



Roscoe Conklin Simmons

For the last two years the country has been afflicted with many wind jammers, who are long on inspiration and short on information. Among Negroes, this class is typified in Roscoe Conklin Simmons. Among ignorant Negro editors (and most of them are ignorant) Simmons is reputed to be an orator. The truth, however, is that Simmons is an entertainer and a very poor entertainer at that. The substance of his speeches is usually nothing said in schoolboy florid rhetoric. Of recent date, he has been speaking upon the subject of Americanism. Speaking in Portland, Oregon, upon this subject, Simmons said: "I am an American, proud of it and jealous of both the power and reputation of my country and countrymen." Think of a Negro being proud to be an American! Think also of an American Negro proud and jealous of the reputation of his countrymen when his country protects neither his life nor his property, denies three-fourths of his race the right to vote, lynches, segregates, insults and robs him and his race. Reflect also upon a Negro jealous of the reputation of his countrymen, most of whom are savages and barbarians compared with whom the Huns and vandals were as shining angels of light. Another sample of Simmons' trash is: "I have an undisturbed faith in the justice of my countrymen, and in the promises of God. I am not moved, nor am I discouraged. Patience is my pillow." Here is a sample of a fool in a fool's paradise. The only

solution which Simmons has for the Negroes' wrongs is patience. Patience for lynching! Patience for disfranchisement! Patience for discrimination! Patience for hoodlum rioters! Patience for the Jim-crow car! Patience for segregation! Patience for all the ills from which Negroes suffer. The inanity and asininity of such a proposal would be ludicrous were it not so vicious. All the progress of the world, among any race or people, has been made through intelligent discontent with the conditions under which people were suffering, and a determination followed by action, to remove the conditions. That is true of every advance made by the Negro. It was not the patient Negro who helped to free the slaves. All the slave owners told Negroes to be patient and that God in his own time would free them, but the two hundred thousand Negroes who fought on the Union side were not willing to wait for God and His own time but impatiently rose and decided to free themselves by striking the blow. A patient Negro of the me-too-boss-hat-in-hand variety, to which Simmons himself belongs, would have been in slavery today. Had Negroes followed the advice of patience in Washington and Chicago their houses would have been burned down, their women insulted and abused, and their men murdered. But the Washington and Chicago rioters met an impatient New Negro, whose only patience was in aiming straight.

Simmons has no knowledge of

history, economics, sociology or any science at all. Upon no public question is he prepared to advise anybody. A sample of his ability to discuss a public question may be taken from his speech on prohibition. He says: "Those who favor prohibition are a bunch of hypocrites. As long as the grapes are ripe on the vines and the barley lifts its head to Heaven, and receives the sunray kisses, men will be drunk." Simmons has not even enough brains to realize that men can't drink unless they get something to drink. Moreover, his observation was that Lester F. Ward calls an opinion based upon desire. The wish was father to the thought. In Seattle, Wash., Simmons spoke in the Y. M. C. A. Auditorium. He there appeared again in the role of a specialist on patience. He praised the forty-three Negro policemen in Boston who did not strike during the policemen's strike, when we condemn them and condemn them very severely, unless the white policemen discriminated against them in joining the union. Wherever Negroes can get into the unions, it is both desirable and their duty to do so. If the police had won their strike, all the members on the force, including the forty-three Negroes, would have received the wage increases and it is the business of Negroes to fight side by side with their fellow workers for any advantage which they may exact for their class. Simmons also launched an attack upon Bolshevism and the Reds in Seattle, saying that the Reds were all foreigners and it

was only foreigners who lynched Negroes, and the Negroes must be the force that rises to put down the menace to this free country. This statement is the zenith of ignorance and stupidity in the light of the highly foreign character of the composition of our population, and the large contribution which has been made in the fields of art, commerce, science, industry, religion, etc., by the foreign element; and the further fact that every so-called American is a foreigner—the Irish, French, English, Negro, everybody, save the Indian.

The census of 1910 shows that every section of this country is highly foreign, in the sense of being composed of persons who are naturalized or born of foreign parentage, except the South which is the most backward and unprogressive. Even the Negro has been affected with this anti-foreign virus. But here *The Messenger* would warn him to watch his step. Since when has the Negro been imbued with a passion to be consigned to the tender mercies of the native white population of the South, consisting of its Tillmans, Vardamans, Oleases, Hoke Smiths and John Sharp Williams, in preference to the highly foreign population of the North, East and West!

There are 30.64 per cent. of whites born of foreign parents

and 26.19 per cent. of naturalized and unnaturalized whites form 4.45 per cent.

In the good old state of Tennessee, where Eli Parsons was burned at stake, there are only 1.88 per cent. whites born in America of foreign parents, and 1.13 per cent. of strictly foreign born whites. In the State of Massachusetts, however, 27.09 per cent. of its population are composed of whites born of foreign parents, and 39.35 per cent. of whites, naturalized or unnaturalized. Or in a word, 66.44 per cent. of the population of Massachusetts are foreigners.

Ask your Negro leaders in which states would they prefer to deliver a speech against lynching—Georgia and Tennessee or New York and Massachusetts? Remember, however, that the dirty foreigners live in New York and Massachusetts, while our good old American native stock hold forth in Georgia and Tennessee. A perusal of the above mentioned facts reveals the utter ignorance and silliness of any so-called Negro leader attempting to make disparaging and approbrious remarks about the foreigners. They are the best friends the Negroes have, and naturally so, since in no country in the world but America are race and color so discriminated against and so foolishly hated. The Frenchmen

are foreigners, but no Negro would has two ounces of sense would maintain that French foreigners are not superior and juster in every way than American natives.

But why speak longer about Simmons? That is a question which demands an answer, and the answer is not far to find. To-day, the stage has probably the most powerful appeal to the masses and it is from the point of view of the influence of stage and screen that we discuss Roscoe Simmons. He is an entertainer and a comedian, and since fun is the most common form of amusement for the plain people, the funmakers and entertainers, like Simmons, have considerable influence among them. The eyes of the Negroes are being opened, however, by the continuous propaganda of the New Crowd Negroes and the days are numbered when such old, political and oratorical fossils as Roscoe Conkling Simmons can longer mislead any considerable group of Negroes. With the passing of the old order these little Negro satelites, who are bankrupt in information, poverty stricken in ideas, intellectual lilliputians, and mental midgets, will be relegated to the discarded and discredited realm of forgotten derelicts.