

AIMED AT COLORED WAITERS

Reform Proposed by the Geneva Society Will Eliminate the Negro.

PORTLAND, Or., Oct. 12.—(To the Editor.)—In an article which appeared in The Oregonian, under the caption, "A New Union to Teach Waiters," which told of the formation of a Geneva Society, the colored waiters of Portland feel that they have been done an injustice. Among the colored waiters now at work in this city, there is a feeling that the so-called Geneva Society has been formed for the express purpose of driving us out of the various places where for years we have worked as waiters. In stating the objects of the Geneva Society, W. B. Martlin, superintendent of one service in one of Portland's leading hotels, has not given the public the direct motive of the society he intends to organize here. Mr. Martlin says that the object of the society is to select its members from every race, but I have reasons to believe that this is not Mr. Martlin's intention, or the intention of the society which he has organized or is about to organize. A number of colored waiters have taken the matter up and they are of the opinion that the main purpose of the organization of the Geneva Society is merely to abolish the colored waiters.

For the good of the service at any first-class hotel, perhaps it would be better if its waiters could speak two languages, but I disagree with Mr. Martlin when he says that it is necessary. I doubt very much whether Mr. Martlin, or any other member of the Geneva Society, unless he is foreign-born, can speak more than one language. Right here in Portland there are several colored waiters who can speak French and some of them have a slight knowledge of German, but I have never known this to increase their salaries or to make them more valuable as waiters.

Only since the Civil War, has the negro been a paid servant in America, and in this capacity there is no race that has been able to compete with him. With the growth of education among them, they are becoming more capable each year of understanding and satisfying the public wants.

I must admit the negroes have no system of organized labor, and that negro labor has never in fact been recognized by the American Federation of Labor until recently, at Birmingham, Alabama. Thus the negro is compelled to depend for strength not upon united effort, but upon individual merit and ability.

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