

Messenger, p. 21
Mar. 1, 1919

Who's Who

By "Who's Who" Editor

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

The death of Theodore Roosevelt was a bit unexpected, and sent a shock through the American Nation. Most of the publications in the country have eulogized him to the "nth" power, and Negro publications, without exception, have been effusive with praise. An honest and intelligent opinion could only be expected from the Socialist press among the whites, and from "The Messenger" among the Negroes.

Negro leaders have consistently fooled the Negro masses as to Roosevelt's friendship for the Negro ever since, and because he ate a sandwich with Booker Washington in the White House.

In-as-much as this did not in any way tend to increase the wages, shorten the hours, reduce the rent, or bring down the high cost of living of the Negro workers we did not regard it as of any value whatever. On the contrary, however, it had a pernicious effect in lulling Negroes into a false sense of security. It had no effect on the civil and political status of the Negro since disfranchisement and discrimination apparently were not subjects of conversations during the lunch, and even if they were, no visible after effects were discernible. Lynching continued even worse than it has under Woodrow Wilson and his Democratic administration. Disfranchisement increased. Jim-Crowism took on a fresh impetus. Residential segregation and discrimination in places of public accommodation were augmented. While all this continued, no word or message came from President Roosevelt and his "Big Stick," apparently, was locked up in the closet, the combination of which was forgotten until the East St. Louis riots, when Teddy "out" desiring to get "in," told an audience in Carnegie Hall what he would do "if I were President." He again fooled the Negroes, but not us. We remembered the Atlanta riots, the Springfield riots and the

many unspeakable atrocities committed under his administration and his Republican régime.

The "Advance," organ of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, says in an editorial which we quote in part:--

Roosevelt was the leading militarist in the country. The Labor Movement will remember Roosevelt in more than one way:--

As President of the Police Commission of New York, Roosevelt sought to introduce a special "strike club" for police to use upon strikers. On its surface the club appeared quite "innocent," but it contained a secret mechanism, which would, by the pressing of a button, release numberless spikes with which the flesh of the clubbee would be lacerated, causing very painful wounds. The club was so brutal that the commissioners refused to accept it. The Roosevelt proposition caused a sensation at the time.

As Governor of New York, he sent the state militia to Croton Dam where a strike was on and kept it there until the strike was completely broken.

During his second term in the presidency of the United States, he led the fight against the union shop, by forbidding the unionization of the Government's printing.

When Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone were on trial for their lives in Idaho, Roosevelt denounced them to the Country, in a public statement, as "undesirable citizens." That statement was construed as an attempt to influence the judge and the jury against the kidnapped labor representatives.

The above facts speak for themselves. The man who introduced this unspeakable weapon with which to brutalize white workers could not possibly be a friend of black workers, and 99% of Negroes are working people.

We did not grieve when Tillman passed, nor will our lachrymal ducts find difficulty in restraining their secretions because the sage of Oyster Bay has gone. We shall remember him as a leader of American militarism, imperialism, capitalism and anti-labor unionism. We are opposed to all of these things, of which he was the epitome. We hope that the loss of the chief spokesman of the above mentioned evils will open a way for the cosmic tread of democracy in America, and will dampen the ardor of the well organized forces of reaction which now disgrace the once reputed "land of the free, and the home of the brave."

W. E. B. DU BOIS

W. E. B. Du Bois is probably the most distinguished Negro in the United States today. For the last twenty years he has been known as a radical among Negroes. He is also the leading literateur. It is as editor of the "Crisis" and the Director of Publicity for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People that he is best known just now. Courageous, fearless, cool and honest, we have admired him for many years. As college students we admired his writings, his rich alliterative effects, his beautiful style, his uncompromising opposition to prescription, caste and discrimination, his unswerving demand for more and better education for men and women of color.

Sometimes Dr. Du Bois has been termed a sociologist. The alleged Negro historian, Benjamin Brawley, makes this inexcusable error. There is nothing in Dr. Du Bois's works, however, which justifies this conclusion. Dr. Du Bois has often written upon sociological titles, but the sociology is not to be found as we understand it. His "Suppression of the African Slave Trade" is a purely descriptive, quasi-historic-

al work. His "Philadelphia Negro" is a heavily padded work, filled with superfluous matter, very much like a similar work by Dr. George E. Haynes, entitled "The Negro at Work in New York City." His "Souls of Black Folk" has more literature than information. The best chapter in the work is the sane and logical criticism of Booker Washington, Kelly Miller, Grimké, and others. But, on the whole, the book is a mass of labored alliterations with most of the information "within the veil" to which he not infrequently refers. His "The Negro" is little more than an attempt to pick out the better part of certain phases of African development and featuring those phases. His "Quest of the Silver Fleece" will probably never be considered more than a third rate piece of fiction. The only fairly scientific production which we have ever seen from the pen of Dr. Du Bois was an article in the May issue of the Atlantic Monthly, 1916, entitled "African Roots of the War." This article is worth reading and we have not infrequently urged our readers and audiences to put it in their libraries.

It needs to be said in extenuation of his scientific shortcomings, that Dr. Du Bois was educated at a time and place where political science was not in great favor and where political science was little taught. Greek, Latin and classicism were stressed at Harvard. Few of the older Negro leaders have had the modern education. An illustration of this may be seen in Dr. Du Bois's "Crisis". The leading column of the "Horizon" is always "Music and Art." Then "Meetings" which signify the gathering of literateurs. Next "The War" which inspires pictures and scenes for literary description and word painting. "Industry" and "Politics" sections follow. This is no coincidence but a logical product of Du Bois's education. The "Messenger" carries as its first column, after editorials, "Economics and Politics." This is natural for us, because with us economics and politics take precedence to "Music and Art."

Du Bois's conception of politics is strictly opportunist. Within the last six years he has been Democratic, Socialist and Republican. His attitude toward the

parties is the old, antiquated conception of swinging on to the one thought most likely to win. That accounted for his support of Woodrow Wilson in 1912, when the spit in the Republican party presaged a Democratic victory. Propitiation—for-favors policy!

On the economic field he interprets movements from the personal and not the collective action point of view. Instead of opposing a prejudiced union, he opposes unionism, which is about as logical as opposition to writing on the ground that it may be used for forgery. But, as we said, political science is new to the old Negro leaders, while the brand taught in the universities is largely mischievous and reactionary.

Dr. Du Bois, however, has been honest and, we believe, fearless. He has supplied a good transition from Booker Washington's compromise methods to the era of the new Negro. He has made the bridge. He will ere long now have to make way for the new radicalism of new Negroes. But Du Bois need not feel chagrined. Radicalism is a relative term and three decades hence may pronounce the radicals of today as the reactionaries of tomorrow.

SAMUEL GOMPERS

The subject of this sketch is the recognized leader of the American labor movement. He has a strong and forceful character and the power for leadership.

This is, indeed, unfortunate in view of the course he is pursuing. It is becoming a matter of common knowledge among the rank and file that the leaders become officialized, conservative and reactionary. The leader is usually inclined to arbitrate and compromise on principles. This is because the leader is sought, flattered and cajoled by the enemies of the army which he leads.

The capitalists know that if they can capture the leader of the working class army, it will be easy to disorganize the rank and file. This is why capitalists wine and dine the President of the American Federation of Labor and the capitalist press glorifies his patriotism. You cannot put your feet under a man's dinner table and oppose his opinions.

The psychology is that an individual is inclined to respect the wishes of his benefactor.

Besides the leader lacks a fundamental understanding of economic methodology. He recognizes a partnership between the employer and employee, the master and slave, the oppressed and the oppressor, the flea and the dog. He would have organized labor to oppose organized capital on the industrial field but support organized capital on the political field. In short, he would assist capitalists to prevent labor securing social amelioration through the agency of law. He stands upon the fallacious principle of pure and simple unionism which operates to achieve an American Separation of Labor instead of an American Federation of Labor.

In a printing establishment where pressmen went on strike he would, according to some spurious principle of union autonomy, permit scab pressmen to take their places.

He has not caught nor understood the meaning of industrial unionism.

As a thinker in terms of internationalism Mr. Gompers is still in his swaddling clothes, distressingly unwitting of his way. He has no conception of the thinking of European labor.

His position is the product of the possession of false opinions on the principles of the class struggle, the race struggle and the nation struggle.

KELLY MILLER

Kelly Miller, of Howard University, was for a long time considered an intellectual somewhat of the Du Bois type. He is a professor of mathematics in Howard University, Washington, D. C., where he became known as a logician—not for anything which he did demonstrating a logical mind, but because it was current that a mathematician was a logician.

Kelly Miller has made a record on repartee and on satirical writing in his replies to Thomas Dixon's "Leopard Spots" and a few other pamphlets. At the present time Professor Miller holds the chair of sociology in Howard. His sociology, however, is more questionable than that of Du Bois. His claim to the title of sociologist is based upon his periodical essays, writ-

ten from different subjects—usually Negro. It cannot be said either that anything which Miller writes is scientific, since he usually predicates his proof of the most important questions upon some verse of the Bible—a recognized fallacious course.

As to his attitude on social questions he is probably the most reactionary Negro scholar of the country. He is opposed to woman suffrage. He is opposed to Socialism. He is a straddler between what Booker Washington stood for and between what Du Bois was once supposed to stand for. He is a palliator, compromiser, acquiescer—trying to please all opposing sides. It is hard to pin him down to an opinion about anything on which others may differ, and when he has been supposed to have taken a position, it is usually with some mental reservation which may contradict the whole position taken.

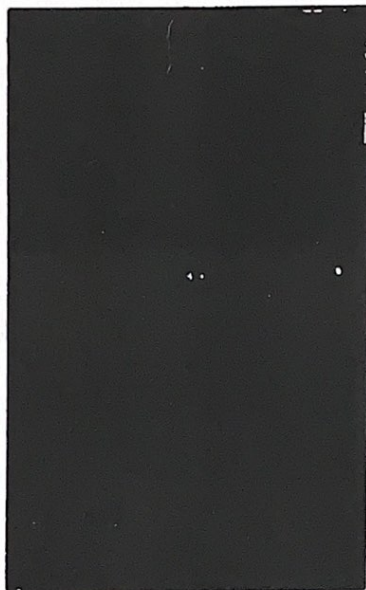
As a writer Miller is prolific in the production of essays. His books like "Race Adjustment" and "Out of the House of Bondage" are generally a medley of essays combined into a book. Picked up and put together as they are, it is not possible to produce a co-ordinated, comprehensive and scientific work. And educated as Miller was in the days of rank classicism, it is hardly to be expected that he could produce a thorough-going scientific work. Training trains the mind in a certain way. In those days bible was a long-winded course in the schools and colleges. Miller must have had ten years of bible, for his system of argument is perpetually to summon some verse of bible to the rescue.

As to the style, he is more direct and clearer than Du Bois. At certain points he is interesting, especially when one feels like relaxing to the primitive and enjoying invective, satire and sarcasm of which Miller makes a specialty. Very often his style is labored, but not the labored, alliterative style of Du Bois. He can write prose poetry when he desires. In his "Out of the House of Bondage" he has a chapter entitled, "I See and Am Satisfied," which is filled with splendid imagination and good literary effects.

It needs to be said, however in extenuation of Miller's scientific shortcomings, that his edu-

cation was the old, antiquated classicist kind. It was the kind that the Negroes were taught to laud, because it was recognized that so long as the Negro's attention was directed toward the declining of Latin and Greek nouns, and the conjugation of Latin and Greek verbs, there was no likelihood of his learning anything radical and fundamental. The long courses in the bible were designed for a like purpose.

In explanation of Miller's shortcomings on taking a definite position upon a public issue, it needs to be said that "the power over a man's subsistence is the power over his will." Miller is employed by Howard University. Howard University is controlled by capitalists and by the govern-



KELLY MILLER

ment. And these two forces allow little radicalism to become articulate while they control.

Untrained and poorly informed on modern economic, political and social problems, Miller is not prepared to lead. Controlled and checked by his employers, he has but little opportunity to do what he knows might be beneficial to his race. His services, however, have to be measured in terms of the stimulation in a certain direction which he has wrought generally. He has made young Negro men and women think that he was radical, that radicalism was a good thing, and they will not stop now at his standard, but will press on to real radicalism. Such

is his best contribution to the young Negro students who have been trained under him.

SCOTT NEARING

Scott Nearing is one of the finest figures in America. Scholarly, capable, cool, courageous, he has an enviable position. The corporation controlled universities of Pennsylvania and Toledo dismissed him because he was too democratic for an alleged republic. He has written some works which have earned the undying hate of the moribund capitalist order. "Income," "Poverty and Riches," "Anthracite," his articles on the Philadelphia traction interests, are thorns in the plutocratic sides.

At present Nearing is on trial for alleged violation of the Espionage Act, specifically, for writing the "Great Madness," which clearly, forcefully, succinctly and lucidly explains America's reasons for entering the Great War. In the courtroom he has been the master without effort or ostentation. He has given out a mass of facts, so informing that the Court may well count itself honored by being fortunate enough to have been assigned the trial. Unassuming, poised and brilliant, he has answered every question without evasion. In fact, his answers have been made at times over the sustained objections of his counsel.

Nearing is an able social economist. He might have enjoyed academic respectability (?) had he been loyal to plutocracy. He could have been the president of some big university. His devotion to principle, however, propelled him elsewhere. He has placed his wonderful powers of analysis at the service of the lowly, the humble, the poor. He has chosen to inform the plain people in order that they might enjoy what they produce. His college training, his conservative traditions and surroundings, did not swerve him from his democratic ideals.

It is not often that a person comes in for unstinted praise in these "Who's Who" columns. But Nearing exacts it. He is a clear thinker, a clean-cut speaker with a fine expository style of presentation. He is a devotee of our own intellectual idol—the late