

The OBSERVATION —POST

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By DAVID WARD HOWE

ROBERT SENGSTACKE ABBOTT A GREAT LEADER A GREAT MAN

Robert Sengstacke Abbott, the founder of the Chicago Defender is dead. With his passing the Race has lost a great leader.

During the years of his life Robert S. Abbott exercised a far reaching influence upon the social and economic status of his race. Even though he is gone the forces which he set into operation will continue to influence the lives of the American people.

In the years to come when time provides sufficient perspective, scholars will be able to evaluate his full contribution to American life. For the present, however, we must of necessity content ourselves with a review of the great work he performed, and a description of some of the benefits already derived from his efforts.

MR. ABBOTT AND THE MIGRATION

While only a young man he helped set into operation forces which have had and will continue to have a dynamic effect upon the position of the Race in American life. When Mr. Abbott began to publish his paper early in the century the overwhelming majority of his people lived in the south. There for the most part they were a simple rural folk living under conditions which have often been described as comparable to peonage.

Before Mr. Abbott came on the scene the great majority of his people were denied opportunity for even an elementary education. They were not permitted to vote, and had few if any rights which white men were bound to respect. Mr. Abbott helped change all that.

Perhaps more than any other man, Robert S. Abbott was responsible for the migration from the south, and accordingly since the migration set into operation forces which have meant improvement in the south, he is entitled to some of the credit for that improvement.

HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE RACE'S POLITICAL POSITION

Every student of political affairs now knows that the voting power of the Race is sufficient to influence national elections. Every student of political affairs should learn of the part Mr. Abbott played in encouraging and effecting the present distribution of Race voters which is responsible for our influence in governmental affairs.

The Chicago Defender under the direction of Mr. Abbott took the lead in encouraging Race persons to leave the south. Through its pages oppressed Race workers read of a new land and a new opportunity. In its columns discouraged and despairing people found the incentive for the venture north.

HE LED FIGHT AGAINST LYNCHING

Not only did the Chicago Defender serve as a medium for acquainting southerners with the opportunities in the north; but the fearless editor also provided a great vehicle for exposing the vicious conditions in the south. He hammered ceaselessly away at lynching, constantly espousing the cause of anti-lynching legislation; and here again is an instance where his influence has been profound.

Robert S. Abbott was unselfish in his devotion to his people. Wherever and whenever members of the Race attempted to stage a fight against discrimination, for example a battle against disfranchisement they could count him on their side. He was ever ready to throw the full weight of his mighty paper behind any sound program for Race advancement.

In addition to his great work with his paper, Mr. Abbott carried more than his share of the responsibility for civic affairs. He gave liberally not alone of his money, but also of his time to many local and national organizations. He worked actively as a member and director of religious institutions. He served continuously as a member and director of civic agencies like the Urban League and N.A.A.C.P. He gave liberally to educational institutions and hospitals throughout the land.

Like Monroe Trotter, he believed in equal rights for all, and opposed separation and segregation. Here again we must recognize the true worth of this great man.

ROBERT S. ABBOTT A TRULY GREAT MAN

Finally, Robert S. Abbott has been and will continue to be a shining example for all people. He has pointed out a path which others may follow. The fact and example of his achievements will demonstrate that great things are possible for all of us. In the years gone by many have secured ambition and inspiration from his work; in the years to come many more will guide their wagons toward his star.

Robert Sengstacke Abbott was a kindly and generous man. Robert Sengstacke Abbott was a fearless and noble citizen. Robert Sengstacke Abbott was a great humanitarian—may there be others like him.