

College or Cadillacs?

By DR. CHARLES I. WEST

IT IS ESTIMATED that there are approximately 5,000 Negro families in the Las Vegas area with an average income of about \$6,000 per year. These estimates, considered conservative, add up to an annual consumer market of \$30,000,000.

This market may be broken down into consumer categories and the annual gross expenditures may be projected by applying the U.S. Department of Labor's summary of spending by American families. Labor Department figures show that Negro families spend a greater percentage of their earnings in certain consumer markets than do other American families. These categories include food, clothing, housing, household operation and maintenance, household furnishings and equipment, and personal care.

Application of the Labor Department percentages reveals that Negroes in Greater Las Vegas annually spend the following amounts in the aforementioned categories:

- Food (25.1%)--\$7,530,000.
- Clothing (12.5%)--\$3,750,000
- Housing (31.4%)--\$9,540,000.
- Household operation and maintenance (6.1%)--\$1,830,000.
- Household furnishings and equipment (5.5%)--\$1,650,000.
- Personal care (3.8%)--\$1,140,000.

An additional \$3,000,000 goes for automobiles, about \$1,000,000 for gaming, lesser but substantial amounts for tobacco products and alcoholic beverages.

The magnitude of these annual expenditures by the Negro community may surprise many. More significant--we consider it frustrating--is the fact that less than one half of one percent of the Negro consumer's dollars find their way into the pockets of Negro businessmen BECAUSE THE POCKETS ARE NOT THERE TO RECEIVE THEM.

This is almost tragic when you realize that the dollar is a powerful influence in gaining acceptance into the mainstream of America's socio-economic life.

It is imperative that Nevada Negroes revise their family spending patterns so that they may apply more of their dollars to those areas that will produce larger dividends. The local Negro, together with Negroes across the nation, must put their hard-earned money to better use. More Negroes should be on the receiving side of the consumer spending ledger. In order to do so, more Negroes must become interested in business and prepare to enter business. (See story page 1.)

Negroes must join with other Negroes and pool their finances to set themselves up in business so they may obtain a much larger share of the dollars spent by Negroes. This is the only way the Negro can improve his economic status appreciably. More money must be retained within the Negro community. Under present conditions, more than 99 per cent of Negro dollars leave the Negro community. Negro businesses would create more jobs for Negroes and larger annual incomes for Negro families.

If Negroes were on the receiving end of only

half of Negro expenditures, it would mean a 50 per cent increase in the average Negro family income. This extra cash would permit each family to send at least one child through college. And advanced education is an indispensable ingredient in the preparation for business enterprise under modern conditions.

The day is rapidly approaching when at least one parent in each family must have a college education if that family is to compete successfully for subsistence in the employment market.

Negroes must educate more of their youth in modern business practices and techniques if they expect to be accepted into the mainstream of American society.

It takes dollars to send kids to college but the return on such dollars certainly will produce larger dividends than dollars spent on expensive automobiles, fancy clothes, unnecessary household furnishings and frequent parties. A modestly-priced auto will provide just about the same service as a costly Cadillac. The difference in price can send a child through college.

The Negro should spend more wisely so that he can prepare himself and his family for the opportunity to get back a greater portion of the money he spends.

College is cheaper than Cadillacs. College graduates help make families economically stable while notes on Cadillacs can wreck the family budget.

We need more college degrees and can get along with fewer Cadillacs. A college degree gives a family true status. A Cadillac can bring scorn or ridicule.

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