

N.A.A.C.P. Parley Held Symbol Of a New Negro, Politically Free

Walter White Says Past's Blind Faith in Either Major Party Was Lacking, While Inept Tactics of Wallace Aids Only Stirred Resentment

By Walter White

Executive Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

KANSAS CITY, Mo.

Some of us who are reasonably close to the thinking minorities, especially of the 14,000,000 American Negroes, have seen some interesting and possibly significant events recently. More than 1,000 delegates, alternates and plain garden variety of members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People were holding their thirty-ninth annual conference. From 8:30 a. m. until midnight they had been in almost continuous session with only brief interludes for food and rest. Kansas City's genial Chief of Police Johnson, newspaper reporters and other experienced observers told me they had never before seen so earnest and hard-working a convention in this convention-ridden city.

Americans who understandably enough believe from the headlines that the white South is in flaming revolt against proposals to do away with lynching, disfranchisement and racial segregation would have had their eyes opened at the number of thoughtful, hard-working white Southern delegates. There were not only university professors and students but a white stationary engineer from Arkansas and trade unionists. They were neither starry-eyed idealists nor Communists but honest, practical Americans who dare to flout the fomenters of racial hate in their home communities and to advocate full equality for all men whatever their skin color.

No Republican Sentiment

Perhaps most significant of all the changes which the last few years have wrought is the almost total absence of any pro-Republican sentiment among the delegates who represented the most informed and thoughtful leadership of 500 cities and towns in all parts of the country. The simultaneous Republican convention at Philadelphia was followed by the delegates through press and radio but with an objectivity bordering on apathy. Whatever candidates were chosen or platform planks adopted seemed to be considered as just another quadrennial performance by the trained seals of politics with another performance scheduled to be given a fortnight later. Republican Tweedledum and Democratic Tweedledee were doing their stunts, and the difference of intent between them was indistinguishable to the N. A. A. C. P. delegates. There was manifest in every speech and throughout the resolutions the realization that the only way to achieve results is through complete independence of either political party, with emphasis on specific issues and individual candidates.

Even a decade ago at least one speaker could have been counted on to paraphrase Frederick Doug-

lass's famous remark to the effect that "The Republican party is the ship, all else the sea." Nothing even approximating such blind faith in either of the major political parties was either spoken or believed. The only attempt at political activity was at the beginning of the conference by the Wallaceites. A few individuals worked energetically in the forlorn hope that a resolution endorsing the third party might be obtained despite the traditional non-partisan position of the N. A. A. C. P. So inept were the tactics of some of the Wallaceites that resentment among the delegates swiftly developed. The sentiment of the convention was overwhelmingly against any political commitments of any character whatsoever. The short shrift accorded the Wallace supporters stopped cold any attempts by any other politicians of other parties which may have been planned.

A new Negro, politically independent and potent, has come into being, and the Kansas City meetings clearly demonstrated that unique development. If it be true that next November's election is to be determined by a margin narrower than that which seemed likely a few weeks ago, it is well within the range of possibilities that the racial group which has just concluded its sessions here in Kansas City may materially determine the result.