

The New Negro

(From THE JACKSON DAILY NEWS)

For the first time in a goodly number of years the Mississippi Legislature faces a serious phase of the Negro problem, and unless it faces that problem in a fair, impartial and courageous manner the result is going to be unhappy for our state.

It is senseless to say "there is nothing new" about the Negro problem.

There may be nothing really new concerning the Negro problem, per se, but there is a new Negro in our land and the Southern lawmaker or citizen who fails to recognize that fact is being stupid at his own cost.

The new Negro has more education. He has better health. He makes more money per week. He has better clothes. He reads more newspapers. He is adopting the white man's customs, the white man's speech, the white man's standards and the white man's shibboleths.

Now it doesn't make sense to assume that this new Negro is going to be content in the cabin of his slave grandfather. And it doesn't make sense to pretend that there is where he ought to be. His eyes are on better things, materially considered. He is going to have a car and drive it. He is going to have a business and run it. He is going to buy a home and live in it. He is going to step into citizenship and exercise its rights and demand its privileges.

Indeed, our use of the future tense is merely gentle reminder to the more recalcitrant of our readers to the fact that the new Negro is already doing these things. The new Negro is not a man of tomorrow. He is a man of today. The old-time Negro was in some things a child with many endearing ways. Even his faults were mostly childish ones, easy to chuckle over, easy to forgive. The new Negro is growing up. Maybe he is not fully grown, but he has grown amazingly.

A vast deal of foolishness has been uttered about equality. The Negro is different. If he weren't there would be no problem and no argument. It is silly to say he isn't. The quality that the Negro is entitled to is the equality of opportunity. How high he will reach given the same level to stand on, is something else. Some will reach high some will grovel in the dirt.

It has been so with others, and it will be so with him.

Soberly, justly and with all kindness of spirit, the white man is going to have to make over the ground rules of living together. Quietly, patiently, with all the dignity of his soul, the black man is going to have to wait while the white man does make over those ground rules. Civilization is the over-all process by which rules come nearer and nearer, by slow stages or violent jerks, to justice and peace and public order. Our Negro citizens must be patient, tolerant, and try to understand that, no matter how irksome some forms of injustice or inequality may seem, that there cannot possibly be an overnight transformation.