

Elders Branson and Rebok -- 2
March 11, 1954

the General Conference officers were "deeply interested and eager to do all they can to push it forward as soon as possible. We are unable to work along more quiet lines as we are not a committee to deal with the subject."

Clarification of Committee S

It is quite possible that I did not make this statement clear. The suggestion of the committee idea was in the preamble to sections II and III of my letter. The mentioned committee was set forth primarily 1) to investigate a committee on a union conference level to deal with matters in respective fields, and 2) to outline the assistance the General Conference level could give in studying such matters as presented in sections II and III of my letter.

It was never in my mind that the General Conference should set up a committee to supervise or direct procedures in union or local fields; the only purpose in appointing this committee, except as suggested in part 2 of the foregoing paragraph, was to have it serve as an example and pattern for the unions to follow. Such a committee as suggested should be appointed and should serve, of course, without fanfare or publicity--quietly and educatively and certainly without coercion. Generally union conference committees tend to regard themselves as legislative and executive, therefore the suggestion that such a committee should be a different one from the executive committee.

I regret that this portion of my letter was submitted to the officers of the General Conference for action. I had written it largely to start the processes of constructive thinking--not to obtain sanction or disapproval--for many times such questions are not answered by a "yes" or "no," but more often by both "yes" and "no." It was merely a thought "tickler."

However, it is common knowledge that the religious and civic groups and the many cities and communities which are having the best results in bringing about peaceful and satisfying adjustments to the changing times in the field of human relations are those which have made use of committees of this type. Education and understanding--not pressure and agitation--have provided the most acceptable media for progress. And this was what my letter tried to suggest.

No Originality Claimed

You may be surprised to know that of the several suggestions made in my recent epistle for advancing the work of God among this minority group, not a single one is really original with me--the possible exception being the proposal of a union with divisional status. And even that was copied from the British and Australians! I merely tried to summarize from my background and contact with our denomination the salient and workable proposals which 90% of our leading ministers and laymen have been talking and advocating for years and decades.

(It took about 20 years of advocacy to obtain the present conference program for our group. About the same length of time was required to persuade the Caucasian brethren to elect a colored American as president of Oakwood College; he was called principal at first. Twenty-three or four years passed before

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the General Conference officers were "deeply interested in this matter and are eager to do all they can to push it forward as seems consistent," "it is preferable to work along more quiet lines as we are now doing than to set up a committee to deal with the subject."

Clarification of Committee Suggestion

It is quite possible that I did not make this specific proposal sufficiently clear. The suggestion of the committee idea was largely intended as a sort of preamble to sections II and III of my letter. The proposal of the aforementioned committee was set forth primarily 1) to indicate the value of such a committee on a union conference level to deal with intergroup problems in their respective fields, and 2) to outline the assistance that such a committee on the General Conference level could give in studying such matters as presented in sections II and III of my letter.

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our majority brethren felt one of their darker brethren was capable enough to handle the funds as business manager of Oakwood. At least ten years of suggestion elapsed before an editor for the Message was chosen from the minority group; and then he had to locate his office in his home rather than at the Publishing House. It has taken almost another decade for the editor to reach a comparable status with corresponding workers at the SPA. It took about two decades to get an assistant circulation manager for the Message magazine. Nearly fifty futile years of importuning for an "official" officer on the General Conference strata have passed, despite the fact that the financial potential of this group is considerably greater than any oversea's division; also its membership is larger than several of these divisions. Brethren, it is undeniably evident that we have been moving. But certainly no one dare accuse us of moving too fast! And just think, those individuals who originally made those suggestions which we now take in stride were stigmatized as heretical by many in the majority group and, ashamedly, by a myopic few among the minority group.)

Committee Proposal Not New

1) My first proposal relative to the appointment of committees of representative majority and minority group members, particularly on the union conference level, was to provide functional assistance to conferences, institutions and churches in becoming oriented in this broader conception and adoption of the principles of practical Christianity and democracy.

This idea is not new, for as far back as 1942 ministers and laymen presented the urgent need for a committee or commission to study methods for bettering intergroup relationships similar to that utilized by the Congregationalists and other denominations. Also more recently Dr. R. Rodriguez asked representatives from the Pacific Union and Southern California conferences to meet with a group of lay leaders. The meeting was held at the Wadsworth church on May 24, 1953. Twenty-five laymen, including school teachers, social workers, college students, business men and five medical doctors, met with Brethren Bauer, Schnepfer and Troy of the Union, and with Brethren Bietz, Munson and four other committee members of the Southern California conference. Also present were all the local ministers serving the minority group constituency.

The opening statement by the presiding layman set forth the need for this type of meeting where leaders of both groups could intelligently, objectively and calmly consider the problems and issues before them. The specific need presented by the laymen to the officials was stated thus: "At this particular time we need an advisory council which can take the various problems which arise from time to time and work them out in a manner that will be fair to all. This should be an interracial council. It would be well to have it on a union conference level so that other areas beside Los Angeles may benefit from all decisions."

Scriptural support for this plan was presented from Acts 6 where the early church appointed the deaconry when the Grecians (a minority group) murmured over the neglect of their widows at the daily ministrations. The leaders appointed both Jews and Grecians on this committee. A rich blessing has come to the church throughout the ages because of this appointment.

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Changes in Designation and Terminology

2) During the Spring Council of 1947, held in Los Angeles, Elder G. E. Peters called a meeting of the delegates and leaders to consider several phases of our work. The meeting was held at Hotel Watson on April 20. Present were: Elders G. E. Peters, H. R. Murphy, L. H. Bland, W. W. Fordham, F. L. Peterson, J. G. Dasent, J. F. Dent, and O. A. Troy. In addition to other matters considered, the following pertinent action was taken:

- VOTED
- a) That we go on record stating the belief that the present name for our department is outmoded and inadequate and that new terminology, better describing our work be found.
 - b) That the representative of this group be a duly elected officer of the General Conference.
 - c) That letters be written by the leaders of this present department to Elder N. C. Wilson, vice president for North America, setting forth these views.

These letters were written in due time by those present.

At the Colored Department Advisory Council held at Grand Rapids, November 11, 1947, an action was taken asking the General Conference to give study to the change of the name and the reorganization of the department.

Adequate Representation

3) For several years a number of our brethren in responsible positions have advanced the idea that our local conferences should be organized into a union conference. Frankly, I have opposed such a plan until within the past six months. As I have studied our denominational structure and existing policy, it appears that the only way it will be possible for our large colored American constituency to receive proper and democratic representation on the union and General Conference level is through the organization of a union with divisional status. But can't you hear some cautious and sainted committeeman comment: "Well, brethren, I suppose the next thing they will be asking for is a 'separate' General Conference."

It is no more logical to think that "if we give them a union they will want a general conference" than it is to conclude that the other fields throughout the world will want a general conference simply because they have a union or a division.

The primary objective of this reorganizational suggestion is to provide a means whereby our brethren have a closer relationship to the General Conference than that which has been possible under the present organization.

Possibly I lack sufficient optimism, but I could hardly expect much consideration to be given these matters at the forthcoming General Conference--they are

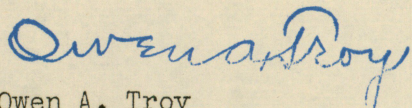
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primarily spring and autumn council items. But we wish to lodge these suggestions with you with the hope that if the opportunity comes at this Spring Council or at San Francisco that you will do what you can to implement these plans which will unify our work and draw our brethren into a closer relationship to the General Conference.

Thank you for the opportunity to explain my previous letter.

Kindest Christian Greetings!

Very cordially yours,



Owen A. Troy
Departmental Secretary

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cc: The executive officers of the General Conference residing in the U. S., Elders C. L. Bauer and C. E. Moseley. Also presidents and secretary-treasurers of the "colored" conferences.