

Strange Contradictions On Subject Of Race Relations

(AN EDITORIAL)

THE Rocky Mount (N. C.) *Evening Telegram* selected the recent meeting of the State NAACP in that city as an occasion to express some sharp strictures against some parts of the organization's program in general, and against Secretary WALTER WHITE in particular.

The *Telegram* had some points of agreement on the subject of improving race relations, but it exhibited some strange contradictions in stating them. We quote:

We have no quarrel with the NAACP when that group calls for an end to discrimination and for greater opportunities for the Negro race. To discriminate against an individual or a race because of skin color is an unenlightened policy and practice that cannot be defended on Christian or humane grounds.

The *Telegram* then proceeded, as we shall point out later, to argue against the very things it said that it approved. For instance, it is against NAACP—

When it calls for abolition of segregation in all of its forms;

When it is in favor of "integration";

When it seeks enactment of an FEPC "civil rights" program;

When it warns that if the Democratic party sacrifices civil rights to "regain the South" it will lose the nation, and when the NAACP sharply criticizes (abuses is the word used) certain southern leaders.

In its first and second reservations we surmise that the *Telegram* has its mind on what is commonly called "social equality." When discrimination on ac-

count of race or color is removed, whether at the local level or otherwise, the Christian idea of the dignity of the human person, and the recognition of the individual person on a basis of worth, are substituted therefor. It is hard to do these things without creating "social" equality in a certain sense. But persuading or compelling an employer to stop discriminating solely on account of race does not say to him that he must invite his employees to dinner, or to otherwise intermingle with them socially, or to marry one of them. That is a matter of purely personal choice, for both the employers and the employees.

When a way to economic equality is opened, "social" worth is automatically enhanced for those who have been discriminated against, for the reason that they acquire the means to become equal to others as "social" beings.

The *Telegram's* third reservation refers to an FEPC "civil rights" program.

The Fair Employment Practice Commissions, as operated by the Federal government during World War II, and as adopted by several states since, have sought only to open wider fields of employment in industry, business and government for Negroes and other disadvantaged Americans. The FEPC has no "civil rights" plan, beyond breaking down barriers to the employment of cer-

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tain Americans solely on account of their race, and the employment of them, when possible, on a basis of their training and skills. Its relation to "integration" is that of "including" certain people not included among those who are afforded opportunity to work for a living.

The whole doctrine of segregation as insisted upon in America implies that Negroes can live and prosper in a separate economy, apart from, instead of a part of, the American economy. That is equivalent to the greater powers of the Western hemisphere taking Cuba, for instance, and erecting trade walls around it which say to the Cubans: You must eat all of the sugar you produce. You must smoke all of the tobacco you grow; we will not permit you to export these products.

The Cubans cannot consume all of their sugar and tobacco, and live. Southern Negroes cannot use all of their labor among themselves. They must market 75 per cent of it, or they will not prosper.

As to its third reservation, the *Telegram* probably is unaware that the State of South Carolina has a law which prohibits the hiring of Negroes in the textile industry, and this is the unwritten law in all of the other southern states.

While on this aspect of the *Telegram's* objection to the NAACP's all-out fight for "integration" we commend to the editor a report just issued by the Committee of the South, a sub-committee of the National Planning Commission.

The report was prepared by Prof. DONALD DEWEY, assistant professor of economics at Duke University. It says in part:

Negroes are "totally excluded" from white collar work in white managed firms.

Negro workers "have scarcely a toehold in supervisory jobs."

The report said it found in non-industry occupations a trend toward the elimination of Negro workers.

"Perhaps the most disturbing feature of southern economic development which this study has revealed is the difficulty faced by Negroes in securing advancement."

The report said that unionization had retarded promotion of Negroes in two ways: (1) By making the work more attractive to white workers through higher wages, thus reducing the employers' incentive to take on Negro workers, and (2) by freezing existing job patterns to foster seniority."

The *Telegram* apparently does not know that most labor unions, particularly those in the South, limit their memberships to white workers only. Out of the union, out of a job. One purpose of

pending FEPC legislation is to open the doors of unions to all Americans who are qualified to perform the work which is controlled under our present economic system by contracts with labor unions.

Finally, the *Telegram* admonished Dr. WALTER WHITE to emulate the example of the late BOOKER WASHINGTON, and tell southern Negroes, "as Dr. WASHINGTON told them," in his Atlanta Exposition address to "let down their buckets where they are . . ."

The *Telegram* is in error in interpreting the allegory. Dr. WASHINGTON was speaking to the white South. He was saying to the South: Give Negroes a chance for education; train their heads and their hands, and then "let down your buckets" into the great reservoir of Negro and white labor, for the building of your unlimited industrial and agricultural potentials.

What would southern Negroes let down their buckets into now? The answer is: resistance to employment in practically every area except that of menial labor, which is being rapidly displaced by machines operated by unionized white men. Let their buckets down into the well of teaching, when almost every southern state is threatening to destroy the system of public schools? Let their buckets down into industry—tobacco and textiles—when statutory and unwritten laws forbid their employment in all brackets of these industries except as janitors and warehouse hands—and in tobacco—the raw, unskilled work of stemmers?

Let down their buckets into what? Into a political, economic and social vacuum, created by race prejudice, and kept alive by an alarming number of negro-phobists and political extremists, one of whom last week, from the Conference of Southern Governors, had the brazenry to shout the boldest form of intimidation into the chambers of the Supreme Court of the United States, while the court is considering the greatest question involving human rights since slavery.

When Negroes support the legal fight for human rights that the NAACP is making in the courts of the nation they are helping to keep themselves and their children from being reduced en masse to indigents in a land of plenty, for the sole reason that they are racially unlike—outwardly—the dominant race that is in political and social control of the South.