

Carl Diton, Famous Negro Composer, Fights for Relief

Creator of 'Roll, Jordan, Roll' Victim of Woodrum Bill

By Angelo Herndon

Crippled with arthritis in his right hip, his wife suffering from a stroke of paralysis, Carl Diton, 1925 Seventh Ave., a nationally known baritone and pianist composer, tells a harrowing story of fighting against tremendous odds to ward off the tragic impact of poverty which has overtaken him.

But all of his daring efforts to beat the death warrant signed for him and millions of other Americans in the Woodrum WPA Bill, are becoming less and less successful.

More than a year-and-a-half ago Mr. Diton made an application for home relief which was promptly turned down. He was advised by relief officials to move out of the eight-room apartment which he then rented for \$100 a month.

Five of the rooms were rented out and his monthly share of the rent was \$10.

In order to meet the requirements of relief officials he gave up the apartment and put his furniture—into which had gone most of his life-time savings—in storage.

He has surrendered all claim and hope of ever regaining possession of it because the storage bill already amounts to more than \$500.

TOOK 1 ROOM

After giving up the eight-room apartment, he and his wife moved into the one room where they now live. Upon the acceptance of his second application for relief he was certified both as a relief and non-relief client, but never received a full check to which he was entitled.

He said he never got more than \$28 during the whole time he was on relief.

In April of 1938, his certification for direct relief was cancelled.

Several months after he had lost his relief status, he was employed by the Federal Music Project in Brooklyn where he worked for approximately three months.

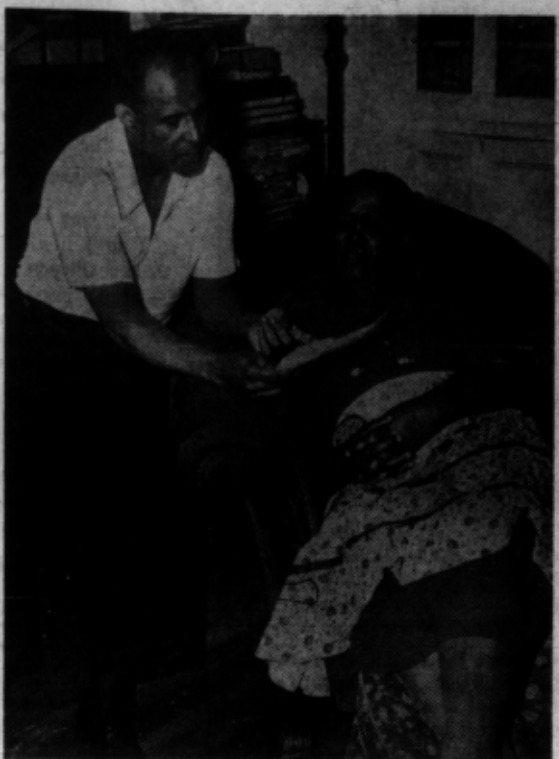
At the end of last February he was advised by WPA officials, against his will, to accept a job as rehearsal pianist in "Hot Mikado."

It was not long before Mr. Diton found himself in the same situation that he was in at the beginning—without a job and ineligible for relief.

APPLIED AGAIN

Without losing courage and hope, Mr. Diton again applied for relief last June. But relief officials say that his present case history—whether he is dead or alive—indicates that he is not eligible for relief.

The same goes for his wife who worked from 1931 to 1938 with the Home Relief Division of



Carl Diton, composer of "Roll, Jordan, Roll," "I Want to Climb Jacob's Ladder" and other spirituals is a Woodrum Bill victim. Crippled with arthritis, his wife down with a paralytic stroke, Diton is still unable to obtain relief. They are shown here examining the latest rejection of their application for relief.

the Department of Public Welfare, and later with the Children's Bureau of the WPA where she remained until stricken with paralysis.

This story will perhaps come as a distinct shock to thousands of people in the music world who have for years followed Mr. Diton's career.

They will remember him for his outstanding contributions to American music.

In the summer of 1913, Mr. Diton collected in Frogmore, S. C., 36 Negro spirituals which were set to music and published in 1928 by G. Schirmer, 3 East 43rd St., New York City.

Among his published spirituals which have become famous throughout America are: I Want To Climb Jacob's Ladder; When The Train Comes Along; Every Time I Feel The Spirit; I Ain't Gwine To Grieve My Lord No More; Roll, Jordan, Roll; Little David Play On Your Harp (five parts); Deep River (five parts); An' He Never Spoke A Mumblyn' Word, and many others.

MARRIED 25 YEARS

Mr. Diton and his wife are both 53 years old and have been married for 25 years. He is a graduate of music from the University of Pennsylvania and served as director of Music at Talladega College from

1915-1918, Paine College, Augusta, Ga., 1912-14, and Wiley College, Marshall, Texas, 1914-15.

He has given concerts at various universities throughout the country and traveled more than 66,000 miles in concert tours.

As a climactic end to all of his suffering, he is now completely incapacitated, at least for a period of time, by the arthritis in his right hip.

If he could get his piano out of storage, perhaps he could earn a few nickels from piano instruction at home. But where will he get the \$500 to pay off the storage bill?

His last possession is an Old Dodge car that he calls "Martha." Before he can get on relief again he will have to depart with Martha.

Speaking about Martha, Mrs. Diton said somewhat affectionately:

"Martha is the only thing we have left in the world. If we didn't have her I wouldn't be able to get to the hospital every day.

"She can still chuckle along but I'm afraid that some day soon she'll fall to pieces. Martha is 13 years old and we're going to keep her, for I've made up my mind not to let them put us any further in the gutter."