

Some Patience On Color Issue

Phantom House
OBVIOUSLY FERMENT is going on in the Negro movement.

It is easy to make jokes about Adam Clayton Powell. Many are deserved as the Harlem congressman deports himself like an Oriental potentate answerable only to himself.

But you should understand that Powell is influential in some of the national Negro community. Clearly he is not in all of it. Powell, whatever his own selfish aims, adequately has survived tempests before.

The editor of *The Washington Afro-American*, a paper the policy of which is to back Powell, says flatly that recent censure of the Harlem congressman is "solely because he is a Negro." But the former ballplayer, now confection executive, Jackie Robinson, takes a dim view of much Powell says. He recently criticized the congressman for demanding of Negroes that they operate only among groups which they exclusively can control.

Moderates At Issue

THE POINT is obvious: Some Negroes think well of what are called "white moderates." Others do not. Powell apparently doesn't. He boldly criticized even the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People because whites are among its leaders.

Newer Negro groups—CORE, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee—have appeared more pressing, more activist, than older, more established Negro leadership.

Most Negroes, of course, are aware that their differences will be highlighted by resisting whites and used against them. It is only wisdom for whites of any persuasion to recognize that (1) Negro leaders are often brilliant strategists; but that (2) Negro leaders as whites can commit grievous errors of policy. Judged only by strategy evidences, both whites and Negroes at times have shown remarkable ability in this "contest"; but both have shown miserable judgment at other times.

There is a continual struggle within the national and the local community for leadership of Negroes, for authority to speak for Negroes. This registers in political matters and policy as to integration effort timing and degree.

It is related to present contest over the Negro vote in national presidential elections. Significance of this issue readily is recognized; it involves "swinging" ~~back~~ a dozen major cities, hence states, in the North and East.

Roy Wilkins, NAACP executive director, in a recent Washington ad-

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 dress to the National Civil Liberties Clearing House, stated that the Negro may go over to Republicans unless Democrats now in office answer Negroes' demands for action. Wilkins needs the activists in this.

At that meeting Wilkins and Clarence Mitchell, Washington NAACP head, joined in strong criticism of Justice Department policies regarding voting and schools. So also said Leslie W. Dunbar of the Southern Regional Council. (Dunbar is white.)

But No Outsiders?

BUT IF DUNBAR called for more action, saying the administration was wrong, "to continue to approach this situation as solely a legal" matter, he also said that the Southern Negro should carry on his protests without "witnesses" from Chicago, New York, elsewhere. "I don't believe the white South hears the transient witness from abroad," he said. Is this critical of a Dick Gregory traveling to Greenwood, Miss., or of various other Northern "missionaries" occasionally coming South?

There is more to all this. But what it amounts to is important difference among leaders of Negroes, and perhaps among following.

This is or ought to be of interest to whites, not only in the South. It tangibly could affect white decision in dealing with Negro moves. There are differences, also, among whites as to how to deal with those Negro demands. This is true North or South.

There is a case in point in Mobile. For whites. For Negroes.

A Negro meeting took place there last Sunday night. Appearing were Sen. Leroy Johnson of Georgia, first Negro in the Georgia Senate in 92 years. He made a vigorous appeal for Negro advance. But it is noteworthy that he said in the Georgia Senate he had refused to sponsor a fair employment practices bill. He said that to do so would be "absurd and ill-timed." Would Sen. Johnson appear too moderate for some Negroes, though clearly he is the epitome of gain for Southern Negroes?

What The Whites Said

A WHITE U. S. district attorney spoke at the meeting also. He told Negro listeners: "You have a district attorney who is willing to get out and help you with your fight." He spoke about Justice Department voter registration effort in Alabama.

The U. S. attorney showed remarkably poor judgment in appearance and utterance. Yet a cynic might suggest that all he had said was that he would help enforce laws applying to right to the ballot—a hard thing to argue against. Qualification for the vote may be another matter, of course.

Mobile City Commissioner Joe Langan also appeared. He promised "peace and order." No man, he said, has the right to take law in his own hands. Only a misguided few would disagree.

Both U. S. attorney and city commissioner have been criticized. A resolution introduced in the Montgomery House referred to "some basely menial public officials of Alabama." That apparently was referring to a brigadier general in the Alabama National Guard, a former Mobile mayor, former head of the Alabama League of Municipalities—all in one man, Joe Langan. In regard to Langan the resolution was outrageous.

Criticism of the U. S. attorney might be something else, to the extent it applied to his going out of the way to involve himself voluntarily in the issue.

Aspects of Negro-white relations are additionally revealed. An example of balance was this community's quiet regard for the fact of Negroes in a City Council race. Birmingham deserves due note for an attitude which, while not earth-shaking everywhere, was not wholly predictable here.

The Problem's Complexity

THESE ALL indicate the multiplicity of "angles" in this matter of races. Common sense is much in order, with a balance in human relationships. This problem will be here a long time. We need patience, Negroes and whites. Some may say, facetiously or otherwise, that the matter is one of "black or white." It must not be. The matter is one of citizens with differences—white differing with white, Negro differing with Negro, as well as race differing with race.

Never did a free, self-determining people require more understanding and mental effort. Emotion on either side, will obscure logic.—E. L. H., JR.



Mobile Commissioner Joe Langan