DU BOIS, WILLIAM EDWARD BURGHARDT, 1868-1963 . ***CHAPTER 9: REVOLUTION*** . New York, NY : Harcourt Brace , 1940 .

## Chapter 9: Revolution

AFTER the war, with most Americans, I was seeking to return to normalcy. I tried three paths, one of which represented an old ideal and ambition, the development of literature and art among Negroes through my own writing and the encouragement of others. The second path was new and had arisen out of war; and that was the development of the idea back of the Pan-African Congress. The third idea was quite new, and proved in a way of greater importance in my thinking than even the other two; and

that was the economic rehabilitation and defense of the American Negro after the change and dislocation of war. Of course, it would have been impossible for me successfully to follow more than one of these paths and indeed with my work on the *Crisis* and for the National Association, perhaps I could do nothing but experiment in all three; but I did think that I might point ways for others to follow.

It had always been my ambition to write; to seek through the written word the expression of my relation to the world and of the world to me. I had begun that writing early; while at Fisk I had an article tentatively accepted by the *Century*, although it was never actually printed. Later while in college I wrote for various colored--269--periodicals. Then after my graduation from Harvard came my first book. This work had been my doctor's thesis which I had succeeded in some degree in transforming from a dry historical treatise into readable literature. That was published in 1896 and to my gratification was the first volume in the Harvard Historical Studies. It was followed in 1899 by the "Philadelphia Negro," a huge volume of five hundred pages but not unreadable. And from 1897 to 1914, the sixteen Atlanta University Studies which I edited and largely wrote appeared, each varying in size from pamphlet to volume. They covered more than two thousand pages. Then came, in 1903, my collection of essays called "The Souls of Black Folk," of which I have spoken.

In 1909, I published my biography of John Brown which I regarded as one of the best things that I had done; but it met a curious fate. Unconsciously I had entrenched on the chosen field of a writer who controlled two powerful literary vehicles. He severely criticized the work, most unfairly as it seemed to me, and would give me no chance for rejoinder. In 1911, I tried my hand at fiction and published "The Quest of the Silver Fleece" which was really an economic study of some merit. Beginning in 1910, besides editing the *Crisis* continuously for twenty-three years, I published "The Negro," a sketch of racial history, in 1915; and a series of essays called "Darkwater" in 1920. In 1924, with the subvention of the publishing fund of the Knights of Columbus, I brought out "The Gift of Black Folk," basically sound as I believe, but too hurriedly done, with several unpardonable errors. The article on Georgia in "These United States" came the same year and a chapter in "The New Negro" in 1925. In 1928--270--came another novel, "Dark Princess," my favorite book. In addition to this I published a considerable number of magazine articles in many of the leading periodicals.

My writing up to this time and since has brought me but scant financial returns. From my twelve and more volumes I have not averaged altogether in forty years as much as five hundred dollars a year; but I have written what I wanted to say and not what men would rather hear. I have loved the writing and the chance to do it has fully repaid me and more.

More especially I tried to encourage other Negro writers through the columns of the *Crisis*. By 1920, we could point out that most of the young writers among American Negroes had made first publication in the columns of the *Crisis*. In the next few years we published work from Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, Anne Spencer, Abram Harris and Jessie Fauset. In 1924, through the generosity of Amy Spingarn, wife of Joel, we were enabled to offer a series of prizes for young Negro writers, and our contemporary, *Opportunity*, organ of the Urban League, offered similar prizes. For several years this competition went on until it grew into what has been called the renaissance of Negro literature, late in the twenties. Here again the World War and its aftermath balked us. No authentic group literature can rise save at the demand and with the support of the group which is calling for self-expression. The depression of industry, which came with a crash in 1929, was foreshadowed in the Negro group several years before, despite the apparent industrial boom. The circulation of the *Crisis* went down,--271--the contributions to the National Association were curtailed and the New Negro literature was forced to place its dependence almost entirely upon a white audience and that audience had its own distinct patterns and preferences for Negro writing.

We were particularly proud to have had the chance to publish some bits of real literature; like that great poem of the black man's part in the war by Roscoe Jamison:

These truly are the Brave, These men who cast aside Old memories, to walk the blood-stained pave Of Sacrifice, joining the solemn tide That moves away, to suffer and to die For Freedom -- when their own is yet denied! O Pride! O Prejudice! When they pass you by, Hail them, the Brave, for you now crucified!

I sought to encourage the graphic arts not only by magazine covers with Negro themes and faces, but as often as I could afford, I portrayed the faces and features of colored folk. One cannot realize today how rare that was in 1910. The colored papers carried few or no illustrations; the white papers none. In many great periodicals, it was the standing rule that no Negro portrait was to appear and that rule still holds in some American periodicals. Through our "Men of the Month," our children's edition and our education edition, we published large numbers of most interesting and intriguing portraits.

In these days, 1920 and 1921, I made one effort toward which I look back with infinite satisfaction: an attempt in the *Brownie's Book* to furnish a little magazine for Negro children, in which my efforts were ably seconded by--272--Augustus Dill and Jessie Fauset; it was really a beautiful publication, but it did not pay its way.

In another realm of art I made essay. From my childhood I have been impressed with the beauty of Negro skin-color and astonished at the blindness of whites who cannot see it. In addition I recognized, not perhaps so much a native Negro dramatic ability, as lack of those inhibitions which keep most folk from natural self-expression. Combining these two things, I believed that the pageant, with masses of costumed colored folk and a dramatic theme carried out chiefly by movement, dancing and music, could be made effective. I even hoped that such a movement might be placed on a paying basis. I tried first in 1913, when New York made an appropriation to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of emancipation. The colored contractor who handled my printing was head of the new colored Tammany organization in Harlem. He put me on the celebration committee and through all kinds of difficulties, I wrote and staged an historic pageant of the history of the Negro race, calling it "The Star of Ethiopia." Before a total attendance of thirty thousand persons, we played it on the floor of an armory with three hundred fifty actors. Led by Charles Burroughs, they did scenes whose imagery and beauty have not often been surpassed.

Encouraged by this response I undertook in 1915 to reproduce this in Washington. We used the great ball field of the American League, a massive background of an Egyptian temple painted by young Richard Brown, and a thousand actors. A committee of the most distinguished colored citizens of Washington co-operated with me. Audiences aggregating fourteen thousand saw the pageant. We--273--faced every discouragement from rain to lack of funds. "Then," as I wrote, "it was, as it always is in things of this sort. Suddenly a great new spirit seemed born. The thing that you have exorcised becomes a living, mighty, moving spirit. It sweeps on and you hang trembling to its skirts. Nothing can stop it. It is. It will. Wonderfully, irresistibly the dream comes true. You feel no exaltation, you feel no personal merit. It is not yours. It is its own. You have simply called it, and it comes. I shall never forget that last night. Six thousand human faces looked down from the shifting blaze of lights and on the field the shimmering streams of colors came and went, silently, miraculously save for the great cloud of music that hovered over them and enveloped them. It was no mere picture: it was reality."

A difficulty, of course, with dramatic effort of this sort, was that it could not be made to pay unless organized with considerable capital. That I did not have and could not command. Nevertheless, once more I made the experiment in Philadelphia in 1916, to celebrate the one hundredth general conference of the African M. E. Church. "It was," says the *Friend's Intelligencer*, "a signal contribution to the fine art of pageantry." A settlement worker added: "I wish I could find the words I need to thank you for the beautiful thing you have given us in the pageant; but perhaps my best tribute is the very wordlessness, the tearsalted eyes with which I watched it, and shall always remember it. It was not only the pathos and the tragedy of the story that made the tears, but something deeper than that. In spite of the hurt, you'll keep right on being a poet, won't you, please?"--274—

But alas, neither poetry nor pageants pay dividends, and in my case they scarcely paid expenses. My pageant died with an expiring gasp in Los Angeles in 1925. But it died not solely for lack of support; rather from the tremendous and expanding vogue of the motion picture and the power of the radio and loud speaker. We had no capital for entering into this field and indeed in face of monopoly, who has? Yet, my final pageant took place significantly in Hollywood Bowl, and was still a beautiful thing: "Hard and loving, costly and adventurous has been the effort that brought the 'Star of Ethiopia' to Los Angeles. It cost five thousand dollars and weeks of work; and doubt and travail, harsh words and with it, all curiously inwrought, a love and wonder, a working hand in hand and heart in heart, which paid. And sitting again tonight I see the trees darkly, solemnly uplifted to God; I hear the wild, sad music; and then comes thrilling the light -- the light of dancing feet and soft, brown skins and beautiful, beautiful eyes: the eyes of Ethiopia on the Black Rock, beneath the gleaming of her sword."

Of the Pan-African Congresses, I have explained their rather hurriedly conceived beginning. I was convinced, however, by my experience in Paris in 1919 that here was a real vision and an actual need. Contacts of Negroes of different origins and nationality, which I had then and before at other congresses and the Races Congress were most inspiring. My plans as they developed had in them nothing spectacular nor revolutionary. If in decades or a century they resulted in such world organization of black men as would oppose a united front to European aggression, that certainly would not have been beyond my--275--dream. But on the other hand, in practical reality, I knew the power and guns of Europe and America, and what I wanted to do was in the face of this power to sit down hand in hand with colored groups and across the council table to learn of each other, our condition, our aspirations, our chances for concerted thought and action. Out of this there might come, not race war and opposition, but broader co-operation with the white rulers of the world, and a chance for peaceful and accelerated development of black folk. With this in mind I started to organize and hold a Pan-African Congress in 1921 which would be better attended and more carefully organized than that in 1919.

I found the board of directors of the NAACP not particularly interested. The older liberalism among the white people did not envisage Africa and the colored peoples of the world. They were interested in America and securing American citizens of all and any color, their rights. They had no schemes for internationalism in race problems and to many of them, it seemed quixotic to undertake anything of the sort. Then too, there were colored members who had inherited the fierce repugnance toward anything African, which was the natural result of the older colonization schemes, where efforts at assisted and even forcible expatriation of American Negroes had always included Africa. Negroes were bitterly opposed because such schemes were at bottom an effort to make slavery in the United States more secure and to get rid of the free Negroes. Beyond this they felt themselves Americans, not Africans. They resented and feared any coupling with Africa.--276—

My scheme then for the Pan-African movement had to depend upon voluntary organization largely outside the NAACP. This to some degree I secured and planned a congress to sit successively in three capitals of Europe: London, Brussels, and Paris, from August 29 to September 6, 1921. This congress really deserved to be called Pan-African and it attracted world-wide attention. There were one hundred thirteen accredited delegates from twenty-six different groups, including thirty-five persons from the United States, thirty-nine from Africa and the rest from the West Indies and Europe.

Among the speakers were Sir Sidney, now Lord Olivier, and Norman Leys of England; Paul Otlet, often called the "father of the League of Nations"; and Senator La Fontaine of Belgium; Dr. Vitellian, former physician of Menelik of Abyssinia; General Sorelas of Spain; Blaise Diagne of France; and Florence Kelly and Bishop Hurst of America. The attention which the Congress attracted all over Europe was astonishing. It was discussed in the London *Times*, the *Observer* and *Daily Graphic;* in the Paris *Petit Parisien, Matin* and *Temps;* in the *Manchester Guardian*and in practically all the daily papers of Belgium. It led to heated debate in Brussels touching the rights of these delegates to discuss at all the relation of colonies, and it emphasized in the minds of all of us the importance of such

discussions. Two of us visited the League of Nations and the International Labor Office with petitions and suggestions.

On the other hand the Pan-African movement ran into two fatal difficulties: first of all, it was much too early to assume, as I had assumed, that in 1921 the war was over.--277--In fact the whole tremendous drama which followed the war, political and social revolution, economic upheaval and depression, national and racial hatred, all these things made a setting in which any such movement as I envisaged was probably at the time impossible. I sensed this in the bitter and deep opposition which our resolutions invoked in Belgium. Both the Belgian and French governments were aroused and disturbed and the English opposition hovered in the background.

There came, too, a second difficulty which had elements of comedy and curious social frustration, but nevertheless was real and in a sense tragic. Marcus Garvey walked into the scene. I had heard of Garvey when in 1915 I took a short vacation trip to Jamaica, where I was surprisingly well-received by colored people and white, because of the wide publicity given me from my participation in the Races Congress of London in 1911. Garvey and his associates, "The United Improvement and Conservation Association," joined in the welcome.

After the war he came to America, launched a widely advertised plan for commerce between Negro groups and eventually of Negro domination of Africa. It was a grandiose and bombastic scheme, utterly impracticable as a whole, but it was sincere and had some practical features; and Garvey proved not only an astonishing popular leader, but a master of propaganda. Within a few years, news of his movement, of his promises and plans, reached Europe and Asia, and penetrated every corner of Africa. He actually bought two small boats, summoned huge conventions to New York, and paraded the streets of Harlem with uniformed troops and "Black Cross" nurses. News of--278--his astonishing plans reached Europe and the various colonial offices, even before my much more modest proposals. Often the Pan-African Congress was confounded with the Garvey movement with consequent suspicion and attack.

My first effort was to explain away the Garvey movement and ignore it; but it was a mass movement that could not be ignored. I noted this movement from time to time in the *Crisis* and said in 1920 that Garvey was "an extraordinary leader of men" and declared that he had "with singular success capitalized and made vocal the great and long-suffering grievances and spirit of protest among the West Indian peasantry." Later when he began to collect money for his steamship line, I characterized him as a hard-working idealist, but called his methods bombastic, wasteful, illogical, and almost illegal. I begged his friends not to allow him foolishly to overwhelm with bankruptcy and disaster "one of the most interesting spiritual movements of the modern world." But he went ahead, wasted his money, got in trouble with the authorities and was deported from the United States. He made a few abortive efforts later, but finally died in London in 1940, poor and neglected.

The unfortunate debacle of his over-advertised schemes naturally hurt and made difficult further effective development of the Pan-African Congress idea. Nevertheless, a third Pan-African Congress was attempted in 1923. It was less broadly representative than the second, but of some importance, and was held in London, Paris and Lisbon. Thence I went to Africa and for the first time saw the homeland of the black race.--279--

At the London meeting of the third Pan-African Congress, Harold Laski, H. G. Wells, and Lord Olivier spoke, and Ramsay MacDonald had promised to speak to us but was hindered by the sudden opening of the campaign which made him prime minister of England. Among other things we held conferences with members of the Labor Party of England at which Mrs. Sidney Webb, Mr. Clynes and others were present. We emphasized the importance of labor solidarity between white and black labor in England, America, and elsewhere. In Portugal our meeting was attended by cabinet ministers and deputies and though small, was of exceeding interest.

In my ensuing trip to Africa, of which I have spoken elsewhere, and which in a way was a culmination of this Congress, I was further encouraged in my belief in the soundness of its underlying idea. I met

in Sierra Leone members and promoters of the Congress of West Africa. Starting after the war, this organization made such cogent and persistent representations to the British colonial office in 1920 and later, that they secured for the first time in British West Africa, popular representation in the governors' councils. Their movement resembled our National Association in the United States and I was convinced that acquaintance and correspondence between colored persons promoting such movements all over the world would be a great and wise step from many points of view.

A fourth Pan-African Congress was held in New York in 1927, chiefly as a rather empty gesture to keep the idea alive. Dantès Bellegarde and Georges Sylvain of Haiti and other speakers took part. A fifth Pan-African Congress was proposed for Tunis, Africa, in 1929, but the French government--280--vetoed the project. Then we tried to charter a boat and hold the congress in the West Indies. There was no boat available. No further efforts have been made, yet the idea is not entirely dead.

My third effort after the war was toward the economic stabilization and rehabilitation of the Negro, and was, as I see it now, more fundamental and prophetic than any of these three lines of endeavor. It started with an effort to establish consumers' co-operation among American Negroes. On August 26, 1918, there met in the *Crisis* office, twelve colored men from seven different states, to establish the Negro Co-operative Guild. This was in response to a series of editorials and explanations in the *Crisis*, advocating consumers' co-operation for Negroes. The meeting determined to induce individuals and groups to study consumers' co-operation, to hold an annual meeting for encouraging co-operative stores and to form a central committee.

Several co-operative stores were established. The most ambitious came in Memphis where the Citizens Co-operative Stores opened five places of business in 1919 and carried on a good trade. Then the manager conceived the idea of turning this co-operative effort into a stock company. The result was that eventually he was driven out of business by competition of the chain stores. An excellent effort in the colored state school at Bluefield, West Virginia, planned to teach the students the basic theories of co-operation in a school co-operative store. From the Harvard University Graduate School of Education came a comment to the manager, W. C. Matney: "I am convinced that you are doing a splendid piece of work with this--281--enterprise." It was successful for many years, but the state of West Virginia eventually forbade its continuance. There were four or five other attempts. My trip to Europe, the disasters of the year 1919, my concentration of interest in Pan Africa and the depression left this, perhaps the most promising of my projected movements, without further encouragement. The whole movement needed more careful preliminary spade work, with popular education both of consumers and managers; and for lack of this, it temporarily failed. It must and will be revived.

In general, the decade from 1918 to 1928 was one of infinite effort and discouraging turmoil as I suppose it had to be. The economic boom and depression in the United States were necessarily for all Americans a time of heart searching and intellectual stock-taking. I was nervous and restless; in addition to all my activities, I ranged the country from North to South and from the Atlantic to the Pacific in series of lectures, conferences, and expositions. I do not doubt but the directors of the Association and my friends would like to have seen me settle down to fewer lines of effort; but at the time this was impossible. I had to be a part of the revolution through which the world was going and to feel in my own soul the scars of its battle.

Still racial injustice prevailed. At the time of the Mississippi flood, the Red Cross allowed the Negroes to be treated like slaves and peons; and in Okolona, Mississippi, a national organization of the Episcopal Church refused to prosecute a white murderer who killed a black professor in cold blood on his own school ground. There came disquieting situations among Negro students: a strike at--282--Hampton, disturbed conditions at Wilberforce, turmoil at Howard and an uprising at Fisk.

Into this last battle I had to throw myself; to resurrect and re-publish the *Fisk Herald* and to fight until Fisk deposed its dictatorial president. The struggle here was epoch-making. How far can a Negro

college, dominated by white trustees and a white president and supported by white wealth, carry on in defiance of the wishes and best interests of its colored constituency? There was room at first for argument as to whether the Fisk of 1924 was inimical to our best interests. This matter, by tongue and pen, I helped to settle. The proof was unanswerable. The effort cost me friends and influence, even though eventually the righteousness of the fight was acknowledged by the most reactionary.

Gradually, however, even in the midst of my activities and distractions I began to pause and take stock, I began to look back critically at the twenty years of my life which had passed since I gave up my work at Atlanta University, joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and founded and edited the *Crisis*. My basic theory had been that race prejudice was primarily a matter of ignorance on the part of the mass of men, giving the evil and anti-social a chance to work their way; that when the truth was properly presented, the monstrous wrong of race hate must melt and melt quickly before it. All human action to me in those days was conscious and rational. There was no twilight zone.

To some extent I saw in two decades of work a justification of this theory. Much of the statement, assertion and habit of thought characteristic of the latter part of the--283--nineteenth century regarding the Negro had passed away. Wild Tillmans had stopped talking of the growing "degeneracy of American Negroes." Tom Watsons were ceasing to assert that the Negro race had always been and would always be barbarians. Even the basic excuse for lynching, the rape of white women, had been successfully countered and denied with statistical proof. And from a day when the legality of the Fifteenth Amendment had been openly denied and that denial in some cases supported by judicial decision, we had come to the recognition of full citizenship rights by the Supreme Court. All this was gratifying to the leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and to me. In a sense it was an epoch-making achievement. No longer was it possible or thinkable anywhere in the United States to study and discuss the Negro without letting him speak for himself and without having that speaking done by a well-equipped person, if such person was wanted.

On the other hand, I began to be deeply and disturbingly aware that with all the success of our agitation and propaganda, with the wide circulation, reading and attention which the *Crisis* enjoyed, with the appearance of Negroes on the lecture platform everywhere, and the emergence of a distinct and creditable Negro literature, nevertheless the barriers of race prejudice were certainly as strong in 1930 as in 1910 the world over, and in certain aspects, from certain points of view, even stronger.

Or, in other words, beyond my conception of ignorance and deliberate ill-will as causes of race prejudice, there must be other and stronger and more threatening forces, forming the founding stones of race antagonisms, which--284--we had only begun to attack or perhaps in reality had not attacked at all. Moreover, the attack upon these hidden and partially concealed causes of race hate, must be led by Negroes in a program which was not merely negative in the sense of calling on white folk to desist from certain practices and give up certain beliefs; but direct in the sense that Negroes must proceed constructively in new and comprehensive plans of their own.

I think it was the Russian Revolution which first illuminated and made clear this change in my basic thought. It was not that I at any time conceived of Bolshevik Russia as ushering in any present millennium. I was painfully sensitive to all its failures, to all the difficulties which it faced; but the clear and basic thing which appeared to me in unquestioned brightness, was that in the year 1917 and then, after a struggle with the world and famine ten years later, one of the largest nations of the world made up its mind frankly to face a set of problems which no nation was at the time willing to face, and which many nations including our own are unwilling fully to face even to this day.

Those questions involved the problem of the poverty of the mass of men in an age when an abundance of goods and technical efficiency of work seemed able to provide a sufficiency for all men, so that the mass of men could be fed and clothed and sheltered, live in health and have their intellectual faculties trained. Russia was trying to accomplish this by eventually putting into the hands of those people who do the world's work the power to guide and rule the state for the best welfare of the masses. It made

the assumption, long disputed, that out of the down-trodden--285--mass of people, ability and character, sufficient to do this task effectively, could and would be found. I believed this dictum passionately. It was, in fact, the foundation stone of my fight for black folk; it explained me.

I had been brought up with the democratic idea that this general welfare was the object of democratic action in the state, of allowing the governed a voice in government. But through the crimson illumination of war, I realized and, afterward by travel around the world, saw even more clearly that so-called democracy today was allowing the mass of people to have only limited voice in government; that democratic control of what are at present the most important functions of men: work and earning a living and distributing goods and services; that here we did not have democracy; we had oligarchy, and oligarchy based on monopoly and income; and this oligarchy was as determined to deny democracy in industry as it had once been determined to deny democracy in legislation and choice of officials.

My thoughts in this line were made more firm by a visit to Russia. Sometime in 1927, I met three Russian visitors to the United States. They were probably clandestine agents of the communist dictatorship. They sought me out, probably because they recognized that I had been for some time a leader of what was called the liberal if not the radical wing among Negroes; and Russia was conceiving the distinct idea that the revolution in the United States might be promoted certainly in some degree by stirring up discontent among the most oppressed tenth of the American nation, namely, the American Negroes.

Two of these Russians, a man and wife, were persons--286--of education and culture and sought to learn my ideas and reactions rather than to press upon me their theories. The third was a blond German and an active revolutionist. He was unwilling to wait. He wanted something done and done now. After I had sought firmly to show him that no revolution in America could be started by Negroes and succeed, and even if that were possible, that after what I had seen of the effects of war, I could never regard violence as an effective, much less necessary, step to reform the American state, he gradually faded out of the picture and ceased to visit me. I do not know what became of him. I never saw him again.

From the other two Russians I learned much. We had pleasant social relations and I sat at their feet to hear what was taking place and what was planned in Russia. I asserted my inability to judge the situation fairly, because I did not know enough of the facts and stressed my continuing doubt as to whether the Russian pattern could be and should be applied in the United States. They said I ought to visit Russia and I expressed my eagerness to do so. Finally, they offered to finance a visit to Russia, which I accepted with a written proviso which I insisted upon, that this visit entail no promise on my part of action or agreement of any kind. I was to go on a journey of free inquiry to see the most momentous change in modern human history which had taken place since the French Revolution. I went to Russia in 1928, traveling by way of Germany, where passport difficulties held me for two or more weeks.

The sight of the German Republic struggling on the ruins of the empire and tottering under a load of poverty,--287--oppression and disorganization made upon me an unforgettable impression. But never in my life have I been so stirred as by what I saw during two months in Russia. I visited Leningrad and Moscow, Nijni Novgorod and Kiev and came home by way of Odessa and Constantinople. I was allowed, so far as I could see, every opportunity to investigate. I saw the wild waifs of the sewers, the fifty thousand children who marched in the Red Square on Youth Day, the new art galleries and the new factories, the beginnings of the new agriculture. But this was physical. Mentally I came to know Karl Marx and Lenin, their critics and defenders. Since that trip my mental outlook and the aspect of the world will never be the same.

My day in Russia was the day of communist beginnings; the red weal of war-suffering and of famine still lay across the land. Only yesterday England, France, America and the Czechs had invaded their

land without shadow of right. The people were ragged and hungry, the cities were half in ruins. The masses of men who crowded the streets and fought for places on the packed street cars, were truculent and over-assertive in manner. Moscow did not have a half dozen automobiles. Yet, there lay an unforgettable spirit upon the land, in spite of almost insurmountable obstacles; in the face of contempt and chicanery and the armed force of the civilized world, this nation was determined to go forward and establish a government of men, such as the world had never seen.

Since that they have reeled on; their path has been strewn with blood and failure; but at the same time their accomplishment today is such that they have compelled the world to face the kind of problem which they determined--288--to face; and no matter how much the Fascism of Mussolini and the National Socialism of Hitler, the New Deal of Roosevelt and the appeasement of Chamberlain and the new World War, may assert and believe that they have found ways of abolishing poverty, increasing the efficiency of work, allowing the worker to earn a living and curtailing the power of wealth by means short of revolution, confiscation and force; nevertheless every honest observer must admit that human civilization today has by these very efforts moved toward socialism and accepted many of the tenets of Russian communism. We may, with dogged persistency, declare that deliberate murder, organized destruction and brute force cannot in the end bring and preserve human culture; but we must admit that nothing that Russia has done in war and mass murder exceeds what has been done and is being done by the rest of the civilized world.

Gradually it dawned upon me with increasing clarity just what the essential change in the world has been since the first World War and depression; and how the tactics of those who live for the widest development of men must change accordingly. It is not simply a matter of change in ideals, but even more of a decisive change in the methods by which ideals are to be approximated. As I now look back, I see in the crusade waged by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People from 1910 to 1930, one of the finest efforts of liberalism to achieve human emancipation; and much was accomplished. But the essential difficulty with the liberalism of the twentieth century was not to realize the fundamental change brought--289--about by the world-wide organization of work and trade and commerce.

During the nineteenth century the overwhelming influence of the economic activities of men upon their thought and action was, as Marx insisted, clear; but it was not until the twentieth century that the industrial situation called not only for understanding but for action. Modern business enterprise organized for private profit was throttling democratic government, choking art and literature and leading work and industry into a dangerous paradox by increasing the production of things for sale and yet decreasing even more rapidly the number of persons able to buy and the amount of money they could spend; thus throwing industry into periodic convulsions. The number of persons who see this economic impasse is becoming larger and larger until it includes today the leading thinkers of the world.

But the difficulty was to know how, without revolution, violence, and dislocation of human civilization, the wrong could be righted and human culture started again upon its upward path. One thing, at any rate, was clear to me in my particular problem, and that was that a continued agitation which had for its object simply free entrance into the present economy of the world, that looked at political rights as an end in itself rather than as a method of reorganizing the state; and that expected through civil rights and legal judgments to re-establish freedom on a broader and firmer basis, was not so much wrong as short-sighted; that the democracy which we had been asking for in political life must sooner or later replace the tyranny which now dominated industrial life.--290—

In the organization whose leadership I shared at the time, I found few who envisaged the situation as I did. The bulk of my colleagues saw no essential change in the world. It was the same world with the problems to be attacked by the same methods as before the war. All we needed to do was to continue to attack lynching, to bring more cases before the courts and to insist upon our full citizenship rights.

They recoiled from any consideration of the economic plight of the world or any change in the organization of industry.

My colored colleagues especially were deeply American, with the old theory of individualism, with a desire to be rich or at least well-to-do, with suspicion of organized labor and labor programs; with a horror of racial segregation. My white colleagues were still liberals and philanthropists. They wanted to help the Negroes, as they wanted to help the weak and disadvantaged of all classes in America. They realized poignantly the dislocation of industry, the present economic problems; but most of them still believed in the basic rightness of industry as at present organized and few -- perhaps only one, Oswald Garrison Villard -- moved from this undisturbed belief in the capitalist system toward the left, toward a conception of a new democratic control of industry.

My nearest white friend, who was executive head of the organization, Joel Spingarn, was skeptical of democracy either in industry, politics or art. He was the natural anarchist of the spirit. His interest was aroused in the Negro because of discrimination, and not in the interest of ideal methods of conducting the state. Given certain rights and opportunities, it was more than wrong, in his mind, to discriminate--291--against certain individuals because of their race and color. He wanted for me and my people freedom to live and act; but he did not believe that voting or revolution in industry was going to bring the millennium. He was afraid that I was turning radical and dogmatic and even communistic, and he proceeded to use his power and influence in order to curb my acts and forestall any change of program of the Association on my part.

Students of sociology have not yet studied widely one method of human government used in modern times and that is the carrying out of social reform of various sorts by means of the secretary-board of directors organization. A group of intelligent men of good will come together for the purpose of studying a certain problem and improving conditions. They may elect the conventional officers, but eventually they put effective power in the hands of a secretary. There ensues a peculiarly effective unity: the members of the committee consult and discuss, arrive at conclusions which the secretary carries out. In the end, the secretary, to all essential purposes, becomes the organization and his effective consultants are his office staff whom he appoints and pays. All this goes smoothly until changes in the policy, ideals, and objects are indicated. Logically these changes should come by decision of the board of directors; but the board by this time has probably become a co-opting body, whose members are suggested by the secretary, so that they are, in fact, his creatures. Moreover, the secretary is naturally tempted to fill his board with "window-dressing"; with persons who are in general agreement with his policies, but who take no active part either in attendance or discussion; and whose names, on--292--the other hand, lend high prestige to the organization. These persons are not apt to know that changes in object are necessary or to care much, so long as the organization remains respectable.

In part the NAACP followed this development but not entirely. In any such united effort for social betterment as ours, there is bound to be some cultural gap between white and black workers. The wider the gap, the easier the collaboration which resolves itself into the standard pattern of white leaders and black followers. If the cultural gap is narrow it calls for some degree of submission of white to Negro leadership. This in the United States is so unusual a pattern that it must be handled carefully.

Our original constituents upon the board of directors were intensely and vividly interested in finding some practical solution to the Negro problems. They were not for the most part rich men, and it was necessary to secure funds. The original idea was that rich philanthropists would gladly contribute, but this assumption was to no large extent realized. On the contrary, large numbers of colored people and many white people of small means contributed through membership and donations. The major support of the organization during its effective years came from the colored people themselves, as was natural and logical.

The secretary at first was little more than an office executive. Then we hired a trained white man at a high salary, who knew methods of modern publicity and propaganda. He came at a critical time, 1917, and did a fine job, especially in increasing membership and funds. In 1920 he resigned, and was

replaced by James Weldon Johnson,--293--whose power as executive was shared with the chairman of the board. The chairman represented the board and gave considerable time as real executive. The executive power was also shared in another and rather unusual way, and that was with the editor and publisher of the *Crisis*.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People never accepted financial responsibility for the *Crisis*. When they first allowed me to publish it in November, 1910, it was on condition that the Association would be willing to meet any deficit which did not exceed fifty dollars a month. It was for a long time a source of great pride to me that it was never called upon to pay any deficit. On the other hand, the Association paid my salary and a part of the office expense up until January 1, 1916. From that time until 1933, the *Crisis* was self-supporting, and received and disbursed over a half million dollars and distributed seven and a half million copies. The *Crisis* came thus to form a distinct department of the NAACP, with its own office and clerical force and its own funds kept separate from those of the organization.

There soon came the delicate matter of policy, of how far I should express my own ideas and reactions in the *Crisis*, or the studied judgment of the organization. From the first to last, I thought strongly on this point and as I still think, rightly; I determined to make the opinion expressed in the *Crisis* a personal opinion; because, as I argued, no organization can express definite and clear-cut opinions; so far as this organization as such came to conclusions, it would state them in its annual resolutions; but the *Crisis* would state openly the opinion of its editor, so long, of course, as that opinion was in general agreement--294--with that of the organization. This was a dangerous and delicate matter, bound eventually to break down, in case there arose any considerable divergence of opinion between the organization and editor. It was perhaps rather unusual that for two decades, the two lines of thinking ran so largely in agreement.

If, on the other hand, the *Crisis* had not been in a sense a personal organ and the expression of myself, it could not possibly have attained its popularity and effectiveness. It would have been the dry kind of organ that so many societies support for purposes of reference and not for reading. The editor was thus allowed wide latitude for his expression of opinion, chiefly because that freedom cost the Association nothing, gave it free publicity which otherwise would have cost thousands of dollars, and was backed by readers and subscribers who increased more rapidly than the direct membership of the Association, and became in time a body of perhaps a quarter of a million persons. The first real although tacit decision as to my power over the policy of the *Crisis* led to a change in the chairmanship of the board, which Joel Spingarn then assumed.

The next question arose over the matter of political advice in the first Wilson election. No action was taken, but some members of the board doubted the wisdom of our support of the Democratic Party. The question of a segregated camp for Negro officers again split the board; but as the chairman and the editor were in agreement, the power of the Association was used for the establishment of the camp and later the board agreed that this had been the proper procedure. After I had gone to Europe--295--and held the first Pan-African Congress and began to advocate Pan Africanism, the board quite decidedly refused to accept this new activity as part of its program; but it did not for a moment object to my further advocacy of Pan Africanism so long as I was responsible for any costs.

Then came the depression. The revenue of the *Crisis* began to fall off as early as 1924 and 1925. Our circulation dropped steadily until by 1933 it was scarcely more than ten thousand paid subscriptions. If the magazine was to be carried on, evidently the Association would have to share its cost, and if it did so, it would have a right to a larger voice in its conduct and policy.

If the *Crisis* had continued self-supporting during the depression, I would have felt myself free gradually to force upon the thinking Negro world and the NAACP a new economic program. But the *Crisis* was no longer self-supporting. The mass of Negroes, even the intelligent and educated, progressively being thrown out of work, did not have money for food, much less for magazines. I found

myself, therefore, seeking support from an organization for a program in which they did not wholeheartedly believe, and particularly this disbelief and growing suspicion centered around the new conception which I had for mass action on the part of the Negro.

By 1930, I had become convinced that the basic policies and ideals of the Association must be modified and changed, that in a world where economic dislocation had become so great as in ours, a mere appeal based on the old liberalism, a mere appeal to justice and further effort at legal decision, was missing the essential need; that the--296--essential need was to guard and better the chances of Negroes, educated and ignorant, to earn a living, safeguard their income, and raise the level of their employment. I did not believe that a further prolongation of looking for salvation from the whites was feasible. So far as they were ignorant of the results of race prejudice, we had taught them; but so far as their race prejudice was built and increasingly built on the basis of the income which they enjoyed and their anti-Negro bias consciously or unconsciously formulated in order to protect their wealth and power, in so far our whole program must be changed, and we must seek to increase the power and particularly the economic organization among Negroes to meet this new situation. It was this change of emphasis that I proposed to discuss and promote through the columns of the *Crisis*.

In addition to this, the meaning and implications of the new psychology had begun slowly to penetrate my thought. My own study of psychology under William James had pre-dated the Freudian era, but it had prepared me for it. I now began to realize that in the fight against race prejudice, we were not facing simply the rational, conscious determination of white folk to oppress us; we were facing age-long complexes sunk now largely to unconscious habit and irrational urge, which demanded on our part not only the patience to wait, but the power to entrench ourselves for a long siege against the strongholds of color caste. It was this long-term program, which called first of all for economic stability on the part of the Negro, for such economic foundations as would enable the colored people of America to earn a living, provide for their own social uplift, so far as this was neglected by the state and--297--nation, and at the same time carry out even more systematically and with greater and better-planned determination, the fight that the NAACP had inaugurated in 1910.

Meantime, the Association itself was receiving less of its income from colored supporters and more from white charity. It was illogical to expect that white philanthropy would be willing to support the economic program which I had in mind. Moreover, the colored group did not wholly agree with me. I realized that too much in later years the Association had attracted the higher income group of colored people, who regarded it as a weapon to attack the sort of social discrimination which especially irked them; rather than as an organization to improve the status and power of the whole Negro group. If now the Association was willing to allow me the same freedom of expression in the crippled *Crisis* that I had had when the *Crisis* was economically independent, I was willing to try to set forth my new point of view while giving anyone else who had an idea, full opportunity to express it. I wanted, not dogmatically but inquiringly, to find out the function of a minority group like ours, in the impending social change. I thought that this was the highest service that any real periodical of opinion could do for its constituents. If we had had at this time leisure for thought and argument, my program could have been carried out; but unfortunately it happened that here dogma entered and dogma from a source that made my new point of view easily misinterpreted and suspected and this was the dogma of the American Communist Party applied first and most unfortunately to the Scottsboro cases, in which our organization--298--was deeply interested and involved. Had it not been for their senseless interference, these poor victims of Southern injustice would today be free. To insure their freedom, we had followed a tried and successful pattern: we had secured the services of Clarence Darrow and with him a respectable firm of local white lawyers. With quiet and careful methods, the Scottsboro victims would have been freed in a couple of years without fanfare or much publicity.

But in the case of the Communists the actual fate of these victims was a minor matter. The leaders of Russian communism thought that they saw here a chance to foment revolution in the United States. This crass instance of cruelty and injustice; where ignorant colored boys, stealing a ride on a freight train, were faced with the ridiculous charge of attacking two white prostitutes on the same train, who

were amply protected, if they needed protection, by white hoodlums, seemed to Russia an unusual opportunity to expose American race prejudice and to arouse the Negroes and the working classes of America and the world. All this was based on abysmal ignorance of the pattern of race prejudice in the United States. About the last thing calculated to arouse the white workers of America would be the defense of a Negro accused of attacking a white woman, even though the Negro was probably innocent and the woman a prostitute. This fact the Communists either did not know or ignored. They seized the occasion for agitation in order to forward "the Revolution." They scared respectable lawyers out of the case; they repudiated Clarence Darrow; they made the whole issue turn on property rights and race, and spread this propaganda all--299--over the world. Right as they undoubtedly were on the merits of the case, they were tragically wrong in their methods if they were seeking to free these victims.

This, of course, exasperated our office, the *Crisis* as well as the executive office. But while in the case of the *Crisis*, it left me still determined to work for economic reform as the immediate method of attacking the Negro problem, in the case of the executive office it had the opposite effect of making both Spingarn and others determined to avoid this discussion and any drastic change in the object of the Association.

For this reason the Second Amenia Conference was called, seventeen years after the first. The first Amenia Conference in 1916 met at a strategic time. Our essential agreement on a program of advance was gratifying and epoch-making; but as I now realize, we had not only been hammered into unity by culminating oppression, but prepared for it by spade-work which had gone before, and which for ten years had been preparing the minds of Americans, black and white, for a new deal in race relations and renewed effort toward racial equality. In 1933, the situation was different. We met at the beginning rather than at the end of a period of preparatory discussion. We were still mentally whirling in a sea of inconclusive world discussion. We could not really reach agreement as a group, because of the fact that so many of us as individuals had not made up our own minds on the essentials of coming social change. The attendance was sifted -- perhaps too much so; outside of four of the Elder Statesmen, the median age was thirty -- persons just out of college; their--300--life work begun but not settled. They were teachers, social workers, professional men, and two artisans.

The discussion and resolutions, while disappointing to both Spingarn and myself, as I now see them, threw a flood of light upon our situation. Four threads of thought entered into our conference: *first*, the fight against race segregation and color discrimination in any form. This was age-old among Negroes and also the bitterly felt contribution of those younger folk, who had experienced race prejudice during the war and the difficulties of getting a decent opportunity to work and live after the war. The *second* thread was Marxian economic determinism. Most of the younger trained college group were convinced that the economic pattern of any civilization determined its development along all cultural lines. In the *third* place everybody present, old and young, was seized with a new concern for the welfare of the great mass of Negro laboring people. They felt that too much in the past we had been thinking of the exceptional folk, the Talented Tenth, the well-to-do; that we must now turn our attention toward the welfare and social uplift of the masses. *Finally*, the old liberalism, resurgent in the leadership of the NAACP officials, wished to reiterate and strengthen everything that we had done in the past, as the only program for the future.

Out of these trends of thought, one can imagine the turmoil and contradiction of our discussion. Our argument was indeterminate and our resolutions contradictory. It was agreed that the primary problem before us was economic, but it was equally certain that this economic problem could not be approached from the point of view--301--of race. The only approach to it must be through the white labor masses who were supposed to accept without great reluctance the new scientific argument that there was no such thing as "race"; and in the midst of this, nearly all the older men and some of the younger men were still trying to insist that the uplift of the Negro in the past and in the future could only take place through the development of superimposed economic and cultural classes; and that we needed in the future to reinforce the liberal program which we had been carrying out in the past.

I was disappointed. I had hoped for such insistence upon the compelling importance of the economic factor that this would lead to a project for a planned program for using the racial segregation, which was at present inevitable, in order that the laboring masses might be able to have built beneath them a strong foundation for selfsupport and social uplift; and while this fundamental economic process was going on, we could, from a haven of economic security, continue even more effectively than ever to agitate for the utter erasure of the color line.

I stood, as it seemed to me, between paths diverging to extreme communism and violence on the one hand, and extreme reaction toward plutocracy on the other. I saw disaster for American Negroes in following a set determination to ignore race hate and nearing instead a creed of eventual violence and revolution; simply because a single great nation, having perhaps no other alternative, had started this way, this path was for American Negroes, to my mind, nonsense. The nonsense did not end here, it was just as nonsensical for us to assume that the program--302--which we had espoused in 1910 was going to work in 1950. We had got to prepare ourselves for a reorganization of society especially and fundamentally in industry. And for that reason we had got to work as a group toward the socialization of our own wealth and the establishment of such social objects in the nation and in the world.

Spingarn was disappointed and in some degree impatient. I remember one amusing incident: there was a young man in attendance (we will call him Jones), well-educated and in some ways brilliant, but on the other hand, a communist and also irresponsible and unreliable. The members of the conference had been invited up one day to the Spingarn home, a beautiful spacious country mansion with pools and gardens in the English style. Jones stood in the parlor and grinned; and said aloud to the visitors: "Comes the revolution, and Commissar Jones will live here!" Spingarn did not appreciate the joke.

The end of it all was inconclusive resolutions and no agreement; and greater conviction on the part of the executive office that discussion of economic change and organization among colored people to effect a stronger economic position, was not in the line of the policy of the NAACP; and that neither the *Crisis* nor anyone else ought to discuss these matters nor agitate them. I began to see that for a second time in my life my occupation was gone, unless I made a very complete surrender of my convictions. I was not and am not a communist. I do not believe in the dogma of inevitable revolution in order to right economic wrong. I think war is worse than hell, and that it seldom or never forwards the advance of the world.

On the other hand, I believed and still believe that Karl--303--Marx was one of the greatest men of modern times and that he put his finger squarely upon our difficulties when he said that economic foundations, the way in which men earn their living, are the determining factors in the development of civilization, in literature, religion, and the basic pattern of culture. And this conviction I had to express or spiritually die.

My leadership was a leadership solely of ideas. I never was, nor ever will be, personally popular. This was not simply because of my idiosyncrasies but because I despise the essential demagoguery of personal leadership; of that hypnotic ascendancy over men which carries out objectives regardless of their value or validity, simply by personal loyalty and admiration. In my case I withdrew sometimes ostentatiously from the personal nexus, but I sought all the more determinedly to force home essential ideas.

I think I may say without boasting that in the period from 1910 to 1930 I was a main factor in revolutionizing the attitude of the American Negro toward caste. My stinging hammer blows made Negroes aware of themselves, confident of their possibilities and determined in self-assertion. So much so that today common slogans among the Negro people are taken bodily from the words of my mouth.

But of course, no idea is perfect and forever valid. Always to be living and apposite and timely, it must be modified and adapted to changing facts. What I began to realize was that the heights and

fastnesses which we black folk were assailing, could not in America be gained by sheer force of assault, because of our relatively small numbers --304--They could only be gained as the majority of Americans were persuaded of the rightness of our cause and joined with us in demanding our recognition as full citizens. This process must deal not only with conscious rational action, but with irrational and unconscious habit, long buried in folkways and custom. Intelligent propaganda, legal enactment and reasoned action must attack the conditioned reflexes of race hate and change them.

Slowly but surely I came to see that for many years, perhaps many generations, we could not count on any such majority; that the whole set of the white world in America, in Europe and in the world was too determinedly against racial equality, to give power and persuasiveness to our agitation. Therefore, I began to emphasize and restate certain implicit aspects of my former ideas. I tried to say to the American Negro: during the time of this frontal attack which you are making upon American and European prejudice, and with your unwavering statement and restatement of what is right and just, not only for us, but in the long run, for all men; during this time, there are certain things you must do for your own survival and self-preservation. You must work together and in unison; you must evolve and support your own social institutions, you must transform your attack from the foray of self-assertive individuals to the massed might of an organized body. You must put behind your demands, not simply American Negroes, but West Indians and Africans, and all the colored races of the world. These things I began to say with no lessening, or thought of lessening of my emphasis upon the essential rightness of what we had--305--been asking for a generation in political and civic and social equality.

It was clear to me that agitation against race prejudice and a planned economy for bettering the economic condition of the American Negro were not antagonistic ideals but part of one ideal; that it did not increase segregation; the segregation was there and would remain for many years. But now I proposed that in economic lines, just as in lines of literature and religion, segregation should be planned and organized and carefully thought through. This plan did not establish a new segregation; it did not advocate segregation as the final solution of the race problem; exactly the contrary; but it did face the facts and faced them with thoughtfully mapped effort.

Of course I soon realized that in this matter of segregation I was touching an old and bleeding sore in Negro thought. From the eighteenth century down the Negro intelligentsia has regarded segregation as the visible badge of their servitude and as the object of their unceasing attack. The upper class Negro has almost never been nationalistic. He has never planned or thought of a Negro state or a Negro church or a Negro school. This solution has always been a thought up-surging from the mass, because of pressure which they could not withstand and which compelled a racial institution or chaos. Continually such institutions were founded and developed, but this took place against the advice and best thought of the intelligentsia.

American Negroes have always feared with perfect fear their eventual expulsion from America. They have been willing to submit to caste rather than face this. The reasons--306--have varied but today they are clear: Negroes have no Zion. There is no place where they can go today and not be subject to worse caste and greater disabilities from the dominant white imperialistic world than they suffer here today. On the other hand there is no likelihood just now of their being forcibly expelled. So far as that is concerned, there was no likelihood ten years ago of the Jews being expelled from Germany. The cases are far from parallel. There is a good deal more profit in cheap Negro labor than in Jewish fellow citizens, which brings together strange bed-fellows for the protection of the Negro. On the other hand one must remember that this is a day of astonishing change, injustice and cruelty; and that many Americans of stature have favored the transportation of Negroes and they were not all of the mental caliber of the present junior senator from Mississippi. As the Negro develops from an easily exploitable, profit-furnishing laborer to an intelligent independent self-supporting citizen, the possibility of his being pushed out of his American fatherland may easily be increased rather than diminished. We may be expelled from the United States as the Jew is being expelled from Germany.

At any rate it is the duty of American Negroes today to examine this situation not with hysteria and anger but with calm forethought. Whether self-segregation for his protection, for inner development and growth in intelligence and social efficiency, will increase his acceptability to white Americans or not, that growth must go on. And whatever the event may bring, it must be faced as men face crises and not with surprise and helpless amazement. It was astonishing and disconcerning, and yet for the--307--philosopher perfectly natural, that this change of my emphasis was crassly and stupidly misinterpreted by the Negroes. Appropriating as their own (and indeed now it was their own) my long insistence on self-respect and self-assertion and the demand for every equality on the part of the Negro, they seemed determined to insist that my newer emphasis was a repudiation of the older; that now I wanted segregation; that now I did not want equality, that now I was asking for black people to act as black people and forcibly overthrow the dominance of the white.

I can see an assembly in Philadelphia, when I went down to say to the colored people that the demand of Leslie Hill to make the Cheyney school a college supported by the state of Pennsylvania, was wise and inevitable. "It will be a Negro college!" shouted the audience, as though such a thing had never been heard of. "It will be Segregation," said a woman, who had given much of her life to furthering the fight for Negro equality. I can see her now, brown, tense, bitter, as she lashed me with the accusation of advocating the very segregation that I had been fighting. It was in vain that I pointed out that Cheyney was already segregated; that without the help of the state, the school would die; that with the help of the state it could be a great school, regardless of the fact that its teachers and students were Negroes. And moreover, there was no reason in the world why some of the teachers and some of its students could not eventually be white.

Another incident occurred during these years, which shows the increasing paradox of race segregation in the United States. The Rosenwald Fund proposed in 1931 to start a crusade for better hospitalization for Negroes.--308--Negro health needed to be safeguarded and improved and one of the main reasons for the Negro sickness and death rate was the fact that Negroes were not furnished hospital facilities, and that their physicians were very often not admitted to medical schools for study nor to hospitals for practice. They proposed therefore to help in the building and equipment of Negro hospitals and in the education of Negro physicians.

Just how far they proposed to go, they did not make clear because before they had thoroughly matured their plans they were bitterly attacked by Dr. Louis Wright of New York and others. Louis Wright was a special favorite of mine. The stepfather who brought him up was my own family physician for years. I had followed Wright's career as he fought his way through Harvard and made a fine record. He began practice in New York and then at the time of the World War went to France as a captain in a colored medical unit of the AEF and there had a distinguished career. He came back and fought his way into prominence in the Harlem Hospital of New York, which up to his time had admitted no Negro physicians, although nearly all the patients were Negroes. In time Louis Wright became an authority in many branches of surgery and medicine; he was with reluctance admitted to the American College of Surgeons and was appointed one of the seven members of the Board of Surgeons of the Police Department of New York. He is an outstanding man; gifted and thoroughly unselfish, and the one thing that he fought with unceasing energy was discrimination against Negroes in hospitals, whether as medical practitioners or patients. He violently attacked the Rosenwald--309--board saying that the method of segregated hospitals and segregated training for Negro physicians was not the way to go at the matter; that what ought to be done was to insist in season and out that Negroes be admitted to medical schools and hospital practice without regard to color.

I saw and saw clearly the argument on both sides to this controversy. I was heart and soul with Louis Wright in his fight against segregation and yet I knew that for a hundred years in this America of ours it was going to be at least partially in vain. I was heart and soul with the Rosenwald Fund; what Negroes need is hospital treatment now; and what Negro physicians need is hospital practice; and to meet their present need, poor hospitals are better than none; segregated hospitals are better than those where the Negro patients are neglected or relegated to the cellar.

Yet in this case I was unable to decide or take part. I wrote a rather perfunctory editorial in general upholding Dr. Wright, but I was sorry to see the larger plan of the Rosenwald Fund curtailed and cut down to a mere ghost of its first self. Whatever the merits of this particular controversy were, I am certain that for many generations American Negroes in the United States have got to accept separate medical institutions. They may dislike it; they may and ought to protest against it; nevertheless it will remain for a long time their only path to health, to education, to economic survival.

The NAACP from the beginning faced this bogey. It was not, never had been, and never could be an organization that took an absolute stand against race segregation of any sort under all circumstances. This would be a stupid stand in the face of clear and incontrovertible facts. When--310--the NAACP was formed, the great mass of Negro children were being trained in Negro schools; the great mass of Negro churchgoers were members of Negro churches; the great mass of Negro citizens lived in Negro neighborhoods; the great mass of Negro voters voted with the same political party; and the mass of Negroes joined with Negroes and co-operated with Negroes in order to fight the extension of this segregation and to move toward better conditions. What was true in 1910 was still true in 1940 and will be true in 1970. But with this vast difference: that the segregated Negro institutions are better organized, more intelligently planned and more efficiently conducted, and today from in themselves the best and most compelling argument for the ultimate abolition of the color line.

To have started out in this organization with a slogan "no segregation," would have been impossible. What we did say was no increase in segregation; but even that stand we were unable to maintain. Whenever we found that an increase of segregation was in the interest of the Negro race, naturally we had to advocate it. We had to advocate better teachers for Negro schools and larger appropriation of funds. We had to advocate a segregated camp for the training of Negro officers in the World War. We had to advocate group action of Negro voters in elections. We had to advocate all sorts of organized movement among Negroes to fight oppression and in the long run end segregation.

On the other side, white friends and enemies were rather gleeful in having so apt a club fashioned to their hands. "Chauvinism!" they said, when I urged Pan African solidarity--311--for the accomplishment of universal democracy. "Race prejudice," they intimated, was just as reprehensible when shown by black toward white as when shown by white toward black. Here again it was nearly useless to reiterate. So long as we were fighting a color line, we must strive by color organization. We have no choice. If in time, the fight for Negro equality degenerates into organized murder for the suppression of whites, then our last case is no better than our first; but this need not be, if we are level-headed and clear-sighted, and work for the emancipation of all men from caste through the organization and determination of the present victims of caste.

All this is bound to right itself logically in the minds of American Negroes and Africans, and West Indians, once it has been thoroughly digested and thought through. But the domination of ideas always has this disadvantage in the presence of active, living, personal dictatorship. It is slow, painfully slow. It works with the vast deliberation or perhaps that lack of rational thought which is characteristic of the human mind; but its ultimate triumph is inevitable and complete, so long as the ideas are kept clear and before the minds of men. I shall not live to see entirely the triumph of this, my newer emphasis; but it will triumph just as much and just as completely as did my advocacy of agitation and self-assertion. It is indeed a part of that same original program; it is its natural and inevitable fulfillment.

No sooner had I come to this conclusion than I soon saw that I was out of touch with my organization and that the question of leaving it was only a matter of time. This was not an easy decision; to give up the *Crisis* was like--312--giving up a child; to leave the National Association was leaving the friends of a quarter of a century. But on the other hand, staying meant silence, a repudiation of what I was thinking and planning. Under such circumstances, what could I do? I had seen the modern world as few of my fellow workers had: West African villages, Jamaican homes, Russian communism, German disaster, Italian fascism, Portuguese and Spanish life, France and England repeatedly, and every state in the United States. I knew something of the seething world. I could seek through my editorship of

the *Crisis* slowly but certainly to change the ideology of the NAACP and of the Negro race into a racial program for economic salvation along the paths of peace and organization.

There were two alternatives: to change the board of directors of the NAACP so as to substitute a group which agreed with this program, or to leave the Association. If the first could be done without a prolonged fight, I was willing to undertake it. I was appointed a member of the next nominating committee; five new members were proposed who would have begun the reorganization. When, however, the committee gave its report the majority had changed from the persons agreed upon and substituted two or three excellent persons who unfortunately were either absolutely reactionary in their social and economic outlook or basically ignorant.

The Association seemed to me not only unwilling to move toward the left in its program but even stepped decidedly toward the right. And what astonished me most was that this economic reaction was voiced even more by the colored members of the Board of Directors than the--313--white. One could realize why a rich white liberal should suspect fundamental economic change, but it was most difficult for me to understand that the younger and more prosperous Negro professional men, merchants, and investors were clinging to the older ideas of property, ownership and profits even more firmly than the whites. The liberal white world saw the change that was coming despite their wish. The upper class colored world did not anticipate nor understand it.

When now I came advocating new, deliberate and purposeful segregation for economic defense in precisely the lines of business and industry whither the NAACP was not prepared to follow it was not an absolute difference of principle, but it was a grave difference as to further procedure. When I criticized the Secretary for his unsound explanation of the historic stand of the NAACP on segregation, the Board of Directors voted May 21, 1934, "that the *Crisis* is the organ of the Association and no salaried officer of the Association shall criticize the policy, work or officers of the Association in the pages of the *Crisis*." Thereupon I forthwith gave up my connection with the Association saying:

"In thirty-five years of public service my contribution to the settlement of the Negro problems has been mainly candid criticism based on a careful effort to know the facts. I have not always been right, but I have been sincere, and I am unwilling at this late day to be limited in the expression of my honest opinions in the way in which the Board proposes. . . . I am, therefore, resigning, . . . this resignation to take effect immediately " The board refused to accept this resignation and asked me to reconsider. I did--314--so, but finally wrote, June 26, "I appreciate the good will and genuine desire to bridge an awkward break which your action indicated, and yet it is clear to me, and I think to the majority of the Board, that under the circumstances my resignation mus stand."

In finally accepting my resignation the Board was kind enough to say in part: "He founded the *Crisis* without a cent of capital, and for many years made it completely self-supporting, reaching a maximum monthly circulation at the end of the World War of 100,000. This is an unprecedented achievement in American journalism, and in itself worthy of a distinguished tribute. But the ideas which he propounded in it and in his books and essays transformed the Negro world as well as a large portion of the liberal white world, so that the whole problem of the relation of black and white races has ever since had a completely new orientation. He created, what never existed before, a Negro intelligentsia, and many who have never read a word of his writings are his spiritual disciples and descendants. Without him the Association could never have been what it was and is.

"The Board has not always seen eye to eye with him in regard to various matters, and cannot subscribe to some of his criticism of the Association and its officials. But such differences in the past have in no way interfered with his usefulness, but rather on the contrary. For he had been selected because of his independence of judgment, his fearlessness in expressing his convictions, and his acute and wide-reaching intelligence. A mere yes-man could not have attracted the attention of the world, could not even have stimulated the Board itself to further study of various--315--important problems. We shall be the poorer for his loss, in intellectual stimulus, and in searching analysis of the vital problems of the

American Negro, no one in the Association can fill his place with the same intellectual grasp. We therefore offer him our sincere thanks for the services he has rendered, and we wish him all happiness in all that he may now undertake."

I had already for some years begun to canvass the possibility of a change of work. This, of course, is not easy when a person is over sixty years of age. If he has not had the grace to die before this, he ought, in accordance with prevalent public opinion, at least to be willing to stop acting and thinking. I did not agree with that. I thought of many possibilities, but at last determined to accept an offer that had been made to me quietly in 1929, and periodically repeated from time to time when John Hope of Atlanta came to town. We had been close friends since 1897. We taught together until 1910. Hope had joined the Niagara Movement and the NAACP. We met in France in 1918 while he was a YMCA secretary, and I promoting Pan Africa. Always when he came to New York, we did a theater and a dinner, and discussed the reformation of the world. When he became President of the newly organized Atlanta University, he invited me to join him.

Of course, this change of work had certain unpleasant necessities. It would not only involve giving up the *Crisis* and my connection with the Association. It also involved the cold douche of a return to life in the South. I knew the South. In part I had been educated there. I had spent thirteen years teaching in Georgia and during my connection with the NAACP nearly every year I traveled in the--316--South to keep myself closely acquainted with its problems. The South of 1933 was not the South of 1897. In many respects it had improved and the relations between the races were better. Nevertheless the South is not a place where a man of Negro descent would voluntarily and without good reason choose to live. Its civilization is decidedly lower than that of the North. Its state and local governments are poor and full of incompetency and graft, and its whole polity is menaced by mass hysteria and mob-law. Its police system is wretched and the low grade white policeman full of crude race hate is the ruler who comes closest and in most immediate contact with black folk of all classes. There is a caste system based on color, fortified in law and even more deeply entrenched in custom, which meets and coerces the dark man at nearly every step: in trains, in street cars, in elevators, in offices, in education, in recreation, in religion and in graveyards. The economic organization is still in the nineteenth century with ruthless exploitation, low wages, child labor, debt peonage, and profit in crime. The better classes, with gracious manners and liberal outlook, exist and slowly grow; but with these I would have little contact and fear of the mob would restrain their meeting me or listening to me.

All this I faced, but I saw too the compensations. After all, the place to study a social problem is where it centers and not elsewhere. The Negro problem in the United States centers in the southern South. There in the place of its greatest concentration, forces are working for its solution and the greatest of these forces are institutions like Atlanta University. The university throws around its professors and students a certain protective coloration.--317--It is an inner community surrounded by beauty with unusual chances for intellectual and social contact. To a degree it furnishes recreation and avenues to culture. Our library without doubt is the best in Atlanta; our music is unsurpassed and the chances here for quiet contemplation and the intellectual life are considerable.

Then too, I could not forget that even in New York, with all its opportunity for human contact, with its unrivaled facilities for a center of world thought and culture, it was nevertheless no heaven for black folk. Negroes were not welcome to its hotels and restaurants nor to most of its clubs and organizations. Contact with human beings despite color is far wider than in Georgia; but yet, it is not wide. Theaters and great music center in New York as nowhere else in America. But they are very costly; a theater once a month and opera once a year was as much as I could afford. By careful choice and delicate prevision I may in New York foot a path of broad cultural contact and wide physical freedom; it would be difficult to find a quiet, clean place to live; but if I can earn a living, I can be fairly content. I should certainly have there no such dread of the white mob and the police as Negroes must have in the southern South. Weighing and balancing all these considerations, I came back to Atlanta. In a sense I returned to my ivory tower, not so much for new scientific research, as for interpretation and reflection; and for making a record of what I had seen and experienced.

The situation to which I returned was new. Back as early as 1905, I had proposed to the seven colored colleges of Atlanta the beginning of efforts toward uniting these various institutions into one university. We actually once--318--had a meeting at Spelman, but the dean was definitely opposed. She said crisply that if her head was going to be taken off, she would prefer to bite it off herself. I turned then in 1909 to John Hope, the president of Morehouse, and we worked out an interchange of lectures between Morehouse and Atlanta University. He wrote me in 1910: "I hope and believe this is the beginning of new and larger things in an educational way among our colored institutions. . . . I feel down-right enthusiasm over the beginning that our two schools made this year and hope that, now that we have made a start and have some slight idea of what can be accomplished, the two schools may next year do larger things." Hope was then president of Morehouse College, but in 1929, he realized our dream in the affiliation of three Negro colleges of Atlanta in the new Atlanta University, with himself as first president.

Far back in 1910 before leaving Atlanta University I had read before the American Historical Association a paper on "Reconstruction and Its Benefits," which greatly exercised Ulrich Phillips, protagonist of the slave South, but brought praise from Dunning of Columbia, Hart of Harvard and others. I was convinced then, and am more certain since, that the reason for certain adjectives applied to Reconstruction is purely racial. Reconstruction was "tragic," "terrible," a "great mistake," and a "humiliation," not because of what actually happened: people suffered after the Civil War, but people suffer after all wars; and the suffering in the South was no greater than in dozens of other centers of murder and destruction. No, the "tragedy" of Reconstruction was because here an attempt was initiated to make American democracy and the--319--tenets of the Declaration of Independence apply not only to white men, but to black men. While still in the *Crisis* office, through a grant from the Rosenwald Fund I had begun a history of the black man's part in Reconstruction. This was my thesis. Two years' work at Atlanta University finished my "Black Reconstruction" and it was published in 1935. Next I naturally turned my thought toward putting into permanent form that economic program of the Negro which I believed should succeed, and implement the long fight for political and civil rights and social equality which it was my privilege for a quarter of a century to champion. I tried to do this in a preliminary way, through a little study of the "Negro and the New Deal" which I was asked to undertake in 1936 by the colored "Associates in Negro Folk Education," working under the American Association for Adult Education. The editor of this series, Alain Locke, pressed me for the manuscript and by working hard I finished it and was paid for it just before my trip abroad in 1936. I think I made a fair and pretty exhaustive study of the experience of the Negro from 1933 to 1936 and by way of summing up I appended a statement and credo which I had worked out through correspondence with a number of the younger Negro scholars. It was this:

- 1. We American Negroes are threatened today with lack of opportunity to work according to gifts and training and lack of income sufficient to support healthy families according to standards demanded by modern culture.

- 2. In industry, we are a labor reservoir, fitfully employed and paid a wage below subsistence; in agriculture, we are largely disfranchised peons; in public education, we tend to be disinherited--320--illiterates; in higher education, we are the parasites of reluctant and hesitant philanthropy.
- 3. In the current reorganization of industry, there is no adequate effort to secure us a place in industry, to open opportunity for Negro ability, or to give us security in age or unemployment.

- 4. Not by the development of upper classes anxious to exploit the workers, nor by the escape of individual genius into the white world, can we effect the salvation of our group in America. And the salvation of this group carries with it the emancipation not only of the darker races of men who make the vast majority of mankind, but of all men of all races. We, therefore, propose this:

*BASIC AMERICAN NEGRO CREED*

- A. As American Negroes, we believe in unity of racial effort, so far as this is necessary for self-defense and self-expression, leading ultimately to the goal of a united humanity and the abolition of all racial distinctions.
- B. We repudiate all artificial and hate-engendering deification of race separation as such; but just as sternly, we repudiate an ennervating philosophy of Negro escape into an artificially privileged white race which has long sought to enslave, exploit and tyrannize over all mankind.
- C. We believe that the Talented Tenth among American Negroes, fitted by education and character to think and do, should find primary employment in determining by study and measurement the present field and demand for racial action and the method by which the masses may be guided along this path.
- D. We believe that the problems which now call for such racial planning are Employment, Education and Health; these three: but the greatest of these is Employment.
- --321--E. We believe that the labor force and intelligence of twelve million people is more than sufficient to supply their own wants and make their advancement secure. Therefore, we believe that, if carefully and intelligently planned, a co-operative Negro industrial system in America can be established in the midst of and in conjunction with the surrounding national industrial organization and in intelligent accord with that reconstruction of the economic basis of the nation which must sooner or later be accomplished.
- F. We believe that Negro workers should join the labor movement and affiliate with such trade unions as welcome them and treat them fairly. We believe that Workers' Councils organized by Negroes for interracial understanding should strive to fight race prejudice in the working class.
- G. We believe in the ultimate triumph of some form of Socialism the world over; that is, common ownership and control of the means of production and equality of income.
- H. We do not believe in lynching as a cure for crime; nor in war as a necessary defense of culture; nor in violence as the only path to economic revolution. Whatever may have been true in other times and places, we believe that today in America we can abolish poverty by reason and the intelligent use of the ballot, and above all by that dynamic discipline of soul and sacrifice of comfort which, revolution or no revolution, must ever be the only real path to economic justice and world peace.
- I. We conceive this matter of work and equality of adequate income as not the end of our effort, but the beginning of the rise of the Negro race in this land and the world over, in power, learning and accomplishment.
- J. We believe in the use of our vote for equalizing wealth through taxation, for vesting the ultimate power of the state in the hands of the workers; and as an integral part of the working--322--class, we demand our proportionate share in administration and public expenditure.
- K. This is and is designed to be a program of racial effort and this narrowed goal is forced upon us today by the unyielding determination of the mass of the white race to enslave, exploit and insult Negroes; but to this vision of work, organization and service, we welcome all men of all colors so long as their subscription to this basic creed is sincere and is proven by their deeds.

This creed proved macceptable both to the Adult Education Association and to its colored affiliates. Consequently when I returned from abroad the manuscript, although

ordered and already paid for, was returned to me as rejected for publication. Just who pronounced the veto I do not know.

I had next two other projects: first, that large mass of material relating to the Negro in the World War, which the NAACP had never made an effort to use or publish. I had been working at that off and on since 1919, and one year had a grant from the Social Science Council. But I had not yet got it in shape for publication. Another project in which I had long been interested was an Encyclopaedia of the Negro. As early as 1909, I had planned an Encyclopaedia Africana and secured on my board of advisers Sir Flinders Petrie, Sir Harry Johnston, Giuseppe Sergi, Dr. J. Deniker, William James, and Franz Boas, and on my proposed board of editors I had practically all the leading Negroes of the United States who were then inclined toward research. My change to New York and the work of starting the *Crisis*, and finally the World War, put this quite out of my mind.--323—

In 1931, the Phelps-Stokes Fund called together a committee to consider a plan of arranging for the preparation and publication of an Encyclopaedia of the Negro. To this first meeting I was not invited as my relations to some of the executives of the Fund during the past had not been cordial. But those who met insisted upon myself and others being invited to the second meeting. Overcoming a natural hesitation I went. Eventually and to me quite unexpectedly I was designated as future chairman of the editorial board, in case the funds for the enterprise should ever be found.

Since the incorporation of the Encyclopaedia in 1932, by the help of a small appropriation from the Phelps-Stokes Fund, I have been planning and working on preliminary arrangements for such an undertaking. We found the great Funds, from bitter experience, encyclopaedia-shy. But, in addition to that, I fear that no money sufficient for the publication of such an encyclopaedia under the leadership of colored scholars and the collaboration of white men can be soon found. I doubt if men would formulate their objection to such a procedure, but after all it would seem to them natural that any such work should be under the domination of white men. At any rate, we have gotten together a definite and completely worked-out plan, even to the subjects and many of the proposed writers, which can in the future be used for an Encyclopaedia of the Negro, a publication sure to come in time.

In 1936, my application to the Oberlaender Trust for a chance to restudy Germany was granted. I spent five months in Germany, and some time in England, France, and Austria, interviewing scholars on the encyclopaedia--324--project. I then took a two months' trip around the world. I was not allowed to stop as long in Russia as I would have liked; but I traversed it in a swift week from Moscow to Otpur. Then I spent a week in Manchoukuo, ten days in China, and two weeks in Japan. I seemed confirmed in the wisdom of my life choice by the panorama of the world which swept before me in London and Paris; Berlin and Vienna, Moscow and Mukden; Peiping and Shanghai; Kyoto and Tokyo; and heavenly Hawaii. Singularly enough in that journey I was most impressed with the poignant beauty of the world in the midst of its distress.
For several years I had been importuning my publishers to get out a new edition of the little book called "The Negro" published first in 1915 in the Home University Series. Finally in 1938 they consented by suggesting an entirely new book. This entailed a good deal of work of the highest interest and in which I took much satisfaction. The resulting volume, "Black Folk: Then and Now," was published in 1939. Since then I have been interested in the book I am now writing, a further essay into fiction, and a university review of race and culture, *Phylon*, born this year.

In February, 1938, I reached the arresting age of seventy and despite some effort on my part to escape the immediate consequences of this indiscretion, two of my younger

colleagues, Ira Reid and Rayford Logan, initiated and carried through a University celebration, with a convocation, a bust by Portnoff, a dinner and a talk. In that talk I was called upon to set forth something of my philosophy of life after traversing so many years. The essence of what I said can be summed up in these words:--325—

I have been favored among the majority of men in never being compelled to earn my bread and butter by doing work that was uninteresting or which I did not enjoy or of the sort in which I did not find my greatest life interest. This rendered me so content in my vocation that I seldom thought about salary or haggled over it. My first job paid me eight hundred dollars a year and to take it I refused one which offered ten hundred and fifty. I served over a year at the University of Pennsylvania for the munificent sum of six hundred dollars and never railed at fate. I taught and worked at Atlanta University for twelve hundred a year during thirteen effective and happy years. I never once asked for an increase. I went to New York for the salary offered and only asked for an increase there when an efficient new white secretary was hired at a wage above mine. I then asked equal salary. I did not want the shadow of racial discrimination to creep into our salary schedule. I realize now that this rather specious monetary independence may in the end cost me dearly, and land me in time upon some convenient street corner with a tin cup. For I have saved nearly nothing and lost my life insurance in the depression. Nevertheless, I insist that regardless of income, work worth while which one wants to do as compared with highly paid drudgery is exactly the difference between heaven and hell.

I am especially glad of the divine gift of laughter; it has made the world human and lovable, despite all its pain and wrong. I am glad that the partial Puritanism of my upbringing has never made me afraid of life. I have lived completely, testing every normal appetite, feasting on sunset, sea and hill, and enjoying wine, women, and song.--326--I have seen the face of beauty from the Grand Canyon to the great Wall of China; from the Alps to Lake Baikal; from the African bush to the Venus of Milo.

Perhaps above all I am proud of a straightforward clearness of reason, in part a gift of the gods, but also to no little degree due to scientific training and inner discipline. By means of this I have met life face to face, I have loved a fight and I have realized that Love is God and Work is His prophet; that His ministers are Age and Death.

This makes it the more incomprehensible for me to see persons quite panic-stricken at the approach of their thirtieth birthday and prepared for dissolution at forty. Few of my friends have openly celebrated their fiftieth birthdays, and near none their sixtieth. Of course, one sees some reasons: the disappointment at meager accomplishment which all of us to some extent share; the haunting shadow of possible decline; the fear of death. I have been fortunate in having health and wise in keeping it. I have never shared what seems to me the essentially childish desire to live forever. Life has its pain and evil – its bitter disappointments; but I like a good novel and in healthful length of days, there is infinite joy in seeing the World, the most interesting of continued stories, unfold, even though one misses THE END.