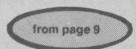
## -Roosevelt Fitzgerald-



never heard of any refusal to employ Colored people and that he would take the matter up immediately on his return to Boulder City, and see that provision was made for their employment of the work when and if they had the necessary experience.

On the basis of the evidence, three conclusions be may suggested: (1) Mr. Bechtel was either not cognizant of the absence of Blacks from the work force or it did not matter to him: (2) Blacks were required to have experience and whites were not: and (3) affirmative action of any sort did not exist at that time. Whichever the case, it is clear that in order for the rights of Black people to be protected, safeguards beyond those for whites were necessary.

It was charged that while Blacks were expected to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens of the U.S., their rights as citizens

protected. Just as white clear that Blacks would Americans had, with the Spanish- American War and World War I, answered the "bell," the same was true for Blacks. "When the call to arms came in the Great War our government called for American citizens, regardless of color. There are ex-servicemen many among the local Negro settlement. Many of them are unable to obtain work." Hawkins and Pickins did not hestitate point out the discrepancies of the condition Blacks found themselves in. It was a harsh brutal truth which most Americans would just as soon not admit.

As preparations got underway for the actual construction of the dam, the condition of local Blacks worsened. By the end of November, 1931, there had been 3800 letters of response written to job seekers by the local labor office and the numbers of arrivals were increasing daily. The influx of newcomers to the area lessened Black chances of employment. It was

were ignored and not becoming not be hired so long as a single white man was out of work and in need of a

In May of 1932 Pickins returned to Las Vegas. Conditions had not changed and the NAACP was adamant in its efforts to bring them about. His visit was second highlighted by an open meeting in which there were several influential white people - Nye Wilson, Mayor Ernie Cragin and Leonard Blood of the Labor Office. Pickens'address extolled the contributions blacks had made in the historical development of the United States. Once again the thrust of the meeting was to indicate to white Las Vegans that Blacks were citizens of the country and the community. His plea, as usual, fell on deaf ears. The habit of excluding Black from development economic did not seem to be of concern to any but Blacks. Rather than look for reasons to hire Blacks, reasons justifying their not being hired were developed in abundance.

In a number of cases men, in search of employment, brought their families with them. The very best of conditions were terrible for most. Zane Grey, in his BOULDER DAM gives a fairly accurate portrayal of life in southern Nevada duirng the early 1930s. The kinds of housing and the presence of thousands of job seekers is very well illustrated. Today, in Clark County, there are people who were here at the time of the construction of the dam. Some of them have interviewed and taped and their recollections of those days have become a part of the pages of history. Only in rare instances are there similar artifacts recorded by/of Blacks. Once again the evidence is scanty.

When we consider that the number of Blacks who were here, nearly 500, and the number who were unemployed, nearly 500, we must wonder how they managed to survive. Most did without the basic fact that there was aid to st the employment of

similar straits were met by the "welcome wagon." Blacks were termed vagrants and as such were arrested and placed on work gangs for the city or they were very forcefully asked to leave town. What has been described as the "pioneer spirit" was not all that Christian - but then no one has ever claimed that pioneers were "Christians." If they were they were inconsistent and a Christian is either a Christian at all times or merely a faker. The constablesconspired with the other cooties and without care of conscience they constumaciously caused "colored" people to comcountering their ad- and one step backwards. versaries' continually calcifying christianity.

Fortunately, persisted. At a meeting between representatives of the NAACP, the CCLPA, Six Companies, Senator Tasker L. Oddie and Secretary Wilbur of the Department of the Innecessities. They lived in terior some meaningful was only at Black peoples' cardboard shacks and ate decisions were finally whatever food they could made. It was decided that find. They received little there would be "no fur- first Blacks would be or no aid in spite of the ther discrimination again- hired on the project.

be had. White newcomers Colored labor on the who found themselves in Hoover Dam. It was finally admitted discrimination had been taking place in the hiring practices. Walter White, **Executive Secretary of the** NAACP, in writing to Ar-McCants, thur president of the local chapter, said that he had been notified by Mr. Ray Lyman Wilbur of the Interior department that "When additions to the force are made, the company will arrange to give employment to Negro labor." Almost as soon as this occurred, the local government advertised for laborers for a sewer A project. requirement was attached - prospective workers had to be property pute their chances of owners. One step forward

> At that stage the dam was one-third finished. Blacks Blacks were still playing catch-up. At almost every opportunity to do the right thing - whites, in position of authority, maintained their perfect record of opting to do the wrong thing. After all, it expense. It would yet be some months before the

> > TO BE CONTINUED

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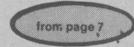
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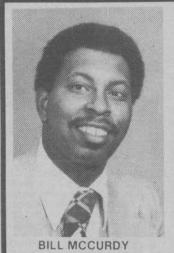


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## **Fire** Education



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