

OTHER PAPERS SAY

NEW NEGRO LEADERSHIP

(New York Times)

With the increasing recognition won by Negroes of outstanding attainments in many fields there comes to many of their people a natural feeling of pride. That this is accompanied by a consciousness of the responsibilities of the new leaders is pointed out by E. Franklin Frazier, Negro sociologist, in the April Current History. The preacher and politician domination which followed immediately after the emancipation of the slaves was filled with optimism and enthusiasm. Any opportunity open to American citizens did not seem beyond the reach of the free Negro. As education spread, a less hopeful attitude was taken by the outstanding individuals.

Now that the number of Negroes who have succeeded is growing rapidly, some of the more public spirited among the new leaders are inclined to criticize these artists, poets, novelists and scientists. The detachment necessary to their work is deplored by Negro newspaper editors in some cases because it cuts an able man off from active participation in helping the race. The artist absorbed in his pursuit loses the feeling of race consciousness that drives others to organize and educate.

Not all the artistic leaders are lost in their own specialty. James Weldon Johnson is a poet and musical critic of note, and also a prominent worker in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Another active member of it is Walter White, the author of two successful novels. Dr. W. E. B. DuBois is best known for his guidance of the association and his editorship of The Crisis, but he is also the inspiration of much artistic and scientific work by younger men. Some of the men and women who are doing the best work in their own fields should not be diverted from their purpose, even though it looks like a selfish one to the new Negro radicals. The latter are eager to press every force available into such labors as the organization of the Pullman porters, development of educational facilities, free clinics, political betterment and everything that will improve racial opportunities.

They should not forget that individuals concentrating successfully on their own creations automatically act as leavening agents. There is stimulation for all in the subtle poetry and ambitious prose of Jessie Fauset; in the poems of Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes, who have won the Witter Bynner poetry prize for two successive years; in the scientific studies of Dr. Ernest Just, Dr. Carver at Tuskegee, and a number of others distinguished for research work; in the achievements of Roland Hayes in music, Aaron Douglas in art, and Charles Gilpin and Paul Robeson in the theater. Such leadership plays as large a part as more conscious direction in the social transformation of the Negro.