

*They are winning support
from voters of both races*

Negro Candidates in the South

September 1951

WITH the growth of the Negro ballot in the South, Negro office-seeking has shown a moderate but steady increase in the past few years. During 1951 some thirty Negroes have sought public office in their communities. Leading the Southern states by far in this respect is North Carolina, where fifteen Negro candidates offered for city councils. They participated in primaries or final elections in Burlington, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Durham, Fayetteville, Gastonia, Greensboro, Madison, Monroe, Raleigh, Rocky Mount, Southern Pines, and Winston-Salem.

Although only five Negroes in the region were successful in their bids for office, others failed by narrow margins. In Jacksonville, Florida, for example, one of two Negro candidates for city council placed second in a field of four.

The successful candidates—in each case for city council or board of aldermen—were:

DR. W. P. DEVANE, physician, Fayetteville, N. C.

DR. WILLIAM M. HAMPTON, physician, Greensboro, N. C.

REV. WILLIAM R. CRAWFORD, Winston-Salem, N. C.

ROBERT E. LILLARD, attorney, Nashville, Tenn.

Z. A. LOOBY, attorney, Nashville, Tenn.

Particularly notable was the election of Dr. Hampton. He is the first Negro in recent years to serve as councilman in Greensboro. In a field of thirteen candidates for seven vacancies, he won fifth place. This showing was partly due to the substantial number of white voters who supported him. Of 5,219 votes cast in his favor, only 2,393 came from the predominantly Negro precincts. It has been estimated that Dr. Hampton might well have won solely on the basis of white returns.

Also significant was the heavy support received by Dr. Devane, of Fayetteville. Having completed one two-year term, he was re-elected with the largest number of votes received by any of the ten candidates in the race.

Mr. Looby's election, followed shortly by that of Mr. Lillard, marked the first time in almost forty years that Nashville has had Negro representation on its city council. The change was made possible largely by the passage of an ordinance providing for election by districts rather than wards.

Winston-Salem has had a Negro alderman since 1947, when the Rev. Kenneth Williams set the precedent for North Carolina and other Southern states. At the end of two terms on the board of aldermen, Mr. Williams this year declined to seek a third and was succeeded by Mr. Crawford.