

# North American Regional Department

By H. D. SINGLETON, *Secretary*

Colored citizens of the United States have from the beginning been a part of the Advent Movement. One of the Mill-erite preachers was a Negro American named Charles Bowles. He was an out-standing evangelist, raising up many churches in New England. Another Negro preacher of that time was John W. Lewis, of Providence, Rhode Island.

Among those given visions was William E. Foy, a man of color. He related his visions before large audiences during the early 1840's.

As the Seventh-day Adventist Church developed, a few Negroes were scattered among various churches in the North. O. O. Farnsworth is said to have observed that there were Negroes in the first SDA church organized in Washington, New Hampshire.

But the growth in numbers from this segment of the population was very slow. By 1894 there were only about 50 colored believers. Heeding the call of Ellen G. White for aggressive evangelism among the colored people of the South, many workers, white and colored, went South. By 1909 there still were fewer than 1,000 members in the United States. At that time a department with a secretary for the fostering of the work among the Negroes of the United States was organized on the General Conference level. In 1918 the secretary of the department reported that there were 3,500 members.

As the membership and number of churches grew and the ministry enlarged, departments on the union and, in some cases, local levels were organized for the fostering of the work.

By 1944 there were 17,891 members in 235 churches. That was the year that the plan of Regional conferences was decided upon. There are seven Regional conferences covering all the United States where we have colored church congregations except the unions on the Pacific Coast and the Northern Union. The separate-conference idea was never thought to be an ideal organization, but has served an excellent purpose in the furtherance of God's work and in the development of leadership.

Until the year 1951 only one colored person was on the staff at the world headquarters in Washington, D.C. In that year the secretary of the department, G. E. Peters, was joined by C. E. Moseley, formerly the head of the Bible department at Oakwood College, as associate secretary. Elder Moseley has served as a general field secretary for the General Conference in recent years. In 1954 E. E. Cleveland joined the Ministerial Association, and in 1959 O. A. Troy, Sr., became associate secretary of the Sabbath School Department.

A high-water mark in Negro participation in SDA church leadership was reached in 1962 when F. L. Peterson, who had spent 19 years altogether as secretary of the General Conference Regional Department, was elected as a general vice-president for the world field. Altogether there have been, during the last term, six Negro leaders serving in the General Conference. They are F. L. Peterson (vice-president), C. E. Moseley (field secretary), E. E. Cleveland (Ministerial Association associate secretary), L. B. Reynolds (Sabbath School Department associate secretary), and F. L. Bland and H. D. Singleton of the North American Regional Department.



H. D. Singleton

An important area of progress since our last General Conference session has been the integrating of the union conference staffs in several unions by the adding of colored personnel. In the Pacific Union, W. S. Lee had been regional department secretary for about nine years; he was made temperance secretary. The Lake Union selected J. P. Winston, formerly pastor of the City Temple church in Detroit, as the union temperance secretary; the Colombia Union has added C. D. Brooks, formerly pastor of the Glenville church in Cleveland, Ohio, as field secretary; the Atlantic Union elected G. H. Rainey, pastor of the Cincinnati, Ohio, church, to be associate ministerial secretary; and the Southern Union elected M. G. Cato as associate publishing department secretary.

The past four years should go into history as marking an important period of development on the part of the church in the matter of brotherhood in race relationships in North America.

At the Autumn Council of 1961 an action was taken outlining the basic principle of brotherhood that is fundamental in this church. At that time a permanent committee on human relations was set up under the chairmanship of R. R.

Figuhr. This committee has met several times during the past quadrennial period and given study to the advancement of brotherhood in the church. Recommendations have been made and church councils have acted. These councils have placed the church firmly against discrimination in education, church membership, employment in and patronage of the varied institutions in North America. We are very pleased that the various union conferences are in full agreement and are attempting to implement the actions taken by the church body.

Our evangelists have baptized 18,254 souls during this period of four years. Outstanding evangelistic efforts have been conducted by E. E. Cleveland in New York City and in St. Louis, Missouri; H. L. Cleveland in Atlanta, Georgia; C. D. Brooks in Cleveland, Ohio, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; G. H. Rainey in Buffalo, New York; J. M. Phipps in Durham, North Carolina, Chicago, Illinois, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and E. C. Ward in Miami, Florida, and San Diego, California, to mention only a few evangelists. Altogether 16 of our evangelists baptized 100 or more in one year in one or more of the four years past.

The membership was 45,991 four years ago. At the close of 1965 it was 57,202, a gain of 11,211, or enough to make a conference as large as Allegheny, which is the largest Regional conference. An interesting comparison is that 30 years ago the total membership was only a little under 11,000, or about the same as the net gain of these four years. Further, the membership has more than tripled since Regional conferences were started about 20 years ago. The membership has doubled in the past 15 years. There are 427 churches with 280 ministers, 32 Bible instructors, 240 church school teachers, and 359 colporteurs.

The total membership of all SDA's in North America, December 31, 1965, was 380,855, with the Regional membership being 57,202. This shows that every seventh Adventist in the North American Division is a member of the Department for which I am reporting. Generally in the United States the Negro is considered the tenth man, but not among SDA's, where he is the seventh man, or to be more exact the 6.6 man.

Although our group traditionally occupies the lowest income level, having a per capita income of about 54 per cent of that in the United States, we have been faithful givers to God's cause. The tithe for the past four years has been \$18,136,873.66, the Ingathering \$2,269,383.55, the total mission offerings \$5,127,111.05.

Compare this with the figure of \$50 tithe for all the colored members for one year in the 1890's.

We are proud of our educational progress. Oakwood College had an enrollment of more than 500 this past term. It is fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Having opened its doors to classes 70 years ago this year, it has been mainly responsible for the development of the leadership of the Regional work. All the presidents of our seven Regional

conferences attended Oakwood at some point in their educational careers. The same also can be said of the six colored men on the General Conference staff. Pine Forge Academy, a boarding school conducted by the Allegheny Conference, and three day academies in the Northeastern, Lake Region, and Southwest Region conferences, along with the 78 church schools, complete the school program in the Department. Since we were in session last, all of our church colleges and practically all of our academies and many church schools have opened their doors to students of all races.

Our believers are entering wholeheartedly into all phases of God's program. The youth supported the MV Target 30,000 project to the extent that in the Regional conferences alone 719 were baptized in 1965. Likewise, the lay activities program is energetically fostered, and in some areas local projects have been developed as the Blueprint Every Member Evangelism and the Family Bible Course. Our people respond loyally to the health and welfare projects and Ingathering promotion.

The 359 colporteurs are making outstanding sales records. Around \$3,700,000 in deliveries was made.

Many good buildings have been purchased or erected for our churches and institutions. An improvement in buildings and properties is a general need, and it is heartening to see the advancements in this area.

We thank God for the growing list of doctors being prepared within the ranks of our Regional membership. We need many more, along with more trained nurses. The Riverside Hospital is still holding forth a bright light on the banks of the Cumberland River at Nashville, Tennessee, where its standing in the community is highly rated. The Phillips Memorial Hospital in Orlando, Florida, has been taken over by the South Atlantic Conference and is now being conducted as the Phillips Memorial Nursing Home.

The *Message* magazine continues its work of soul winning by means of the printed page. It was developed for the purpose of appealing to the Negro population and has succeeded in this role. It is one of the church's most attractive journals with a growing circulation.

It is with sorrow that we mention those workers who in the past four years have died. Perhaps best known in this group was George E. Peters, for years prominent in our church, having been pastor of our largest congregation and a successful soul winner. He served as secretary of the Regional Department for 12 years before retiring in 1953. His widow is present at this conference.

Also prominent among us for years in the role of leadership was John H. Wagner, Sr., who had served as president of the Allegheny and South Atlantic conferences. He died only a few days after our last General Conference session.

When a young man is cut down in his prime our sorrow becomes even deeper. Leland B. Mitchell, who had dedicated his life to foreign mission service and was the president of the Liberian Mission in West Africa, was taken from us

by death. Several others have died and now await the great resurrection morning. Well known among these was Sister E. I. Cunningham, known as "Mother Cunningham" at Oakwood College where she served for many years.

We thank God for His blessings. We thank Him for those who labor together in His work. We thank Him for faithful believers who are loyal and dedicated to finishing His work on earth. We feel our need for a greater infilling of the Holy Spirit and an all-out preparation to meet our God. We humbly pray for this deeper experience as we face the challenge of warning the more than 20 million colored Americans of our Lord's coming.

## The Day in Detroit

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the night writing up this story. Stepping outside the Arena it seemed that the whole convention hall area was embroidered with lights. Looking across the Detroit River (I would guess just under half a mile wide) to Canada I could see a red-and-green electric signboard beckoning "Shop-Stay-Save-Play 5 Min. Away." Well, that's not for me. How different and peaceful the Detroit waterfront looks at night. During the day, gazing from the spacious Cobo Hall cafeteria, one can see packed white excursion boats leaving for Lake Erie, motorboats speeding by in the choppy waters, and sailboats racing down the river along the Canadian shore, their sailing canvas forming a white-flecked pattern reaching up toward Ambassador Bridge, while above, jets streak by, leaving vapor paths in their wake.

A hard-working group under the direction of C. D. Forshee, the session man-

ger, are the eight messenger boys assigned to various duties connected with the secretarial office, nominating committee, and other places. I take a special interest in this group, because I myself was a messenger boy at the Washington, D.C., 1946 General Conference session 20 years ago.

Varner J. Johns, Jr., of the Loma Linda School of Medicine, gave a well-reasoned morning devotional emphasizing the general and specific signs pointing to Christ's imminent return, and invited us all to dedicate our lives to giving the gospel to all the world in this generation.

The secretary of the General Conference paid homage to one of the world's great institutions, the American Bible Society, now celebrating its 150th anniversary. Dr. Robert T. Taylor, general secretary, responded by saying that "Adventists and the Bible Society are partners." Kenneth H. Emmerson then performed his first official duty as treasurer of the General Conference by handing to Dr. Taylor a check for \$29,000. Adventists have always been "People of the Book." We support Bible Society work. In fact, Harold Pereira Lobo, a delegate at this session, is vice-president of Brazil's Bible Society.

To close the morning business session W. E. Webb of Fresno, California, shared with us some familiar but inspiring thoughts on the Christian's obligation to forget the limiting things of the past and to pass triumphantly forward to victory.

The overseas division booths are some of the most popular spots at any General Conference session. As I made my way from one booth to the other I felt that each booth was better than the preceding one, until I completed the circle and came back to the first booth again, which appeared then just as good as the others, if

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C. D. Forshee, driving his electrical cart, with his helpers who kept messages flying between General Conference departments. From left to right: Fenton Froom, Willis M. Adams, Jr., Roland Perez, Isaac Johnson, Ted Wilson, Richard Long, David DeBooy. Jim Chase was absent at the time.