

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

Texas A. and M. College System and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating

STATE OF TEXAS

Box 5918  
Jasper, Texas

EXTENSION SERVICE  
COUNTY AGENT WORK



F.C. 16:155

Mr. J.V. Smith  
District Agent  
Extension Service  
Prairie View A&M College  
Prairie View, Texas

Dear Mr. Smith:

I received your letter dated December 9, 1953 concerning the distribution of Sears Poultry for 1954.

During the past week, I checked thoroughly with 4-H clubbers and parents to try to find poultry demonstrators that were willing to make the necessary preparations and could afford to feed the birds properly. Unfortunately I was unable to find anyone.

Experience with previous demonstrators have taught me that it is unwise to give this poultry to families unless they are willing to make necessary preparations and are economically able to handle the feeding.

I deeply regret that I could find no one willing to accept this splendid opportunity.

Yours truly,

*D.H. Seastrunk*  
D.H. Seastrunk  
County Agent

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

~~FARMERS' HOME ADMINISTRATION~~

FARMERS' HOME ADMINISTRATION

Parry Avenue at Commerce

Dallas 1, Texas

IN REPLY REFER TO

R8-JHW

R. G. 116  
1570

Mr. J. V. Smith, Farm Labor Field Assistant  
Negro Extension Service  
Prairie View, Texas

Dear Mr. Smith:

Mr. George S. Mitchell, director of Veterans Services, Southern Regional Council, Inc., has communicated with us in reference to improving the training program of colored veterans here in Texas.

It is our desire to accumulate sufficient data to enable us to bring out both the good and bad points in the services to colored veterans, at the earliest possible date, as we are expecting a conference with interested persons within the very near future.

Therefore, we are asking the opinion of representative people as to the merits of the program as it now operates. We would like very much to have your opinion of the service being rendered to colored veterans, with special emphasis on the training program. Send us whatever information that you have.

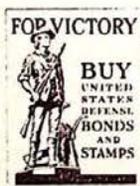
We think that the enclosed pamphlet entitled, "A Survey of Veterans Services for Negroes in Arkansas", by Harry L. Wright, pretty well reflects the situation as it exists here in Texas. May we suggest that you read it carefully before giving us your reply.

We hope that we may hear from you at an early date.

Sincerely yours,

*John H. Williams*  
John H. Williams,  
Senior Administrative Assistant

Enclosure - 1



# A Survey of Veterans Services for Negroes in Arkansas

By Harry L. Wright

Field Representative, Veterans Services Division,  
Southern Regional Council

**"EX-G.I. JOE"** is marching home — marching back home with the same spirit of hope and faith that, not so long ago, he marched off with to the battlefields of the world to do his bit toward making the world a better place to live. In the days of war, he found unusual problems and, somehow, he solved them; in these days of peace, again he is finding unusual problems; how well he will solve these depends largely on the concern and the counsel of the folks back home.

Arkansas sent 250,000 of her sons to war. One of every four of these was a Negro. Since the end of war about 150,000 of these men have come back home to Arkansas — approximately 40,000 of these are Negroes. The job of helping all of these veterans to get fitted back into their niche in the scheme of progress is Arkansas' obligation and opportunity. How well is the job being done?

In order to get a picture of how Negro veterans were actually faring in Arkansas, I spent two and a half months traveling throughout the state. From beneath the capitol dome in Little Rock to the humble shacks of Helena, I talked on cordial terms with officials of veterans organizations, administrators of federal and state veteran agencies, local officials, preachers, teachers, farmers and just plain

"Ex-G.I.'s" hanging around on street corners and in the pool rooms.

## Education

"On paper" Arkansas furnishes to all veterans four plans for training under the GI Bill: on-the-farm training; on-the-job training, cooperative on-the-job training and institutional training. The first is for the time being limited to veterans who as owners or renters have full control of a farm. It is a plan of teaching veterans how to become better farmers right at home on their own farms under the supervision of the local vocational agricultural teachers. It involves some classroom teaching, too. The second gives veterans the opportunity of learning a trade in local businesses; supervision of both the practical work and the related studies being assumed by the businesses. The third also offers veterans the opportunity of learning a trade in local businesses; the practical work being supervised by the businesses with the local school supervising related instruction. The fourth is straight high school and college education modified to meet the special needs of the veterans. Here are three typical examples of conditions of the training programs among Negro veterans, found in towns visited:

Town number one is a peaceful little place of about 6,000 people — 40 per cent Negroes. It's a town thriving on

*"I came home from years of war.  
Everything was like before,  
People hadn't changed a bit,  
That's the awful part of it!"*

— Christopher Morley

the agricultural enterprises of the surrounding communities. There are three Negro doctors, a few Negro teachers, still fewer tradesmen and the usual large number of just plain "workers." I took a walking tour of the business section and had casual talks with veterans "hanging around" the shoe-shine stands. In order to get the official side of the picture, I talked with the Veterans Administration's contact officer. Not one of the many Negro veterans with whom I had talked knew where this office was; the leading Negro doctor pointed out where I *might* find it. After climbing two flights of stairs up a narrow passageway, looking in vain for some kind of signs along the way, I finally peeped into the right office. In our talk, the contact officer explained that Negro veterans were "doing a good job." There were eighty-eight white veterans in the on-the-job training program and only two Negro veterans.

Town number two is a "river town." Fifty per cent of its 8,000 people are Negroes. Like all other delta towns, most of its income is from the surrounding agricultural communities, plus a few mills. There are open gambling and vice dens. In these places I found veterans with their discharge emblems pinned on dirty shirts standing over grimy tables rolling dice and cursing. Most of these veterans were "country boys" from the nearby communities, who came to town to try and live by being one of the smart gamblers. To my suggestion for them to get on some kind of veterans training program, their only comment was: "I just haven't thought about it." The contact officer informed me that there were "eighty-some" white veterans on-the-job training program and only "some few Negro veterans in the high school."

Town number three is an "oil town." White people outnumber Negroes five to one. The few Negroes who live here are the "left-overs" from oil-boom days. They have decent homes, beautiful churches, and poor schools. There are hundreds of opportunities for

skilled workers in the many oil refineries and supply businesses here. A trade and industry teacher is employed in the Negro high school, yet the school has neither workshop nor equipment.

Institutional training for Negro veterans in Arkansas meets with the traditional problems of education for Negroes in the South—inadequate buildings and equipment, a shortage of well-trained teachers, and the ever-present "limited budget." The State A.M.&N. College for Negroes at Pine Bluff offers the best opportunity for institutional training for Negro veterans in Arkansas. The College officials have worked out a good program. Their courses for veterans range from the teaching of a trade along with the three "R's" to regular college courses in the sciences. There is a good plant here, fairly well equipped and staffed by qualified teachers. Four hundred and fifty veterans have crowded into all the departments of the college. Class rooms and housing facilities are overcrowded. More than 150 veterans have been refused admission in the last two months by the college officials because of the overcrowded conditions. This is the only school in Arkansas that offers Negro veterans a well-rounded trade education.

High schools should furnish the major portion of institutional training for Negro veterans because most of the Negro veterans are of the high school level or below and the high schools are more advantageously located. Of the fifteen towns visited only seven had fair high school buildings and equipment. Only four of these fifteen had a fairly well equipped trade shop.

The GI Bill provides that the states shall supervise veterans training. In Arkansas this authority to supervise veterans education drifts from the officials of the State Department of Education to the County or City Superintendents of Education and still further down to one of the (white) high school teachers designated co-ordinator of veterans. The coordinator and

his staff are paid from the tuition received from both Negro and white veterans; typically, his office is located in the white high school.

Under the four plans for veterans training in Arkansas there are 12,990 veterans in training; 6,638 of these are on cooperative job and farm training; 466 are taking on-the-job training in business establishments, and 5,886 veterans are training in educational institutions.

Information on the racial distribution of veterans in all of these training programs was not available from officials of the Veterans Administration; neither could an approximate estimate of such a racial distribution be obtained from those officials whose every-day association with a large number of Negro veterans should enable them to have this information.

### **Employment**

In the fifteen towns visited, employment offices reported plenty of job opportunities, both agricultural and non-agricultural. Most of the task of getting employment for veterans falls on the United States Employment Service. Nine of the towns visited had local USES offices. Responsible officials in each of these offices stated that their placements of Negroes were almost exclusively in laborer and menial jobs. Little if any effort was being made by them to sell the idea of employing Negroes in any other than the so-called "Negro job," despite veterans' qualifications and service-acquired skills. In Arkansas the USES employs hundreds of professional and clerical workers; not one Negro is employed in these brackets.

The regional office of the veterans administration is located in Little Rock. The work of the regional office is supplemented by the work of twenty-four contact offices located in the following towns: Batesville, Blytheville, Camden, El Dorado, Fayetteville, Fordyce, Forrest City, Ft. Smith, Harrison, Helena, Hope, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Malvern, McGhee, Mena, Morrilton, Mt. Home, Pine Bluff, Po-

cahontas, Russellville, Searcy, Stuttgart and Texarkana. There are guidance centers at most of the principal white colleges and at the one Negro State College.

The state offices of the Veterans Administration employ thousands of professional and clerical employees. Only five are Negroes; these five are doing an excellent job at the Negro State College in Pine Bluff where they are stationed.

A break-down of the non-agricultural placements in Arkansas during May, 1946, shows that non-whites received only one of the 66 placements in professional and managerial jobs, three of 522 clerical and sales placements, 13 of the 478 skilled placements, and 77 of the 647 semi-skilled jobs. In the lower income brackets non-whites received 827 of the 1350 placements in service jobs and 1203 of the 3489 placements in unskilled; 95 per cent of the placements for non-whites were in the service and unskilled jobs. While these figures don't specifically show the placement of Negro veterans, the Negro veterans are included in figures for all non-whites, and the over-all picture shows that Negro veterans along with other non-whites are being referred to the low income jobs to the tune of 95 per cent of their placements.

### **Lack of Understanding**

In Little Rock, officials of agencies that handle veterans' affairs on a state-wide basis were interviewed. Without exception they proved to be men of integrity, who had a sincere interest in seeing that all veterans received the best services that their agencies could furnish. These officials described in detail the work of their agencies out in the state and outlined the opportunities offered both Negro and white veterans — a beautiful picture of "separate but equal" facilities and programs for Negro veterans.

Out in the state it was found generally that Negro veterans and their community leaders were uninformed about veterans' rights and opportunities; they had a vague idea about

available benefits, but lacked the know-how of making the right contacts and getting problems to officials who could help. In all of the veterans information centers in towns visited, the employees (white only) were generally informed about their Negro communities and businesses. Consequently Negro veterans were handicapped in being advised, and policy-making officials in the state and regional offices were not being presented with the specific problems that hindered the effectiveness of their program with Negro veterans.

### **G. I. Loans**

The State Office of the Loan Guaranty Division, Veterans Administration, is located in Little Rock, with sub-offices spotted out in the larger towns of the state. These offices furnish guidance and information to veterans applying for loans from private lending agencies, in addition to handling the administrative work of the government's guaranty on loans to qualified veterans. This state office reports that there have been approved for veterans in Arkansas 199 farm loans, 189 business loans and 1,250 home loans as of June 1, 1946. The office did not have available information on how many of these loans were approved for Negro veterans. Responsible officials in the state office declined even to estimate the number of Negro veterans receiving guarantees for loans through their offices.

In all of the fifteen towns visited in Arkansas, this writer has talked with hundreds of Negro veterans and their families and has found only three veterans who have received loans with government guaranties provided for under the G. I. Bill.

### **Self-Employment Allowance**

The GI Bill provides that self-employed veterans whose net earnings don't amount to \$100 per month can claim a supplemental amount from the federal government to raise their net earnings to that amount. This benefit is available to veterans up to a maximum of 10 3/5 months, de-

pending on the length of the veteran's qualifying service in the armed forces.

During May, 1940, 20,888 veterans in Arkansas were certified to be paid \$2,095,348 in these allowances. Information on the number of Negro veterans receiving these allowances was not available from responsible officials.

### **Readjustment Allowances**

In Arkansas during May, 1946, 32,437 veterans received \$2,529,429 in readjustment allowances; 99.3 per cent of this payment was made to veterans who were totally unemployed. The number of Negroes included in these figures could not be obtained from official sources; however, observers who work with the veterans' employment from day to day, agree that Negroes constitute a large per cent of the totally unemployed veterans.

Generally the jobs in Arkansas available to Negro veterans are in the service and unskilled levels that pay from \$12 to \$20 per week. Most men figure that \$20 a week coming without working is better than taking one of these low income jobs. A large number of these fellows figure that they possess skills for better jobs but are denied these jobs because of race.

From whatever cause, this number of veterans of both races sustained in idleness cannot be healthy. The benefit is theirs as a matter of law. The number drawing it could be sharply lessened, particularly among Negroes, by employment at wages well above \$20 per week. Many of such jobs would require skills, which in turn would tempt veterans to take advantage of the educational and training opportunities offered under the GI Bill. The matter of getting them jobs is a duty for USES and the large number of employers. Getting them educational opportunities is a job of the State.

### **Arkansas Veterans Service Office**

The Arkansas Veterans' Service Office is an agency created by the Legis-

lature in 1945 for the purpose of assisting veterans and their dependents in securing their rights under all laws of both the state and federal government. The director, who must be an honorably discharged veteran of World War I or II, is appointed by the Governor. The director is authorized to employ an assistant director, secretary and other lesser employees necessary to the function of this office.

The County Judge of each county is authorized to appoint a county service officer with the consent of the American Legion Commander in the county and with the approval of the Governor. County Quorum Courts or City Councils equitably with the state pay the salaries of these county service officers. Only a small number of Negro veterans interviewed in all the areas had received from their county service officers benefits other than referrals to other agencies.

### **Veterans Organizations**

The American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars are the majority veterans organizations in Arkansas. Both the Legion and the VFW have organized separate posts for Negro veterans in most of the larger towns. Neither of these organizations, however, has done an extensive job of organizing Negro veterans. The Legion has given valuable assistance in encouraging responsible state officials to expand educational facilities for Negro veterans. The local Legion and V.F.W. officers throughout the state handle claims for both members and non-members, white and Negro.

The newest veterans organization in Arkansas with national affiliation is the American Veterans Committee. The only chapter in the state is at Forrest City. Membership is limited to veterans honorably discharged from World War II. Although racial lines are not drawn the entire group of charter members in this organization is made up of Negroes.

In a majority of the towns visited groups of Negro veterans had organized some kind of provisional organi-

zations and were observing carefully the policies of existing national veterans organizations with a view toward affiliation with the one that offers the best opportunities.

### **What Would Help**

(1) At least one Negro coordinator of veterans education should be employed by the state and the county or town in every county where numbers of the Negro veterans are living.

(2) The Veterans Administration should immediately employ additional qualified Negro personnel to serve as advisers, training officers and contact officers, at least in all sections of the state where Negro veterans are numerically important.

(3) USES should employ Negro interviewers and counsellors in all offices where large numbers of Negroes are served.

(4) USES should revamp its policies and practices (official or otherwise) of referring Negro veterans to menial jobs only. All veterans should be referred on the basis of qualification, despite the "employers' preference." This would go a long way to sell employers the idea of giving Negro veterans fair employment opportunities.

(5) The State Department of Education should quickly make an overall survey of the standards of educational facilities available to Negro veterans. This survey might well be made by both qualified Negro and white personnel from some recognized body not having official ties with the department.

(6) The educational facilities at Pine Bluff should be immediately expanded. The state has the opportunity to secure one of the several prisoner-of-war camps available in Arkansas, with a view to converting it into a well-equipped trade school for Negro veterans.

(7) Local organizations and leaders of both races all through the state should get acquainted with the affairs of veterans and encourage and instruct Negro veterans in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the GI Bill.

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Erratum: page 4, column 1, line 7 should read  
"generally *uninformed*," etc., instead of as printed.

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**Southern Regional Council, Inc.**

**Veterans Services Division**

63 Auburn Ave., N.E.

Atlanta 3, Georgia