

THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Sociology

THE NEGRO AND THE NORTH

By EDWIN R. EMBREE

FOR generations the whole country has patterned its race relations after the prejudices of the South. In dealing with Negroes, people in Chicago and New York and San Francisco have bowed to taboos fixed by conditions of a hundred years ago in regions a thousand miles away. Yet in Northern cities, made up of people of every race and nationality, color prejudice is no more natural than discrimination against blond hair or big feet. Fortunately, the North is beginning to realize that such prejudice has no more place in democratic America than the hates of Europe.

This realization is growing not so much from a surge of brotherhood as from a desire for efficiency. We have seen the South bog down further and further by the waste motion and waste energy caused by prejudice: dual systems of schools and colleges in a section least able to support or man one system; segregated services in trains and busses and waiting rooms in a region least well equipped with pub-

lic services of any kind; learning and statesmanship frustrated by preoccupation with color bars; agriculture stifled by the inefficiency of tenancy and share cropping, which makes peons of twice as many whites as Negroes and does not even make prosperity for the owners; labor divided by racial clashes and industry hampered by having to give as much attention to caste as to production. The North has looked at the bankruptcy of the South, caused in part by the tribute paid to "the race problem;" it has seen its own efficiency impaired by following Southern custom, and is beginning to recognize that prejudice and discrimination just cost too much.

America has suffered enough already from letting the attitudes of a single small section influence the action of the whole nation. Even when faced by world conflict, we faltered in total preparedness because of our subjection to Southern custom. With defense industries clamoring for manpower to build ships and planes, to make munitions and all the materials of war, the skills and energies

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of hundreds of thousands of Negroes have not been used because most employers refused to hire colored workers in any but menial jobs. The cost of this waste of human resources in production and in morale has been incalculable. Not until the President issued an edict against discrimination in defense employment did many firms begin to utilize Negro manpower.

When we set out to draft all of our able-bodied young men to fight for democracy, we sacrificed total effectiveness to these same old prejudices. We put one-tenth of our fighting force into Jim Crow camps and Jim Crow units in every branch of the service, assigning many well-qualified men to menial tasks. While those who have been given combat duty have already made a striking record of bravery in this war—as Negroes have in all the previous battles of the nation—it would not be surprising if these undemocratic practices affected the Negro's will to fight. It is certainly true that, in general, the morale of the colored soldier is very low. How could it be otherwise when, to cite but one example, Negro soldiers on a troop train going through Texas find themselves sitting behind a Jim Crow curtain at one end of the dining car while a group of German war prisoners eat in the main section, together with the white Americans!

In little ways, as well as big, we have kowtowed to the ancient feudal feelings of the South. In New York City an authoritative pamphlet, *The*

Races of Mankind, prepared by leading scientists, was barred from the servicemen's centers. "It might be all right for us in New York," explained an official, "but you know they are very sensitive about race in the South." Even in cosmopolitan Hollywood, colored actors are seldom shown as anything but menials and comics, not because the movie producers are ignorant of Negro achievement, but because they "do not want to offend the South."

The heartening fact is that even in the South many people no longer share the ancient point of view. Hundreds of Southerners are devoting their careers to Negro schools and to interracial movements of various sorts. White teachers' groups in many Southern states are the chief sponsors of equal pay for Negro teachers. The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching has publicly scorned the claim that lynching is necessary to their protection, pointing out the danger of mob violence to all the values of home and religion. In almost every Southern city committees of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, composed of leading citizens of both races, meet regularly to protect Negro rights and to plan for the common community interests of both white and colored. An influential Southern journalist, Mr. Virginus Dabney of Richmond, recently proposed the repeal of Virginia's segregation laws on public carriers, on the grounds that these practices did not peacefully separate,

as originally intended, but now contributed to interracial friction and added an intolerable humiliation for the Negroes.

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It is time for other sections of the country to declare their independence, to secede from the old patterns of discrimination. Through the long years the South has demanded that Northerners leave the South alone on the race question. "We Southerners will solve our problems in our own way," they said. Now the North is by way of taking up the same slogan. We are beginning to say to the South, "Keep out. Your traditions have no bearing on attitudes in the North. We will solve our race relations in our own way — the American way."

Each of America's four great wars has been fought for the idea of freedom. In each of them Negroes have climbed another mighty rung toward freedom and equality. The Revolutionary War fixed our minds on the rights of man. It started a development which ended slavery in all the Northern states and outlawed the further import of slaves. While the South continued a huge bootlegging of blacks, and while the world cotton industry brought an upsurge of the plantation and slavery, the Revolution set a tide toward freedom that was never wholly checked.

The Civil War brought emancipation and a national declaration of equal rights for all without regard to

race, creed, or color. It is true that, following a brief period of Reconstruction, the Southern states found ways to evade the national will. It is true that real freedom could not be created overnight by any edict for four million people who had never known anything but the abject dependence of slavery. Real independence had to be won by the freed men themselves — in education, health, economic competence, self-discipline, self-reliance. And ever since the Civil War, Negroes have been painfully but steadily climbing toward that independence.

The First World War gave the Negro his first big opportunity in industry and started the great migration out of the South. It is true that, after that war, there were race riots in Northern cities and fierce suppressions throughout the South. But the Negro had gained a new status. And he has been steadily building on it ever since.

The Second World War has given an opportunity for another advance toward democracy in America. It is true that the national Army and Navy have not thrown off the old pattern of segregation even in this life-and-death struggle. But the Army has enrolled nearly a million Negro youths and given them some combat duty on all fronts, including the thrilling and heroic air service. It has commissioned hundreds of colored officers, and in many of the officer-training camps, even in the South, it has forgotten all about segregation.

The Navy has recruited nearly a hundred thousand Negroes and has issued a few commissions.

In the non-military branches of war service, the Negro has been welcomed as never before. The war industries, following the Presidential edict against discrimination, have called into employment every able-bodied man, white or colored, and hundreds of thousands of women of all races, creeds, and colors. The CIO has stood from the beginning for equal membership of all workers. The AF of L, in spite of a long history of exclusion, is rapidly shifting in most of its affiliated unions to a common front for all labor. Even the Railway Brotherhoods, guardians of white supremacy in labor, are under attack both by the manpower authorities and by a large bloc of public opinion.

There are urgent reasons why the North and West must revise their racial attitudes now. In the first place, Negroes are no longer massed wholly in the South. Between one-quarter and one-third of all brown-Americans now live in the North and West. The 1940 Census reported 3,500,000 Negroes outside the Southern states. And the huge influx of workers to war industries during the past three years has raised that number to well over 4,000,000, out of a total Negro population of slightly less than 13,000,000. The big concentrations are no longer in the Southern rurals but in the Northern cities.

The single city of New York shows, in the 1940 Census, nearly 500,000

Negroes, equal to the total colored population of such typically Southern states as Arkansas and Tennessee. Chicago's 300,000 Negroes exceed the colored population of the whole states of Kentucky or Missouri. The last census lists eleven cities throughout the country with over 100,000 Negroes. Los Angeles reported 64,000 in 1940 and is estimated to have doubled that number during the last three years of war industry. San Francisco, which never had more than a small colored colony of two or three thousand, suddenly finds twenty-five to thirty thousand Negroes teeming about its war plants.

A second reason for a shift in attitude is that Negroes in the North have the vote and are using it. They hold the balance of power in many states and in just those states — New York, Pennsylvania, and the Middle West — which in turn hold the balance in national elections. Hard-headed politicians know what this means — as is amply proved by the frantic wooing of Negro favor by both parties. As Negroes learn to use their political power more skillfully, there is almost nothing that they cannot demand and get, both from the party in power and the party seeking power.

A third force is vague but powerful: a recognition of the new status of "colored" peoples throughout the world. This war covers the whole earth. Among the United Nations who will control the new world are men of every race and creed and

color. The Allies number some 250,000,000 "white men of the Western nations" — the United States and the British Commonwealth. But there are also 450,000,000 yellow Chinese; 350,000,000 brown men of India; 125,000,000 dark Malayan peoples of southeast Asia, the East Indies, Philippines, and other Pacific islands; 120,000,000 Latin Americans, many of whom are proud of their Indian and Negro ancestry as well as of their European blood; such millions from Africa and the Near East as can free

themselves for the struggle; and 190,000,000 Soviet Russians who are devoted not only to economic equality but to equality of all races and cultures.

Most of us have not let ourselves think of a world order in which these people will hold the power, not only of numbers, but of their rapidly developing industry and arms. But most of us know in our inner hearts that the heyday of the mastery of the earth by the "white man of Northern Europe and North America" is gone.

Medicine

MEDICAL TELESCOPES

BY ROBERT H. FELDT, M.D.

Two new medical telescopes have made diagnostic miracles possible today that were undreamed of a decade ago. One of them, the peritoneoscope, has increased diagnostic accuracy for abdominal diseases by 50 per cent. The other, the gastroscope, gives promise of reducing the appalling death rate of cancer of the stomach.

Diagnosis is scientific guess-work based on the physician's training and experience. In many disorders, 95 to 100 per cent accuracy is possible. But at times the combination of symptoms and findings points to two or more possible conditions. If these lie in the abdomen, an exploratory operation

may be necessary. Often the operation discloses a localized cancer, an ovarian tumor, or a diseased gall bladder, and removal of the organ cures the patient. But sometimes spreading cancer or other inoperable abnormalities are discovered, and then the exploratory operation will have been in vain.

The peritoneoscope eliminates the necessity for such operations in one-fourth to one-half of the patients. It does this by enabling the physician to peer directly into the abdomen. The only anesthetic required for the process is a shot of novocain into the skin just below the navel. A needle is then inserted and air is pumped in, ballooning the abdomen. This makes it easier to manipulate the peritoneoscope after it is introduced through a tiny nick in the skin.

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