Directors was self-perpetuating in that the membership was not open. Like, the NAACP which had membership open to all who were interested, the DUL's membership was solicited.⁸⁹

The DUL's third policy regards the financial arrangement. The League was to obtain its funds through the Associated Charities and was not allowed to solicit money without the approval of the Associated Charities. When the Employer's Association started to fund the cost of running the employment bureau of the DUL, the money was given to the Associated Charities who in turn passed it over to the DUL.⁹⁰ This policy

19, 1917, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC. This policy was followed by Mr. Washington's successor as will become clear in later chapters of the study.

⁸⁷This practice was evidence in all the meetings in which the Board of Directors of the League recruited new members into its Board. All nominations were submitted to the Associated Charities for approval. Sometimes the Associated Charities refused to sanction certain names and the Joint Committee had to drop them.

⁸⁸This was initially followed as a matter of practice. It became an written policy of the DUL in 1923.

⁸⁹Written policy of membership perpetuation was made in 1928. See Minutes of the Board of the DUL, February 16, 1928, Folder [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁰The financial reports indicates that the DUL received money from the Employers Association and later, the Community Fund through the Associated Charities.

was made more strong in 1918 when a Community Fund was established. At that time the League was prohibited from soliciting money unless given authorization to do so by the Associated Charities and the Community Fund. Before 1924, the DUL did not have a treasurer of its own. All funds associated with the DUL were handled through the office of the treasurer of the Associated Charities and the Community Fund.⁹¹

So far, we have traced the organizational development of the DUL by pointing the major events and personalities associated with this process. We have noted how Jones initially tried to interest the black and white leaders of Detroit with the League's work but failed. We have discussed how the demand for black labor created a situation in which the Associated Charities became the primary sponsor of the Urban League in Detroit. The main participating individuals and organizations in the founding of the DUL have been introduced. We have also described the goals the founders of this new organization formulated and set to accomplish. Also a brief comment was stated about their basic guiding policies. It now remain to highlight the issue of the financial sustenance of this new organization during its formative period. We will conclude with a brief comment about the League's initial program activities.

Soliciting Funds: Life Blood of DUL During its Formative Years

Once the Joint Committee was organized, the budget formulated, and Leagues's

⁹¹The policy on financial autonomy was watched closely by Mr. Henry Stevens. See Minutes of the DUL, April 14, 1921 and November 17, 1921 File Box 11, DULP-MHC.

mission articulated, plans were outlined for fund solicitation activities. We have already noted that 50 percent of DUL's budget would be from the money allocated by Associated Charities and the remaining 50 per cent was to be raised by the Joint Committee, from both whites and blacks in Detroit community. On July 16, 1916, the Joint Committee drew up a list of one hundred and one names of individuals and industrial firms to be contacted and requested to contribute to the cost of running an Urban League. Letters of solicitation were sent out to eighty-four individuals and firms. Four individuals responded with a total of \$131.38. Stevens gave the largest contribution of \$61.38 and later in October, he gave another \$50.00. Another individual reported as Mrs. J. B. Schlotman gave \$50.00. The other two gave \$10.00 each. The only firms that responded were the Detroit Stove Works and Continental Motors Company. Each gave \$25.⁹²

On November 22, 1916, twenty-four follow-up letters were sent. Stevens was the person who signed the letter on behalf of the Associated Charities and the Joint Committee. In this follow-up letter, Stevens said: "Sometimes ago we sent you an appeal in behalf of the Detroit League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes...It now is established in offices at 297 St. Antoine Street, in the heart of the Colored district" The letter then concluded with the plea that "now that this had been accomplished and practical work among the colored people of the city is actually began, won't you

⁹²Contributors, 1916-1917, Detroit Urban League, Folder [3-7] Associated Charities of Detroit, United Community Services Collection, Series I, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

help?"⁹³ The checks were to be made payable to the treasurer of the Associated Charities, F. L. Klengensmith.⁹⁴

This follow up activity resulted in only three responses of individuals who gave a total of \$20.⁹⁵ Thus, on November 29, 1916 a third bunch of solicitation letters were mailed to forty-five letters composed of a new list. The results were even more disappointing. Of these only one individual, Judge Alfred J. Murphy, responded with \$10. The Committee requested his membership into the Joint committee shortly after.⁹⁶

Between December of 1916 and September of 1917 about seventeen people and firms gave some contributions to DUL. The Packard Motor Car Co., Hudson Motor Car Co., and Templeton-Detroit Seamless Steel Tubes Co. were the largest contributors. Each of them gave \$100. An organization of black youth allied with DUL gave a contribution of \$25. Individuals who gave the largest contribution were W. T. Barbour for \$50 and Fred Butzel for \$75. Joseph Boyer gave \$250 on the behalf of twenty-three individuals. Jackson gave \$50.00 and William R. Kales, through R. H. Webber, gave \$25.⁹⁷

From this report of the fund solicitation and responses, it is clear that the financial

⁹³Letter, Joint Committee, A. G. Stevens to Mr. James Haynes, November 22, 1916, Correspondence and Reports, Folder [3-7] Detroit Urban League, Associated Charities, Series I, United Community Services Collection, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Detroit Urban League, Contributors, 1916-1917, Folder [3-7], Associated Charities of Detroit, Series I, United Community Services Collection, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

support for running DUL during its first two years came mainly from a handful of organizations and individuals. The most important included the Associated Charities, Employers Association, some industrial firms, Stevens, Mrs. Jackson, Fred M. Butzel and a few other persons who gave small contributions. Employers Association's contribution of \$100 per month was the single most important contributor to the DUL.⁹⁸ In sharp contrast to the white benefactors, contributions from blacks was almost negligible.

Earliest Program Activities

Interestingly, during the first few weeks the League's offices were opened, its main customers were not the black migrants. Agencies in Detroit such as juvenile Court, Associated Charities, Y.M.C.A., Child Aid Society, Associated Charities in Cleveland made the most enquiries on how to handle blacks. "In the three weeks the League has been in their permanent offices," Washington reported, "they have been called upon by a number of social organizations of the city to make special investigations of colored families and individuals."⁹⁹ Even the sixteen individuals Washington reported as having been offered jobs, were called for by employers looking for black workers. Washington recorded no migrant who sought the assistance of the League during the initial three weeks of being in its offices. Its customers were either white-only-agencies or individuals

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint committee of DUL, October 16, 1916, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

interested in directing blacks to the League.¹⁰⁰ Only one black minister was reported to have sent a man for employment.¹⁰¹

Between October 16 and November 9, 1916 thirty cases were reported to have been handled by the DUL. Out of those thirty cases, seventeen were related to employment, six to individual case work investigations, four on social service, and three were described as "special assistance." Two black ministers, Rev. Bagnall and Evans were reported to have referred seven cases to the League for handling. In other words, employment was progressively becoming the context through which the League and the black migrants were coming into contact. By December, of that same year, more people were applying for employment at the League's offices. During that month about sixty-nine did so. Out of that number, the League reported to have been able to place forty.¹⁰² By April of 1917 DUL was reporting a hundred and fourteen persons placed in employment in one month. At that time about five hundred migrants were arriving in Detroit weekly.¹⁰³ During the summer of that year it was reported that one thousand

¹⁰⁰The League was, of course, a new agency and was not known to the black migrants or other older residents of the black community. However, it appears that white organizations had more awareness of the presence of this new organization. It is mainly the members of the white Community that had established the organization.

¹⁰¹Monthly Report of Director to the Joint Committee of DUL, October 16, 1916 Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰²See in the Monthly Reports of Director to the Joint Committee, for the months of October 16, November 9 and December 12 Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰³Monthly Report of Director to the Joint Committee, April 12, 1917, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

migrants were arriving per month.¹⁰⁴ Thus the DUL was increasingly becoming important as a distributor of black labor at the time black migration was at its peak.

Influence of the League's employment activities helped greatly to win, for Washington, the support of several black ministers, who, a year earlier, had rejected the establishment of an Urban League in Detroit. Moreover, now that the League was already formed and more migrants were arriving in large numbers who, then, would reject the existence of such an organization in their midst had unprecedented access to the white power structure? Of course, Washington did attempt other strategies in an effort to secure the cooperation of the black leaders such as proposing a plan to bring all the black organization in a common association. For instance, on March 15, 1917 Washington and Cole met to consider the best way to carry out such a project.¹⁰⁵ In the final analysis, though, it was the employment office of DUL that became the best medium for making the new organization known among the migrants.¹⁰⁶ Every day several migrants visited the League's office in search of jobs and shelter. Between 1917 and 1919 many of these migrants found employment but not shelter.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the founding of the DUL. The organization was

¹⁰⁴See Carlson, p. 70; Haynes, The Negro in Detroit, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵Monthly Report of Director to Joint Committee, April 12, 1917, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁶In the following chapter it will be seen that Washington made a tremendous effort to make the League known among the migrants.

founded by the members of the Associated Charities of Detroit. Pressed by the desire to deal with the race relations problems caused by the dramatic influx of black southern migrants, the Detroit's white leaders acted quickly and decisively to set in motion the process of founding an Urban League affiliate in Detroit. The Associated Charities was an all-white organization. Therefore, it was mainly white leaders of the City who volunteered their time, energy and money to see that the organization was a success. In cooperation with Forrester B. Washington, the organization's first director, the Associated Charities formed an interracial Committee to assist in the running of this new organization. Most of the white board members were associated with Detroit's industries. The black members were drawn from the black professional class. The League's goals aimed at correlating the needs of the Detroit's business community with those of the black migrants. The League's policies prevented the League from having autonomy. It could not raise funds on its own, could not recruit members without the approval of the Associated Charities and, later of the Community Fund. Another policy prohibited the League from dealing with problems of discrimination. It left such concerns into the hands of the NAACP. When the League opened its office in Detroit Washington's work concentrated on meeting the requests from white organizations. Many of these organizations needed the League's assistance in dealing with individual cases of black migrants. As months passed, the League's work became increasingly tied to the problem of black labor. That story is the subject of chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMPLOYERS AND THE SHAPING OF THE LEAGUE'S ROLE, 1916-1918

We found that the Employer's Association was ready to go a long ways in carrying out suggestions that would prove of benefit to colored workman. [It] pay the salary of the employment secretary.¹

F. B. Washington (1917)

This chapter focuses on the impact of the employers in the program activity of the DUL shortly after it was organized. It highlights three factors that combined during World War I to create the context in which the League assumed its role in Detroit. In the first place, because Washington arrived in Detroit as an outsider he needed the support of the city's respected personalities. His new organization needed the financial support of the white philanthropists. Secondly, the desperate situation of the arriving migrants led the League to seek alliance with institutions and individuals who held access to jobs, shelter, recreation, and health facilities. Thirdly, the demand for black labor, created by the curtailment of European immigrants, led the industrialists to look at the DUL as an ally and potential supplier of black workers. The League used this situation to position itself as an intermediary between Detroit's employers and the black migrants. It soon

¹Washington's Speech notes, "A Program of Work for the Assimilation of Negro Immigrants in Northern Cities", delivered at the Round Table Conference of Charities and Corrections, June 13, 1917, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

began to speak to the black migrants about the needs and interests of the employers and vice versa. Although, the employers formed a strong alliance with the DUL they did not adequately address the needs and interests of the migrants. Thus, the League, supported by Detroit's power structure, acquired power fairly quickly while the black problems remained neglected by the employers. Seeing that the DUL had gained power while ineffective at influencing its powerful allies to meet the needs of the black community, some individuals began to oppose the new organization and its corporate supporters. However, the opposition of these individuals failed to weaken the League. The powerful white leaders of Detroit continued to give strong support and recognition to the DUL.

Organizational Needs During the DUL's Formative period

During its formative years, the League's greatest needs centered on questions of credibility, financial support and means to solve the problems of its two main constituents: the employers and the black migrants. To meet these organizational needs, the League realized that it had to cooperate with those who represented the city's power structure. The League's behavior during its first two years of formation illustrates this strategy.

When Washington arrived in Detroit in the summer of 1916 he became aware of his limitations as a newcomer to the city. He was young² and was an outsider to both the white and black communities of Detroit. Yet he had to deal with the city's leaders

²Washington was born on September 24, 1887. This means that when he arrived in Detroit as the first Executive Director of DUL Washington was barely 30 years old.

who were considerably older than himself and more familiar with the city's residents and traditions. Washington lacked significant credibility and influence to achieve his purposes and objectives as the director of the newly formed organization. One of his first activities in Detroit, for instance, revealed Washington's limitation. He wanted to conduct a survey on the industrial and social condition of the African Americans in the city. To do so, however, Washington had to seek the help of an influential personality in Detroit. The research questions were designed to help Washington discover the industries that employed blacks, how much they paid them, and what types of jobs most blacks were able to obtain.³ He also wanted to know the kinds of social services available to blacks and what institutions served them.⁴ With regard to the survey on social services, Washington obtained information using the assistance and influence of the Associated Charities and in particular, Henry Stevens. He positioned himself as having "come to Detroit at the request of the Associated Charities" and as an employee of that organization.⁵ In the case of getting the employment information, however, Washington needed a well-known and trusted person from among the manufacturers of Detroit. Washington found such a name in the person of Boyd Fisher, the Vice-President of the Executive Club of the Board of Commerce. Washington contacted Fisher and requested his assistance in securing the information on the industrial condition of black Detroiters.

³See a letter, from Boyd Fisher to various manufacturers, June 27, 1916, Executive Secretary General File, 1916, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁴See letter, F.B. Washington to various heads of Social Services in Detroit, June 9, 1916, Secretary's General File 1916, [1-6], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁵Ibid.

Fisher agreed to endorse the League and its Director. In his cover note of support to Washington's investigation of the industrial condition of the blacks, Fisher said to the manufacturers: "Mr. Forrester B. Washington, a straight forward and capable man is working with that organization doing research among the people of his race. He has asked me to aid him in securing data from Detroit manufacturers."⁶ On his part, Washington expressed appreciation of Fisher's assistance which had saved him "an infinite amount of expense, time, and trouble, and it also guarantees me a much larger percentage of returns."⁷ As expected, upon seeing the name of Boyd Fisher in the questionnaire, the manufacturers responded promptly.⁸

The League's financial needs was another problem during its formative period. We noted in chapter three that 50 per cent of the League's budget came from the Associated Charities and the rest had to be raised through solicitation from both the whites and blacks. But the majority of the blacks were too poor to be of much financial help in supporting the DUL. Most of the blacks in Detroit during this time were the newly-arrived struggling rural migrants. The League, therefore, sought financial contributions from wealthy whites in the city. Thus, Stevens and Washington contacted and attempted to persuade the Detroit's whites to provide the League's financial needs.

⁶Letter, Boyd Fisher to the various manufactures in Detroit, June 27, 1916, Executive Secretary's General File, Folder June 1916, [1-6], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁷Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee, June 1916, Folder [11-0], Box 11, 1916, DULP-MHC.

⁸Most of the responses were made within a few days after Boyd Fisher sent out his circular letter to the Detroit's manufacturers. See the dates in the responses by the various manufacturers of Detroit to the Boyd Fisher's circular letter of June 27, 1916, Executive Secretary's General File, Folder 1916, [1-7], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

The whites that the League contacted, as noted in the previous chapter, included several industrial employers. As soon as Washington received the responses to his questionnaire which he had sent to the employers, he categorized the Detroit industries into those that employed blacks and those that did not.⁹ He believed that those industries willing to employ blacks would also be inclined to give financial and moral support to the work of the DUL. With this list of Detroit's employers, the League began to contact individual industries asking for financial contributions.

The League also hoped to solve the problems of the black migrants. Washington's survey had revealed many of these problems. Basically, Detroit's social services served the white migrants only and refused to help the black migrants. Many of the blacks migrants in Detroit found it extremely difficult to locate decent boarding for their children. A majority of them lived in the worst sections of the city. Washington noted that the death rate in the black community was twice as much as that found among the whites.¹⁰ As he summarized his findings, Washington stated: "nothing is being done in the way of adjusting these colored strangers in their new environment and assimilating them healthfully. Hence, a situation is being created which, unless proper preventive measures are soon taken, will present a very difficult problem in the not so distant future."¹¹ Likewise, a majority of the employers were unwilling to hire blacks except

⁹See Detroit Urban League, Folder [3-17] Contributors, 1916-1917, Associated Charities of Detroit, Box 3, United Community Services Collection. Series I, ALUA-WSU.

¹⁰Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee, October 16, 1916, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹Ibid.

as janitors. Washington and his organization believed that if employers could be persuaded to employ black workers the black migrants could meet their basic needs of food, shelter, and health. Thus, Washington organized a list of those that were willing to and those who did not want to employ blacks. He began contacting those he considered willing to employ blacks with requests of job employment vacancies and financial assistance for the work of the DUL.¹²

Although Washington initially made little success in getting jobs for black migrants, the employer's needs began to shape the context in which the League's role developed. Whereas during the summer of 1916 most of Detroit's employers refused to employ blacks, in late 1916 the demand for reliable, efficient, and productive black workers forced Detroit's manufacturers to contact the office of the DUL making orders for black workers. With the League in need of financial and moral support from the employers and jobs for the black migrants, and the employers using the services of the League to obtain black workers, a situation developed in which the newly formed organization found itself with two clientele: the employers and the black migrants. The League's role, therefore, began to take shape under the obligation of meeting the needs of its black clientele as well as its corporate supporters.¹³

¹²See letters to solicit funds written by Henry G. Stevens to the first and second list of Detroit firms written between July 16, and November 29, 1916; T. Porter, "The Emergence of the Negro in Detroit's Industry, 1916-1919", pp. 14-15, Folder 260, Box 7, Michigan University-Department of History Papers, Michigan Historical Collection.

¹³As it will become clear later, the employers had the advantage in that they controlled the organization and black migrants were never allowed to make their contribution into the formulation of the league's policies.

Correlating the Needs of the Employers and Those of the Migrants

In an effort to address the needs of its corporate supporters as well as those of the black migrants, the League began to argue that the needs of the black migrants were connected to those of the employers. This was quite easy because the Employers themselves were beginning to make a similar argument. They sought to link their needs with those of the migrants. More important, the employers began to see the League's Director as an intermediary between themselves and the black migrants. The leaders of the employing class began to invite Washington to their meetings and ask him to interpret the needs of the black migrants and the work of his organization to the employers. During the month of October 1916, for example, the Employers invited Washington to two social gatherings sponsored by the Board of Commerce. At one of these events Washington was, as he put it, "given the honor of saying a few words on the Urban League."¹⁴

Toward the close of 1916, Detroit's industrial employers began to take bold steps in using their newly developed relationship with the DUL to pursue their interests. In November 1916, Boyd Fisher delivered a talk on the behalf of employers at a meeting sponsored by the Young Negro Progressive Association (Y.N.P.A.), a new organization composed of thirty-four black students in Detroit and the surrounding area. The Y.N.P.A. had been formed on November 4, 1916 with A. H. Cassey as its president. John Roxborough, the future manager of Joe Louis, the famous World Heavy Weight Boxing

¹⁴Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee, November 9, 1916, p. 7, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Champion, and an individual who in the thirties came to play a key role in the financial support of the DUL, served the Y.N.P.A. as its Vice-President. William Dent and Washington served as the organization's Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Other members of the Executive Committee of this organization included George W. Williams, B. Taliaferro and Simplen.¹⁵

The members of the Y.N.P.A. served as a tool of the DUL. Washington guided their policies and the League's offices served as the venue for their meetings.¹⁶ The programs of this organization during its establishment period originated from the League's Board members.¹⁷ The Y.N.P.A.'s helped the League to be known in the black community and solicited money to support the activities of DUL.¹⁸ The Board members of the League showed much interest in this organization and some of them attended its

¹⁵News release, "Colored Young Men Form Strong Organization", Executive Secretary's General File Folder [Undated, 1-5], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁶See Monthly Report of the Director to Joint Committee, October 16, 1916 p. 7, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC. In this report Mr. Washington said that this young men's organization was formed "under the auspices of the League." See also the report of the November 9, 1916 pp. 7-8. In the report of December 12, 1916, p. 2, Mr. Washington clearly states that the YPNA was "affiliated with the Urban League."

¹⁷Initially the purpose of this organization was to seek "the best possible industry and business open to the young Negro and the best and most practical training for these fields." (The Report of October 16, 1916). Soon Mr. Washington began to view it as an agency to further "the civic and economic conditions of the colored race" in Detroit. (From the report of November 9, 1916). As time passed by the League and the leaders of Detroit began to use the organization for the purpose of dealing with crime through recreations and as a cheap labor recruitment agency.

¹⁸In August, for instance, the YNPA's treasurer collected from its members a total of \$25.00 as a contribution to the work of DUL. See Detroit Urban League, Contributors, 1916-1917, Associated Charities, Series I, United Community Services Collection, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

meetings and functions. Even Stevens, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the DUL, frequently visited the group to offer a word of advice.¹⁹

On the occasion of Fisher's visit to these black youth, he expressed explicitly the interests of the employers and what he thought the black migrants should be urged to do. Fisher strongly encouraged the members of this organization to take a leading role in making the migrants adhere to the requirements and ethics of the industrial employers. On November 16, the League's director reported concerning the Y.N.P.A. members,

they were addressed by Mr. Boyd Fisher of the Board of Commerce and at that time planned with the speaker to reach colored workmen in the various industrial plants about Detroit with the object of impressing upon these work-men that they must pay particular attention to their punctuality and efficiency if the Negro is to make any further progress in industry or even retain the advance he has made after the war.²⁰

Plans were also made for the Y.N.P.A. to hold a mass meeting at one of the large black churches at which "the working men from various plants will be the addressed along the lines already mentioned."²¹ The team also planned to circulate among black workers in factories cards of advice to black workers in the factories. The message contained in the cards was far from accuracy, if not dishonest, as Levine suggests.²² It

¹⁹According to the Monthly Report of the Director, January 19, 1917, the Chairman of the League himself addressed the YNPA stressing their need to make use of the industrial opportunities that were now open to them. Another member of the DUL who addressed these youth was Mr. Birney Smith. Mr. Ira Jayne, the Recreation Commissioner for the city was quite involved in this organization.

²⁰Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee, December 12, 1916, p. 3, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²¹Ibid.

²²Levine, Internal Combustion, p.90.

said that the black migrant worker failed because "he watched the clock," asked "too many questions," and due to "his stock excuse" such as 'I forgot.' The card also maintained that the black migrant failed because "he wasn't ready for the next step," "did not put his heart in his work", leant "nothing from his blunder", "contended to be a second rater," and "didn't learn that the best part of his salary was not in his pay envelope-SUCCESS..."²³ The League's director made no reference to the problem of racial discrimination--the single most important reason that made blacks unable to enter into employment."²⁴

The employers also wanted the League to serve as an agent of social control in the black community. The League hoped to assist in tackling the problem of crime among black youth and therefore make the black migrants less socially threatening to whites. Members of Y.N.P.A. planned to take it upon themselves the task of lessening black crime. The strategy designed by Fisher called for a collaboration with the Pathfinders Club of America which met at the offices of the Board of Commerce. The Y.N.P.A. tried to get in touch with colored prisoners about to be paroled from the various

²³See, Washington's Speech notes, "Why he Failed", attached to a talk entitled "A Program of work for the Assimilation of Negro Immigrants in Northern Cities", delivered at the Round Table of Negro Migration into Northern Cities at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, June 13, 1917.

²⁴See the typical responses of the Detroit's manufacturers to Boyd Fisher's letter of June 27, 1916, General File, 1916, Box 1, DULP-MHC. The most frequent answers to the item in the survey questionnaire on the "number of colored men in your employ during the past year?" were: "none", "We do not employ colored people", "we have never employed any negro", "we have never made it a practice of employing colored labor", "only janitress" and "we have all white employees and have no colored help to date." Yet some of these employers had workers of about 1,000, and up. Morgan and Wright: Detroit Rubber Works had about 3, 170 employees and had not even one black worker.

prisons in Michigan. The Y.N.P.A. members acted as "next of friend" to black criminals hoping to prevent them from straying back into the old life.²⁵

Related to the task of crime prevention performed by these black youth was the issue of what the League described as the "wholesome recreations." The League began to assume the main role of sponsoring recreations. According to the League's philosophy, "recreation...is conducive to better manhood and citizenship because it keeps the mind occupied during leisure hours thereby reducing juvenile delinquency." Stated in other words, "recreation is not only helpful but necessary to pure thought and right living."²⁶ Washington himself stated clearly that "wholesome recreation" was "important to counteract the vicious attractions of the saloon, the cheap pool-room, the gambling club and the so-called buffet flat." He also said that "if they don't get the wholesome kind, they are going to get the vicious kind."²⁷

In pursuit of this philosophy, the League, through the assistance of the Y.N.P.A., started "the first supervised dance" on December 11, 1916. About thirty blacks, including the representatives from the DUL and Y.N.P.A., attended the first of a series of such dances. The event was held in the Bishop School Hall offered by Ira Jayne, the Recreation Commissioner, after Henry Stevens talked to him. In the following month, the attendance jumped from eighty-one to one hundred and forty-three. By April, the

²⁵Monthly Report of the Director to Joint Committee, December 12, 1916, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²⁶Leo C. Wheeler, Recreation Director of DUL's Center, in General File, Undated, folder [1-4], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

²⁷Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee, April 12, 1917, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

attendance reached a record high of three hundred and twenty-seven.²⁸

The League seemed to be more successful in providing recreations to the migrants than it was in providing housing. A group of blacks were not enthusiastic about these dances because they were not dealing with the real priorities of the black migrants, especially the problem of housing need. In their complaint statement, the group pointed out "Several amusement clubs are in existence under the Urban League. A dancing Class, Washington, is dancing master; base-ball, basket ball, and probably foot-ball team. We do not object to these amusements, but they should not be preferred to healthful, sanitary living."²⁹

Given the purpose of recreation in preventing crime and promoting social control activities, it is not surprising that the League's recreation projects for the black migrants received strong support from Detroit's white leaders and philanthropists. As early as November 1916 Washington reported to the members of the Joint Committee that "the League has been fortunate in receiving an offer from a certain wealthy lady in this city to assume the expenses or rental of a building for the recreation of the colored youth in the district."³⁰ And as we have noted so far, Ira Jayne, the Recreation Commissioner,

²⁸See the Monthly reports of the Director to Joint Committee, December 12, 1916; January 19, 1917; February 8, 1917; March 8, 1917; and April 12, 1917, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²⁹Letter, J. H. Porter to Members of the Detroit Board of Commerce, March 11, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918, Folder [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

³⁰Monthly Report of the Director to Joint Committee, November 9, 1916, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

offered the Hall at the Bishop School to conduct the community dances.³¹ He also extended to the DUL "the use of a large room in the basement for development of athletic clubs such as basket-ball teams etc."³² His assistant, Hessler, offered Cass High School for black boys to practice basket-ball and other athletics. He personally attended their practices. With such support, the Y.P.N.A. helped the blacks to start a base-ball League. The players were recruited from the employees in the factories. Washington sent a letter to the executives of thirty factories employing more than fifty blacks requesting them to send the names of those employees expressing interest in the League. He even visited certain plants personally and talked to the men and obtained a list of interested individuals. Jayne, the Recreation Commissioner, was so interested in the project that he took the matter up with the employment superintendents of various plants at the Board of Commerce meeting.³³

The recreation programs also brought into being the alliance of the League and Stacy McGregor, a Jewish philanthropist whose financial contribution to the DUL would continue for many decades. In December 1916, McGregors offered to assume the rent of a social center but later decided to wait "ready to co-operate when any practical proposition was developed."³⁴ In spite of his willingness to help in matters of recreation this philanthropist had difficulties cooperating in solving the problems of housing. During

³¹Monthly Report of the Director to Joint committee, December 12, 1916, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

this time, most whites were so desirous of segregation that two black migrant boys were refused to lodge in McGregor's welfare agency, McGregor Institute, even though these boys had no other place to stay.³⁵ Later, though, after some plea from the League's Director, the Institute began to accept "a limited number" of black boys. However, this was done in a dehumanizing manner. As the League's Director explained, "there was a certain indignity about it, however, which some men resented. Everyone was required to go through a delousing process before being given a bed."³⁶ The league's Director himself supported such an action. He believed that "this was doubtless a justifiable requirement, but it was unpopular with some of the applicants, who were clean and fairly well dressed, and did not appreciate having their clothes all messed up by the spray."³⁷ The League's Director considered McGregor as "one of Detroit's finest, most philanthropic citizens."³⁸ As will be seen later, Mr. McGregor's role in the League's recreational program was very significant.

In an effort to serve both the employers and the black migrants, Washington embarked on a national campaign emphasizing those things Fisher had stressed. To address the needs of black migrants in the context of the interests of employers, Washington moved along three lines. Firstly, he became one of the foremost spokesman on behalf of the interests of both the business community and the black migrants.

³⁵Monthly Report of the Director to Joint Committee, January 19, 1917, p. 4, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁶Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 96.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid. p. 95.

Secondly, he organized the black community in such a way as to meet the needs of the Detroit's employers and the migrants simultaneously. Thirdly, Washington developed special organizational instruments for carrying out his objectives. Throughout his activities, the League's director tied tightly his newly organized League with the interests of industrial capitalists and interpreted the black community in the light this focus. To the blacks, he urged them to be efficient, productive, ambitious, loyal and impressive to the employers and the general white community. Washington hoped to facilitate the progress of the black community using those programs designed to make them economically useful to the Detroit's employers and socially less threatening to the larger white community. He called on the white leaders to support the League's programs such as the vocational bureau, the housing bureau, recreational projects, domestic training, and travellers' Aid agents among others. In Detroit and the country, Washington became one of the most loved public speakers by the business community and the supporters of the League from the black community.

On January 26, 1917, the Associated Charities financed a trip for Washington to represent them to a Conference of Negro Migration held in New York and organized by the NUL.³⁹ On March 24, 1917 the Secretary of the Associated Charities attempted to convince the organizers of the Charities and Correction Conference planned to be held in Pittsburgh that Washington was the best person to address the topic "Negro

³⁹Monthly Report of the Director to Joint Committee, February 8, 1917, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Immigration into Northern Cities."⁴⁰ Although the organizers of the Conference had already chosen Haynes as the main speaker on black urban conditions, Washington did attend it and delivered a powerful speech on April 26, 1917 on the topic "What can be done to assist the Negro Immigrant."⁴¹ At that Conference Washington stated that "an important feature of a program for the assimilation of Negro migrants in Northern industrial centers was the development of industrial efficiency on the part of the Negro."⁴² He also argued that "this feature was important because of its effect on Public opinion."⁴³ He stated that "if the community in general can be made to believe the Negro will be an asset to the industry of the municipality then the solution of the problem of employment, housing, recreation etc., will be all the more easy."⁴⁴

On May 20, Washington delivered another speech on efficiency at St. Mark's Brotherhood in which he told his audience that "the deciding factor" to their success and the key to retaining their jobs was industrial efficiency. According to Washington, efficiency determined the success of the black migrants. "No excuse for being shiftless," the League's Director told his black audience. In the conclusion of his speech,

⁴⁰Letter, Lee Greenwood to J. Byron Deacon, March 24, 1917, Detroit Urban League, Correspondences and Reports, 1917, Folder [3-18], Associated Charities, Series I, United Community Services, ALUA-WSU.

⁴¹See Letter, W. M. T. Cross to L. Greenwood, March 28, 1917, Detroit Urban League, Correspondences and Reports, Folder [3-18], Associated Charities of Detroit, Series I, United Community Services, ALUA-WSU and Annual Report for the year 1917, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴²Annual Report for 1917, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Washington pointed out the role of the League "to get the Negro into as many different kinds of employment as possible." He made it plain that his organization "has endeavored to develop individual industrial efficiency by calling the attention of Negro employees of the fact that they must be punctual, zealous, and ambitious in their work. We always emphasize these points when we send a negro to a job."⁴⁵

The following June, Washington delivered his most famous speech which tied the interests of the American business community to the needs of the black migrants. The Speech was delivered at the Round Table on Negro Migration into Northern cities at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections held in Pittsburgh. Capturing the main themes he had presented in previous talks, Washington outlined five items which he espoused as the best ways, or to use his phrase, "the pre-requisites," to deal with the constantly increasing black migrants from the rural south into the Northern cities. "The first pre-requisite in a program of a local community is the establishment of a vocational bureau," Washington asserted. Then he went on to develop his argument: "When labor agents were bringing the majority of the Negroes to the cities of the North the problem of employment was very simple. The Negro was assured of a job before he arrived. Now when the majority of immigrant are coming of their own volition, the problem has become serious...."⁴⁶

⁴⁵Speech notes on "Efficiency", Speech at St. Marks, Brotherhood, Sunday 20, 1917, Executive Secretary's General File, 1917, Folder [1-8], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁶See Mr. Washington's Speech notes, " A Program of Work for the Assimilation of Negro Immigrants in Northern Cities", delivered at the Round Table Conference of Charities and Corrections, June 13, 1917, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

Touching on the most sensitive aspect to white leaders when thinking of black urban dwellers, Mr. Washington explained the danger of allowing the black migrants to remain even "two or three days idling about the city in a struggle to find employment." Then Washington warned: "the Negro immigrant can come in contact with conditions and people that are positively demoralizing and whose influence may destroy any possibility of his ever becoming a useful citizen of the municipality." He advised that "the vocational Bureau should strive to make itself acquainted with every possible industrial opening for the Negro in the city. It should on the other hand, make its own presence known in order that the immigrant Negro can be directed to it immediately." In summary, the DUL's director concluded the first point of his speech:

For the reasons stated here-to-fore, no time should be lost in placing the Negro-search-of work- in touch with the job-in-search-of-a-man. The Vocational Bureau should not be content with simply locating vacant jobs, but should be constantly endeavoring at the same time to make new openings for the Negro in order to be able to cope with the ever increasing number in the Negro migration.⁴⁷

The second point Washington focused on concerned the need for a housing Bureau. "Housing is next in vital importance in our program," the League's Director informed his audience.⁴⁸ The year 1917 had been a high peak in the migration patterns of the black rural southerners to Detroit. To Washington, establishment of a bureau of investigation and information was the answer to the housing crisis. He suggested that whatever data was collected by the bureau of investigation be given publicity.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

Washington stated that "the bureau should constantly remind the employers of Negro labor that it is to their advantage to see that the Negro is well housed and that, if nobody else will, it is good business for them to build homes for their Negro employers."⁴⁹

Washington's speech emphasized recreation linking it to the effort for crime suppression. Thus Washington stressed: "Recreation becomes a hundred fold more important in the Negro's life in the North, than it does on the South. There isn't the restraining influence of his family, of his friends, and one that know him."⁵⁰ After describing the vicious influences that allured the black migrants into criminal places such as saloons, pools, gambling clubs, and disorderly houses and "other individuals who make their living from commercialized vice," Washington asserted that "the only way to counteract these vicious influences is to provide the immigrant Negro with wholesome recreation that will satisfy his natural instinct for active amusement and the society of his own kind."⁵¹ The program of suppressing crimes among the black migrants was, to Washington, of great importance because it determined the relationship between the migrants and the older black residents. He pointed out that the criminal inclination of southern migrants made the older black residents resent the newcomers whom they viewed as jeopardizing the well-being of the "better" behaved blacks. Washington suggested that "the assistance of the local police should be solicited for the outset." He also suggested that "the appointment of colored detectives should be urged in order that

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

the inevitable loiters, crooks, bums, and adventurers who are parry of every hegira should be filtered from the community as soon as possible."⁵²

With regard to the question of cooperation, Washington gave the example of his own situation: "we found that the Employer's Association was ready to go a long ways in carrying out suggestions that would prove of benefit to colored workman. Pay the salary of the employment secretary." In addition to cooperating with the Employers's Association, Washington mentioned the Police department, Y.N.P.A., black churches, white newspapers and the city's recreation commission as good groups to seek cooperation with in an attempt to "assist" the black migrants into Northern cities.⁵³

Washington's speech was very well received. As Professor Richard W. Thomas said in his book about Black Detroit, Washington became "a national celebrity."⁵⁴ The speech led the New York Evening Post to praise the work of the DUL in an article they published on July 13, 1917.⁵⁵ Jones, the Executive of the NUL also praised Washington's speech:

It will be impossible for me to explain to you the good that Mr. Washington was able to do by his visit to New York and his attendance at the conference on Negro migration. I think that Mr. Washington's account of his work on Detroit was the most favorable received address of the whole conference that two representatives from Washington, who are trying to get an organization affiliated with the League established in Washington, asked that Mr. Washington's report be put in pamphlet form

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Thomas, Life for Us is What We Make it, p. 59.

⁵⁵New York Evening Post, July 13, 1917.

for propaganda work in Washington.⁵⁶

Gaining Credibility in the Black Community

One of the earliest attempts to meet the employment problem of black migrants was worked out by the League in cooperation with A. Krolik, a prominent Jewish community leader and owner of a dry-goods wholesale company, whose wife, Julian H. Krolik, soon joined the membership of the Joint Committee of the DUL.⁵⁷ The League convinced this manufacturer "to open a factory in which they will employ only colored help."⁵⁸ This project helped to create support for the DUL from a number of elites in Detroit's black community. As soon as the discussions between Washington and the A. Krolik firm began the League began, to contact several members of the black community advertising for black girls in a black newspaper and requesting "the ministers of the various black churches to make appeals for girls from their pulpits."⁵⁹ According to Washington, this idea was received enthusiastically by the black community. A hundred and sixty-five girls "about twice as many as are necessary to open such a plant" applied

⁵⁶Letter, Jones to Miss Lee Greenwood, June 29, 1917, Detroit Urban League, Correspondences and Reports, [3-18] Associated Charities of Detroit, Series I, Box 12, Folder 40, ALUA-WSU.

⁵⁷Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 74.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee, October 16, 1916, p. 4, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

in advance for the positions.⁶⁰

The publicity surrounding this project helped to create a strong relationship between the League and Mrs. Krolik and other manufactures interested in black labor. It also helped to create a favorable image of the DUL among the black religious leaders. On October 1916, Washington reported at the monthly meeting of the Joint Committee some "encouraging evidences of co-operation due to the League's efforts in the past two months."⁶¹ Robert L. Bradby, pastor of the second Baptist church made a supporting gesture for the work of the DUL. He "offered the League a large amount of gymnasium apparatus to be used in any sort of social center or recreation center that the League might project."⁶² According to Washington, Pastor Bradby

stated that he had hoped to use the apparatus at his church for the benefit of the entire community but he found such a strong denominationalism existing among the colored people of the city that he felt a social center or a community enterprise of any sort could be best fostered by an organization of the type the Urban League rather than a particular church.⁶³

Reverend Bagnall, pastor of the only Episcopal church and one of the four large black churches in Detroit, was another significant black leader to support Washington and his organization. Washington told his Joint Committee that Reverend Bagnall "has asked the League to co-operate with him in establishing a parish house with institutional features in connection with his church. He also stated that Hargreaves of the Park Davis

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid. p. 7.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

Co., was willing to contribute to the expenses of such a united effort."⁶⁴ Washington also reported that "St. Marks Brotherhood of Bethel church has sent several women here for employment and the officials of the organization have come to the office several times to express their interest in the work and desire to co-operate."⁶⁵

Aware of the prestige from the black community that would accompany Washington if black leaders credited the League for opening employment opportunities, the League began to emphasize the idea that the development of black worker's efficiency was a basic agenda item of his organization. "The League hopes to make better citizens and more efficient workers of the Negro," Washington asserted.⁶⁶ The strengthened alliance between the League and employers of black migrants enabled the DUL to gain power in less than a year after its formation. With the support of the white power structure the DUL began to play an intermediary role between the larger white community and that of the blacks. For instance, McGregor told one black going around the city to raise funds for supporting orphanages and other social services for blacks to first go "to the League for an endorsement to continue his solicitation of funds."⁶⁷

The League and the Dress Well Club

With increasing credibility in the black community, Washington began to spread

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 9.

⁶⁷Monthly Report of the Director to the Joint Committee, November 9, 1916, p. 7, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

his ideas far and wide. In July 1917, Washington helped to organize the Dress Well Club. Through this agency he hoped to make black migrants fit the taste of white industrial capitalists upon whose power both the DUL and the black migrants' survival depended. Washington organized the Dress with the assistance of the Loyal Christian Brotherhood of the Second Baptist Church and the Y.N.P.A.⁶⁸ The core group constituted mainly the older residents of the black Detroit community. Washington hoped to enlist the assistance of these older residents in spreading his message. The aim was to encourage the black migrants to foster a good impression to the industrial employers and the general white society. Washington urged these older residents to do their best to educate the black migrants in the ethics and values of Detroit white industrialists. "You are the people who are going to make Detroit a great city for the Negro,"⁶⁹ Washington charmed his audience. "You are the yeast who are going to leaven the loaf. We are directing our onslaught not against you, but against those who have not the ambition you have....," he went on. Pointing out the purpose of the gathering, Washington said, "this is not a meeting arranged for Northern Negroes to criticize Southern Negroes." He told them that "every one of us came directly or indirectly from the South." Then he made it unmistakably clear of his main concern: "Our stress, rather, is on advice," and that "this meeting was called by people who have a better right to advise the newcomer than any

⁶⁸F. B. Washington, Outline notes to the Speech delivered to the Dress Well Club, Detroit, September 20, 1917, Folder 1917 [1-8], Executive General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁹The source for the material on this talk and the ideas expressed by Washington presented here is based on his speech notes to the Dress Well Club members, delivered on September 20, 1917, General File, Folder, 1917[1-8], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

one else." Concerning the progress the black had made the League's director said: "On the whole the Negro is making good in this city," he went on, "but there is room for vast improvement."⁷⁰ Washington informed the agents of his message: "The Urban League receives complaints daily from the police commissioner and other city officials concerning the behavior of some Negroes in public." He believed that the black migrants "act the way they do because freedom of the North and especially of Detroit have been heralded so thoroughly, and they don't know any better." The solution he proposed was that "they have to be advised."⁷¹

Washington also diagnosed the Migrant's problems and shared his ideas with the members of the Dress Well Club. At the top of the list of problems that he felt needed attention was that of "black workmen crowding inside street cars in dirty overalls." This kind of criticism against the black migrants shows that one of Washington's objectives aimed at minimizing the offensive behavior of the migrants among both the older black residents of the city as well as in the general white society. In doing so, Washington acted partly through the influences of his fellow members of the black middle class and partly by the larger white society. "Black men sitting around during the summer months barefoot, blacks talking loudly in public places," continued Washington to spell out the things he considered his Dress Well Club members could help eliminate from the arriving migrants. "White people complain about such things and they are justified in doing so," the League's director insisted. He then pointed out that "Color prejudice does not enter

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

into the situation."

The Dress Well Club, he believed, would solve the problems he had outlined: "Members should ask any person who is making himself a nuisance by vulgar clothing or loud mouth, to digest this card and hand it to others....We beseech you to impress these doctrines on every Negro you come in contact with who you think needs them." In anticipation of black opposition Washington warned there would be "you can't club" and "people who call every movement to help the Negro segregation." But "segregation is increasing in this city" in such places as in theaters, restaurants, hospitals. "Why is segregation increasing?" he rhetorically posed. He answered by saying it was "partly on account of southern whites. But chiefly on account of the loud, noisy, almost nude women in 'Mother Hubbards' standing around on the public thoroughfares."⁷²

Not to offend his audience whom he considered "the better" class "with a right to advice" the black rural migrants into Detroit, Washington pointed out that "the public doesn't see people like you. You stay at home or are not conspicuous." Directing his anger where he felt it belonged, Washington said: "one hundred of the bad class do more to shape public opinion than 10,000 like you." He challenged those who criticized him for singling out only filthy blacks in exclusion of whites of a similar character by stating that "there of course, untidy and uncouth whites, but white people are the judges and colored people are being judged."⁷³

At the end of the Dress Well Club, Washington handed for dissemination among

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

the newcomers cards for advice containing the instructions which were to be "read carefully." The first thing the card mentioned was the purpose for which the Detroit Dress Well Club was formed. "This organization is composed of earnest race men resolved to create a better impression of the Negro by attention to dress, personal appearance and public behavior." The card made it clear that once the migrant accepted membership, he had to abide by the club's rules: "by accepting this card you become at least an honorary member of this Society authorized to spread its doctrines whenever you see a Negro making himself conspicuous by bad behavior or improper dress."⁷⁴

Washington conceived the Dress Well Club as an instrument for meeting the needs and interests of the black middle class, the black migrants, and the larger white society--in particular, the employers. The white population had complained of the black migrants' manners and dressing. As Washington stated: "Complaints are being received by the Police Commissioner and the officials of the street railway companies regarding the unclean clothing, etc., of Negro workmen on the car lines. This sort of carelessness in regards to dress will lead to discrimination and segregation unless steps are taken to improve conditions." Washington also attempted to link the interests of the employers with those of the black migrants. Thus, he instructed: "Employers have more respect for a man and are more apt to give him a good job if he dresses neatly. This does not mean that a man must be a 'dude.' Flashy clothes are as undesirable and harmful as unclean clothes."⁷⁵

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

Other prohibitions Washington brought to the attention of the black migrants included:

Don't crowd inside of a street car filled with people in your dirty, greasy overalls. Stay on the platform as do the majority of white men in such apparel or wear a coat over your clothes when you are going back and forth to the foundry.

Don't wear overalls on Sunday.

Don't sit bare-footed in front of your house or loll around in public at Belle Isle etc. with your shoes off.

Don't allow your women folks to go around the streets in bungalow aprons and boudoir caps if you want white people to respect them.

Don't do your children's hair up in knots, alleys and canals if you don't want other children to make fun of them.

VERY IMPORTANT DON'TS

Don't loaf. Get a job at once.

Don't carry on loud conversations in street cars and public places.

Don't keep your children out of school.

Don't send for your family until you get a job.

Don't think that you can hold your job unless you are industrious, efficient, prompt and sober. ["Sober" was printed in extra heavy type]

Don't forget that cleanliness and fresh air are necessary for good health.

Don't fool with patent medicines in case of sickness, but send immediately for a good physician.

Don't fail to become an active member in some Church as soon as you reach the city.

Don't start buying on the installment plan.

Don't fail to start a savings account with some good bank or with a building loan association.

Don't spend all your money for pleasures. Save some of it for extra clothing and fuel for the winter.

Don't fail to call upon the Urban League if you are a stranger in the city-if you want a job, if you want a place to live, if you are having trouble with your employer, if you want information or advice of any kind. No fees, we want to help you.

To do these things means to help yourself and 20,000 more of your own people in this city to make good in your jobs, to get better jobs and to

keep down prejudice, race friction and discrimination.⁷⁶

Meeting Labor Shortages

The DUL did other things that attempted to tie the interest of industrial employers to those of the black migrants. This orientation makes sense if we consider that it was the period that the employers desperately needed the black labor. In 1917 the effect of the labor shortage had been sharpened by the availability of more war contracts as soon as the United States entered into the World War I. The League sent an employment agent to Cincinnati for the purpose of inducing black migrants to consider Detroit as their destination rather than any other city.⁷⁷ Most importantly, the League ran an employment bureau targeted at the recruitment of black labor. This bureau served as the clearing-house for employment requests and the distributing center of black labor. So important was this service to the city's employers that the Employer's Association of Detroit decided to make a monthly contribution of \$100 to the League. Later, this figure was increased to \$140. The financial agreement came about when the Employers' Association made a contract with the League in May of 1917 that it would pay the cost of running an employment bureau located in the offices of the DUL. A full-time worker was hired for the purpose of recruiting black workers on the behalf of manufacturers.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Joyce Shaw Peterson, "Black Automobile Workers in Detroit, 1910-1930," Journal of Negro History, (Volume 64, No. 3, Summer 1979), p. 178.

⁷⁸The arrangement between the League and the Employers' Association of Detroit was made by DUL's Chairman, Henry G. Stevens, and Chester M. Culver, the Manager of the Employers' Association of Detroit. Stevens urged the Employers' Association to sponsor the work of the League. See T. Porter, "The Emergence of the Negro in Detroit's

This financial arrangement helped to continue the alliance between these two organizations for a period of fourteen years. It was cut off during the middle of the Great Depression in 1931 when the Employers' Association found it no longer helpful.⁷⁹ Through this employment bureau the employers were able to obtain black workers, and the black migrant got jobs. By the end of 1917 about 10,861 black workers got jobs through the League's offices.⁸⁰ More than three thousand of these were women who worked during the day as domestic servants.⁸¹

The Day Worker's Training School

Washington also linked the needs of the employers of the black workers with those of the black migrant women. He applied the concept of industrial efficiency to the employment of these migrant women from the south. According to him, the black women migrants had to be made to appeal to the taste of white employers. "By their very uncouth appearance at present", the League's director stated, "and by their real ignorance of the machinery of a modern city home, these women cannot be used in the only occupational (namely day's work) [sic] in which their appearance would be against them." In order to make them more usable, "the League established a Day Worker's

Industry, 1916-1919", A seminar paper in Business History, June 23, 1967, Folder 252, Box 7, Michigan University, Department of History Papers, Michigan Historical Collection.

⁷⁹For a discussion on the cutting off of financial assistance to the League by the Employers Association of Detroit, See Chapter 8.

⁸⁰Annual Report, 1917, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸¹Ibid.

Training School."⁸²

The Day Worker's Training School program did not originate with Washington himself. It was introduced by Lee Greenwood, a white woman and also the acting secretary of the Associated Charities. Greenwood served as a member of the Joint Committee of the DUL but also as the Director of the Visiting House-Keepers Association. She envisioned the League as a major instrument in making black workers attractive to the employers. In support of the League's effort to provide employers with quality workers, she developed what Washington described as "a systematic course of instruction." Greenwood herself supervised the program. The actual instruction, though, was given by "three young colored women two of whom are graduates of schools of domestic science, one of whom is a trained nurse, practical house-keeper and a person who has had experience in teaching just this sort of thing."⁸³ The project was guided by a committee of eight white women and eight black women. The black women were trained:

in the fundamentals of housekeeping in the type of homes to which they would go to day's work such as washing with machines, ironing with electric irons, the use of a vacuum cleaner for sweeping, and cooking things which simple as they seem these women do not know how to perform thoroughly or with dispatch at the present time."⁸⁴

The Day's Workers Training School was "located in the heart of the colored district where we have established a sort of a model flat." This was a two room

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

apartment set up with "all the paraphernalia used in a modern household of the type into which the women would go to work with electric irons, set tubs, vacuum cleaners etc., gas stoves, wall beds and the like."⁸⁵

The individuals served by this service were easy to identify. "A great many more employers are calling on us for colored day women than has been the custom in the past," Washington revealed to the Members of his Board of Directors. According to him, the need for the "trained" black workers was caused by the "shortage of white domestic help." The League, not wishing to fail in its role of making the black migrants as useful to the employers as possible recommend only those black women who accepted to go through the training for seven or eight weeks "under competent instructors at the conclusion of which period of instruction we can certify them to people as capable day workers." ⁸⁶ But Washington pointed out that the black women so trained would benefit much more than by obtaining a job. "Furthermore," he asserted, "they will be trained to manage their own households which is also quite important and which a greater many of them are unable to manage in their new environment in the North." Washington also pointed out that:

we are not trying to keep colored people in domestic service, but on the contrary we are trying to get them out of it as a class and into the skilled trades as rapidly as possible but in this particular case, the women can do nothing but domestic work. We want to make as much as possible in this so that they can fit themselves and their children for better things.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

Aware of the enthusiasm with which white women embraced the idea of a Domestic Training School, Washington stated emphatically: "That this movement has the right affect on public opinion," he stated, "is evidenced by the fact that it is being carried on by pledges of monthly contributions for six months from women's organizations of the largest white churches of the city."⁸⁸ Julian Krolik, a member of the Joint Committee and a major employer of black labor, was among the main advocates of his project.⁸⁹ Because the project was supported by white women as well as by the four largest colored churches, it is clear that the program aimed at addressing the needs of the employers of the blacks and the black community itself. In a sense, the League was trying to do a service for the employers of black labor and the migrants.

Opposition to the League-Employers Alliance

The League's attempt to link the needs of the employers with those of the black migrants worked well for the League and the employers. Unfortunately, needs of the black migrants were not adequately addressed. Employers hired black migrants mainly in the worst kinds of jobs--those that were the hottest, dirtiest, heaviest and lowest in pay. Of course, the League was aware of this problem and from time to time made statements to the effect that they were constantly trying to get blacks into "better jobs" which matched their qualifications. It advised them that if they worked harder and obeyed their

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Letter, J. H. Porter to Gentlemen, Officers and Members of the Detroit Chamber of Commerce, March 11, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918 [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

employers things would get better and their efforts would be rewarded some day. However, as the year 1918 opened, the housing situation of black migrants in Detroit was desperate arousing intensified opposition against the League's approach. The DUL's efforts in helping the migrants to "make good" did not translate well. An organized resistance against the League and its industrial allies emerged against Washington and his industrial supporters during the Spring of 1917. This resistance centered on the housing problem and was spearheaded by Jasper Henry Porter, President of the Good Citizenship League. The confrontation began when Porter presented the Board of Commerce some proposals for solving the housing problem for black migrants. Upon hearing the proposal, the Board of Commerce at once contacted Washington and asked to advice them on whether to honor Porter's proposal. In his response to the Board of Commerce, Washington wrote: "I am making a report as requested on the proposition proposed by Porter and his friends." Then he went on to show his disapproval and opposition to Porter's project. His scheme, Washington stated, "is not on a sound basis" and it was "not clearly thought out and it has not the backing of the representative colored people in the community." Washington also said that the organizers had no "committee of responsible business men," and that they had only a "vague proposal."⁹⁰ Moreover, Washington pointed out that Porter "has no experience." Furthermore, Porter and his associates were irresponsible, including Sarah Bannister, "a woman whose profession is that of a day worker in private families in this city." Dismissing Porter's proposal,

⁹⁰Letter, F. B. Washington to Byers H. Gitchell, April 13, 1917, Executive Secretary's General File, 1917, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

Washington pointed out that "his project is simply a scheme to collect funds the disposition of which there will be no reliable check." Thus he said to the Board of Commerce: "I told Porter that if he would present me with the names of a committee of reputable white and colored business men who would act as consulting body and name of a reputable business man who would act as treasurer and recipient of funds I would take up the matter, but he has not been in to see me with such data."⁹¹ The Board of Commerce agreed with Washington. Meanwhile, Porter and his team continued to strive to present their suggestions to the leaders of the city, only to be referred for clearance at the office of the DUL.

Founded in 1911 and incorporated on February 19, 1918, the Good Citizenship League served as a welfare agency among blacks in Detroit. With offices located at 11 Division Street in Detroit, little is known of its eleven members. No information has been uncovered which would reveal the occupation of Porter, its president and chief spokesman. Neither is there anything known about its other members, including Mary E. Jones who served as the group's treasurer. Other members included Miss Sarah Jane Banister, Charles Bolles, Dollie Franklin, William H. Porter, W. T. Green, Reverend W. L. Barr, Clara F. Bolles, Stella Campbell, Mary Porter and Arthur D. Edwards.⁹²

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²See letter, Coleman C. Varghan to Forrester B. Washington, April 16, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918 [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC; Good Citizenship League Card of Solicitation [1918], Box 1, DULP-MHC; Robert Suggs, "The Leadership of Detroit's Black Ghetto", p. 42, Senior Honors Thesis, April 1, 1968, Folder, [260]; Box 7, Michigan University Department of History Papers, MHC; Levine, Internal Combustion, pp.122-123.

"The Good Citizenship League," according to its declared mission, "was organized for patriotic and charitable purposes." Its objectives were to solicit "any donations of cast off clothing, rags, paper, magazines, books, and old furniture." The agency also proposed to build a "home for orphaned and abandoned children and aged women." But these goals did not reveal its most important function: namely the symbol of black resistance against the DUL and its allies, both black elites and the white industrial leaders. It advertised itself: "The Good Citizenship League is not the same as the Urban League. The Urban League is a Negro employment bureau. The Good Citizenship League is the only incorporated organization doing welfare work among Negroes in this city."⁹³

In response to this obvious attack against his organization, Washington wrote to Jones requesting permission to change the League's name from the Detroit Urban League to "Urban League for Social Service among Negroes." Jones advised that the name not be changed.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, the Good Citizenship League made an offensive move against the DUL and its financial sponsors in March of 1918. In an extremely angrily-worded letter "to the officers of the Detroit Board of Commerce" written on March 11, Porter accused the DUL, the Board of Commerce, and the black elites of conspiracy against the black migrants. "What has Byres Gitschells' Urban League done for the Negro in two

⁹³The Good Citizenship League Card of Solicitation [1918], Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁴Letter, E. K. Jones to F. B. Washington, March 9, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

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⁹³The Good Citizenship League Card of Solicitation [1918], Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁴Letter, E. K. Jones to F. B. Washington, March 9, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

years?"⁹⁵ the Good Citizenship League asked.

It has blocked every worthy move for bettering conditions, shut up every Negro ministers's mouth in this city, on Buffet flats, gambling dens, and street women, and if anybody should try to have a change of conditions brought about, Byres H. says that such a person is 'hunting a job', that they should let it alone, that he and the white Urban League are looking after conditions among Negroes.⁹⁶

Continuing to express his strong anger against DUL and its supporters, Porter added:

...every newspaper in the city, is afraid to touch this condition on account of Byres H. Gitchell's and Henry G. Stevens, "millionaire" chairman of the Urban League. Whenever the Urban League Supt. wants to send a lie, through the newspapers, he is able to do so. In the last twelve months, about five articles have appeared in the newspaper, the same lie, twisted in another direction.⁹⁷

Several factors prompted the members of the Good Citizenship League to condemn and oppose the DUL and the Board of Commerce. These factors included the realization that the founding of the DUL represented what Porter viewed as imposed leadership on the black community. Furthermore, the Good Citizenship League opposed the Board of Commerce for refusing to grant Porter's application for money to construct an orphanage building. The Board of Commerce had refused to grant the Good Citizenship League this request on grounds that such a matter was outside the province of the Board of Commerce, yet they seemed to support the DUL. The Good Citizenship League also

⁹⁵Letter, J. H. Porter, Chairman, Good Citizenship League, to the Officers and Members of the Detroit Board of Commerce, March 11, 1918, General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC. Byres Gitschell referred to in this letter was the Secretary of the Employers Association of Detroit.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

opposed the intermediary role of the League in Detroit:

Negro ministers, and other worthy citizens can't reach the Civic Boards now on the account of the Urban League, being the accepted channel through which all matters pertaining to Negro welfare must pass. As far as we have been able to learn, every application for aid of any kind, worthy of unworthy, that has been presented to the Board of Charity, during the last year or more, has died in the office of the Urban League, the application seldom receiving a reply.⁹⁸

Porter also accused the League for concentrating on the wrong things: "There is a job now, for every Negro that wants to work, in this city," he declared.

If the Board of Charity meant to deal squarely with the Negroes, why did they establish a New York organization here to look over and control the Negroes' affairs? This organization is illegal, not citizens of state, country or town, and is here without the consent of the Negroes, of the city and illegally collecting funds.⁹⁹

Responding to the League's program activities the Good Citizenship League objected to the DUL's priorities. Porter believed that the DUL should not have been concentrating on recreations but instead on "healthful, sanitary living." In rejection of the League's Domestic Training program the Good Citizenship League pointed out that "this is alright with Gitchell and Stevens, for the money being spent, is going through proper hands. Detroit very probably would be shocked, if a negro woman was taught house-keeping in the Y. M. C. A."¹⁰⁰

The Good Citizenship League violently attacked practically everything the DUL stood for including the League's programs such as the Dress Well Club and the dances.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

Porter condemned the DUL for criticizing the migrants that "they 'slept on the job'"; its silence on discrimination, emphasis on recreation, elitism, encouragement of migrants to come to Detroit without seriously helping them with shelter, the rhetoric, and blocking the way for other blacks seeking to assist migrants were other points of attack. In frustration, the Good Citizenship League concluded with these remarks:

The underworld, and the entire police force are against us. We want your political weights, and Byres H. Gitchell's political hands off our heads. Every turn we make, we are denied that life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, which you gave us...Our general appeal is to the Christian Citizens of Detroit...We are appealing to this class of pure America to help us ...keep Detroit fit and safe for the democracy for which were fighting.¹⁰¹

The wrath released by the Good Citizenship League against the DUL and its allies, the Board of Commerce, continued to intensify. In April 1918, Washington and Porter met at a conference concerning the Good Citizenship League's project of constructing an orphanage and a hotel business to serve the black community. During that conference, Washington became convinced that Porters's project should not be supported by the Board of Commerce or any one else. "Detroit is rapidly becoming dependent on Negro labor", Washington pointed and therefore, a Hotel was unsuitable for families that had to be "developed into efficient work-men and good citizens." To Washington homes were better. Washington condemned Porter's project as "a scheme to collect funds, the disposition of which there will be no reliable check."¹⁰² Fortunately for Washington,

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Letter, F. B. Washington to Byers H. Gitchell, April 13, 1917, Executive Secretary's General File, June 1916 to June 1927, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

his allies, the Board of Commerce, agreed with him in his views against Porter.

In response, Porter intensified his attacks against the DUL and the Board of Commerce as well as other supporters of Washington. Porter attacked the League's alliance with the Krolik Garment Factory. He claimed that Krolik had tricked blacks by deceptively promising to build a factory and then turn it to blacks. Porter also attacked the Board of Health for its failure to build new boarding homes for black children whom he believed "have absolutely no place." He pointed out that the money the Board of Health could have used to build homes for orphaned, abandoned children and aged women had been squandered by the DUL in "building a garment factory for negroes." Yet as he charged "we have neither the factory nor a home for children."¹⁰³

The Board of Directors of the DUL became apprehensive of the negative publicity it was getting from the Good Citizenship League. Its leaders decided to use the court and police powers to destroy the Citizenship League. But it would be some years before this was accomplished because the DUL feared that taking action quickly against the Good Citizenship League could promote sympathy from the black community. The League investigated the legal status of the Good Citizenship League by checking with the State of Michigan. On April 12, 1918, Washington wrote the Secretary of the State:

There is an organization in this town circulating propaganda under the heading of the 'Good Citizenship League'. They claim to be the only incorporated colored welfare organization in Michigan...Will you inform us if such an organization has really filed incorporation papers at Lansing

¹⁰³An Appeal for Voluntary Subscription [1918], Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

and will you be kind enough to send us the names of the incorporated?¹⁰⁴

When the League got the answer that the Good Citizenship League had been incorporated, the Board members agreed to take no further action at the moment.

The Power of the DUL

With the assistance of Detroit's power-structure, the DUL was able to demonstrate its claim to the leadership role in black community. This was easily done given that Mr. Washington had done so well in offering services to the Detroit's white leaders. Although the formative stage in the history of the DUL was far from complete, indicators of its leadership position acknowledged by whites were observable even before the World War I had come to an end. By the summer of 1918, two years after its organization, the DUL had already become a visible organization in Detroit and throughout Michigan. Washington was constantly being asked to give talks and advice on black issues. He was being consulted by various organizations in the city , the state and even the nation. On June 1, 1918 the DUL helped organize a welcome and entertainment of five hundred black soldiers from Fort Wayne.¹⁰⁵

The real indication, though, that the Director of the DUL was now the most

¹⁰⁴Letter, F. B. Washington, to Secretary of State, April 12, 1918, General File , 1918, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁵Document, "500 Colored Soldiers Entertained", dated June 1, 1918, General File, 1918, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

powerful black figure in Detroit became clear through a gesture by James Couzens, a former police Commissioner and manager of Henry Ford Motor Company, who had been impressed by Washington's advice to black migrants and his cooperation with Detroit police against the criminal elements among the migrants. While running for the position of Detroit's mayor, Couzens sought and recognized the influence of the Director of the DUL over the voting behavior of the black community instead of contacting Benjamin Pelham, the most known black political figure in Detroit prior to this time.¹⁰⁶ Although most blacks in Detroit did not support Couzens, his singling out the Director of the League as the spokesman for the black community symbolized the rise of new leadership in the black Detroiters. Thus, an organization heavily supported by powerful white personalities had assumed the leadership role, at least for a time, and until the mass strength of the black community helped to rearrange this order. The Good Citizenship League seemed unprepared to submit to the leadership of the DUL voluntarily. Force was necessary. However, because Washington was busy preparing to leave Detroit for another job in Washington, drastic measures against the Good Citizenship League, as we shall see in chapter five, would be taken in the 1920s by his successor. At that time, though, the DUL would have to contend with a more angry Good Citizenship League as well as the Garvey factor in the battle for leadership over the African American community in Detroit.

¹⁰⁶Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, P. 110; Robert Conot American Odyssey (New York: Morrow), p. 198.

CHAPTER FIVE

ARRIVAL OF JOHN C. DANCY AND OTHER NEW ACTORS

John Dancy knew early in his efforts that jobs were the basic need if the Negro was to play a major role in the life of Detroit. And he went out and got them, slowly but surely over a period of four decades. He knocked on doors, he telephoned, he wrote letters-and he talked endlessly to people who had the power to open doors. He was successful because the people for whom he got jobs rarely failed to produce. So a great feeling of trust developed between John Dancy and employers throughout Detroit--and, over the years, that meant more and more, better and better jobs.¹

Frank Angelo (1966)

In 1918, exactly two years after its founding, new and influential persons in the League's history joined the organization. In the Spring of this year Washington resigned his position as the Director of the DUL to become the Research Director of the Associated Charities. The Joint Committee chose another young man by the name of John Campbell Dancy to be the second Director of the DUL. In that same year two new organizations were formed in Detroit and joined the Associated Charities and the Employers' Association as key sponsors of the DUL. These two new organizations were the Community Fund and the Council of Social Agencies. Through the influence of Dancy, the Community Fund and the Council of Social Agencies other new members joined the League and played a leading role in the development of the organization's programs and policies. In addition to these new actors, the League arranged with some

¹Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 14.

industrial firms for the participation of new black social workers known as the Industrial Welfare Workers. Although the Industrial Welfare Workers received the salary and authority from their respective industrial firms, they worked under the guidance of the DUL. All these developments--the arrival of Dancy, the formation of the Community Fund and the Council of Social Agencies, the recruitment of new members of the Joint committee and the establishment of black Industrial Welfare Workers--strengthened the League's alliance with Detroit's industrial captains. This strengthened alliance between the DUL and the industrialists, however, failed to improve the condition of the black migrants.

John Campbell Dancy: the Second Director of the DUL

Dancy had a lot of things in common with his predecessor, Washington. Both came to Detroit when they were fairly young. Born on April 13, 1886, Dancy was only thirty years old when he succeeded Washington as the Executive Secretary of the DUL. Like Washington, Dancy was a newcomer to Detroit. He graduated with a B. A. degree from Livingstone College at Salisbury, North Carolina, and did graduate courses at the University of Pennsylvania. Shortly after he finished his college, he took a course in Sociology under Scott Nearing after he finished his college work.² After completing college, Dancy took a job in the position of the principal of Smallwood Institute, a black preparatory school in Clairmount, Virginia. In 1914, at the age of 26, he became the

²Letter, E. K. Jones to F. B. Washington, May 27, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918, Folder [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

Secretary of the black Y.M.C.A. in Norfolk, Virginia. Soon after, the Indianapolis Y.M.C.A. offered him a job but he declined it. Contact with the Urban League led him to refused the Indianapolis Y.M.C.A. offer. Just before he took up this job, Dancy happened to drop in on Eugene Kinckle Jones, the head of the National Urban League, and his destiny was determined. Instead, he decided not to accept the job at Indianapolis. He moved to New York to work with the NUL as the industrial secretary.³

With the resignation of Washington in the Spring of 1918, an opportunity opened for Dancy to work in Detroit as the Executive Director of the local league. In May of 1918, Jones had recommended him to the Board of Directors of the League as a capable man who would do a good job for the League in Detroit.⁴ Dancy had a great wish to work and live in Detroit for some time prior to this. "The very name of Detroit, for some reason had always held a strong appeal for me," Dancy disclosed in his memoirs to explain why he wanted to work in Detroit. One of the powerful attractions which drew him to Detroit was the Detroit Tiger baseball team. He was "a great fan of the Tigers, and especially its manager, Hughie Jennings." In addition, Dancy considered Detroit as a place for adventure and thrill. Thus he had told Jones that "If by any chance Detroit is ever open, please let me know. I would like to work in Detroit."⁵

To Dancy's thrill, the chance opened when Jones arranged for the interview which led to his being hired as the successor to Washington. During the interview process the

³Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, pp. 72-83.

⁴Letter, E. K. Jones to F. B. Washington, May 27, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918, Folder [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁵Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 48.

members of the Board of the DUL asked him what he would do if they offered him the job. They asked him what plan he could provide "for making the league effective."⁶ Upon discovering that he got the job, Dancy was extremely pleased. He called it "the great adventure."⁷ Given this emotional state, plus the fact that he needed to support his brand new wife, it is not surprising that the maintenance of his job security became uppermost in his mind. Soon Dancy discovered what it required to keep the job secure.

As soon as he assumed his new role, Dancy found himself under scrutiny and watchful eyes of the white sponsors of his organization. During his first board meeting, for example, the board's chairman and its strong man, Stevens, asked him to give a report of what he had done since arriving to Detroit. Upon learning that the new director didn't have anything ready worthy reporting, one of the board members expressed astonishment and disappointment in Dancy, saying that it had been a mistake to have appointed Dancy. Fortunately for Dancy, the League's chairman, Stevens, expressed satisfaction with Dancy. Stevens praised Dancy for not acting in a radical manner to "turn Detroit upside down."⁸

This experience weakened Dancy's autonomy as a director of the DUL. He realized his powerlessness and dilemma as a promoter of the well-being of the black community. He discovered that his initial task as a director of the DUL dealt with creating credibility and gathering strategies to convince his employers that he had the capacity and the dedication to do the type of job they required him to do. Like his

⁶Ibid., p. 49.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 49.

predecessor, Dancy had to develop his credibility in a totally new environment. Moreover, like his predecessor, Dancy found that he had to depend on the people who supported the League financially. Forming an alliance with Stevens seemed his best strategy of securing his job and going about assisting the black migrants. As he put it concerning Stevens, "I had to depend on him in many ways. He was the leader of the movement. I didn't really know anybody else in those days. I was in touch with him constantly."⁹

Black Social Work professionals during this period had to depend on the good will of white philanthropists. The black physicians and the business professionals provided their services to their black clients and sometimes to the white customers by charging them. As the professionalization of the black social workers began under the auspices of the Urban League Movement, untrained social workers came under increasing attack from aspiring black social work professionals like Washington.¹⁰ The desire of the black professionals to take over the social work from the "non-professionals" propelled the black community into dependence on white industrialists and philanthropists. The smallness and the poverty of black urban dwellers during this period led the professional

⁹Ibid., pp. 49-50.

¹⁰Washington's characterization of the social work done by the black churches in Detroit is presented in his research report "The Negro in Detroit", pp. 223-232. He says that it was "half-baked" social welfare schemes. Washington felt that "the Churches who are going into the field of social work should either employ trained social workers or get rid of the social workers that they are using at the present time and have none at all. These half-trained social workers are duplicating each others efforts, interfering with established social agencies, and in general cluttering up the welfare work of the city." See Forrester B. Washington, Report, 1920, "The Negro in Detroit: A Survey of the Conditions of a Negro Group in a Northern Industrial Center during the War Prosperity Period", Research Bureau, Associated Charities of Detroit, 1920, DULP-MHC.

black social workers to seek financial support from white patrons. This process of professionalization of black social workers contributed to the destruction of the independent nature of the black social work previously dominated by black women. Given that the majority of the Detroit's blacks did not financially contribute to the League, Dancy's accountability rested on the industrial corporate supporters. Although Dancy was genuinely interested in the welfare of the rank and file blacks, especially the migrants, yet his lack of autonomy and dependence on the good-will of Detroit's white leaders forced him to listen more to the financial supporters of his organization. Thus, Dancy's policies, programs, and approach tended to conform to the interests of Detroit's white leaders, who controlled both the DUL and the Associated Charities.¹¹

There is another factor that made Dancy more and more vulnerable and dependent on the good-will of Detroit's white leaders--one that may shed light on his behavior and dilemma in addressing the black agenda in Detroit. It was his unusual desire to seek the company of important people, especially famous white leaders. Dancy's psychology is a part of what Frazier described as the problem of the "black bourgeoisie."¹² It speaks to the psychological impacts of racial prejudice on the black elites. The roots of Dancy's psychology goes deeply into his childhood.¹³ His mother died when he was only five.

¹¹Subsequent chapters will demonstrate this point more fully.

¹²See Edward Frnkline Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie, (Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1957). His discussion of the National Urban League and its affiliates is made in pages 98-101. He believes that the policies of the NUL and the local Leagues were formulated "according to the demands of the white employers whose financial support made their existence possible." p. 99.

¹³The discussion on Dancy's childhood presented here relies heavily on his Chapter Five of his Sand Against the Wind.

His father who was a political ally of the Republican government, was a very busy man and did not have enough time to be with him. He hated his step-mother with a passion. The only one he cherished in his memory was his grandmother.

John C. Dancy, Sr. had climbed very high on the social ladder when he became the recorder of deeds for the District of Columbia. He had family friends who were the "cream of the crop" among the nation's black community. Dancy, Sr. had been the second black man to be invited to the White House; the first being Booker T. Washington. Those that Dancy, Sr. counted as his close friends included such influential figures as Booker T. Washington himself, whom he had met in 1880.¹⁴ Other family friends included characters like Judge Robert H. Terrell, and P. B. S. Pichback.¹⁵

Dancy was aware of the high social status of his father and the fact that such a position was beyond the reach of the overwhelming majority of blacks. Commenting on his father's salary of \$6,000 he said "it is doubtful that in the entire city of Washington, D.C., there were more than half a dozen Negroes whose pay came within \$4,000 of that amount."¹⁶ And again he said, "as I look back at my early boyhood I realize that my father's position in the community, and his relative affluence, brought me many advantages." Most important, Dancy was aware how his father had managed to "make it." He was particularly impressed with how his father handled presidents in a way that

¹⁴Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 64.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 63.

helped to maintain his position.¹⁷ Dancy considered his father a hero, one of the "wise men of the day,"¹⁸ whom he had learned a lot from on how to deal with white society in order to "make it," and whose glory he enjoyed reflecting upon.¹⁹ He had learned to be a docile and patient suppliant in order to get ahead. He had learnt the skill of manipulation and persuading the white man. Such was the background that Dancy brought with him to Detroit as the Executive Director of the DUL. On the eve of his life, reflecting on that long experience, he affirmed that "I would do it again!" and that he wished he "could try it all over again."²⁰

Dancy's cautious manner won the admiration of many of Detroit's whites and their black allies. In a short time, Dancy made friendship with the Mayor, police Commissioner, politicians, industrial employers and civic leaders of Detroit. Unfortunately, his influential friends headed organizations that practiced discrimination against African Americans.

Establishment of the Community Fund

Dancy's arrival coincided with the establishment of two new organizations in Detroit. These two organizations made a tremendous impact on the history of the DUL and probably of the black community. One of these organizations was established in

¹⁷Ibid. p. 64.

¹⁸Ibid. 74.

¹⁹Ibid. p. 71.

²⁰Ibid., p. 234.

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¹⁷Ibid. p. 64.

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1918 when the leaders of Detroit, chief among them Henry Stevens, decided to centralize the financial campaigns aimed at supporting the city's welfare agencies. The other one came into being in the same year. It was brought about by the city's leaders who decided to organize a council of social agencies under the name of the Detroit Community Union.

Initially known as the Patriotic Fund, the Community Fund Drive was established to increase efficiency, raise sufficient funds for all "worthy and reliable Charitable organizations," and prevent duplication among the existing agencies. The most important reason for starting the program, though, was, as Dancy pointed out, designed to raise money to aid--in addition to the war charities and provide support for those social agencies that were worthy and to "protect the public from solicitations that are unworthy of fraudulent."²¹ The Patriotic Fund, later named the Detroit Community Fund, "served as a fiscal clearinghouse for some seventy[-five] welfare institutions requiring public contributions for their total or partial support."²² The program worked out well with its campaigns "anything but completely successful."²³ In 1922, for instance, it raised a total of \$2,161,174.89. This success continued throughout its history climaxing in 1955 when the fund made national news by raising over fourteen and a half million--making it the largest charity fund-raising in the world.²⁴

This successful Community Fund enabled Detroit's recognized charity

²¹An article, "Modern Charity," Dancy wrote in 1918 for a newspaper, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918, Folder [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

²²Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 78.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Robert I. Vexler, Detroit Chronological and Documentary History, p.71.

organizations such as the DUL to meet their financial needs. After deducting the expenses for administrative, campaign and collection expenses, the money was distributed to legitimate charities. Among the regular recipients of the fund were the American Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., the Associated Charities (which then allocated a portion to the DUL), Visiting Nurse Association, The Children's Aid Society, the League of Catholic Women, the Salvation Army, the United Jewish Charities, the Americanization Committee of Detroit the Detroit Tuberculosis Society, the Girl Scouts and Campfire Girls, the Visiting Housekeeper Association, and many other organizations in Detroit.²⁵

In the black community, only the DUL and the Phyllis Whitley Home were eligible. Later on, a few more were included in the fund. In 1919, for instance, Dunbar Hospital, the first black hospital in Detroit, received about \$5,500.00 from the fund. In 1920, the black Y.W.C.A. at St. Aubin Street became a regular recipient of some money from the Community Fund.²⁶

Although some black organizations benefitted from this arrangement, the Community Fund program intensified the dependency of black Social Workers on Detroit's wealthy whites. Through this plan, black groups not allied with the power structure found it difficult to solicit funds in Detroit even if they sought mainly from blacks themselves. In this way a structure was created by the leaders of Detroit which controlled black social work. The DUL became the chief mechanism through which that

²⁵Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 78.

²⁶Document entitled "What the community Fund means to the Negroes of Detroit", dated 1920, by Mr. Dancy for the Detroit Contender, Executive Secretary's General File, 1920, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

control was effected. One of the stipulations established between the League and the Community Fund was that the DUL could not seek financial aid independently. To do so the League had to obtain permission from the Community Fund. Secondly, the League was prohibited from establishing a membership because to do so would mean that it was in a position to collect funds from the membership fee.²⁷ These conditions curtailed further the autonomy of the DUL.

In the black community, Dancy became the chief champion and spokesman in support of the Community Fund. In 1920, for instance, he wrote an article for a black newspaper in which he gave arguments for supporting the Patriotic Fund:

Negroes ought not to let pass this opportunity to help the Community Fund. Why? It takes care of their agencies, and in such a way that they are not forever and eternally appealing to the public for funds....No matter how much Negroes give to the agminate Fund it will not be sufficient to carry on the work of any one of these organizations. Well-to-do white men will make up whatever deficiencies there are in these agencies. They give possibly six or eight times as much to the Negro Agencies as these agencies give themselves. This year we ought to make a banner effort. There is no reason why we should not accumulate for the drive more money than at any previous drive. Let every Negro in Detroit get behind this movement and give till it hurts, for in giving you will directly helping those who are not nearly so fortunate as you. In other words these dollars you give are what might be called mercy dollars.²⁸

Every year Dancy struggled to persuade blacks to give to the Community Fund. "Fund raising was an important part of my job, and I participate, year after year, in the Community-Chest and United Foundations drives," he stated in his memoirs.²⁹ "I

²⁷These conditions are discussed by Dancy in his memoirs.

²⁸A document entitled "What the Community Fund Means to the Negroes of Detroit", written by Dancy for a black newspaper, Detroit Contender, dated 1920, Executive Secretary's General File, 1920, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

²⁹Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 172.

enjoyed this work," he continued, "because it threw me into contact with the noblest people in the city--people who not only gave freely of their means but worked assiduously to persuade others to give." Commenting on the success of his efforts in promoting the Community Fund, Dancy stated that "It was gratifying that, as the years went on, the Negro Community became more and more responsive to the need and made generous contributions." For all the 41 years he was involved in the solicitation Dancy said that "our solicitation unit never fell down."³⁰ Actually, there was a time during the Depression and also the 1940s that his goal was not reached.³¹ Besides, Dancy concealed the fact that most blacks refused to give, and that as he once pointed out, the DUL solicited only the "detached persons."³² In fact, only the black middle class participated in the solicitation effort and constituted the majority of those that made the contributions.

Establishment of the Council of Social Agencies

The organization establishment in 1918 of the Council of the Social Agencies played an important role in reducing further Dancy's autonomy. According to its stated purpose, the Detroit Council of Social Agencies "was to coordinate social work and to develop a balanced program."³³ The Council's membership included all the private and

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Resume for the year's Activities [1940], Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³²Minutes of the Board of Directors of DUL, December 12, 1940, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³³Levine, Internal Combustion, 79.

government agencies involved with welfare work in Detroit. All the private charities under the Community Fund were members of this Council. Other members of the council included Detroit's school board, the juvenile court, department of health and the City's department of public welfare. Ten years later, the probation department, the psychiatric clinic of the criminal court, the Detroit House of Correction, the police department, the recreation department and the public library became members.³⁴

The Council's secretary and chief administrator was William John Norton, a "Maine-born Phi Beta Kappa from Bowdoin College, social worker, practical, hard-headed, efficient" genius known to friends simply as "Bill." His task included supervising the distribution of the millions of dollars raised through the Community Fund Drive, to the union's member organizations not supported by public funds. Norton also kept a close watch on federation members. He was quick to cut back financial support almost immediately on evidence of waste or inefficiency.³⁵

Caught up in such networks of organizations and immersed in between itself and the Detroit's industrialists, the DUL became very tightly held in the thumb of the powerful white leaders of Detroit. Norton himself joined the League's Board of the Directors for a brief period. Later, due to the pressure of too much responsibility, his Associate Director replaced him to represent the Council in the DUL's Board of Directors.³⁶ Personal friendship between Dancy and Mr. Norton developed to the point

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid. p. 80.

that the League's Director once described Norton as "sincerely dedicated to good works, and who made a great impression on me" and "who through the years has been one of the finest friends I ever had in my life. I had a deep and abiding affection for him. He guided me in a great many things."³⁷

A couple of members of the Board of the DUL served as officers of the Community Fund. The League's chairman, Stevens, himself, was the chairman of the Community Council's Central Budget Committee, the body to which the budgets of the Community Fund member organizations were annually submitted for approval. Another important supporter of the DUL, Julian Krolik, also served as a member of the Community Fund. Fred M. Butzel, to be discussed later, was another important person to join the League during this time and also a participant in the Council's executive Board.³⁸

Recruitment of New members of the Joint Committee

Given Dancy's background as discussed earlier, the alliance between the DUL and Detroit's employers became closer than during Washington's time. "Finding Friends," developing what he described as "a climate of good human relations," acquainting the leaders and the power structure of the community with the problems which confronted Negroes, and seeking to express himself "fully and forcefully, but without rancor,

³⁷Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p.106.

³⁸Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 80.

constituted what Dancy advanced as his approach to "assist" the black migrants.³⁹ "I set out to find people who could help," Dancy explained his strategy for black advancement. Then he went on to say, "I found many. . . . I established cordial relationships with many of the men who shaped Detroit's Destinies. I was rarely turned down in the requests I made of them."⁴⁰ Yet he found the task difficult because "nearly everyone looked askance at such an organization as the Urban League...The whites were afraid; they didn't know what they were getting into, and it was very difficult to find people who would work with us. But many Negroes were reluctant also."⁴¹

Among the few white leaders that Dancy recruited to join in the League's work included an influential attorney named Fred M. Butzel. Born in 1877 of a Jewish family Butzel practiced law in Detroit while leading quite a busy life in support of philanthropic activities. Although Butzel had never been a candidate for public office he was one of the most respected attorneys in the city. He was a member of the United Jewish Charities, Detroit Boy Scouts, the Juvenile Court, Associated Charities, Americanization Committee of the Board of Commerce, the Ford Republic, and Board of House of Correction. In addition, Butzel served as the president of National Conference of Jewish Social Service. He concentrated his greatest philanthropy to art, social service, music, and the education of youth.

Although he formally joined the DUL in 1919, he had been one of the agency's

³⁹Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 90.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 165.

financial supporters since its founding. Butzel's place in the history of the DUL cannot be over estimated. According to Dancy, Butzel was "in the forefront of those who came to the Negro's aid." One of the most important things he did in the name of the DUL was supporting at least fifty black youth with assistance to go to school.⁴² As will be seen later, Butzel continued to be one of the most important financial donors of the DUL. His views and legal advice had great weight in shaping the history of the League. As a member of Americanization Committee of the Board of Commerce, Butzel was one of the DUL's greatest champions of the Americanization education of black migrants according to the taste of the white industrialists of Detroit.⁴³

Another significant personality to join the DUL during this early period in Dancy's leadership was Chester M. Culver. Culver grew up in Kansas, where he graduated from Kansas State Normal School in 1890. He taught high school students in Topeka briefly, and in 1894 matriculated at the University of Chicago. Before he received his degree in 1925, he had enrolled at Harvard Law School and graduated in 1899 only to move to Detroit to practice law. In 1912, he moved to Arizona to manage a sugar company. In 1916, Culver returned to Detroit to accept the position of the Manager of the Employers' Association of Detroit.⁴⁴

Having negotiated a relationship with the DUL in 1917 in which the League would supply employers with black labor in return of \$100 per month, later increased to \$140.

⁴²Ibid., p.91-92.

⁴³Levine, Internal Combustion, p.75.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 80-81.

Culver joined the League's Board of Directors in 1919. His importance in the League's history is particularly significant because he represented the interests of approximately seventy-nine major industries. His task during the League's board meetings centered mainly on advising the agency on matters of employment. He did so on a regular basis by supplying statistics on how many people were being hired at a given month or year, and which companies were hiring and laying off workers. Culver constantly supplied information on the industrial condition, such as peak periods of employment and unemployment.⁴⁵ Like Butzel, he was a great advocate of the Domestic Training program for the black migrant women workers. Culver was also an advocate of using blacks as strikebreakers. He strongly opposed the League's getting involved or advocating legislative measures as a means to accomplish the organization's objectives and goals.

Fred R. Johnson, who also joined the League in 1919, was born in Minnesota in 1881 of Swedish parents. He graduated with a degree in history and Social Science from the University of Minnesota. Before coming to Detroit in 1919, he did social work in Kansas City, Bridgeport, Connecticut; and Boston. In Detroit, Johnson obtained a position as an Associate Director of Detroit's Community Union. He represented this organization on the Board of the DUL.⁴⁶

Other individuals who joined the League during this period included Alfred J. Murphy, Dr. Nellie Perkins, J. A. Bailey and Lulu B. Gregory. Murphy was a judge in

⁴⁵See the Minutes of the Board meetings of the Detroit Urban League for January 30, 1930 and May 6, 1937, Box 11 DULP-MHC.

⁴⁶Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 79-80.

Detroit. Perkins was a psychologist who worked with Psychopathic Clinic. Her PhD had been earned at the University of Michigan, where she worked in the Department of Psychology. Perkins also served as a member of the Associated Charities of Detroit, the organization that had sponsored DUL.⁴⁷

In addition to these new recruits in the League's work other prominent figures began to give the attention to the organization. For instance, the City's Mayor asked Dancy to accompany "as the official representative of the Y.M.C.A., all the colored drafted men in surrounding territory to Camp Custer."⁴⁸ This gesture from the Mayor suggests that the League was increasingly being viewed by those in the political power as a representative of the interests of the black community. Moreover, within the black community itself the League's prestige increased. For example, the Ministers' Conference organized in 1919, invited Dancy to join their organization, even though he was not a minister.⁴⁹

The Industrial Welfare Workers

The alliance between the League and the employers strengthened further as new actors associated with the activities of the DUL and the industries came into being. Two months after his arrival in Detroit, Dancy began to make contacts with the industrial

⁴⁷Annual Report ending December 31, 1931, Associated Charities of Detroit, United Community Services, Series I, Box 5, ALUA-WSU.

⁴⁸Letter, John C. Dancy to E. K. Jones, September 18, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁹Minutes of Ministerial Conference, March 17, 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, 1919 [1-10], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

employers offering the League's services in "bringing about better efficiency of the colored labor to make them more regular, more punctual."⁵⁰ In explaining the rationale behind the project the League's new Director said, "It is obvious that industrial concerns are interested in getting maximum amount of production from the men who are employed by them and in order to get this efficiency it is necessary to have the environment and conditions as healthy and as purposeful as possible."⁵¹ Rationalizing that since white welfare workers are used in welfare work by industries, the DUL with black welfare workers offered to do the same among the black workers. Dancy argued that blacks would be the best to supervise black workers because "their instincts habits and desires are as strong as they are characteristic."⁵²

The DUL required the black social welfare workers to assist the black workers to be properly housed; to advise them to buy liberty bonds, war stamps; and to show them the advantages of banking. The League also stated that a black industrial welfare worker "should point out how the company feels toward them and how they can best serve the company's interests." As conceived by the League, the industrial welfare workers were to "act as go-betweens for the employment dep't and the men." They were also to assist the employer in preventing black workers from moving to other jobs.⁵³

⁵⁰Letter, John C. Dancy to J. G. Johnson, on the back of a press release of October 26, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918 File [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³A document, "Plan for Colored Workers in Industrial Plants", dated October 26, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

Letters and visits were made to various industries with a large employment of black labor such as the American Car and Foundry Co., Ford Motor Car Co., Packard Motor Car Company, Dodge brothers.⁵⁴ The plan provided the employers with black industrial welfare workers who would be trained by the League but paid by the owners of industries for the purpose of supervising black workers. This project was actually a continuation and expansion of the sort of activities introduced earlier by Washington and implemented by his Y.N.P.A. Its aim was to assist the black industrial workers to be more productive to the employers. Like his predecessor, Dancy acted with the assumption that if the interests of Detroit's employers were served, the well-being of the migrants would be much secured. Dancy's other intention in promoting the idea of the black industrial welfare workers was aimed at providing a means to employ the black trained social workers.

Although many manufacturers, such as the Ford Motor Company, turned the League's offer down, a few did see some merit in the proposal. Some of the most celebrated cases of black social welfare work in Detroit's industries through the efforts of the DUL, was seen in the American Car and Foundry Company, the Hemmeter Cigar Company, and Dodge Brothers. In his first report of his work to the NUL, Dancy said,

we have worked up argument and sentiment sufficient to have a colored social worker put on at the American Car & Foundry Company, at a salary of \$1800.00 per year. This company employs between five and six hundred colored men. We have had a colored Forelady put on at the Hemmeter Cigar Company. She

⁵⁴News release, October 28, 1918; Press release, October 26, 1918; News release November 20, 1918; Letter, E. D. Doane to John C. Dancy, November 22, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

supervises the work of the colored girls.⁵⁵

Dancy was successful also, at convincing Charles Winegar, superintendent of labor at the Dodge company to accept hiring a black man who would act as a go between for the black workers and the company. Such a worker, Dancy told Winegar, would advise black workers on "how they can best serve the company's interest" and help it to increase productivity. When Winegar agreed, the Company got a social worker named James Bailey, a Tuskegee graduate.⁵⁶

Exploitation of black welfare workers by the industries was not out of question. For example, although the salary had been agreed upon between Dancy and Winegar as starting at \$2400, when Bailey came to start the work Winegar offered a lower pay of \$1800. The League's Director did not do anything about it. When Dancy heard that Winegar did not offer the better salary he had promised to give Bailey, he became very angry. Dancy placed the blame squarely on the black Welfare worker, Bailey:

Bailey was one of these altruistic people who think they must do something for their folks. Rather than take the risk of asking for \$2400.00 a year he took \$1800, and I don't believe he ever got beyond that although he stayed with the company for some time. He did a good job for Dodge, and for the Negroes of Detroit. He was a fine man, and the community was very fortunate to have him.⁵⁷

The League's good relations with the Dodge company served the organization well. For instance, Dancy and Winegar were able to reach an understanding that the

⁵⁵Letter, John C. Dancy to E. K. Jones, September 18, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918 [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁶Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 131.

⁵⁷Ibid.

Dodge plant would not deal with any other organization in arranging for the employment of black workers. When other black organizations such as the NAACP approached the Dodge company with pleas for jobs, Winegar refused, stating that he dealt with the Urban League only. "We do not feel there is any point in our going out of our way just to try to distribute jobs through various and sundry organizations," the Dodge representative reassured Dancy.⁵⁸

Personal rewards came along with the League's friendly relations with the industrial leaders. For instance, Dancy obtained the privilege of enjoying the friendship of powerful personalities. According to Dancy, Winegar was "one of the finest friends the Detroit Urban League ever had." He and Winegar became "close personal friends."⁵⁹ Eventually, Winegar became a Board member of the DUL.⁶⁰

The black community, though, benefitted little from this relationship. Although the Dodge provided jobs to one black welfare worker and offered jobs to black migrants, yet the exchange in the relationship provided more benefit to the Dodge Company than to the black community. Although the DUL continued to maintain that the Dodge Chrysler company under Winegar was the best friends of the Urban League,⁶¹ it became one of the most exploitative industries against the black community throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Even when it became incorporated with Chrysler, Dodge continued to

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 130.

⁵⁹Ibid. p. 130.

⁶⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors of the DUL, January 31, 1937, Executive Secretary's File, 1937, Folder [11-14], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶¹Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, pp. 130-131.

use blacks as strike-breakers and adamantly refused to upgrade its black workers into better jobs.⁶² Yet in 1919 and 1942, the two periods of greatest labor shortage in Detroit, the DUL gave special consideration to Chrysler Corporation in terms of finding black workers. Still the company continued its practice of using blacks as strike breakers even during times in which such actions were life-threatening to black workers.⁶³

Dancy's Initial Program for the Migrants: the Night School

Apart from initiating the black industrial welfare program, Dancy gave attention to other concerns of the black migrants. In October, 1918, Dancy expressed interest in the idea of a night school for the migrants who did not know how to read.⁶⁴ "I plan to have volunteer workers in every section conducting these schools," he informed Jones, "no matter if each has only one student."⁶⁵ "This school," Dancy pointed out, "is only for those who do not attend the regular city night school. Don't you want to learn to read, to write and to do figures in arithmetics? If you do we advice you to come to this school. We want our own race to know as much as any other race."⁶⁶ To get the

⁶²For a fuller discussion of the refusal of the Dodge company to give the black workers a fair treatment, see chapter 9.

⁶³See Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, P. 130-131; Meier, Black Detroit and the Rise of UAW, p. 121; Director's Report, 1943, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁴Letter, John C. Dancy to E. K. Jones, October 19, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918, Folder [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Letter, John C. Dancy to My Dear Sir, November 12, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918, [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

project going, Dancy requested Reverend Robert W. Bagnall to "co-operate in getting this project set forth. If you will make mention of it at your sunday service we will be only too glad."⁶⁷ In explaining to the minister the purpose for the school which was to be conducted at the DUL's offices, Dancy said that it was "for the purpose of teaching those of our race who do not know how to read and write and to cipher."⁶⁸ Unfortunately, the lack of records prevents our judgement in regard to the success of this project.

The Helpful Hints Project

Another foundation set by his predecessor and upon which Dancy continued to strengthen, was aimed at making the black migrants fit the image desired by the white society regardless of their financial ability and human dignity. In 1918 Dancy began to expand the program that had been started by Washington's famous Dress Well Club. Dancy altered the title by replacing it with "Helpful Hints." The idea of "helpful hints" had been first introduced by the Ford Motor Company with the title, "Helpful Hints and Advice to Employees." Ford's brochure advised the employers to "use plenty of soap and water in the home, and upon their children, bathing frequently....Notice that the most advanced people are cleanest."⁶⁹ Ford's Americanism, by promoting thrift and savings, differed from the stress on conspicuous consumption found in much corporate advertising. But like his Madison Avenue counterparts, Ford believed the foreign-born should conform

⁶⁷Letter, John C. Dancy to Rev. Bagnall, November 14, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918 [1-9], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Steve Babson, Working Detroit:the Making of a Union Town, p. 36.

to a single, "American" standard of dress, diet, speech, and hygiene, and his company store made all the ingredients of this American Way available at cut rate prices--"No profit added."⁷⁰

This kind of ethic, championed by industrialists, was promoted by DUL enthusiastically. Mr. Dancy insisted that the purpose of his project was for the benefit of blacks. Thus, in the "Helpful Hints" brochure one could read that "We want to make Detroit a place free from race prejudice, race friction and discrimination. If you observe the following suggestions you can greatly help us in bringing this about."⁷¹ Just as Washington had argued, Dancy suggested that the black migrants had brought much of the discrimination upon themselves. He gave his rationale for stressing a dress code for black migrants by stating that:

There were all kinds of problems back in those days. You must remember that the great majority of Negroes in Detroit were brand new. They had grown up in the rural South, without access to any education worthy of the name, without training in personal cleanliness, without familiarity with most of the features of civilization which the average white person took for granted.⁷²

In spite of the fact that the majority of the black migrants were condemned to work "in foundries" and had to "come home dirty," Dancy realized that wearing dirty clothes "was always a problem on street cars." The problem, as Dancy explained, was that "some of these men would be on the cars coming home, and sometimes they would

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹"Helpful Hints", 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁷²Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 155.

sit down beside a white person, which would bring protest from the whites."⁷³ He "was always interested that Negroes try to develop a sentiment in favor of themselves." As he put it, "I sought to convey this message to the workers, 'Now when you go home nights, kind of fix yourself up a little before you get on the car. It will make for better sentiment'"⁷⁴

But Dancy's taste and source of standards was not based on the interest of the black migrants alone. His inspiration came from several sources including the President of the United States. Thus, he changed the title of the brochure once more. "This was just about the time that President Wilson came out with his famous Fourteen Points," the League's director remembered in his memoirs, "so I plagiarized the title and issued a pamphlet called 'Fourteen Color Points'."⁷⁵

Much of the content in the "Helpful Hints" brochure contained the usual advise that Washington had championed. The Brochure had

pictures in it of a Negro woman who was a general housekeeper, in two poses. One showed her sitting in front of her house with a bandanna handkerchief around her neck, and broom in her hand, slovenly dressed. Then on the opposite side of the leaflet was a picture of the same woman in orderly attire--a picture of how she should look. And there were other suggestions, such as 'Tell your children not to be loud and boisterous when they are in school'.⁷⁶

Its written contents consisted of sixteen "DON'TS". Many of them were almost

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶"Helpful Hints" [dated 1918], Executive Secretary's General File, 1918, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

a repeat of what Washington's Dress Well Club had established in 1917. Among the rules included was the prohibition of the migrants from carrying on "loud conversations or us[ing] vulgar or obscene language on street cars, streets, or in public places." The brochure advised the migrants to be "on time, industrious, efficient, and sober" at their work. At all times they were to "try to dress neatly" and not to "be a dude or wear flashy clothes." On Sundays they were to refrain from wearing overalls. At their house or at the beach at Belle Isle or other public places they were not to sit with their shoes off. Advice relating to children was also given. The parents were urged to send children to school and not to fail the teachers.⁷⁷

In spite the obvious violation of human dignity manifested in such paternalistic projects and the fact that Dancy himself was aware of the opposition it provoked from the black community, he still insisted,

I should add that my pamphlet was very unpopular with some members of the community. Some of them severely castigated me for spreading this kind of advise. But I felt--and still do--that the way for Negroes to advance is not to conceal their faults but to face up to them and overcome them. At any rate, the pamphlet proved effective in improving the appearance of many in the community.⁷⁸

Dancy interpreted the protest of blacks against such indignities as a problem of differing opinions within the black community. "This points up to one thing that many white people fail to realize" the Director of the League argued, "that public opinion among Negroes is not unanimous and you are likely to get conflicting viewpoints about

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 156.

whatever you undertake to do."⁷⁹

This program, though unpopular among blacks, was continued. In the summer of 1919, a board member suggested that the program be "carried out in the form of mass meetings at various churches."⁸⁰ Dancy reported to the Board that his project was well received. To him the brochures were designed "to remedy some of the affairs among our own." He pointed out that "some very favorable comment coming directly from Negroes has been heard regarding this."⁸¹ In 1923 the Board voted to have "more of these printed and distributed to the new-comers in the city."⁸² Upon his reflection on the project during his old age, Dancy stated that "we had 20,000 of those pamphlets printed and distributed. I would like very much to find one, but all my inquiries have been unavailing."⁸³

The attitude of the police towards the black migrants greatly influenced the League's program activities. Thus, the brochure itself stated, "Complaints are being received by the police department and the street railway officials in regards to unclean clothing of colored workmen on the car lines. This kind of carelessness will lead to discrimination and segregation unless steps are taken to improve conditions."⁸⁴

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors of DUL, June 12, 1919, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸¹Directors Report to the Board of Directors, August 14, 1919, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸²Minutes of the Board of Directors of DUL, May 3, 1923, DULP-MHC.

⁸³Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 156.

⁸⁴Brochure, "Helpful Hints", [1918], Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

The League's Attitude Towards the Institutions of Black Migrants

The League's negative attitude towards the black migrant's way of life found expression also in other ways. Both Washington and Dancy shared with other black middle class in their negative view of the black migrants's institutions. Members of the League and their allies, for instance, looked down upon the migrants's religious institutions, especially the churches. To the black migrants, churches served as the main vehicles for expressing their social and emotional needs. As Levine put it, "the sullen stares, the problem of finding a less crowded place to live, the filth and heat of the job, the enormous power the foreman held over all workers-there had to be a release from all this somewhere, and for tens of thousands it came in religion."⁸⁵ The rapid increase of black churches in Detroit since the great Migration of the World War speaks to their importance to the black migrants. Before the establishment of the DUL in June 1916, there were only nine black religious organizations in the city and of these, two were missions and three others were very small. However, by 1919 more than twenty one thousand blacks were registered as church members. This number more than doubled by 1926. Between 1916 and 1919 numerous churches were founded with thousands of members in only a few years. In fact, the collective emotional, financial, and numerical strength of the black migrants during those years was used to support their churches. In 1926, for instance, the value of the church-owned property was estimated to be nearly \$2,300,000. The black migrant churches could be found in basements, attics, houses, and

⁸⁵Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 94.

even stores.⁸⁶

Although black migrants viewed these churches highly,⁸⁷ the DUL served as one of their sharpest opponents. Washington himself had been one of the most focal opponents of black emotional churches in Detroit. While working as the Director of the Research Bureau of the Associated Charities he expressed his disgust with these organizations when he wrote, "it was impossible to find in the Christian religion any justification for such barbaric practices as go on in these so-called churches." Washington further pointed out that this form of worship was "very harmful" and that "it unquestionably produces an abnormal type of individual." Washington also said that "these highly emotional services seem to produce an unbalanced state which robs the individual of inhibitions which would make him a reasoning being and capable of self-control in sudden uprushes of passion."⁸⁸

Washington was of course not alone in condemning the black emotional churches. Other black leaders in Detroit opposed these forms of worship included the black ministers. One of them said that "the museum of art is not always crowded" and that "the service that appeals only to the emotions, not to the mind, more often debases than it uplifts."⁸⁹ These black leaders were actually voicing the sentiments of white leaders in

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸See the Section of "The Religious Life of the Negro in Detroit, in Forrester B. Washington, Report, "The Negro in Detroit: A Survey of the Conditions of a Negro Group in a Northern Industrial Center during the War Prosperity Period", Research Bureau, Associated Charities of Detroit, 1920, pp. 217-230.

⁸⁹Levine, Internal Combustion, pp. 96-97.

Detroit, who were also appalled by emotional forms of worship. The leadership among the white community in Detroit asserted that the participants in such kinds of worship were "extremely ignorant." They also condemned the ministers of such forms of worship as "rarely more intelligent than their flocks" and were individuals "who had little or no educational training." These "Progressive Men" also pointed out that the members of those "hysterical" churches were associated with immorality, hypocritical, and criminal way of living, they are those "who are constantly getting into trouble for stealing and for committing other crimes which are supposed to be contrary to their religion."⁹⁰

The League's Respond to Marcus Garvey

Supporters of the DUL also opposed individuals who black migrants viewed as their heroes. During the World War I, for instance, the employers and other supporters of the League spoke sharp criticisms against the famous Marcus Garvey. Garvey, born in Jamaica, arrived in United States in 1918. He soon organized his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and enlisted the support of thousands of blacks. The black migrants to Detroit were enthusiastic supporters of Garvey. On June 4, 1919 Garvey came to Detroit and urged blacks to support his Black Star Line, a streamlined commercial enterprise that he hoped to be a means of major business enterprise among the people of Africa. Support for Garvey in Detroit is evidenced by the fact that by 1923, UNIA had about five thousand members in Detroit, under the leadership of an attorney, Joseph. A. Craigen, who acted as Executive Secretary.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 95-96.

Opposition to Garvey in Detroit came from the industrial employers and the black middle class. On one occasion, for instance, a black migrant attempted to look for a job in a certain factory. The employer of the factory sent him off disgustingly saying "go and get a job from Marcus Garvey!"⁹¹ Opposition to Garvey in Detroit had its most vocal expression through Bishop C. S. Smith, the head of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. His church served mainly the spiritual needs of the majority of the black middle class, including those who sat on the Board of Directors of the DUL. Bishop Smith's wife, for instance, served as a member of the DUL's Board of Directors.⁹² According to the Bishop, Garvey "did not interpret the thoughts of 1 per cent of colored Americans." Opposition to Garvey from the black middle class found another expression in the words of the Reverend Robert W. Bagnall, pastor of St. Matthews Episcopal Church in Detroit, and president of the Detroit branch of the NAACP and one of the earliest supporters of the DUL. According to the pastor, Garvey was simply a madman and "boastful, egoistic, tyrannical, intolerant, cunning, shifty, smooth and suave, avaricious...a lover of pomp..."⁹³ Dancy, too, found little to praise Garvey for. The following statement perhaps reveals Dancy's opinion of Garvey:

Back in the 1920s we had Marcus Garvey, in the Back-to-Africa movement they called the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey became famous all over the United States. He was All-American against everything. He wanted to have Negroes resettle in parts of Africa, which did not make too much sense to those of us who reflected that the American Negro had been out of Africa

⁹¹A note, deposited in the Executive Secretary's General File, [Undated], Folder [1-1], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁹²For a look at the list of the Black members of the DUL's Board, see Chapter 3.

⁹³Levine, Internal Combustion, pp. 102-103.

for about 300 years.⁹⁴

Dancy and the Good Citizenship League

The most annoying resistance to the authority of the DUL in Detroit continued to be from the Good Citizenship League. In chapter three it was discussed how this organization terrorized the League and its sponsors, the Chamber of Commerce and the Associated Charities. In the 1920s the Good Citizenship League renewed its attacks against the DUL and its allies. During this time, in the struggle for supremacy in Detroit's black community, the DUL, supported by the powers of Detroit, emerged triumphant. But this victory was only superficial and did not take roots from within the black masses. It drew sustenance from the City's white leaders and the black middle class.

As the black community was feeling the pain of joblessness and homelessness in the summer of 1920, the Good Citizenship surfaced again. In a heavily-worded pamphlet, distributed publicly in Detroit, the Good Citizenship League mounted its attacks against the DUL, the Black elites and the White power structure. In a sense they repeated the same accusations they had made in 1918. The Good Citizenship League opposed literally everything that the DUL stood for. It attacked all the allies of the DUL, including the black ministers, the DUL's emphasis on recreation, elitism, acceptance of tokenism, Dancy's solution to black crime, his silence on discrimination and segregation, alliance with A. Krolik Garment factory, the failure to find housing for blacks, employment

⁹⁴Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p 167.

bureau supported by the Employers Association, the League's research work sans substantive results, being allied with republican party, Alliance with Mayor Couzens, Reverend Bradby, welfare work in the industries, Associated Charities, Domestic Training School and many more.⁹⁵

The Good Citizenship League attacked Dancy as the "recognized 'hard-picked' Negro spokesman." The dissident group condemned the DUL's president as well as the leaders of the Board of Commerce. It said: "About four years ago, under Mayor Max's administration, an organization known as the Urban League was perfected with Henry G. Stevens, a white millionaire, as chairman; and Byres H. Gitchell as director, secretary-treasurer, trustee, collector and paymaster; and a Boston Negro, the cat's-paw." Then, they went on to accuse the black elites as collaborators who had sold out the black community. "The Good Citizenship League is very keen about this subject of leadership", they contended. Then they went on to say that "we haven't a man in Detroit that the masses of colored people can point to and really trust as a leader. If racial trouble would break out in this city the very first person that the city would condemn would be Mr. Dancy and Dr. Bradby, the picked advisers on problems affecting the races."⁹⁶ In a more specific statement the dissidents pointed out that

what we want our white folks out to do is to let out 'Negro Leadership Department' alone. We reserve the right to pick our own leaders and when they don't suit us we have the power to move them. We know who is best fitted for

⁹⁵For a complete information on the attacks of the Good Citizenship League against the League and its allies in the 1920, see Annual Report of the Good Citizenship League, [1920], Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁶Annual Report of the Good Citizenship League, [1920], Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

leadership among us. We are tired of picked leaders, meddling into cheap politics and selling the race out for husks from organized graft under the guise of religion and sociology. . . . It is hard sledging, but we would rather see these young folks with a puck on the turnpike than to see them holding positions of social service where they are not given the opportunity to serve the interests of their own people, however sincere their intentions may be.⁹⁷

Upon reading the pamphlet, Julian H. Krolik, a member of the DUL, and a major employer of black women wrote to Dancy,

The enclosed circular from the so-called "Good Citizenship League" has just been brought to my notice. The general tone of it is sufficient to classify the authors of it, and I can understand how embarrassing this type of thing is to you. Your work certainly needs no defense against attacks of that sort.⁹⁸

Krolik went on to refute the charge made by the Good Citizenship League that her garment factory had initially been intended to be turned over to the black community and that money from the public had been collected to start the industry. Porter, the president of the Good Citizenship League, had charged A. Krolik and the League that they had collected about \$100,000.⁹⁹ Recalling the moment when the idea of the factory had been conceived, Krolik pointed out that,

When we contemplated the establishment of our garment factory some three years ago, we had the matter with Mr. Washington, with Rev. Bradby and with other leaders in the colored community. So far as we known, no money was collected for the factory, nor was there any promise made of turning it over to the workers.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Letter, Julian H. Krolik to John C. Dancy, August 17, 1920, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁹Letter, J. H. Porter to Henry G. Stevens, December 27, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁰Letter, Julian H. Krolik to John C. Dancy, August 17, 1920, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

About four months later, the powerful Employers Association of Detroit, a major ally and important financial benefactor of the DUL, used the weekly journal, Detroit Saturday Night to write an article aimed at painting a bad picture of the Good Citizenship League. The editor-in-chief, a board member of the Employers' Association, put the views in an editorial calling the Good Citizenship League members "Mischievous Negroes." Responding to the charges made in the pamphlet which had embarrassed the DUL and its industrial leaders, the Saturday Night asserted that "there is nothing constructive about this so-called 'report.' Then it concluded, "we call attention to it only because it is capable of making mischief, and therefore merits exposure."¹⁰¹

The DUL was pleased with the remarks made by the Saturday Night against the Good Citizenship League. Dancy, writing on behalf of the DUL, said "our organization was one of those attacked by the Good Citizenship League, and we feel that you did us a service in throwing light on that organization."¹⁰²

The following year, the Good Citizenship League made another public attack against the establishment. In a publicly announced document aimed at opposing the solicitation of black votes to support the election of Townsend, the Good Citizenship League attempted to awaken the black masses. "TO COLORED MEN AND WOMEN VOTERS OF MICHIGAN," the Good Citizenship League warned,

Can't you see that such men as Bishop Smith, Dr. Robinson, Dr. Gomez, R.L. Bradby, Forrester B. Washington and Dunbar and all such political burns, together with the Associated Charities, Urban League, building garment factories for you,

¹⁰¹See Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 124.

¹⁰²Letter, John C. Dancy to "Detroit Saturday Night", January 20, 1921, Executive Secretary's General File, 1921-1922, [1-12], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

and other city graft, are only making fools of you for your vote? Now these men do not work for the Republican Party for nothing. They get paid. This ring couldn't even build the garment factory for you, without taking the money, and all that money went somewhere. We didn't get it.¹⁰³

Greatly frustrated with the establishment, the Good Citizenship League concluded, "We feel that a rifle and dynamite will do more good than for the bill to be put in a political pawn shop. Politics messed up with the preachers, have got us where we are political outcasts."¹⁰⁴

These kinds of protests against the establishment did not go unanswered. Late in the 1920s the police intervened. They carried a search warrant and raided the office of the Good Citizenship League, arrested its leaders including Bannister, orter, and Jones, secretary, president, and treasurer respectively.¹⁰⁵ The building which also served as the Good Citizenship League's home for orphaned children was invaded. The police took the six children, including one white baby in the home and handed them to the Children's Hospital for observation.¹⁰⁶ That was the end of the Good Citizenship League, although later, on the eve of the Great Depression, it strongly insulted Dancy, calling him "the greatest grafter in the city."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³Article, "To Colored Men and Women Voters of Michigan," [1922], Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁴Document, "To Colored Men and Women Voters of Michigan," Executive Secretary's General File, [1922] , Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁵Unfortunately the first names of these individuals are now where to be found.

¹⁰⁶Levine, Internal Combustion, p.124.

¹⁰⁷Letter, Julian Perry to John C. Dancy, February 4, 1928, Executive Secretary's Executive File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

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¹⁰⁶Levine, Internal Combustion, p.124.

¹⁰⁷Letter, Julian Perry to John C. Dancy, February 4, 1928, Executive Secretary's Executive File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

Conclusion

The arrival of a new Director did not bring a new approach or program to the DUL. Like his predecessor, the Dancy had no autonomy. He had to conform to the existing policies and program chartered by the founders of the agency. Moreover, his attitudes, need, values and interests were similar to those of Washington; and therefore, he did not have a new perspective to bring to his new job. He simply began to expand and continue the activities and programs that had been started by Washington. He promoted the same ideas and middle class attitudes and values and imposed them on the black migrants.

By examining the sudden rise to prominence of the DUL in the public mind, especially among the white leadership community in a period of only two years, we are forced to consider some of the factors responsible for such a development. For one thing, the League did not become important because it solved the problems of the African Americans nor did it deal sufficiently with the race relations crisis that developed as the result of the Great Migration. As we shall see later, those problems stayed with the citizens of Detroit for a very long time. Moreover, the League was not without opposition, at least from a few blacks, even though they failed in their attempt. The key to the understanding of such a development is, therefore, found in the conditions that made it appealing to those who sponsored it. The conditions imposed by World War I and the Great Migration had greatly helped the DUL to become prominent. Once Detroit's white leaders were convinced that the DUL would serve their purposes, interests and values, they made sure that it was a success. Through their support, the League was able to

develop a vigorous propaganda campaign to promote itself. A number of black leaders, on the other hand, began to support the work of the League, partly because the whites did so and also because the organization championed the middle class values. Moreover, the daily flow of migrants from the rural south to Detroit worried them and made them to listen to anyone who proposed the have the answer to such a new problem and access to the power structure. Many of them, of course, were genuinely interested in assisting the migrants.

Such continuities in the League's activities and commitments brought tremendous rewards to Dancy, just as they had done to Washington. As World War I came to a close, Dancy's organization captured the attention and admiration of the NUL, prominent blacks in Detroit, and, most importantly, Detroit's white leaders. As a gesture of goodwill and respect, the NUL decided to honor the DUL by holding its Annual Conference in Detroit, the first time in its short history outside of New York. The Mayor and other leaders in the City began to consult Dancy on matters related the black community. The League's Director began to enjoy the company and friendship of many corporate and civic leaders in Detroit. But the condition of the black migrant worsened as the demand for their labor came to a halt. Chapter six will attempt to discuss that subject.

CHAPTER SIX

ADDRESSING THE POST-WAR PROBLEMS, 1919-1928

Judging from the groups of soldiers loitering on the streets in that particular section of town the location seems a good one, the demand for the gymnasium and other diversions such as billiard tables etc. is an immediate necessity. The house is well-adopted for a settlement house, seems to be in very good condition.¹

Sarah L. Krolik (1919)

In the period between the end of the World War I and the beginning of the Great Depression, Detroit's expanding black community faced numerous problems. Among the problems that the league grappled with was the question of veterans' needs, housing shortage, health deterioration, the difficulties of a post war depression and racial confrontations that climaxed with the famous Sweet trial. This chapter focuses on DUL's approaches, programs and tactics used to address the problems of the black community. It shows how ineffective the league was despite its alliance with powerful Detroit personalities. The white population and its leaders were resistant to the genuine interests of the black migrants. The projects receiving the greatest support from Detroit's power structure mainly constituted recreational activities. The league's lack of courage in challenging racial discrimination due to its dependence on wealthy white's goodwill and

¹Letter, Sarah L. Krolik to John C. Dancy, March 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, 1919, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

the resistance of the DUL's white leadership made it ineffective in challenging barriers erected by the white community against meeting the needs of the black migrants. The league was least effective in its attempts to resolve the problems of housing and employment. However, and perhaps more importantly, the league achieved success in aligning the moral and material support of Detroit's power structure. In fact, during this period the league emerged with greater power and a stronger feeling of confidence.

The Challenge of Veterans

As World War I ended the most immediate problem faced by the city of Detroit concerned the matter of assimilating the veterans. The way the black leaders in Detroit and the DUL handled the matter indicated their weakness in getting the Detroit's power structure to assist the black community. It was on November 11, 1918 that the armistice was signed ending World War I and the returning soldiers began arriving in Detroit by March and April of 1919. Their arrival coincided with a constantly increasing influx of both black and white southern migrants. The white migrants arriving in Detroit from the southern states included members of Ku Klux Klan. The presence of black veterans, black southern migrants and members of the Ku Klux Klan sharpened the issues of racial confrontation, housing shortages, competition for jobs, exacerbated by a serious depression, and health crisis in the city of Detroit. Like in other cities throughout the country, Detroit citizens greeted the arriving veterans with very warm and heroic welcome. Dancy was chosen by the newly-elected Mayor Couzens to serve on a committee that welcomed home the soldiers. "It was amazing how much excitement this

stirred when the Negroes saw my name in the paper," Dancy excitedly stated. "This was something new," he continued, "I can remember ministers and other community leaders calling me up to talk about it."²

Concerned with morale among black soldiers both black and white leaders strongly supported all the soldiers. In May 1918 Detroit's black community entertained about five hundred black servicemen from Fort Wayne. The event was directed by a committee of Detroit's black leaders chaired by Forrester B. Washington, the executive director of the DUL. Other DUL's board members who belonged to the committee included C. Henri Lewis, W. P. Kemp, Lilian E. Bakeman and Mrs. Benjamin Pelham. Representatives from organizations that dealt with the welfare of soldiers such as the War Camp Community Service, the National League For Women's Service and the Colored Soldiers' Welfare League participated in this committee. Other black leaders who also served in this committee included Frank Waters, Joseph E. Thompson, Mary Cole, Mary Matthews and Mrs. W. P. Kemp.³ Even the white-controlled board of education "had no reasons to regret their kindness in extending to these colored soldiers and their friends the use of this public auditorium." During the program, inspirational speeches were given. A representative of the War Camp Community Service in Detroit and Wayne County District promised that the War Camp Community Service movement intended assist both

²Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 106.

³News release, "500 Soldiers Entertained", June 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, 1918, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

colored and white soldiers in the community.⁴ Forrester B. Washington also expressed concern for the soldiers.⁵

In the summer of 1918 Dancy reminded the black soldiers that they were fighting for a chance to work, better educational facilities for the black war orphans, and for a chance to live and for the recovery of the ballot. "America is the American Negro's country," he asserted. He then added, "No individual, no nation or no race can ever accomplish anything whether in the realm of industry, art or war unless they have a purpose an ideal or an aim." In his response to the complains of many blacks against black fighting without any benefit, Dancy said, "it has been said that this is the white man's war---that the Negro (at least the American Negro) has nothing at stake and nothing to gain in the success of the Allies." Stating what he considered as his "conception of why the Negro should cast his lot unhesitatingly with the United States and the Allies, and second in addition, what should be Negro's aims," Dancy said:

The Negro fight with the U. S. because America it is the American Negro's country. The central idea behind Germany is force....The Negro's aims should be: Aim 1. We want a chance to work. Aim 2. We Negro wants better educational facilities for the black war orphans of Alabama than their father's had. The Negro is fighting for a chance to live. The Negro hopes that his patriotism in this war will bring back the ballot....We do not pray that they will all return for we want our blood to enrich the fields of France.... hoping that for every black man who gives his life on the Western front, some black boy in Alabama will have life more abundantly... but all united against a common foe and in support of a common ideal, and none who fights will be weaker because he has an aim

⁴News release, June 1, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁵Ibid.

peculiar to his own group.⁶

Provided with such a positive attitude and promises, the black soldiers were disillusioned when their expectations remained unfulfilled. The returning veterans anticipated receiving a chance to improve their lives and enjoy the fruits of democracy, equality and justice. But their arrival increased an already over-crowded conditions in the black ghetto. As early as January 1919 Detroit leaders began feeling the pressure. On January 11, 1919 Dr. Eugene Shippen, a one-time DUL's member, suggested that a community center with a multi-purpose use by veterans be established. He proposed that the center contain a memorial to honor the black soldiers with inscriptions, tablets, historical room, war museums "with possibly a branch of the public library devoted to the literature of the war." He also envisioned the center would serve as a service club for soldiers, and as a community center for recreational, civic, art and educational activities." Shippen advised that such a center be "centrally located" and "administered by a representative group somehow linked up with the city government" to appropriately symbolize "the ideals for which the war was fought." As a first preliminary step in establishing such a center the Shippen suggested that the DUL "make the survey of social conditions."⁷

Dancy described the feelings stirred by the arriving veterans. "I can still remember Armistice," he wrote in his memoirs forty-six years after the incidence. "We

⁶Speech notes, "The Negro's War Aims", delivered at a Soldiers' Banquet July 9, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁷Letter, Eugene Shippen to Mayhee Mckinley, January 11, 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

were having a board meeting in our offices at 1911 St. Antoine. Suddenly there were hardy-gourdes in the streets; people were yelling, screaming, carrying on so that we had to call off the meeting because we couldn't hear each other speak."⁸ During this time Dancy worried whether these veterans would obtain jobs:

I remember the first fellow I saw who came home from the service. He had his uniform on and I was looking out the window of the league office when I saw him come walking across the street and into a barber shop. I thought, 'There's the first one. What will happen to all the others? Will there be jobs for them?'⁹

The black soldiers made sure the promises made to them were not forgotten. They wanted jobs, shelter, dignity and pleasure. On March 22, 1919 Eugene K. Jones identified better jobs as one of the returning veterans' demands. In his correspondence with Dancy, Jones talked of Dr. Arthur D. Brown, who had just returned from France where he was an artillery medical officer, wanted a job as an executive in a city league.¹⁰

Unfortunately, these wants and needs were not met once the black veterans returned. The warm welcome accorded them was short-lived. Soon after their arrival black veterans began to experience tremendous disillusionment. Little was being done by Detroit leaders, including DUL's white supporters to fulfil these promises made to the black veterans. The first signs of disappointment came in spring 1919 from the organizations dealing with the veterans' affairs. These included the Detroit War Camp

⁸Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p.141.

⁹Tbid. p. 143.

¹⁰E. K. Jones to John C. Dancy, March 22, 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

Community Service, a branch of the War Department and Navy Department Commissions on Training Camp Activities. Three of the League's leading white leaders and benefactors were members of the Detroit War Camp Community. Fred M. Butzel was its chairman and Henry G. Stevens and Mrs. R. B. Jackson were members of the executive committee. Although representatives of this organization promised their organization would help the black veterans, in March of 1919 they refused to provide black veterans with a War Camp Community Service unit. The veterans protested; eventually a new unit known as Unit Eleven for The Colored Returned Soldiers and Sailors opened specifically for them. The black veterans were also promised a building to create a veterans club; however, the War Camp Community Service changed its mind.

This situation revealed the limitations of the League's black leaders. A. J. Bailey, the DUL's employment secretary, located a building for the proposed club at the Gratiot Avenue in the middle of the black ghetto. On March 27, 1919, Bailey wrote the Executive Secretary of the Detroit War Camp Community Service, Herman G. James, asking for his support to meet the "promise of such a club" on behalf of the black soldiers whom he stated had offered a "supreme sacrifice ... for our country." Bailey urged the War Camp Community Service to "save" the black veterans "a great disappointment."¹¹ However, white leaders, in particular Butzel, refused on the grounds that the Detroit War Camp Community Service could not grant the request for a black club since the situation had cooled down and the state of emergency had disappeared. Butzel's other objection

¹¹Letter, A. J. Bailey to Mr. Herman G. James, March 27, 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

to the request was that the location where the club was to be located unsatisfactory. Finally, Butzel told Bailey not to devote any more time to the matter because he was sure there was no chance of receiving approval from the Detroit War Camp Community Service.¹²

Throughout March and April 1919 the pressure from the returning black soldiers was felt in Detroit. In black churches and meetings of ministerial conferences, Dancy and black ministers frequently discussed the subject of the arriving veterans. Noting that the soldiers were "under surveillance at Camp Grant," the members of the ministerial conference suggested "that a committee be appointed composed of Father Bagnall and Mr. Dancy to investigate the soldiers case and to report to the committee."¹³ Unfortunately, there is no record of the outcome of this action.

The Columbia Community Center

As the problem of the veterans continued Serah L. Krolik, a white woman closely associated with the DUL, began advocating the idea of a community center. Krolik had been a major financial and moral supporter of the DUL, and her interest with the idea of a community center was linked to the problem of the black veterans. She worried that loitering soldiers could create problems in the city. In her letter to Dancy, Krolik said: "Judging from the groups of solders loitering on the streets in that particular section of

¹²Letter, Fred M. Butzel to J. A. Bailey, March 28, 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹³Minutes of the Ministerial Conference of March 17, 1919; March 27, 1919; April 21, 1919; and April 31, 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

town the location seems a good one, the demand for the gymnasium and the other diversions such as billiard tables etc. are of immediate necessity."¹⁴

This was not the first time a community center had been proposed to the League's Board. However, blacks on the board were not effective in achieving results. Dancy seemed ineffective in getting the board to establish a community center. Since his arrival in Detroit in mid-1918 Dancy had requested a community center. It was among the items he listed in his first director's report to Eugene K. Jones:

We have a big project on foot, but it is not yet a reality...We are about to take over a splendid building to be used as a community center. I have outlined a number of activities which are to be lodged in this building. We are to have a music school settlement, a boys' play room, a day nursery and overnight lodging for girls, together with our domestic training school, which is at present adjoining our Urban League offices. All these activities are to be run under our supervision.¹⁵

In May 1919 Dancy urgently recommended to the DUL's board for the establishment of a community center.¹⁶ With Krolik's backing the, the white-dominated board enthusiastically supported the idea of the community center and decided to request monies from the Community Fund for the purpose of renting a building for such a purpose. The money was provided; a large brick building, located at 553 East Columbia Street, with two large rooms and a kitchen on the first floor and another good-sized kitchen and two rooms on the second floor was rented. On June 1, 1919 the DUL opened

¹⁴Letter, Sarah L. Krolik to John C. Dancy, 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁵Letter, John C. Dancy to E. K. Jones, September 18, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁶Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 148.

its first community center.¹⁷

The Columbia Center "became popular overnight and was usually filled to capacity with a variety of interesting activities"; "became a veritable beehive of activity."¹⁸ One of its goals was to provide the veterans with "entertainment and information."¹⁹ This project became a major cornerstone of the league's activities. A committee of eleven composed of members of the DUL's board of directors and "some other interested people in the community"²⁰ was formed to direct the center's operations. The committee was accountable to and supervised by the DUL's board and included Fred M. Butzel; Mrs. Julian Krolik; Dr. C. B. Lundy, commissioner of recreation²¹; Bessie Lee; H. B. Talliaferro; Dr. Charles Green; Irene Postles, Irene Hunton; Mrs. L. Bakerman Johnson; Mrs. Duporte Harper and John C. Dancy.²² In the spring 1921 this committee was replaced by three committees appointed by the League's board, made up of an educational, social and house committee with a chairman for each. The education committee concerned itself with matters of sewing classes, music, dancing and other classes at the center. The house committee dealt with arranging meeting places by other organizations and the center maintenance. The social committee involved recreational

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 149.

²²Ibid. p. 148.

activities, such as athletics, outings and others.²³ Mrs. Lyle served as the chairman of the house committee; and Baker headed the social committee. The educational committee had Mrs. E. Devere as its chairperson. The city supported the league in the establishment of the Columbia Center. This was in accordance with the city's interest in supporting the DUL in matters of recreation and social control activities. Dr. Lundy, the City's Commissioner of recreation not only served on the committee that directed Columbia Center activities but also appointed Joseph Duplessis to serve as a full-time worker at the center.²⁴

Program activities conducted in this community center included classes for boys and girls, a music school and dramatics. Club activities, represented by the Tom Phillips Post of the American Legion, Wolverine Athletic Club, Tuskegee Club, the Y.P.N.A., Pastoral, the Women's Auxiliary of Dunbar Hospital, the Physicians Medical Society (Allied Medical Association), the board of trustees of Dunbar Hospital, the Imperial Boy's Club, the Pioneer Girls, the Camp Fire Girls, Alpha Kappa Psi, Alpha Iota Sigma, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternities were conducted. The War Community Service designated the center as a meeting place for veterans for the purposes of "providing entertainment and information for the returned men."²⁵ The Domestic Training School was permanently set up in this center. In addition, a living quarters for the resident worker and a room

²³Minutes of the Board of the Detroit Urban League, April 14, 1921, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²⁴Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 149.

²⁵Director's Report of the Detroit Urban League, September 18, 1919, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

for overnight lodgers were designated.²⁶

The Chestnut Center

The League's activities at the Columbia Center proved to be a great success. However, renting terms forced the league to seek another building for the same purpose. According to Dancy the Columbia Center closed as a result of a dispute between the DUL and owner of the building. Initially the agreed rent rate was \$75. This was paid for the first two years. During the third year the landlord demanded an exorbitant \$275, after accepting the regular charge of \$75 for the first month. DUL's legal counsel won over the landlord to the original term of \$75 for the third year. At the end of the lease contract the Columbia Center was closed.²⁷

In 1922 the league began planning another community center. This time the league did not try to rent the building. Fortunately, with the aid of some Detroit philanthropists, the board of directors managed to purchase a large two-story house at 1534 Chestnut Street on June 11, 1923.²⁸ After considerable repairs the center opened its doors to the black community. Like Columbia, the Chestnut Center too became a place for various club activities and a Baby Clinic. Most of the clubs that used the old

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 149.

²⁸Minutes of the Detroit Urban League Board Meeting, June 21, 1923, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

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²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 149.

²⁸Minutes of the Detroit Urban League Board Meeting, June 21, 1923, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

center began using the new one.²⁹ By December 1923 the league claimed that the center was popular in the community. According to Dancy's report, sixteen organizations had regular meetings at the center. In addition to the baby clinic, lecture courses in hygiene were offered. Sewing classes attracted about forty children and music classes had twenty.³⁰ Club space for boys and girls--clubs made up of social, gymnastic, musical and athletics groups--became part of the Chestnut Center. Recreation room for boys and girls were also available. Thursday and Friday nights were reserved for parties for the leaders of several groups in the city. As time passed, the league's work at the center became institutionalized and continued to be its most important activity until the late 1940s and 1950s, when the league was forced to discontinue such emphasis in its programs.

The League and the Housing Crisis of 1919

One of Detroit's sharpest shortages in housing came in the wake of returning veterans and migrants from the rural Southern states in 1919. The housing situation had always been serious among black migrants since 1916. According to the 1919 annual report for the city of Detroit, the shortage of the dwelling places was the highest in its history. While 1916 saw a housing shortage of 1,247, 1917 saw 11,556, and 1918 was

²⁹Minutes of the Detroit Urban League Board Meeting, September 13, 1923, DULP-MHC.

³⁰Report of the Director to the Detroit Urban League Board, December 13, 1923, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

24,328; 1919 reached a staggering figure of 30,402!³¹ Detroit's 1919 housing crisis reached a catastrophic proportions among black migrants. Dancy revealed to a friend of his, "Right now we have not a single room available. Negroes are sleeping on the streets. One thousand or more of them have come in here since you left."³² August 1919 a six-room house on St. Antoine Street, just off Adams, was occupied by fifteen regular tenants and "double" that number of lodgers! Although the place had no toilet or bathtub the landlord charged an incredible seventy-five dollars a month.³³

The Detroit Community Union, to which the DUL belonged and supported, and was described by historian Levine as "the city's monolithic social service agency,"³⁴ conducted a census among the black urbanites to begin solving the housing crisis. The organization hoped to find "whether the negro population is scattered over the city or whether it has been contracted into a densely populated settlement, with the inevitable unsanitary conditions resulting from such situation."³⁵ However, the Union took no follow-up action.

Aware that the city's leaders had failed to address the housing crisis, Dancy took

³¹Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 39.

³²Letter, John C. Dancy to A. Jackson, May 15, 1919 Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DUL-MHC.

³³Most of the best houses in the white neighborhood at that time cost much less than \$75 per month. See Unsigned Memorandum of John C. Dancy, August 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC; Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, pp. 56-57.

³⁴Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 44.

³⁵Detroit Free Press, May 14, 1919, p. 1.

the matter to the Detroit Board of commerce. He met with the board to acquaint its directors with the seriousness of the housing crisis within the black community. The meeting was followed by a tour of the black ghetto by these leaders under Dancy's guidance. The area they examined was the heart of the ghetto--the area bounded by Beaubien, Lafayette, Hastings and Winder. According to one report, the Board members were startled by the sight of extreme overcrowding, the lack of sanitation facilities and the exorbitant rents. They later recommended the immediate appointment of a special committee "to delve further into the conditions" and to "suggest a program of activity which at least in part would relieve this blot in the city's boundaries." At that time they expressed sentiments of compassion "because the Negroes are all native-born, full American citizens, whose entire culture is derived in America and it was not deemed proper to imply in any degree that the Negroes were not all Americans."³⁶

Dancy believed that his friends would actually do something to alleviate the housing situation. In his 1919 annual report he wrote,

What we consider the biggest forward step yet taken with regard to our housing situation was a meeting which we attended as the guest of the Americanization Committee of the Board of Commerce...with a view to getting some facts and figures which might be used by the Board of Commerce in getting something done about our housing situation...In a letter to this office by the secretary of the Americanization Committee which has handled the situation up to this time, we have been advised that a very strong committee from the Board of Commerce has been formed to go further into this matter.³⁷

³⁶Annual Report of the Americanization Committee for the year ending March 31, 1920, (carbon Copy) Americanization Committee Papers, MHC.

³⁷Annual Report of the Director of the Detroit Urban League, November, 1919, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Several months later, Dancy realized that the board of commerce would not help resolve the housing situation.³⁸ Lacking other alternatives, the League followed the tradition started by Forrester Washington--keeping a listing of available houses and rooms. But Dancy was quick to note that the demand exceeded the supply.³⁹ Suggestions were also made by the DUL Board for a tent colony.⁴⁰

These solutions failed to prevent the suffering of the black community. In 1921 the league discussed the possibility of placing black men on farms throughout Michigan.⁴¹ But the proposal only illustrates the Board's futility in addressing the housing problem. "Like the poor," the problem of housing "is always with us," Mr. Dancy said in 1922. "It is the one problem we seemingly have no effort to combat," he said.⁴² Dancy wondered why the DUL's white leaders failed to appreciate the magnitude of housing problem. The inability of his fellow board members to understand the problem profoundly shocked him. One evening the league's board members happened to hear an address by a visiting settlement-house director, who illustrated her talk with slides showing housing conditions in London. During the slides Dancy was shocked to

³⁸Report of the Director of Detroit Urban League, April 8, 1920, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁹Report of Director to DUL Board, March 11, 1920 and April 1922, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁰Minutes of the Board of the DUL, July 11, 1919; Director's Report of the Detroit Urban League, June 10, 1920, Box 11, DULP-MHC; Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 57.

⁴¹Minutes of the DUL, May 9, 1921 [dated June 9, 1921], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴²Report of the Director to the Board of the Detroit Urban League, October 22, 1922, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

hear the audience express deep sadness. He had witnessed obviously worse conditions in the black neighborhood where the talk was being delivered, than those that the audience was looking at. To Dancy the London houses on the screen looked "like castles by comparison."⁴³ Dancy interpreted the audience's reaction as a lack of appreciation for the seriousness of the housing situation in Detroit's black community.

During the same year Henry G. Stevens, the DUL's chairman and a millionaire who "owned a considerable amount of land beyond the city limits, north of Eight Mile Road between Livernois and Wyoming," and whose brother was a real estate leader, decided to sell a part of his property to real-estate developers. The property was subdivided and offered for sale to blacks as home sites. As soon as the offer was made, one hundred black families moved into the area.⁴⁴ A number of difficulties confronted these migrants. Because the subdivision was beyond the city limits, there was no municipal water service or sewerage available for the black "suburbanites." Families were forced to walk one quarter mile to reach the nearest water.⁴⁵ The problems of building a house were considerable. Private contractors invariably charged blacks higher-than-normal interest rates because the discount available to professional builders through the banks was much less attractive on jobs for blacks than on those done for whites.⁴⁶ Few

⁴³Report of the Director to the Board of Detroit Urban League, October 14, 1920, Box 11, DULP-MHC; Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 128.

⁴⁴Dancy, Sand Against the Sand, p. 57-58; Report of the Director to the Board of the Detroit Urban League, March 10, 1920, Box DULP-MHC.

⁴⁵Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, pp. 57-58.

⁴⁶Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, The Negro in Detroit, Section 5, "Housing", pp. 58-59.

black men in Eight Mile Road were skilled enough at carpentry to do a proper job themselves. As a result many simply built a floor and erected a tent to live in until they could somehow afford the cost of constructing a home. Others fabricated shacks that quickly became permanent. Some families paid the contractors's prices.⁴⁷

The League's Approach to Black Health Problems

The League had always been aware of the impact of poor living conditions on the black community. Few health facilities in Detroit were willing to accept blacks for medical treatment. During World War I two hospitals were founded by black doctors in Detroit in order to cope with the increasing number of black migrants.⁴⁸ Statistics revealed that "the incidence of tuberculosis, influenza, pneumonia, and smallpox among Detroit's blacks was far above that corresponding rates for the city's white population."⁴⁹ Life expectancy among blacks was almost ten years below that of whites; death rates were forty per cent higher. This "alarming death rate" among blacks was due to

⁴⁷Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, P. 57.; Harold Black, "Restrictive Covenants in Relation to Segregated Housing in Detroit", M. A. Thesis, Wayne State University, 1947, p. 43; Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 129.

⁴⁸Mercy Hospital was founded in 1917 by David Northcross. Dunbar Hospital, later renamed Parkside Hospital, was founded in 1918 by a group of black doctors. Dancy was a committee member of the group that directed the Dunbar Hospital. For a full treatment on Black Hospitals in Detroit, see Thomas, Life for Us Is What We Make It, pp. 180-184.

⁴⁹Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 117.

overcrowded neighborhoods created by forced racial segregation.⁵⁰ But Dancy was powerless to change the social structure and the system that supported segregation. Moreover, the league's policy ignored matters of discrimination.⁵¹ Dependent on the financial support of Detroit's power structure, Dancy could not fight discrimination and remain the director of the DUL. Radicalism was not a financially sound practice for him, especially at a time when the League's board increased his salary from \$1800.00 to \$2400.00.⁵² In fact, few black leaders during this time could afford a confrontational approach to help struggling migrants. Those that tried failed to achieve the desired results.

Dancy therefore supported the Board of Health in their program "to improve health conditions." The plan assigned Elizabeth Gulley, a black social worker to visit the homes of every black newcomer to the city and persuade them vaccinate themselves against smallpox; she also instructed them in proper diet and clothing. Gulley had studied

⁵⁰Dancy had at one time reported to the board of directors that the reason the black housing situation was more serious than among whites was "due primarily to the fact that we live in a limited area and find it difficult to expand our borders." In that same report he pointed out that overcrowding was sure to result to "alarming death rate" during the winter months. See Report of the Director to the Board of Directors October 9, 1919, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵¹The Urban League's policy was that matters of discrimination were out of its jurisdiction. It left such issues to the NAACP. Unfortunately, the housing problem was closely tied to questions of racial discrimination and segregation. Therefore, the League could not address the problem without engaging in challenging well-established practices of many real estate owners who refused to rent to blacks outside the ghetto. For a fuller account on the problem of racial discrimination in the housing market in Detroit see Thomas's Life for Us Is What We Make It, especially chapter five.

⁵²Report Special Urban League meeting November 3, 1919, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

science and sanitation at Chicago University and dietetics at Chanatauqua, New York. Prior to working with the black migrants in Detroit, she had been employed as a home economics worker under the Jeannes Fund and the Smith-Lever Fund and the extension department at A and M College. Gulley had worked for four years in the rural south instructing clients in sanitation, canning and other health aspects.⁵³ In 1919 an influenza epidemic swept the city. The League quickly mandated Gulley to improve migrants' hygiene standards. She also organized sewing classes for two groups of children, a mothers' club and a pastoral club that consisted of laboring and domestic workers interested in Columbia Center's work.⁵⁴

The second project, known as the "Clean Up and Paint Up Campaign" originated with the board of commerce in the co-operation of the department of public works, department of buildings, the health Board, police, and fire departments, Detroit schools and the boy scouts. The Detroit Community Union and the Associated Charities encouraged the DUL to participate.⁵⁵ A series of mass meetings were held in which speakers discussed the importance of cleanliness. Dancy was enthusiastic about the program and began promoting it to black ministers.⁵⁶ He saw it as a program that could

⁵³News release document, "Board of Health and Urban League Co-operate to Improve Health Conditions, 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors of Detroit Urban League, March 11, 1920, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁵Letter, Fred R. Johnson to John C. Dancy, April 9, 1919, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁶Letter, John C. Dancy to Dear Pastor, May 6, 1919, General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

be utilized to publicize the League's work and create a positive image in the black community so that funds to run the league's programs would be obtained.⁵⁷ The DUL's board members made it part of the League's regular annual events, scheduling it to correspond with the fund-raising season.⁵⁸

Basically, the League's approach to African-American health problems in Detroit during the post war period constituted educational campaigns among black migrants. Dancy stated that "half of the serious illness that overtakes colored people could be avoided if they would only pay attention to general cleanliness around their homes. Small pox, typhoid fever, and tuberculosis are always found lurking about in filthy homes where unsanitary conditions prevail." In 1921 the league joined the Tuskegee Institute and the NUL in promoting another educational program popularly known as "Health Week." Literature was distributed throughout the neighborhood "advising cleanliness in effort to get homes cleaned up."⁵⁹ Black ministers were requested to cooperate with the league by promoting the program from their pulpits and hosting physicians to speak on the subject of health. Doctors were assigned a church where they gave health lectures. The league also took the opportunity to promote its community fund drive, holding these

⁵⁷The League did not solicit money for the League directly. It participated in the general community fund raising activities. The money collected went directly to the Community Fund. Dancy wanted the black community to participate in this event because the League was obtaining funding from the money collected during such fund raising events.

⁵⁸Evidence that the "Paint-Clean-Up!" was continued annually are quite numerous. See the Annual Reports of the league during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁹Report of the Director, April 8, 1920, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

events concurrently with the community fund. As Dancy argued, "it would probably work to better advantage if we schedule our campaign simultaneously with the Board of Commerce."⁶⁰ To him the combined activities served to "foment interest for the Community Union Drive."⁶¹ As years passed the project assumed what Dancy called "a two-fold purpose: one to acquaint those present with the plans of Community Union and the other to bring to the attention of those present the need for better health."⁶² The league still continued the "Clean Up Fix Up!" project for many years. In the 1930s the league found that blacks were reluctant to participate in these "educational" projects. To create interest the league sponsored contests with cash prizes as incentives to attract its black clients.

The baby clinic was another means by which the league tried attempted to address the black community's health needs. The league instituted the baby clinic in cooperation with board of health, who paid for the cost of running the clinic. The league provided the space and encouraged black women to bring their children to the clinic. Initially, one doctor and two nurses constituted the entire staff at the league's baby clinic. A few months later, a third nurse was added. Dr. Roland Athay served as the main physician until he became the head of Wayne County General Hospital. Dr. Reginald McGeogh

⁶⁰Report of the Director, April 14, 1921, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶¹Minutes of the Board of Detroit Urban League, September 22, 1921, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶²Report of the Director to the Urban League Board for July and August, given on September 22, 1921, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

succeeded Dr. Athay.⁶³

To encourage community interest in the clinic the league used several promotional techniques, including a baby contest aimed at enticing black women to bring their babies to the clinic. Winners were given cash prizes.⁶⁴ A mother's club was inaugurated in April 1921, "to acquaint mothers with methods of caring for the babies, such as feeding, clothing, etc."⁶⁵ According to Dancy, mothers brought their babies "five mornings a week from all over Detroit."

In August 1919 the attendance averaged twenty babies a day. Dancy was delighted that the clinic had "developed to the point where we have an average of twenty babies a day."⁶⁶ In January 1920 clinic attendance "fell off by 80%." One report offered a reason for the decline by stating, "the nurses say that the mothers object to bringing the babies out in the severe cold weather."⁶⁷ By Spring 1922 the League was resorting to questionable methods aimed at forcing black women to attend the baby clinic. A black woman board member called attention to the fact that black mothers were being forced to "bring their children to the community Center in lieu of other clinics which were near them." According to this woman, reports had been obtained that "colored

⁶³Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 145.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Report of the Director to the Detroit Urban League Board, April 14, 1921, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁶Report of the Director to the Detroit Urban League Board, August 14, 1919, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁷Report of the Director to the Detroit Urban League Board, February 19, 1920, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

mothers who lived in the far west side had necessarily to bring their children to the Columbia Center." The board appointed two physicians, Drs. Green and Johnson, to investigate the matter but no record of the resulting report is available.⁶⁸

The League and Black Employment

During the summer of 1919 industrial jobs were abundant and the DUL continued to emphasize employment placement of blacks. Like his predecessor, Dancy argued that as soon as the migrants arrived, and before they were introduced to bad characters, they should be given jobs. Industrial employers in 1919 were in great need of black labor. Thus black migrants arriving in Detroit had little trouble finding employment. The league's employment bureau was expanded and became extremely busy supplying various factories with black workers. "The Urban League has enlarged its quarters 100%," a DUL news release declared in the summer of 1919, "in proportion for the Negro migrants who have began to arrive in the city from the South. Employment will be handled entirely on the first floor saving the public from climbing the stairs and in addition it enabled the employment secretary of the League and his assistants to handle more people."⁶⁹ As soon as the migrants arrived they were put into waiting buses and taken to work at local factories immediately. Dancy later wrote in his memoirs, "I remember the Packard Motor Car Co. had a very beautiful bus, which they would send down to our

⁶⁸Minutes of the Detroit Urban League Board Meeting, March 16, 1922, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁹News release, 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

office to wait while we recruit a bus-load of people to be taken to the plant."⁷⁰

Certain industrial plants wanted special treatment from the league. A unique relationship developed between the league and the Dodge Motor Car Company. Dodge hosted NUL officers during the annual meeting held in Detroit in October 1919.⁷¹ According to Dancy, "no person was sent out to work until he had given a pledge to stick to his job, to be punctual, to avoid pay-day-off, to be pleasant, and to maintain good health habits."⁷²

Black women migrants were in great demand as domestic workers. The league expanded its domestic training program in 1919, calling it the Domestic Worker's Training School. Its purpose was to take "care of some of the green women coming in the migration and many of whom we were unable to place during the summer because of their ignorance of the conduct of a modern household."⁷³ These activities led Dancy to say that "Detroit Urban League is said by Mr. Jones, Executive Sec'y of the NUL to be the most rapidly growing branch of the organization."⁷⁴ Among the reasons he counted for the DUL's accomplishments was the fact that "11,000 people were handled by the Urban League last year [1918] and it is expected that the League will take care of

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 131.

⁷²Ibid., P. 101.

⁷³A Circular letter of NUL to "the Friends of the National Urban League, June 15, 1918, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁴Ibid.

even more this [1919] summer."⁷⁵ Dancy added that "all the factories, large and small and many of the department stores and theaters now rely on the Urban League for their colored help."⁷⁶ "In addition to merely locating jobs," the Director stated that "the League is also employing a vocational secretary who is visiting factories, stores and every placed of employment with the object of getting new openings for Negroes, especially women."⁷⁷

The league's apparent success was based on the needs of the industrialists rather than the DUL's effectiveness. Dancy himself stated,

at the present time the League cannot get enough men to fill the jobs on hand. But on the other hand, there are more colored women looking for work than the League can obtain positions for. Therefore the League is just now concentrating on creating more industrial openings for colored women.⁷⁸

When the post war depression arrived and the employers began laying off workers, blacks were the first to go. About seventeen thousand black workers lost their jobs during the two-year long post war recession.⁷⁹ Although the post war depression hit Detroit in October 1920 many blacks were out of work by April 1920.⁸⁰ The DUL had previously encouraged black migrants to come to Detroit rather than any other city when

⁷⁵News release, 1919, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Thomas, Life for Us Is What We Make It, p. 27.

⁸⁰Speech notes, "Unemployment", delivered in 1921 by Mr. Dancy, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

factories hired black labor. During April 1920, the League began to change its message.

On April 8, 1920, Dancy reported that:

We are at present time experiencing a migration that is possibly as heavy as it has been during any previous year...The crux of this situation is how shall these people be provided for and is Detroit in position to absorb this heavy influx under its present housing condition.⁸¹

This short but severe recession besieged the Detroit manufacturers until the end of 1921. The slackening economy gradually followed the armistice after war production ceased. By the beginning of 1921 Detroit's work force had been reduced from a normal of 300,000 to 50,000.⁸² According to Dancy the depression "did not last long, but while it did last it brought great suffering to many people."⁸³

Public welfare did not exist in the 1920s. Caring for the unemployed was the duty of the Associated Charities. But the post war depression severity created so many unemployed that this organization was unable to handle them. According to Dancy, "people who had come to Detroit recently, and were still new at their jobs, were the first ones let out when things started going bad."⁸⁴ Although this depression affected almost everyone negatively, "hard times were particularly felt in the Negro neighborhood of River Rouge. Many men who had worked for Solvay Process Co. were laid off down there and the facilities for private charity were even less adequate than those in

⁸¹Report of the Director to the Detroit Urban League Board, April 8, 1920, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸²An article written by Mr. Dancy to Newspaper editorial of the NUL, sent to Mr. E. K. Jones, January 1921, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁸³Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 142.

⁸⁴Ibid.

metropolitan Detroit."⁸⁵

Because most blacks worked in foundries, they were the first to be laid off since the foundries were the first to close. Without employment blacks lost the homes they had obtained on contract for "two or three times the original cost price." In January of 1921, thirty nine per cent of those applying for relief from the department of public welfare were blacks, even though they constituted only four per cent of the total population.⁸⁶

The league attempted to coordinate relief work. "For some time I tried to function as a one-man relief organization," Dancy wrote.⁸⁷ He tried to "go around to some of the churches such as the Second Baptist Church and Bethel AME Church and tell the ministers about the destitution of these people." The ministers had their congregations take up collections, then they it to Dancy who distributed the funds to the needy.

I would take what they had given and what I had been able to scrape together from other sources. And once or twice a week I would catch a Jefferson street car and go down there. I've forgotten the cross street, but it was out beyond the Solvay company. The colored community comprised just a few blocks, and there were perhaps fifty families whose need was desperate.⁸⁸

Dancy stated "some of these people lived on the street that runs along the Michigan Central yards. For heat that water they would slip over the fence and take coal out of the yards. But food was a problem not so easily solved." As he put it, "I had very

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Article, written by Mr. Dancy for the Newspaper editorial for NUL sent to Mr. E. K. Jones, January, 1921,

⁸⁷Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 142.

⁸⁸Ibid.

little I could give to any one family; if I had been able to get \$50 together I was doing well. But two or three dollars at a house sometimes meant the difference between starving and survival." The extent of people's needs overwhelmed Dancy: "this quickly became too much for me to handle. After a while the Red Cross visiting nurses took over these calls and I turned over to them such money as I had been able to collect. I tried as hard as I could to fund jobs for the people, but those were terrible times!"⁸⁹

The league tried other possibilities by encouraging the migrants to go to farms. "We are endeavoring to get as many Negroes as possible into the farms in Michigan," Dancy said in a 1921 speech. "If we could encourage some of the unemployed to go out to help the farmers, it would mean a great deal of relief. We have asked some of the farmers whether they would like to have some men to work for them."⁹⁰

The league's main success during these difficult days was in placing black women as domestic workers. These jobs were the only ones available to the black community. "All of us can't be professional men; some of us have got to be domestics," Dancy informed the black migrants. "We must stress these jobs as domestics. The bulk of our women do this particular kind of work." As usual, the league attempted to create good impressions with the employers of black migrant women. Dancy reported:

The Urban League should try to get hold of those people before they go into the homes as domestics; we are doing it in Detroit, in order to correct some of these people who go into the homes to do domestic service. Every little consideration helps. You know as well as I know that some

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 143.

⁹⁰Speech notes, "Unemployment", delivered by Dancy in 1921, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

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⁸⁹Ibid., p. 143.

⁹⁰Speech notes, "Unemployment", delivered by Dancy in 1921, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

of our women coming from the south don't know about these latest devices. We are trying to look ahead and see if we can't remedy some of these conditions.⁹¹

In pursuit of this emphasis the DUL opened its domestic training school once again.

For many African-Americans, moving seemed the best solution to the crisis. Thus, several blacks migrants returned to their original homes in the South.⁹² The majority, however, sought relief from the city's department of public welfare where many encountered tremendous discrimination from the officials administering the relief agency. During the winter of 1920-21, the city granted about \$34,000 for public works. But they intended to take only white men for the jobs.

All except a few Negroes were of other races who were put on the jobs and yet Negroes were finding it hardest to get jobs in Detroit. We took up with the Mayor and pointed out to him that inasmuch as the city was supporting without any return about 3,000 Negroes or more, it was advisable that they put some of these Negroes to work on the Public works, so as to relive the city work.⁹³

The League's black leadership demonstrated once again its ineffectiveness in addressing the racially-based problems blacks faced. On February 10, 1921 Dancy took the matter of discrimination to the board of directors. At the meeting he read a statement: "because of discrimination in the Department of Public Works Negroes were finding it increasing difficult to get on in the department the matter was taken up with the head of

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Letter, E. K. Jones to John C. Dancy, October 7, 1920, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁹³Speech notes, "Unemployment", by Dancy delivered in 1921, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

that department." When Stevens, the chairman and founder of the DUL, heard the word "discrimination," he furiously pointed out that cases of discrimination "ought to go" to the NAACP "inasmuch as that organization was formed with a view of taking up matters of discrimination." Dancy complied by changing the wording "so that it would read that jobs were being sought for colored men." One other black Board member named Lulu Rainwater, another black member disagreed with Stevens but retired two years later from the board.⁹⁴

Other black leaders in Detroit vainly attempted to intervene. In April Walter F. White, the president of the Detroit NAACP branch wrote a protest entitled "Reviving the Ku Klux Klan" in which he charged Detroit's relief agency with discriminating against black applicants. The Department of Social Services denied the charge saying that "at no time this winter has there been any discrimination in relief shown because of race, creed, or color." Moreover, he did "not believe that the interests of colored people are furthered by statements of the existence of prejudice in northern cities which have no foundation."⁹⁵

Other blacks tried to organize a grassroots relief effort to assist other blacks during the depression, but the Community Fund and the Council of Social Agencies blocked their efforts. In March 1921 an organization of black churches known as the Church of God and Saints of Christ, concerned about the hardships of the depression, attempted to solicit

⁹⁴Minutes of the Detroit Urban League Board, February 10, 1921, January 17, 1923, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁵Letter, Mr. Harry L. Lurie to the Editor of the Forum, April 6, 1921, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

money to assist those in need. When some of its agents visited Dow Chemical Company employers the management refused them entry. Dow contacted the Associated Charities, stating they "would like to hear from some authentic source in regard to the advisability of our employees contributing to this organization."⁹⁶ Associated Charities advised them that "We see no reason whatsoever for your contributing to this work".⁹⁷ Dow replied, "Your letter in regard to solicitors connected with the Detroit Colored religious denomination received. We appreciate this information. If there is any way in which we can be of assistance to your organization at any time, kindly let us know."⁹⁸

The employment situation began to improve near the end of 1922. Dancy reported that during the winter of 1922-23 there was no unemployment.⁹⁹ "The particular depression did not last very long. Things began to get better in 1922 and, though they never got back to what they were before, went along fairly smoothly until 1929 when the big depression came." Nevertheless, employment conditions for blacks continued to worsen:

After the 1921 depression it again became possible for someone down south to get a little bit together and come here and be pretty sure of getting a job. The jobs were mostly unskilled, heavy, rough work. Most of the Negroes who came here had no previous foundry training or factory

⁹⁶Letter, Guy L. Shippo to Associated Charities, March 2, 1921, Associated Charities of Detroit, United Community Services Collection, Box 5, ALUA-WSU.

⁹⁷Letter, William J. Norton to G. L. Shippo, March 5, 1921, Associated Charities, United Community Services, Box 5, ALUA-WSU.

⁹⁸Letter, G. L. Shippo to Wm. J. Norton, March 19, 1921, Associated Charities, United Community Services Collection, Box 5, ALUA-WSU.

⁹⁹Report of the Director to the Detroit Urban League Board, January 17, 1923, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

training. Most were from rural areas, used to working in agriculture. There were perhaps a few who had come from coal mines, or been employed as stevedores at New Orleans. The percentage of Negroes who are rugged physically is probably no greater than the percentage of whites, if indeed it is as great. For a white man, however, there were plenty of occupations that did not require exceptional strength and stamina; for the Negro newcomers to Detroit there were very few such jobs. If you had the ability to stand on your feet all day, to lift heavy things, to withstand the stifling of a foundry, there was perhaps a place for you. If you lacked these qualifications, and still were determined to break away from the oppression of life in the south, Detroit offered a rather slim chance for improving your condition. It was a chance, however, and increasing numbers of Negroes took it.¹⁰⁰

Black Crime

As employment began to improve by 1923, more people arrived in Detroit. The following year an even greater influx of blacks travelled to Detroit from the rural south. The demand for black labor in the mid-1920s was partially created by U.S. legislation that restricting European immigrants into the United States.¹⁰¹ wave of black migrants intensified competition for housing and increased the problem of race relations. In fact, during the period between 1919 and 1928 many U. S. cities experienced racial confrontations. Following the famous Chicago race riot during the summer of 1919, the league leaders became alarmed that such violence would visit Detroit. They spoke to Detroit's mayor, pointing out that the Chicago riot had been caused by a housing shortage and poor employment conditions. When the mayor asked for the league's solution to the

¹⁰⁰Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, pp. 143-144.

¹⁰¹Thomas, Life is What We Make It, p. 28.

matter Dancy told him to employ black policemen. "Place colored officers in this particular neighborhood to stir up the loafing element to work and to stop loitering on the streets," the league suggested. A league's spokesman pointed out that "we have seen thus the good results of this conference. Because the Police Commissioner has ordered some colored Detectives into this settlement to keep the men moving." He concluded that "once we get them to work we have done the thing which will make great friction in Detroit next to impossible."¹⁰²

In 1920 the members of the league's joint committee invited Judge Cotter to one of their meetings to deliver a presentation on the crime situation among blacks. The judge stated that the police were bringing a lot of complains about too much loitering among the blacks. The league suggested that Dancy give two weeks' service at Judge Cotter's court. While at the court Dancy found that most blacks accused of loitering and other menial crimes was due largely to a lack of shelter, which made them the target of police arrest. Dancy suggested that by forcing the loiterers "into gainful occupations" and making them "an asset to the companies that employ them," the situation would be resolved. Dancy urged the court to "get tough" on the loiterers because "they give the entire colored population a black eye by their deportment." This kind of solution to the police-black migrant problem was not new to the DUL. Washington had made similar proposals in 1917 with regard to black "criminals." In February 1917, six blacks had been sent to the league office by police detectives. Washington offered these blacks the

¹⁰²Report of the Director to the Detroit Urban League Board, August 14, 1919, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

option of employment or "be locked up, as loiterers." He added "co-operation between the police and an organization interested in the assimilation of the Negro into city life is very important, because crime among Negroes has increased with their immigration to Northern cities and has had the bad result of creating distrust against all Negroes."¹⁰³

As months passed, the relationship between the police and the black community worsened. On September 27, 1923, Powell remarked in the Detroit Free Press that one half of all crime in Detroit was "directly traceable to Negroes." He also revealed that eight policemen in the past year had been killed. From January to August 31, 1923 there had been seventy-four murders. Thirty-eight had been committed by whites, and thirty-six by blacks. On September 27, three hundred and fifty persons had been in the county jail--one-hundred-and-thirty-five were African-American. According to Powell, three-hundred-and-fifty guns had been shipped into Detroit by mail to blacks; the bulk of guns sold in Detroit were to blacks.¹⁰⁴

Alarmed at the possible consequences of such information Dancy and other black leaders called an emergency meeting on October 24, 1923. Dancy chaired the meeting. The meeting's main concern focused on the hot subject of the great crime wave in Detroit that demanded their attention. Black middle-class individuals were especially annoyed by the police force's tendency to mistreat all blacks: "the majority of white people class the colored people[sic.] as a whole as a criminal class. Great car loads or armies of

¹⁰³Report of the Director to the Joint Committee, February 8, 1917, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁴Dancy's notes from a discussion between Mr. Powell and Dancy, September 27, 1923, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

police are called out for the smallest affray in the Negro districts. Police attitude--arrogance, etc, has a tendency to create friction among the races." At the meeting's conclusion it was suggested that a compilation of "census of black police in other cities with end in view of having colored policemen appointed in colored districts. Let the other group know our group stands for law and order." Mr. Dancy was particularly worried that the whites thought that guns were being shipped to blacks and that black officers had been reduced from fifty to only six.¹⁰⁵ The problem of police-black community relations continued to worsen.

The League's Recreational and Educational Work

The league's recreational and educational work seemed to go well as the league's energy and preoccupation focused more on the Community Center activities. Since 1919, following the opening of the Columbia and Chester Street Centers the DUL was primarily emersed in recreational work. In 1918 Dancy helped to form the Wolverine Athletic Club with thirty-five to forty boys. The club "played games around Detroit with various teams--all white."¹⁰⁶ Joseph Duplessis and Fred Jones were the football coaches. A Baseball team started and continued until 1924 or 1925, when dramatic clubs took over. Later, the group got interested in basketball. They named their basketball team Center Five because it was organized at the Urban League Center. Fred Hart Williams acted as the manager

¹⁰⁵Minutes of the Black leaders's meeting held at Elk's on October 24, 1923, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 153.

of Center Five team. Dancy's wife often cooked for the team members.

The women also had their own team called the Center Girls Five. Dancy was greatly attracted to the idea of playing with whites. His desire to seek the company of whites and pleasing them was constantly in his mind even in matters of recreation.

Too eager to carry on with recreational works Dancy promoted his values a bit too far. For instance, on one occasion, he scheduled the black girls to play a game with white girls at the Grosse Pointe Neighborhood Club. According to the hygiene courses offered by nurses at the Baby Clinic of the Community Center, they had been told to be careful not to offend whites. "A word had gone around that Negroes had a different odor from whites, and these girls did not want to leave any such odors on the ritzy Gross Pointe gymnasium." Although Dancy knew that it was "against all sensible athletic custom they took baths just before the game, and put on fresh clean uniforms." As far as Mr. Dancy was concerned, "making a good impression" was "far more important than winning the basketball game." To him "this was in line with the lesson I was trying to teach." Dancy believed,

it was a great experience for these girls to be invited to Gross Pointe, which to them represented the ultima thule in wealth and position. I am sure none of them ever forgot it. Whenever things looked discouraging they could say, 'Everybody isn't drawing the line against us. We've been to Grosse Pointe!¹⁰⁷

These activities constituted Dancy's main source of joy during this time. As he put it: "I still remember the pleasure of many of those evenings."¹⁰⁸ However, his

¹⁰⁷Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, pp. 156-157.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

purpose was not just giving black youth a good time: "This was one of the ways of getting people together, developing a community spirit. We tried many different approaches to this goal. One was a series of street dances."¹⁰⁹ He put a lot of hours after his regular office work.¹¹⁰

Further expansion in recreational activities continued when the league joined a settlement organization. Although the League was not a settlement¹¹¹, it joined an organization of thirteen other centers run for European migrants. The organization had been formed in 1922 under the name Association of Settlements, and was made up of the head workers and staff members of various settlements who organized such projects as Inter-Settlement Athletic Contests, Inter-Settlement debates, dramatics and oratorical contests.¹¹² The league's three basketball teams joined the Basket Ball League of the Inter-Settlement Association. A monthly function of the Inter-Settlement Association was to invite prominent men in the community "to address the group on the subjects that had to do with their work."¹¹³ Because Detroit's white leaders associated with the DUL supported the settlement activities.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp.154-156.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 151.

¹¹¹A settlement was a community center where clients and the workers lived. For a full discussion of the relationship between the Urban League and settlements, see Chapter Two.

¹¹²Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, February 12, 1925, Folder [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹³Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, January 15, 1925, Folder [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

The league's settlement activities were closely related to educating blacks in matters of behavior and health. In 1925 the league focusing on gardening programs. It organized a group of sixty women into a women's club at the Eight Mile Road who "made house to house canvas in one section of the city and urged the owners and tenants to keep their premises in good condition---to clean up their yards, to keep the hedge in order and to have their lawns as presentable as possible."¹¹⁴ The board of commerce-sponsored "Clean Up- Paint Up Drive" continued to be the league's focus. The league used the tactics of contests to interest blacks in participating in the program.¹¹⁵ The league also worked with the Detroit Tuberculosis Association and the Tuskegee Institute in sponsoring Annual Negro Health Week.

In 1924 the DUL set several goals to encourage people, especially children, to make use of public library and promote better behavior among blacks. Improvement associations were developed and young men's clubs organized and supported with talks and lectures. Efforts were made to prepare future leaders. A new worker was added to the DUL's staff and charged with the task of working with children, parents and school principles in an effort to bring about behavior correction. In particular she was to address matters of "irregular attendance, poor scholarship, chronic tardiness, untidiness, bad behavior, and such other cases that indicate a lack of cooperation on the part of the

¹¹⁴Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for 1925, given on March 11, 1926, Folder [11-8], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁵Report of the Director to the Board of the Detroit Urban League, September 16, 1926, Folder [11-8], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

parents."¹¹⁶ An education committee of the league's board of directors was formed and plans were developed to help needy youth to go to college.¹¹⁷ To encourage the youth already in colleges parties were held for visiting College students in Detroit.¹¹⁸

In 1925, the DUL focused on stressing students to maintain the right behavior. Particular attention was given to juveniles at the detention home. The superintendent of schools gave addresses to the Settlement Association participants. The League organized an educational tour of the art museum. Summer outings for children were emphasized and father-son, daughter-mother meetings were held including a mother and daughter week program featuring plays, musical numbers and recitations.¹¹⁹ The league took over the Go-to-High School-College movement begun by the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity to impress upon black youth the importance of going to school.¹²⁰ The purpose of the Movement was "to encourage boys and girls to stay in school and go to college."¹²¹ But the "Go to High School - Go to College" campaign had other purposes. "We feel

¹¹⁶Report of the Director to the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, April 10, 1924, Folder [11-6], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁷Minutes of the Joint Committee, April 14, 1921, Folder, [11-3], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁸Report and Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, September 11, 1924, Folder [11-6], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁹Report of the Director to the Board of Directors, May 21, 1925, Folder [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹²⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, April 9, 1925, Folder [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹²¹Minutes of the Board of Directors of Detroit Urban League, May 21, 1925, Folder [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

that it offered an opportunity to do more that stress the importance of continuing through High School and College. It gave us chance to talk with Parent Teachers Associations and to students on matters of behavior."¹²²

In addition, the Chestnut Street Center's Pen and Palette Club was started in 1925 at the suggestion of Miss Laurson,¹²³ began with eight members. Dancy became its director and Stevens was a major participant in its programs. The head of the art department at the J. H. Hudson Co. store "was always ready and willing to serve the club whenever he could."¹²⁴ Not many blacks were interested in the project, although the league worked hard to recruit and interest prospective members. It invited prospective members to lunch and tried to persuade them to join. It offered awards to the best paintings. By 1927 the league claimed that the club had about twenty-one members.¹²⁵ Each spring the Pen and Palette Club members held an exhibition for "the general good of the community."¹²⁶ This project became for the league one of the most important annual programs.¹²⁷

¹²²Annual Report for the year 1927, delivered on January 28, 1928, Folder [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹²³Annual Report for the year 1925 delivered on March 11, 1926, Folder [11-8], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹²⁴Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 160.

¹²⁵Annual Report for the year 1926 delivered on February 14, 1927, Folder [11-9], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹²⁶Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1926 delivered on February 14, 1927, Folder [11-9], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹²⁷Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 160.

The league's board members made other contributions to the organization's new education campaign. Fred M. Butzel, for instance, brought his connections with the Jewish community to assist in the league's education program for the black youth. He made the Jewish United Charities sell their Hanna Slaus building on High Street to help educate the black community. Unfortunately, the league turned the offer down due to its lack of adequate financial resources to purchase the building. Other board members served the league's educational promotion program by speaking at various schools to black students. One of the schools that received DUL supplied speakers was the Detroit Teachers College. The league was not only interested in promoting the educational experience to black migrants. Dancy, for instance, served one year the chair for a fund raising campaigns for the Tuskegee and Hampton College in 1926.¹²⁸

The league focused mainly on these kind of activities partly because it believed that keeping black youth occupied was the best way of preventing racial conflicts. When Clinton School experienced racial problems the league's board asked Dancy to invite Detroit High School students and attempt to correct their behavior. Strong relations with Children's Aid Association was called for. Someone at the DUL board meeting suggested hiring two social workers to work with children. The league's board of directors also began conducting book reviews during its board meetings.¹²⁹ The league not only helped to form Detroit Study Club but also stressed child welfare.

¹²⁸See the minutes and Reports of the DUL for the year 1925, Folder [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹²⁹Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, February 12, 1925, Folder [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

In 1919 Dancy asserted that the community center was the one thing blacks needed the most. The idea that a lack of recreational facilities was the most serious problem led the league's staff and board to concentrate more on behavior correction for black migrants. Moreover, the league's donors were less concerned about the questions of housing and employment and more about prevention of crime through recreation. Being involved with the settlement work and educational activities in 1924 Dancy did not see the housing problem as "so acute as it was a few years ago."¹³⁰ Most of his reports concentrated on the league's accomplishments in areas of settlement work.¹³¹

White Mob-Police Against Black Home Seekers

Although the league was deeply involved in its recreational and educational activities, it was aware that the most serious problem for the black community during the mid-1920s was housing. Efforts to obtain housing for blacks once again demonstrated the league's ineffectiveness in this area of its concern. In April 1924 Dancy wrote an article discussing the seriousness of the housing crisis among the blacks. He pointed out that the housing problem was national in character and had come about when construction for war contracts ended; blacks suffered most because they had arrived after construction had ceased. Blacks were forced to go into tenement sections of the large cities where the houses were old and run down. White landlords tended to ask for more rent. In Detroit,

¹³⁰Annual Report for the year 1924 given on January 15, 1925, File, [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹³¹Ibid.

Dancy said, the blacks had paid the highest rent in country.

Dancy's article also revealed if blacks wanted to own homes, they first had to struggle to move from the temporary shelter. But earning \$30 per week while paying a \$50 per monthly rent made it very difficult. Given this condition, Dancy said the black man "becomes depressed and discouraged in his outlook upon life and does not have the incentive to press forward." Dancy felt for the black man "the door of hope for better thing is closed" and "bad housing conditions do not make for a normal family." Dancy also felt that "the work of the Health organizations is seriously handicapped because of the poorly ventilated and unsanitary conditions which is found in so many of the homes in which Negroes are forced to live." Bad Housing was conducive to conditions "that make for disease." Bad housing conditions not only broke up family life and caused poor health but increased juvenile delinquency and a lower moral tone. Dancy's article noted that conditions in of the black ghetto were so filthy that they had attracted rats.¹³²

Detroit's leaders did not respond and the housing crisis continued to intensify. Dancy even contradicted himself when he said to the board members that "our housing situation is not so acute as it was a few years ago."¹³³ By 1925, Dancy had given up trying to solve the housing problem. The league instead occupied itself with settlement's activities aimed at correcting black behavior, and the character of ghetto dwellers.

Although the league's intensive recreation work hoped to keep blacks off the

¹³²Article written by Dancy for Ohio State Conference for Social Work, April 26, 1924, Executive Secretary General File, 1924, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹³³Annual Report for the year 1924, delivered on January 15, 1925, File [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

streets, and remove them from a situation of direct confrontation with police and white gangs. The failure to solve the housing problem inevitably led to just such a confrontation. During the mid-1920s white mobs and police, eager to keep blacks out of white neighborhoods targeting their prejudice directly at blacks with well-to-do backgrounds. The Detroit police constantly arrested black migrants on minor charges like as loitering. The league and some black elites had argued in favor of harshly treating black migrants that loitered. The black middle class had supported strong measures against loitering because they feared that noisy and dirty blacks gave all blacks a bad name.

Towards the mid-1920s, however, the conditions altered. The black middle-class seeking housing in white dominated neighborhoods became the victims of a new rise of white supremacist violence. It was a direct result of a new wave of black and white migrants from the south. Between 1923 and 1925 saw a huge wave of black southern migrants came North to cities like Detroit. In 1923 alone fourteen thousand blacks arrived in Detroit.¹³⁴ By 1927 Detroit's black population reached about ninety thousand.¹³⁵ Two years later the figure jumped to 105,000.¹³⁶ The increase of black migrants in 1924 meant increased overcrowding in the ghetto which was already beyond its limits. At the same time the increase of black ghetto residents helped to raise the

¹³⁴Letter, John C. Dancy to E. A. Carter, 1923, Executive Secretary's General File, 1923, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹³⁵Letter, John C. Dancy to A. L. Foster, August 25, 1927, Executive Secretary's General File, 1927, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹³⁶Letter, John C. Dancy to Chas. S. Johnson, July 16, 1929, Executive Secretary's General File, 1929, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

number of black elites who depended on ghetto dwellers as customers for their business and services. However, the situation also increased class conflicts in the ghetto.

Class conflicts occurred because the black-middle class resented black migrants and vice versa. As one contemporary observer noted, "some Negro physicians and business men complained that large numbers of their own race do not patronize them, although some have a considerable white clientele. There seems to be a lack of confidence on the part of Negroes, in their own race."¹³⁷ Black migrants accused the black professionals of "uppishness" and "swell-headedness." Some black migrants even preferred white social workers to black social workers: "I'se sho' glad yo' come, Ma'm. Ah doan want no 'niger' tellin' me what to do."¹³⁸ Black social workers grew upset with black migrants. The black elites annoyed black migrants for lecturing to them on proper order and behavior.¹³⁹ The black migrants annoyed black professionals for their tendency to buy from cheaper white industries than of black business.¹⁴⁰ This class conflict pushed black professionals to seek residences outside an overcrowded and filthy ghetto.¹⁴¹

Although this was not the first time black elites had lived in predominantly white neighborhoods, considerable danger existed in doing so during the first half the second

¹³⁷Carlson, "The Negro in the Industries of Detroit", P. 229.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 230.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

decade of twentieth century. The reason for this change in situation during this time was the presence of the Ku Klux Klan in Detroit. The Klan was determined to stop blacks from moving into white neighborhoods.¹⁴² Its strength in the city was such that in 1924 a Klan candidate actually won the mayoral election (some ballots disqualified due to misspelling of the candidate's name).¹⁴³ On April 9, 1925, a mob of five thousand whites attacked a black-owned home. On June 23 two hundred whites (mostly women) attacked Dr. and Mrs. Alexander L. Turner at Spokane Avenue . On July 7 at American Avenue Mr. Vollington Bristol was attacked by a white mob. On July 10 John Fletcher was attacked by a white mob of four thousand at Stoepel Avenue.¹⁴⁴

The League and Dr. Sweet's Trial

In fall 1925 Dr. Oasian Sweet, a black physician, and ten other blacks were surrounded by an angry white mob. All eleven blacks were charged with first-degree murder as a result of shots fired from inside and outside the Sweet home. One white person was killed and another seriously wounded. Clarence Darrow was hired to defend the Sweet in the trial; this created an uncomfortable situation for the DUL. Prior to this incident the league's board strictly followed a policy that stated that issues of discrimination and legislation were outside its realm of interest.

¹⁴²Robin Moyer, "The Sweet Trials: An Example of Man's Inhumanity to man", a history paper, [undated], folder [245], Box 7, Michigan University Department of history Papers, Michigan Historical Collection.

¹⁴³Levine, Internal Combustion, pp. 137-141.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 153-158.

This "hands off" policy had been established when the Detroit's Urban League was founded. On a number of occasions, instances of discrimination had been brought to its attention as early as 1917 but the league adamantly refused to deal with these situations.

The executive director said:

Among the twenty odd other cases, were two which the League refused to take up, considering that they were not within the scope of the Urban League. One was the case of a young man who presented considerable information to prove that he had been discriminated against in the United States Post-office on account of color. The other case of a second young colored man, very light complexioned who had obtained a position in the sales department of an automobile house without revealing his color. He was discharged from this concern when his colored was discovered. If there is anything worth considering in either of these cases it is work for the N.A.A.C.P. and not for the Urban League.¹⁴⁵

However, it was difficult for the league to ignore the Sweet crisis in the center of the black community. In April 1924 the league had incorporated and was feeling a sense of confidence. Dancy noted in January 1924 that "the League has developed along with the increase in the general population and is now an integral part of our community life." He also felt the league's "influence has been for the general good in the promotion of various schemes for uplift, and for the general raising of standards," and even attributed the declining black death to the educational health campaigns of his organization.¹⁴⁶ In May 1924 Dancy reported that "employment conditions have improved perceptibly during the month" and that "considerable calls are coming to us from the factories and

¹⁴⁵Monthly Report of the Director the Joint Committee, January 19, 1917, Folder [11-0], DULP-MHC.

¹⁴⁶Annual Report of the Director to the Detroit Urban League Board, January 10, 1924, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

stores for men. Work for women is also improving."¹⁴⁷

Sweet's trial received national attention. Dr. Sweet was the oldest of ten children of a Methodist preacher. His father had attempted to supplement his meager earning by growing oranges. Young Oasian had seen and heard of several instances of whites killing blacks. One day he saw a white mob set a black on fire using kerosine while they laughed and took pictures. He strove to achieve his professional success by working as a bell-boy, a waiter on steamships and in hotels, a pullman porter and a janitor. He attended college at Wilberforce in Ohio, then earned an M.D. at Howard University. In 1921 he began his practice in Detroit and the following year married Gladys Mitchell.

Mrs. Sweet who had been born into a comfortable surroundings of a professional musician father, lived in a white neighborhood most of her life. She became a teacher following graduation from Detroit Teachers College in 1921.¹⁴⁸ In 1923 the young couple went to Europe so that Sweet could advance his career. In France he studied radiology; in Vienna he expanded his knowledge in pediatrics, specializing in gynecology. While in Europe the Sweets became the parents of a daughter. They were haunted by racism when the American Hospital in Paris refused to admit Mrs. Sweet for delivery of her baby because she was black. Shortly after, they returned to Detroit.¹⁴⁹

Early in the summer of 1925 the Sweets bought a home on Garland Avenue, a

¹⁴⁷Report of the Director to the Detroit Urban League Board, May 21, 1925, Folder [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁴⁸Levine, Internal Combustion, pp. 159-160.

¹⁴⁹See Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 159; Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 22; Thomas, Life for Us is What We Make, pp. 137-138.

working class neighborhood. On July 14, 1925 the Tireman Avenue Improvement Association met to consider actions against the Sweets if they moved into the white neighborhood. On September 8 the Sweets notified the police that they were going to move into their new home. That same day, the Sweets, together with one of Dr. Sweet's brother and nine friends, moved in. This action was against the advice of Cecil Rowlete, a black lawyer who served in the DUL board.¹⁵⁰ That night a mob gathered in front of their home. On the evening of the following day, a larger crowd gathered and stoned the house. Shots were fired killing one and wounding another. All the eleven blacks in the house were arrested without bail.¹⁵¹

The DUL did not call any emergency meeting to deal with the crisis. However, during one of their regular board meetings held on September 17, 1925, members discussed about the event. Dancy recorded in the minutes that "some discussion was given to the recent racial unpleasantness; after which the meeting adjourned at six o'clock."¹⁵² The DUL knew that this matter properly fell in the jurisdiction of the NAACP, whose job was to deal with legal issues relating to discrimination and civil rights. Yet the Detroit NAACP branch president left the city for Denver as a delegate for the annual convention, although he was aware of the matter.¹⁵³

Judge Frank Murphy denied petitions to dismiss charges against Sweet and his

¹⁵⁰Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 161.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Minutes of the Board of the Detroit Urban League, September 17, 1925, File [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁵³Levine, Internal Combustion, pp. 166-167.

friends. The Judge permitted no bail except for Mrs. Sweet who was released on October 5 on \$5,000.¹⁵⁴ On September 29 the defendants asked the NAACP to defend them. NAACP became convinced that the Sweet's affair was not just another "racial unpleasantness," and that the defeat of the Sweets would send a wrong message to the white "mobbsists" that blacks were not free to defend themselves. If the defendant was acquitted it would be a victory for blacks. Walter White began researching for the best defense lawyer. On October 16 Clarence Darrow accepted the NAACP's offer of the chief defense lawyer for the Sweets.¹⁵⁵

The case also created a racial consciousness among Detroit's black elites and eventually became national in scope. Such a development gained Dancy's attention and propelled him into direct involvement with matters of housing discrimination. At that time Dancy and other black DUL members become intimately involved in the case. These members included lawyers and Dr. Sweet's medical colleagues. Two of the city's black most famous lawyers: Cecil L. Rowlete and C. Henri Lewis sat on the league's board. These men earned their livelihoods by tackling black legal problems. Rowlete was a champion of the "Go-to-School Movement" that the league began promoting in 1925. He was also a vice-president of the league's board of directors. Rowlete an ambitious man; he and Darrow clashed violently during the Sweet case.

Another important DUL black board member and participant in the Sweet trial William Osby, a former President of the Detroit's Branch of the NAACP. Other

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 167.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

individuals representing black members on board of directors were physicians. These included Albert H. Johnson, Green, and George Bundy. Johnson and Green were among the few blacks who lived in an all-white neighborhood. "They were so light in complexion that they lived in their home a long time before the neighbors realized they were Negroes."¹⁵⁶ Their taste was that of the white community. Bundy made it clear he had no objections to blacks caricatured in the worst possible manner by white artists writing for the Saturday Evening Post.¹⁵⁷ Johnson suggested that the league request the police commissioner to appoint "some qualified person to make it their business to mingle with the crowds on the streets where the new comer congregate and urge the later not to make a nuisance of themselves by blocking the side-walks, by loud talking."¹⁵⁸

The league allied itself to Detroit's black physicians not only because many black doctors were members of the DUL's board of directors but also because they were financial contributors in the black community. Sweet was a contributor to the community fund. The other tie that bound the physicians to the league was its annual Health Week campaign. Every year the league assigned different physicians to churches to give talks to the black migrants on some subject of health. In 1925 alone about twenty-three physicians spoke at twenty-three black churches during the Annual Health Drive Sponsored by the Annual Negro Health Week, the Detroit Tuberculosis Association and

¹⁵⁶Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 221.

¹⁵⁷Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 1926, Folder [11-8], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁵⁸Monthly Report of the Joint Committee, April 12, 1917, Folder [11-0], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

the Board of Commerce's "Paint Up Clean Up" drive. These physicians urged blacks "to take care of their health and to look after their general surroundings."¹⁵⁹ Sweet had participated in the program.¹⁶⁰

Given the connection between the league and black elites it is not surprising that the black members of the DUL's board of directors were affected by the Sweet incidence. As soon as the NAACP decided to take up the case on behalf of the defendant, many Detroit's black elites organized themselves to raise the necessary funds needed by the NAACP. A committee known as the City-Wide Sweet Fund was set up. Dancy himself, accepted to serve as the committee's treasurer. Reverend Joseph Gomez was the committee chairman; Linnie Cloud served as the secretary. Individuals and institutions were contacted and urged to contribute to the cause. Dancy's church, St. John's C. M. E. gave \$50. Bethel A. M. E. Church donated \$33. The largest contributions came from the Hiram Lodge No. 1 F. & A. M., the Easter Lily Club and Jos D. Coak, who gave \$100, \$100 and \$112, respectively. Rev. Joseph Gomez's church gave \$41. The Urban League's brain child organization--founded by Forrester B. Washington--Young Negro Progressive Association gave \$25. By October 23, 1925, the total amount of money raised in Detroit was \$1,200. By the time the case was over Detroit's blacks had raised a total of \$9,067.64. The bail of \$74,000 was also provided by Detroit's black elites.¹⁶¹

The committee was more than a fund-raising body. It also sponsored mass

¹⁵⁹Report of the Director, April 9, 1925, Folder [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Carlson, "The Negro in the Industries of Detroit", p.227.

meetings where speeches to educate the Detroit community about the problem of racism were held. One such meeting took place on November 15, 1925 and featured Darrow as the speaker. Dancy, as a community leader attended and gave a few remarks. What was most significant to Dancy on that day was that Darrow asked him to participate in the second trial as a witness who would provide sociological background that led to the shooting incident.¹⁶²

When Darrow agreed to take the case, the NAACP had hired two more attorneys to defend the Sweets. Arthur Garfield Hays, a Jewish lawyer who had worked with Darrow that past summer in Tennessee, came from New York. Hays' fee was \$3,000; Darrow was paid \$5,000. At Darrow's suggestion a local white lawyer, Mr. Walter M. Nelson of Detroit was hired at \$2,000. Detroit's black lawyers, Rowlete, Mahoney and Perry were also kept. When Rowlette found out that he and his fellow black lawyers had been relegated to the background in such an important case, he was furious, particularly by the fact that local talent was replaced by out-of-state experts. Furthermore, the three received a total less than what Hays alone was getting.¹⁶³

Rowlete was also upset that their strategy which had called for a trial of each of the eleven defendants separately, had been ignored. He especially opposed the strategy of using sociological arguments to defend the entire body of the defendants. He rejected the argument that had the people in the Sweets' house been white and the mob been black no charges would have been made; the fact that the Sweets were charged indicated the

¹⁶²Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, pp. 17-20,26.

¹⁶³Levine, Internal Combustion, pp. 172-173.

presence of prevailing racism. Typical of the DUL's board members, Rowlette rejected the fact that racism was there and called prosecutors, Robert Toms and Lester Moll his good friends. For him, Toms was a fair man who was simply doing his duty. Rowlete believed that the state was justified in issuing a warrant because "those strangers" had gone to protect the Sweets.¹⁶⁴

The trial began on October 30, 1925. Frank Murphy, who later became a mayor of Detroit, an ambassador to the Philippines, and the chief justice of the supreme court of the United States and Dancy's personal friend, served as the presiding judge. Prosecutor Robert Toms contended that the killing had been premeditated because the men in the Sweet house had moved there armed with guns and ready to kill. They did the killing even if there was no damage done or any trespasses made. He began parading a number of witnesses, including police and neighborhood people, who all denied that the Sweets had been provoked to any degree to cause the shooting.¹⁶⁵ Darrow emphasized self defense based on reasonable apprehension of danger from the mob. He tried to probe into the size, attitude, density and temper of the mob, calling Sweet to give his boyhood background and his life's experience, showing its impact on him on the night of the shooting. Darrow tried to bring the past alive as a powerful force that impacts on the behavior of people who are prejudiced or oppressed.

On Nov. 27, 1925 the trial ended in a mistrial. The defendants were bailed out

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Levine, Internal Combustion, pp. 172-73.

for \$10,000 each except for two brothers who remained in the detention.¹⁶⁶ A second trial began on April 19, 1926. Darrow asked Dancy if he would be willing to "volunteer to come to court and give testimony as to the sociological implications of the case and the things that led up to it." Dancy responded: "Actually, I wouldn't have missed it for anything. This was an opportunity to take part in a historical event. And what an impressive cast of Characters!"¹⁶⁷ Given Dancy's need to be in the company of important personalities, he was naturally very excited to participate in an event that featured national leaders.¹⁶⁸

At trial Darrow questioned Dancy about DUL's work. Darrow highlighted the issues of migrations, patterns of residence and the difficulties associated with blacks in obtaining better housing. He asked Dancy to mention the names of the DUL's board members including their background. Once Darrow finished questioning Dancy the prosecuting attorneys began questioning him: "Was it not true that when Negroes moved into a neighborhood, property values declined?" Dancy said that "they were enhanced." To support his contention, Dancy gave an example of two-family houses. In each the prices were raised when blacks moved in. In fact, according to Dancy, the prices doubled.

It seemed to me that nearly everyone in the courtroom came up to congratulate me on the presentation I had made. I continued to get this kind of reaction for a long time afterward, and I am sure that the information I had been able to get on the record had registered in the

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 26.

¹⁶⁸See especially chapter one of Sand Against the Wind.

minds of some who were sincerely concerned.¹⁶⁹

On May 1926 the trial came to an end when all the defendants were acquitted. The Sweet case finally came to a complete end on July 21, 1927 when Judge Murphy telegraphed the NAACP, stating that "All cases against defendants in the Sweet trial dismissed this date."¹⁷⁰ However, the Sweet crisis led Mayor Smith to establish an Inter-Racial Committee, the first of its kind in Detroit, to find jobs and housing for blacks.¹⁷¹ Headed by Reverend Reinhold Niebuhr, pastor of the Bethel Evangelical Church, the committee conducted its meetings at the DUL office.¹⁷² The committee made a study in which it found the existence of discrimination in courts, housing, employment and medical care. The committee recommended that Detroit follow a policy of "not imperilling Negro rights [but] not ignoring the cultivated race prejudices of larger sections of the community."¹⁷³

The league was consulted for information used in connection with the study, and former league Director, F. B. Washington conducted the study.¹⁷⁴ When the study was

¹⁶⁹Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 27.

¹⁷⁰Quoted in Finch Minnie, NAACP: Its Fight for Justice, (The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Mentuchen, N.J., 1981) p. 70.

¹⁷¹Robert Conot, American Odyssey, p. 234.

¹⁷²Report of the Director, September 16, 1926, File [11-8], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁷³Report of the Mayor's Interracial Committee, The Negro in Detroit, (Unpublished), 1926, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan; Conot, American Odyssey, p. 234.

¹⁷⁴Annual Report for the year 1926 given on February 14, 1927, File [11-9], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

completed, DUL asked Reverend Neibhur to urge Inter-Racial Committee to publish the report. The league felt that "after so much time and money had been spent in gathering the information then the general public ought to have the advantage of it. It was pointed out that copies of the report had been put out for the use of newspapermen, but to date no use had been made of it by them."¹⁷⁵ About one hundred copies of the Interracial Commission's report were distributed by the person who had funded the project.¹⁷⁶ The city leaders, however, did nothing to implement the committee's recommendations. In October 1926 an influential DUL's board member and a member of the newly created Inter-racial Committee, Fred M. Butzel, said that color prejudice was decreased in Detroit due to the Committee's 1926 survey. According to Butzel, the survey had enlightened whites in dealing with racial issues. Dancy also thought prejudice had been reduced as a result of the survey. The example he cited to prove his point was the case of a large white Methodist Church that bought a building for its black members to use for worship. Glen Carlson, also a member of the Inter-Racial committee felt that the Detroit Negro Survey had improved human relationships there.¹⁷⁷ In February 1928 DUL expressed its interest in seeing the mayor's Inter-racial committee continued. They wrote to mayor Lodge urging him to continue it.¹⁷⁸ The mayor replied he would take up the

¹⁷⁵Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 27, 1927, File [11-9], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁷⁶Letter, John C. Dancy to Cecil C. North, May 4, 1928, General File of the Director, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁷⁷Carlson, "The Negro in the Industries of Detroit", p. 233.

¹⁷⁸Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 28, 1928, Folder [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

matter.¹⁷⁹ On February 15, 1927 Dancy was appointed a member of the Advisory Board Member of the Detroit Committee for the State "Bureau of Negro Welfare."¹⁸⁰

On eve of the Depression the league was able to say that "we believe that the organization has grown into a very integral part of the communities development. I do not think that there is any organization that is any more highly regarded by all high classes and kinds than our own."¹⁸¹ Many black elites may have agreed with Dancy but the black workers were being laid off by factory owners; life was becoming very difficult for them. The Good Citizenship continued to fight the league as usual. In February, Miss Bannister and Mrs Jones of the Good Citizenship League called Dancy "the biggest grafter in the city."¹⁸² The following year Detroit's police arrested the leaders of the Good Citizenship League.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹Minutes of the Board of Directors, February 16, 1928, Folder [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁸⁰Letter, William Jennifer to John C. Dancy, September 13, 1927, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁸¹Annual Report for the year 1927 given on January 28, 1928, File [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁸²Letter, Mrs. Julian Perry to John C. Dancy, February 4, 1928, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁸³Levine, Internal Combustion, P. 124.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE LEAGUE DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION, 1928-1934

Today economic depression and consequent unemployment is affecting the Negro more than any other racial group in Detroit....With the unemployment of the male heads of so many Negro families, the wives and mothers are forced to work away from home and the children are left alone often inadequately fed and improperly clothed and allowed to wonder about the streets under guarded and unsupervised....In either case the Negro child suffers. He is denied those conditioning factors which lead to wholesome habit formation. "Green Pastures Camp" is a counter-irritant for all these evils so far as the children are concerned.¹

Forrester B. Washington (1931)

Like many other organizations in Detroit, the DUL's awareness of the seriousness of the Great Depression came gradually. As it felt the pinch of the Depression with the loss of its employment bureau, the failure to meet the Community Fund goals, layoffs of two of its staff, and the deterioration of its ability to provide jobs, the League primarily attempted to fill the niches, doing volunteer work here and there with no real program to meet the new challenges ushered by this serious economic disaster. The organization manifested greater interest in a business enterprise known as the Michigan People's Financial Corporation that attempted to lend small loans to blacks. However, the enterprise failed. Its effort to establish a nursery project for black mothers also failed to materialize. Despite of these setbacks the DUL continued its usual programs of

¹Forrester B. Washington, "Deluxe Summer Camp For Colored Children", Opportunity, IX, October 1931, pp. 305-306.

vocational training and domestic training, which did not bring any relief to the black community. The organization's biggest success during this period was the Green Pastures Camp, which corresponded with the interests of black elites, white philanthropists and black mothers. Throughout the Depression Dancy and the League's power and prestige continued to rise among the city's power structure, even after the death of its most influential board member, Henry G. Stevens. Nevertheless with the League's failure to adjust its program to meet the changing times some blacks began seeking new alternative paths for their survival and progress. The increase in their numerical strength and the increasing importance of labor unions and New Deal politics presented many blacks with alternatives other than those charted by Dancy and his organization (chapter eight deals with this topic in greater detail).

The League's initial response to the Great Depression

During the first year of the Great Depression the DUL did not take the crisis seriously. In his annual report summarizing the League's work during the first Depression year, Dancy said that "the work of the League during 1929 has gone along smoothly."² The League's Director even boasted about the capacity of his organization to meet the needs of the black community and, in particular, its "keenness of perception and discernment...in handling of the problems that come to us daily".³ Dancy impressed

²Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for 1929, delivered on January 30, 1930, Folder [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³Ibid.

his audience with the figure 13,156 as "the total number of individuals benefitted by the services of the League during the year 1929."⁴

Depression's arrival found the League involved with numerous activities that drew the League's attention away from the seriousness of the depression. Many were a continuation and expansion of settlement activities and educational programs begun in the early 1920s. Others were related to the interests of black elites. As early as 1928, for example, the chairman, the director and several black board members established a business enterprise known as the Michigan People's Finance Company. The following year the League began its most famous summer recreational program for black children known as the Green Pastures Camp.

Another factor that caused the League to treat the depression lightly at first was the influence of the Detroit employers. According to the Employers Association of Detroit, unemployment during the late 1920s was created by the publicity about the existence of many jobs. Many people came into Detroit looking for work. Chester Culver, the manager of the Employers Association, sat on the League's board of trustees of the League; as early as 1928, he "rather decried the attitude of the newspapers in constantly giving out optimistic reports concerning employment conditions in Detroit. He felt that these reports tendered to bring too many outsiders into Detroit looking for work."⁵

⁴Ibid.

⁵Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, January 28, 1928, Folder [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Several months before the 1929 October stock market crash the DUL's board of trustees discussed the unemployment situation, concluding that "due to much publicity on the part of one big manufacturing concern, stating its need for more laborers, too many men had come to Detroit in search for jobs."⁶ These board members "pointed out that more men both white and colored were coming in the city, than the industrial plants could absorb."⁷ Their solution at that time was "to counteract some of this publicity by giving word out that no more colored men should come to the city unless they could do other than unskilled labor."⁸ The DUL interceded with the Transportation Bureau of the Department of Public Welfare in 1929 to return some blacks who had come to Detroit. About twenty-one of them were returned "to their homes."⁹

The League was aware of existing unemployment problems. Dancy conceded that during 1930 "the great majority of placements has been given to women. 1149 going to them and 364 to men. In almost all cases the jobs have of temporary duration."¹⁰ Dancy also acknowledged that the League was "not been so successful as in previous years in opening new opportunities for colored men and women of training as in years gone by." He explained:

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Minutes of the Board of the Detroit Urban League, January 11, 1929, File [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League 1928, given on January 30, 1929

¹⁰Annual Report of 1929, given on January 30, 1930, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

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⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Minutes of the Board of the Detroit Urban League, January 11, 1929, File [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League 1928, given on January 30, 1929

¹⁰Annual Report of 1929, given on January 30, 1930, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

With so much unemployment we have been content with almost any job given us. In the so called 'dignified positions' we feel that we have been singularly successful in having been able to place three colored women with the Children's Aid Society and one with the Associated Charities in like capacity, and while we were at the peak of our unemployment and the Department of Public Welfare was in the throes of despair for competent workers, we lent to it one of our workers who was eventually taken of as one of its regular employees. A nurse was placed with the Visiting nurses Association also. A few other placements of this character have been made in institutions of lesser importance.¹¹

In spite of such observations the League remained unconvinced that the situation had grown worse. While acknowledging that the employment situation was "bad enough," Culver felt that the "conditions were not as bad as in 1921 depression period." He predicted that the depression would continue for about six months, not for the length of time it lasted.¹²

The League's source of income seemed secure. Salary increases were included in the 1930 budget. The Community Fund increased its funding to \$ 1,223 from the previous year due to the transfer of the Music School to the DUL; the increase was to pay the salary of the school's teacher, Miss Grace Barber.¹³

Since the Sweet trial incident, African-Americans experienced difficulty in obtaining jobs. The early 1920s saw a greater demand for women domestic workers than male factory workers, which continued progressively until 1928, when the black unemployment condition grew serious. The 1929 depression changed little of the

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 30, 1930, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹³Ibid.

condition the DUL dealt with. The board was used to the reality of serious African American unemployment situation. Dancy knew that Detroit blacks were having hard times. The League was also aware that many blacks were leaving Detroit for other locations. Culver himself stated that about seventy-five thousand blacks had actually left the city. "The influx had been almost negligible," he said. It is ironic that he concluded that 1929 unemployment problem was due to an influx of new people into Detroit.¹⁴

The League's initial response to the hardships caused by the depression among African-Americans was superficial. One of its suggestions was to look for farm work. In 1929 the League reported it had found farm jobs for ten people.¹⁵ Some relief work was also performed but it was left to the community center to do the task. "Owing to the unemployment situation," Dancy reported, "the Community House Worker has had more immediate work to accomplish, not only among the children, but adults as well. Friends have been kind enough to offer a supply of second-hand clothing and shoes, and by this means we have cared for twenty-five families."¹⁶

Culver and the DUL were not alone in advocating such solutions to counteract depression-created hardships. In the fall 1929 the auto industrialists approached the depression in a fashion somewhat similar to the Detroit Urban League. The Chamber of Commerce advocated a program to send the unemployed from the cities back to their original homes. The organization also proposed a state 'immigration service' to patrol

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1929, given on January 30, 1930, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁶Ibid.

Michigan's state line and turn back migrants seeking work in Detroit.¹⁷

In contrast to the industrialists and the DUL the government emphasized relief efforts. For example, in October 1929 the Department of Public Relief in Detroit supported about a hundred and fifty-six persons. By April 1930, it was assisting about seven hundred and twenty-eight thousand people. A special subcommittee, called the Homeless Men's Bureau, was created by the Mayor's Unemployment Committee to locate shelter and food "for the many unemployed and unattached men who roamed Detroit's streets." The situation was so bad that "hundreds of homeless people slept nightly in Detroit's Circus Park and listened daily to the soap box speakers who flocked to the park and its ready audience....some Detroit families lived in caves dug in the ground and overlaid with a protective covering of brush." As the winter of 1930 arrived, "the city's municipal lodging homes sheltered 5,000 each night and fed up to 10,000 each day....Other unemployed and homeless workers slept on army cots set up in vacant factory buildings donated by General Motors and Studenbaker."¹⁸

Such conditions led the Unemployed Committee of Detroit to attempt to feed "some of the floating men by operating a free employment service, but its listings fell dismally short of the need." By the following winter "the Detroit Welfare Department added 300 families daily to its relief rolls; at least half of these families had never before appealed to any welfare organization." In the meanwhile, the previously "self-supporting

¹⁷Detroit Perspective, pp. 53-54.

¹⁸Ibid.

families finally exhausted their resources," but "they had nowhere else to turn."¹⁹

Probably the League's failure to grasp the situation's gravity led its board of trustees to give little emphasis on relief. The director's report on placement in summer 1929 gave an encouraging picture of the situation. "In the early summer and late spring employment," Dancy told the board members that "conditions were fairly good but just now there appears to be a tremendous slackening." In May the League "had dispatched 120 men to jobs whereas in August only 40 were sent out." For months of June, July and August, Dancy said a total of one thousand and two hundred and forty-one individuals were provided with jobs. Out of that figure, nine hundred and seventy-eight were women and two hundred and seventy-five were men.²⁰

Near the end of 1930 the DUL acknowledged the seriousness of the situation. Dancy's annual report began making reference to "the great amount of suffering and mental anguish which has resulted from the depression." He discussed the "serried throngs of the unemployed" that constantly visited his office "in the hope that something might be done to aid them in their struggle for existence." He knew that "they needed a job, or shelter, or food, or clothing, or all of these and it was our obligation to see that these essential of life be provided, either by ourselves or by some other agency especially equipped to take care of the particular need." As he put it, "During the month of September, October, November and December [of 1930] the number of individuals

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Report of the Months of June, July, and August delivered on September 12, 1929, File [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

appealing were so many and our force so small that we could not register all of the cases that came to our attention."²¹

By 1931 black unemployment had grown so acute that even the League's close ally, the Employers' Association of Detroit, saw no advantages in continuing the employment bureau set up the DUL's offices. After financing such a program for fourteen years, the Employers' Association of Detroit discontinued the bureau. Dancy reported to the board that "he had been in communication with the officers and the Employers Association of Detroit, and that they had made known the fact to him that, that organization could not further give us the \$180.00 per month which they had been giving for the past fourteen (14) years for service rendered them through our Employment Bureau."²²

As things worsened, the city government began persuading "the auto companies to shoulder more of the burden of welfare programs" claiming, in the case of Detroit, that "the industries which brought this surplus population to Detroit during boom times should not expect the taxpayers to shoulder the entire load of a situation which the small taxpayer, at least, did not bring about."²³

Some companies did make an effort towards contributing to relief the unemployment particularly in the early years of the depression. Most of their efforts,

²¹Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year ending December 31, 1930, delivered on January 20, 1931, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²²Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, May 28, 1931, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²³Detroit in Perspective, pp. 55.

however, were inadequate to even begin to meet the need. Some offered recreational activities. Flint's Industrial Mutual Association offered housing subsidiaries to reduce the interest rate on the houses owned by laid off G. M. workers. Other auto companies supplied laid off workers with coupons exchangeable for groceries at local stores. The coupon's value was expected to be paid back if the worker was rehired. Still others, like the Ford Motor Company, supplied garden plots, food orders, treatment at the Ford Memorial Hospital to be repaid from payroll deduction when rehired. Henry Ford's most publicized relief measure was renovating Inkster, the black community adjacent to Detroit.²⁴

By 1932 the hardships faced by the great mass of Detroit's blacks were intense; no amount of recreational activities pursued by the League could relieve them. Even whites considered as the more affluent workers of Detroit, now found it difficult to make ends meet. A 1932 study of 1,164 families buying homes on mortgages found that seventy-seven had either had their mortgages foreclosed or were behind in their payments. In one Detroit factory alone, forty percent of the homeowners were no longer owners by 1932. Approximately one-third of all families owning homes were delinquent in their tax payments. Not only were homeowners losing jobs, but their tenants, upon whose rent they depended for mortgage payments, lost their jobs, too. The tenants often left the city; with the loss of their rent, the homeowners' bills came due but could not be paid.²⁵

²⁴Ibid., pp. 55-56.

²⁵Joyce Shaw Paterson, "Auto Workers Confront Depression, 1929-1933", in Detroit in Perspective: Journal of Regional History, (Volume 6, No.2 , 1982) p. 51.

The League's Services to Government During Depression

The government also asked the League to provide some sort of consultation with African-American hardships caused by the depression. In 1930 Mayor Frank Murphy appointed Dancy to the Mayor's Committee on the Unemployed at the request of several black middle class.²⁶ Dancy served as a member of the Executive Committee, and on "such sub-committees as Employment, Chairman of the Negro Advisory Committee, and has assisted those Committees dealing with the Homeless men and Homeless women."²⁷

The League also helped the Mayor's committee by persuading some black men and women to volunteer their services to the Mayor's Committee, of which "some of them ultimately acquired regular positions as a result of their splendid service."²⁸ Throughout the Urban League movement, local affiliates worked with the government during the depression. Parris and Brooks pointed out that "in more than one local League office many of the tasks were carried out by black on the payroll of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration or N. Y. A." ²⁹ In Detroit "there were nine FERA workers in John Dancy's Detroit League and ten N. Y. A. workers on assignment in the research department of NUL, for example. Many League staff members were named to

²⁶Document written by Dancy concerning with his relation with Frank Murphy, Executive Secretary's General File, Undated, Folder [1-1], Box 1, DULP-MHC.

²⁷Annual Report for the year 1930, January 20, 1931, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 237.

state and city commissions."³⁰

These efforts did little to alleviate the overwhelming needs experienced by ordinary people during the height of the depression. Dancy himself called attention to the fact that a lack of money led to blacks being evicted from their homes. "One interesting situation developed several weeks ago," reported the League's director on March 31, 1932, "when a family was ejected from it's own home because of non-payment of rent."³¹ When this event took place, the DUL with another landlord to house the family in return for "domestic service which the wife was to render the landlord."³²

Unemployment among black youth was extremely high. In 1932 the League co-operated with the Board of Education in matters of helping unemployed youth. This activity began in 1929 when Board of Education used DUL office placement to contact boys and girls to the Board Education employment Bureau to be send to jobs. The DUL was extremely pleased with its recognition by the Board of Education. Dancy said that "we feel deeply grateful to the Board of Education Employment Bureau which has manifested unusual interest in providing the Urban League with placement for our own boys and girls."³³

Such a move did little to eliminate the hardships blacks faced as a result of the depression. The League conceded once again that they were not so successful in their

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Report of the Director, March 31, 1932, Folder [11-12], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

placement. "Our Employment office," Dancy observed, "as might be imagined, has not been successful with many placements." But he also reported that his organization had "interceded with many of the factories in an effort to find jobs for men. A good number of men gave been placed in the Ford Motor Company by our intercession and some have been placed with other companies."³⁴

Throughout 1933 African-American job seekers visited the DUL repeatedly but the League was of little help. Of the seven thousand individuals that sought jobs at the DUL offices only six hundred and eighty-eight were reported to have been furnished with jobs. Most of them "were sent to the Dodge Motor Company, a few to Fords, some others to Briggs and about 15 boys to the Reforestation Camps."³⁵

In early 1933 the League's finances began feeling the long-term effects of the depression. The Director conceded, "because of the failure of the community Fund to reach its quota we were compelled to drop two of our workers who had been with us for eleven and fifteen years respectively...there was no money with which to pay them."³⁶

Organization of Relief and discrimination

Although the League did not emphasize relief activities, it attempted to provide some form of assistance. Other social welfare agencies, such as the Associated Charities,

³⁴Minutes and Report of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, March 31, 1932, Folder [11-12], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁵Annual Report for the year 1933, January 29, 19234, File [11-12], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁶Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1933, January 29, 1934, File [11-12], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

were doing exactly that. As previously noted, so far, the Great Depression rendered millions of Americans incapable of self-support in any occupation; African-Americans suffered the most. Many needed food, clothing and lodging and were forced to turn to welfare agencies. According to its 1929 annual report, the DUL helped provide clothing and small sums of money to one hundred and twenty-five people. Much of this was given to children in the form of Christmas presents. "Major relief cases," the director reported, "were referred to the Department of Public Welfare."³⁷

In 1930 the League claimed to have performed relief to about one thousand and six hundred and eighteen cases that included advice, employment, social adjustment, child placement, transportation, medical services, and delinquency cases. About one hundred children were given shoes, underwear, shirts, caps, and stockings as Christmas presents. The money used for this purpose was raised by black women organized by the DUL.³⁸

At the beginning of 1932 year the DUL supported a New Year's Eve party that raised \$255. The money was used to purchase sixty-five pairs of shoes and clothing to aid those in distress. The Castle Theater Company which gave a benefit performance on Saturday afternoons and donated most of the receipts to the League for relief assistance. At one time they gave about \$25.50 to "go for the relief of the indigent poor who are not otherwise provided for by the Department of Public Welfare." The League was given \$50 by Associated Charities to distribute to those who needed "only temporary

³⁷Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1929, January 30, 1930, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁸Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1930, January 20, 1931, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

assistance."³⁹

The Michigan People's Finance Corporation

The majority of the DUL's activities had little to do with alleviating depression-created hardships. The interests of the Detroit's black elites and white leaders were paramount. Black elites were mainly concerned about the images the whites had of them and attempted to eliminate any negative images that their black social class felt had been imposed on them. Most white leaders wished to maintain social control. The black elites contemplated a business enterprise to address their image problem and help black workers. Detroit's leaders decided that the high unemployment rates called for more recreational programs that dealt with the problem of unsupervised youths.

The black elites opened a business in 1928 called the Michigan Finance Corporation began erecting a building at the corner of St. Antoine and Vernor Highway. Funds for the project came in the form of a loan, to be paid with interest to the League's president, Henry G. Stevens and the Union Guardian Trust Corporation.⁴⁰ Dancy said the organization was engaged in the "business of making small loans."⁴¹ He told his board of directors that the corporation was the "first co-operative step in the matter of

³⁹Minutes of the Board of the Directors of the Detroit Urban League, March 31, 1932, File [11-12], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁰Letter, John C. Dancy to Williams P. Stevens, November 1, 1936, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁴¹Report of the Director for the months of June, July and August 1929, given on September 12, 1929, File [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

building that has been attempted in Detroit." ⁴² He believed that the enterprise represented "the first co-operative movement to accomplish anything of merit for Negroes in Detroit."⁴³ When discussing its architectural plan Dancy stated:

It is to have 6 offices in the hope of advertising simply that the Board should have knowledge of all the forward steps the Negroes in this Community are making towards bettering their own economic status. And too because your Director happens to be an officer in the Company. The building by the way happens to be all rented once it opens.⁴⁴

Dancy was elected the president and treasurer of the Michigan Finance Corporation in 1929. Five other black DUL members also sat on the board of directors.⁴⁵ C. Henri Lewis, Jr. was elected the secretary; Cecil L. Rowlette became the Finance committee chairman. Frank Rainford was its first vice-president; Dr. Herbert E. Simms was its second vice-president. The corporation manager was Mr. C. E. Jackson.⁴⁶

Dancy did reveal the corporation's hidden purpose to meet the psychological needs of the black elites. This is evident in Dancy's remarks to the League's board of trustees, "We feel that we have greatly improved this section and removed what was an eye sore and built up what we believe to be a thing of beauty. Much time and energy has been

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1929, given on January 30, 1930, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁶A Report of the Michigan Peoples Finance Corporation, December 12, 1936, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC,

spent in making this project a reality."⁴⁷

Dancy took "a pardonable pride" in the project,⁴⁸ rationalizing his need to capture dignity that whites were not providing the black members of his social class. "Business," he asserted "is well known is one of the weakest elements in our race."⁴⁹ He praised the participants by saying that the company was "operated by an enterprising group of colored men and women in Detroit."⁵⁰ By the beginning of 1930, the DUL occupied a space in the Michigan People's Finance Corporation building.⁵¹

As the depression progressed, the Michigan Peoples' Finance Corporation suffered a lack of growth; it was not until the end of 1936 that it began to raise "its head a little above the surface." Despite its difficulties, it had to pay its monthly one hundred-dollar payment to Mr. Stevens. After Stevens died in 1934, the money was sent to his brother, Williams P. Stevens.⁵²

The Vocational Opportunity

Supporting of a business enterprise that rent office spaces and loaned money did

⁴⁷Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, September 12, 1929, File [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁸Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1929, January 30, 1930, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Letter, John C. Dancy to Williams P. Stevens, November 1, 1936, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

little to alleviate the hardships created by the depression. The League also sought other methods of alleviating the hardships of black masses. One such means was the Vocational Opportunity Campaign, a program actually conceived by the NUL's Arnold Hill. Initiated in the fall of 1929 as the NUL's response to the depression, the first drive began on April 20- 27, 1930. It emphasized the importance of planning and preparing the blacks for the future through industrial training and vocational counselling.⁵³

Many blacks opposed the Vocational Opportunity Campaign for not being relevant to the realities of the times.⁵⁴ The DUL board discussed it at their March 31, 1932 meeting. The DUL did not participate in the program until 1932. Dancy mentioned that meetings had been arranged, one through the National Go-to-High School Go-to-College Campaign, of which he was the Michigan's state director. Other were planned to take place simultaneously with the Vocational Opportunity Campaign were to be organized through the Social Workers' Club "whereby," as Dancy said it, "we could make known to Detroit what the Campaign was purported to do."⁵⁵ Other meetings were held at the YMCA and the League of Catholic Women, latter in the form of a dinner meeting.⁵⁶ The next Vocational Opportunity Campaign was held in March 1939.⁵⁷

⁵³Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 211.

⁵⁴Many blacks felt that the program was started at the wrong time. See Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 211-212.

⁵⁵Minutes of the Board of Directors, March 31, 1932, File [11-12], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1939, March 1940, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Other League Concern During the Depression

In the middle of the depression, some health experts became concerned about the consequences of the diseases plaguing the African-American community. Their main concern was that "in health the relation between the races is clear and striking. Disease cannot easily be segregated. The germs of TB, small pox and measles do not obey Jim Crow Laws."⁵⁸ The League also concentrated on assisting students to pursue higher education. In 1930 it helped five students, including a young man attending the University of Chicago Medical School who was expected to graduate in June "with very high honors."⁵⁹

Domestic Training During the Depression

The 1920s and 1930s saw an increased demand for domestic workers. Although black women did not like doing that kind of work, financial supporters of the League constantly urged Dancy to train black women for such work. During the middle of the depression, the League's board of trustees held a discussion "over the prospects of a Domestic Training School." A number of the board members wanted the League to start the school,⁶⁰ despite the fact that domestic classes.⁶¹ The Domestic Science Class was

⁵⁸A Statement by John Embrey reporting for the Rosenwald Fund, quoted by Dancy in his Report to the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, January 20, 1931, Folder [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors, September 11, 1930, Folder [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

established near the end of 1930. Dancy reported that the program had "justified its existence" and that "the women are being taught how to make use of what they have, how to do plain cooking, how to do laundry work and to create in them a love for neater and cleaner homes."⁶² Dancy never mentioned that the League found it difficult to persuade black women to attend the classes and often was forced to "coarse and coax these women."⁶³ The following year the League's director reported that "the Domestic Training School at the Center is showing splendid results both in number and in the character of work done. The rooms at the top floor of the Center have been put in good shape to take care of this enterprise."⁶⁴

The Struggle for a Day Nursery School

The League's board discussed the need for a day nursery since the early 1920s to

⁶¹That Dancy was aware of black women's opposition to domestic training was revealed in a May 20, 1938 letter to Kenneth L. Moore. He stated that "it should be remembered that those schools are difficult to operate because the women folk do not take readily to them. They have to be coaxed and coerced into attending. I once ran one at the Center and found it particularly hard to keep the interest at a pitch" (Executive Secretary's General File, 1938, Box 4, DULP-MHC).

⁶²Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1930, January 20, 1931, Folder [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶³Letter, John C. Dancy to Kenneth L. Moore, May 20, 1938, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁴Handwritten, Report of the Director to the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, 1931, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

help black women but with little result.⁶⁵ This issue was again brought up at a board meeting on September 12, 1929, when someone introduced a need and availability of a day nursery for black children. According to the minutes, "it was pointed out that at present there is only one in Detroit for twenty colored children." This calculation did not take into account "those cared for by the Jeffries Nursing School which is a part of the Department of Public Welfare and provides only for children whose parents are at least mildly dependent upon the Public Welfare for relief."⁶⁶ The matter of a nursery school came up again at another Board meeting the following year. Some feelings were expressed that effort be made to get the Sophie Wright Settlement, "in the heart of a Negro district," to accept colored children.⁶⁷ The need for a day nursery was justified in that most of the jobs available to blacks were in domestic service, which was usually performed by women. Dancy's annual report suggested that "an analysis of employment shows that the beginning of the year many more men and women were placed than towards the end....Most of the women have been placed as domestics."⁶⁸ The plan to establish a day nursery failed when the Community Fund refused to pay for the program. The League turned to another project, the Green Pastures Camp.

⁶⁵See Minutes of the Board of Directors, September 19, 1926 and January 27, 1927; Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1926, February 14, 1927]; and Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 1928, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁶minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, September 12, 1929, File [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁷Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, January 30, 1930, Folder [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁸Ibid.

The Green Pastures Camp

The project that brought the League its greatest praise, pride and joy was the Green Pastures Camp.⁶⁹ Following the Sweet trial, the question of creating a camp for black children occupied the attention of the DUL's board members.⁷⁰ In 1929 the League formed a committee made up of Clarence E. Brewer, Cecil Rowlette and John Dancy to research the possibility of a camp for black children; the DUL would temporarily oversee until "another dependable group could take it over." The members of the committee contacted William Norton, the secretary and executive vice-president of the Michigan Children's Fund for the financial sponsorship of the camp. The committee calculated that the cost for running a camp for one year was approximately \$42,000.⁷¹

In June 1930 an agreement was reached that the Michigan Children's Fund would financially support the camp. The Fund "purchased a camp site of fifty acres near Grass Lake at a point known as Little Lake Pleasant, located sixty-eight miles from Detroit on rolling territory touching upon the Lake,"⁷² located about three miles from Grass Lake

⁶⁹Forrester B. Washington, the League's first Director once said that "If John Dancy had not done any more than conceive and bring to actuality Green Pastures Camp he would have justified in a large part his retention for so many years as Director of the Detroit Urban League." See his article, "Deluxe Summer Camp For Colored Children", Opportunity, IX, (October 1931) pp. 305-306.

⁷⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors, February 17, 1927, File [11-9], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷¹Report and Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 30, 1930, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷²Annual Report of the Board of Directors for the year 1930, January 20, 1931, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

on the Jackson Road. According to Dancy the camp site was "one of the prettiest sports to be found in this section of the state."⁷³ He described it as "a beautiful, rustic site in the hills with a very excellent water front splendid for bathing."⁷⁴ "Superior buildings" were to be erected with a goal of accommodating about one hundred children at a time.

By the summer 1931 thirteen buildings had been built including one large recreation hall that also served as a dining room. The recreation hall contained "a stage fire place and can comfortably seat 250, although we are to make arrangements for taking care of one hundred at a time , plus of course the help which will number sixteen." Ten cottages, five for girls and five for boys, arranged in such a way that eleven individuals could occupy one cottage at the same time. Such a plan took "into account the ten boys and one counsellor for each group of ten." Other cottages were reserved for the camp director and an "an infirmary for ill children," respectively. Either a nurse or a dental hygienist provided medical care.⁷⁵

Although the camp was primarily for recreational activities during the summer months, there was some considerations for winter use as well. At the rear of the recreation hall a large kitchen with a roomer above for all kitchen help was constructed. This kitchen had a store room and a heating plant that was designed to be of use by the boy scouts during the winter.

A lagoon separated the girls's cottages from the boys' cottages. The lagoon to do

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors, May 28, 1931, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁵Ibid.

away with swamp-land at the rear of the cottages; the swamp was converted into what Dancy described as "a very desirable athletic field."⁷⁶

Operating expenses for the camp for the first year were paid by the Michigan Children's Fund. An agreement was reached with the Detroit Community Fund that once the Michigan Fund had stopped its financial support, the former institution would "carry the expense attendant upon operation."⁷⁷ Another agreement reached between the League and the Children's Fund was that the property title was to remain for some time in the name of the Michigan Children's Fund. The property was eventually to be donated to the League.⁷⁸

The League director was so delighted with the camp that he wrote that "we feel that this is a big step and one calculated to improve the general health conditions of the children in this state. The request of this camp came from the Urban League to the Children's Fund."⁷⁹

On May 28, 1931 the DUL board members chose "Green Pastures" as the official name for the camp because it was a "heavenly spot and besides the name is suggestive of a leading play of the present season which has been done by all Negro actors in New

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1930, January 20, 1931, Folder [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁹Ibid.

York City for the past sixteen months."⁸⁰ Approximately five hundred children were to participate, fifty boys and fifty girls each two-week period.⁸¹

The League planned to accepted no money whatever from the children and "no children are to be accepted at Camp who are in position to pay their way."⁸² The camp accepted only indigent poor children between the ages of eight and fourteen, both male and female.

This activity kept Dancy and his organization very busy. He planned "to spend two or three days out of each week at the Camp in order to get it in operation and to see that the program" was working "out as it should be"⁸³ A committee composed of Lillian Johnson, E. DeVere, Clarence E. Brewer, Harry Pope, Dancy in co-operation with Norton ran the camp.⁸⁴ Earnest Carney was hired as the camp director, and was assisted by a team of counsellors who were selected from the colleges around Detroit. Three cooks, a nurse and a dental hygienist completed the camp staff.

⁸⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors, May 28, 1931, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸¹There is a discrepancy of the exact figure of the Children who attended the Green Pastures during the first Summer of 1931. Dancy's Report to the Board of Directors given on May 28, 1931 put the figure as 500 as the number of the Children that were anticipated to attend the Camp that summer. In his Memoirs, he gives the figure 600; See Sand Against the Wind, p. 163.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Report of the Detroit Urban League, May 28, 1931, Folder [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁴Ibid.

Green Pastures Camp opened on June 29 and closed in September of 1931.⁸⁵ At the end of the camp's first summer Dancy gave a report to Norton, secretary of the Children's Fund calling

attention to the fine spirit that prevailed at the camp and that there was no mishaps and nothing whatever to mar the general running order of the camp. He cited figures to show that we had taken care of five hundred and thirty six during the summer at a cost of six dollars and fifty cents (\$6.50) per child, per week and the meals were good and well prepared, that the children enjoyed themselves to the fullest and that the camp had been spoken of in all circles in highest praise.⁸⁶

During the summer 1933 the League reported that six hundred children had attended the camp. That year the Children's Fund cut the camp's budget by \$2,000. Dancy reported that "the salaries of the workers of necessity had to be shoved down and one worker dropped, but careful buying enabled us to live within the \$6,000 allowed us and to take nine more children than before." Carney continued managing and carrying out the camp's program "in approved fashion."⁸⁷

Activities included flag allegiance, health education, behavior correction, dances, basketball, weaving, crafts, swimming, learning of black history, boxing, hiking, boating, and baseball. Heavy weight champion Joe Louis, at Dancy's invitation occasionally visited the camp. Green Pastures Camp's programs were similar to those the League was conducting at its community centers. It was not only a place to shape behavior through

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors, September 18, 1931, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁷Annual Report of Detroit Urban League for the year 1933, January 29, 1934, File [11-12], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

recreation, education, and health education, but also a meeting center for clubs and other organizations. The NUL found the camp premises ideal for holding its annual Conferences. During World War II it became a labor recruitment arena. It provided jobs for counsellors, camp director, volunteers and repairers.

The camp also gave Dancy great personal enjoyment. Nature walks and gardening were among his favorite hobbies.⁸⁸ When listing some of his activities, he mentioned that Green Pastures Camp was one of them,⁸⁹ which partly explains his obsession with the camp. Green Pastures Camp's centrality in Dancy's life is highlighted by his statement that "for 31 years I gave up all summer vacations to be at hand constantly in case any problems arose at the camp. In all these years my connection with the camp I never missed being there on the week-ends. I have therefore seen every one of the 15,000 children who have stayed there in those 31 years."⁹⁰

There was another underlying reason for Dancy's strong interest in the Green Pastures Camp. This project represents the programs that most white leaders supported and wanted DUL to do. Their main interest was in finding ways to occupy black youth so that they had little time for crime. This would prevent them from making demands on society, which gave them few worthwhile opportunities. Although Green Pastures Camp was successful for the DUL, it did little to alleviate the serious problems the caused by the depression. Indeed, most of the programs inaugurated during the depression had

⁸⁸See Dancy's hand written self profile, [1934], General file of the Director, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 164.

little to do with solving the problems experienced by the black community. They were meant as diversions from the real needs.

The DUL and New Efforts by Blacks in Challenging the Depression

The League's successful projects were geared to addressing the needs and values of black elites and the interests of the white power structure. Some were not suitable to the psychological well-being for the majority of black Detroiters. Most of the DUL's depression era programs during the Depression, were related to social control mechanics. This situation encouraged some blacks to seek other avenues for meeting their needs.

One of the most practical approaches taken by black migrants in dealing with the immediate problems caused by the depression was to leave Detroit. According to Culver, Detroit lost approximately seventy-five thousand people from spring of 1929 to November 1930. Figures for blacks who left is not available a considerable of them did leave the city. He also noted "that the influx had been almost negligible."⁹¹ Many took another approach that was in keeping with the spirit of the time. Whereas the League emphasized activities that were a diversions to the real problems, many blacks joined radical sweeping the nation that were tolerated by the new mood inaugurated by the problems of joblessness and hopelessness.⁹²

⁹¹Minutes and Report of the Detroit Urban League, January 30, 1930. File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹²Scholars have pointed out that the hardships of depression brought a shift in the national mood from the right to the left as expressed in New Deal legislation that favored unionization. Other evidence of radicalism in American society due to the depression was seen in the increased activities of communist and socialist

Some African-Americans opted to exercise a spirit of defiance against the status quo in the form of a new religious expression. Those who attempted to defy the system joined the religion of Islam in opposition to their forefathers,' the Christian faith. The leading black Islamic was Elijah Muhammad, also called Poole. He founded the Nation of Islam movement, described by his opponents as the Black Muslims.⁹³

The new spirit of boldness in opposing the status quo found expression throughout the country among many people in United States. Even the Urban League movement was affected by it. In the fall 1929 the NUL grew more openly critical of discriminatory practices by the labor unions and the federal government against blacks. Several local urban leagues became even more daring by sponsoring campaigns such as "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work."⁹⁴

Such a new national attitude made the DUL, especially Dancy, nervous.⁹⁵ The League's Detroit director feared this defiant spirit would result in the breaking ties with industrial leaders. His fear intensified when he contemplated a shift of power called for by this new attitude in politics and labor unionization. The whole Urban League movement, as well as the NAACP, were sharply criticized by socialists like A. Philip Randolph and a new generation of black intellectuals such as professors Abram L. Harris, Ralph Bunche of Howard University; Dean Charles H. Houston of Howard University's

organizations and thinking in the United States.

⁹³For more information on Elijah Muhammad's activities, See Thomas, Life for Us is What We Make It, pp. 199-201.

⁹⁴Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 208.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 209.

Law School as well as sociologist Franklin E. Frazier.⁹⁶

The Shift to the Democratic Party and the New Deal

The most dramatic evidence of defiance against the League and its allies was demonstrated in the political arena. While most of the NUL movement's leaders remained loyal Republicans throughout the depression and beyond, many blacks, particularly a few small bands of young black elites, began to abandon the Republican party in favor of the Democratic party. League leaders remained committed Republicans. For example, Mr. Jones, the executive secretary of the NUL continued as an active participant of the republican party. The Republican party made Dancy their chief consultant during the depression. In 1930 they made him an advisor to the Detroit Citizen's League, a Republican-controlled and highly political organization in Detroit and the state. Dancy also served on the council of the highly political Wolverine Republican Club of Detroit.⁹⁷ These two organizations were opposed to liberal policies in matters of race relations and labor unions. In the mid-1930s, the republican, worked closely with the Urban League to use the influence of Joe Louis to campaign and raise funds for their

⁹⁶August Meier and Ellitt M. Rudwick, Black Detroit and the Rise of UAW (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 23; Spero and Harris, Black Worker and the Labor Movement, pp. 140-43; Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie, pp. 99-100. For comments by Ralph Bunche on Urban League, see Gunnar Myrdal, American Dilemma, p. 1407. Bunche also investigated the work of the DUL in 1939. See Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1939 given on March 1940, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁷Moore, A Search for Equality, p. 73; Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1929, given on January 30, 1930, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

party.

Republican official NUL officials participated in the President's black cabinet. Their behavior was partially determined by their need to keep communists from taking over the leadership of blacks from the Urban League.⁹⁸ Such motivation may have partly influenced the League leaders to begin organizing their famous Worker's Councils. The Urban Leaguers were also motivated by their desire to help African-Americans benefit from whatever form of government that came to power. The League leaders worked closely with the government placement agency known as the United States Employment Services (USES) created during World War I. This cooperation between the League and the USES came to play an important role in the history of the Urban League movement. The NUL probably influenced by its political affiliations, fought against the discrimination found in both the New Deal and other relief programs.

Alliance with the Labor Unions

During the depression, the employers received a heavy blow when labor unionization gained momentum. Parris and Brooks noted that,

the Depression awakened the Urban League to the realization that 'ordinary "old-fashioned" diplomacy [would] get Negroes nowhere in their fight for jobs.' This tactical lesson was one that 'highly organized minorities such as trade unions and unemployed groups' had already learned, one that prompted them to 'set up elaborate machinery for creating spectacular protest.' The Urban League's actions on the labor front remained moderate with the full spectrum of protest popular during the 1930s. And yet, for the League itself, they represented a substantial

⁹⁸Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 156.

tactical, if not ideological, change."⁹⁹

This sort of unionization did not come at the beginning of the Depression. Weiss noted "While the depression ultimately created the conditions for unionization of the auto industry, the early years of the depression showed few signs of militancy. From the fall of 1929 until the early months of 1933 auto workers coped with the increasingly severe conditions of their work in personal and private ways." At that time, "the only important organizations to come out of these early depression years grew around those auto workers who were unemployed. Organized protest from unemployed workers took place in auto cities starting early in 1930." The most radical organization at that time was the communist party which "sponsored unemployment demonstration in industrial cities around the country on March 6, 1930." Depression at that time had made people hungry and angry, a situation that led "some 50,000 to 10,000 demonstrators in Detroit" to demand "unemployment insurance; full wages for part time workers; a moratorium on layoffs, wage cuts, and speed-up; a seven hour work day; and emergency relief from the city government." The communist party formed unemployed councils in Detroit and other cities. But

most of the time of the Unemployed Councils was spent in anti-eviction efforts and in organizing demonstrations calling for jobs and relief. They also ran soup kitchen with food solicited from local merchants and ran a few halls where homeless men could sleep. In addition, the Unemployed Councils held protest meetings against police brutality, often a feature of unemployed black men who were picked up and held by police for being on the streets at night. Many an auto worker's first experience with organized working class activity came through participating in a an event

⁹⁹Weiss, National Urban League, p. 282.

sponsored by an Unemployed Council.¹⁰⁰

The Ford Hunger March of March 7, 1932 is the most famous of these demonstrations. It began in January 1933 when the "employees of the Briggs Manufacturing Company in Detroit startled the industry by taking a simple walkout over slashed wages and sustaining and building it into a genuine and impressive strike."¹⁰¹

Establishing Worker's Councils was the way the NUL attempted to go about organizing black workers to deal with their problems. In October 1934 Dancy expressed opposition to this sort of a move, contending it would jeopardize "the decided advantage which Negro workers [held] in the absence of a 'closed shop' set-up" in the city industries.¹⁰²

The League Out of Tune with the Spirit of Radicalism

The move towards radicalism by the American society did not mean that the DUL was in a position to follow the current. The DUL was not only left behind by the changing mood, but set itself against the political and social currents of the time. The reason for this situation was a result of the fact that the League's history was strongly tied to industrial interests; Dancy expressed the relationship very well:

We venture the assertion that in no other city where an Urban League exists is their [there] broader or more wholesome relationship between the League and the civic and social associations that can be found in Detroit. The calibre if the men and women who comprise our Board is for most

¹⁰⁰Detroit in Perspective, p. 56.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 58,

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 294.

part the reason for this situation.¹⁰³

This kind of "wholesome relationship" between the DUL and industry captains dominating its governing body helped the League to sow seeds of irrelevancy in the new spirit generated by the stresses and hardships of the depression. It set itself up for challenges with the new form of leadership developing within the Detroit's black community and their new white allies--democrats and Labor unionists.

Most black leaders found that private and public relief agencies practiced discrimination against blacks in so great a measure; Dancy saw these organizations quite differently. For instance, in his 1930 annual report he said that

with all the dealings that we have had with the other social agencies, we have no complaint to register against them, for there have been few, if any discordant notes sounded any where along the line. True there have been differences of opinion, but these in no wise affected the cordial relationships existing between the agencies. We have frequently have called to our assistance other agencies to help us out in emergencies and at the same time other agencies have called upon us to do likewise for them.¹⁰⁴

Dancy emphasized again and again the existence of cooperation between the DUL and other white agencies. Why was this so important? Dancy was too personally involved in these agencies, and serving as president, secretary or committee member in several of them. His views seemed to correspond with those espoused by Detroit's white leaders rather than by the majority of the black community.

¹⁰³Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1929, January 30, 1930, Folder 11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁴Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1930, January 20, 1931, Folder [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

A good example may be observed on March 1932 incident, when a report circulated that the Retail Merchants Association and the Better Business Bureau were urging down-town stores "to dismiss their colored help in favor of whites." According to Dancy, who investigated the matter together with the secretary of the bureau, "no such thought had ever enter the minds of these organizations and they had no thought of any such plan." Dancy also stated that "Mr. Boyd assured us that he would be opposed to any such move. He said that he was positive that the statements emanating from the Bureau were without foundation."¹⁰⁵

This event placed Dancy in a position to either believe the charges made by the blacks or believe Boyd, the accused bureau's representative. It is doubtful that Dancy really believed, but the DUL's director did not want to appear as though he did not trust the bureau's representative. He was too dependent on the good will of white leaders to not believe them. Dancy's financial and psychological needs were being met through his association with Detroit's white leaders. So he did not dare criticize them. Instead he presented them as believable, generous individuals. This game of flattering white leaders was essential for Dancy because it held the key to his personal advantage.

Stevens's Death and the End of an Era

While the depression led to discontentment by the black community, causing them to call for new approaches to addressing their conditions, the League's attitude was to

¹⁰⁵Report of the Detroit Urban League, March 31, 1932, Folder [11-12], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

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¹⁰⁵Report of the Detroit Urban League, March 31, 1932, Folder [11-12], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

maintain the status quo. On February 12, 1934, Henry G. Stevens, the man who "more than anyone else is credited the organization of the League" died.¹⁰⁶ Stevens was DUL's first president serving in that capacity for eighteen years, the longest in the League's history. During his tenure, Stevens was the most powerful man in the DUL. His power rested on the fact that he was its founder, one of its strongest benefactors and a program initiator and volunteer. Moreover, he was the man the League's director depended on most for advice and protection. Dancy himself made it crystal clear: "I had to depend on him in many ways. He was the leader of the movement."¹⁰⁷

Using his authority, Stevens had kept the League steered along the path he had set in motion in 1916. As president of the board of trustees, Stevens was an adamant opponent of the League's participation in the discrimination issues. He also vigorously protested any suggestions that seemed to give the League financial autonomy. From the beginning, Stevens was a strong advocate of the alliance between the League on one hand, and the industrial capitalists and law-enforcement agencies, on the other. He had originally envisioned the League as a coordinating agency, primarily designed for research investigation, interpreting the black community to the Detroit's leaders and vice versa. Between 1917 and 1919, when industrialists experienced a sharp shortage of labor supply, Stevens encouraged his newly-formed organization in the direction that would solve Detroit's labor supply crisis. He helped negotiate an agreement with the Employers

¹⁰⁶Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1933, January 10, 1934, File [11-12], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁷Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 50.

Association of Detroit that made the DUL a virtual employment bureau located in black communities in exchange for one hundred dollars monthly payment.¹⁰⁸ Stevens himself become a chief advocate of making black migrants economically profitable and socially less threatening to the industrial capitalism he believed in.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, Stevens's attention was focused on making the League a settlement organization. He promoted the inter-settlement activities and oriented the League towards recreational programs aimed at behavior control of the black community. In January 1925 Stevens "urged that the Board give more thought during the coming year to the Urban League and Community Center with a view to getting the staffs of the various settlements."¹⁰⁹ Due to his leadership DUL became the most respected organization working on behalf of the Africa-Americans by Detroit's white leaders while the black situation failed to improve.

In addition, Stevens's leadership was responsible for making the DUL beloved organization by status quo champions. Between 1928 and 1938 the number of organizations and committees in which the League participated increased dramatically. Naturally, Dancy was exceedingly pleased. In a number of his reports to the board of trustees, Dancy constantly mentioned the organizations that he participated in. In 1928 he became president and treasurer of the Michigan Peoples Finance Corporation, secretary-treasurer of the Federation of Settlements in Detroit, the Chapter House vice-

¹⁰⁸Letter, Mr. Chester M. Culver, to Mr. Henry G. Stevens, May 8, 1917, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁹Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 15, 1925, File [11-7], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

president and manager of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, a member of executive committee of Detroit Social Worker's Club, and the president of the Detroit Social Worker's Council. In 1930 he became a member of the political organization known as Advisory Committee of the Detroit Citizen's League. During the same year, Mayor Murphy chose Dancy to be an executive member of the Mayor's Unemployment Committee to serve as the spokesman for the Detroit's blacks.¹¹⁰

Dancy's most cherished moment occurred on March 25, 1933 when Governor Murphy appointed him to the Detroit House of Correction commission. Dancy often spoke about this appointment devoting an entire chapter in his memoirs to this position. Commenting on the badge he wore that said 'John C. Dancy--Commissioner, Detroit of Correction,' Dancy wrote:

That badge was a saving grace to me on many occasions. I was, of course, always careful to avoid any accidents or incidents which would made it necessary to display it, but it was a very comforting thing to possess. It was amazing how much respect it commanded. I have sometimes wondered what the effect would be if it were possible for other Negroes to carry badges attesting to their attainments or standing in the community, such as 'phD', or 'Successful Business Man', 'Physician', 'Low Handicap Gofer' or the like.¹¹¹

That same year he became a member of the Advisory Committee of the Department of Recreation as well as the secretary of Parkside Hospital, which was a reorganization of the Dunbar Hospital. In 1937 Mayor Frank Couzens re-appointed him to the Detroit House of Correction Commission. In 1938 Governor Murphy appointed

¹¹⁰See the Annual Reports for the years 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932 and 1933, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹¹Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 179.

to the Commission of Reform and Modernization of Government.¹¹²

These appointments were the real highlights of Dancy's career. He was particularly gratified in being involved in those organizations that brought him together with Detroit's most powerful figures. Some of the "figures" he referred to included "the Fords, Kanzlers, Newberrys and similar lustrous names."¹¹³ His participation in the Detroit House of Correction, involvement in the Federation of Settlements and being accepted into the membership of the Executive Committee of Detroit Social Worker's Club were the most fulfilling experiences of his life. As he acknowledged, "there was much satisfaction, of course, in a job which threw one into association with the leading citizens of the town." He was particularly gratified if the organization was largely white dominated. "The Social Worker's Club," he happily pointed out, "has honored us by electing the Director as a member for the second time on its executive Committee." He emphasized that it was a "white" organization.¹¹⁴ The delight in these "rewards" played influenced his reports of the DUL's work. He repeatedly made reference to his appointments and recognition. During the 1930s and early 1940s Dancy constantly praised of Stevens for his "long vision" and wisdom in founding the DUL.¹¹⁵

Dancy's salary was increased and he became a favorite of the city's prominent

¹¹²Letter, John C. Dancy to Thos R. Solomon, December 21, 1938, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹¹³Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 100.

¹¹⁴Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1928, Folder [11-10]. Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁵See the Annual Reports between 1936-1943.

men as the most severe aspect of the depression drew to a close. He was Mayor Frank Murphy's personal friend. Dancy's prestige made his organization more popular with the power structure. The Board of Commerce sang the League's praises.¹¹⁶

In contrast to the increase in fortunes of the League during the depression era, the condition of blacks did not improve. According to Widwick,¹¹⁷ the unemployment among African-Americans reached eighty percent during the depression. Increased police brutality was dramatized during the summer of 1933 when a white police officer killed James Porter, a black man.¹¹⁸ Despite the League's high file during this time its board of directors and their allies were impotent to do anything not only about the police brutality but also about employment problems.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

Ironically, the DUL emerged from the Great Depression with good feelings and acclamations from the champions of status quo. Its activities involved supporting the of status quo and failed to address the winds of change sweeping the nation. The new programs it inaugurated during this period were, in many cases, irrelevant to the immediate goal of alleviating the suffering caused by the depression among African-

¹¹⁶Annual of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1928, Folder [11-10], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁷B. J. Widwick, Detroit: A City of Race and Class Violence (Chicago:Quadrangle Books, 1972), p. 44.

¹¹⁸Wilber C. Rich, Coleman Young and Detroit Politics: From Social Activist to Power Broker (Detroit, Michigan:Wayne State University Press, p. 50.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

Americans. Moreover, the League did not meet long-term needs of black Detroiters. Nevertheless, although the black community's difficult situation DUL's experience during the depression seemed quite positive. These differing experiences between the DUL and the black community sowed seeds for future trouble for the organization. Despite Dancy's effort to impress his board of trustees, the League gradually began to enter into a process that would result in a painful end. From this point of view, the League received a blow from the Great Depression.

The blow came about because throughout the nation, the depression had created suffering never before experienced by most Americans. The depression altered the balance of power between those that were content with the status quo and those that were not. Because the depression gave the impression that the former leadership was not to be trusted new a leadership began to emerge. Most importantly, the depression called for a new attitude towards Federal government's role in its citizens's lives, and a new tolerance of the labor unions. These developments beckoned the African-Americans to the possibility of new allies and weakened their dependence on the DUL and its allies, the employers.

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ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY OF THE DETROIT URBAN LEAGUE, 1916-60

By

Njeru Wa Murage

VOLUME II

A DISSERTATION

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE LEAGUE IN THE AFTERMATH OF DEPRESSION, 1934-1940

To show you that I am doing my best to keep up, I can tell you that I am now the President of the Board of Commissioners of the House of Correction. At this institution I do entertain the presidents of some defunct banks. The chances are that I shall continue to entertain them until the Governor grants these fellows paroles.¹

John C. Dancy (1934)

The league emerged from Great Depression without experiencing any major organizational change. Its original supporters, programs, purposes, policies, personnel and donors continued to dominate during the six-year following depression. Unfortunately, the league's commitment to continuity remained ineffective in addressing the problems facing Detroit's black community. Other new actors appeared and began bypassing the agency in influencing the destiny of Detroit's black community. This chapter discusses the Depression's aftermath and Dancy's attempts to control the new players bypassing his organization. The league found itself in an awkward position when blacks became interested in Democratic politics and labor unions. The chapter also discusses how post-depression organizational challenges forced the league to respond by equivocating, hiding and continuing to support the employers.

¹Letter, John C. Dancy to Mrs. Lenas Jackson, February 28, 1934, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

Commitment to Continuity: New Board Members with Old ideas

Henry Steven's physical disappearance from the league's leadership did alter its traditions or usher in a new administration with fresh ideas. Many of the league's original founders continued to influence the organization, John Dancy. The league's original policies and its constitution continued to guide the agency's operation for many years. The new individuals joining the board of directors in the 1930s included Harry S. Pope, Christine S. Smith, Henry P. Williams and Mrs. John Bulkley. The new board members who proved very influential in the League's history included Kenneth L. Moore, Beulah E. Whitby, Anne Woodruff, Dr. Harvey Bell, Mrs. Geraldine Blesdoe, and Charles Winegar.²

Moore took over the leadership of the DUL in 1935.³ He was a wealthy man with ideas similar to Stevens. Moore first appeared on league's board of trustees of the league in 1932, during the middle of the depression.⁴ He was one of Detroit's real-estate leaders with his own company.⁵ When Dancy first asked Moore to join the board of directors he hesitated, saying that he did not "know anything about colored people or their

²For the names of the individuals who joined the league's board of directors in the 1930s see Minutes of the board of directors, January 22, 1931; January 28, 1932; February 22, 1934; January 31, 1935; January 31, 1937, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³Following Stevens' death on February 12, 1934, Clarence E. Brewer was elected the acting president. See Letter, John C. Dancy to A. L. Jackson, February 13, 1934; Undated information sheet with an overview of the work of the league and its location and its officers. See Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 22, 1931, File [11-11], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵See the stationery in a letter he wrote to Dancy on March 18, 1935, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

problems."⁶ He referred to black people as "pickaninnies," "your people" and "you people" until Dancy pointed out to him that the terms were highly offensive to blacks. Despite his obvious bigotry, Moore became one of Dancy's close friends.⁷ Moore quickly became one of the board's most influential personality. In 1935 he was elected the board chairman, and served in this capacity for three terms.⁸

Anne Woodruff, Detroit's Junior League president and niece of Stevens replaced her uncle in the board of directors. Dancy described her as a person who was "prominent in Detroit social circles." Like her uncle, Woodruff became one of the league's important financial supporters, especially to the Pen and Palette Art Club exhibit.⁹ Her influence on the DUL board was considerable. As soon as she joined, she was appointed the organization's representative to the national advisory committee of the NUL.¹⁰ In 1941 she became president of the League's board.¹¹

Beulah E. Whitby, a social worker did her graduate studies in social work at the

⁶Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 96.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid. pp. 96-98.

⁹See news release, "Art Exhibition Announced for May 13, 1934", which stated that the exhibition for 1934 "was in a form of a memorial to the late Henry G. Stevens who during all his lifetime did so much to encourage Negroes in the field of art. He annually gave the prizes and also served as Judge of the Awards." On May 13, another news release announced that Woodruff was the donor for the Pen and Palette Club prizes of the winners. Both of these news releases are deposited in the Box 3, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, May 23, 1935, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹A document, "Presidents of the Detroit Urban League, 1916-1966", Executive Board Materials, 1939-1950, Box 61, DULP-MHC.

University of Michigan where she wrote a master's thesis entitled "Hospital Facilities Available to Negroes."¹² She was the executive secretary of the city's emergency evacuation service.¹³ During the 1940s Whitby served as the assistant director of the Mayor's Inter-racial Committee.

Dr. Haley Bell, a dentist and one of Detroit's wealthiest, and conservative black elites is a classic example of the traditionalist influences on the league's board.¹⁴ One of Bell's longest and closest friends was the infamous racist congressman, Rudolph G. Tenerowicz, who in the early 1940s became the focal point of the opposition against blacks occupying the Sojourner Truth public housing. Although blacks did not like Tenerowicz (they organized specifically "to stop Tenerowicz" with a slogan "no such a notorious character as Mayor Rudolph G. Tenerowicz of Hamtramck-Detroit"¹⁵), Bell actively campaigned for Tenerowicz election as a U.S. senator in 1938. Bell sent a circular letter endorsing Tenerowicz, stating that "Dr. Tenerowicz and myself have been friends for many years." According to Bell, Tenerowicz was a man who "recognizes no distinction in race, creed or color." He told the members of the black community that "there is no doubt in my mind that if elected to congress he will show the same

¹²Letter, Eleanor Cranefield to John C. Dancy, June 2, 1938, General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹³Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 203.

¹⁴Letter, John C. Dancy to W. P. Bayless, March 2, 1938, General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹⁵Letter, Albert B. Sheldon to the National Organization Committee and All Members of the American Union, December 31, 1938, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

consideration for our race that he has displayed as Mayor of the City of Hamtrack." He concluded the appeal with the remarks that "anything that you can do to further his candidacy will be considered as a personal favor to myself."¹⁶ Bell and his wife were among the few black community leaders that Dancy respected and trusted.¹⁷ Bell played a central role in the league by serving as a vice-president of the board of trustees in 1937.¹⁸

Charles Winegar, the personnel director for Dodge Brothers became involved with the DUL in 1919 when Dodge-DUL entered into an alliance.¹⁹ His company later was cited by blacks as one of the most exploitative employers of black workers in the 1940s. During World War II Winegar adamantly refused to promote black workers despite tremendous pressure from black leaders in Detroit and federal Government.²⁰ Dancy later described Winegar as "one the finest friend the Detroit Urban League ever had."²¹

Probably the least conservative members that joined the league during the 1930s were Beulah Whitby and Geraldine Bledsoe, the wife of Harold E. Bledsoe, an attorney

¹⁶Letter, Haley Bell to My dear friend, September 6, 1938, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹⁷Letter, John C. Dancy to Leon Y. Frost, January 27, 1934, General File of the Director, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

¹⁸Minutes of the Detroit Urban League Annual Board Meeting, January 31, 1937, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁹Ibid. pp. 128-130.

²⁰For more complete treatment of Winegar's role and his Dodge or Chrysler Corporation in the exploitation of black workers in the 1940s, see the section on labor unions.

²¹Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 129.

and a political ally of Senator Diggs. Bledsoe worked for W.P.A. office for Chief Minority Group Services of the Michigan Unemployment Compensation Commission of the M.S.E.S.²²

Commitment to its traditional programs was not only manifested in the league's appointment of new conservative board members but also in its desire to indoctrinate these members to the league's conventional values. Dancy gave "a talk on the aims, purposes, and the historical background of the Urban League for the benefit of the new members of the board," in order to instill in the new board members the tenants of the DUL.²³ A month later, both Dancy and Jones, the executive director of the NUL spoke to the new board members. Dancy's speech was basically a rehearsing of his earlier presentation. Jones's speech centered on "the organization of the Urban League in New York and Detroit." He stated that "when the Urban League was formed in New York, there were no trained Negro Social Worker in America and that Detroit would have experienced race riots such as were carried on in Chicago had it not been for the establishment of the Urban League," suggesting the DUL had been successful in assisting African-Americans to enjoy their lives in Detroit.²⁴

²²Evidence that these two individuals held liberal views is seen in the fact that they were the first board members to support labor unions at a time other members remained either opposed or took a neutral stand. In later years, Whitby played an important role in supporting integrated public housing, a position that brought her into conflict with the mayor Albert Cobo. See Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 31, 1937, Box 11, DULP-MHC; Letter, Lawrence A. Oxley to Frederic S. Schouman, May 28, 1938, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

²³Minutes of the Detroit Urban League Board Meeting, February 28, 1935, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors, March 26, 1935, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

The League's Pursuit of Traditional Programs

Given the presence and influence of conservative individuals on the league's board of directors it is not surprising its programs virtually remained unchanged. Although Dancy did express an interest to have the organization alter its programs, stating in 1938 that "the League must be sensitive to the needs of the Community and must be even ready to change a program so that immediate needs can be cared for," he still supported maintaining of the status quo.²⁵ Between 1934 and 1940 no new league programs to encourage the well-being Detroit's blacks emerged. The organization simply expanded the older projects and programs: its job search tactics remained unchanged.

The league continued to depend on the good will and advice local to solve the African-American problems. In early 1935 the league appointed Culver, Employers Association of Detroit manager, as chairman of the league's employment committee. Culver pointed out that the Ford Motor Company in January 1935 was hiring from two to six hundred men a day; there were 450,000 men working, a mere ten per cent less than the all-time high reached in 1928 of working force.²⁶ Early in 1937 the league sought the advice of Charles T. Winegar, the personnel manager at the Chrysler Corporation. Soon Winegar joined the league's Board of trustees and the committee that shaped the

²⁵In his annual report for the year 1937 given on January 31, 1938 (Box 11, DULP-MHC), Dancy proposed a future which, rather than chart a real alteration of the league's program, called attention to the necessity of yet more of the usual settlement activity programs and what he described as "some outlet for the young men and women for the whole recreation."

²⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, January 31, 1935, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

league's relationship with local industries. Together with Winegar, Culver, Moore and Dancy served on this new committee.²⁷

Unfortunately, this approach was ineffective in obtaining jobs for blacks. Between 1934 and 1940 a disproportionately high number unemployment and housing problems occurred among African-Americans. In April 1934, blacks constituted about 25 percent in a city where the total black population of only 7 percent and employment had increased 134 percent.²⁸ In 1935 blacks, although with less than 9 per cent of the total population, had more than 30 per cent of the relief load. These figures changed very little before World War II. Moreover, during this time racial discrimination in employment became quite widespread. In 1934 the Webster Hall Hotel dismissed sixteen blacks and replaced them with white workers.²⁹ By the end of 1934 the Healy Shop and the Hotel Fort Shelby had dismissed all of its black workers.³⁰ In March 1937 Dancy revealed that the gas, light, water and telephone companies did not employ blacks except for a few who were used as janitors; and about thirty as motormen and trench diggers.³¹ On May 6, 1937 Moore pointed out that "the building trades, was at a low ebb" but "because of

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Letter, John C. Dancy to Campbell C. Johnson, January 11, 1934; Article, "The Negro in the Recovery program", written in July 1934. Both in the Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

²⁹Letter, John C. Dancy to Robert C. Weaver, April 23, 1934, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

³⁰Letter, John C. Dancy to Forrester B. Washington, May 10, 1934, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

³¹Letter, John C. Dancy to H. T. Kealing, March 13, 1937, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

the absence of Mr. Culver and Winegar little light was thrown on this subject."³² The unemployment situation was further complicated by deplorable housing conditions.³³ Furthermore, police brutality against blacks continued to be a major source of frustrations for Detroit's black community.³⁴

Despite the persistence and increase of these problems among the Detroit's black community, the league continued to address them with the same old approaches. Thus in January 1939, in reply to an inquiry to the league's methods or procedure by which the organization attempted to obtain jobs for blacks in Detroit, Dancy stated that "we depend upon personnel directors or some other high official to put us in right in other concerns on the basis of his experience with us."³⁵ Dancy felt that the league's work was to "try to break into new situations and to develop people who have aptitudes, abilities and strong personalities." He pointed out that "if any individual can definitely prove his worth, regardless of race, there is a better chance of others in the same group to follow." Yet he was quite aware that blacks vainly and repeatedly attempted to do what they were told to achieve success, and failed."³⁶

³²Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, May 6, 1937, box 11, DULP-MHC.

³³Letter, John C. Dancy to John P. Murchison, May 1, 1934, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

³⁴Wilber C. Rich, Coleman Young and Detroit Politics, p. 50

³⁵Letter, John C. Dancy to T. Arnold Hill, January 27, 1939, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

³⁶An article written by Dancy for publication in the NUL's issue of THE SECRETARIAT, November 13, 1938, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

Despite the league's high-powered industrial committee and a worker employed by the board of education to find employment opportunities for the black youth black unemployment continued to be a problem. In September 1937 Dancy said that "For most part, the Negro is still the common laborer, doing the most menial and the hardest work in the factories. There are at the present time fully 22,000 employed and except in a few establishments, their wage scale is lower than that of the whites doing the same type of work."³⁷ As far as employment was concerned, the league stated

our employment department is not able to do much in the matter of placement because jobs are so few, however, the League has busied itself in referring worthy people to the W. P. A., and about 25 people were given temporary employment with the Department of Public Welfare as temporary investigators, through the aid of the League. There was much discussion regarding the employment situation, law wages and incompetent help. It was thought that a W. P. A. training center for domestics would help the employer secure trained workers and also aid the employee by raising wage standards.³⁸

According to a report of by the Alfred District Council of the Council of Social Agencies Committee to the Michigan Unemployment Compensation Commission Detroit blacks carried 35 per cent of the city's public welfare load in August 1939. In 1940 they received only 7.6 per cent of total placements by MESS in Detroit, mostly in domestic and unskilled labor. Geraldine Bledisoe was an MSES employee and a DUL board member. The commission noted the plight of Negro youth due to job discrimination. "The Council hopes for a sustained and fruitful effort to find jobs for Negro Youth

³⁷Letter, John C. Dancy to Ferne Tennis, September 11, 1937, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

³⁸Minutes of the Board of Directors, May 12, 1938, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

outside the unskilled labor and domestic service category."³⁹

But Moore and Dancy at that time were "enthusiastic about the idea of starting a new Domestic Training class." The league's president added

If the Urban League and the Y. M. C. A. do a good job of training servants, I am perfectly sure the difficult about low pay can be overcome. I am positive there is a demand in Gross Pointe, and therefor should be in other parts of the city, for trained and reliable servants at pay of \$10 a week and upward.⁴⁰

Although Dancy knew that blacks did not appreciate the DUL's program of domestic training, the league still went ahead and began it. "I am interested, too, in the domestic training school," Dancy told Moore, "and will do my best to make a go of the thing once the site is put in shape for it." However, he warned his employer, "it should be remembered that those schools are difficult to operate because the women folk do not take readily to them. They have to be coaxed and coerced into attending." Remembering that the blacks had always opposed the program, Dancy said, "I once ran at the center and found it particularly hard to keep the interest at a pitch."⁴¹

The League Success Stories, 1934-1940

Emphasis on success stories about league's program activities continued to be in

³⁹A Document [December 1939?], with no title beginning with the words, "The Alfred District Council of the council of Social Agencies Committee on Industrial and Public Relations wishes respectfully to call to the attention of the Director of the Michigan Unemployment Compensation Commission...", General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁰Letter, Kenneth L. Moore to John C. Dancy, May 20, 1938, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁴¹Ibid.

the area of recreation, contrasting sharply with employment work. For all of 1937 the league's only employment placement included only one worker in the police department, two or three nurses in the Receiving hospital and a worker employed by the board of education."⁴² Dancy noted that 1938 was "very difficult to secure a job in Detroit."⁴³ During his annual report for 1937, Dancy summarized the league's "high spot of the year's activities," listing the "opening of the Eight Mile Road Center" at the top. This event served as the main highlight of the DUL's activities before the start World War II. Established to replace the Eight Mile Road Center that had been closed in 1935 due to poor facilities and lack of water, the center received financial support from the McGregor Fund, the Aaron Mendelson Memorial Trust,⁴⁴ the Chrysler Corporation, Mrs. Green, Whitby, Miss Woodruff and Brewer.⁴⁵ Moral supporters included Heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, the Michigan governor and Detroit mayor.⁴⁶ Other success stories reported by the league included the fact that the Eight mile Center had become the meeting place for several clubs, including a young bride's club, established "to instruct

⁴²Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors for the year 1937, given on January 28, 1938, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴³Letter, John C. Dancy to Isaac Smith, February 1, 1938, General File of the Director, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁴Letter, John C. Dancy to Elmer A. Carter, May 21, 1936; Dancy to Gentlemen, Attention: Fred M. Butzel, September 15, 1936; Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 24, 1936, Box 11, All in DULP-MHC.

⁴⁵Minutes of the Detroit Urban League Board, May 6, 1937, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁶Tbid.

prospective brides in the household arts, etiquette, sewing and the like."⁴⁷

Among the center's main programs was the Garden and Lawn Contest started in 1936 and of which the Dancy attributed to have improved "the general appearance of the homes."⁴⁸ Other activities included vesper services, music school, social clubs, sewing clubs, and Emily Post clubs that taught etiquette to blacks.⁴⁹

Another success story was the center's general attendance, the baby clinic, interest in the opening of a dental clinic, a community club "whose object is to assist land owners in retaining their prosperity by paying delinquent taxes, hold their meetings in the center."⁵⁰ These activities received the largest financial assistance from the league's donors. In 1936 the Children's Fund of Michigan, which had financially supported the cost of purchasing and operating Green Pastures Camp, gave \$1,650.00 to enable the league to employ a full-time boys worker at the Chestnut Center.⁵¹ Yet William Norton, fund's Secretary, one of the league's best friends and a past board member, argued that the Children's Fund had no money for such a purpose. Like the league's financial supporters, Detroit's government, too, tended to give to the league its greatest support in recreational activities. In 1938 the city provided the Chestnut Center with eight W.P.A. workers and six volunteers to conduct educational classes. The board of

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Minutes of the Board of Directors, October 20, 1938, box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Letter, John C. Dancy to William Norton, May 21, 1936, General File of the Director, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

health operated the league's baby clinic.⁵²

During 1934 and 1940 the Green Pastures Camp came to be regarded as the league's most important institution. Dancy pointed out that the camp was "one of the most favorably spoken of enterprises ever fostered by Negroes in this community" and because of it, "the behavior of the children is spoken of everywhere in highest praise."⁵³

In 1936 Dancy wrote:

Please let me say that I feel that Green Pastures Camp is one of the most purposeful institutions in Detroit. I Could even go even further than that, but I will not for there are others who might feel that I was Boasting; but I think that if you were to talk with the teachers in the schools, or any of those connected with Detroit's social agencies, they would tell you in no unstated fashion that this camp has meant more in the way of taking care of behavior problems than any other institution. Besides, it has stimulated interest in race culture and race pride to a marked degree. The white in this community (I mean those who are socially minded) know all about Green Pastures Camp.⁵⁴

The league's success in its recreational activities convinced the board of directors that the Eight Mile Road center was the ideal place to hold its meeting "in order that the Board members might not lose sight of the activities carried on by the settlement."⁵⁵ The league also considered establishing another center on the west side, described by Dancy as "some outlet for the young men and women for wholesome recreation." Mr. Butzel "felt that a sum of \$40,000 would be as easy to secure as \$25,000 which would

⁵²Minutes of the Board of Directors, October 20, 1938, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵³Memo, Director to the Board of Directors, November 27, 1939, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁴Letter, John C. Dancy to William V. Kelley, July 28, 1936, General File of the Director, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁵Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors, January 28, 1938, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

amply meet the minimum need for establishment of the West Side Center." There was optimism that McGregor Fund and the Rackham Fund would finance the project.⁵⁶

The league's success in recreational programs had more to do with the interests of its financial supporters. Almost all the DUL's financial supporters had some interest in curbing crime among black youth. Both Tracy W. McGregor and Fred M. Butzel illustrate this point well. They belonged to a number of agencies and organizations that dealt with juvenile delinquency and gave considerable amount of money towards the goal of reducing crime. McGregor was described by Butzel as a good friend who "was peculiarly interested" in the "matter of having an efficient and well directed system of probation in our community, especially for directing the lives of many of our underprivileged youth who come in conflict with the law."⁵⁷

Even attempts to seek employment were linked to the overriding goal of reducing crime. For instance, Claire Sanders, who attempted to find jobs for black youth, was doing so to reduce crime. She worked on behalf of juvenile court and the junior consultation bureau. Black crime was a leading problems that worried most white leaders in Detroit. Dancy himself knew very well why recreation was important to whites. He even gave speeches on "how recreation can play its part in the prevention of Crime."⁵⁸ In July 1937 Butzel, in an effort to solicit financial assistance from Dancy on the behalf

⁵⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors, May 12, 1938, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁷Letter, Fred M. Butzel to John C. Dancy, July 13, 1936, General File of the Director, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁸Letter, John C. Dancy to John J. Considine, April 22, 1938, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

of the National Probation Association, stated:

While the public is becoming more and more conscious of the inadequacy in the treatment of crime and the necessity for taking prisons and court administration out of party politics, as well as providing for the training of personnel of professional caliber, the study of the individual who is caught in the meshes of the law has not progressed sufficiently and the application of our limited knowledge is yet very much behind its potential use.⁵⁹

During that same summer of 1937 the white community was concerned with crime among black youth. In June Claire Sander, of the Junior Consultation Bureau, and an ex-board member who had helped found the league in 1916, discussed with Dancy about an idea of employing "an individual with intelligence and training, with a personality such as would enable him to make and hold good will of those with whom he came in contact, a salary of at least \$2,100 a year should be given." The potential employee would work through the placement bureau of the board of education serving black boys and girls.⁶⁰

Sanders contacted Norton, a one-time board member of the DUL and chief executive of the Children's Fund of Michigan, requesting him "to furnish the salary necessary for such a worker due to the fact that the individuals to benefit from this project are beyond the age limit of the Fund, Norton could offer no assistance." In July the league's board invited Sanders to consult on what to do about the idea of "developing opportunities for employment of trained Negro youth."⁶¹ Her suggestion was that "a

⁵⁹Letter, Fred M. Butzel to John C. Dancy, July 14, 1937, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁰Letter, John C. Dancy to Claire M. Sanders, June 9, 1937, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁶¹Ibid.

young colored man, with training recognized by the Board of Education, be employed to work under the direction of the Urban League with the Board of Education, to stimulate interest among colored workers, white employers in colored districts and Negro employers in an effort to open new opportunities for placing Negro Youth."⁶² The board's chief concern was whether the project would not lead to "a sacrifice of other Urban League activities." Recreational activities were valued much more by the DUL than obtaining jobs for blacks.

Finally a committee was appointed comprised of Butzel, Winegar, Dancy, Moore and Mrs. Green "to study the situation thoroughly and that they be authorized to take action for the funds if they find the cause worthy."⁶³ The Council of Social Agencies, the Financial Sponsor of the League's financial sponsor approved the employment of an employment counselor, and gave \$400 to the league for "employment work for a period not to exceed two months of this summer with the understanding that there is no commitment by this action for an extension of the service."⁶⁴

White women showed greater interest in training and utilizing black women as domestic workers. In May 1937 H. R. Stackpool, director of districts in the department of public welfare wrote Dancy suggesting the practice house be established in the Alfred district, one of the worst areas occupied predominantly by blacks. Dancy replied that he was "heartily in favor" of her suggestion although he warned her that black women were

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, July 1, 1937.

⁶⁴Letter, Percival Dodge to John C. Dancy, July 16, 1937, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

not interested in domestic work and training. "I do not expect to see serried throngs lingering about its doors, eager and anxious to gain admission unless there is evolved some plan which will insure the job once the course has been completed."⁶⁵

The League and Joe Louis

The League's success in recreational work profited with the championship of Joe Louis, Detroit's "Brown Bomber" in the 1930s. Louis and his manager, John Roxburgh lent their moral and financial support to the league, maintained a long history together.

Louis's boxing career began in the 1920s through the recreational activities of the DUL. Roxburgh, had been a key Dul's supporter when it was started; as a member of the Y. N. P. A., the group organized by Washington during 1916-17 to promote the league's recreational activities. When the Green Pastures Camp was established, Louis visited the children. In 1937 when the league opened its new Eight Mile Center, Louis was its guest of honor.

In the 1930s Louis and his manager became important financial donors. In 1936 Louis sponsored the children's christmas party held by the league.⁶⁶ In 1937 Roxburgh provided gifts for the Eight Mile Road Center. In 1938 other urban league officials began to use Dancy for access Louis and Roxburgh for donations. In February 1938 A. L. Foster, executive secretary of the Chicago Urban League, appealed to Dancy to speak to

⁶⁵Letter, John C. Dancy to H. R. Stackpool, June 11, 1937, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 24, 1936, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Roxburgh for financial assistance. Dancy suggested that they seek aid from Julian Black because Louis felt that "most of his charities should be given to Detroit where he belongs."⁶⁷ However, Dancy did assist the NUL in obtaining a donation of about \$2,500 from Louis. In summer 1939 Dancy managed to prod the McGregor Fund into giving \$500 to the NUL.⁶⁸ During the late 1930s Louis and Roxborough supported the league's scholarship program by endowing black youth with money to attend college.⁶⁹

Influence through mediation

Prior to World War II, some black Detroiters began calling upon the league to abandon its traditional program. They wanted the DUL to communicate to the power structure their impatience with slow social change. But the league was not prepared to abandon its accustomed approach. In September 1934 Sarah M. Blackwell, a black woman asked Dancy to use his organization to fight on the behalf of her daughter who was being refused a room in a University of Michigan dormitory. Dancy refused to approach the matter as a DUL representative. He wanted to "make the appeal on personal grounds." As he put it, "I did not want the Urban League brought into it because that is

⁶⁷Letter, John C. Dancy to A. L. Foster, February 24, 1938, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁸Letter, Jesse O. Thomas to John C. Dancy, June 26, 1939, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁹Memo, John C. Dancy, Director to the Board of Directors, November 27, 1939, General File of the Director, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

purely a National Advancement Association job."⁷⁰ However, Dancy's style so infuriated Mrs. Blackwell that she wrote to a newspaper condemning Dancy. "She took me to task for not having done anything for her daughter Jean," Dancy later complained. Upon learning of the story against him from one of the black weeklies, the Associated Press, Dancy vowed that "I certainly do not plan to make any move in behalf of Jean after the black eye Mrs. Blackwell gave me through the newspapers."⁷¹

The league's most important donors and friends also came under attack from the black community. A wave of Negro anti-semitism emerged in Detroit and Chicago. Dancy worried about the consequences because several members of Detroit's Jewish community were the league's friends and financial supporters, including Fred M. Butzel, the Julian Kroliks, Tracy W. McGregor, the Aaron Mendelson Fund and Rackham Foundation. Through Butzel's efforts, the league enjoyed a good relationship with Jewish settlement organizations.

Black anti-semitism became a source of concern to Jewish leaders as well. In 1938 William I. Boxerman, executive director of the Jewish Community Council of Detroit, approached Dancy seeking the league's cooperation in fighting against Negro anti-semitism. The Jewish community requested the DUL to spread among the black community the message that "negro anti-semitism is illogical and dangerous."⁷² The

⁷⁰Letter, John C. Dancy to Edward S. Lewis, September 24, 1934, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

⁷¹Letter, John C. Dancy to Edward S. Lewis, September 24, 1934, General File of the Director, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

⁷²Letter, William I. Boxerman to John C. Dancy, September 23, 1938, Executive Secretary's File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

Jewish leaders did admit that individual Jews were among those that exploited African-Americans, but felt that since other whites also participated in the exploitation, it was unfair to only single out the Jews.

No one will deny that the Negro race in America has been exploited by white people. Among the exploiters are not only individual Jews, catholics, or Protestants, but members of other religious denominations. Why should any Negro wish to single out the Jews as a group and to incite Negro prejudice particularly against them, unless it be that certain Negro individuals wish to achieve a pseudo-popularity and a certain standing among unthinking elements of their own group through fanning race prejudice?⁷³

The Jewish community of Detroit also noted that Jews were major financial contributors to the black cause and aided them "in their struggles."⁷⁴

Dancy cooperated with the Jewish leaders and requested black newspaper owners to assist in preventing the spread of Negro anti-semitism. He contacted the Detroit Tribune and asked its editors to include an article entitled "Be Just to the Jews." Although the Tribune agreed its editor also reminded Dancy of the fact that Jewish establishments were prejudiced towards the blacks. He was particularly unhappy that blacks did not get "a fair share of advertisement" in the establishments that the Jews controlled and from which the black papers were excluded. He pointed out that although blacks were major customers of the leading Jewish merchants they were not given a fair share. These anti-black businesses allegedly included Colonial Clothing Store, Peoples Outfitters Co., Weil's Furniture Co., Sears-Roebuck Stores, Sam's Cut-Rate Department

⁷³A Document entitled "Negro Anti-Semitism is Illogical and Dangerous", September 23, 1938, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁴Ibid.

Stores, Seigels's Store, and Himelhoch Brothers Co. Many other local concerns under Jewish ownership refused to employ blacks.⁷⁵

In November 1938 A. L. Foster requested Dancy "in view of our fight against Anti-Semitism, a prominent Jew would be most desirable" to be the guest speaker at their anniversary. Dancy replied, "I can only suggest the DUL's Fred Butzel, to speak for you at your Anniversary Dinner." Butzel as the best guest speaker for the anniversary, Mr. Dancy stated that Mr. Butzel was "one of the foremost citizen's of Detroit city," was "loved and admired by all," and "a true friend to Negroes." Dancy regarded Butzel as an important philanthropist in the cause of the African-Americans "much in the same light that Julius Rosenwald was in Chicago." Dancy pointed out that Butzel had given nearly \$28,000 to assist black students.⁷⁶

Dancy's role as a mediator between the Jews and blacks consisted of running messages from Jewish leaders to the black community. There is no record that he presented to the Jewish leaders the complaints voiced by blacks against the Jews. He was tied too tightly to them. This close relationship to powerful Jewish individuals made it difficult for him to act as an objective mediator.

⁷⁵Letter, J. Esw. McCall to John C. Dancy, September 30, 1938, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁶Letters, A. L. Foster to John C. Dancy , November 4, 1938; John C. Dancy to A. L. Foster, November 6, 1938. Both in Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

The League's Response to Black Political Transformation:

During the 1930s blacks nationwide became interested in using their vote to improve their condition. The increase in the black population of northern cities where their ballots were useful made politics a viable route for social change. In 1910 the total black population in Detroit was 5,740; in 1916 it jumped to 15,00. In 1920 Detroit's black community reached 40,838, a figure which was 4.4 per cent of the total population. This figure more than doubled in 1925. In 1930 Detroit's population which was black reached 120, 066. A decade later, this figure increased to 149,119 which represented about 9.1 per cent of the total population.⁷⁷ As these figures indicate, the growing numerical strength of Detroit blacks became important in the mid-1930s. This development placed the DUL in an awkward.

The policies of the New Deal during the Great Depression led blacks throughout the country as well as in Detroit to consider shifting their political allegiance from the Republican to the Democratic Party. The support given by Black Detroiters to the Democratic ticket during Frank Murphy's election as Detroit's Mayor in 1930 was a turning point in the city's black history. But Dancy was a loyal Republican.

Among Detroit's black Republicans who shifted to the Democratic party were Coleman Young's parents.⁷⁸ The most significant individual to enter the Democratic party in 1932 was Charles C. Diggs, a prosperous businessman owning a mortgage company and the House of Diggs, a funeral home; became a leader in ward Politics.

⁷⁷Levine, Internal Combustion, p. 59.

⁷⁸Rich, Coleman Young and Detroit Politics, p. 47.

Harold Bledsoe, whose wife was on the DUL board of trustee, and Joseph Craigen, an attorney and the leader of the Garvey movement also switched their political allegiance. Shortly after, Bledsoe was appointed chairman of the black committee of the democratic party in that same year. Diggs, Bledsoe and Craigen immediately began recruiting blacks to the democratic party.⁷⁹ In 1932 Franklin D. Roosevelt had received 36.7 per cent of the black vote; in 1936 they gave him 63.5 per cent.⁸⁰ In Detroit, Diggs, was elected state senator.

The shift of Detroit's blacks in their political allegiance from Republican to the Democratic Party conflicted with the DUL's financial supporters, industrial leaders who opposed the ideas voiced by the Democratic party. On one occasion, Detroit's leading industrialists refused to serve on the mayor's committee dealing with the unemployment. They withdrew from it simply because the mayor suggested the idea of federal aid for the unemployed. Detroit's industrialists argued that the idea was communistic.⁸¹ During this period DUL's president, Kenneth Moore, resigned because he suspected communist influences in the Urban League movement.⁸² The industrial employers went as far as attempting to prevent Detroit's blacks from voting Democratic. Henry Ford and his black allies, especially the black ministers, strongly advised blacks not to make the shift.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 50.

⁸⁰Conot, American Odyssey, p. 337.

⁸¹Widwick, Detroit:City of Race and Class Violence, P. 48.

⁸²See Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, pp. 96-98

However, blacks rejected this plan.⁸³ Ford had helped finance and organize the Republican party in African-American districts and hung placards favoring Herbert Hoover in the River Rouge plant.⁸⁴ Black Detroiters not only supported Frank Murphy but also Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1932 the Detroit blacks voted overwhelmingly Democratic in some neighborhood twenty to one.⁸⁵

The support of Detroit's blacks for the Democratic Party, Dancy's admiration of mayor Murphy and the industrialists's opposition to New Deal programs influenced the league's political behavior during the mid-1930s. Dancy was well aware of the political leanings of most blacks and the benefits blacks obtained from New Deal policies. In October 1936 he revealed to one of his friends that Frank Murphy was "extremely popular with Negroes and rightly so because he is willing to give recognition to them."⁸⁶ Dancy received several cherished appointments due to the defeat of the Republicans. As soon as Charles C. Diggs was elected to the state senate on the Democratic ticket, he invited Dancy and other individuals to join a nonpartisan commission aimed at advising the new senator.⁸⁷ In November Dancy sent a congratulatory letter to newly elected Governor

⁸³Rich, Coleman Young and Detroit Politics, p. 51.

⁸⁴Widwick, Detroit: City of Race and Class Violence, p. 31.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Letter, John C. Dancy to Lester A. Walton, October 18, 1936, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁷Letter, Charles C. Diggs to John C. Dancy, December 18, 1936, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

Frank Murphy, praising him for his interest in the affairs of the black community.⁸⁸ In August 1938 Murphy appointed Dancy as a member of the commission on reform and modernization of government in addition to being a member of the House of Correction.⁸⁹ These appointments brought honor and recognition to the DUL president.⁹⁰ When Murphy failed to be reelected Dancy wrote him stating that he was very disappointed.⁹¹

At the same time Dancy remained a committed Republican, criticizing the New Deal policies. In March 1935 he notified Walter White of the NAACP that "with the coming of the N.R.A., a goodly number of the Negroes lost their jobs. The code regulations with higher pay under N.R.A., caused a lot of Negroes to be discharged and replaced by whites. It is plain that the Negroes were hired in the first place because they were a cheap labor supply."⁹² While acknowledging that there was a "great room for improvement," Dancy also felt that "the F.E.R.A., has done better than one could suspect it would"⁹³

⁸⁸Letter, John C. Dancy to Frank Murphy, November 5, 1936, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁹Letter, Frank Murphy to John C. Dancy, August 22, 1938, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁰Letter, John C. Dancy to Honorable Frank Murphy, August 25, 1938, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁹¹Letter, John C. Dancy to Honorable Frank Murphy, December 17, 1938, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁹²Letter, John C. Dancy to Walter White, March 15, 1935, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

⁹³Ibid.

His political dilemma during these years on December 21, 1938, when he pointed out that he never wanted people to know what his political party affiliations were:

My closest friends have never known whether I was Republican, Democrat or Socialist. The fact is, that my leanings have always been towards the Republican party, and naturally; my father was an office holder under several presidents of that party beginning with Harrison and lasting through a part of the Taft administration. However, I have never taken the stump for any Michigan candidate for office.⁹⁴

His neutral stand, he believed, gave him "contact with those in the high places." He stated that "several of Michigan's political leaders have asked my advice or council on matters pertaining to the Negro and in some instances where Negroes were not involved directly."⁹⁵ As he surveyed his political involvement Dancy cited Governor Sleeper in making him a representative of his in "some matters relating to the soldiers in the World War, Senator James Couzens requesting his advice on matters relating to blacks," and a "member of the committee to welcome the soldiers returning from France."⁹⁶ He also recalled his appointment by Murphy to the unemployment committee and his 1933 appointment to the House of Corrections. In 1937 Mayor Couzens reappointed Dancy to the House of Corrections. In 1934 he was elected president of the commission, a position held for three years. This position was so important to Dancy that his friends continually teased him about it. On April 21, 1934 John T. Clark wrote him a letter, "Dear John: or rather should I address you as Commissioner, since I

⁹⁴Letter, John C. Dancy to Thos R. Solomon, December 21, 1938, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

understand you are running the Detroit Penal System more or less."⁹⁷ Two months later, Dancy stated that "since I've been on the House of Correction Commission, some here have tried to make me a politician but whatever success I've here has been due to the fact that I have kept free of this nefarious game. That's a game for the rich, not us poor folks who when our of job have to scuffle to beat hell to make it."⁹⁸

The League's Response to Black Alliance with Labor Unions

The League's inability to adjust its program and policies to the changing times led it into another serious dilemma. The league found its financial dependence on industrialists difficult to support the pro-labor sentiments of the 1930s. Since its founding the League had supported strike-breaking. In 1921 during a white metal-workers strike at the Timken-Detroit Axle Company works, the DUL "freely furnished Negro labor to plants affected." The league's industrial secretary, whose salary was paid by the aggressively anti-labor Employer's Association of Detroit, supplied over one hundred-and-fifty black strikebreakers, escorting them across picket lines who were afraid to attack so large a group. After delivered his men, the secretary left the plant, unnoticed, by a side exit.⁹⁹ H. W. Alden, company vice-president was the general secretary of the Associated

⁹⁷Letter, John T. Clark to John C. Dancy, April 21, 1934, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁸Letter, John C. Dancy to T. R. Solomon, December 21, 1938, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁹Spero and Harris, Negro Worker and the Labor Movement, p. 140; Meier, Black Detroit and the Rise of UAW, p. 19; Rudwick, Detroit: A city of Race and Class, p. 19.

Charities, the organization that initially helped establish the league and paid Dancy's salary.¹⁰⁰

On another occasion an "all-white dining room staff at the Detroit Athletic Club discovered just how suddenly management could become 'enlightened' on race matters." As soon as its whites-only waiters's union struck to establish union work standards, management hired an all-black crew who helped to reopen for business. The situation was understandable given that strikebreaking was the only way for these blacks could enter such previously all-white jobs.¹⁰¹ Most labor unions refused to accept black workers into their membership.

Nationally, during the depression, a few blacks began considering labor unionization of black workers as an effective social-change strategy. In 1930 a small band of young black radical intellectuals at Howard University emerged in support of labor unionization as a more viable strategy for social change. The group included figures like Philip Randolph, Sterling D. Spero, Abram L. Harris, Franklin Frazier, Charles H. Houton and later, Ralph J. Bunche.¹⁰² In 1934 the NUL began organizing black workers.¹⁰³ They requested Lester B. Granger to organize a Workers' Council.

This development created a dilemma for the Detroit league. The NUL's plan to organize black workers greatly alarmed Dancy. He pointed out that organizing black

¹⁰⁰Correspondences and Report, August 1915-June 1916, Associated Charities of Detroit, United Community Services, Series I, Box 3, ALUA-WSU.

¹⁰¹Working Detroit, p. 44.

¹⁰²Meier and Rudwick, p.23 and Spero and Harris, Black Worker (1931)

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 250.

workers would annoy industrial employers of blacks because Detroit was "principally an open shop town and few organized groups can be found in automobile concerns."¹⁰⁴ At the same time Dancy, personally supported the idea of organizing black workers. At 1934 a meeting held in Detroit he "made his endorsement even stronger."¹⁰⁵ In a letter written on May 1, 1934 Dancy clearly revealed his dilemma:

This question of trying to make the Negro labor conscious is one that has been interesting for some time and yet, am still unable to state my own position clearly. You see, Detroit is an 'open shop' town. Labor unions have not thrived here, certainly not in the automobile industries. I am therefore hesitant about advising Negroes to go about organization when there is fear in my mind that we might simply be made the spear head in something that eventually turns out to be a failure.¹⁰⁶

The league's white financial supporters monitored Dancy's position in regard to the question of labor unions. They wanted him to be pro-employer rather than pro-labor. In December 1934 Julian Krolik, a Detroit industrialists and a former member of the DUL board of directors, wrote a letter to Dancy stating that:

I was interested and pleased to learn from 'Council Clippings' of the position you took at a recent meeting, when union labor was discussed. That was certainly a note that has not been sounded as it should have been, and represents a source, not only of injustice to the Negro, but also a decided weakness in the union labor movement. I just hope that note will be sounded more frequently, in the future.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴Letter, John C. Dancy to Lawrence A. Oxley, April 23, 1934, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁵Parris and Brooks, p. 254.

¹⁰⁶Letter, John C. Dancy to John T. Clark, May 1, 1934, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁷Letter, Julian H. Krolik to John C. Dancy, December 22, 1934, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

Although there is no direct documentation providing clear information on Dancy's position at the meeting, development of his thinking on the matter would suggest that he did not wish to take sides contrary to his white friends. It is also inconceivable that an industrial employer would have praised Dancy for taking a stand favoring labor unions. During this period the league and Dancy had not yet made their positions clear.

The League increasingly came under pressure to state its position on the question of labor unions. In 1936 the National Negro Congress invited Dancy to attend or send a representative to its meeting.¹⁰⁸ That same year Charles C. Diggs, Sr., Reverend Horace White, and Louis Martin, a newspaper editor, embraced labor unionism. Scholars viewed the support of labor unions by these young black leaders as the "more influential factor in creating favorable sentiments for labor unionism among blacks in Detroit."¹⁰⁹

In the late 1936 and early 1937 more black workers joined white strikers. At the Midland Steel Frame Company black workers actively supported a strike. As Professors Meir and Rudwick noted, "not only did the men of both races act together, with a black assembler, Oscar Oden, serving on the bargaining committee, but the wives on the outside jointly prepared food which they passed up through the factory windows."¹¹⁰ A few blacks also participated in the GM sit-down strike of January and February 1937. As Dancy confirmed to a friend: "Detroit has been involved in the strikes mainly in accessory plants where Negroes have been working. In these plants the Negroes have done exactly

¹⁰⁸Letter, C. Frankson to John C. Dancy, November 8, 1936, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁹Meier and Rudwick, Black Detroit and the Rise of UAW, p. 32.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 35.

what the whites have done. All have struck together."¹¹¹ During this time the union's power increased so that "the city is scared stiff, fearful what might happen in case the strike spreads in a big way to Detroit."¹¹²

Despite of these developments, Dancy still found it difficult to endorse labor unions. In January 1936 Dancy criticized labor unions for taking union fees from blacks, then telling them that "there is no work at the time that he can be referred to," and their secret "tacit understanding between the union and the prospective employer that where and when the Negro union member is on a job, fault is found with his services or the employer argues that he has sufficient help without him."¹¹³

As the month-long sit-in-strike at Chrysler began, Dancy found it not only impossible to ignore the subject of labor unionism but also in an extremely difficult dilemma. The Chrysler Corporation served as the second largest employer of blacks and the league's closest ally. Winegar, the corporation's personnel director, was one of Dancy's closest friends. He also served on the league board of directors. Chrysler supplied black children with Christmas baskets which were distributed by the DUL. When the league opened its new center at the Eight Mile Road in 1937, Chrysler provided \$50 to meet the cost for the opening ceremony.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹Letter, John C. Dancy to T. Arnold Hill, January 27, 1937, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Letter, John C. Dancy to William M. Ashby, January 24, 1936, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, May 6, 1937, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

In 1937 the NUL wrote Dancy stating three benefits to be derived "by negroes from joining labor unions" and "why the negro should join the unions."¹¹⁵ They included the fact that no worker could protect himself while outside the unions; once close-shop contracts were made between the unions and the employers as a result of the labor relations act, blacks would find themselves excluded from employment; and if blacks did not join labor unions they would increasingly become objects of prejudice. During this time many blacks found that although "there is discrimination against Negroes even after they are in the union, this can be controlled, however, only by getting into the union and fighting it out from within. If you are out you have no voice whatever."¹¹⁶

The subject of labor unionism had become "one of the most controversial matters of this time and Negroes must give thought to it."¹¹⁷ In fact, at the height of the 1937 G.M. sit-down, a debate was sponsored at the Y.M.C.A. between Reverend Horace White and Donald Marshall. Marshall charged the UAW with communistic interests--precisely the arguments usually offered by manufacturers. Reverend White countered by denouncing union critics as supporting starving wages. He pointed out that blacks joined political parties even though they were also racists. He concluded his remarks by urging blacks working at Ford not to break the strikes.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵Letter, John C. Dancy to Lester B. Granger, February 2, 1937, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁶Letter, John C. Dancy to Andrew Smeed, March 8, 1937, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 3, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Meier and Rudwick, The Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW, pp. 37.

Although most black workers during the 1937 Chrysler strike took a neutral stand, their refusal to side with employers contributed to the strike's success. Moreover, during this time some blacks, including Samuel Fanroy, a chief steward in the paint shop at and a member of the strike committee, became deeply committed to the union and began urging other blacks to join the sit-down strikers. Most black workers remained neutral and refused to be used as strike-breakers as the company asked them to do.¹¹⁹ With the appointment by United Auto Workers Union (AUW) of Paul Kirk as the first paid black union organizer in 1937, and later, of more black full-time organizers, including Walter Hardin, the matter of unionism grew heated.¹²⁰

During spring 1938 Chrysler, DUL's closest industrial ally revealed its true colors. Chrysler management locked out twenty-four thousand workers from its Dodge main plant, including the black worker force of seventeen hundred. The union then struck at all the Chrysler factories. Chrysler's management, attempting to capitalize on black alienation from the union, developed the back-to-work movement. Because the management was counting on the loyalty of black workers, the possibility of racial violence loomed. Blacks sympathetic to the labor unions suspected Dancy as a back-door collaborator in a situation that promised to explode into a violent and bloody confrontation.¹²¹ These blacks appealed to state senator Diggs, who assured them of his full cooperation. Reverend Horace White called together twenty-five prominent local

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 36-37.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 43.

¹²¹Ibid., pp. 67-68.

black leaders in a last-minute attempt to prevent the anticipated racial violence. The meeting included Louis Martin, William Peck, Wilbur Woodson, Hardin, Charles Mahoney, Macolm Dade, Reverend Charles Hill, Hon Charles Diggs and Reverend Horace White.¹²²

Chrysler Corporation gathered together a group of black and white workers to serve as strike-breakers. Black leaders published a pamphlet with the signatures of four prominent black labor supporters in the black community--Reverend White, Senator Diggs, Louis Martin and Reverend Hill urging blacks not to be used as strike-breakers through the back-to-work movement. Reverend White tried to convince the strikers not to attack the strike-breakers because the company wanted violence as a pretext for calling in state troopers. A federal labor mediator helped arrange an agreement that brought the strike to a peaceful close.¹²³

As a result of this strike, Chrysler signed a contract that stated, "When new jobs are created or vacancies occur, the oldest employee in point of service regardless of race, creed or color shall be given preference in filling such new job or vacancy so far as practical and consistent with proper ability to perform the service required."¹²⁴

The league's reluctance to adjust its policies and practices received its strongest blow yet from the forces of change during spring 1941 as a result of labor union's victory over Ford Motor Company. During this situation, expediency rather than principle forced

¹²²Ibid., p. 69.

¹²³Ibid., pp. 69-70.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 72.

the league to side with the labor unions. The incident began in September 1940 when the UAW began organizing Ford workers under Michael Widman's leadership. At that time two black secretaries were hired. Christopher C. Alston, a radical young black, was given the task of editing a document that appealed to thousands of blacks working at Ford. In one of the pamphlets Alston published, Henry Ford and the Negro People, "denounced the auto magnate as a hypocritical racist operating behind a facade of benevolent philosophy."¹²⁵ The UAW tried to contact black workers to convince them to join the union. Only few openly joined, although many were privately sympathetic to the unions. "Pro-Ford sentiment remained strongest at the Urban League."¹²⁶ Dancy joined Reverend Bradby in urging blacks to remain pro-employer. The Interdenominational Ministers Alliance publicly declared its support of Henry Ford.

Senator Diggs, Reverend Hill and Martin continued to urge blacks to support join the union. UAW leaders, desiring to win black cooperation, began reassuring black workers that their jobs would be protected if they joined unions. Once it became clear that unions would triumph, several middle-class blacks began shifting their allegiance to the union. One of Dancy's closest friend, Louis Blount, the president of the Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company, allied with the union. Geraldine Bledisoe and Beulah Whitby, two influential league board members also sided with labor unions.¹²⁷

The union struck on April 1, 1941. The NAACP accused Ford of deliberately

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 83.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 84.

¹²⁷Ibid., pp. 86-87.

stirring racial hatred in order to frustrate union solidarity. The following day Ford management called for strike-breakers. Their use of black attackers, however, backfired when at the urging of the NAACP, a few hundred blacks left the plant. The following day four hundred strikebreakers, mostly black, battled strikers, injuring a number of people. The NAACP youth council's sound truck circled the Ford plant at River Rouge several time and black residential and business neighborhoods urging blacks to refuse being used as strike breakers. On April 3 one hundred black leaders came together to discuss the emergency. The DUL sent Beulah Whitby and Geraldine Bledisoe as its representatives.¹²⁸ With the NUL and NAACP backing the UAW-CIO, Dancy and his board found it difficult to take any antiunion stand. Lester Granger wired Dancy urging him to publicly support the UAW-CIO. The DUL board refused to take any stand on the matter.¹²⁹

On April 6, 1941 the local NAACP distributed about ten thousand leaflets at black churches urging black workers not to be used as strike breakers.¹³⁰ These actions helped encourage many blacks to become members of the UAW-CIO. Blacks demonstrated their resolve by walking out of the Ford plant in protest against being used as strike breakers. By April 9, 1941 the company still had about one thousand blacks in the plant. Dancy still did not know what to do, although by this time he was less

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 93.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 95.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 97.

sympathetic with Ford management.¹³¹ That same day he wrote Eugene Jones, telling him that the Ford strike was a "nasty thing in that it is taking on a decided racial angle." He also expressed his awareness that many blacks were now walking the picket line. He sought the advice of the NUL on what to do about the situation, stating he had not called any meeting "because I believe the right advise is being given. The mass of Negroes are all divided as to whether to go in with the unions or to stay out. It was a difficult situation."¹³²

In the final analysis, a majority of black workers refused to support strike-breaking. This refusal helped the UAW triumph over Ford. Ford Motor acknowledged union's victory by signing an agreement with the UAW-CIO. Pleased with the development, the union officials thanked the black workers: "the UAW-CIO wishes to express its hearty appreciation of the union solidarity shown by the overwhelming majority of the Negro employees of the Ford Motor Company in going out on strike with the rest of the union members."¹³³ The league finally began supporting labor unions. By 1943 labor unions had become such a major force in the black struggle for equality and progress that the league desired a closer working relationship with the union officers.¹³⁴

¹³¹Letter, John C. Dancy to Elmer Carter, April 9, 1941, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹³²Letter, John C. Dancy to E. K. Jones, April 9, 1941, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹³³Quoted in Thomas, Life for Us is What We Make It, P. 303.

¹³⁴Chapter nine makes this point more stronger.

In conclusion, the aftermath of depression was problematic for the league in a number of ways. It created a new climate of change in attitude and ushered the era of transition in black political alliances. The blacks leanings towards the Democratic party and labor unions placed them at sharp odds with the DUL and its financial supporters. But the league was not able to adjust to the new conditions. Although enjoying considerable support from Detroit's power structure, its influence began to be erode. Dancy tried to push his influence by mediating between blacks and the Jews, and by accepting appointments from Democratic officials. Eventually the league was forced reluctantly to accept the growing power of labor movement; this in turn weakened the league's leadership.

CHAPTER NINE

ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGE AND ADJUSTMENT DURING THE WORLD WAR II

In all the years of the League's existence there has never been a summer season where the work of the League has been heavier. Conditions directly bearing on the war has had much to do with this. Much of the Directors time has been taken with serving on the Draft Board, the City Rent Commission, which was formed by the City Council as a method of mediation between landlords and tenants, and upon which the director has served.¹

John C. Dancy (1942)

In the period between 1940 and 1945 the League faced two major organizational problems. Firstly, activities and organizations that promoted the war effort began to make enormous demands on the staff and time of the DUL. But the League's budget and staff had not changed much since the time of Depression. In fact since the mid-1930s, as noted in the previous chapter, the League's staff had been having a problem of meeting the demands of its increased activities and commitments. This problem of strained staff of the DUL was sharpened by the demands made of the organization by the war-related activities. The League's desperate need at this time was, therefore, the expansion of its budget and staff. Secondly, the organization's traditional policy of not involving directly in matters of segregation and discrimination limited its organizational effectiveness in

¹Annual Report of Detroit Urban League for the year 1941, Folder [11-15], box 11, DULP-MHC.

addressing racially based problems plaguing the black community. As a result, other more militant organizations filled the vacuum and took over the league's leadership. The difficulty involved here was how to find a middle ground between preserving its traditional policy of not dealing with matters of discrimination, and maintaining friendly relations with organizations that called upon it to directly demand an end to racial segregation, discrimination and injustice. Since the League's strategy of addressing the needs of urban blacks constituted polite and friendly persuasion rather than demanding justice the emergence of organizations that openly advocated boycott, protest and other forms of aggressive strategy presented a dilemma. What was it to do in this instance? This chapter discusses the League's effort to address these two wartime problems. It highlights the consequences for the League that came about as a result of its approach to solve these two key wartime organizational problems.

The Demands of the War Effort

During World War II Dancy participated a great deal in war-related efforts. He devoted a considerable amount of time participating in the War-related government agencies. In the Fall of 1940 he was appointed to serve as a member of the Selective Service System of Draft Board #6 "where he devoted time to the Selective Service program of the Government."² In 1941 the League served the war effort by recommending two young women to serve as hostesses at Fort Custer. In the summer of

²Report of the Director to the Board of Directors, December 12, 1940; Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1940, File, [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

that same year, the DUL provided material for the Survey Magazine for an article on Negroes in National Defense which appeared in the June issue.³

He also took part in the USO. The national USO was organized in February of 1941. Throughout the country there were about three hundred USO, mostly, segregated clubs. Only a few were interracial. In Detroit, Dancy served as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the John R. USO. The "committee is interested doing whatever it can to provide for soldiers who are stationed in and near Detroit," said Dancy.⁴

In 1942 Dancy devoted time on the State Health and Welfare Committee at the invitation of the Ex-Governor Murray D. Van Wagoner, and lent assistance as a Committeeman on the Army War Show, the Youth Service Incorporated, You Can Defend America Program, the Russian War Relief, the Committee of the Protestants, Catholics and Jews. Dancy was also one of the incorporators of the War Chest Campaign of 1942. The Members of the League's staff also gave considerable help in the Red Cross Drive.⁵

One other chief way in which the DUL assisted in war effort was in the Purchasing of the bonds. In February, for instance, the DUL presented William Pickens, Dean of Morgan College to stimulate interest in the sale of war bonds."⁶

To increase the morale of blacks nationwide the DUL recommended that "a high ranking officer, commissioned by the President and assigned to Negro units to do

³Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1941, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴Director's Report, 1943, File [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵Annual Report for the year 1942, File [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶Ibid.

whatever he can to raise the morale of Negroes in the various units of the army." They named Jean T. Shaefer, Secretary- Treasurer of the Michigan Bell Telephone Company and a member of the League's Board of Trustees.⁷

The DUL also participated in the Intercultural Understanding, an organization which believed that:

One important approach to building good morale is through a well-planned program of intercultural education. This type of program introduces nothing new into the school schedule. It simply places fresh and greater emphasis upon making children understand and appreciate the contributions which various races and nationalities have made to the development of our own national life and to the progress of civilization in general.⁸

Other agencies that the DUL joined to deal with the moral problem included Welfare Committees, the F.E.P.C. of the Detroit Metropolitan Area,⁹ the Health and Welfare Committee,¹⁰ the Committee of the State Council of Defense.¹¹

The League also assisted in the war effort by persuading blacks to raise funds for the purpose of supporting the war. In 1943 the League helped to raise about \$8,000 for such activities and proudly pointed the fact that it had exceeded the quota which had

⁷Letter, John C. Dancy to Mr. Lester B. Granger, February 6, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁸A Document entitled, "Toward Better Understanding and Greater Unity", Executive Secretary's General File, 1942, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁹Letters, E. W. McFarland to Mr. John C. Dancy, April 3, 1942; John C. Dancy to E. W. McFarland, April 6, 1942. Both in the Executive Secretary's General File, 1942, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰Document, "Health and Welfare Section Civilian War Service Division Michigan Council of Defense", Executive Secretary's General File, 1942, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹¹Ibid.

been assigned it!.¹² In the following year DUL raised for the War Chest Campaign about \$5,0.¹³ By 1944 DUL was very active in war effort. It was represented on the John R. U.S.O. Committee, the Wayne County Council of Defense, the Board of Directors of the War Chest, and Advisory Board of the American Red Cross. Before the creation of the Veteran Information Service, the League's Vocational Services Secretary had in operation a Negro Veteran Committee, which considered steps which could be taken to assist veterans with their special problems. The Committee was composed of personnel men, Negro Commanders of American Legion Posts, and representatives of other organizations.¹⁴

The League strived to spread patriotism even among high schools. On Feb. 12, 1945 Dancy, happily, served as a judge in an essay contest sponsored by his old friend Hon. Charles Mahoney who had given \$500 to Miller High School to the Arts and English Department for use in an essay contest on "Why We Love America."¹⁵

The League's participation in the war was recognized by the Government. On April 27, 1944 Dancy received an Award for Service Certificate from the State of Michigan Office of Director of Civilian Defense for contributing 200 hours of work.¹⁶

¹²Ibid.

¹³Annual Report for the year 1944, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Letters, Ruth Spencer to Mr. John C. Dancy, February 12, 1945; John C. Dancy to Ruth Spencer, February 14, 1945. Both in the Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁶See a copy of the Certificate in the Executive Secretary's General File, 1944, Folder [11-15], Box 5, DULP-MHC.

Wartime Reorganization of the League

Dancy's involvement in these war-related activities put considerable pressure on the League to expand its staff. But this required an increase of its financial strength. When World War II started the League's annual budget was \$15,896.80. The League's Board made persistent request to the Community Fund to increase its funding so that it could employ an assistant Director. Their consent increased the League's annual budget to \$ 20,054 for the year 1942. The Community Fund continued to increase their funding of the DUL as a result of the 1943 race riot. By the end of the War the League's annual budget reached \$35,532.00 and in 1946 it rose up to \$51,179.¹⁷ Throughout the years the League's regular source of income continued to be the Community Fund. With this increased budget the League expanded its staff.

In 1942 under the pressure of too much work due to the demands made on the League by the war, the organization decided to departmentalize its program. The League became organized into three departments: the administrative, the Group work and the Vocational activities. The League, as Dancy put it "now began to recruit staff members who were schooled in community services, industrial problems or job placement."¹⁸

During that same year, the League hired some new staff members. Raymond O. Hatcher was employed in January. Hatcher joined the DUL staff from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Dancy was very impressed by Hatcher's work. In only six months of service Dancy said of his new employee, Hatcher, that "I believe that he has impressed the

¹⁷See the Budget and Financial Records, 1933 to 1946, Box 15, DULP-MHC.

¹⁸Dancy, p. 206.

community by his straight-forward thinking and his general interest and application to the work he has undertaken."¹⁹ However, Hatcher worked for the League for only two and a half years. The reason for his leaving was that "better opportunities came along." Hatcher's better opportunity came when he got a job with the Housing bureau of the federal government.²⁰

At the end of 1942, the organization, engaged the "services of Jack Robinson, a graduate of Virginia State College and Yale University in the permanent position as a Boy's Worker at the Center on Chestnut Street."²¹ According to Dancy, this new staff member "comes to the League highly recommended and should prove a very great asset to the work." Robinson began working for the DUL in February 15, 1943.²²

These gains of new staff members of the League were offset by the resignation of others. The chairman of the Board of Directors, Moore resigned. He was furious because he believed that the DUL was becoming radical. His charge was privately disputed by Dancy who had spent much energy in an effort to prevent the League from becoming involved in militant and controversial issues. The incident that led to Moore's resignation began during a talk sponsored by the DUL. The talk was delivered by Elmer Carter, a one time Executive Secretary of the Minneapolis and Louisville Urban Leagues.

¹⁹Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for 1942, File [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²⁰Dancy, p. 247.

²¹Annual Report of the Detroit urban League for 1942, File [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²²Ibid.

He had come from New York to Detroit at the request of Dancy to deliver the keynote address during the DUL's 25th Anniversary held on May 22, 1942. At that meeting Carter made reference to the activities of communists and their influence on blacks. His point in mentioning the activities of the Communists, according to Dancy, was to show that radicals were making claims for the achievement of blacks in getting jobs. Because of that comment many Board members present at that meeting became quite furious. As Dancy put it, "many people took exception and there was a great furor about it, and I have always blamed this for Moore's decision to drop out."²³

Two years later, a few more DUL's staff members resigned. On March 1, 1944 Fred Jones resigned his post as Industrial Secretary which he had held for about 21 years. He went to study mechanical Dentistry. Two weeks later, Lois Walden resigned her position of the Chestnut Street Center and retired from active public life.²⁴

To replace those that had resigned from the League's work, the Board of Director's elected Jean T. Shaefer, to replace Moore, as the League's President. Shaefer worked for Michigan Bell Telephone Company in the capacity of Secretary-Treasurer.²⁵

On June 1, 1944 Francis A. Kornegay joined the staff of the DUL. Kornegay, a native of Mount Olive North Carolina, was a graduate of Carver High School education, Mt. Olive, North Carolina. After his High School education, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity awarded him a scholarship to assist with his earning of a degree in biology and

²³Dancy, pp. 97-98; Director's Report to the Board of Directors of the DUL, Revised report, 1942, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²⁴Michigan Chronicle, March 11, 1944, p. 8.

²⁵Dancy, p. 243.

mathematics at North Carolina Central University. His Masters degree, obtained in the area of personnel Administration and guidance was received from the University of Michigan. The DUL employed him to deal specifically with placement, counselling and vocational guidance programs of the agency. Later, while still working for the League, Kornegay obtained a Doctor of Philosophy, also, in the field of guidance and counselling and from University of Michigan.²⁶ Initially Kornegay worked for the DUL under the title of a Group Worker; later, in 1944, he was called the Vocational Secretary. In 1956 Kornegay became the League's Assistant Director. Following the retirement of Dancy in 1960, Kornegay was named the Executive Director of the DUL, a position he held until his retirement in 1978.²⁷

In the same year Kornegay joined the League, 1944, two other individuals were employed. One of them, E. Y. Sutler, a native of Evanston, Illinois, and a graduate of Howard University. Her graduate work in the field of Personnel Administration and Vocational Guidance, was done at Northwestern University. Sutler joined the DUL from Phyllis Wheatley Y.W.C.A. of Indianapolis of Indiana, where she had been a girl's Work Secretary and the assistant Director of the Junior activities of that institution. She was employed by the League to process registration for Green Pastures camp and supervise the work of the League's two community Centers in addition to promoting group work and community organization projects.²⁸ The other individual employed by the League

²⁶Anne D. Russell, Builders of Detroit: Biographical Sketches of 62 Outstanding Blacks, (1978) p. 129.

²⁷Dancy, p. 247.

²⁸Michigan Chronicle, June 24, 1944, p. 16.

in 1944 was Helen L. Howard who started to work on November 27, 1944. She was employed as a Group Worker II.²⁹

The Wartime highlight of the League, though, was not the employment of the new staff members. Rather it was the acquisition of its new building located at 208 Mack Avenue, in July 1944, which served as its headquarters. "Acquisition of this property," the League asserted, "marks the beginning of a new day for the Detroit Urban League."³⁰ The League managed to obtain this new office through the effort of Butzel. It was him who persuaded Mrs. Kahn, the widow of Albert Kahn, "to sell the house for a modest sum."³¹

The Building "was bought in the name of the Council of Social Agencies, with \$20,000 supplied by the McGregor and Kresge foundations."³² Several individuals contributed for its furnishings. Butzel himself contributed about \$500.³³ Other major Donors who made this possible included Mrs. Philip Vanzile, Ruth Butze Van Zile, Earnestine Kahn in addition to her gifts "many fine pieces of furniture and other appurtenances that aided"³⁴ in equipping the new offices, gave about \$500, Max Osnos of Randolph Drug Company provided the League with \$500.00; Dr. Richard Green gave

²⁹Ibid,

³⁰Michigan Chronicle, July 1, 1944, p. 3.

³¹Dancy, p. 92.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Dancy, p. 92.

\$100.00 for the rug in Dancy's office. Mrs. Robert H. Green also made some contributions.³⁵ To celebrate the opening of the new office, the League held an open House in Mid-October, 1944.³⁶ With large spaces available in the new office building the League planned to have more programs.

Wartime Militancy and the League's Policy on Discrimination

Before World War II, DUL occupied a position of prominence and importance in Detroit and the nation.³⁷ With the commencement of the war, however, the League role as the primary organization that addressed the problems of blacks diminished greatly. The ideology espoused by the United States and its allies, during this global conflict,

³⁵See Dancy's letters of gratitude to the individual donors: to Ruth Butze Van Zile, August 19, 1944; to Earnestine Kahn, August 19, 1944; to Fred M. Butzel, August 19, 1944; to Max Osnos, October 10, 1944; and to Dr. Richard Green, October 10, 1944. Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

³⁶Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League, 1944, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁷Evidence that DUL was the most important organization before World War II is revealed by the fact that Dancy was the most noticeable black leader in Detroit between 1918 and the late 1930s. Although this does not mean that he was the most accepted leader by the black masses, his fellow black elites did recognize him as the leading black figure in the city. As far as the white community was concerned, Dancy was the leader of "his race." Detroit Mayors and Police Commissioners as well as Michigan Governors constantly consulted him on matters concerning the black citizens of Detroit. He represented the black community in many important political and social organizations and discussions. Dancy participated in almost every major event in Detroit before World War II. Nationally, Dancy was also frequently consulted as a representative of the NUL. The NUL considered the DUL as one of its most important affiliates. The first Annual Conference of the NUL to be held outside of its New York headquarters, was hosted by DUL. In many of its major decisions the NUL frequently sought Dancy's opinions. During the 1930s, Dancy helped the NUL to obtain financial assistance from wealthy individuals in Detroit. For a fuller discussion on the influence of Dancy see chapters five and eight.

championed the ideals of democracy and denounced Hitler's racial theories. Such expressed war aims highlighted the inconsistency between foreign and domestic policies. In fighting fascism and Nazism, the American society had to stand before the whole world in a demonstration of racial tolerance, cooperation and equality. In other words, America had to denounce racialism and condemn it as a reversion to barbarism. Proclamation of universal brotherhood and inalienable human freedoms had to be made abroad as well as at home.³⁸

Discrimination in the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and in the war industries, in particular, made this inconsistency conspicuous and gave the black community tremendous power to make their case for equality and justice.³⁹ Assisted by the black press, the black masses were stirred by the War's ideology to intensify their demands for an end to racial segregation, discrimination and injustice. However, the blacks' call for equality and justice was met by stiff resistance from many whites who became even more determined to oppose any meaningful black social, political, and economic progress. Such an environment of intensified conflict of will and interest, destroyed the usual routine and the feeling of confidence which had characterized NUL and its affiliates for years.⁴⁰

The situation created by the War raised, especially within DUL's supporters, the fear of their organization's ineffectiveness. The call to protest, raised by the war

³⁸Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. 1004.

³⁹Ibid., p. 915.

⁴⁰The remaining part of this chapter together with chapters ten and eleven makes this point stronger.

situation, created an environment conducive to a threat against the League's policies and traditions. The seemingly docile and weak black community was now replaced by an aggressive and militant one. The dilemma faced by the DUL as the war progressed may be captured by the question: what was the League to do about the increased calls for a militant approach to social change while keeping its white conservative friends happy? If the League failed to attune its work into the spirit of militancy already being voiced by many blacks in Detroit, and indeed, throughout the country it risked being relegated into the limbo of an "Uncle Tom" organization. Worse, the League feared becoming an object of organized resistance from the increasingly militant black community.

Calls to militancy came from many quarters. During the early 1940s many black supporters of labor unions called on blacks to be more militant against the employers by supporting strikes and tough stands against discrimination. In April 1941, the NAACP called on "All Ford workers" to refuse being used as strike breakers.⁴¹ During that same time Randolph was organizing his militant March-on-Washington Movement inviting thousands of blacks to protest against discrimination in the Defense industries.⁴² In the Spring of 1942, some blacks called on DUL to boycott the National Conference of Social Workers to be held in New Orleans. However, Dancy and his organization seemed to avoid such approaches, being ready to appease and cover controversies. On May 2, 1942, for instance, Dancy wrote to Granger opposing the plan to boycott the National

⁴¹A leaflet entitled, "To All Ford Workers", [April 1941?], General File of the Director, box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁴²Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, pp. 290-291.

Conference of Social Workers in New Orleans. Dancy opposed the boycott plan because he believed in the "staunch white friends" of Negroes who were participants of the Conference.⁴³ Yet the main wartime issues centered on questions of putting pressure against racial discrimination.

On May 14, 1942 UAW-CIO called on Dancy to join in the fight against Ford's refusal to employ black women.⁴⁴ Again on August 20, 1942, a mass demonstration was called for against the Ford Motor Company. The organizers of that mass demonstration said that:

This demonstration is an irresistible, spontaneous mass movement on the part of all Ford workers and many civic organizations who desire full participation of All The People in Carrying out the war against Hitler. We want the whole world to know that the Ford Motor company is flagrantly violating the executive order of President Roosevelt, No. 8802, which declares that "there shall be no discrimination against Race, Creed, or Color in hiring in Defense Industries." We feel that this is every man's war regardless of race. We are fighting for Democracy abroad. We want Democracy at home as well. Mr. Ford, Negro women and men will and must play their rightful part in helping win this war.⁴⁵

During that same August 1942, Randolph asked Dancy for information regarding cases of local discrimination in the Labor unions. Dancy replied that "the only actual discrimination that we have been able to substantiate is with Beer Drivers and Helpers

⁴³Letter, John C. Dancy to Lester B. Granger, May 2, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁴Letter, Horace L. Sheffield to Mr. John C. Dancy, May 14, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁵A flyer announcing a Mass Demonstration scheduled for August 20, 1942, General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

Union #271 which within the past year refused to accept Negroes for membership."⁴⁶

Emergence of New Organizations and Their Impact on the DUL

The League's continuation of its polite persuasion and its failure to alter its "hands off" policy in matters of racial discrimination created problems for it at this stage. As the war progressed new organizations as well as revitalized old ones, emerged to address racism.

Religious organizations also emerged during the war and began to address the problem of race relations. The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, established to strengthen the moral and spiritual foundations of America life invited Dancy in their race relations work.⁴⁷ The Michigan Council of Churches began to sponsor race-relations activities. In March of 1943, DUL joined in with protestants, Catholics, and Jews to sponsor a program on race relations⁴⁸ In June 1943 the Mayor of Detroit announced the formation of an Interracial Commission and many of the Mayor's appointed persons were those that were active in the Council of Churches. The League was finding itself isolated as a major organization avoiding the race issue in its program.

The Interracial Committee, appointed at the suggestion of the DUL in 1941, in the

⁴⁶Letter, John C. Dancy to A. Philip Randolph, September 4, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁷Letter, George A. Buttrick to Mr. John C. Dancy, June 24, 1940, General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁸Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1943, File [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

wake of racial conflicts in the school system of the Northwest section of the city, began to concern itself with matters of race relations. During the same time the Intercultural Education Movement of Michigan Curriculum Program of the Department of Public Instruction of the State of Michigan joined the ranks of the agencies that intensively focused on race relations in Detroit. The Curriculum Steering Committee decided to set up a committee to plan and direct a state wide program and invited Dancy to be a member.⁴⁹ Another organization that dealt with race relations was Youth in Defence of America's Future. Dancy was asked to send two delegates at one of its conferences held in 1941.⁵⁰

While the DUL's agenda tended to avoid addressing racial discrimination, the NAACP was broadening its agenda to address employment, housing--long the exclusive reserve of the DUL. Since the end of the Depression, the NAACP had become interested in issues that were previously meant to be in the domain of the DUL. For example, the NAACP was now interested in dealing with issues of employment and housing. Some black leaders assumed that only the DUL was to deal with the questions of employment among the black community.⁵¹ Another organization that became interested in finding

⁴⁹Letter, Eugene B. Elliot to John C. Dancy, September 12, 1941, General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁰Letter, Bridget Poulson to John C. Dancy, October 29, 1941, General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁵¹During a meeting of Ministerial Conference, an organization of black ministers of which Mr. Dancy was a member, a certain black man came to request assistance in matters of employment. The members of the Ministerial Conference told him that he was making a mistake in bringing such concerns to such an organization. Matters of employment, this black man was informed, were the responsibility of the DUL. See Minutes of the Ministerial Conference held on April 21, 1919 and April 31, 1919.

jobs was the National Negro Congress local branch.⁵²

In April 1942 the Fair Employment Practices Commission of Metropolitan Detroit was established. Its purpose was "to assure full utilization of the local labor supply in war efforts, using every worker at his highest skill level; to use training for the War Workers program; to make more real in the job field the democratic principles for which we are fighting on the war front; to serve as the local agency to publicize and help enforce Executive Order #8802, and shall do its utmost to eliminate discrimination in government employment and training for defense industries against individuals because of race, creed, color, sex or national origin." Its membership had representatives of employers, labor, minorities and many other groups. Each civic organization was to be represented by two delegates. Professor Edward McFarland was the Acting Chairman and Geraldine Blesdsoe was the acting secretary.⁵³

The housing problem no longer remained exclusively in the League's domain. The Fair Rent Commission of the City Council was one of the agencies that emerged during the war and dealt with housing matters. On October 1941, an Advisory Committee representing government, industry, labor, civic and social groups was established by the

General File of the Executive's Secretary File, 1919, Box 1, DULP-MHC.

⁵²For years DUL had refused to support labor unions, as noted in the previous chapter. After the UAW-CIO's victory over Ford Company, the League began to seek the friendship of Labor unions. The labor unions had become the most important organizations that competed for allegiance over the hearts and minds of the black community. See August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW, chapter Four, especially pp. 218-19.

⁵³Minutes of Metropolitan Detroit Council on Fair Employment Practices, April 8, 1942; Constitution of the Metropolitan Detroit Council on Fair Employment Practices, [1942?], both in the Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

Mayor. The purpose of the committee was to maintain a list of available vacant dwelling accommodations, to refer applicants to the available dwelling accommodations, to circulate "circular" to appeal for the registration of such available dwellings, through the Council of Social Agencies. This was actually one of the tasks that the DUL had performed for years without much success. On October 16, 1941 Dancy was asked to be a member of the Committee.⁵⁴

Perhaps one of the most famous organization that came to play an important role in Detroit to deal specifically with black issues, was formed in 1942 as the Citizen's Committee under Reverend Charles Hill as its chairman. Its importance was revealed in its quest for jobs in war industries and in its advocacy of black rights at the famous crisis known as the Sojourner Truth Housing.⁵⁵ Another organization, Union of Democratic Action, with Mr. Charles Livermore, as the temporary chairman supported the black interests during the Sojourner Truth Housing crisis. It met on March 5, 1942.⁵⁶ The Citizen's Committee for jobs in the War Industry was also organized to deal with the problems of employment. The Citizen's Committee held a mass meeting at Shiloh Baptist Church on November 15, 1942 with a slogan "Jim Crow Must go in War Industries."⁵⁷

⁵⁴Letter, Stuart E. Walker to Gentlemen: Attention to Mr. Dancy, October 16, 1941, General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁵This crisis is discussed fully in later part of the chapter. See also Meier and Rudwick, Black Detroit and the Rise of UAW, pp. 114-115, 178-182.

⁵⁶Union for Democratic Action meeting, March 5, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁷Leaflet, "Jim Crow must go in War Industries Mass Meeting of Citizens Committee", November 15, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

Dancy continued to be involved in other less controversial organizations that dealt with the problems of housing. On October 23, 1942 Dancy was invited to join the Citizen's Housing and Planning Council of Detroit. The purpose of the organization was to study problems of housing and presented facts to "those who are equipped to change the sordid conditions amid which thousands of our people live."⁵⁸

The State Health and Welfare Committee, discussed previously, was another organization that attempted to perform some of the tasks that the League had been handling for decades. Organized with the purpose to promote high morale among families, handling community and family war problems and mobilizing the states's leadership and resources in health and welfare fields, this agency dealt with social work that had been dominated by the DUL. It also dealt with evacuation, relocation of families in areas taken by military production, emergency welfare, post war social problems, day care of mothers working in defense areas and migration of families and individuals in search of work in Michigan industry.⁵⁹

In the Spring of 1942 the founding of CORE in Chicago took place. Its presence was felt in Detroit during the war. In the summer of 1942, CORE, using slogans such as "Red Cross and its Jim Crow Policy," became quite active in the fight against the American Red Cross and its policy of segregating the blood of African Americans. The

⁵⁸Letter, Dr. Leo M. Franklin to John C. Dancy, October 23, 1942, General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁹Document entitled "Committee on Health and Welfare of the MICHIGAN DEFENSE COUNCIL", [1942?], Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

battle against the Red Cross was felt in Detroit. Several Board Members of the Detroit American Red Cross were associated with DUL. William J. Norton, Chairman of this Board of Directors, was himself a one time Board Member of the DUL. Other members of the DUL who also associated with the Detroit Red Cross included Dancy; Fred M. Butzel; Jean T. Sheafor, who was the Chairman of DUL; Harvey Campbell; Mrs. John J. O'Brien; Gustavus D. Pope; and John Ballenger a very close friend of Dancy.⁶⁰ The membership of Dancy to this Board came about as a result of the controversy over its blood policy opposed by CORE. The Chairman of the Detroit Red Cross, William H. Fries said to Dancy that "we feel that you, as a representative of your race, will greatly strengthen and reinforce our work."⁶¹ In this instance Dancy and the DUL are used by the white leaders as a cover up in controversies and soften the demands made by black militant organizations.

CORE continued to exert its influence in Detroit even after this incident. On April 14, 1945 it raised funds by dances. As its leaders stated "Detroit is being considered as the community for the project, because of its acute race tensions and critical housing situation."⁶²

⁶⁰Executive Secretary's Topical File, American Association of Social Workers, 1932-1949, Box 8, DULP-MHC.

⁶¹Letter, William H. Fries to John C. Dancy, January 17, 1945, Executive Secretary Topical File, 1932-1949, American Association of Social Workers, Box 8, DULP-MHC.

⁶²Letter, Anne B. Papp to Dear CORE member, April 7, 1945, Executive Secretary, General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

The League and the Wartime Black Employment Problem

Participation in the war efforts kept DUL's staff very occupied yet it had to deal with the black calls for more militancy as a strategy to obtain jobs. Dancy and the League continued their tradition of avoiding controversial issues-race discrimination in the war economy and the housing market. Instead, Dancy positioned himself always ready to appease, represent his "race" and to cover controversies.

During the National Conference of Social Workers held in Grand Rapids on May 30, 1940 a committee, composed of several NUL Executive secretaries and other Delegates attending the conference, made and passed some resolutions calling on the government to end discrimination in the Army, Navy and in war productions. They especially called attention to the segregation of blacks into the "Fifth Column." Considering his extreme fear of antagonizing his white friends who did not want the League to engage in protest actions, Dancy was the chairman of that committee that prepared these resolutions.⁶³

This action was criticized by John T. Clark, Executive of the Urban League of St Louis. Dancy had the reputation in the Urban League movement as the "most reactionary affiliate director."⁶⁴ According to Clark, the views expressed by Dancy and his committee were simply a restatement, a bit, with an emphasis of the "many of problems

⁶³Report made by Dancy on the Resolutions of the Committee on May 30, 1940, Executive Secretary's General File, 1940, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁴Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 254.

which have been repeatedly publicized in the country."⁶⁵ Clark criticized the idea of passing resolutions without any plan of action or a follow up strategy. He especially criticized the committee for not containing enough "concrete suggestions as to how the government could specifically lessen the limitations against Negroes."⁶⁶ Although Dancy made reference to the Social Workers Conference in Grand Rapids, and even made mention of the resolutions his committee had passed during that event, yet he did so only in passing. No record of any discussion took place on the subject.⁶⁷

Dancy attempted to adjust his organization to the spirit of protest while avoiding controversial issues and remaining loyal to his white friends. He and his fellow Urban League secretaries went to have a talk with Sidney Hillman, head of the employment with the National Defence Commission, "in the hope of interesting him in the present plight of Negroes in all sections of the Country." Dancy highlighted the fact that their friendly visit to Hillman was a success in getting blacks accepted in the National Defense Program. "This conference" he assured his Board of Directors, "proved salutary in that Hillman pledged to have written in all contracts for National Defence that there will be no discrimination against Negroes." Dancy pointed out that Hillman's "advice to the committee was that in every case where industries had government contracts and refused Negroes the chance to work that he would personally check the matter for remedial

⁶⁵Letter, John T. Clark to Dancy, June 11, 1940, Executive Secretary's General File, 1940, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1940 to the Board of Directors of the DUL, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

purposes."⁶⁸ Thus, according to Dancy, the mere assurance that things would be done well was sufficient enough. What Dancy was actually trying to demonstrate was that the tactics of friendly visits was sufficient.

In some situations Dancy tended to play down controversies, for example, Chrysler Corporation's discriminatory practices against black workers. At a time when blacks were furious about Chrysler's hiring practices that refused to upgrade black workers, Dancy simply expressed "thanks to the Chrysler Corporation for jobs and other considerations that have come to the League through Winegar."⁶⁹ Yet one of the chief problem blacks were encountering during that time was getting a fair treatment at the Chrysler Corporation which adamantly refused to upgrade black workers that it would offend white workers.⁷⁰ Perhaps Dancy remained silent on the existence of such a condition because Winegar was one of his closest friend who deserved "gratitude and praise" together with other "many friends of the League who had supported its programs."⁷¹

The League's traditional moral persuasion strategy continued to dominate its approach to the problems of blacks during this period. During a Conference held on October 8, 1940, sponsored by the United States Employment Service Division Dancy stated that the Negro occupational picture was "very dismal." He even disagreed with

⁶⁸Report of the Director to the Board of the Detroit Urban League, December 12, 1940, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁹Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, December 12, 1940, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁰Meier and Rudwick, Black Detroit and the Rise of UAW, p. 121.

⁷¹Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Detroit Urban League, December 12, 1940, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Mayor Jeffries's idea that the problem had not always been discrimination. Yet at that conference Dancy showered praises to individuals such as Winegar, whose company was unwilling to hire and upgrade blacks in its war industries. According to Dancy the solution to the problem of black unemployment was "to educate the public,"⁷² to think about the problems of blacks, and to have black youth attend "trade schools where they could "learn tool and die making or anything else they wish to learn. It should not be side-tracked simply because some company will not accept him."⁷³ Yet in the speech Dancy stated that blacks faced "barrier of finding employment once they have the training."⁷⁴

In contrast to Dancy's polite approach and his belief that visiting the key leaders in the government and industries was the most effective means of solving the problems of the African Americans, other blacks favored intensified direct protest action. On January 15, 1941, A. Philip Randolph, the president of the Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, announced a plan to hold a mass protest demonstration. The plan called for a March on Washington consisting of thousands of blacks in protest against racial discrimination in war industries. Such a strategy caused President Roosevelt to issue the famous Executive Order # 8802, which prohibited industries from discriminating against citizens on the basis of race, color or creed. The success of the March on Washington

⁷²Findings, Report and Recommendations, "Michigan State Conference on Employment Problems of the Negro", Detroit, October 8, 1940, p. 30, Copy in the Library of Michigan, Lansing, Michigan.

⁷³Ibid., p. 31.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 30.

increased in many black minds the popularity of the conflict approach to their social and economic progress. It also meant that those organizations, such as the Urban League⁷⁵ had to tune themselves to the new spirit of militancy rather than polite persuasion and gradualism.

Moral suasion continued to be the League's method of finding jobs for blacks. On March 1941, together with the NUL, Dancy appeared on radio to publicize their movement and to appeal for jobs and better opportunities for black workers.⁷⁶ However, the League tried to perform services to Detroit's employers by recruiting black labor. In 1940 Dancy stated that "Our employment office this year has attempted to develop more places to work for our Negro constituents and has been fairly successful in many places."⁷⁷ As war progressed, labor shortage became a problem for the industrialists. In 1942 DUL did its best to supply labor to one of its most friendly businesses--Chrysler. In return Chrysler provided the League with money for the purposes of running another Camp, known as Alfred Camp.⁷⁸

Just as it had done during the World War I, the League tried to socialize black

⁷⁵The Urban League was initially opposed to the March-on-Washington Movement. However, when it appeared that the black masses throughout the country were enthusiastic about the project, the NUL decided to support Philip Randolph, the leader of the Movement. See Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the city, especially a chapter entitled "It is March Time."

⁷⁶Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1941, File [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Annual Report for the year 1942; Director's Report, 1943. Both in the File [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

workers to be efficient and productive. In 1942 the League's Industrial Department published its "Sixteen Points" urging blacks not to "argue or sulk on the job", but to do their work quietly, quickly and pleasantly. The League urged the workers to leave their ideas about the 'race problem' at home because the boss "wants work, and not debate." In particular the League reminded the black workers to be on time and to "give your boss a full day's work." It admonished them that 'the fellow who is on the job every day and on time is the fellow who is the last to be fired when the slump comes.' The League did not want blacks get into the militant spirit and, therefore, it urged them to "ignore 'slights on the job or on the way to and from jobs.'"⁷⁹ Other things the League wanted blacks to do included:

Don't wait for the job paying the price you think you are worth, but take a job and make it pay more by application and diligence.

Don't blame the street car when you are late to work. Get an earlier start.

When you find many faults with your job, the trouble might be more with you.

Don't worry too much about the hours of work and the pay days. Such a worker seldom gets beyond regular clock punching job.

Don't expect your foreman to excuse you for doing inferior work because you are a Negro. Put out the best work you can.

Don't slow up on your job when the boss is not around because the boss often sees you when you least think.

Anyway you are 'paid of for what you produce.

Don't 'clown' on your job. The foreman who puts up with that 'stuff' doesn't mean you any good.

Don't hesitate to make suggestions to your superiors when you know better ways or quicker methods of doing certain tasks.

Avoid street car and bus "incidents" by taking showers and changing clothes completely after a day's work is done.

⁷⁹At the bottom of the points, the League stated that the materials "may be reprinted by any organization or individual." See document, "Negroes Beginning to get jobs now: Sixteen Points on How to 'Make Good,'" 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

Don't lay off even though you are "not feeling well."⁸⁰

Finally, the League informed black workers that "lack plays no part in success." They were to seize an opportunity that came on their way. The League felt that this kind of advice was so important that it deemed it necessary to reiterate it once again in 1944 under a new brochure entitled "Working for Victory".⁸¹ About four thousand copies of the brochure were distributed in 1945.⁸² According to the League's advice to black workers "Victory will come through hard work. Your job should always come first." The black workers were also to "be on time," making "every day count" and "staying home will not help in defeating the enemy." Another aspect of success according to the League was courtesy. "Courtesy and getting along with fellow workers are the keys to success. Respect the other man first and he will respect you. Think before you act; and you will not regret it." Black workers were also to "try to avoid Street Car and Bus 'incidents'" They were also urged to "organize your habits and thoughts. Clear all grievances and problems through proper channels at employment. Solving your problems means increased production." They were also to "remember that overdoing it shows you up. Children often follow the examples of adults. Dress neatly; but not flashily. If you must clown, do it off the job. Every man-hour counts." Finally, the DUL reminded the black workers that "your record will speak for you when peace comes. Do a jam-up job every

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹A Brochure, "Work for Victory", Executive Secretary's General File, 1944 Undated [5-4], Box 5, DULP-MHC.

⁸²Annual Report of the Detroit urban League for the year 1945, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

day as AN AMERICAN." The League also urged black workers to "Buy bonds and keep them" because " America's Strength is your investment."⁸³

This work education of black workers was in keeping with the kind of service the industrialists wanted the League to perform in exchange of financial support and jobs for its black constituency. On May 10, 1942 Earnest Kanzler, the Chief Automotive Branch and Director, Detroit Region wrote to Dancy saying that:

There is one phase of great assistance to your own cause, and that is by constantly urging your men and women to exert every effort to prove their ability to produce and to measure up to the responsibilities that employers are giving to them. They should constantly remember that, by turning in an outstanding performance, they are serving other members of their race, by developing a favorable experience on the part of employers of labor so that they will be more willing to take more employees.⁸⁴

DUL's Wartime Approach to the Housing Crisis

Housing had always been problematic for black Detroiters. Moreover, it had been a major source of racial tension in the city. The League had always found itself unable to effectively deal with this problem partly because it was rooted in discrimination and segregation, areas in which the DUL did not devote much time and energy. It not only failed to challenge discrimination but also avoided being drawn in situations that were controversial and confrontational.

The influx of black migrants from the South during World War II forced the DUL

⁸³Brochure, "Working for Victory," Executive Secretary's General File, 1944 Undated [5-4], Box 5, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁴Letter, Earnest Kanzler, to Mr. John C. Dancy, May 10, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

to face the problems associated with housing shortage, discrimination and overcrowding. The League continued its usual programs of maintaining a record of any available housing, attempted to persuade the people of influence to help, and joined other groups that concerned with wartime housing problems.

Towards the end of 1939 and early 1940 a coordinating Housing Committee of about 1,000 people had been created to deal with the problem of housing for blacks. On April 4, 1940 Dancy joined⁸⁵ the group at their meeting held at the Second Baptist Church with a goal of seeing what could be done in helping the housing situation. The Coordinating Housing Committee came up with a solution in the form of a Brochure entitled "Clean Up! Fix Up!!!". A plan for a mass meeting with a series of speakers for April, 29, 1940 and a parade for May 4, 1940 was put forth. Such a program was supported also by the NAACP.⁸⁶ This activity, while soliciting the cooperation of many black elites did not constitute an effective means of solving the housing crisis. However, it was one of those kinds of activities that were less controversial and supported by the DUL.

On September 13, 1940 the League held its usual Lawn Contest in attempt to deal with the wartime housing problem. Kitchen contests in some neighborhoods were conducted in an effort to stimulate interest in keeping clean kitchen and house

⁸⁵Letter, Dr. R. Greenidge to Mr. John C. Dancy, March 18, 1940, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC; Parade for May 4, 1940, General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁶Leaflet, "Clean Up! Fix Up!!!", April 29, 1940, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

surroundings. "Handsome cash prizes" were given to the contest winners. The League seemed to believe so strongly on the importance of these programs that Dancy happily reported to the NUL of the fact that "in one neighborhood we had more than 100 families contests."⁸⁷ And again he reported that "the contest this year was spirited and good results obtained. I believe we have gone a long way toward making the people conscious of what can be done to make their settlements more attractive."⁸⁸ The Contest's financial donors included Butzel who in 1940 gave \$25 for that purpose.⁸⁹

Dancy also served as a member of the Fair Rent Commission to which he was appointed by the City Council.⁹⁰ The City Fair Rent Commission was formed by the City Council as a method of mediation between landlords and tenants.⁹¹

Black Militancy and the DUL in the Sojourner Truth Housing crisis

As it turned out, a more effective means of solving the housing crisis during this time was through militant means. But such an approach was avoided by the DUL and Dancy. The League's polite strategy made it difficult to participate in the Sojourner Truth

⁸⁷Letter, John C. Dancy to E. K. Jones, September 16, 1940, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁸Letter, John C. Dancy to Fred M. Butzel, November 18, 1940, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁹Letter, John C. Dancy to Fred M. Butzel, November 18, 1940, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁰Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1941, File [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹¹Ibid.

Housing crisis, one of the most important incidents in Detroit's race-relations history. In sharp contrast to his role during the Sweet Trial of 1920s Dancy's role at this incidence was almost negligible. During the Sweet Trial crisis, as noted in chapter seven, Dancy not only participated in organizing the black community to finance the cost of defending Sweet but he also was a key witness to the occasion, often in the limelight. In the Sojourner Truth Crisis, the key actors in the defense of the black interests were mainly national leaders and the new radical local leaders in Detroit's Black community.

The problem began in the Fall of 1941, when Federal government unveiled a plan to construct an all-black housing project named after the famous black conductor of the underground railroad during the slave era. Upon learning of the project, a coalition of white priests, politicians, community and business leaders, and individuals decided to strongly fight against the project.⁹² Some of them were influenced by Klux Ku Klan.

This Federal-funded project, located in northeast Detroit and segregated in harmony with the publicly declared policy of the Federal Housing Administration and the Detroit Housing Commission, was built right at the border between the black and white neighborhoods, specifically for housing black war workers who were having a difficult time securing shelter. The Federal government constructed the project under a contract with the Detroit Housing Commission to house black war workers and their families.⁹³

As the winter approached, political and religious leaders; members of Klux Ku Klan; and a number of the rank and file members of the white community protested

⁹²Moore, A Search for Equality, p. 104.

⁹³Joe T. Darden,et al, Detroit: Race and Uneven Development, p. 114.

against the idea of a black housing project. Reverend C. Dzink wrote a letter to the Federal government calling for the abandonment of the plan to have black occupancy of the Housing project. He asserted that if blacks moved into the proposed housing, white girls would be in jeopardy and the neighborhood would be ruined.⁹⁴ The leading politician who supported an all-white neighborhood was the Congressman, Randolph G. Tenerowicz and his supporters who included the members of the Ku Klux Klan.⁹⁵ Ironically some black elites, who lived in a nearby Covant Gardens also joined in opposing the moving of black workers into the Sojourner Truth Housing project.⁹⁶

Due to these pressures, the Federal government decided to hand over the project to Detroit whites. National and local black leaders began to mobilize in an attempt to reverse the Washington decision. In January 1942 the NUL sent telegrams to the DUL urging the organization to get "as much pressure around the Detroit situation as possible so as to use it in correcting alarming tendencies observed on the national picture."⁹⁷ Granger sent also telegrams to the key figures in the White House, including President Roosevelt and his wife, Eleanor; Baird Snyder, acting Administrator of Federal Works Agency; and Charles F. Parmer, the coordinator of Defense Housing; and Senator Prentiss M. Brown. In these telegrams, the NUL urged that "yielding under the pressure of selfish Detroit groups and reactionary congressmen that seek to bar Negro families from these

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 115.

⁹⁵Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. 568.

⁹⁶Darden, p. 115.

⁹⁷Letter, Lester B. Granger to John C. Dancy, January 13, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Folder January-March, 1942, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

homes" was "so unworthy an act." The NUL also pointed out that the black morale low simply because of the failure of the Federal government to eliminate barriers that prevented blacks from contributing effectively in the war effort.⁹⁸

On the local scene, the leading figures did not include the participation of the DUL. Dancy remained in a low profile throughout this controversy. It was Reverend Charles A. Hill, the minister of the Calvary Church and one of the emerging new black leaders of the Citizen's Committee, together with the leaders of the NAACP, Union for Democratic Action, the UAW-CIO, and other Detroit's militant black leaders who mobilized action at the local scene. They organized mass meetings and sent telegrams to the White House calling for a reversal of the decision. The Governor of the State of Michigan supported such a move.⁹⁹

Early in February 1942, the Northern District Council held a special meeting to discuss the Sojourner Truth Housing project. The Chairman of the meeting was Krolik. Representing a position in favor of black occupancy was the Executive Secretary of the Council of Social Agencies, Robert H. McRae. The white supremacists were represented by Joseph Buffa, of the Seven Mile Improvement Association. He argued that if blacks moved in, property value would go down. On the other side of the controversy was Lloyd Cofer, representing the Citizen's Committee, and favoring the idea of black

⁹⁸See Telegrams on January 14, 1942 from Lester B. Granger to Byaird Snyder, Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt, Charles F. Palmer, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Senator Prentiss M. Brown, Executive Secretary's General File, Folder January-March, 1942, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁹Meier and Rudwick, Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW, p. 179.

occupancy. He opposed Buffa on the grounds that the project was originally for blacks; and that the area was not completely composed of whites. Moreover, Coffey pointed out, the blacks in general had the greatest need of defense housing. Unfortunately, no agreement was reached at this meeting.¹⁰⁰

On February 12, 1942, a mass meeting was held at the Reverend Hill's Calvary Baptist Church to rally support to again reverse the decision of the White House. A plan to picket the meeting of the Detroit Housing Commission was called but did not take place because the Detroit Housing Commission postponed their meeting. Finally, a Commission of a delegation of some black leaders headed by Reverend Hill was sent to the Commission, only to be told that the blame was with the Washington.¹⁰¹

A Sojourner Truth Citizn's Committee, under the leadership of Reverend Hill, was formed. It included Jewish organizations, the Detroit Council of Churches, and trade unions. With pressure from such a powerful body, the Detroit Housing Commission gave in and requested Washington to reverse the ruling.¹⁰² Upon learning that the Project had now been returned to the blacks, Detroit's whites, who were opposed black occupancy, once again, vowed to protest and were determined, more than ever, to oppose

¹⁰⁰Northern District Council Special Meeting to discuss the Sojourner Truth Housing Project, February 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰¹Leaflet, "We Have Only Begun to Fight for Sojourner Truth Homes!!!, ATTEND SOJOURNER TRUTH RALLY", February 15, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰²Meier and Rudwick, p. 179.

the occupation of Sojourner Truth Housing by black tenants.¹⁰³

On February 28, 1942 the first tenants were ready to move in. The Klux Ku Klan became directly involved when its members burned a cross near the project. Just before the first black moved in, about 1,200 whites, some openly armed, began to walk back and forth around the project threatening to use violence in an attempt to prevent blacks from moving into the housing. When some blacks arrived and made their way into their apartments, whites seized their furniture loading them back into the vans. A riot broke and the police sided decisively with white rioters. This led to a postponing of the occupation.¹⁰⁴

Later, neighboring whites organized demonstrations but the police broke it up with tear gas. Counterpart groups of whites and blacks began to demonstrate also. In early March, Reverend Hill sent a telegram to Dancy urging him to join in the fight against the plan to displace the black Defense workers from the Sojourner Truth Housing.¹⁰⁵ Finally, in April 1942, due to the pressing needs of the war pressure exerted by a coalition of black organizations, prominent religious leaders, the UAW-CIO, and the black press, some black families began moving into the housing protected by one thousand and two hundred state home-guard troops, three state police officers and eight Detroit Police officers.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 181-182.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Telegram, Charles Hill to Mr. John C. Dancy, March 5, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Folder January-March, 1942, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁶Darden, pp. 115-119.

Strangely, although this was one of the hottest incident in the history of Detroit's race relations, and despite the NUL's attempt to get the DUL involved in the crisis, Dancy made no reference to this event in his memoirs and the Annual Report for the year 1942.¹⁰⁷ The reason for this situation is obvious. His role in the crisis was negligible in comparison to the one he had played during the Sweet's trial. When asked about the situation by a friend of his during the heat of the event in March 1942, Dancy stated clearly that "the Urban League has not made much of a contribution to the fight now going on, but I have been sitting on some of the meetings and giving what financial aid that I could."¹⁰⁸ The League's behavior during this incident suggests that Dancy had lost his leadership influence on the black community. The more militant black leaders, like the Reverend Charles Hill, were rising as more effective leaders.

Hoewver, the League continued its traditional methods of obtaining shelter for blacks. On April 29, 1943, the DUL submitted for consideration of the Detroit Housing Commission "The Victory Pattern in Public Housing." The contents was made up of comments, news articles and letters as "proof to the fact that Americans of all religions, creeds, colors and background work and live for democracy and that where there is a will to make democracy work--democracy does work."¹⁰⁹ According to the League if Detroit Housing Commission gave consideration to the facts the League provided they

¹⁰⁷See Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1942, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC; Dancy, Sand Against the Wind.

¹⁰⁸Letter, John C. Dancy to Mr. William L. Evans, March 6, 1942, Executive Secretary's General File, Folder [January-March, 1942], Box 4, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰⁹"Document "Victory Pattern in Public Housing", in the General File of the Executive Secretary, 1943, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

would then act to make Detroit "the arsenal of the free world."¹¹⁰

Reporting on the housing situation in 1944, Dancy stated that "Numerous groups and organizations have been concerned with efforts to remedy this problem." The Urban League, Dancy said, "has been active in the majority of these efforts. The League, through its staff and Board, has been represented in the Citizen's Housing and Planning Council, the Housing Committee of the Victory Council for Metropolitan Detroit and the Advisory Committee of the Willow Run Housing Projects." Another effort that the League made in the struggle to address housing needs of African Americans was the conducting of "a special survey to determine the extent of home ownership in the area earmarked for the proposed Wayne Medical Center, and to study other characteristics of the area."¹¹¹

Reporting on the League's accomplishments for the year 1944, Dancy mentioned such services as, the offering of general information covering housing facilities, welfare and community agency resources provided to a large number of applicants of about four hundred-and- thirty-seven persons. Aid was, also, given to four families and six individuals in war housing and room placement; eighteen persons were referred to the War Housing Center, Detroit Housing Commission, and other agencies for special housing services.¹¹²

On Feb. 5, 1945 Valentine, successor to Hatcher wrote some letter to key

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1944, File [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹²Ibid.

individuals in Washington calling their attention of the housing crisis among the blacks in living Detroit area.¹¹³ These approaches to housing tended to be traditional and non-controversial and left the field open to more militant approaches.¹¹⁴

The DUL and the 1943 Race Riot

The self-confidence that the DUL exhibited of its ability to gag and address race relations was shattered on June 20, 1943 when one of the most violent racial riot, in Detroit's history occurred. Just before its 25th Anniversary celebration, Dancy had released a document in which he praised the race relations found in Detroit and gave the credit for the city's successful handling of race problems to the efforts and work of his organization. "The Detroit Urban League", he asserted, "has more than fulfilled its purpose in establishing relationship between the races in Detroit." Then he went on claiming that Detroit was one of the "best cities in America in which the Negroes lives and one of the reasons for this condition is the Detroit League which has busied itself for a quarter century in bringing together the best minds of the various races to coordinate their thinking."¹¹⁵ A year earlier, Jones, the Executive of the NUL, had praised the work of the DUL pointing out that the founding of the DUL had saved Detroit from a

¹¹³Letter, John C. Dancy to John O. Hopkins, January 18, 1945, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵News release to announce the 25th Anniversary, May 1940, Executive Secretary's General File, 1940, Box 4, DULP-MHC.

race riot.¹¹⁶ In fact Detroit had a tradition of boasting of its ability to deal with social problems. Despite the contrary evidence as demonstrated by the Sweet's incident, and the constant conflict between the black community and the police, the City's leaders, including some of its "best minds," believed that Detroit knew how to prevent the development of dangerous social problems such as racial riots.¹¹⁷

Such denials of the existing tensions were, of course, held by other contemporary commentators, including figures like Gunnar Myrdal. As late as August 1942, Myrdal predicted only minor clashes but no serious race riots. He believed that the future looked "fairly peaceful in the North." Although he was aware of the Sojourner Truth Housing crisis, he still felt the situation was not really bad.¹¹⁸

Since its founding the DUL's activities aimed at preventing racial conflicts rested on two main premises. The first was that League believed that black migrants had to accept the ethics prescribed by the black elites and white leaders. In doing so the DUL, unintentionally, became a chief instrument of legitimizing the demands made by the dominant society towards the black masses. Secondly, the League believed that supervised recreation was the most effective strategy for dealing with racial conflicts.¹¹⁹ This belief was so strong that a few days prior to the 1943 race riot the League's

¹¹⁶Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1939, File [11-14], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹¹⁷Carlson, "The Negro in the Industries of Detroit", p. 8.

¹¹⁸Myrdal, An American Dilemma, p. 568.

¹¹⁹A fuller treatment on the thinking of the League in regard to recreation as a deterrent to racial violence had been done in previous chapters, especially Three, Four, Five and Six.

preoccupation was mainly in recreational activities at its Community Centers. Moreover, after the riot, the DUL's main proposals and plans to prevent future riots still centered on the idea that recreation was the important solution to future racial conflicts in the city.¹²⁰

In the beginning of 1943, many people who observed the condition of race relations in Detroit could witness evidence of racial tension. Since 1941, racial conflict intensified in the fields of housing and work. The situation in the work place was particularly bad. Many Detroit whites were constantly involved in so-called hate strikes. If blacks were upgraded to better jobs, according to the same criterion used for whites, the white workers went on strike in protest. Blacks refused to work if they were not treated fairly. The most telling hate strike, and one that came at about the time the 1943 race riot was about to occur, took place in Packard Company early June of 1943.¹²¹

At that time Packard Company, which employed about 2,500 hundreds of blacks under pressure, upgraded only three black men to the aircraft assembly on May 24, 1943. Several hundred whites put down their tools in hate strikes.¹²² Such hatred events were very well known to the League officials and Mr. Dancy, on June 8, 1943, himself wrote to a friend of his about the Packard hate strike.¹²³

¹²⁰See a hand-written note which begins with the words: "Think in terms like this;" dated 1943, immediately after the riot, in the Executive Secretary's General File, 1943, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹²¹Meier and Rudwick, Black Detroit and the Rise of UAW, p. 167.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Letter, John C. Dancy to Lemuel L. Foster, June 8, 1943, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

Two days later, A. L. Foster, the Director of the Chicago Urban League to Dancy about his observation of the very bad race relations he had seen in Detroit. Foster mentioned about his disgust with the behavior of black sailors in Detroit abusing, cursing, and using most obscene language against passengers. After observing the existence of bloody fights between blacks and whites Mr. Foster wondered about the effectiveness of Detroit's inter-racial organizations that worked to reduce such serious conflicts:

This leads me to ask what, if anything is being done to change the behavior pattern in Detroit, and to suggest that it seems to me that something ought to be done. I was also amazed at the intense racial hatreds which are being manifested, and wonder what has happened to the various interracial organizations that made them appear ineffective.¹²⁴

On June 17, 1943 only two days before the final breakdown of the riot, the NUL sent a telex to President F. D. Roosevelt and the Mayor of Detroit calling his attention to the crisis in race relations in U. S. cities. A copy of their message was sent to Dancy on the following day.¹²⁵ In Detroit, several individuals were constantly reminding those in authority that racial conflicts were in a crisis situation. "Detroit is Dynamite," Ted Poston warned sharply. It "can either blow up Hitler or it can blow up the U. S."¹²⁶

In spite of all these signs most leaders in the city continued to live their lives as if things were as usual. Mayor Edward J. Jeffries felt that the problem was with publicity

¹²⁴Letter, A. L. Foster to Mr. John C. Dancy, June 10, 1943, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹²⁵See the several telex messages of the National Urban League to various leaders in the Federal Government, Executive Secretary's General File, June 1943, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹²⁶Meier and Rudwick, p. 192.

against the fair name of his city.¹²⁷ The League in Detroit was no different. Its preoccupation was in its usual recreational programs and speech presentations. The League's main preoccupation at the time was in the work of the Green Pastures Camp. This was a non-controversial program. Some people criticized the League for being involved with matters of camping during a time of crisis in the black community.¹²⁸

On the day that the major race riot broke, June 20, 1943, Dancy himself was in Grand Rapids "on a speaking engagement, departing from that city by train at midnight."¹²⁹ The day had been very hot and many people had gone to the beach at Belle Isle to cool themselves and relax. In the evening, as the crowd was returning to their homes a serious conflict arose between a white sailor and a black civilian. That bloody "clash between a white sailor and a black civilian, following several minor alterations on a bridge linking Belle Isle Park to the mainland, triggered a racial riot."¹³⁰

As Professor Moore points out, "the widespread wild rumors, particularly that a Negro woman and her child had been thrown into the river by whites, added fuel to the fire."¹³¹ As the nightfall approached, "the looting and wrecking of white-owned stores in Negro neighborhoods had commenced. Before the first night of rioting had ended, Negro gangs had set upon whites, and white gangs had sought out Negroes to administer

¹²⁷Ibid., pp 193-194.

¹²⁸See the various reports on the riot, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹²⁹Dancy, p. 194.

¹³⁰Moore, A Search for Equality, p. 106.

¹³¹Ibid.

beatings."¹³² By Tuesday morning, the day that the police and the United States Army had brought the riot under control, twenty-six persons were dead, more than one hundred had suffered serious injuries, and over fifteen hundred had been arrested. Twenty-three of the dead were blacks.¹³³

Detroit's politicians, police, city administrators, and most of the white population attributed the riots to agitation by "militants". The NUL sent its own investigators to the scene of the riot. Its representatives concluded, upon weighing the evidence, that blacks were unhappy over inadequate housing, frequent labor disturbances in the city and, continued employment discrimination. In addition, the NUL called attention to inadequate recreational facilities in the black areas of Detroit, citing this as another factor that caused the rioting.¹³⁴

Officials of both the NUL and the DUL also stated that the black population resented the arbitrary action of the police in making arrests during the riot. Although the number of riot participants was approximately the same for both races, the police arrested more than 1,200 blacks as contrasted to only less than 200 whites. Moreover, the majority of the blacks killed in the riot had died from the police gunshot wounds.¹³⁵

Dancy's Administrative Assistant, Raymond O. Hatcher, was the only person in the office during the day the riot occurred. At the request of several individuals on the

¹³²Moore, p. 106.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴"The National Urban League's Report of the Detroit Race Riot", Executive Secretary's General File, June 1943, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹³⁵Ibid.

following day Hatcher wrote an article on the riot and gave it to the Mayor's office. In the article, Hatcher recommended further study and that a joint Commission be formed. In the meanwhile the NUL, NAACP, UAW-CIO, Citizen's League and other organizations became the chief actors at the scene. Dancy's low profile, in this crisis and the emergence of Thomas, Reverend Hill and others, who seemed to offer more effective leadership in the moment, once again, showed that the DUL's leadership in race relations had waned considerably. Its lack of interest in dealing with controversial issues, therefore, influenced the League's continual decline in its leadership and prominence in the wake of rising black militarism.¹³⁶

In contrast to other organizations, the DUL remained silent for almost a week before its Board of Directors met and responded to the riot. Whereas some local organizations began to meet immediately after the riot and, in fact, some of the organizations, such as the Reverend Hill's Citizens Committee, met daily to consider what to do about the situation, DUL's Board of Directors did so only once and at the end of the riot week.¹³⁷ Here again, as during the Sojourner Truth crisis, the DUL's leadership

¹³⁶There is no question that the Riot led to the emergence of new white and black leaders in Detroit. J. Thomas of the UAW-CIO became unquestionably the most single important white leader of the hour, and who seemed to get the attention blacks. The NAACP and the Citizens Committee emerged as key black organizations in the fight for the rights of Detroit's black community. National Urban League's role in the Detroit riot was more significant than that of the DUL. This event, therefore reduced the prestige of both white and black leaders associated with the DUL. See the various reports of different groups that emerged to address the riot crisis. Executive Secretary's General File, June, 1943, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹³⁷Memorandum on Detroit Race Disturbance by Harold M. Kingsley, June 23, 1943; Circular letter, President of the National Urban League to Board Members and Executive Secretaries, July 6, 1943, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-

lacked promptness and was weak.

Among the most important organizations that sought to offer leadership in the aftermath of the riots included the NUL, the Citizen's League, the NAACP, the Wolverine Bar Association, the East side Merchants's Association, the Detroit Common Council, the Mayor's Interracial Peace Board, and UAW-CIO. Dancy recognized the effectiveness of the labor unions, especially the International president of UAW-CIA, R. J. Thomas. Dancy called him the "the strong man and leader of the hour," who "came forth boldly and strongly with an eight-point program--the only tangible program presented to date."¹³⁸

Dancy also praised his friends in the industries. He credited the industrialists as acting together with labor to "prevent any serious outbreaks in our war plants." He said that "it is significant that in the hour of crisis industrial and labor leadership rose to the occasion and gave us the outstanding demonstration of basic Americanism and patriotism--an island of sanity in a sea of sadness."¹³⁹

Thomas's eight point program called for a special grand jury to investigate causes of riots and indictments. These included: the immediate construction and opening of park and recreational facilities, immediate re-housing of black slum dwellers, recognition of black rights in jobs and grading, full investigation by the special jury of the conduct of police department, exercise of care by the courts not to discriminate against black rioters,

MHC.

¹³⁸Letter, John C. Dancy to Claude Barnett, June 24, 1943, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹³⁹Ibid.

creation by the city of a special fund to help the innocent people and business who were victimized by the riot, and finally a recommendation by a special bi-racial committee of ten on ways to avoid racial differences and frictions especially High Schools.¹⁴⁰

The aftermath of the riot made the black masses even more militant calling for and demanding justice. Now, more than ever, they denounced the behavior of the Detroit Police, the Common Council of the city and its Mayor. But they showered R. J. Thomas with praises. One angry black said the "Riots will be prevented when the rights of Negroes are respected so much so that white hoodlums dare not violate them lest they be punished".¹⁴¹

The Mayor's Interracial Peace Board report responded in favor and praise of the police. They called for the punishment of the rioters, provision of more recreation facilities, condemnation by the city of some lots for creating such facilities with the help of the DUL and the council of Churches. The report also recognized the importance of equal opportunity for all in jobs and upgrading, recommended that educators be stimulated to seek better ways and means of teaching tolerance, courtesy, and kindness among school children. In addition, the report called on public health experts and hospitals to work out better ways and means of maintaining and improving the health of blacks. Finally the report recommended that a study be conducted on how ways to provide good

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹An article in a Newspaper Clipping, "Race Riots; Why we have them" by Rev. Wm. Lysles, [1943], Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

housing under private ownership.¹⁴²

Dancy, aware of the anger of blacks against the police and the Mayor, put the blame on the police and the mayor. He felt that the police killed nearly all the colored people and that "everything was done to protect whites." In regards to the leadership of the Mayor, Dancy said "a firm stand in the beginning by the Mayor would have done much to have averted this massacre but the Mayor wanted to preserve the 'fair name of the city.'" ¹⁴³ This, however, he said privately.

When the DUL board met to respond to the riot, nearly a week after it had taken place, the board decided that it would cooperate with all organizations and groups working for better race relation. The League proposed to offer its experience and information needed on race relations. It also recommended the appointment of a city-wide interracial Commission. The DUL pointed out that the riot had not been caused by subversive elements as Granger had charged. The DUL argued that the riot had been caused by a series of minor racial clashes involving housing, employment, recreation, and civil liberties. The League also accepted R. J. Thomas' eight points program and that the "Detroit plan" for better housing, wholesome recreation and jobs to "combat undesirable influences."¹⁴⁴

On June 28, 1943 the NUL, through the person of Julius A. Thomas, reported on

¹⁴²A document, "Suggested Report to the Mayor of the Mayor's Inter-racial Peace Board, 1943, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁴³Letter, John C. Dancy to Mr. Claude Barnett, June 24, 1943, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁴⁴Detroit Urban League's News release, June 26, 1943, General Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

Detroit race riot and made recommendations to the DUL. In a fifteen-page document the NUL attempted to account for the causes of the riots and gave some recommendations on the course of action to avoid future occurrences. As the NUL saw it, the underlying cause had to do with the fact that "facilities for housing, recreation, law enforcement, health service, and other social needs have not been expanded to keep pace with the rapid population growth."¹⁴⁵ Another source of tension according to the NUL was in the area of employment. The report stated that: "Discrimination in employment has added fuel to fires of racial conflict." In pointing to the key leaders in Detroit, the League praised the leadership of R. J. Thomas, Walter Hardin, and the CIO organization, and the Reverend Hill and his Citizen's Committee. In regard to the program of action, the NUL called for "a program of education in race and human relations for the City of Detroit." The NUL called public schools, churches, social agencies, organized labor, the press and the radio to do their best to "overcome the prejudices and fears of Negroes and whites in Detroit." From an action point of view the NUL recommended that the Detroit community use of the "directed program of better public relations, and the neighborhood improvement program sponsored by the DUL or other agency." The NUL charged the implementation of this program to the Mayor's Committee.¹⁴⁶

Another organization that reported on the riot was the Metropolitan Detroit Youth Council. Its report came on June 29, 1943 in a form of a statement on the riot and their

¹⁴⁵See the Report itself, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁴⁶See the Report itself and a letter from J. A. Thomas to John C. Dancy, June 29, 1943, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

recommendations.¹⁴⁷

As time passed, the DUL had to take action in response to the new situation created by the aftermath of the riot. On July 3, 1943, Hatcher recommended to Dancy "I believe that it would be wise for us to undertake a self-analysis of our overall program to ascertain whether or not we are meeting adequately the responsibilities usually assumed by an agency of this type and the nature of change or expansion (if necessary) at this time."¹⁴⁸ He suggested a committee, composed of board and staff members with advisory assistance from the Council of Social Agencies, could undertake the review and make recommendations on personnel policies, job specifications, job performances, programs, community centers and camp set-ups.

Mr. Hatcher also called for a clear redefining of the League mission asking: "Are we a promotional agency of functional agency or both? To what degree?" He pointed out that the DUL's "program might be further strengthened." He also called for the DUL to be in touch with the interests of the rank and file members of the black community. To "establish roots in the community at large", Hatcher pointed out, could "be done through a lay organization of interested persons". The example he gave was that the Urban League Associates could be held responsible for interpreting the DUL to the community at large and help to create an interest in the League, community Fund and the League's educational and cultural activities.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Memorandum, Raymond O. Hatcher to Dancy, July 3, 1943, Executive Secretary's General File, July 1943, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

In terms of addressing the real issue of the riot, the League simply recommended an expansion of recreational activities "to combat undesirable influences" as the remedy to racial problems and one that would help to guard future racial violence. Both the NUL and the DUL recommended an increase of Negroes on the city's police force; more frequent garbage and rubbish removal in the densely populated residential areas; more and better housing for the city's black population; and the retention of federal troops in the city for at least ninety days. Most important, they called for educational courses in race and human relations for the entire city.¹⁵⁰

Mayor Jeffries, and other city officials accepted the Urban League's recommendations on ways to resolve racial tensions in the riot-torn city of Detroit, but withheld final approval of any of them. Yet there was some activity on the part of Detroit's public officials to improve interracial relations. An interracial commission, appointed by the Mayor, was charged with the responsibility of assembling information as may "be available to formulate such programs as it thought advisable, and to make such recommendations as the information and its experience may dictate."¹⁵¹

DUL and the Mayor's Inter-racial Committee

Among the twelve members of the commission were: William J. Norton, Executive-Vice President of the Children's Fund of Michigan who also acted as the Chairman of the commission; Fred M. Butzel, a highly respected attorney and DUL's

¹⁵⁰Moore, p. 108.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

most influential board member; John F. Ballenger, Superintendent of Public Welfare of the State of Michigan; and Walter Hardin, director of the Interracial Division, UAW-CIO.¹⁵² Other members included the Reverend Charles A. Hill, Hartford Avenue Baptist Church, and Chairman of the Citizen's Committee; Louis E. Martin, editor of The Michigan Chronicle; Beulah Whitby, Executive Secretary of the Emergency Evacuation Service of OCD and a Member of DUL's Board of Directors; Charles H. Mahoney, Commissioner, State Department of Labor; Reverend George W. Baber, Ebenezer AME Church; Jean T. Shaefer, Chairman of DUL; Reverend Benjamin Jay Bush, Westminster Presbyterian Church and President of the Detroit Council of Churches; and Adelia Starreth, Public Welfare Commission. According to Dancy, his organization "furnished three members for the Mayor's Interracial Commission and has offered to that group the use of any and all its resources."¹⁵³

Despite this distinguished group of individuals, the commission was not well received either by the NUL or the Detroit community. The NUL publicly attacked the Commission, charging it with failure to place the blame for the riot where it belonged-on white citizenry of Detroit.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the little input the DUL made to respond to the racial crisis intensified by the riot was rejected by the NUL as well as the Detroit community.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³See page 7 of an untitled document of the Detroit Urban League reporting on the Detroit Riot of 1943. The document begins with the words, "The Basic causes of the Detroit riots are imbedded in the usual socio-economic factors which...", Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁵⁴Moore, p. 108.

A more well-received committee was the Metropolitan Detroit Youth Council (MDYC), formed in the wake of the riot. It recommended included the youth of Detroit establish an Exchange Meeting Program, and an interracial committee be formed in the city's schools as a way to increase interracial contacts among the youth of the city.¹⁵⁵ Both the NUL and the DUL were quite receptive to the idea of increasing interracial contacts between black and white youth. While other agencies were formed in the wake of the riot to ease tensions, the program of the MDYC had the most immediate and long-term effect on the Urban League affiliates.¹⁵⁶

The NUL and its affiliates began to promote interracial contacts with other organizations. Thus after the 1943 Detroit riot the NUL began calling on city officials to begin institutionalizing racial commissions in political structures.¹⁵⁷

During the first week of July the DUL requested the NUL to provide them with the services of Dr. Warren Banner and Maurice Moss, the Secretary of the Pittsburgh Urban League for assistance in dealing with the post riot situation.¹⁵⁸ The NUL hesitatingly accepted.¹⁵⁹ On July 13, 1943 Dancy wrote to William R. Valentine that "our riot, I believe, is now a matter of the genuine past. The air has cleared and there seems to be more genuine affection exhibited between many of the whites and colored

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Ibid. p. 109.

¹⁵⁷Moore, pp. 108-109.

¹⁵⁸Letter, John C. Dancy to W. H. Baldwin, July 6, 1943, General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁵⁹Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p.299.

people that before."¹⁶⁰

The NUL did not agree with Dancy that Detroit's riot was a matter of the past. On July 22, 1943 Granger wrote to Dancy "Detroit, Michigan; Mobile, Alabama; Beaumont, Texas--danger spots appearing in dozen of other cities-- three are warnings that America's problems of racial relations cannot "wait until after the war." Granger told Dancy that the League needed to get on the tasks of advising industrial management with personnel problems, assist the labor leadership with union problems and help the black "workers with all problems affecting their jobs today and in the future."¹⁶¹

In spite of Dancy's optimism Detroit's white community was more adamant at opposing any meaningful attainment of black aspirations. As Dancy himself observed

There are 8 housing projects in operation in Detroit at the present time with eleven projects under construction. A policy of complete segregation applies to all projects with no exceptions; war housing policies are the same as the regular low cost housing policies. Housing conditions have been and still are deplorable for Negroes in Detroit and there is nothing hopeful in sight at present.¹⁶²

Thus, the wartime strategy the League adopted to deal with its dilemma developed quickly and helped it to survive. However, it led to a situation in which the organization lost the leadership primacy in handling the problems of the black urban community. Organizations such as the UAW-CIO became new allies of black community in their quest for social change. The League in Detroit had no choice but to seek an alliance

¹⁶⁰Letter, John C. Dancy to Valentine, July 13, 1943, General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁶¹Letter, Lester B. Granger to John C. Dancy, July 22, 1943, General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁶²Letter, John C. Dancy to Roma S. Ullman, July 28, 1943, General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

with, the UAW-CIO as they had become the most effective organization to deal with the problems of the black community at this time. In October 1944 the DUL defined its relationship with labor in which it desired to cooperate with the UAW-CIO.¹⁶³ A year later, the League sought into its Board of Directors, representatives from the Labor Unions.¹⁶⁴ Soon it began to publicize its association with the CIO-UAW.¹⁶⁵ The League wanted to be known as working with organized Labor. Aware that other organizations had more effectiveness in dealing with the problems of the black community the League had to follow their lead.

Still the DUL continued to deal with the employment, and housing problems working mainly within the periphery of the black problems. It did not want to abandon its policy of "hands off" in matters of discrimination. In the area of employment, for example, the League, still, pursued its familiar counselling and placement referrals for youth and adults. Under its Industrial Relations Services, the DUL continued to maintain good relations with the employers. The Vocational Services Department, established in the spring of 1944, helped to further maintain such a relationship. The department interviewed applicants for job placements, referring some to USES, and other placement services. The League developed a vocational trends digest for each month and published

¹⁶³Report of DUL for August 1944, General Secretary's File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁶⁴In the Fall of 1945, Jack Zeller, the Director of the UAW-CIO Educational Department was recruited to join the League's Committee of Public Relations. See Letter, William R. Valentine (for Charles Daly, Chairman of Public Relations Committee), to Mrs. Francis Bourke, September 11, 1945, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁶⁵See the Annual Reports for the years 1944-1946, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

it in the weekly press as a means of keeping the public informed with respect to job trends. The DUL re-organized its Industrial Associates in 1944 and met weekly to consider problems of employment policies, upgrading, seniority, worker relations and training. The group was composed of black and white representatives of labor, industry, government, social work, schools, and organizations interest in civil rights and other special problems.¹⁶⁶

As World War II came to a close with the veterans arriving, the climate of confrontation was bound to continue unabated. The League had to deal with how it was going to satisfy its two constituents--the black community and its financial sponsors. Since intensified militarism from the black community characterized the Post-war period, it was inevitable that the League's traditions of gradualism and conciliation had to come under even greater pressure. Its struggle to adjust to the climate of intensified racial conflict is the subject of the remaining two chapters.

¹⁶⁶See the Annual Report for the year 1944, Folder [11-15], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

CHAPTER TEN

THE LEAGUE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION, 1945-1960

The Urban League movement does not support lobbying for social legislation. It is a professional social service agency. After the passage of Civil Rights Legislation, Urban officials may occupy places on committees and commissions. Because several states and cities have passed legislation and ordinances prohibiting discrimination in employment; And, Because the passage of such legislation is pending in several states, including the State of Michigan; Be it resolved that, the Detroit Urban League offer the following services on request: ...Recruit, screen and refer applicants to employers committed to a new employment policy in keeping with the law.¹

The Detroit Urban League Board (1949)

After World War II, the DUL had to deal with the issues raised by black militarism, civil rights legislation and Detroit's expanding politicized black population. These developments placed stress on the DUL's fabric. The league's black and white board members took different views of the significance of these post war developments. Black board members saw the post war developments as providing an opportunity for

¹Memorandum, Francis A. Kornegay and the Industrial Relations Committee of the Vocational Services Department to John C. Dancy and the Executive Board of Detroit Urban League, January 19, 1949, Vocational Secretary's General File, Box 45, DULP-MHC. It was accepted by the Board of Directors on February 25, 1949. See Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Detroit Urban League, February 25, 1949, Board of Directors File, Box 61, DULP-MHC.

revising the league's program and orientation. The white board members feared that the post war developments might erode the league's traditions. This chapter discusses how the league responded to post war developments. It focuses on the league's policy adjustment.

Handling Discrimination and Segregation

Issues of discrimination and segregation became the most pressing concerns the post war league faced. Aided by a number of post-war Supreme Court rulings, the African-Americans intensified their crusade for equality and progress. The whites resisted such aspirations. During the last half of 1945, white employers made orders for workers through U.S.E.S. specifying "white only." The Detroit's M.S.E.S. policy stated that "the local office will accept employers's orders containing discriminatory specifications." Companies like Budd Wheel, Ford, Chevrolet Gear and Axle made orders for workers specifying "white only." Between fifty and eighty per cent of most job calls had such specifications.² The Employers Association, whose manager had been on the league's board of directors since World War I, continued to look only for whites workers. The Employers Association rationalized this practice by saying that its employment bureau "was set up as a segregated unit for whites only" because the manufacturers wanted

²Letters, Francis A. Kornegay to Edward L. Cushman, October 3, 1945; Edward L. Cushman to Francis A. Kornegay, October 9, 1945; F. A. Kornegay to Guichard Parris, October 11, 1945; F. A. Kornegay to Mead Baker, November 7, 1945; F. A. Kornegay to Honorable Arthur H. Vandenberg, December 26, 1945; Memorandum, Edward L. Cushman to State Administrative Staff, Area Directors, Field Supervisors and Local Office Managers, October 8, 1945. All in Vocational Services General File, Box 45, DULP-MHC.

"white skilled workers." The Association's manager also argued that manufacturers were "faced with the problem of getting efficient workers. . . .Lack of understanding the Negro due to the leadership on the part of the foreman, has tended to retard the production of the Negro worker."³ Discrimination and segregation in the housing market and hospital services continued to exist.

The league's initial response in addressing post war racial discrimination and segregation was to write protest letters and publicly exposing the organizations that discriminated against blacks. In April 1945, William R. Valentine, the league's administrative assistant secretary wrote a protest letter against Detroit's mayor for rejecting a site to house African-Americans. On December 14, 1945, the league and its supporters sent president Harry S. Truman a resolution "That all citizens of the United States, regardless of racial origin or religious or cultural background, be given full participation in our democratic way of life, and that measure be adopted to assure all peoples of and opportunity for gainful employment and decent shelter."⁴ In the same month the league protested discrimination by sending "a strong protest letter to the war secretary and to his civilian aide." In reply, the league "received notice from the local recruiting office, subsequently confirmed by a letter from the war secretary, that the policy had been rescinded and that Negro applicants will be accepted."⁵

³Report of the Findings of "Job Workshop Conference", September 14, 1945, Vocational Services General File, Box 45, DULP-MHC.

⁴Letter, Frank Winn to Hon. Harry S. Truman, December 14, 1945, Directors File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

⁵Field Report, Monthly Summary of Trends and Events in Race Relations, January 1946, by William R. Valentine, Director's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

The League also used exposure tactics to fight discrimination and segregation. In the mid-1940s, the league exposed the employment practices of the Employers Association of Detroit. The league accused the bureau of rejecting black applicants, telling them directly that its office served whites only and that blacks seeking employment should go to the offices of the DUL or the U.S.E.S.⁶ The league also exposed the USES's racial discriminatory hiring practices. In October 1945 the league issued a public statement that "many United States Employment Service interviewers are making selective referrals--i.e., Negroes are not referred to jobs unless Negroes are specifically requested."⁷ The league accused the M.S.E.S. of "selective referral since the war" and of referring blacks only to those jobs for which they were requested. Valentine estimated that eighty per cent of the employer orders specified white employees.⁸ Ironically, the M.S.E.S.'s director served as the DUL's vocational services committee chairman.

On December 8, 1947, the DUL issued a public document calling the housing situation "the number one problem in Detroit for a good many years. . . .The Urban League has requests every day from those who are seeking an apartment, house, or just shelter of any kind. It is that bad."⁹ The DUL blamed the housing problem on the architects of the Restrictive Covenants and city council. The document condemned

⁶News release, September 1945, Director's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

⁷Letter, William R. Valentine to Charles R. Lawrence, December 18, 1945, Director's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

⁸News release, October 1945, Director's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

⁹A news release document, December 8, 1947, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

congestion and pointed out that the problem had been aggravated by the return of many veterans.¹⁰

On that same day, the league issued a news release focusing on the problem of restrictive covenant, which were agreements written into the deeds of sales by which the property owners mutually banded together themselves not to sell or to lease to an undesirable. These agreements were enforceable by court action. The league accused the City Council for failing to provide public housing for blacks by refusing to change the racial pattern of any area and condemning land properties without making any plan to assist the displaced families.¹¹

The league's protest and exposure methods failed to lessen the housing problem, which worsened as veterans arrived into the city. The league reissued its 1948 "Victory Patterns" brochure, which presented a moral case to the City Council and real-estate owners for integrated housing. The DUL's argument rested on the grounds that integrated housing had been successfully tried in other cities.¹²

¹⁰News release, December 8, 1947, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²The Brochure known as "Victory Pattern in Public Housing", attempted to convey to the real estate leaders that housing desegregation had been tried in other parts of the country with success. The League hoped that if the real estate owners read the news clippings containing the successful application of housing desegregation they would adopt it. See the contents of the brochure in the General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

The "Equal Opportunity" Brochure

Because the league did not want to participate in activities that called for immediate end to employment discrimination, it exercised its involvement with issues of discrimination in jobs cautiously. At the same time, the Truman's administration led to the establishment of nation-wide and state-wide laws demanding pressure on employers to abolish their practices of racial discrimination. The league attempted to accommodate to the changing legal conditions by publishing "Equal Opportunity: A practical guide to Successful Employment Practices," a brochure it prepared "based on experiences of employers who successfully utilized minority group workers during war and peace with the hope that it will be beneficial to those employers who are considering the employment of minority group workers."¹³ The league published the pamphlet to seek to refrain Detroit's employers. A quarter of the pamphlet's contents consisted of propaganda about the league's work and its being the "best way to recruit Negro Workers."¹⁴ Employers were encouraged to recruit black workers through the DUL, M.S.E.S. and the Detroit Board of Education. "These are competent resources which provide specialized recruiting services," the League recommended.¹⁵

The League did not wish the employers to think that it was advocating social equality: "Does the hiring of Negroes imply accepting them socially? Making friends among fellow workers is purely a personal matter. Pleasant cooperative working relations

¹³Pamphlet, "Equal Opportunity", brochure dated 1948, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

does not imply any social responsibilities."¹⁶ About ten thousand copies of the "Equal Opportunity" brochure were distributed to the employers at a total cost of \$964.¹⁷

The League on Civil Rights

In addition to protest letters, public exposure and moral persuasion, league considered using social legislation to response to racial discrimination and segregation. In May 1946, Dancy chaired a community meeting that called for social legislation to address the problem of minority employment. The meeting resulted with a majority favoring the establishment of Fair Employment Practice Committee Act at both the local and state levels. They recommended that Edward L. Cushman, the director of the M.S.E.S, be asked to appoint a continuing committee, "made up of representatives of management, labor, community and government to make plans to implement the principles adopted."¹⁸

The league's policy, though, prevented its involvement with social legislation. The organization's corporate patrons opposed social legislation in addressing employment problems. This situation placed the league in a dilemma. On October 23, 1946, Dancy expressed concern that labor unions and the Civil Rights Federation favored FEPC at the

¹⁶Tbid.

¹⁷Memorandum, Frances A. Kornegay to Mrs. Willard Pope and Mr. John C. Dancy, May 17, 1949, Vocational Service Department General File, Box 45, DULP-MHC.

¹⁸Report by Mr. Dancy of Community Discussion, May 10, 1946, Director's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

state and local levels, whereas Detroit's employers only supported the state one.¹⁹ The DUL supported the employers' position; however, upon realizing that the forces in favor of establishing a local FEPC were stronger, the its board decided to "go on record as in favor" of the local legislation.

Developments at the national level during the following year pressured the league to make up its mind whether or not to directly address issues of social legislation. On October 29, 1947, the President's Committee on Civil Rights advocated the establishment of regional offices to enforce civil rights: "a permanent Commission on Civil Rights in the Executive Office of the President and a Joint Standing Committee on Civil Rights in Congress."²⁰ On December 8, 1947, Detroit's Chapter of the Michigan Committee on Civil Rights was organized with the aim of securing "These Rights." On January 12, 1948, the Michigan Committee on Civil Rights asked Dancy for financial contribution.²¹ By the end of January 1948, the Michigan Committee on Civil Rights was formally organized replacing the Michigan Council For Fair Employment on a state-wide basis.

Nationwide, blacks including the NUL, supported these developments. On February 11, 1948, the NUL issued a new release seeking association with Sadie T. Alexander, a well-known philadelphia attorney who served as a member of President Truman's Civil Rights Committee. The NUL was elated that she had endorsed the

¹⁹Letter, John C. Dancy to William R. Valentine, October 23, 1946, Directors's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

²⁰Recommendations of the President's Committee on Civil Rights, released on October 29, 1947, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

²¹Letter, Most Reverend Francis J. Haas to John C. Dancy, January 12, 1948, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

League's slogan "The Future is Yours--Plan and Prepare."²²

In contrast, the DUL found itself in a dilemma due to the establishment of the Civil Rights Commission. During January and February 1949 the league's board of directors discussed its position on social legislation. While noting that the "league does not support lobbying for social legislation" but acted as "a professional Social service agency," the board felt that their organization had to offer "minimum services" to the civil rights cause. "After the passage of Civil Rights legislation," the board stated, "UL officials may occupy places on commissions and committee." Its rationale was that

because several states and cities have passed legislation and ordinances prohibiting discrimination in employment, and, because the passage of such legislation is pending in several states, including State of Michigan, be it resolved that the DUL go on record as favoring such legislation designed to further democratic practices in employment.²³

The civil rights activities they decided to participate in included the development of contents and techniques for educational programs, providing information on the problem of employment of blacks; recruitment, screening and referring black applicants to employers committed to the new policy in keeping with the law; providing technical advice and assistance in the integration and orientation of new Negro employees and developing "in Negro workers a sense of responsibility commensurate with the right to equal considerations for job placement and up-grading."²⁴

²²NUL news release, February 11, 1948, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

²³Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Detroit urban League, February 25, 1949, Board of Directors File, Box 61, DULP-MHC.

²⁴Ibid.

The board restricted the activities of its staff members from getting involved in other civil rights organizations that challenged discrimination with methods different from the league's. In February, Dancy resigned his position of Commissioner to the Governor's Civil Rights Commission.²⁵

The Civil Rights Legislation and the League's Dilemma

The League's clarification of its position regarding the question of social legislation, Dancy's resignation from the Governor's Civil Rights Commission, and the publication of the Equal Opportunity brochure did not settle its problem of dealing with the social legislation question. The issue reoccurred over and over. In Spring, 1951, the Board's president expressed the hope that the League would "move in a united effort with other agencies toward social action." A reaffirmation of the league's commitment to its 1948/49 Social Action position was made: "a clearly defined statement of policy relative to the League's participation in social action and legislation had already been stated previously. . . . As a professional social service agency the League could collect information and make it available to study groups and organizations".²⁶

The issue surfaced again during the league's 1951 Summer board meetings. The league once again found itself in a dilemma. It had to choose between the wishes of its industrial patrons or that of the black community. The industrialists were in favor of a

²⁵Letter, G. Mennen Williams to John C. Dancy, February 14, 1949, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

²⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors, March 8, 1951, Folder [11-16], Box 6, DULP-MHC.

state FEPC; black organizations advocated a state as well as a local one. Organizations supporting a local FEPC included NAACP, the Detroit Citizens' committee and the Communists. The City's industrialists opposed the local FEPC because they believed to communist influenced. They further argued that the City's Common Council had no authority to establish such a ordinance in Detroit. Afraid to aggravate its corporate allies, the DUL decided to concentrate on the state FEPC only. The league was particularly afraid of alienating itself from the Corporation Council that strongly opposed a Detroit FEPC. In early 1952 Julian Krolik, an industrialist and a DUL ally opposed the local FEPC. She attacked the Citizen's League committee's advocacy of the establishment of a local FEPC ordinance.²⁷ The DUL decided not to take sides. Dancy wanted the league to emphasize the state rather than the local one. He also wanted the league to work closely only with city's "recognized agencies."²⁸ The board decided to wait and see. Finally, as it became clear that the advocates of the local FEPC seemed destined to win, the league issued a statement that it go on record as supporting the local ordinance.²⁹

Further Dilemma in the League's role:

Handling housing discrimination and segregation weakened the league's capacity

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Minutes of the Board of Directors, May 10, 1951 and June 14, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²⁹Minutes of the Board of Directors, September 20, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

to perform its traditional mediation role. During the early 1950s, Detroit City Council planned to eliminate slum conditions by expanding Wayne State University's Medical Center--this meant the removal of many blacks who had no other place to stay. Dancy took a position against the plan, but he was strongly attacked. Horace A. White criticized Dancy's position on the proposed Medical Center as being "inconsistent with some of his best thinking in the past on great issues." White pointed out that the neighborhood was "already too transient to hold 50 per cent of even its present valuation" and that the defeat of the proposal would not solve the housing problems of blacks. White stated that Dancy's position helped to "make white people to reinforce their held beliefs that negroes are against civic and community progress, and that opposition to the site is a sentimentally negative manner, reaffirms this mistaken notion in the minds of people who are opposed to better housing for negroes."³⁰

The league began to be torn among its old allies. In 1951, the Booker T. Washington Trade Association (BTWA) requested the league's membership. Dancy wanted the league to become a member of BTWA; other Board members opposed membership. Eventually, the board voted in favor of the league becoming a BTWA member.³¹

The relationship between the league and Detroit's NAACP branch deteriorated during the post war period. These two organizations had been on good terms for a long

³⁰A document, "Some Questions put to John Dancy about the Medical Center" by Horace A. White, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

³¹Minutes of the Board of Directors, June 14, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

time. Their cooperation had led Dancy in the early 1940s to state that the two organizations "complement each other."³²; this situation still existed in the late half of the 1940s. On January 15, 1947, Dancy stated that "the NAACP has been the militant organization fighting through the courts for equality of opportunity, while the UL has attempted through its social services, to gain the same end."³³

This cooperation between the DUL and the NAACP came into jeopardy in the early 1950s. Signs of weakened cooperation between these two agencies appeared in April 1951, when Arthur L. Johnson, Executive Secretary of the NAACP, wrote a letter to the board of the DUL requesting the league's data on discrimination by super-markets. The NAACP wanted to use the data to "effect a more factual approach to programming in this area." White board members worried that a surrender of the league's information to the NAACP could be used for militant activities. Dancy called for a closer working relationship with the NAACP. He also wanted the League to supply the information. He pointed out that there was no need to deny the NAACP the facts were to be given to all the other groups. Dancy opposed drawing any lines between organizations.³⁴

Internal crisis in the league was felt in the area of its research activities as well. Its approach to discrimination in the 1950s focused mainly on collecting data about such cases. The post war league seemed almost like a research organization to the point that

³²The Radio Script, dated 1946, Director's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

³³Letter, John C. Dancy to Donalee Reed January 15, 1947, Executive Secretary's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

³⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 19, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Dancy contemplated the employment of a full-time Research employee in the summer 1952.³⁵ During that summer the league conducted two investigations in co-operation with labor unions: one dealt with "alleged intimidation of a bakery driver-salesman and the other dealt with barriers which prevented black drivers on beer trucks." A three-month study of the adequacy of local research information on black-white relations was also conducted. The diversity of the subjects the league's research covered included the study of Detroit's churches. By 1953, the league's research activities had increased to the point that it began efforts to obtain funds to employ a full-time research secretary. In this field too the league experienced pressure to from its old supporters. In 1951, Mrs. Weldon resigned from its board after twenty years in respond to alteration in the league's program emphasis.³⁶

The league's inability to perform a mediation role was again demonstrated in one of its April 1951 board meetings. More militant organizations began to attack the league publicly. Detroit's Common Council invited the league to present a report on its findings on the problems of housing. Beulah Whitby who served as the community organization chairman, and Dr. Robinson, the League president represented the league. The league's findings focused on the extent of the hardship to families in the Gratiot-Orleans area while avoiding addressing the discrimination question. Although the Common Council responded positively to the league report, some black leaders were dissatisfied with the

³⁵Minutes of the Board of Directors, June 12, 1952, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁶Minutes and Report of the Board of Directors, October 18, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

League's performance at the meeting.³⁷ They criticized the league's representatives for not addressing "the basic issues in the situation, namely, racial segregation." The league countered this criticism stating that DUL did not deal with social action. Whitby pointed out that the League's task was to render a sociological, scientific and wholesome service.

This controversy between the DUL and other blacks suggests that the league's approach to matters of discrimination were being called into question. It also reveals the persistence of the league's traditional policy of not addressing issues of discrimination. Despite that this was a period of greater militarism in the blacks' quest for social justice, the League believed that its sociological rather than social action approach was more "wholesome."³⁸

Confrontation with Mayor Cobo

The League's strategy of survival by trying to meet the expectations of its financial supporters, and the blacks' desire for a more militant approach, led it to one of its most serious organizational crises. While it refused to push for integration on already segregated housing, the league called for integration in future public housing projects. In January 1952, the league supported integration in the public housing project known as the Jeffries project.³⁹

The issue of redevelopment and re-location of blacks emerged as the major

³⁷Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 19, 1951, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Minutes and Report of the Board of Directors, January 17, 1952, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

housing issue of the post war period. The DUL attempted to seek the solution to the relocation problem by working closely with the Housing Commission. Later it began to oppose the commission. In spring 1951, the league accused the Housing Commission of summoning eighteen families to court from the Gratiot redevelopment area and securing judgement against them for refusal to accept on-site placements which were not decent, safe, and sanitary as required by section 105C of the Housing Act of 1949.⁴⁰ The league called for integration in the new public housing projects. The call for integration in new public housing projects led to a conflict with mayor Albert Cobo.

Cobo had for a long time been Dancy's friend. He used to call Dancy "for advice and counsel about various matters."⁴¹ This friendship was evident in September of 1950, when Dancy accepted the mayor's request to serve on the Crusade of Freedom committee under the leadership of Judge Joseph A. Moynihan.⁴² The following month, Cobo wrote Dancy thanking him for his contributions in the success of the Crusade for Freedom: "we are proud to have worked for freedom with you."⁴³ In February of 1953, DUL wrote Cobo thanking and commending him on his plans to continue the mayor's Interracial Committee, its valuable work in race relations and the wise choice of Beulah T. Whitby

⁴⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors, May 10, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴¹Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 183.

⁴²Letter, John C. Dancy to Mayor Cobo, September 22, 1950, General File, Box 6, DULP-MHC.

⁴³Letter, Albert E. Cobo and Judge Joseph A. Moynihan to Mr. John C. Dancy, November 14, 1950, General File, Box 6, DULP-MHC.

as acting director.⁴⁴

The friendship came to a halt in late 1953. On November 24, a police officer representing the youth bureau attended a seminar meeting on housing matters sponsored by the Community Services committee of the DUL. Whitby, who chaired the meeting, led a discussion about the problem related to white resistance to the black occupancy of a home in a predominantly white neighborhood. A participant of the meeting pointed out that "when Negroes move into a white neighborhood the only thing to do, to prevent violence, is to call in the police."⁴⁵ The policeman misunderstood the point. He went and told Cobo that the Urban league had decided to commit violence. The policeman reported that violence would occur as a result of the group's attempt to open public housing to blacks. He also stated that league planned to use legal means against the city by planning a subscription dinner to raise money for hiring attorneys to carry this matter to the United States supreme court if necessary.

At hearing this report, mayor Cobo "got very excited." He demanded the removal of Beulah Whitby from her position of acting director of the Commission on Community Relations. Cobo believed that Whitby should not remain active in a city organization while at the same time being a part of "any organization that says it is going ahead even if it may result in violence." The mayor was additionally furious with Whitby because he believed she had been the chairperson of the meeting at which "resolutions to do

⁴⁴Letter, John C. Dancy to Mayor Cobo, February 12, 1953, General File, Box 6, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁵Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 183.

violence had come on the floor and be passed."⁴⁶

Mayor Cobo called Dancy in the presence of a newspaper reporter. Angrily, Cobo demanded that Dancy "repudiate the Urban League position" of planning to commit violence as the police had presented. Dancy tried in vain to convince the mayor that the police report was inaccurate.⁴⁷ Dancy requested the mayor to clear the league with a public statement that the DUL had not advocated violence. The mayor insisted that the Community Services committee be disassociated from the DUL. He also demanded that Dancy take the matter up to the league's membership for a further deliberation. Regarding this, Dancy tried unsuccessfully to tell Cobo that the league had no membership. To Dancy's dismay, the event appeared in the press and the DUL was embarrassed.⁴⁸

On January 27, 1954, the league's board of directors held an emergency meeting to clarify to the public and the press the mayor's comment about DUL and Whitby. Dancy read the newspaper articles and quoted the mayor as saying, "Mrs. Whitby seemed to have been very close to organizations not in keeping with our thinking--one of which was later identified as the Community Services Committee, of the DUL urban League, which among other projects, is asking for removal of racial barriers in city housing projects." The board was convinced that the mayor had dropped Whitby from the Commission on the Community Relations committee because Cobo believed that she was

⁴⁶Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Board of Directors, January 27, 1954, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁷Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 183.

⁴⁸Ibid.

associated with a strange group. The league's board denied that its Community Organization Department had advocated violence.⁴⁹

Finally, the DUL's board decided that the league should play a low profile; they were not to insist on the issue of open housing occupancy, which they were actually attempting to work for. They also felt that since the Commission on Human Relations and the director of that commission "serves at the pleasure of the Mayor and that our concern is challenging the inaccuracy of the report of the Community Services Committee meeting as given to the Mayor," the league was not to deal with the dismissal of Whitby. They concluded by deciding to write a letter "stating the facts as they are."⁵⁰

Eventually the Cobo-DUL conflict led the Mayor in June 1955 to refuse reappointing Dancy to the House of Correction's membership, on which he had served since 1933. The league's board and Dancy were infuriated with the mayor's action. Dancy retaliated by resigning from Detroit's Commission on Children and Youth.⁵¹ The league's board said that "it is unfortunate that Mayor Cobo's virtual dismissal of Dancy from the House of Corrections Commission had nothing to do with Dancy's able performance of his duties. Rather, the affair arose from a year-old political quarrel." The league decided to ignore the matter for good.⁵²

⁴⁹Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Directors, January 27, 1954, File [11-17], DULP-MHC.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 183.

⁵²Minutes of the Board of Directors, June 9, 1955, File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC; Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 184.

The mayor's office, however, continued to frustrate the DUL. In spring 1954, the league had a conference with mayor Cobo giving recommendations for open occupancy practice. The effort did not materialize. The league's Community Organization department decided to adopt a new approach to solving the housing problem. The approach focused on educating blacks and interpreting the magnitude of the housing problem to those in power. The strategy was to motivate other community agencies and individuals to become interested in making more public and private housing available to the African-Americans. The league called for a utilization of "the experiences of other cities that have more liberal occupancy policies and to evaluate these experiences in the light of our own local situation." The league had used the same methods in the 1940s, when it produced brochures called "victory Patterns." It was an approach that avoided confrontation with the opponents of integrated housing. The league called upon the city's leaders to follow the example of those cities that had successfully tried integrated public housing. The league insisted that this approach did not alter its "convictions with respect to open occupancy, nor does it infer that the need is less acute because municipal authorities refuse to recognize it." The league's board passed a motion reaffirming its policy for non-segregation in public housing and its belief in open occupancy and authorized the community Services department to step-up activities--including educational and interpretative programs--in line with the new approach.⁵³

⁵³Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 8, 1954, Folder [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Fighting Employment Discrimination

Towards the end of 1954, the league's Vocational Services Department "re-defined" its objectives as "to effect equal job opportunities for Negro workers and other workers who face employment problems."⁵⁴ Its methods, though, continued to appeal to employers "on a high moral basis" or to point out "the facts on the basis of good business," and holding conferences with the employers "to solicit their help." It continued to conduct research as its method of addressing employment discrimination. It conducted studies "to determine the number and extent of Negro employment in Super Markets."⁵⁵ It avoided confrontational a approach. When a black accused one local veterans's administration office of discriminating against blacks in its employment practices, the league responded by holding a conference with the officials concerned. These officials revealed to the league's satisfaction that "the charges were unfounded."⁵⁶

But during the post war climate it was difficult to sustain the league's strategies. Civil rights legislation on employment practices continued to pressure the league to move more the left. On October 14, 1955, the league voted to go on record as being supportive of the anticipated passage of the FEPC legislation in Michigan. A letter was sent to employers and unions in Detroit calling attention to the forthcoming new FEPC legislation. Ironically, this new law applied also to the DUL, and called upon its board

⁵⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors, December 9, 1954, Folder [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors, December 8, 1954, File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

to move towards racially integrating its own staff.⁵⁷

The Fight against Hospital discrimination

During the latter half of the 1950s, the League began to fight hospital discrimination. In 1951, Sidney Barthwell, the president of the Booker T. Washington Trade Association requested the league to investigate cases of discrimination and segregation in public-supported hospitals like the Greater Detroit Hospital and Henry Ford Hospital.⁵⁸ In 1954 and 1955, blacks forced the league to give greater attention to discrimination in medical and hospital residencies and internships.

The league responded to these calls by applying its usual research tactics. In 1954, the league conducted a study which revealed that 937 residencies available in Metropolitan Detroit had no black ever to have been accepted for an internship in a voluntary hospital in the history of voluntary hospitals in Detroit. The league found that black physicians lacked the opportunity to receive residencies; applications from blacks in November and December of 1954, had all been denied. The study showed that Henry Ford Hospital had accepted only one black applicant; the Women's Hospital had accepted only two and yet those hospitals were publicly supported. The league's findings stated that hospital discrimination against blacks included the practice of segregation of patients in ward and room assignments, fixed maximums of private or semi-private rooms for

⁵⁷Minutes of the DUL's Board of Directors, October 13, 1955, Folder [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁸Minutes of the Board of Directors, May 10, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

negro patients, limitations in facilities for obstetrical care and treatment of blacks, restrictions on the use of facilities for special services for black patents, a lack of residencies open to black physicians, and restrictions on the number of staff privileges to five black physicians. The DUL documented the lack of active staff, courtesy staff, the absence of blacks on administrative committees, and the restriction of blacks and the denial of employment opportunities of qualified blacks to fill the many and varied positions found in the general and specific occupation classification of hospitals.⁵⁹

These findings moved the league into the next phase: what was to be done about black's grievances against Detroit's hospitals? Once more the league's division within its board surfaced. Some wanted the league to try the NAACP strategy--legal action. The opponents of the legal action wanted the league to use its traditional methods of education and persuasion. Finally, the league's board voted in favor of an educational program. This decision encountered problems--the involvement of the city's Commission on Community Relations, which created competition in its research efforts. The league decided to form a committee that aimed at promoting action rather than at doing a survey.⁶⁰

Competition between the league and other organizations continued to influence its involvement in Detroit hospital discrimination problems. In October of 1955, Dr. Robinson, a former president of the league, reported to DUL board members the activities

⁵⁹Minutes/Report of the Board of Directors, January 13, 1955, Folder [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁰Ibid.

of the Detroit Medical Society in fighting hospital discrimination. He read to them a resolution which stated that:

Whereas, the health opportunities of the community are our basic concern, and whereas, Restrictions and/or denial of health services and facilities, because of race, creed, or color, violate the spirit of our ethical code, and whereas, such practices are unsocial, uneconomical, undesirable and undemocratic, Therefore, be it Resolved, (1) That the Michigan State Medical Society record itself as opposing racial discrimination and segregation in the schools, hospitals and other health services of our State; and be it further Resolved, (2) That and appropriate committee or committees be created to effectuate the intent and spirit of this resolution.⁶¹

Commission on Community Relations was another organization that tried to find a solution to hospital discrimination. In 1956 the commission made public its findings of on hospital study. The report outlined various forms of discrimination practiced by Detroit's medical interest groups and voluntary hospitals. The study recommended the elimination of all racial factors contained in the policy or practice of these medical institutions. The report led the league to reactivate its hospital board committee which conducted a series of meetings between itself and the administrators of selected hospitals. The league also initiated a plan to strengthen its program of facilitating the achievement of a non-discrimination policy and practice in voluntary hospitals.⁶²

In June 1956, Ramona S. Scruggs,⁶³ the DUL's newly-elected president,

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Annual Report of the Board of Directors, 1957, File [11-19], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶³Ramona Scruggs was elected the president of DUL in 1956 succeeding Horold Schroeder, the then Vice President of the Michigan Bell Telephone Company. Scruggs, a native of Nashville, Tennessee was born in 1909 and received B. A. in business Administration at Fisk University in 1932. In 1936 he moved to Detroit where he

requested the Commission on Community Relations to include the league in the group that sought solutions to Detroit's hospital problems: "this interest and service has included in full measure concerns for improved health and job opportunities for all Detroit Citizens." Scruggs also stated that "we take pride in the fact that many sensitive, or presumed to be so, areas of concern have been harmoniously resolved through League's efforts. . . . We feel that the committee would profit much from the League's accumulated knowledge in developing and projecting programs in a problem area such as this."⁶⁴ The league's plea for inclusion in the effort to address Detroit's hospital problem suggest that the organization was being bypassed by other newly established organizations that they dealt with.

worked as a Director of the Boys' Work at St. Antoine YMCA and shortly as a Director of the Green Pastures Camp. In 1939 he got a job with the Telephone Company, working as the commercial Agent, and the following year he was promoted to be a branch office manager. Shortly, after he was transferred to the Company's Public Relations department as Public Relations staff supervisor. In 1952 Scruggs got a special assignment with the Public Relations Assistant Vice-President's staff. In 1955 he was appointed as the Customer Relations Manager. He fitted quite well with the kind of individuals that loved and were loved by the League. He was a kind of a person that Detroit's industrialists loved. Like a typical black elite of those days, Scruggs had more in common with the White leaders than with the black migrants and rank and file. For instance, he belonged to various organizations that black elites, like Dancy, found prestigious. He was a member of the Gamma Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Board of United Community Services, Booker T. Washington Trade Association, Parkside Hospital, Children's Hospital, Greater Detroit Area Hospital Council, Vice-President of United Community Services, Detroit Board of Education, Detroit Board of Commerce, Economic Club, and Detroit Frontier's Club. See Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 244; "profile of Ramona S. Scruggs", Vocational Services Department General File, Undated and January 1944 to August 1945, Box 45, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁴Letter, Ramona S. Scruggs to Father John E. Coogan, June 25, 1956, Executive Secretary's General File, DULP-MHC.

To strengthen its declining influence, the league pursued the idea of holding conferences with administrators of proposed medical Center Hospitals (Woman's, Grace, Harper and Children) enlargement of its hospital board. The league reminded hospital administrators to observe the Hill-Burton Act, which prohibited the Hill Burton supported institutions from discrimination. Still, the league felt the pinch of competition from other organizations.⁶⁵ In October 1958, it sought a conference with the Commission on Community Relations chairman; sent a letter to the board chairman of hospitals under study asking for a meeting of a small committee from the DUL-Hospital Board, and planned to discuss the league's concerns on the problem of the status of Hospital-Medical services in Detroit.⁶⁶ Finally, the league's adopted approach to hospital discrimination constituted activities such as neighborhood organizations, infant adoption, community research projects, social welfare institutes, cooperative efforts to eliminate discrimination in medical facilities, and selection of families.⁶⁷

In sum, it is evident that developments in race relations during the post war period brought about internal and external crises for DUL. For the first time, the league began to address issues of discrimination and segregation. However, the league did not want to appear as challenging discrimination directly, lest it jeopardize its relationship with its corporate patrons. With various supreme court rulings making segregation and

⁶⁵Minutes of the Board of Directors, October 10, 1957, File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁶Minutes of DUL-Hospital Medical Committee Meeting, October 7, 1958, General File, Box 12, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁷Annual Report for 1958, given on February 12, 1959, File [11-20], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

discrimination illegal, the league was forced to support civil rights causes. This the league decided to participate in by conducting research to document cases of discrimination and pursuing its tradition of moral suasion. During the post war period the league was behind the progressive forces and had to be forced to follow others. This situation further eroded its influence. It attempted to capture its lost influence by seeking alliances with other organizations that addressed black problems.

The ADC Crisis

In the winter of the same year, the DUL encountered other critics. These developments placed pressure on the league, forcing it to ally itself more with its financial supporters rather than black militants. In January 1959, a Detroit newspaper published a series of articles charging Michigan's Aid to Dependent Children's program with mismanagement of public funds. The article called attention to the fact that in 1959 \$21,000,000 in federal, state and county funds was provided to 13,000 families in Wayne County; that 47 per cent of the 34,000 children for people helped by this program were born out of wedlock; that only 14-16 cases a month were terminated because mothers had found employment; that nearly 80 per cent of these families were black. The paper accused the ADC of inefficiency, failing to help these families change their destructive behavior.

The League and the Brown v. Board of Education Decision

The question of school segregation was brought to the attention of the urban

league by the famous Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka of May 17, 1954. The Urban League Movement was initially not supportive of the fight against school segregation. Lester B. Granger, NUL's executive director did not publicly support NAACP's efforts to overturn the de jure school segregation. However, the publicity and popularity that came along with such a successful legal battle by the NAACP soon forced the NUL to make its position strongly in favor of the decision.⁶⁸ During their Pittsburgh annual conference held in September 6-10, 1954, the Urban League delegates discussed at length the ramifications of the decision. The delegates publicly endorsed the Brown decision completely.⁶⁹

The DUL was represented at the conference by six board members and seven staff members. Each of the DUL's delegates to the Pittsburgh conference was requested during one of their board meeting to shared their conference experience. None of them made any reference to the conference's central issue--the question of the Brown decision. Only Dancy made a slight mention of the subject; the board's minutes were recorded with the comment that "mention was made of Lester Granger's speech on Desegregation and the meaning of it and the responsibility of the League to bring about a better day." In the meantime, the NUL began to put it at the center stage of its agenda.⁷⁰ The DUL could not afford to ignore the Brown Decision for long.

On December 4, 1954, a Michigan Urban Leagues Institute with eighty-five in

⁶⁸Moore, A Search of Equality, p. 181.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors, September 16, 1954, File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

attendance was held to respond to the Brown decision. The purpose of the institute was to review the Supreme Court ruling and its implications for the future of the urban league's planning in Michigan. The league's history, philosophy, and policies were presented; the most enjoyable part of the program was the presentation of the Service Award Pins to Dancy, Culver and Simms for their twenty-five years of service; Theresa M. Carrol, for twenty years; Haley Bell, Charles A. Daly, Francis A. Korgegay, Mrs. Willard Pope, and Julian P. Rodgers, for fifteen years; Laurentine B. Collins, Ernest T. Marshall, Mrs. Fred T. Murphy, Dr. Remus G. Robinson, Ramon S. Scruggs, and Donald M. D. Thurber for five years.⁷¹

These distractions did not divert the attention from the issue of school desegregation. Calls for revising of the league's programs and approaches to social change were made by the NUL. On April 15-17, 1955, the NUL held a board convention in Kansas City to review its purposes, policy and program "in the light of changes in the national race relations picture during the past six years." The NUL wanted to reorient its future to addressing the question of equal opportunity, considering what changes were needed in policy and methodology for the achievement of these goals.⁷²

The DUL board of directors took the Kansas meeting seriously. It requested its president, executive secretary and other staff members to attend.⁷³ This convention led the DUL to fully support the Brown Decision. The league decided to "gather facts

⁷¹See Minutes of the DUL's Board of Directors December 9, 1954; Annual Report, 1954. Both in File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

regarding segregation patterns existing in Detroit School system and other policies and methods used to perpetuate segregation, and that the facts be made available to the Board of education and any other public agency needing or seeking these facts."⁷⁴ In addition, the league representatives were to discuss the issue with the Detroit's school officials.

In October 1955, the league finalized its position and plan of action regarding the Brown decision. The Community Services Department recommended to the Board of Trustees a three points plan which included a meeting with superintendent staff of the public schools, formation of a joint study committee and presentation of policy recommendations relevant to the Brown decision.⁷⁵ The league ruled lobbying out of question in addressing questions of school discrimination and segregation: "government workers are severely restricted from lobbying, however, they are often called upon to supply facts." Tension between the board member that favored lobbying and those who opposed led the league to suspend making a final decision.⁷⁶ Eventually, it was decided that the league should only provide facts and not participate in lobbying.⁷⁷ In stating its rationale for this decision, the league stated that its financial supporters objected to

⁷⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 21, 1955 and May 12, 1955, File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁵Minutes of the Board of Directors, October 13, 1955, File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors, September 16, 1954, File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁷Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 21, 1955 and May 12, 1955, File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

lobbying in support of social legislation.⁷⁸ Any staff "with administrative clearance" could furnish facts and results in regards to legislative activities. Staff members could also act privately as they wish but not as representatives of the DUL. Staff members could "discuss pending policies, ordinances and statutes with any executive or administrative official unless the official is acting on legislative capacity." Finally, the board stated that DUL's staff could meet in scheduled meetings or hearings with legislative or quasi-legislative bodies to present orally or written facts and professional experience. In making a rationale for all these rules, the league's board argued that

the integrity of the League's position can be maintained only by declining to participate in or to sponsor organizations which have many different legislative objectives or which employ techniques different from those to which the League must adhere. The interest of the League is in specific legislative proposals, to which it has its own contribution to make in its own effective way. It should avoid situations in which the participation and support of the League is claimed by another organization using different means and working in many different situations.⁷⁹

DUL-UCS relationship

Since its founding, the DUL made every effort to maintain a good relationship with its benefactors. This was true especially with the United Community Services (UCS), the organization which was the primary financial sponsor of the league. Survival of the league was dependent on its good relationship with UCS. During the mid-1950s,

⁷⁸"A Suggested Detroit Urban League Policy Statement on staff Activities in Social Legislation", Board of Directors General File, 1955-1956, File [12-1], Box 12, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁹Ibid.

southern whites began a vigorously campaign to stop the Civil Rights movement. As early January 1956, southern white supremacist opposition to the urban league alarmed the DUL.⁸⁰ Southern white supremacists opposed the urban league because it had endorsed the Brown decision of school desegregation. At the same time, the league experienced criticism from black militants who called for confrontational approaches to social change.⁸¹ White supremacist groups like the National Citizen's Protective Association began their protests against the UCS's financial support of the urban league in 1955. The association had supporters from the business people, industrialists, religious and government leaders--precisely the kind of people the league had faith in throughout its history.⁸² White supremacists published and distributed literature against the UCS and the urban league. One of their pieces of hate literature was entitled White Sentinel. In 1956 hate literature against the league grew to twenty-one items. They accused the league of being communist agitators for black rights, union busters, illegal fund users, political activist and servants and instrument of NAACP.⁸³

By October 1957, white supremacist campaign reached northern cities, and the DUL expressed its concern with the National Citizen's Protective Association for distributing hate pamphlets discrediting the United Community Funds and Councils who

⁸⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 12, 1956, Folder 11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸¹Parris and Brooks, Blacks in the City, p. 365.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 366-367.

supported the urban league. The UCS reassured the DUL of its support.⁸⁴ In fall 1958, DUL became more worried of the white supremacist's increasing influence and success in destroying the urban League of Oklahoma City and forcing the Little Rock league to withdraw from the Community Chest; New Orleans and Richmond, Virginia were also forced out of the Community Chest.⁸⁵

The league in Detroit feared its extinction. Its board responded by calling a conference with the Commission on Community Relations urging the Commission to provide periodical reports to other organizations on the activities of the hate groups and their literature. The league also called for the establishment of a program with speakers and material to discredit and expose the hate literature of white supremacists.⁸⁶

Unfortunately, the league relationship with the UCS deteriorated. In fall 1958, the CUS refused to pay salary of one of DUL's full time employers at the Northwest center. This financial setback forced the DUL to close its Northwest center on October 23, 1958 for \$14,500.00.⁸⁷ Further, the UCS cut the league's budget for the following year by 5 per cent; that of the Green Pastures Camp was cut by 10 per cent.⁸⁸

⁸⁴Minutes/Reports of the Board of Directors, October 10, 1957, File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁵Minutes/Reports of the Board of Directors, September 18, 1958, Folder [11-19], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Minutes/Report of the Board of the Directors, April 9, 1959, Folder [11-20], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁸Minutes/Report of the Board of the Directors, October 23, 1958, File [11-19], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Fortunately the league's individual financial contributors like Aaron Mendleson increased his donation from \$125 to \$200.⁸⁹ Still, the UCS cut further its contributions to the league by \$11,292. The 1959 Green Pastures Camp budget was also again cut by 10 per cent.⁹⁰ This created strain for the league's staff because most of its budget went to salaries rather than program activities. A 1956 budget of \$96,356, for instance, had constituted \$74,125 of salaries and wages.⁹¹

DUL-UCS relationship was further strained in 1959 when the DUL was infuriated by the UCS for classifying the league with "Miscellaneous agencies." The league was further displeased when UCS formed a committee to study social problems on welfare, employment and the adjustment of newcomers to the Detroit area. The league said, "the Urban League has been doing this job for years and that we should be ready to point out to the newly formed committee that we are ready to make a contribution."⁹²

These pressures led the league to put effort at amending its relationship with its financial supporters. This was given further impetus when the NUL finally put the question of social legislation to rest at a conference held in September 1958. At that conference, Whitney Young, the newly appointed executive director of the NUL, stated

⁸⁹Minutes/Reports of the Board of Directors, May 8, 1958, Folder [11-19], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors, September 18, 1958, October 23, 1958, File [11-19], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹¹Minutes/Report of the Board of Directors, May 12, 1955, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹²Minutes of the Board of Directors, June 11, 1959, File [11-20], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

that his organization was not a civil rights organization, civil liberties organization, political, legal, or social mass movement. Young pointed out that the Urban League program was a research, communication, fact-finding and information oriented agency. He argued that the NUL placed its greatest emphasis on the program for strengthening the black family and other things "aimed at the problems of youth, but will be so designed as to show awareness of the relationship to the total environment."⁹³ The DUL also followed the lead of the NUL in avoiding participation in radical activities. To do so it was likely to lose the financial support from its corporate supporters. However, as the following chapter will indicate, the league was unable to please both black militants and conservative supporters. This situation made the league one of the oldest as well as most conservative surviving organization working on behalf of Detroit blacks.

⁹³Parris and Brooks, p. 401.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE LEAGUE'S POST WAR STRUGGLE TO REORGANIZE, 1945-1960

The Advisory Committee, that group of citizens which helps the Department to shape its policies and to mobilize public opinion in support of its policies, was enlarged and strengthened. Interviews were held with Advisory Committee members to interpret the objectives of the Department and the ways in which committee members could help.¹

Detroit Urban League Board (1952)

After World War II, the DUL's black members called for a revision of program and organizational structure. In 1949 the NUL also urged the DUL to make drastic changes in its program and structure. Altering the league's traditions proved difficult. Its board members became divided between those advocating change and those that wanted the agency to continue its traditional programs and functions. The league feared change because its financial benefactors objected to the altering of its program. Although the league's program, role and functions changed slightly, much of its traditions remained unaltered. Because the league changed little during the post war period, it found itself unable to meet the demands of a changing time. This chapter highlights the role of the League's new actors and discusses the organization's struggle to re-organize its program during the post-war Period. To some extent the history of the league during this period is a story of the struggle between advocates for change and those that desired to preserve

¹A brochure of DUL, "1951/1952: Mid-Century Stock-taking", Printed Material 1951-1955, File [18-14], Box 18, DULP-MHC.

the agency's traditions.

The Call for the League's Reorganization

After World War II, William Valentine called for an alteration in the league's program saying that a revision of the agency's program had been "made necessary by the end of the war." Valentine argued that the league "should head constructive criticism." He suggested that "there should be evaluations from the staff on the program" twice a year and that a membership plan should be established. Valentine believed that the league needed to alter its image because it was not getting credit for its accomplishments from the public: "It was unfortunate that some things that Urban League is doing cannot be publicized--eg. Mr. Kornegay opening job opportunities." Another concern Valentine voiced about his organization is related to the criticisms made against the DUL. He therefore suggested to the league's staff members that "we should bring into staff meetings what we hear people say about the League and its program. People are impressed with the building but more important should be impressed with usefulness and efficiency of our organization. . . . Our agency is judged by work we turn out. Our program can be improved."²

Another call for re-organizing Detroit's league came from the NUL in late 1949 and early 1950. With funds obtained from the Community Chest, the DUL began to conduct a critical study of its program, structure and activities in March 1949.³ Dr.

²Minutes of Staff Meeting, October 12, 1945, Director's General File, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

³See Budgets and Financial Records, 1949, Box 16, DULP-MHC.

Warren Banner, director of the NUL research program was hired to evaluate the Detroit urban league. He was to

review the program of the League and its departments, analyzing the activities, evaluating the emphasis and determining the extent to which major objectives have been reached during January 1944 to March 1949; to relate the program to the basic current needs of the population which it serves, and to make recommendations for future operations.⁴

The study hoped to review the league's activities and board of directors committee in order to determine the DUL's constituency, policy and participation. After the study, a report was given to the league's board of directors, who in turn set up an interpretation committee designed to study the report.⁵ The interpretative committee's task was to provide concrete suggestions to the board of directors on the best way to re-organize the Agency. Included in this interpretative committee were Ramon Scrugg who acted as its chairman; Jean T. Sheafor; and Beulah Whitby, who served as the committee's secretary.⁶

On December 14, 1949, the interpretive committee recommended major changes in the league's organizational structure. It advocated that the executive board have more control over policies and programs, that the term of office for the executive board members be limited to three years, and that an advisory board be created. The committee called for revision of the league's constitution and that a strong community organization

⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 21, 1949, Box 61, DULP-MHC.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Report and Recommendations of Committee to Receive the Review of the Program and Activities of the Detroit Urban League, 1944-1949 by Dr. Warren Banner", December 14, 1949, Directors File, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

program be developed to include a membership program. The committee called for a new emphasis in the league's activities including promoting job development and providing "constant and vigilant attention to the workers' problems." A city-wide organization and neighborhood organizations including the formation of a strong community organization committee were called for. It was proposed that each functional division of the program be governed by a standing sub-committee appointed by and responsible to the executive board. Among the standing committees that were immediately called for, were vocational services, community organization, budget and personnel. A Strong recommendation was made that an assistant director be hired immediately. Finally, the interpretive committee proposed the creation of the league's revised administrative chart.⁷

Resistance to Organizational Change

Resistance to change in the league's structure and leadership was the most formidable. This is evident in the effort to establish a membership plan which began on June 7, 1945, with the formation of the league's membership committee. The stated purpose of the membership was to increase knowledge of the DUL throughout the community, promote community interest in the league and its program, provide a medium for keeping the community informed on developments and problems, and present to "the

⁷Statement of Transmittal from the Advisory Committee of the Community Organization Department to the Executive Board of the Detroit Urban League, March 23, 1950, General File, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC; Report and Recommendations of Committee to Receive and Review of the Program and Activities of the Detroit Urban League, 1944-1949 by Dr. Warren Banner, December 14, 1949, General File, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

community an added example of interracial cooperation."⁸ The league's other stated purposes for the membership drive was to broaden its sphere of influence by increasing the community participation in the organization's programs, providing a medium of interpreting the aims and programs of the agency to the community, creating a medium to relay the community needs to the DUL and to provide a constituency for the league.⁹

These recommendations were not accepted by the league's board of directors. On December 4, 1945, a revised set of recommendations was presented to the board which included a membership plan categorized into regular and special. A fee of \$3 was required for the regular membership holders. Their privileges would include attendance at the league's annual meetings where the member would be able to vote, and receive reports, use of ecclestone library, and a one-year subscription to the "Opportunity" magazine. The special membership holders were to pay a fee of \$1, have all the privileges of the regular membership except for the "Opportunity" magazine subscription.¹⁰ The league still did not implement these recommendations, and three years elapsed before the league discussed the subject again.

When, in 1951, the issue of membership came again, a debate ensued among the board members. Some opposed the membership plan because they feared that the league's financial supporters would object. These board members also feared that a

⁸Outline of Membership Committee, June 7, 1945, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

⁹Report of the Membership Committee by Charles Daly, October, 1945, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

¹⁰Ibid.

membership plan would erode the power of the executive board; they believed that the membership plan would turn over the control of the league to Detroit's rank and file community members. The opponents of the membership plan felt that the establishment of a membership plan would kill the league program activities.¹¹

Board members in favor of a membership plan argued that a membership strategy would help the community know the purposes of the league since too few knew them. They also stated that a league's membership would broaden the base of activities--increasing the agency's source of funding. They claimed that having membership would increase the league's influence in the community.¹²

The division in the board made it difficult to take action. Another committee was appointed to study the matter further and report to the board.¹³ Several years elapsed and still the membership plan was not resolved. In May 1958 the league revised its constitution and by-laws, and decided to solve the problem of membership once and for all. The revised constitution and by-laws provided for an increased board membership from thirty-six to forty-two, and created two types of memberships approved by the league's financial supporters and which included dues of \$5.¹⁴ In November, another

¹¹Minutes of the Board of Directors, March 8, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Minutes/Report of the Board of Directors, June 12, 1958, File [11-19], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

revision to the constitution required all the league members to pay a fee of \$25.¹⁵ On January 15, 1960, steps for membership recruitment were outlined.¹⁶ But the league made a policy that rejected an all-out drive for membership--it called for recruitment of membership from only the influential individuals. Still this plan did not work. By 1966, the league had not established a membership plan.¹⁷

The league's resistance to change was reflected in another situation similar to the one dealing with the membership plan. On March 8, 1951 a debate focusing on the establishment of the League Guild emerged. Advocates for the guild held similar ideas like those advanced by the supporters of the membership plan. They believed that a DUL guild would popularize the league's activities and increase its financial support through "a broad program of educational, cultural and social activities."¹⁸ William Searborn, the director of the community organization department and future administrative secretary, supported the formation of a guild arguing that "at least 50 per cent of the net funds accrued from its activities are contributed to the National Urban League."¹⁹ Board members who opposed the formation of a guild in Detroit feared that such a body would

¹⁵Minutes of Board of Directors, November 12, 1959, File [11-20], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁶Minutes/Report of the Board of Directors, January 14, 1960, File [11-21], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁷As late as 1966, when Dancy wrote his autobiography, the DUL still did not have its membership plan implemented.

¹⁸Minutes of the Board of Directors, March 8, 1951, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

¹⁹Ibid.

be too autonomous from the Executive Board. A special committee was appointed to study the matter and then advise the league accordingly.²⁰

In 1952, the executive board of directors decided to form the DUL Guild with Dawn Watson Francis as the president. An organizational meeting was held in June of that year with about sixty-five in attendance. Dancy stated the purpose of the DUL Guild was to broaden the league's community participation base. By early 1953, two hundred guild members had been recruited. They served as volunteer workers in various programs of the DUL and also helped to interpret the league's work to the rest of the community.²¹ As Dancy stated, the league's guild was an organization designed to provide "active workers" for the DUL's various programs and helped "to spread information and understanding about the work of the League."²²

In Fall 1955, Julia C. Page succeeded Watson Francis as the Guild's president. Its objectives remained the same: to be promote better understanding of the league program, to develop a wider community participation to help promote DUL's programs, and to raise funds for the urban league movement.²³ On June 14, and September 23, 1956, the DUL guild held a fellowship tea to raise funds for the NUL.²⁴

²⁰Ibid.

²¹1951/1952: Mid-Century Stock-taking

²²Ibid.

²³Minutes of the Board of the Directors, September 22, 1955, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

²⁴Ibid.

Establishment of Block Clubs

The league found success in its re-organizational efforts in the establishment of the block clubs in August 1945. The block clubs program included the formation of a neighborhood council composed of delegates from each club. Neighborhood council coordinated block clubs. The clubs had programs determined by its membership which attempted to organize neighborhoods around recreations. The clubs also promoted social interests and coordinated "effort toward improvement, opportunities and development." Two of the first block clubs to be organized by the league became a reality in the summer of 1945 under the names, 'Greenlawn Block Club' and 'Indiana Block Club'. The club's programs included a neighborhood housekeeping service, a sick committee, house and yard beautification, neighborhood canning, adult education, health round-ups and entertainment.²⁵ These programs reflected those that the league had pursued in its community centers.

Remus G. Robinson: The League's First Black President

During the early 1950s, another organizational change occurred in the league's history--election of the first black president. Willard Pope served the league as its president during the late 1940s. On January 19, 1950, Dr. Remus G. Robinson, the head of the surgical staff at Providence Hospital, became the first elected black president of

²⁵News Release August, 1945; Activities Report from Valentine to Dancy, September 1945, General File of the Director, Box 5, DULP-MHC.

the DUL's board of directors. Dancy described Robinson as "a distinguished surgeon."²⁶ Born in Birmingham, Alabama on December 15, 1904, Robinson completed his medical degree and moved to Detroit.²⁷ He remained the League's president for a year after he resigned in 1951 to devote time to a new position as the first black elected to the Detroit's board of education.²⁸

Robinson called for organizational changes in the league's program, wishing that the board would "do its bidding" and he "expressed the hope that the league would experience a renaissance in its program to the community." Robinson encouraged the implementation of Banner study's recommendations, especially regarding the establishment of advisory committees.²⁹

As time passed, Robinson's hope of renaissance in the league's program did not materialize. His encouragement for change failed to bring a significant organizational transformation in the 1950s. However, the league faced criticism from the black community for its failure to adjust its administrative structure and strategy. Two months after Robinson had become the league's president, blacks criticized the league's failure to address discrimination issues. Others criticized the league for being an elitist

²⁶Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 211.

²⁷R. K. Burkett, N. H. Burkett, and H. L. Gates, Jr. Editors, Black Biography 1790-1950: A Cumulative Index, Volume 2, p. 343.

²⁸Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 244.

²⁹Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 19, 1950, Executive Directors File, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

organization.³⁰ The league still refused to change. Dancy was infuriated by criticism against the league. He stated that criticism against the league's elitism did not bother him; that he was satisfied that the league was supported by people of capacity. The board members felt that the league could not fulfil the expectations and demands made on it by other organizations. They argued that to address every problem that others wanted the DUL to deal with would reduce its effectiveness.³¹

During that spring, the league organized a conference to discuss and obtain advice in dealing with criticism against the organization. The conference brought together the NUL and its eastern region affiliates. Delegates discussed how they could adjust to the problems raised by calls for social action from other organizations and the relationship of social legislation to the urban league's mission. Their goal was to establish "a common denominator of League thinking."³² These deliberations gave further impetus to the re-organizational effort.

Advisory Committees

In September 1950 the league established a series of advisory committees to create "a closely working association between the functional program and the community."³³

³⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors, March 23, 1950, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³¹Ibid.

³²Program Outline of the Annual Meeting and Eastern Regional Conference of the National Urban League, March 31-April 1, 1950, General File, Box 6, DULP-MHC.

³³Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors, February 23, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Advisory committees were established for public relations, vocational services, community organization, budget, nominating and personnel. The advisory committees that received the greatest attention were the public relations, community organization and vocational services.

Faced with criticism and competition from other black organizations, the DUL embarked on an ambitious public relations campaign under the leadership of James P. Chapman, who joined the league in fall 1950. Because Chapman owned a public relations agency, the league's board of directors viewed him as a potentially useful ally of the DUL. One board member saw that Chapman's attractiveness to the league was because "he had been an executive with the Ford Motor Company and that he was a southern man and had served on the governing board of an organization similar to the League." Chester Culver, the Employer's Association manager, believed that Chapman was "a valuable addition to the board of Directors."³⁴

Concern that "the League activities in Detroit were not receiving the proper publicity," Chapman promised to help sell the league's programs to companies as a recruitment, training and morale raising agency.³⁵ In November 1950, Chapman called for a publicity budget of \$1,500, the largest ever in the League's history.³⁶ Although enthusiastic in his desire to assist the DUL attain its "deserved attention," Chapman's

³⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors, February 22, 1950, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁵Minutes of the Board of Directors, September 29, 1950, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors, November 16, 1950, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

public relations advice and committee made little success. Most of Chapman's projects were too grand and expensive, and failed to win the board's acceptance.

In summer 1951, Chapman advised the league's board of directors to commit \$3,000.00 for a motion picture for the purpose of interpreting the DUL's work to clubs, civic organizations, schools, churches and commercial theaters. Chapman wanted the movie to feature outstanding black figures in Detroit and the nation.³⁷ The league contacted other Urban League affiliates asking them for contributions, but only a few supported the idea. A conflict between the DUL's board of directors and Chapman gave the project a final blow. The board was displeased that Chapman had been acting as a one-man committee. More importantly, the League found it difficult to get permission from the community union to solicit money to carry out such an ambitious project. The league also rejected the film, pointing out that it was of poor quality. Eventually, the Board decided that instead of a film the DUL should opt for slides because that was cheaper.³⁸ The board rejected the project stating that it was too expensive.

During the same year, the public relations committee published a brochure entitled "For a New Day in Human Relations," which aimed at setting forth the DUL's purposes and methods in an attractive and concise manner. About 373 copies were distributed. The brochure's message promised African-Americans that bright days for them were ahead, that they had "an ally in the UL of Detroit." It stated the league's mission was

³⁷Minutes of the Board of Directors of Detroit Urban League, June 14, 1951, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

³⁸Minutes of the Board of Directors, September 17, 1953, October 18, 1953, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

to help "negroes help themselves," to find better jobs "through conferences with employers," to "build better environments," to "meet their housing needs, and to build a "bridge of understanding." The brochure presented the league as an interpreter of the black community and their "aspirations to policy-making public bodies and influential private groups." Its methods constituted gathering "facts on Negro life and work in Detroit, and presents them to document Negro needs and achievements, to correct false impressions, and to provide a basis for realistic programs for this group of 372,000 citizens." The Green Pastures Camp was noted for providing "vocations for underprivileged children." The brochure stated that "the urban League works for you." For the larger society, the brochure stated that "all Detroiters benefit by the work the Urban League is doing to build a better community," and that "all of us live a better Detroit because of the results of the UL way. The partnership in the effort of Negro and white Detroiters is bringing new dignity, jobs, happier environments to 19% of our citizens." The League pointed out that "equality is good business." The brochure appealed to the public to join its Guild organization: "You can become a member of the UL Guild." The brochure combined slogans and ideas from the league's old brochures of the 1940s. The project cost was \$1000.³⁹

Chapman and his public relations advisory committee unsuccessfully initiated another project known as "One Hundred Detroit Negroes of Achievement." It called for exhibiting photographs and biographical sketches of prominent blacks and their

³⁹See the Brochure itself in Printed Material, 1951, Box 18, DULP-MHC.

accomplishments at the DUL building.⁴⁰ The league's board of directors rejected Chapman's proposal saying that such a project would cause great fury in Detroit's black community. The board decided to consider the proposal if only individuals associated with the DUL were to be exhibited.⁴¹

In 1953, the league produced another brochure entitled "You and Your Neighbors May Need the Services of the Community Services of the DUL." Its other publicity campaign strategies included the publication of a newsletter, bulletin board and a Christmas greeting calendar.⁴² The league produced five hundred copies of the newsletter four times per year which were mailed to its friends together with five hundred calendars printed with greetings. Financial assistance to these projects came from Detroit's Great Lakes Insurance Company.⁴³

During this period, the league's annual reports anniversaries assumed greater importance. Annual reports designed to advertise the agency were produced. In 1953, one thousand copies of the annual reports were distributed to the league's friends. The league's 35th anniversary was postponed five times to ensure that a speaker of national prominence was found. Ralph J. Bunche, a Noble Peace Prize winner and major figure in the United Nations was one of the speakers the league contacted as its guest speaker.⁴⁴

⁴⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors, June 12, 1953, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴¹Minutes of the Board of Directors, September 17, 1953, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

The league participated in the annual United Foundation Torch Parade. Dodge Division of the Chrysler corporation offered a truck with DUL slogans on a float during the United Fund Torch Parade. The league's other publicity projects included educational tours.⁴⁵

During the spring of 1956, more events aimed at publicizing the work of the league took place. In April, 1955 a film project approved by the managing director of the United Community Services was inaugurated. the Detroit Edison project provided the money.⁴⁶ During that same spring, the league sponsored other events aimed at publicity of itself. In April 15, 1955 the League together with the Jewish Community center sponsored the Institute for Neighborhood Leaders. The following month, the league sponsored a camping institute.⁴⁷

The league also used TV to publicize its work. On August 1, 1956, a TV program station WJBk channel 2 featured the league's work.⁴⁸ Radio Series on "Home Influences and Child Development," the industrial relations management conference, the church guidance career conference, the citizen's committee to combat crime in the Tenth Precinct and a neighborhood workshop to reduce crime constituted the league's public relations campaign. In 1959 and 1960, the league, in concert with Merrill Palmer, began its

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 21, 1955, Folder, [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Minutes/Report of the Board of the Directors, July 26, 1956, Folder [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

Strengthening of Family Life series. In May 1960 it published "The ADC Strengthening Family Life Series."⁴⁹

Community Organization Advisory Committee

During 1951-52, the DUL gave new importance to the community organization services department.⁵⁰ Prior to this time, the league's main success was in recreations. Redevelopment projects eliminated the league's community centers, and the city began to build large recreational facilities that virtually eclipsed the league's smaller ones. These post war developments threatened to displace the league's goals and programs. In response, the league began to emphasize work in community organization. The league's shift in its work from recreation to community organization needed a set of advisors to handle this new program change.⁵¹ The steps taken in the transition from group work to community organization included closing and changing the use of the Chestnut and Northwest centers, shifting staff assignments, promoting neighborhood and block organization, cooperating with community councils, and working on the general city-wide problems of housing and police-community relations. This led to a need for a full-time community organization director.

The league's 1951 shift in emphasis helped to establish administrative assistant

⁴⁹Report, "The ADC Strengthening Family Life Series", Printed Materials, File [18-17], Box 18, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁰Minutes of the Board of Detroit Urban League, February 22, 1950, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵¹Minutes of the Board of Directors, February 22, 1950, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

post filled by the newly hired staff member William Searborn. Searborn had been hired to head the community organization--a position paying \$5,500 salary and said called by Dancy "a big job"⁵² A graduate of the University of Iowa and DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, Searborn majored in labor and industrial relations. Formerly he had been the industrial secretary of the Minneapolis Urban League. Prior to his involvement with the Minneapolis League, Searborn had been an active organizer for the UAW-CIO in a Chicago General Motors plant. He had served as a steward and committeeman in the union movement. During the early part of 1943, he was employed as a foreman in a pharmaceutical firm where he supervised a shift of colored and white workers. He was married with three children and a member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, a black professional organization.⁵³

With the promotion of Searborn to the position of administrative secretary in fall 1951, William H. Boone, former secretary to the North Woodward Community Council and member of the community services advisory committee, became the new community services director. Under Boone, the league revised its program to "emphasize Community organization and job development." The changes embodied the "shedding of less specialized functions" which dated "back to the League's early days." The league's board voted to turn over its group work and recreation programs "to public and private agencies

⁵²Letter, John C. Dancy to Mr. William M. Searborn, June 23, 1950, General File of the Director, Box 6, DULP-MHC.

⁵³Press Release, DUL, August 18, 1950 General File, Box 6, DULP-MHC.

which specialize in these fields."⁵⁴

In spring 1953, the league adopted a revised constitution to provide for a committee on community organization services. Beulah Whitby chaired the new community organization and was assisted by a committee of eighteen members.⁵⁵ The new constitution also provided for seven other committees including vocational services, budget, personnel, nominating, public relations, advisory and an executive committee.⁵⁶

The league's new programs emphasis re-defined the concept of community organization as "social work process" aimed at bringing about "an adjustment between social work welfare needs and social welfare resources." This new definition illustrates the new view of community organization as an agency designed to help people "to become aware of their common problems and needs to get facts, to stimulate community interest and support them, and to mobilize and organize interested individuals and groups to effect solutions or meet social needs." Specifically, the league defined community organization as a "process or actions directed toward improving the environment by making basix [sic.] social services and public facilities more adequate, and cultural and economic opportunities more accessible to all the people in the community."⁵⁷

This new emphasis brought attention to the idea of cooperation with city-wide

⁵⁴Minutes and Report of the Board of Directors, November 8, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁵Minutes and Report of the Board of Directors, March 12, 1953, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁶Minutes and Report of the Board of Directors, June 18, 1953, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁵⁷Ibid.

agencies, neighborhood organizations; and education and research, and consultative service in race relations. Instead of dealing with "personal problems," the league focused on "community" problems.⁵⁸ Despite Dancy's announcement that the DUL had altered its program emphasis, the organization's work still continued the same traditional methods of recruiting, training workers, working closely with friendly employers, and serving as a clearing house to job applicants.⁵⁹

The League's newly strengthened community organization department focused on matters concerning black community-police relations. The department proposed to communicate to the mayor and the chief police administrative officials the idea of developing a constructive over-all black-police problem. The committee called upon the mayor and the police commissioner to reconstitute and emphasize race relations in training classes for new recruits. The league was to offer consultants, discussion leaders, and speakers for such training.⁶⁰

These suggestions rested on the premise that training classes for new police recruits minimize the problem of the police-black community relationship. The league's community organization department proposed a training class devoted to "improving interracial relationships." This class was extended to "the supervisory officer level as they have charge of the policemen on the beat." Certain board members believed the strategy would effectively fail to deal with the problem. Beullah Whitby believed that the person

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Minutes and Report of the Board of Directors, November 8, 1951, File [11-16], DULP-MHC.

conducting the class was "not effective at controversial points." The board approved Whitby's proposal that the league send a representative to "sit in on the training course session."⁶¹

The community organization services also suggested that "the Urban League sponsor a precinct-Neighborhood program aimed at building better police-community relations," and that the organization use its block organizations and community councils to "promote such a program." Where such Block Organization did not exist the DUL proposed to cooperate with other groups in establishing community-police Committees to be used as a two-way channel for neighborhood-police interpretation and the handling of specific problems. The community organization proposed a meeting with the police commissioner and the league to consult on alleviating the existing conditions.⁶²

The community organization conducted research work in the area around Eight Mile Road. It completed a needs and resources survey of the area in 1951. The organization concluded that the most immediate problem in this area was the lack of recreational facilities. The league began to negotiate with the department of Parks and Recreation in an effort to promote recreational activities in the area. In 1953, the league obtained a commitment to develop a ten-acre site as a community center and playground.

The league's community organization conducted another study in the same area on housing needs. The study showed that 72.3 per cent of the dwellings were in a slum

⁶¹Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 19, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶²Minutes of the Board of Directors, March 8, 1951, File [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

condition. A community housing forum was held to discuss and investigate various approaches of developing new private housing for this area were. A social worker's council was organized to locate and refer blacks to the social services in the area. A community organization field worker was assigned to work in the northwest section of the area described as having "a highly concentrated and expanding population."⁶³ The league also helped establish an advisory committee composed of seventeen local residents to assist in determining the scope of service that the league's northwest branch could provide. In early 1953 Dancy summarized the northwest advisory committee achievements as consisting of the traffic light installation on Eight Mile Road, a clean-up campaign, and a housing investigation which eliminated area merchant overcharging.

The Advisory Board

On December 14, 1951, the league called for the formation of an advisory committee, a step that was realized in the spring of 1952 "to promote an opportunity for continual service to board members whose terms expired and those persons who could not attend meetings." The initial advisory committee members included Frank Winn, Edla M. Laurson, Fred R. Johnson, Kenneth L. Moore and Jean T. Sheafor. All these individuals had at one time served as board members of the league. Moore and Sheafor were league's past presidents.⁶⁴ Dancy described the advisory committee as "that group of citizens which helps the department to shape its policies and to mobilize public opinion

⁶³1951/1952 Mid-Century Stock-taking Brochure.

⁶⁴Minutes of the Board of Trustees, April 19, 1951, DULP-MHC.

in support of its policies." Their task was to "interpret the objectives of the Departments and the ways in which Committee members could help."⁶⁵

By 1954, the league's advisory committee consisted of sixteen past board members: George E. Bowles, Walter O. Briggs, Edward L. Cushman, Hoyt L. Fracher, William O. Green, Fred R. Johnson, Dr. Earl C. Kelley, Charles A. Kanter, Edla Laurson, Patrick McNamara, Fred Mosdale, Max Osnos, Charles Otto, Jr., Father H. J. Roberge, Jean T. Sheafor and Governor G. Mennen Williams.⁶⁶

The League's Industrial Relations Advisory Committee

Since the 1930s, the league's employment services had been carried on by a small committee. In the post-war period, this committee was expanded. On November 9, 1949 Francis A. Kornegay, director of the league's vocational services department, recommended a membership expansion in the industrial relations committee. He saw this committee to be of "vital importance" to the vocational services department. Kornegay suggested King D. Shwayder, vice-president of Shwayder Brothers, Inc., and C. A. Howell of C. A. Howell and Company for membership into this expanded industrial committee.⁶⁷

Post war developments forced the league's vocational services to change its

⁶⁵A brochure, "1951/1952: Mid-Century Stock-taking", Printed Material 1951-1955, File [18-14], Box 18, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁶Annual Report for 1954, General File, Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁶⁷Memorandum, from Francis A. Kornegay to Dancy, on Membership Expansion of the Industrial Relations Committee, November 9, 1949, Vocational Services Department General File, Box 45, DULP-MHC.

program emphasis. Black women could now obtain jobs outside the domestic service sector. This situation forced the league to stop its carrying the "responsibility for referrals of domestic and unskilled workers." In 1951, the league transferred its employment referral of domestic and unskilled workers to the Michigan Employment Security Commission. The league stated that "these routine referrals had taken up more than half the time of the vocational Services Department. That time can now be applied to Vocational guidance, job development and industrial relations."⁶⁸

Emphasis on the vocational services department continued to reflect Detroit's employers' influence. Industrial captains continued to advice the league's vocational services department. Almost all of the twenty-four members in this new industrial relations advisory committee were associated with Detroit's industrialists, including Geraldine Bledsoe, Chester Culver, Earnest T. Marshall and Edward L. Cushman who served as the committee's chairman. The vocational services committee representatives from the business community included V. W. Blue, the personnel director of the Chrysler corporation; Lewis C. Frank, president of Frank Paper company; Carter A. Howell, president of C. A. Howell Company; J. C. Jenkins, chairman of public relations committee of the National Technical Association; Theodore T. Jones, superintendent, Alfred Street Post Office; Leonard A. Keller, executive secretary of Detroit Bakers Labor Council; Jacob Kellman, assistant to president of Sam's Incorporated; L. D. Kinney, regional manager, Continental Baking company; Patrick McNamara, sales representative of Stanley Carter company; Charles A. Meyer, assistant secretary and chief examiner city

⁶⁸Mid-Century Stock-taking.

civil service community; Fred Mosdale, assistant vice-president, National Bank of Detroit; W. J. O'Sullivan, manager, hourly-rate personnel, Ford Motor Company; King D. Shwayder, the vice-president of Shwayder Brothers; and John Mazer, business agent, Laundry Workers Union local 129.⁶⁹

Other members of the league's industrial committee included Geraldine Bledsoe, chief, Minority Group Section, M.S.E.S.; Irwin I. Cohn, an attorney; Edward L. Cushman, director, Institute of Industrial Relations, Wayne State University; Alex Fuller, executive vice-president of Wayne County CIO Councils; Ira Glover, director of employment services Department of Public Welfare; Lillian Hatcher, international representative of the FEPC and the anti-discrimination department of the UAW-CIO; and Ernest T. Marshall, administrative assistant of the Division of Guidance and Placement of the Detroit Board of Education.⁷⁰

The committee's main emphasis focused on black workers and their relation to the unions. The goal was to help black workers deal with the unions' barriers to them. Their strategy was to educate black workers with pictorial brochures telling about job opportunities. The committee's other emphasis was to visit employers with requests of employment for black workers. The committee also set up a file of black applicants.

None of these activities was new to the league's work. The expanded group of advisors was the only change. The league's Vocational Services Advisory Committee simply called for greater emphasis on the old ideas and programs, like working closely

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

with employers, pursuing the Vocational Opportunity campaign, the "Back-to-School" campaigns, and the urging of blacks to seek employment from the MSES offices.⁷¹ These programs were a continuation of the league's activities begun in the early the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

The fact that the Vocation Services Department Advisory Committee chairman was also the MSES director, led the league to call for a closer DUL-USES relationship. With the employers constituting the league's financial supporters and advisors as they always had, major organizational transformation failed to take place. Problems that plagued the organization before World War II remained with the league regardless of the presence of a large contingent of advisors. In 1951, unemployment among black Detroiters remained very high. Geraldine Bledsoe found that 25 per cent of all the unemployed people in Detroit were blacks.⁷² The league dealt with the problem of solving black unemployment and other problems as they had in the past: by having conferences with employers, by educating black workers, and by conducting studies.⁷³ In the mid-1950s, the league tried to assist employers interested in integrating workers in sales and merchandising positions. The vocational services committee consulted with one industry to determine the best techniques of integration.⁷⁴ Towards the end of 1954, the league's

⁷¹Minutes of the Board of Directors, March 8, 1951, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷²Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 19, 1951, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷³Minutes of the Board of Directors, March 8, 1951, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁴Ibid.

Vocational Services Department redefined its objectives: "To effect equal job opportunities for Negro workers and other workers who face employment problems."⁷⁵ Still, this was to be done in the same way the league had always operated by appealing to employers "on a high moral basis" or by pointing out "the facts on the basis of good business," and by holding conferences with employers "to solicit their help." The league's main preoccupation continued to be research work. In December 1954, it conducted a study "to determine the number and extent of Negro employment in supermarkets."⁷⁶

The league also continued its tradition of avoiding confrontation. When the black militants complained that a local veterans's administration office had discriminated against blacks in its employment practices, the league simply held a conference with the officials. The league was satisfied that "the charges were unfounded." The league's findings supported the employers conclusions.⁷⁷

By October 1955, the league was forced to adopt further reorganization in its vocational services department to conform to the new climate of militancy and court rulings. The work was to be advised by four committees: management, labor, employment and guidance. The new goals of the league's vocational services department were "to look further into family life of Negro families" urging parents to actively encourage

⁷⁵Minutes of the Board of Directors, December 9, 1954, Folder [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Minutes of the Board of Directors, December 8, 1954, File [11-18], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

children to select careers for which they were best suited and trained for. The league's new role was now conceived as that of keeping black youth informed of employment trends and training opportunities.⁷⁸

On May 17, 1956, the league's vocational services shifted its emphasis "from employment placement to guidance and training." Although placement work was not completely abandoned, it was given less attention.⁷⁹ By the end of 1956, the Vocational Service Department made 218 placements, guided and counselled 2,853 black youth on careers through its Vocational Opportunity campaign and the "Back-to-School" movement. In December, 1956, Dancy attended Vice-president Richard Nixon's meeting on Government contracts.⁸⁰ During the unemployment of 1958, the league reported very limited "Pilot" placements. The Vocational Services Department continued to emphasize career guidance and counselling to the black youth. It also sponsored school principal conferences, one of which attracted one hundred school personnel.⁸¹ These activities did little to ease the unemployment problem that plagued Detroit's black community. In 1959 the league reported that employment opportunities were "very limited because of the

⁷⁸Minutes/Report of the Board of Directors, January 12, 1956, Folder [11-19], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁷⁹Minutes/Report of the Board of Directors, May 17, 1956, Folder [11-19], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁰Minutes of the Board of Directors, November 8, 1956, Folder [11-19], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸¹Annual Report of the Detroit Urban League for the year 1958, given on February 12, 1959, Folder [11-20], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

general economic climate in Detroit" at that time."⁸² The league still pushed the Stay-in-School conference. On August 18, 1959, one such conference was held emphasizing the importance of school and saleable skills.⁸³

Towards the late 1950s, the league focused on the problem of automation. It attempted to train blacks to fit into the emerging technological work environment.⁸⁴ In 1959, Frances Albert Kornegay developed a brochure known as "Career Guide: Planning, Preparation, Personality, Performance, Participation."⁸⁵ Kornegay offered a five-step approach to employment success which included very careful job planning; choosing good schools and studying diligently to master all subjects; acquiring a well-rounded personality in order to get promotions, find better jobs. This approach also emphasized progressive advancement which included cooperation, respect, dependability, courtesy and punctuality; and finally effective performance which develops the kind of skills that makes services to be in much demand. Kornegay urged blacks to "develop leadership qualities," and concluded his five step formula by stating that "adherence to the Five 'Ps' determines to a large degree whether one has a career or just a job."⁸⁶

⁸²Minutes of the Board of Directors, June 11, 1959, File [11-20], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Minutes of the Board of Directors, May 8, 1958, Folder [11-20], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁵"Profile of Critical Social Welfare and Economic Problems facing Negro People in the Detroit Community", by DUL, April 8, 1958, Printed Material, Box 18, DULP-MHC.

⁸⁶Ibid.

But the league contradicted this advice by stating to another audience in the spring of 1959, that

employers and unions are still quite conservative, if not reluctant, to consider promotion of Negroes to positions requiring supervision of white workers. It is common practice to permit a qualified Negro with seniority to literally be 'frozen in grade' for extended periods of time before acting on his promotion to such positions. This practice has a deadening effect upon the morale of the Negro worker often leading to resignation which automatically releases him from future consideration.⁸⁷

The League pointed out that "young Negroes have seen this discouraging promotional practice and are led to believe that there is no hope for professional growth. This usually results in their investing little time in further training, either on the job or in school." The league continued to state that "recruitment from campuses of promising Negro graduates for Executive training is rarely experienced." The league further stated that "those skills already developed" were not being used: "rejection by employees" led to "low vocational aspirations" and a focus on "safe jobs."⁸⁸

DUL-Church Guidance Committee

The league maintained its prewar relationship with black ministers. During the period from 1951 to 1952, the league formalized its working relations with churches and ministers. A DUL-Church Guidance council was formed in January 1952 as an auxiliary of the Vocational Services Department to foster and promote vocational guidance in the black community. The DUL-Church council helped black youth select and prepare for

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

future careers. It also assisted the parents in understanding the job-seeking problems of their children.⁸⁹ The committee's other purposes were to reduce absenteeism in school, encourage continuation in school, and train for existing jobs.⁹⁰ The league's Church Guidance council of thirty-six churches directed the "Back-to-School" program. The league's alliance with black ministers received an added emphasis on November 19, 1953, with Pastor A. A. Banks becoming a member of DUL's Board of Directors.⁹¹

State of the League on the Eve of Dancy's Retirement

Given the types of individuals who served as league's real decision-makers little substantive organizational transformation occurred. Faces of the actors changed and increased, but the policies, programs, and strategies changed only in small ways during the post war period. In January 1956 Francis A. Kornegay became the DUL's assistant director. When Dancy retired in 1960, Kornegay became the league's executive. Kornegay had been with the league since 1944. Kornegay and Dancy had similar values and styles of administration, Kornegay considered Dancy his hero and most influential person in his life. He named one of his two sons John Dancy.⁹²

On February 28, 1957, Lourentine B. Collins became the league's president.

⁸⁹1951/1952 Mid-Century Stock-taking brochure.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Minutes of the Board of Directors, November 19, 1953, Folder [11-16], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹²Anne E. Russell, Builders of Detroit: Biographical Sketches of 62 Outstanding Blacks, p. 130.

Collins had previously served as the league's personnel advisory committee chairman. She was the school community relations director on the Detroit's Board of Education. Dancy held her in esteem: "Miss Collins had worked in this area of human relations for quite some time and has exhibited a remarkable grasp of problems that confront all people in Detroit."⁹³

The league's financial supporters continued to dominate its policies. The DUL found it difficult to make major alterations in its program activities for the fear of antagonizing its financial benefactors. In spring 1960, the league sent Jeweldean Jones, a member of NUL to speak to DUL's board on the importance of a strong relationship with the UCS and the United Fund. Jeweldean Jones emphasized the importance of league's staying away from picketing activities or lobbying in order to maintain a good relationship with its financial supporters. She urged that the DUL use "mediation, arbitration, negotiation and conciliation--all of which are very "active nouns."⁹⁴

The league's refusal to make serious organizational alterations ensured the support of its corporate patrons throughout the period covered in this study. On June 9, 1960, Dancy "tendered his resignation as Executive Director of DUL" effective in September of that year after forty-two years of being with the organization.⁹⁵ He said that the "work at the League has been enjoyable, pleasant and altogether stimulating. I have

⁹³Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, p. 244

⁹⁴Minutes/Report of Board of Directors, March 10, 1960, File [11-21], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁵Minutes/Report of the Board of Directors, June 9, 1960, Folder [11-21], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

learned much because of the association and exposure to wonderful personalities."⁹⁶

At the NUL annual conference, Dancy was given a standing ovation by all the delegates who praised his leadership with the DUL. Outside the conference, black militants picketed the urban league and strongly opposed it. Within the larger black community, nationally known black militants gained support. Seeing the strength and influence of black militants the NUL Conference stated that "this should serve as a warning that the organization should not get too far from the people it serves."⁹⁷

Dancy was quite aware that his organization did not accomplish much for the blacks, however captains of industry told him that he had. During his retirement party made for him by the league's Board of Directors, Dancy reflected on his accomplishments: "I thought of the things I had done in those 44 years which had spun by so swiftly and which at times had seemed so hopeless and so frustrating, and I wished I could try it all over again. Had I really accomplished anything worthwhile? At any rate, here were 800 wonderful people, telling me that I had."⁹⁸

This retirement party symbolized Dancy's alliance with the employers and their dependence on each other. Their mutual alliance was demonstrated by the number of influential people who came to pay Dancy respect. Dancy's satisfaction in obtaining the company, the praise and company he received from Detroit's powerful people overshadowed his awareness of his organization's ineffectiveness to address black

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Minutes/Report of the Board of Directors, September 15, 1960, Folder [11-21], Box 11, DULP-MHC.

⁹⁸Dancy, Sand Against the Wind, pp. 234-235

problems. From the point of view of Detroit's power elite the league was viewed a success. But as far as black militants and Dancy himself were concerned, the league had not been successful in fulfilling its pledge to its black constituency:

I went out in a blaze of glory. The board of directors of the league held a farewell party for me at the Sheraton-Cadillac Hotel, with 800 people in attendance. And what people! The Chairman was William T. Gossett, vice-president and general counsel of the Ford Motor Co. Tay Eppert, president of the Burroughs corporation, was the main speaker and made a magnificent talk. Seated on the dais were Mrs. Edsel Ford; C. E. Wilson, former president of General Motors; Walker Cisler, president of Detroit Edison; and K. T. Keller, former head of the Chrysler corporation. The Mayor and city council president were there, as well as Councilmen William T. Patrick, Beulah T. Whitby, Leonard Woodcock, Msgr. Edward J. Hickey, Francis A. Kornegay, Ramona S. Scruggs, Louretine B. Collins, the Rev. Mr. Carlyle Stewart and Charles Mahoney--and many, many others. Lester Granger, executive director of the National Urban League, was present. From Cleveland came Shelton Granger, the executive secretary of the league there, to represent 62 executive secretaries throughout the country. His witticisms threw the audience into a uproar of delight. I tried to take it all with becoming modesty, and I was able to say, truthfully, that I had never expected any such reward as this. But I couldn't help being deeply moved.⁹⁹

Dancy's retirement from the DUL left the organization still secure in the sight of its white benefactors. However, its capacity to satisfy its black constituency was far from being a reality.

⁹⁹Ibid.

CONCLUSIONS

During the league's history from 1916 to 1960 it appears that the organization experienced two major historical periods. The first lasted from 1916, when the league was founded, to the mid-1930s. The second period began during the aftermath of the Great Depression and continued to 1960. Nancy Weiss argued that the NUL pursued ideals and programs shaped by Booker T. Washington's ideology. The Detroit league does not fit this characterization. This study reveals that the DUL's behavior and role was shaped not by any of its leaders' ideological convictions but by the real interests of those that controlled it. Since the employers held the league firmly in their hands they shaped most of its policies and programs. The league pursued its mediation work with relative success up until the Great Depression and the start of World War II, reconciling blacks and Jews; industry and labor; and black community and the police. Given the general racial attitudes and possibilities that existed between World War I and World War II the league made a considerable effort in speaking to the city's leaders on the behalf of the black migrants and tried to help them survive and progress within the confinements of what was possible.

Once they established the league in Detroit the organization's supporters created a control mechanism to keep the organization in their hands. This was treated as a private affair. Throughout this study the league's board demonstrated a great reluctance

to allow control of the agency to fall under the influence of the black community. Access to influencing the league policies, decision-making processes and the direction of program activities was strictly guarded. If a position opened on the league's board great care was exercised to ensure that it was filled by an individual who held ideals, values and interests similar to the original founders. Family members were recruited to replace those that could not continue serving in the league's board.

Such a situation created many implications. The DUL deprived of the input from rank-and-file blacks, became the expression of the needs, interests and values of the city's white industrial capitalists and black professionals rather than of black migrants and the rank-and-file members from the black community.

This study confirms Thomas's conclusion that the league's networking strategies "resulted in financial support for such programs as community dances, community centers, a wide range of educational activities housed and staffed at the centers, and the Green Pastures Camp."¹ This same network also resulted in the league's dependence on people who used the organization for their own ends. This does not mean that the league did not assist the black migrants at all; some assistance was provided. Through the league a few blacks received scholarships for college. However, this help was far less than the public was led to believe. Most of the league's assistance constituted individual cases rather than the entire black community. The league made its greatest contributions in the area of recreation, which corresponded with the interests of its black constituency and financial supporters.

¹Thomas, Life for Us Is What We Make It, p.87.

By the mid-1930s, with the Depression's aftermath and the war's arrival the league found itself unable to perform the role and function it had previously filled. This second major historical period in the league's development was characterized by activities designed to preserve its existence in a changed organizational environment. The depression and World War II created new attitudes in the general society and ushered new possibilities for social change. The league's dependence on corporate financial support made it difficult for the organization to alter its traditions and still survive. Yet society had changed so much that the league could not ignore the militant spirit that beckoned it to become more radical in its approach. During World War II the agency tried to survive by hiding, equivocating and continuing to support white employers. In the post-war years the organization found itself emerged in greater difficulties as its role, functions and mission became questionable. During this period the DUL was behind the progressive forces.

Between 1945 and 1960 DUL's program centered on public relations--an indication of the presence of a crisis of confidence. During this period both black militants and white supremacists sharply criticized the league. Amidst the storms that battered the organization the league struggled to find a new mission and identity. During the World War II and beyond the league lost its leadership and influence to labor unions and the NAACP. Because its autonomy was curtailed, the DUL was not allowed to use protest techniques such as lobbying and demonstrating against discrimination and segregation--techniques that became popular after World War II. Other agencies willing to use social action began bypassing the league in influencing Detroit's blacks. The

league sought ways to reclaim its leadership position but it still found protest difficult to use for the fear of antagonizing corporate patrons so its influence waned further. By the time Dancy retired the league decided to remain loyal to traditional supporters and rejected social activism. DUL's case does not support Moore's contention that the league was a civil rights organization during this period.

DUL functions in the larger society was to both alter and preserve the status quo. The urban league came into existence to meet the needs of black social work professionals, the white power-structure and black migrants. Its message to the black migrants communicated the needs, interests and values held by the larger white society and Detroit's black middle class. Individuals invested in status quo financially and morally supported the league. Its staff earned their livelihood from money donated by status quo supporters. The staff had no autonomy; they could not act as disinterested arbiters in the struggle between blacks and whites.

The league's organizational structure was set up to benefit people in power. Programs and policies were conceived without input from rank-and-file members with the result that the black community's needs and aspirations were not pushed hard enough by the league. Yet at the same time the DUL tried to help black migrants and improve race relations; this meant that it stood for social change. The problem was how to fulfil both of these contradictory social expectations. Nancy Weiss is correct in her conclusion that the urban league tended to settle for only what was possible.

The power structure of the league's board determined what was possible. If league supporters were genuinely interested in solving the black community's problems

they would have done more than they indicated they were willing to do. Many had access to jobs and housing markets, but were unwilling to utilize them on the behalf of blacks. The league supporters had also financial, social and political power in Detroit. Governor G. Mennen Williams served as a board and advisory committee member. Police commissioners were close friends of board members. Yet police brutality was one of the worst problems encountered by Detroit's blacks throughout the period covered in this study.

Detroit's case differs in certain respects from Chicago league. In his study of the Chicago Urban League, Arval Strickland stated that the agency had been unable to reach its full potential not "from weaknesses inherent within the organization." He found that the Chicago league had "never been one of the city's top-ranking organizations in the general field of social work."² In examining DUL members, friends and financial contributors between 1916 and 1960 it appears that the league enjoyed considerable support from Detroit's power structure that included captains of industry, mayors, philanthropists, governors and police commissioners. John C. Dancy was one of Detroit's most liked black leaders among the city's power structure.

Interestingly, the league board of directors was composed of several individuals associated with organizations and agencies that segregated and discriminated against blacks even when racial attitudes were changing. The most famous case was the manager of Detroit's Employers's Association who remained an influential board member serving as the chief adviser on how blacks could obtain jobs. His organization maintained an all-

²Strickland, The History of the Chicago Urban League, p.260.

white employment bureau throughout most of the period covered in this study. The Associated Charities, the very organization that founded and initially funded the league's establishment discriminated against African-Americans. Its members represented welfare agencies that refused to give justice and equality to black migrants.

Chrysler's manager, considered the DUL's best friend, was one of the most exploitative industrial establishments in the city. During World War II Chrysler refused on many occasions to promote African-Americans even when pressured by local and national organizations. Charles Winegar, chief executive in the employment service department, sat on the league board. Some of the board members's friends were known racists who were hated by blacks. Dr. Rundolph Tenerowicz, the congressman who played a key role in preventing blacks from occupying the Sojourner Truth Housing project, was a close friend of the league's vice-president. Dr. Studer, director of the Detroit YMCA, was Dancy's friend yet one of Detroit's most racist leaders.

The social and political climate made it easy for employers to use black leaders like Dancy in recruiting and training black workers during periods of labor shortage. The league was not the only agency where Detroit employers used black leaders to achieve their own needs and goals. Henry Ford used black churches for the same purpose other employers used the DUL. Most employers preferred DUL because it was much easier to control. Employers sat on its board and provided financial support for its existence--two factors that gave employers greater influence in controlling black staff members.

It would therefore be inaccurate to consider the urban league on level equal to civil rights organizations dominated by blacks. Both the NUL and the DUL came into

being through the initiative and financial support of white leaders. From its beginning the Urban League was chiefly interested in eliminating black crime in cities. In Detroit this concern was pursued along with providing black labor to white employers. Detroit's case contrasts sharply with Thomas Moore's contention that the executive directors controlled the urban league. In Detroit the league's director was unable to act independently.

The league's real beneficiaries were its staff and philanthropists. John Dancy was able to maintain a well paying job and his cherished company of socially prominent city figures. During its early period the league policies and actions tended to legitimize segregation and discrimination--these benefitted the champions of status quo. The league urged black workers not to complain, to work hard and happily accept the system as it was. They promised blacks that if they worked hard, valued education and obeyed authorities their lives would improve. This message was strongly supported by Detroit's power structure. However, the league failed to induce powerful Detroiters to assist blacks finding reasonable housing, employment or reduce police brutality. Moore's view that the Urban League promoted this message as a strategy to help blacks differs from the findings of this study; the DUL's behavior was primarily determined by the employers interests that dominated its policies. If Dancy had been able to control the league, he would have tried to get the agency involved in challenging discrimination. To do so would have meant the loss of his job as the league director.

A few individuals courageously opposed the league in the early phase. The most famous league opponents included a small group of individuals who organized around the

Good Citizenship League. During the 1940s and 1950s black militants criticized the league for its failure to address issues of discrimination and segregation. The Citizenship League opposed the league's supporters such as the Detroit Board of Commerce, black ministers and the Employers Association of Detroit. In the 1940s Snow Grisby opposed John Ballenger, one of the league's most supporters.

Criticism against the league in the 1950s forced it to spend much of its resources and efforts on public a relations campaign. The campaign tended to intensify whenever the league was under attack from either black militants or white supremacists. In the 1950s Detroit's white and black leading newspapers were represented on the league board of directors. During the 1940s and 1950s the league programs were conducted more or less like public relation projects.

A negative impact of the league was its eclipse of social work grassroots organizations in the black community. Concerned with its own survival the league attempted to eliminate other organizations that it viewed as competitors. With wealthy supporters and admirers, the league was able to claim leadership in social work activities in Detroit before World War II. The Detroit league was not only a social-work agency. It attempted to lead the black community and act as a go-between with the city's blacks and whites. But it tended to listen to the white community's needs more than it did to those of blacks.

The league generally sided with those that provided it with financial support. It was always on the side of employers in fighting labor unions, supporting republican economic policies and refusing to support local social legislation. It altered its positions

on issues if it saw some advantage in doing so rather than on principle. At times the league took positions that did not benefit the black community. At one time the league refused to support a local legislation for fair employment practices simply because the employers were opposed to it. But when it found that the legislation was about to be passed anyway the league voted to go on record as favoring the legislation.

Gunnar Myrdal's contention that the local urban league were in favor of labor unions in the late 1930s would not receive support from DUL's case. Controlled by the industrialists the DUL supported labor unions only when there was no other alternative; the UAW-CIO had become very powerful forcing industrialists to accept its demands. Black workers and national leaders overwhelmingly decided to move on union's side.

The league faced its most serious challenge during World War II when many organizations emerged supported by whites and black elites. Increased numerical strength forced the league to address matters of discrimination. But it tried to do this without annoying its financial supporters. It decided to avoid lobbying or boycotting activities; instead the league attempted to conduct research documenting cases of discrimination. When the NAACP sought to use the league's research to fight discrimination the league would not surrender the information.

The Detroit case does not support Thomas Moore's presentation of the league movement as a black civil rights program. By 1960 the DUL still refused to be viewed as a civil rights organization. It preferred to be viewed as a professional social work. Moore's presentation of the urban league as a black organization in the same light with other black-dominated organizations was not the case in Detroit. Wealthy whites

influenced the DUL more than Washington and Dancy were able to. When league black leaders like Remus Robinson, William Valentine and Warren Banner tried to force the league towards a more activist direction after World War II they found it unable to do so while at the same time maintaining the good pleasure of the organization's financial benefactors.

The league tried to pose as a militant organization while actually remaining conservative and committed to the interests of its most important constituency--the white leaders. Still it could please its financial supporters unless it denounced civil rights activities. On the eve of Dancy's retirement, the league was torn by opposition from black militants and white supremacists. Fearing a loss of financial sources, the league decided to stick to its original path of not involving itself in matters of discrimination and segregation. Instead the league began concentrating on research and other less controversial activities. As long as the league was under the thumb of individuals resistant to change, its program and administration remained fundamentally unaltered.

Throughout the period covered in this study the league's black staff members made considerable efforts to assist the black community. However league policies and financial supporters wanted the DUL to meet corporate interests and needs. The league's financial patrons wanted to place emphasis on socializing black migrants into the image desired by employers. The league refused to recommend the migrants if they did not fit a particular image. It also emphasized eradicating rural behaviors offensive to whites and black elites.

Black migrants resented this paternalistic attitude. This study found that the black middle class emphasized this behavior because it embarrassed them. The league tried hard to secure jobs and shelter for the black migrants. This was difficult except during labor shortage. In times of job security the league achieved little success in finding jobs for the migrants; its sponsors put more effort in helping the league with its recreational work as a deterrent to crime.

The league was unable to stop the firing of black workers during economic recessions. It failed miserably in its quest to secure housing for blacks. It is safe to say that the league failed to meet the expectations made of it by the black community. At various points in its history certain blacks expected the league to challenge discrimination and segregation--barriers they believed were the real cause of their problems. It was not until after World War II that the league's policy took racial discrimination and segregation into account as a barrier that had to be eliminated to enable black social and economic progress. This indicates that rank-and-file blacks had different expectations of the league from those held by the organization's financial supporters.

SOURCES

A Note on the Sources

In the reconstruction of the history of Detroit Urban League this study drew primarily from the Detroit Urban League Papers deposited in the Michigan Historical Collection, Ann Arbor, Michigan. In addition to the fact that these papers are replete with correspondences from and to the Officers of the DUL, they also contain numerous letters and reports to and from the National Urban League and a couple of its other affiliates. The papers contain minutes of the Board of Directors as well as monthly and annual reports of the Executive Director, the department secretaries, and other agencies and organizations that the officers of DUL participated in. The papers also contain some valuable information based on the numerous news releases, speech notes and lengthy articles written by both Washington and Dancy. In addition, these papers contain valuable information that shed light on the social, political and economic milieu in which the Urban League of Detroit operated.

The minutes and reports provide information on the main characters and influential figures in the history of DUL. They also contain rich information on the projects that the League pursued, the individuals that initiated and financially supported such programs. The correspondences of the Director with his personal friends provide information on the private thoughts and dilemma associated with his career as the Director of the

organization. Such information was usually omitted in the reports and minutes and other public communications. The thinking of the Leaguers is found in the many speech notes and several lengthy documents as well as research reports of the League contained in the General Files of the Director, the Board of Directors, and in the Printed Materials section of the papers. Information about the policies and philosophy are easily revealed in the minutes and reports and other documents like the constitutions of the various agencies of the League.

In addition to this collection DUL's account was traced by the use of some additional sources from the Walter Reuther Labor and Urban Archives, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan. From this archives sources were gathered chiefly from the United Community Services Collection, Series I, mainly the Associated Charities of Detroit papers. This archive was valuable in that it contained information on the founding of the Detroit Urban League in 1916. In this archives there were also some oral materials based on the oral Interviews of Joseph Billups, Geraldine Bledsoe, Snow Grigsby, Arthur McPhaul, Jack Raskin, Shelton Tappes, and Beulah Whitley.

The third archival depository from which this dissertation was researched included the Burton Historical Collection located in the Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Michigan. In this archive information was obtained about Black Churches in Detroit as well as a Report of the Mayor's Committee on Race Relations of 1926 which shed some light on the problems the black community were confronted with in the decade of the 1920s.

Outside the archives, one significant source was John Campbell Dancy's Sand Against the Wind: the Memoirs of John C. Dancy, Detroit, Wayne State University Press,

1966. This document proved very important in filling some of the gaps created by the archival materials. The memoirs were especially useful in filling gaps on the details of some of the program activities that the League conducted. It also helped in the creation of the biographical sketches of a number of the key personalities in the history of DUL. The danger in the memoirs was that of interpretation of the League by someone so strongly tied to the organization. A considerable care had to be exercised not to confuse Dancy's private interpretation of the League with the official data he offered on the subject.

Another primary source consulted included a document of the Michigan State Conference on Employment Problems of the Negro (1940: Detroit, Michigan), Findings, report, recommendations. The document is located in the Michigan Library, Lansing, Michigan. Forrester B. Washington's report entitled "The Negro in Detroit" was also helpful in shedding some light on the condition of the migrants and the thinking of the black elites who supported the League's work in Detroit. This report is deposited in the Bentley Historical Collection. Washington's article "Deluxe Summer Camp For Colored Children," in the NUL's publication started in 1923 with the title Opportunity, volume 9, October 1931 provided information about the Green Pastures Camp.

For information on the League's activities during world war, the study was enriched by George Edmund Haynes' The Negro in Detroit, 1917-1918. In filling gaps and enriching the descriptive aspect of the history of DUL some relevant newspapers were valuable. The Newspapers consulted included Detroit Free Press, Detroit Tribune, Detroit Saturday Night, and Michigan Chronicle.

Although there was a great abundance of materials from which to draw data, two main problems were confronted. The most serious difficulty encountered was the contrast between the overwhelming testimony of the supporters of the League amidst the almost silent masses of the black migrants. It was extremely difficult to find out the view point of the black masses in regard to the Detroit Urban League. This meant that much of the attempt to give their voice was based on very limited sources based on their statements. This problem is, of course, not unique. In most cases historians encounter this problem because the powerful individuals have the means to tell their stories whereas the powerless are usually silent.

The second problem was somehow related to the one just stated. The correspondences, memorandum, memoirs, reports, minutes and any other records were aimed at presenting the view point of the founders and directors of the agency. Because most of their reports were self-serving, it required great caution and scrutiny of their reports and interpretation of the organization. The emphasis of the "official" testimony and the absence of the contribution from the rank and file members of the black community made it difficult to know with certainty what the real nature of the League was.

In any case, while these problems presented a barrier to the uncovering the real story, yet the essential features and outline of the history of DUL was possible. With the immense amount of data available, even though most of it was written by the officers of the organization, the major events were easy to discover. The analysis of those events is, of course, a matter of interpretation.

In interpretation of the history of DUL I have been aided by a number of works. Magali Safarti Larson's Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis which looks at the organizations of professionals as partly influenced by the socio-economic interests. I have also benefited from the works of James C. Scott, especially his Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant resistance, which argues that the powerless individuals resist activities such as refusing to work hard, arson, riots, and other forms of criminal actions and guerilla techniques of fighting the powerful. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick's Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW and David Allan Levine's Internal Combustion: the Races in Detroit, 1915-1925, were valuable also in solidifying my conceptualization of DUL. I have also benefited from the literature on Community Development especially Frank Fear's article on the "Technical Assistance" Community Development in Perspective edited by Robinson and Christenson. The general works on the history of Detroit has been obtained by consulting Robert Conot's American Odyssey, and Richard W. Thomas's Life for us is What We Make It: Building A Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945. Other works consulted at length in this dissertation are acknowledged in the following bibliography.

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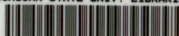
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