

*The BOOKER T. WASHINGTON Papers*

their votes how they prefer their property to be taxed and in choosing those who are to make and administer the laws.

In a certain town in the South, recently, I was on the street in company with the most prominent Negro in the town. While we were together, the mayor of the town sought out the black man, and said, "Next week we are going to vote on the question of issuing bonds to secure water-works for this town; you must be sure to vote on the day of election." The mayor did not suggest whether he must vote "yes" or "no"; he knew from the very fact that this Negro man owned nearly a block of the most valuable property in the town that he would cast a safe, wise vote on this important proposition. This white man knew that, because of this Negro's property interests in the city, he would cast his vote in the way he thought would benefit every white and black citizen in the town, and not be controlled by influences a thousand miles away. But a short time ago I read letters from nearly every prominent white man in Birmingham, Alabama, asking that the Rev. W. R. Pettiford, a Negro, be appointed to a certain important federal office. What is the explanation of this? Mr. Pettiford for nine years has been the president of the Negro bank in Birmingham to which I have alluded. During these nine years these white citizens have had the opportunity of seeing that Mr. Pettiford could manage successfully a private business, and that he had proven himself a conservative, thoughtful citizen; and they were willing to trust him in a public office. Such individual examples will have to be multiplied until they become the rule rather than the exception. While we are multiplying these examples, the Negro must keep a strong and courageous heart. He cannot improve his condition by any short-cut course or by artificial methods. Above all, he must not be deluded into the temptation of believing that his condition can be permanently improved by a mere battledore and shuttlecock of words or by any process of mere mental gymnastics or oratory alone. What is desired, along with a logical defence of his cause, are deeds, results, — multiplied results, — in the direction of building himself up, so as to leave no doubt in the minds of any one of his ability to succeed.

An important question often asked is, Does the white man in the South want the Negro to improve his present condition? I say, "Yes." From the Montgomery (Alabama) *Daily Advertiser* I clip