

Bringing Punch Into Politics



Gene Tunney retired heavyweight champion of the world, is shown as he greeted Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, Democratic nominee for the Presidency, when they met at the McNeill dinner in Bridgeport, Conn. Both Roosevelt and Tunney made speeches, the New York Governor pleading for harmony in the party and praising the work of former Governor Alfred E. Smith. This was the first time since the Chicago convention that Roosevelt mentioned his erstwhile opponent by name.

The New and the Old Negro

By G. R. Higginbotham

The first speaker that I ever heard treat this subject scientifically was Dr. Alain Locke, noted scholar and authority on the new Negro. That was a decade ago; since then, I have been intensely interested in what authorities (and all others who discuss the subject) have had to say on it. I am neither a new nor an old Negro. My age and experience should place me in a position of almost absolute neutrality; I say almost with emphasis, because I don't believe that there is such a thing as absolute neutrality. I believe it is human to pull for the under dog, especially when he has fight in him and the new Negro is an under dog who has shown fight. He may not be a fighter by nature nor training, but this much might be said in his favor: He is neither afraid nor too proud to fight. His method of fighting fire with fire may bring to him many wounds and scars, but he realizes that the bone of his contention is in the possession of others and that he must pass through fire to get it.

The old Negro's method of patiently waiting and expecting by some miracle to have this precious bone handed him on a platter does not satisfy this new energetic Negro who has learned, at least, from his environment, that a thing worth having is worth contending and fighting for. If the new Negro's strategy is bad and his weapons are crude his predecessors, the old Negro is to blame. He should not be criticized too severely by the old Negro because he (the old Negro) has not yet arrived himself. He is being criticized about some of the very things that he criticizes in the new Negro. Fortunately or unfortunately we do not have any national leaders in the class of the old Negro.

Why is it that we are so afraid of the past that we never want it mentioned? The Negro's past has as much right to be recorded and reviewed as any other people's. Certainly there is much to be admired in the records of our fore-fathers; and as to oppression, they haven't fared much different from other unfortunate people. There isn't anything in the Negro's past, here in America or elsewhere of which I am ashamed or afraid to have my children learn. I want them to know the truth; only the truth can make them free. Knowledge of the hardships and suffering of their fore-parents ought to stimulate them. As to the children of the white races it should bring to them the realization of their responsibility of helping lift the burden that was placed upon an unfortunate race by their fore-parents. It seems to me that any work of a satirical nature which has for its purpose the awakening or the reformation of a people should not be condemned by Negro leaders. We have too many self-styled leaders who seem to think that by the grace of God, and thru them and them alone, the race problem is to be solved. I can imagine no way in which Langston Hughes could better serve his race than in the role of a satirist. By nature, training and experience he is especially fitted for this odious task. There are many noble examples recorded in history where men of Hughes' type who, as satirists, were instrumental in bringing about cer-

tain needed reforms.

The New Negro seems to be tired of being told about "his place" and that "he should be made to understand." If he doesn't know his place and doesn't understand he is not to blame. The new Negro is down but not out; but if he is to rise from the mire and gutter in which he has been cast to starve and die, he must lift himself by his own force and strength. If Langston Hughes and the other colored Americans who are stranded in Russia never return to this country, both the new and the old Negro in America should stand indicted before the civilized world. Russia, evidently, offered these young trained artists something that they could not obtain in America. If the new Negro's training is fundamentally wrong he is not the blame for that. You can't train a man one way and at the same time make him understand another. The new Negro is thinking nationally and to some extent internationally. He is no longer local or sectional minded as is his predecessor, the old Negro. The new and the old Negro, I think, should work together toward some definite goal. On section or local issues, we may be as "separate as the fingers," yet on national issues we should be "one as the hand."