

Building-Trades Training Plan Aids Blacks in Newark

By WALTER H. WAGGONER

Special to The New York Times

NEWARK, Feb. 16—From the cold windswept roof of a dingy four-story building that is now a training school for work in the construction trades, John Williams told a group of visitors: "There it is—42 acres, but no mule."

The 42 acres of snow-dusted mountains of excavated soil, frozen pools of water and concrete pylons and foundations are the site of the new College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, which is now functioning in temporary buildings nearby, in the heart of the city's rundown and predominantly black Central Ward.

The tour of the training school—an old New Jersey Bell building that has been immaculately rehabilitated inside for classrooms and workshops—was arranged by the Newark Construction Trades Training Corporation.

The corporation and the training program that helps blacks and Puerto Ricans who want to enter the once-restrictive construction trades was born out of the so-called medical school agreement of 1968.

After many months of bitterness, protest, construction delays and, finally, successful negotiations, a settlement was reached under which it was agreed that one-third of all journeymen and half of all apprentices in each building trade working on construction of the college would be workers from minority groups.

Today, with the cooperation of all the construction trade unions, the building owners—city, state and private—and the contractors, the Newark program was in effect on a number of major construction sites in the area.

In a progress report to more than 100 visitors, including city,

state and Federal officials, James A. Walker, executive director of the Newark Construction Trades Training Corporation, said he hoped that "we can call you back two years from now and say we are no longer needed, because construction workers are being hired without regard to race, creed or color."

The program is one of many that have been undertaken in cities across the country within the federally initiated affirmative-action plan. That plan is officially described as a spur

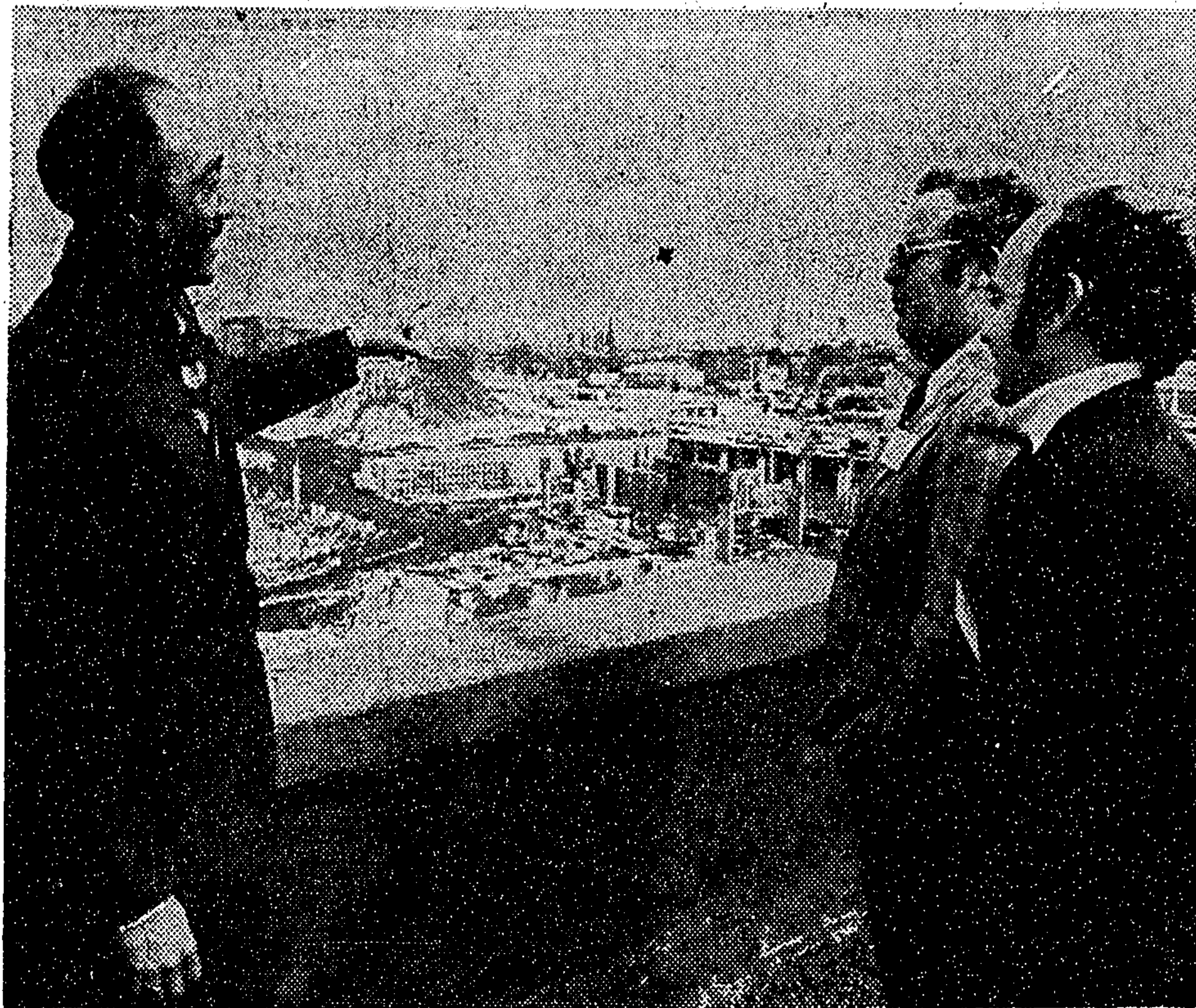
to "action which will equalize opportunity in employment so as to allow full utilization of minority-group manpower potential."

According to Gustav Heningburg, chairman of the corporation and president of the Greater Newark Urban Coalition, the Newark program has made progress while the better-known "Philadelphia Plan" bogged down because of the "effective sanctions" of the operation here.

He noted that the Philadelphia plan could bar contractors

who failed to comply with the "equal opportunity" principles from bidding on Federal work.

"But they had four level of appeals, and the average running time for getting a settlement was about three and a half years," Mr. Heningburg continued. "Meanwhile, the building could go forward. But here, with our system of review council, which represents everyone involved, we can close a job down in 14 days if compliance is not met, or if the council is not satisfied with the explanation for delay."



James A. Walker, left, the executive director of the Newark Construction Trades Training Corporation, with Walter T. Peters Jr., center, the director of the State Division of Building and Construction, and Jerome Lieberman, the dean of Essex County Community College, at the building site of the College of Medicine and Dentistry in Newark.

Walter T. Peters Jr., director of the State Division of Buildings and Construction who was recently head of the Affirmative Action Plan, said that Governor Cahill had visited the Newark program a few weeks ago and was so impressed that he felt it should be established on a regional basis throughout the state.

Since the Newark program was federally financed with a \$1.3-million contract on March 31, 1971, "1,800 young men have come in off the street and made their applications, and we have placed 186 trainees and 46 journeymen on jobs," Mr. Walker said.

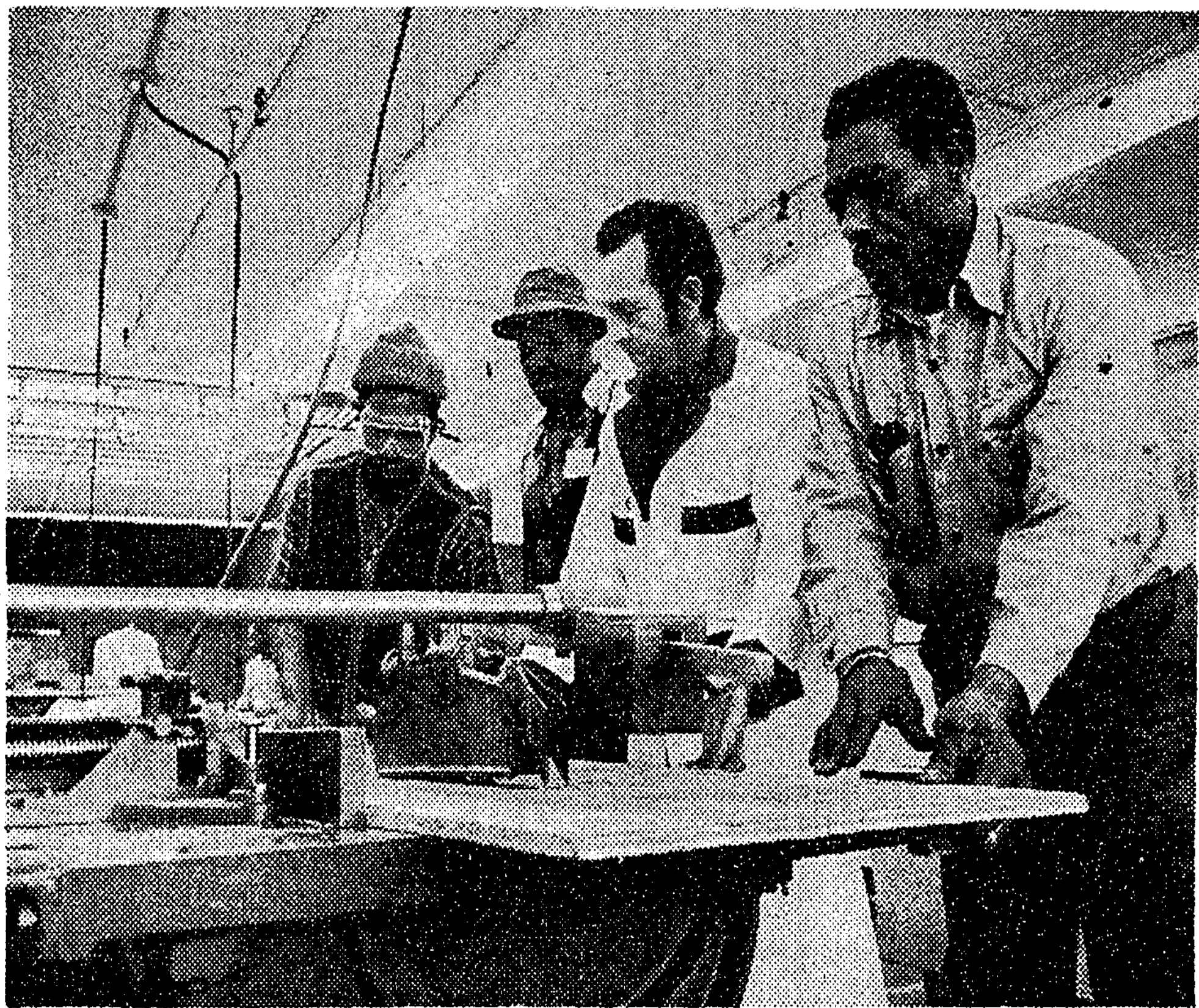
\$7-Million in Pay Cited

"These individuals are working, and they have brought in something like \$7-million in take-home pay — a real economic shot in the arm," he added.

George Fontaine, director of operations for the program, said that totally unskilled applicants got about 1,200 hours of training over a period of two and a half to three years, and that those who were already apprentices got about 400 hours of more-advanced training. High school-equivalency courses in reading and mathematics are also compulsory for workers who are school dropouts, he said.

Three of the successful "graduates" of the program were present at today's meeting.

They were Raymond Wheeler, 32, who is a journeyman carpenter at the medical school site; Arthur Bailey, 29, an operating engineer at the Essex County Community College under construction, and Sanders Fortenberry, a program surveying graduate now at work on the expansion of the Newark Airport.



Photographs for The New York Times by THOMAS CHRISTIE

The carpentry shop of the training corporation's building in Newark

The New York Times

Published: February 17, 1973

Copyright © The New York Times