

New Negro Nation

(From The Montgomery Advertiser)

Progress of Negroes in Africa toward freedom has been in the news of late — for example, the British colony of Gold Coast is to become the independent nation of Ghana in the spring of 1957. It is expected to remain in the British Commonwealth, but to all intents will be a sovereign and independent state, as Canada and Australia are.

With little fanfare, a new Negro nation is taking shape on our doorstep, in the British West Indies. Some time in the third quarter of 1957, a governor general will be named for the scattered British islands in the Caribbean and they will be formally joined in a federation. It is expected that the federation will evolve into a dominion within five to 10 years, perhaps sooner. The name Antillea has been proposed for it.

The new state will not be a Negro state, officially, but it is expected to be so predominantly and in fact, because descendants of Negro slaves make up the greater part of the population. The *Christian Science Monitor* notes that there has already been a falling off in the white population of some of the islands, in anticipation of Negro control: "White parents are sending their children away to schools in Canada, England, or the United States — which they have done in the past. But today some parents are encouraging their children to stay away and make their lives elsewhere."

The islands are far from self-sufficient, and it is interesting to note that some residents "hope that their new status will entitle them to greater United States aid." We are already shelling out but naturally they could use more.

The West Indies are not as important as they were in colonial days, since other eras of sugar production have been developed. It is hard to realize that, 200 years ago and less, Haiti was rated as the most valuable of all the colonial possessions of France — more desirable than Canada. In the wars between England, France and Spain in the 17th and 18th Centuries, great importance was attached even to the smaller Caribbean islands, which today are insignificant and often a burden rather than an asset to the colonial power.

The total land area to be embraced in the new nation is a bit less than that of Massachusetts, and less than one-sixth the area of Alabama. But the population of 3,000,000 is roughly equivalent to Alabama's.

Too many people in proportion to resources — developed resources at any rate — constitute a major problem of the islands. And, in this connection, it is interesting to note that self-interest takes precedence over any impulse to help the less fortunate brother, as the following detail in the move toward federation shows.

One of the islands, Trinidad, is better off and not so densely populated as some of the others, and could absorb some of their excess.

But Trinidad is not welcoming immigrants from depressed islands. On the contrary, many Trinidadians frankly fear "threat to their preferred economic situation if a heavy influx from other islands descended on them after federation."

This fear has been translated into action — in preliminary negotiations it has been agreed that only limited immigration into Trinidad will be permitted for five years, after which the subject will be taken up again. Then, it is said, the bars will be lowered, either part way or altogether.