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Will YOU be One?

THE NEGRO MIGRATION TO CANADA AFTER PASSING OF THE FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT

By Fred Landon, M.A.,

in the Journal of Negro History

When President Fillmore signed the Fugitive Slave Bill on September 18, 1850, he started a Negro migration that continued up to the opening of the Civil War, resulting in thousands of people of color crossing over into Canada, and causing many thousands more to move from one State into another seeking safety from their pursuers. While the free Negro population of the North increased by nearly 30,000 in the decade after 1850, the gain was chiefly in three States, Ohio, Michigan and Illinois. Connecticut had fewer free people of color in 1860 than in 1850 and there were half a dozen States that barely held their own during the period. The three States showing gains were those bordering on Canada where the runaway slave or the free man in danger could flee when threatened. It is estimated that from fifteen to twenty thousand Negroes entered Canada between 1850 and 1860, increasing the Negro population of the British provinces from about 40,000 to nearly 60,000. The greater part of the refugee population settled in the southwestern part of the present province of Ontario, chiefly in what now comprises the counties of Essex and Kent, bordering on the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair. This large migration of an alien race into a country more sparsely settled than any of the Northern States might have been expected to cause trouble, but records show that the Canadians received the refugees with kindness and gave them what help they could. At the close of the Civil War many of the Negroes in exile returned, thus relieving the situation in Canada.

The Fugitive Slave Bill had been signed but a month, when Garrison pointed out in The Liberator that a northward trek of free people was already under way. "Alarmed at the operation of the new Fugitive Slave Law, the fugitives from slavery are pressing northward. Many have been obliged to flee precipitately leaving behind them what little they had acquired since making their escape from slavery." The American Anti-Slavery Society's report also notes the consternation into which the Negro population was thrown by the new legislation and from many other contemporary sources there may be obtained information showing the distressing results that followed immediately upon the signing of the bill. Reports of the large number of new arrivals were soon coming from Canada. Hiram Wilson, a missionary at St. Catharines, writing in The Liberator of December 14 1850 says: "Probably not less than 3,000 have taken refuge in this country since the first of September. Only for the attitude of the north there would have been many thousands more." He says that his church is thronged with fugitives and that what is true of his own district is true also of other parts of southern Ontario. Henry Bibb in his paper "The Voice of the Fugitive" published frequent reports of the number of fugitives arriving at Sandwich on the Detroit River. In the issue of December 3, 1851, he reports 17 arrivals in a week. On April 22, 1852, he records 15 arrivals within the last few days and

notes that the underground railroad is doing good business this spring. On May 20, 1852, he reports "quite an accession of refugees to our numbers during the last two weeks," and on June 17, notes the visit of agents from Chester, Pennsylvania, preparatory to the movement of a large number of people of color from that place to Canada. On the same date he says: "Numbers of free persons of color are arriving in Canada from Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia, Ohio and Indiana. Sixteen passed by Windsor on the seventh and 20 on the eighth and the cry is 'still they come.'" The immigration was increasing week by week, for on July 1 it was reported in The Voice of the Fugitive that "in a single day last week there were not less than 65 colored emigrants landed at this place from the South. . . . As far as we can learn, not less than 200 have arrived within our vicinity since last issue." Almost every number of the paper during 1852 gives figures as to the arrivals of the refugees. On September 23, Bibb reported the arrival of three of his own brothers, while on November 4th, 1852, there is recorded the arrival of 23 men, women and children in 48 hours. Writing to The Liberator on November 12, 1852, Mary E. Bibb said that during the last ten days they had sheltered 23 arrivals in their own home. The American Missionary Association, which had workers among the fugitives in Canada noted in its annual report for 1852 that there had been a large increase of the Negro population during the year while further testimony to the great activity along the border is given by the statement that the Vigilance Committee at Detroit assisted 1200 refugees in one year and that the Cleveland Vigilance Committee had a record of assisting more than a hundred a month to freedom.

(To be continued)

Organization for White and Colored (By The Associated Negro Press)

Washington, Oct.—In the next three years, 95 per cent of the cotton and tobacco growers of the South will be enthusiastic members of co-operative marketing associations, Senator Smith democrat, of South Carolina, predicted in a statement issued to-day. These associations will make the price of those projects stable, he said, the public as well as the producer will know month by month a year in advance, the price at which they will be sold. "For the last three months I have been among the cotton and tobacco planters of the Carolinas and Virginia," he said, "and they are awake to the soundness of the fundamental principles of co-operative marketing. Manufacturers and in all industry, except agriculture, are now well organized on co-operative basis. This includes labor. The stockholders are like farmers in co-operative marketing associations. When deflation came, the farmer alone was hurt. He was not organized. All other industry was."

One of the editors of the Country Gentleman who recently made a survey of the co-operative marketing organizations of the South writes that the colored farmer does not need separate organizations, but will find it to his profit to co-operate with those already established or being formed throughout the South.

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