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January 5, 1945

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Elmer W. Henderson

FROM: Harry H. C. Gibson *HHC*

SUBJECT: Conference with James A. Small in re Dodge Plant.

On Thursday, January 4, 1945, I visited the home of James A. Small, Negro, 6513 Eberhart Avenue.

Mr. Small, on December 15, 1944, had written to President Roosevelt and to Mayor Kelly to call to their attention certain unsatisfactory working conditions. The letters referred primarily to the failure of Small to receive a bonus which was alleged to be due him from the Dodge Chicago Plant. Both letters were referred to our office.

In my conference with Small, he stated that a few days after sending the letters, he had been paid the bonus by the company. Although he contended that the bonus had been held up in some manner by an A.F. of L. union which had jurisdiction over the Hammer Forge Department to which he was attached, he could not explain how. At any rate, he had been satisfied as to the bonus.

Another statement made by him was to the effect that the A.F. of L. got a contract with the company in the Hammer Forge Department without notifying the Negroes. However, he said that the Negro employees voted for the CIO during the election.

Lastly, he said that the Negroes attached to the Hammer Forge Department worked in the Saw Shed, where they operated machines which sawed steel pieces. This job classification paid \$1.05 per hour. He said that there were three shifts in the saw shed with twelve to fourteen men on each shift, and that of the approximate forty men on the three shifts, about nine were white and the remainder Negroes. There were three Leadmen, who are assistants to the foremen, and two of these three Leadmen were Negroes.

Although the colored employees got along satisfactorily in the Saw Shed Department, none had been upgraded to the operation of the Hammer Forge machine, operators of which receive \$2.66

an hour and upwards. Small said that those operators, who were all A.F. of L., were openly opposed to admittance of Negroes to their union or to their job classification and that various officials of the union had stated that all the hammer forge operators would strike if Negroes were upgraded to their classification. Small said that he would not make a formal complaint about this classification and did not wish his name mentioned in any way.

In the course of a future conference with Mr. Cornell, Dodge Personnel Director, I shall inquire generally about conditions in the Hammer Forge Department.

NOTE: Small has worked for 18 months in Department 851, with only 1 day's absence.