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The Socialists Within the Black American Experience, 1917-1924

John M. Andrick

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The Socialists Within the Black American

Experience, 1917-1924

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BY

John M. Andrick

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER I -- Early Negro Socialism | 5 |
| CHAPTER II -- The <u>Messenger</u> - "A High Quality Publication" | 11 |
| CHAPTER III -- The Friends of Negro Freedom | 24 |
| CHAPTER IV -- The Race Leadership | 38 |
| A. The Old Crowd | 38 |
| B. Marcus Garvey | 55 |
| CHAPTER IV -- Conclusion | 68 |
| APPENDIX A | 75 |
| APPENDIX B | 76 |
| APPENDIX C | 77 |
| APPENDIX D | 78 |
| SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY | 82 |
| I. Books | 82 |
| II. Articles | 85 |
| III. Pamphlets | 89 |
| IV. Newspapers | 89 |
| V. Interviews | 90 |

"History is at best a fallacy. It is a record of only the most exceptional of human phenomena."

William N. Colson, Messenger, December, 1919, p. 24.

"The signs are abundant that the future of the Negro race the world over is inextricably intertwined with the future of radicalism and labor. "

Negro World - June 7, 1919

INTRODUCTION

Over the past couple of decades several scholars have dealt seriously with the question of American socialism. The works that have been produced usually focus on the strongest and best organized of Marxist organizations, the Socialist Party of America (SPA). Though formally established at the Unity Convention in Indianapolis in 1901, the roots of the party reach back into the early 19th century. During the first two decades of this century, it enjoyed moderate electoral success and hundreds of its members served the public as various state and municipal office-holders.

Taking its ideological cues from older European parties, the SPA adhered closely to strict Marxist dogma. Encouraged by the incredibly rapid rate of monopolization in industry, the party believed capitalist competition was nearly at an end and the cooperative commonwealth just around the corner. Once basic industries had become trustified, removal from private to public control would insure operation for service instead of for profit. Only when the means of production were in public hands could the socialist goal of eliminating poverty be achieved.

The only true national leader the party had was Eugene Victor Debs, who polled six percent of the popular vote in his bid for President in 1912. But control of party machinery remained in the hands of Morris Hillquit of

New York City, defeated in a four-way race for Mayor in 1917, and Victor Berger of Milwaukee, elected U. S. Congressman in 1916. The leader in the West was Kate Richards O'Hare, who through her organ National Rip-Saw, published in St. Louis, Missouri, appealed for agrarian support.

The first blow came to the Party in April, 1917, when Congress declared war on the Central Powers. Meeting in St. Louis at the time, party leaders overwhelmingly decided not to support the war. Debs and O'Hare ended up in prison and Congressman Berger faced indictment under the Espionage Act. Then in 1919 a disastrous split within the ranks resulted in the creation of the Communist and Communist-Labor Parties.

By 1923 the decline of the SPA (but not radicalism in general) was more than evident. It was desperately seeking an alliance with reform groups and was one of the original callers for the Conference of Progressive Political Action (CPPA) which supported Robert M. LaFollette for President in 1924. Finally in December, 1924, with the collapse of the CPPA, the SPA relinquished its most active role in American history, a role that lasted over a decade.

The role and impact of black socialists in American society, on the other hand, has received rare and insufficient study, and their influence within the SPA even less. Leading scholars of this field, labor historians Sterling Spero and Abram Harris, intellectual historian Harold Cruse, and biographer and recent recipient of the Sidney Hillman Award, Jervis Anderson,

have offered important contributions to the understanding of the Messenger period. Thus far, no volume has appeared dealing solely with the history of Negro socialists as a unit functioning within the black community or as a part of the international socialist movement.

It took nearly five years after the general recognition that the SPA was a political force to be dealt with before any large, active following emerged among Negroes. This movement flourished in Harlem during World War I around a group of young intellectuals led by Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph, co-editors of the Messenger, "The Only Radical Negro Magazine in America," and the first socialist periodical edited and published by Negroes.¹ The socialist years of the Messenger (1917-1924), reflect a period of widespread political and economic radicalism in America. It cannot be denied that discontent among Blacks provided somewhat of a further impetus for radicalism. Spero and Harris have correctly noted that, "The racial movement and philosophies that sprang up among the Negro population during the five years that followed the World War bore the earmark of economic unrest and social dissatisfaction for which the inertia of the labor movement and American race psychology were responsible."²

¹James Weinstein, The Decline of American Socialism, 1912-1925, 1967, p. 71. The Hotel Messenger, published from January-August 1917, and official organ of the Headwaiters and Sidewaiters Union, was labelled socialist by the Lusk Committee of New York investigating radical and seditious activities and thus could be called the first Negro socialist publication. It was also edited by Owen & Randolph.

²Sterling D. Spero & Abram L. Harris, The Black Worker; the Negro and the Labor Movement, 1966, pp. 387-8. Besides economic radicalism, the movement also assumed the forms of racial self-sufficiency and Negro Zionism (p. 387).

This paper will: 1) discuss the nature of the Messenger; 2) examine one of the organizations created by the socialists; 3) explore their relationship to the major figures of Negro leadership; and 4) review some of the reasons historians offer for the socialist collapse.

"Although Black history is dotted with a few socialist thinkers and writers advocating the replacement of capitalism, their influence was small and followings were negligible."

Julius Lester - New Politics, Spring, 1973, p. 8.

I. EARLY NEGRO SOCIALISM

The first known American Negro to address the issue of socialism was Peter H. Clarke.¹ While there were three Negroes at the founding convention of the SPA in 1901, the first prominent socialist was probably W. E. B. Du Bois, who resigned from the party in 1912 to support Woodrow Wilson.² Another leading socialist of the early part of this decade was an Iowan, the Rev. George W. Slater, Jr. Distinguished looking, sporting a mustache and goatee, the Rev. Slater held the post of Secretary to the Colored Race for the Christian Socialist Fellowship. While conceding that Negroes were "prejudiced against the word Socialism," it was his belief that the Negro's condition made him "susceptible to the doctrines of the Co-operative Commonwealth" and that he would develop a deep interest once he understood its tenets.³ A colleague of Rev. Slater, a Dr. J. T. Whitson, of whom little is known, wrote a pamphlet entitled "The Advantages Socialism Offers to the Negro," which sold for 2¢ a copy.⁴

¹See Herbert G. Gutman, "Peter H. Clarke: Pioneer Negro Socialist, 1877," Journal of Negro Education L (Fall 1965), pp. 413-18.

²Jervis Anderson, A. Philip Randolph; a Biographical Portrait, 1973, p. 79.

³George W. Slater, Jr., "The Negro & Socialism," Christian Socialist (July 1, 1913), p. 7.

⁴Ibid.

But the man to lay the groundwork for the Messenger group⁵ was a Virgin Island native, Hubert H. Harrison (1883-1927). According to Irwin Marcus, Harrison joined the SPA "because of its militancy and advocacy of improving the lot of humanity. He achieved some importance in the Party and also took an active role in strikes, including the Paterson struggle of 1913."⁶ Apparently, "doubts about the militancy of socialists and their lack of concern for promoting the interests of Negroes" caused Harrison to leave the party in June, 1917.⁷

Evidence of Mr. Harrison's stature among Negroes is reflected by a remarkable and curious document discovered fairly recently in the National Archives by W. F. Elkins and reprinted in Science and Society. On October 10, 1919, British Intelligence forwarded to the U. S. State Department a report stamped Strictly Confidential and entitled "Unrest Among The Negroes." The report was prompted by labor disturbances and the growth of race consciousness in the West Indies. It dealt almost exclusively with the socialist movement among American Negroes with the added fear of ideological proliferation and exportation to British possessions. With regard to Hubert Harrison the report states:

⁵ See Jervis Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, pp. 86-88 for his definition of "Messenger radicals." Others not formerly tied to the Messenger were called "the Harlem, or New Negro, radicals."

⁶ Irwin Marcus, "Hubert Harrison: Negro Advocate," Negro History Bulletin XXXIV (January 1971), p. 18. The Paterson, N. J. textile strike was one of the bloodiest labor-management encounters of the decade.

⁷Ibid.

Thoroughly versed in history and sociology, Mr. Harrison is a very convincing speaker and his influence is considered to be more effective than that of any other individual radical, because his subtle propaganda, delivered in scholarly language and by the facts of history, carries an appeal to the more thoughtful and conservative class of Negroes who could not be reached by the 'cyclone' methods of the extreme radicals.⁸

The British, while acknowledging his lectures as a "preparatory school for radical thought," said he was not attempting to play such a role; yet he still was "the drill master training recruits for the Socialist Army led by the extreme radicals, Messrs. Owen and Randolph."⁹ Randolph himself has referred to Harrison as the "Father of Harlem Radicalism."¹⁰

Before the appearance of the Messenger, the most effective means of disbursing socialist ideas in Harlem was the street-corner meetings. Frank Crosswaith, leading Negro Socialist of the 1930's, vividly recalls the

awe and astonishment which greeted the small but courageous band of agitators as they sailed forth each night to preach from step-ladders . . . their 'seditious' and 'dangerous' doctrine . . . Negro Harlem had never before witnessed such inspiring spectacles as those intensely active nights when the moon and stars thrust down their shafts of light upon thousands of darkened-skinned individuals of both sexes and all ages standing motionless for 4 or 5 hours drinking the message of 'The New Negro' as it flowed from

⁸W. F. Elkins, "Unrest Among the Negroes: A British Document of 1919," Science & Society XXXII (Winter 1968), p. 78.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 79.

the wind-torn throats of the Negro radicals.¹¹

That this was no passing or occasional occurrence is demonstrated through the pen of James Weldon Johnson. Describing the efforts of Harrison, Owen, Randolph, and others in 1916-17, he wrote:

Radicalism in the modern and international sense of the term was born. Nightly along Lenox and Seventh Avenues dozens of speakers were explaining to listening groups the principles of socialism and the more revolutionary doctrine; trying to show them how these principles applied to their condition; hammering away at their traditional attitude of caution.¹²

Randolph has been universally recognized as one of the greatest orators of his day. He has been placed "in the league with John L. Lewis and Winston Churchill when it comes to creative use of the spoken English language."¹³

Born in April, 1889 in North Carolina and ten days older than Randolph, Chandler Owen was a graduate of Virginia Union College and a student at Columbia when the two met. According to Jervis Anderson, Owen knew nothing about socialism until he was converted by Randolph.¹⁴ His political ideology

¹¹Frank A. Crosswaith, "The Newer Negro," (July 1928), pp. 20-21. A pamphlet from the socialism file, Arthur A. Schomburg Collection, New York Public Library.

¹²James Weldon Johnson, Black Manhattan, 1930, p. 232.

¹³William Dufty, N. Y. Post, December 28, 1959.

¹⁴Ernest Rice McKinney, journalist and Messenger staff writer in 1923, has suggested the opposite. Interview, August 13, 1974. Randolph was first exposed to socialism at the City College of New York.

was based upon the writings of the early 20th century sociologist, Lester Frank Ward. George S. Schuyler has described the brazenly self-confident Owen as "a facile and acidulous writer, a man of ready wit and agile tongue endowed with the saving grace of cynicism."¹⁵

In 1911, A. Philip Randolph, son of a Florida African Methodist Episcopal minister, arrived in New York. Along with Owen, he obtained his red membership (SPA) card in 1916. The two then dropped out of school and re-organized the Independent Political Council with Randolph as President and Owen as Vice-President.¹⁶ They then opened a small employment office at 132nd and Lenox, calling this new enterprise "The Brotherhood." The office also provided a training program for untutored Negroes from the South.¹⁷

It was in January, 1917 that Owen and Randolph met William White, President of the Headwaiters and Sidewaiters Union. He offered them office space to initiate a union organ which they named the Hotel Messenger. It reached a circulation of approximately 2,500.¹⁸ The magazine's life came to an abrupt end after the editors exposed a scandal involving the headwaiters. Taking their furniture with them, Owen and Randolph moved next door to 513

¹⁵George S. Schuyler, Black & Conservative, 1966, p. 137.

¹⁶Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 76.

¹⁷Duffy, N.Y. Post, December 29, 1959.

¹⁸Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 78, and Revolutionary Radicalism - Report of the Joint Legislative Committee Investigating Seditious Activities, by Clayton Lusk, Chairman, II (1920), p. 2004.

Lenox and in November, 1917, one thousand copies of the Messenger hit the New York City newsstands.¹⁹

¹⁹Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 81, and Elkins, Science & Society, p. 76. The Industrial Bulletin, organ of the N. Y. State Dept. of Labor in Vol. XXXIX (January-February, 1960), p. 2., erroneously reports that the Messenger began publication in 1915.

"Our race is better provided with newspapers, even radical ones, than it is with political rights organizations."

Monroe Trotter - 1913

II. THE MESSENGER - "A HIGH QUALITY PUBLICATION"

In 1922 the Messenger stated that it was "authoritatively considered one of the gems of English literature and a high water mark in political science journalism."¹ While displaying an arrogance that sounds much like Owen, there is still much truth to the claim. Over thirty years after the Messenger ceased publication William Dufty called it "one of the ornaments of the age."² It has been called one of the most brilliantly edited magazines in the history of Negro journalism.³ A New York Call editorial declared the Messenger to be one of the most valuable and unique socialist publications that has appeared in this country. It maintains a literary and editorial standard that is equalled by few socialist publications, and in some respects it surpasses all periodicals of this kind in this country Some of the best studies in economic history have appeared in the Messenger, studies that are worthy of a wider reception among white workers as well as among Negroes.⁴

In its column "Open Forum" the Messenger printed letters from many individuals, most expressing high praise for this pioneering journal. The list

¹Messenger, VI (May 1922), p. 408.

²Dufty, N. Y. Post, December 28, 1959.

³Ibid.

⁴Messenger, III (August 1919), p. 29.

included such persons as writer F. Scott Fitzgerald, editor Charles S. Johnson, Eugene Debs, Joel E. Spingarn of the N. A. A. C. P., millionaire socialist William Bross Lloyd, journalist Heywood Broun, Professor Scott Nearing, Mary White Ovington of the N. A. A. C. P., writer Countee Cullen, J. A. H. Hopkins of the Committee of 48, and Oswald Garrison Villard of the N. A. A. C. P.

The magazine was indeed pioneering, and it proudly announced on its masthead to be "The Only Radical Negro Magazine in America." In February, 1920, it became "A Journal of Scientific Radicalism" because its education program resulted in another radical magazine, the Crusader, and its readership was multi-racial, including 10,000 white readers.⁵ Almost three years later, January 1923, its masthead proclaimed the magazine to be the "New Opinion of the New Negro."⁶ By November, 1923, it laid claim as the "World's Greatest Negro Monthly."⁷

Chandler Owen later boasted that the magazine "was the first 15¢ publication for Negroes."⁸ By purchasing a year's subscription for \$1.50, the buyer could save 30¢ off newsstand prices while receiving a free pamphlet or

⁵Messenger, IV (March 1920), p. 11.

⁶Jervis Anderson incorrectly reports this change as occurring in June 1923, A. Philip Randolph, p. 139.

⁷For some reason the December, 1923 issue reverted to the "New Opinion of the New Negro" but the January, 1924 issue once again became the "World's Greatest Negro Monthly - Read Everywhere by Everybody Who's Anybody."

⁸Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 85.

two besides. The magazine began its days at 513 Lenox in Harlem. It would take only a few months before the Messenger would be evicted for non-payment of rent. Owen and Randolph moved to 2305 Seventh Avenue where they remained until again evicted in 1924. The last days of the magazine were spent at 2311 Seventh Avenue until it folded in 1928.⁹ By this time it had dropped its early radicalism and was plugging Negro business and society in its monthly columns. In October, 1920, the Messenger asserted that it would be published "as long as Randolph and Owen - or either of them - is living."¹⁰ Randolph's wife, Lucille Green, would often tease him in later years by asking, "What was the name of that little paper you used to run?"¹¹ Many times she bailed the magazine out of financial difficulties with her own money. Jervis Anderson has described the physical aspects of the magazine in this manner, "Technically the magazine was neat and attractive in appearance, suggesting something of the high standards of printing that even poorly financed journals were once able to call upon."¹²

Of course, not all the credit rested with Owen and Randolph. Chandler Owen boasted in 1922 that "With Domingo, Miller, and Colson we got together not only the ablest array of scholars on any Negro publication in the world,

⁹ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁰ Messenger, IV (October 1920), p. 102.

¹¹ Dufty, N. Y. Post, December 28, 1959.

¹² Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 85.

but they competed on all fours with the very best white publications."¹³ A year later Abram L. Harris wrote in Current History that "Messrs. Randolph and Owen have a following which comprise some of the best trained minds in the race."¹⁴ Opportunity editor Charles S. Johnson, who has included the Messenger on his list of the seven most significant Negro journals, has spoke highly of the "brilliant young idealists . . . attracted to its columns."¹⁵

Even though only 1,000 copies of the first issue were printed of this irregularly published journal, circulation nonetheless reached 33,000 within six months.¹⁶ The highest circulation estimates for the Messenger range around 45,000.¹⁷ Thus, despite the denial of second class mail privileges for three years and its higher price, the Messenger reached the largest circulation in the United States except for the Chicago Defender and the Crisis.¹⁸

¹³Messenger, VI (April 1922), p. 391.

¹⁴Abram L. Harris, "The Negro Problem As Viewed By Negro Leaders," Current History XVIII (June 1923), p. 414.

¹⁵Charles S. Johnson, "The Rise of the Negro Magazine," Journal of Negro History XIII (January 1928), p. 7. Opportunity was the official organ of the National Urban League.

¹⁶Elkins, Science & Society, p. 76. See Appendix A for irregular publication of Messenger.

¹⁷Daniel S. Davis, Mr. Black Labor; the Story of A. Philip Randolph, 1972, p. 30. Weinstein in Decline of American Socialism, says 43,000, p. 71.

¹⁸The circulation for the Defender was about 150,000, and for the Crisis approximately 50,000, Elkins, Science & Society, p. 76. Second class mail privileges entitled periodicals to be carried at the extremely low rate of 1¢ a pound, far less than the actual cost to the government.

Current issues could be read in the New York Public Library, Clark University, Princeton, Harvard, and the Library of Congress which purchased two copies each month. In France it was ordered by the French Ministry of Public Instruction and could be found at the Bibliotheque et Musee de la Guerre in Paris.¹⁹

The readership of the magazine was not confined to Harlem or New York.²⁰ An indication of the wide circulation of the Messenger is given by an ad in The New Justice, a white radical magazine published in Los Angeles. Appearing in the July 15, August 1, and August 15, 1919 issues was the following ad: "Drive On for the Great Negro Magazine The Messenger. Negroes Strive for Universal Justice. Read About it in the Magazine That Dares. The Messenger will invade Los Angeles 5,000 strong." The last sentence corresponds with the editors' claim that Los Angeles agents were selling 5,000 copies.²¹ Randolph said later, "We were selling 5,000 copies in Seattle. And nobody knew there were any Negroes out there."²²

Other radical magazines, following the lead of the Messenger, sprang up in Harlem during this period.²³ They were the Emancipator, Crusader,

¹⁹Messenger, IV (April-May, 1920), p. 4.

²⁰Harold Cruse in The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, 1967, p. 71, estimates the Negro population for Harlem in 1920 at 80,000.

²¹Messenger, VI (April 1922), p. 389.

²²Dufty, N. Y. Post, December 30, 1959.

²³In 1923 there were 113 newspapers and 14 magazines owned and directed by Negroes. Charles H. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 1850 to 1925, 1927, p. 302.

and Challenge. The men connected with these periodicals, Cyril Briggs, Richard Moore, Anselmo Jackson, William Bridges, Otto Huiswood, and William Ferris, were frequent associates of Owen and Randolph.²⁴ While Jervis Anderson declares that "with the exception of Ferris, they were all socialists or economic radicals,"²⁵ it is Robert Brisbane's contention that only the Messenger was socialistic.²⁶ Regardless, none of these journals exceeded a circulation of 10,000 and none compared in quality with the Messenger. As far as the Messenger was concerned, the only other magazine worth reading was the Crusader.²⁷ Still, these radical journals "shook up the Negroes of New York and the country and effected some changes that have not been lost."²⁸

Another Harlem radical that should be mentioned since he is all but ignored by students of the period, is Osceola E. McKaine and his League for Democracy, centered in New York City. McKaine, a first lieutenant in the 367th Infantry, was Field Secretary of the League and also served as editor of a weekly newspaper, the Commoner, the League's official organ. British intelligence ranked his organization second in importance only to the socialists in

²⁴The Socialist-African Blood Brotherhood split in 1919 would end the harmony among Harlem radicals.

²⁵Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 87.

²⁶Robert H. Brisbane, The Rise of Negro Protest Groups Since 1900, 1948, p. 79.

²⁷Messenger, III (July 1919), p. 13.

²⁸Johnson, Black Manhattan, p. 251.

the area of Negro radicalism and expected League membership to reach 150,000.²⁹ This importance may be exaggerated. Neither Ernest Rice McKinney, current educational director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, writer George S. Schuyler, nor retired Crisis editor, Henry L. Moon, could recall McKaine or his organization.

An indication of McKaine's radical nature appears in a speech given in 1919 for the "Welcome Back, Monroe Trotter" gathering at Harlem's Palace Casino; "All methods, the ballot and even force, should be used that the 10,000,000 men and women south of the Mason and Dixon line be free."³⁰ The socialists were much more cautious in advocating the use of violence. They recognized it only as a means of self-defense. In 1917 Owen and Randolph wrote, "We do not advocate or condone criminality or lawlessness among Negroes. We condemn it."³¹

If an organ is determined by its program, the Messenger was indeed socialistic although it was also much more. Scholars of the Messenger period are quick to point this out. Spero and Harris have described its program as combining "a militant race psychology with proletarian class consciousness."³²

²⁹Elkins, Science & Society, p. 69. This estimate is considerably high since membership was confined to veterans of which there were no more than 400,000.

³⁰Clarion, III (August 1919), p. 16. Schomburg Collection.

³¹Messenger, I (November 1917), p. 6. Chandler Owen also once wrote, "we must rise with ballots, not bullets," from a pamphlet "The Remedy For Lynching," 1919, p. 11.

³²Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, p. 392.

Jervis Anderson notes that co-editor Randolph realized that "the movement for radical freedom could not proceed independent of the movement for social and economic change."³³ Chandler Owen foresaw the last order of human society as a "period of philosophic anarchy."³⁴

It is no secret that Owen and Randolph failed to reach the masses of the black proletariat. Ben Hecht offers one of the more salient reasons:

The history of radical journalism in our Republic has remained full of rue. Today, as yesterday, the working class, from the bindle stiff to the top artisan, look for escapism in print rather than for champions. They will give their pennies and loyalties to the comic strip, the cheese cake photos, and the sports section. Karl Marx or Tom Paine playing publisher can seldom coax enough clientele to survive.³⁵

George Schuyler, former socialist turned conservative³⁶ and Messenger contributor, explains why this is so:

Most people who chide the manual workers for not doing more reading do not understand the difficulties and problems of the ordinary people who must work hard all day and have so little leisure and so few of the amenities that

³³Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 62.

³⁴Revolutionary Radicalism - A Report, 1920, II, pp. 1511-12.

³⁵Ben Hecht, A Child of the Century, 1954, p. 245.

³⁶In 1965 Schuyler's name appeared as a National Advisory Board Member of the Young Americans For Freedom. Also serving in this capacity was Strom Thurmond, the James K. Vardaman of our day.

provide the necessary relaxation for reading in depth. Without proper background, how can they analyze or understand news?³⁷

But the insuperable obstacle to developing class consciousness in the Black worker was his undaunting conservatism. As Professor Harris has explained, "A priori deductions which ignore the economic and psychological setting of the Negro's present group life and history and his present reaction to unionism are liable to discover revolution where there is only conservatism."³⁸ Not only is the Negro not revolutionary, but he was not even considered a "promising progressive element."³⁹ Thus it was quite naive for white trade unionist leader, Phineas Eastman, to declare in 1913 that, "It is not a hard matter to make the Negro class-conscious. He is bound to be rebellious . . . All these fellows need is a little industrial union propaganda."⁴⁰ Even the conservative Kelly Miller appeared dismayed when he wrote, "The Negro is not Red, nor radical by nature. No amount of preachment can make him so. He is hopelessly and incurably conservative."⁴¹

One of the charges against the Messenger was that it failed to see this

³⁷Schuyler, Black and Conservative, p. 101.

³⁸Abram L. Harris, Jr. "The Negro & Economic Radicalism," Modern Quarterly, II (1925), p. 208.

³⁹Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, p. 468.

⁴⁰Phineas Eastman, "The Southern Negro & One Big Union," International Socialist Review, XIII (June 1913), p. 891.

⁴¹"Kelly Miller Says," Philadelphia Tribune, April 16, 1931, Schomburg Collection.

cultural aspect of black life. Spero and Harris assert that, "Only one of the economic radicals (Wilfred A. Domingo) expressed an appreciation of the resistance that the Negro's cultural background set up against socialism. Owen and Randolph's failure to see it explains their failure to see the futility of Marxian propaganda in Negro life."⁴² The reason for crediting Domingo with making this observation rests with a document, "Socialism Imperiled, or the Negro -- A Potential Menace to American Radicalism," seized in the June 21, 1919 raid on the Rand School of Social Science.⁴³ In the document Domingo warns of black "White Guards or Czecho-Slovaks" that could be mobilized by reactionary capitalist forces. But to say that Owen and Randolph failed to see this or that Domingo was the only one who did ignores two significant factors. 1) The May-June, 1919 issue of the Messenger featured an article by the editors entitled "The Negro - A Menace to Radicalism," in which they declared that the Negro public was being misled by its leaders. But even earlier Owen and Randolph had written, "The Negro Problem has been the shoals, the Scylla and Charybdis, on which the radical movements have foundered."⁴⁴ 2) Hubert Harrison had reached the same conclusion earlier in the decade:

Left to themselves they could become a menace They can be used

⁴²Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, p. 401.

⁴³On this occasion, these extra-legal yeggs used a drill.

⁴⁴Messenger, I (November 1917), p. 10.

against us , . . . The capitalists of America are not waiting. Already they have subsidized Negro leaders, editors, preachers, and politicians. For they recognize the value (to them) of cheap labor power and they know that if they can succeed in keeping one section of the working class down they can use that section to keep other sections down too.⁴⁵

It comes as no surprise then that when referring to the Messenger, Crisis, and other "radical Negro papers," the Atlanta Independent remarked they . . . "no more represent the thought, character, and intelligence of the 12 million Negroes in this country than Emma Goldman, Debs and other Bolsheviks represent the conservative intelligent class of our white neighbors."⁴⁶

Apparently, considerations such as this led prominent sociologist Wilson Record to conclude, "Among Negro intellectuals and trade-unionists Randolph and Owen created something of a stir, but their influence was extremely limited -- and has been greatly overdrawn by those historians who all too frequently judge the importance of a political actor primarily by the volume and ready accessibility of his writings."⁴⁷ One contemporary of the period who disagrees and who could hardly be called a radical himself is Charles S. Johnson. In 1928 he wrote that the Messenger "reached a high point of influence" and reached "restless Negroes of all stations."⁴⁸ If nothing else the two editors

⁴⁵Hubert H. Harrison, The Negro & the Nation, 1917, p. 22.

⁴⁶Robert T. Kerlin, The Voice of the Negro: 1919, 1920, p. 154.

⁴⁷Wilson Record, Race & Radicalism: The N.A.A.C.P. & the Communist Party in Conflict, 1964, p. 27.

⁴⁸Johnson, Journal of Negro History, pp. 17-18.

"shattered the illusion that Negroes were passive and content."⁴⁹

Whether or not the Messenger was reaching "Negroes of all stations," there is little doubt of its popularity in white liberal and radical circles. Chandler Owen announced in 1922 that, "It is reasonably certain that this publication has more white readers than all the other Negro publications in America combined."⁵⁰ Jervis Anderson reports Owen as stating that two-thirds of its readers were white.⁵¹ Abram Harris was forced to conclude that white liberals and radicals were better acquainted with the Messenger than most Negroes.⁵² That so many white readers responded to the Messenger is surprising considering what Marcus Boulware believes to be the legacy of the Booker T. Washington era:

The optimistic oratory of men like Booker T. Washington caused the majority of those white people who were kindly disposed to the Negro claim for civic and political equality to abandon the Negro. By the time new Negro protest orators had replaced the conservative optimists, their national audience was so reduced as to render their appeal hopelessly ineffective . . . a voice crying from afar.⁵³

But the message reached many, white as well as black. One group that

⁴⁹Richard B. Sherman, The Republican Party & Black America from McKinley to Hoover, 1896-1933, 1973, pp. 130-1.

⁵⁰Messenger, VI (April 1922), p. 390.

⁵¹Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 146.

⁵²Harris, Current History, p. 52.

⁵³Marcus H. Boulware, The Oratory of Negro Leaders, 1900-1968, 1969, p. 14.

listened was the N. A. A. C. P., for their leadership was being challenged by the socialists through an organization called the Friends of Negro Freedom.

"A Negro organization to fight for Negro rights is of more importance to the Negro race than are both Congress and the President. "

William Pickens - 1936

III. THE FRIENDS OF NEGRO FREEDOM

By 1919, the N. A. A. C. P., ten years old, had 88,348 members in 300 branches scattered across the country.¹ In the North there were 122 chapters 38,420 members; in the South 155 chapters and 42,588 members; and in the West 33 chapters with 7,440 members.² The post-war growth of the Association had been phenomenal, showing a seven hundred percent increase. In April, 1917, there existed only 80 branches with a total membership less than 10,000.³

For financial support the organization depended primarily on dues rather than philanthropy.⁴ With the rise of Marcus Garvey and his United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), funds were drained off that would normally have gone to the N. A. A. C. P.⁵ Wilson Record has discussed the

¹A. B. Millican, James Weldon Johnson: In Quest Of An Afrocentric Tradition for Black American Literature, 1973, p. 234. Roscoe Lewis has put the figures a little higher for 1919, 310 chapters with 91,203 members. See Roscoe E. Lewis, "The Role of Pressure Groups In Maintaining Morale Among Negroes," Journal of Negro Education XII (1943), p. 465.

²Millican, James Weldon Johnson, p. 234.

³Lewis, Journal of Negro Education, p. 465.

⁴Record, Race & Radicalism, p. 31.

⁵Ibid., p. 34. Ernest Rice McKinney disagrees, believing that the masses who gave to the UNIA were not potential N. A. A. C. P. contributors and were only looking for a chance to throw their money away. Interview, August 13, 1974.

manner in which Negroes supported their organizations:

. . . Negroes developed the habit of waiting for crises to develop rather than supporting their protest organizations through regular financial contributions and active participation. Although necessary in the circumstances, hat-in-handism was scarcely the way to build a steady, confident movement that American Negroes could call their own.⁶

Confusion has arisen over the true nature of the Association. Spero and Harris assert that its leadership was concerned only with the plight of the race and not that of the working class in general. "The problems of the Negro worker which are the same as those of the white man are beyond its concern."⁷ Yet in an open letter released at its 1924 convention, the Association seemed very much aware of class divisions when it stated, ". . . intelligent Negroes know full well that a blow at organized labor is a blow at all labor. . . Is it not time, then, that black and white workers got together?"⁸ Then on April 19, 1931, William Pickens sent the Communist Daily Worker a letter on N.A.A.C.P. stationery which said in part, "The one objective for final security is the absolute and unqualified unity and co-operation of ALL WORKERS, of all exploited masses, across all race and color lines and all other lines."⁹

Of all the Negro organizations, Owen and Randolph recognized the

⁶Record, Race & Radicalism, p. 45.

⁷Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, p. 464.

⁸Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, pp. 275-6.

⁹See William Pickens file, Schomburg Collection.

Association as the most powerful and influential. The leaders and policies of the organization did not escape close scrutiny by the socialists in the editorial pages of the Messenger. But the editors were well aware of the Association's limitations in American capitalist society. That the two young men knew where the real power lay is evidenced by their writings following the bloody post-war riots: "Powerful insurance companies can do more in a few hours than the N. A. A. C. P. can in a half-century. They can get Congress busy passing laws against destruction from riots and protect themselves."¹⁰ Yet the two men recognized the Association's value and generally approved its policies. "We have never known of any corruption in the handling of funds on the part of the N. A. A. C. P. nor has there been any pronounced ignorance, of error or mistake, in its leadership."¹¹ They also commended the N. A. A. C. P. for its use of picketing "as a means of fighting race prejudice,"¹² although Chandler Owen once wrote that "parades and public demonstrations were only good for voter registration drives."¹³ In 1924, the two socialists were praising the "new spirit" of the N. A. A. C. P.¹⁴

One of the Association's leaders that the socialists were especially

¹⁰Messenger, V (August 1921), p. 233.

¹¹Messenger, IV (March 1920), pp. 12-13.

¹²Messenger, V (July 1921), p. 209.

¹³Chandler Owen, "The Remedy for Lynching," The Truth About Lynching, 1917, p. 13.

¹⁴Messenger, VIII (September 1924), p. 281.

interested in was William Pickens (1881-1954), Field Secretary and former Dean of Morgan College. Two others of special concern for the Messenger were Robert Bagnall, a former Methodist rector in Detroit who served as Director of Branches, and James Weldon Johnson, Executive Secretary. Both Pickens and Bagnall were frequent contributors to the Messenger. Horace M. Bond described the three gentlemen in 1925 as ". . . forceful, polished, and convincing. And they are reaching the Negro, not only of the upper strata, but of the lower levels, in a manner almost as effective as Washington."¹⁵ The Messenger heralded the selection of Johnson as "a wise decision" and credited radical opinion among Negroes for forcing the appointment.¹⁶

But Owen and Randolph were not always in such approval of William Pickens. They described him in 1919 as ". . . addicted to telling hackneyed jokes, in other words, as entertaining his audience by a clownal monologue."¹⁷ In three months time, however, they were able to congratulate Pickens for:

. . . dropping the bush and wing oratory and the comedian style of lecturing at the Urban League meeting Jan. 18. Rumor has it the N.A.A.C.P. considered the Messenger's criticism of Picken's clownalogue oratory upon selecting him as Field Secretary and will expect and exact of him dignified presentation whenever representing the organization . . . After all, the Messenger may be

¹⁵Horace M. Bond, "Negro Leadership Since Washington," South Atlantic Quarterly XXIV (April 1925), p. 115.

¹⁶Messenger, IV (December 1920), p. 163.

¹⁷Messenger, III (December 1919), p. 21.

able to make something out of the Dean! We have gotten him out of the country; we shall now try very hard to polish him up and get the country out of Pickens.¹⁸

But for Owen and Randolph the efforts of the Association in the fight for full political, economic, and social equality was not enough. The movement needed additional organizational support. One of the major gospels that Randolph was preaching was "self-reliance" and he complained that no organization for Negro rights existed "which is not dominated by the Old Crowd of white people."¹⁹ After being besieged for months with letters and verbal inquiries concerning a new organization, the two men proposed in March, 1920, the Friends of Negro Freedom. "While the N. A. A. C. P. will be the only similar organization in the country, it is not our intention to enter into captious or vituperative criticism of it and its work, but rather to take up where they leave off, on the one hand, and to begin where they have never begun, on the other."²⁰

The Friends held their initial convention May 25, 1920 in Washington, D. C. The following are some of the individuals who responded to the invitation to sign the call: poet Archibald Grimke of the N. A. A. C. P.; historian Carter G. Woodson; Bagnall; labor organizers T. J. Pree and W. H. Tibbs; Afro-American editor Carl Murphy; educator Neval H. Thomas; Grace Campbell, only black female probation officer in New York and, as socialist candidate for the state

¹⁸Messenger, IV (March 1920), pp. 5 & 11.

¹⁹Messenger, III (May-June, 1919), p. 27.

²⁰"The Call for A New Organization," Messenger, IV (March 1920), p. 12.

assembly in 1920, also the first Negro woman to be nominated for office by an American political party; and E.B. Henderson of the N. A. A. C. P.

It was agreed upon that the Friends would be bipartisan and international in scope, with membership open to all races. But the organization would be led by the race in whose interest the organization was working. As Owen and Randolph noted at the time, ". . . there is not a national organization alleged to be fighting in the interest of Negroes which is controlled, in any considerable degree, by Negroes."²¹

An executive committee was elected at the Washington convention that seated Robert Bagnall as Chairman, socialist Grace Campbell as Vice-Chairman, Chandler Owen as Secretary, and Richard F. Nicholas as Treasurer. Other executive officers included Professor J. Milton Sampson of Virginia Union University, T. J. Pree, President of the National Brotherhood Workers of America, C. Francis Stradford, Chicago attorney, Linwood G. Koger of Baltimore, socialist George Frazier Miller of Brooklyn, and socialist Rothschild Francis of the Virgin Islands. The national office was located at 2305 7th Avenue in New York.²²

Originally, May 25 had been suggested as the date for the new organization's national holiday. On that day the locals in every city, town, or county were expected to organize a parade, complete with floats and banners. But a resolution passed at the founding convention designated May 9th, the birthday

²¹Ibid., (April-May, 1920), p. 4.

²²Ibid., (August 1920), p. 63.

of John Brown, as the annual National Day. For some reason "Old Brown" was a darling of nearly all socialists. This was perceived as early as 1910 by Georgia's Tom Watson who stated, "The ignorant, narrow-minded and murderous fanatic, John Brown, is one of the patron saints of Socialism."²³ It is especially curious that this new militant black organization would pick as its figure to honor, a man who's first victim of Harper's Ferry was a Negro.²⁴ Regardless, the resolution designating National Day was signed by executive officers Bagnall and Owen, and members Richard E. Lundy and John Morgan.²⁵

The Messenger made it clear that the Friends existed as "a mass movement for the public welfare - not a parlor social."²⁶ It took seven recruits to form a local chapter. There was a \$1.00 initiation fee and 15¢ monthly dues of which 50¢ and 5¢ respectively were claimed by the national office. The local member then received a copy of the constitution, a booklet entitled "Friends of Negro Freedom at Work, a button and membership card. Checks of the local chapter could be drawn only on the joint signatures of the Treasurer and Secretary, who were both bonded. The Messenger warned the young organization to "Guard at all times against blustering fanatics, hotheads and demagogues. They will reflect discredit upon the organization."²⁷ The purpose of the Friends

²³Thomas E. Watson, Socialists and Socialism, 1910, p. 4.

²⁴Ibid., p. 5.

²⁵Messenger, IV (September 1920), pp. 88-90.

²⁶Messenger, VI (July 1922), p. 449.

²⁷Ibid.

was to "crystallize, organize, and consolidate the growing ranks of the disillusioned and awakened Negroes."²⁸ Its slogan was "Economic Emancipation through Co-operation."

Every local was expected to establish the following permanent committees: Labor, Forum, Co-operative, Boycott, Tenants' League, Migrants, Ways and Means, Entertainment-Amusements-Athletics, and Membership. The Messenger devoted several columns explaining how to set up committees and how to organize F. N. F. chapters.²⁹

During the first two years of its short life, the Friends were hardly more than a paper organization. It has been referred to, by a former member, as a "fly-by-night" organization.³⁰ It was not until 1922, when it actively became involved in the anti-Garvey campaign, that the Friends came alive. Owen and Randolph, aware at the time that their organization was making little headway wrote, "During the last two years the time was not ripe for doing much organization work. The Negroes were too confused with Garvey's erroneous views and also they were caught in the industrial depression, with its consequent unemployment and panic. The situation has now changed."³¹ But it was a short

²⁸Ibid., VI (March 1922), p. 379.

²⁹See the Messenger, VI (July 1922), pp. 449-51; and VII (November 1923), p. 890.

³⁰Interview, George Schuyler, August 14, 1974. Mr. Schuyler was the F. N. F. delegate to Kelly Miller's Negro Sanhedrin, March, 1924.

³¹Messenger, VI (May 1922), p. 411. Toward the end of 1922, the Friends adopted the slogan, "Garvey Must Go."

life, for as Jervis Anderson relates, after the Garvey episode "few people beyond its own leadership ever heard of it again."³²

Irregardless, the Friends became the ". . . center of Randolph's social and intellectual life It became sort of a private intellectual forum for Randolph and his friends from the Messenger group."³³ The New York chapter held meetings every Saturday afternoon³⁴ either in the Messenger office or in a vacant store in the Lafayette Theatre Building on West 131st Street. Occasionally they would sponsor lectures at the Harlem YMCA and YWCA on 135th and 137th Streets, and invited speakers such as Norman Thomas, director of the League for Industrial Democracy; Will Durant, historian of philosophy; Algernon Lee of the Rand School of Social Science³⁵ and Socialist Assemblyman; Alfred Adler and John B. Watson, psychologists; James O'Neal, editor of the N. Y. Call; Walter White of the N. A. A. C. P. ; and Jean Longuet, French Socialist and member of the Chamber of Deputies.³⁶ The Philadelphia chapter invited the following individuals to speak: Congressmen L. C. Dyer, Mo. Rep.,³⁷ Congressman Joseph Walsh, Mass. Rep., Senator Robert M. LaFollette, Wisconsin Rep., Robert

³²Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 139.

³³Ibid., p. 140.

³⁴Ibid., George Schuyler says the meetings were held Sunday afternoons. See Schuyler, Black and Conservative, p. 124.

³⁵Both Owen and Randolph lectured at the Rand School.

³⁶Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 140.

³⁷The F. N. F. was the first organization to have Congressman Dyer present his Anti-Lynching Bill to the people of Philadelphia.

Bagnall, Congressman Martin B. Madden, Ill. Rep., and Senator Boise Penrose, Pa. Rep.³⁸ Local councils were strung all over the country from Buffalo to Oakland and from Seattle to Richmond.

In New York there were also the regular Sunday morning breakfast sessions at Randolph's apartment. Those usually in attendance included Owen, socialist Frank Crosswaith,³⁹ Bagnall, Pickens, Schuyler, historian Joel Rogers, and Messenger drama editor, Theophilus Lewis.⁴⁰ Others who occasionally attended these sessions were Randolph's brother, James; Ernest Rice McKinney; and novelist and Messenger contributor, Wallace Thurman. George Schuyler additionally lists Henry F. Downing, author of An American Calvaryman, a fictional account based on the exploits of Col. Charles Young, top-ranking Negro officer at the outbreak of World War I; William Ferris, graduate of both Yale and Harvard theological schools and author of The African Abroad; and James W. Ivy, a young intellectual from Danville, Va., and later Crisis editor.⁴¹ But this Sunday group began to disperse soon after the deaths of Randolph's father and Owen's brother.⁴²

³⁸Messenger, V (November 1921), p. 274.

³⁹By the late 1920's Crosswaith was the recognized leader of the Negro Socialists.

⁴⁰Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 140.

⁴¹Schuyler, Black & Conservative, pp. 143-4.

⁴²Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 142.

Despite the short life of the Friends, the Messenger and its editors devoted much time and space to its development. The Friends of Negro Freedom appeared as a section heading⁴³ in seven different issues of the Messenger.⁴⁴ There were also national tours organized to promote the F.N.F. The first was a swing through the country by the Messenger editors immediately after Christmas, 1920.⁴⁵ The next hegira involved Chandler Owen in a coast to coast excursion in the spring of 1922. Both editors were supposed to make the trip but at least one was needed to carry on with normal Messenger business.

The purpose of Owen's trip was fourfold: 1) To increase circulation of the Messenger. 2) To organize F.N.F. councils. 3) To present the "New Negro" philosophy to the people for examination. 4) To present the Negro problem to organized labor. He spoke to both white and black dominated groups although all were integrated. At Bloomington, Illinois, the President of Illinois State Normal University asked him to address the entire student body and faculty on the question "How American Imperialism Affects the Race Problem."⁴⁶

⁴³See Appendix B.

⁴⁴March, May, June, July, August, 1922; August & September, 1923.

⁴⁵Messenger, IV (December 1920), p. 163.

⁴⁶Chandler Owen, "From Coast to Coast," Messenger, VI (May 1922), pp. 407-10. The black student population of Normal was about 30. Six years earlier, in 1916, the total Negro college enrollment stood at 1,643. See Chandler Owen, "Negroes and the War," a bulletin published for the Office of War Information, 1942.

Then in November the new assistant editor of the Messenger, Floyd Calvin, made a swing through the South. He described the significance of the trip in this way:

So now to those who would sarcastically yell at us: 'Why don't you take your radicalism to the South? Why preach something you dare not carry where it is needed most?' We can reply in good faith: We have been South! We did take our radicalism where it was needed most.⁴⁷

The F. N. F. program for 1923 included organizing 100 councils, unionizing Negro migrants, protecting tenants, organizing forums for publicly educating the masses, and pushing the co-operative movement among Negroes.⁴⁸

The collective nature of the Friends should not be overlooked. George Schuyler wrote, "It is to teach the Negroes how to intelligently use these economic ballots (dollar bills) that the F. N. F. was formed. Councils are urged to energetically carry this idea of the collective use of the economic ballot to the Negroes of their respective communities. Only in this way can the race be emancipated."⁴⁹ In order to push the co-operative movement the co-operative committee of all locals were instructed to write for literature from the Co-operative League of America.

⁴⁷Floyd J. Calvin, "Eight Weeks in Dixie," Messenger, VI (November 1922), p. 530.

⁴⁸Messenger, VIII (February 1923), p. 589.

⁴⁹George S. Schuyler, "The Economic Ballot," Messenger, VII (September 1923), p. 825.

But the most important aspect of the Friends lies in its connection with the N. A. A. C. P. With Pickens and Bagnall in prominent positions of leadership in both organizations, the radicalism of the Friends permeated Association policy. But the Association had another reason to listen to the demands of the militant socialists. During World War I, Owen and Randolph, with the exception of Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., were the only major Negro leaders counseling against active support of the American war effort. Their prediction that the war would result in no visible gains for the Negro had proven correct in the post-war period. The Association, therefore, was in no position to ignore a group within the race which had so accurately forecast Negro status following World War I.⁵⁰

The N. A. A. C. P. had always been viewed with suspicion by many who believed the organization radical and un-American, if not outright seditious. Their affiliation with the socialists and their representatives caused additional concern. One governmental body especially worried over the socialist-N. A. A. C. P. connections was the legislative committee investigating radical and seditious activity in New York. Chaired by state senator Clayton Lusk, the committee reported that a close relationship existed between the socialist element among Negroes and the N. A. A. C. P., and illustrated its contention by an article which appeared in the Negro World April 3, 1920, which said in part ". . . the Emancipator reports that many of the . . . N. A. A. C. P. . . . responded

⁵⁰See Chandler Owen, "What Will Be the Real Status of the Negro After the War," Messenger, III (March 1919), pp. 13-17.

favorably to the F. N. F. call."⁵¹ The committee also concludes that ". . . certain of the board of directors of this organization (N. A. A. C. P.) have extended their sympathy and support to the socialist group headed by Randolph and Owen."⁵² The New York state committee was not the only official body taking notice of this relationship. British intelligence insisted that ". . . on the quiet there is more connection between Du Bois and the extremists than appears on the surface."⁵³

But it would be foolish to argue that the socialists were directly influencing or formulating Association policy. As long as the socialists had a following and Messenger sales rivaled that of the Crisis, N. A. A. C. P. leaders could hardly turn a deaf ear to demands for increased militancy. But the Association related with day-to-day issues, essentially fighting its battles in the nation's courtrooms. Long-range social goals and industrial revolution held little appeal for the vast majority of its leadership.

While frequently expressing displeasure over the N. A. A. C. P., Owen and Randolph nevertheless viewed its operations as vital within the Negro community. Its leadership was conducting serious work and thus the two men understood the need for developing a liason. But it is with the race leadership that the socialists saw no such need.

⁵¹Revolutionary Radicalism - A Report, 1920, IV, p. 1519.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Elkins, Science & Society, p. 79. It is also Henry L. Moon's belief that the socialist pressure moved Du Bois to a more radical position. Interview, August 14, 1974.

"Behind the color line one has to think perpetually of the color line, and most of those who grow up behind it can think of nothing else."

Hubert H. Harrison

IV. THE RACE LEADERSHIP

A. The Old Crowd

Race-pride aside, the socialists were forced to admit that the old leaders had failed. The Messenger charged ". . . that nearly all the old crowd leaders are ignorant, incompetent, controlled, and corrupt. All of them bear some of these vices, and most of them, all."¹ They claimed no ill-feeling, did not impugn their motives, and even recognized the merit and worth of many in the old leadership. But they did question their methods and leveled against them a most serious charge -- ignorance.² The Messenger called the "stuff emanating from the old crowd sheer claptrap . . . repellent . . . offensive and repulsive to the modern Negro student of economics and political science."³ Jervis Anderson has described the socialist attitude toward the old crowd as viewing them not necessarily as "obsequious Uncle Toms but because they opposed radicalism they were affirming their allegiance to limited modes of racial protest - thereby unwittingly helping to perpetuate the system that had first enslaved and oppressed the race."⁴

¹Messenger, III (July 1919), p. 32.

²Chandler Owen, "The Failure of the Negro Leaders," Messenger, II (January 1918), p. 23.

³Ibid.

⁴Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 103.

Who was the "old crowd?" Philip Randolph spelled out the answer in 1919:

In the Negro schools and colleges the most typical reactionaries are Kelly Miller, Robert Russa Moton, and William Pickens. In the press DuBois, James Weldon Johnson, Fred R. Moore, T. Thomas Fortune, Roscoe Conkling Simmons, and George Harris are compromising the case of the Negro. In politics Chas. W. Anderson, W.H. Lewis, Ralph Tyler, Emmett Scott, George E. Haynes . . . enjoin the Negro to be conservative when he has nothing to conserve.⁵

We might also include religious leaders, certain organizations like the National Urban League, and the old political crowd in the traditional leadership which the socialists attacked.

The Messenger radicals referred to themselves as the leaders of the "New Crowd Negro" or the more popular "New Negro." They called themselves the leaders of the left-wing and declared the position of the left-wing to be "the only sound and defensible position for the Negro, just as it is the only sound position for other racial groups."⁶ The leader of the right-wing, according to Owen and Randolph, was Robert Russa Moton, Washington's successor at Tuskegee while the centrists were led by W. E. B. Du Bois.

Du Bois, editor of Crisis, is probably the most important figure of the period. As previously noted, even Du Bois joined the SPA in 1911 only to quit a

⁵Messenger, III (May-June, 1919), p. 27.

⁶Ibid., IV (April-May, 1920), p. 13.

year later to support Woodrow Wilson. Yet throughout the decade and even into the early Twenties, Du Bois praised the "excellent leaders of an excellent party."⁷ He commended the Socialists, along with the Farm-Laborites for "speaking out bravely on our behalf."⁸ That Du Bois was fed up with the two major parties was indicated by the following statement, written in 1922: "May God write us down as asses if ever again we are found putting our trust in either the Republican or Democratic parties."⁹ But politically Du Bois was an opportunist. In the span of a decade he was Socialist, Democrat, Republican, and Progressive.

The Messenger editors conceded that Du Bois had done some good in the Negro struggle for equality. They called him "honest and fearless"¹⁰ in 1918, but within a year they were questioning "even his honesty."¹¹ Corruption of elements in Negro and white leadership was probably no secret. It is rather difficult to determine the exact extent, although bribery certainly was, and to some degree, still is, a part of political behavior. As the young editors enjoyed pointing out, even they had not been forgotten. The Messenger reported in 1920 that Negro radicals were being offered bribes . . . "Three distinct

⁷Weinstein, Decline of American Socialism, p. 71.

⁸Messenger, IV (November 1920), p. 142.

⁹Sherman, The Republican Party and Black America, p. 209.

¹⁰Messenger, II (July 1918), p. 28.

¹¹Messenger, III (July 1919), p. 12.

efforts have been made to attract the Messenger editors - but to no avail of course. "¹² They were not being offered small sums of money either for the bribes ranged in the tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars.¹³ However, the charge was never substantiated and the subject was never brought up again.

The major ideological dispute with Du Bois concerned first the war and later, revolution and social change. With regard to the war, Owen and Randolph strongly supported the St. Louis manifesto of April, 1917, calling this official SPA position as one of the "most courageous, far visioned, and intelligent points of view taken by any group in the world."¹⁴ In fact both men were arrested in Cleveland August, 1918¹⁵ reportedly by the same Justice Department team that arrested party leader Eugene Debs in Canton, June 30. Du Bois's position on the war had been to "close ranks" with the whites who were "fighting for democracy."¹⁶

In the social field, the radicals accused Du Bois of stand-patism. He was the ". . . only alleged leader of an oppressed group of people in the world today who condemns revolution. In other words, he would continue to

¹²Ibid., IV (November 1920), p. 129.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., III (July 1919), p. 10.

¹⁵Jervis Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 106. Savilla E. Weaver, a student at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania erroneously reported in the Negro History Bulletin XXXIV (December 1971), p. 182 that they were arrested June, 1917.

¹⁶Elliot Rudwick, W. E. B. Du Bois: Propagandist of the Negro Protest, 1969, p. 238.

support the status quo."¹⁷ In reply to a Crisis editorial entitled "The Class Struggle," Chandler Owen lashed out against Du Bois calling his view, ". . . shoddy mentality, cheap demogogy, tawdy scholarship, fragmentary thinking, and sham cerebation . . . to pretend that revolution implies human murder."¹⁸

But the socialists overlooked the fact that Du Bois considered a practical side of revolution, specifically the possibility of success and support. Writing in the Inter-Collegiate Socialist, Du Bois noted that:

Revolution is discussed, but it is the successful revolution of white folk and not the unsuccessful revolution of black soldiers in Texas. You do not stop to consider whether the Russian peasant had any more to endure than the black soldiers of the 24th Infantry, but you do consider and consider with the utmost care that the black soldiers cause the lost before they took arms and that for that reason it can be easily forgotten.¹⁹

In fact, when it came to the question of solving the Negro problem, Du Bois may have had the more radical proposal. He once suggested that every white family bring a Negro into their home, entertain him, and in some quick and painless way kill him. In this way the nation would be rid of 12,000,000 people who were giving it so much concern. Du Bois believed this to be a better solution than forcing Negroes to live in ghettos and letting them die slowly. He declared it to be ". . . even better than presenting them with a program of life and education

¹⁷Messenger, III (December 1919), p. 7.

¹⁸Ibid., (September 1921), p. 246.

¹⁹W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Problems," Inter-Collegiate Socialist, VI (December-January, 1917-1918), p. 9.

which includes universal and continual insult with absolutely no hope of normal citizenship in modern civilization, and finally, it is the only one decent alternative to treating them like men."²⁰

Another sore point, as far as the socialists were concerned, was the lack of attention given to black socialist candidates in the Crisis. While reporting on black Republican and Democratic candidates, Du Bois, they charged, ignored the socialists. For example, the Rev. George Frazier Miller of Brooklyn was the SPA candidate for Congress from the 21st District in 1918. Monroe Work insists that "His candidacy attracted wide attention. The white press took their candidacies seriously and did not treat them as jokes."²¹ But the Crisis, according to the Messenger, "knew nothing of the affair."²² Interestingly enough, George Frazier Miller had been active in the N.A.A.C.P. since its founding in 1909. To cite another example, when Domingo's document was seized in the Rand School raid, "scarcely a prominent Negro or white paper failed to mention the incident; but the Crisis was strangely silent."²³ Lastly the Messenger questioned Du Bois as a leader. Assistant editor Floyd Calvin stated, "I do not and would not follow him as a racial leader. I like him, . . . he hasn't got the qualities of a leader. He is for the super-cultured only."²⁴

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Monroe Work, Negro Yearbook, 1918, p. 85.

²²"A Record of the Darker Races," Messenger, IV (September 1920), p. 84.

²³Ibid., p. 85.

²⁴Messenger, VII (January 1923), p. 574.

The dispute with Moton also went back to the war. It is generally recognized that Moton seriously blundered when he delivered his infamous speech in the trenches of the 92nd Division. In brief, he cautioned the soldiers not to expect the kind of freedom back home that they had enjoyed in France. He advised them to remain content with the position they had always occupied. Afterwards, Du Bois criticized Moton for passing up a chance to participate in the Peace Conference at Versailles, hurrying home instead to attend a Tuskegee Conference. The Messenger, calling Tuskegee "a scab factory," decided that Moton had "neither the courage, education, nor the opportunity to do anything fundamental in the interest of the Negro. He counsels satisfaction; not intelligent discontent."²⁵

The socialists, like all other Northern leaders, had been urging the Negro to come north. Dr. Moton was the only major national leader who advised the Negro to remain in the South. His position incensed Chandler Owen who wrote:

The migration of Negroes, then, is the biggest force operating today toward the removal of peonage and its consequent evil - lynching. And this truckling advice which 'big Negro' leaders are giving about 'stay South' is the most hypocritical, dishonest and dishonorable counsel which their bosses have ever hired them to give out . . . displays an ignorance of social laws and history as dismal and inexcusable as their moral courage is spineless and maimed and small.²⁶

²⁵Messenger, III (July 1919), pp. 31-32.

²⁶Owen & Randolph pamphlet, "The Truth About Lynching," p. 10. Schomburg Collection.

Another "old crowd" leader distasteful to the socialists was Emmett J. Scott, former personal secretary to Booker T. Washington. Scott was Woodrow Wilson's choice to rally black support for the war effort. (It hardly needed rallying.) So in 1917 he was appointed Special Assistant to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker. Apparently Scott understood the requirements of his job for he declared this ". . . is not the time to discuss race problems, our duty now is to fight and continue the fight until the war is won."²⁷

While Scott was Special Assistant to the Secretary of War, a serious racial incident occurred at Houston, Texas. On August 23, 1917, a contingent of the 24th Infantry decided to avenge the beating of a popular comrade, a Corporal Baltimore, rumored to have been shot by city police. Two companies of black MP's seized arms and marched to the outskirts of Houston where they were met by city police reinforced by armed civilians. Before they were disarmed, three soldiers, five police officers, and twelve civilians, lay dead. Those involved were quickly tried and a verdict reached on November 30 condemned eighteen blacks to death, 51 to life imprisonment, and four others to brief prison terms. The thirteen that were hung on December 11 were notified of their fate only two days before and the public was not informed until the day of the hanging. The Messenger said that Scott should have told the nation about the Houston hanging and if he was not told himself, he should have resigned. For Du Bois and the N. A. A. C. P. could have been thrown into action. The editors

²⁷Claude Bennett, "The Role of the Press, Radio, & Motion Pictures, and Negro Morale," Journal of Negro Education, XII (1943), p. 480.

demanded to hear from Emmett Scott.²⁸ But it is questionable whether any efforts on the part of Scott would have pleased the socialists for as Monroe Trotter biographer, Stephen Fox notes, Scott was "an old hand at dampening Negro dissent."²⁹

On the issue of social questions, Kelly Miller of Howard University appeared to Owen and Randolph as "probably the most reactionary Negro scholar of the country."³⁰ They did credit the prolific writer as generally holding reader interest and as being "more direct and clearer in his style than Du Bois."³¹ But Miller was not scientific as the radical editors pointed out, because he usually predicated "his proof of the most important questions upon some verse of the Bible - a recognized fallacious course."³² They chided that Miller must have had ten years of Bible, for his system of argument was to continually "summon some verse of the Bible to the rescue."³³ To make matters worse, he was guilty, in socialist eyes, of a serious bourgeois crime -- compromise. They felt this tendency to compromise resulted in his favoring school

²⁸Messenger, II (January 1918), p. 33.

²⁹Stephen Fox, The Guardian of Boston: William Monroe Trotter, 1970, p. 174.

³⁰Messenger, III (March 1919), p. 23.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

segregation in the North and West.³⁴

Roscoe Conkling Simmons, nephew of Booker T. Washington, was another "hat-in-hand, old crowd" leader whose war stand irritated the radicals. In an address delivered in Louisville March, 1917, Simmons affirmed, "Woodrow Wilson is my leader. Where he commands me to go, I shall go. Grievances I have against this people, against this government. Injustices to me there is, bad laws there are upon the statute books, but in this hour of peril I forget -- and you must forget -- all thoughts of self or race or creed or politics or color. That is loyalty."³⁵

It was generally recognized in black, as well as white, circles that Simmons was a gifted orator. The Messenger did not agree: ". . . Simmons is reputed to be an orator. The truth, however, is that Simmons is an entertainer and a very poor entertainer at that."³⁶

According to Harold Cruse, the New York Age was at this time, the "oldest and most influential newspaper in New York."³⁷ For Chandler Owen the Age was so old it was dead and didn't even know it, "walking around no doubt to save the undertaker's expense."³⁸ Owen was not any kinder toward Age editors T. Thomas Fortune and Fred R. Moore, calling the latter "ignorant"

³⁴"Mistakes of Kelly Miller," Messenger, VI (June 1922), p. 422.

³⁵Work, Negro Yearbook, 1918, p. 45.

³⁶Messenger, III (December 1919), p. 25.

³⁷Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, p. 19.

³⁸Messenger, VI (April 1922), p. 391.

and the former "an old moribund derelict" whose mind had "escaped from the cranium."³⁹ To back up this charge that the Age was dead, Owen pointed out that he and his party had travelled thousands of miles over the country before he saw one N. Y. Age. In the 2½ month trip he frequently saw the Chicago Defender, Negro World, Crisis, Messenger, California Eagle and Chicago Whip in newsstands where Negro literature was sold.

The Messenger editors had always been proud of the fact that the United States Department of Justice had referred to them in a Senate report as "by long odds, the most able and most dangerous of all the Negro publications."⁴⁰ This same Justice Department report also stated that the Age was among the "better behaved" of the Negro publications. Chandler Owen clarified the meaning of the report: "This terminology will not be understood by most of our white readers nor by some of our northern Negro readers. The Southern Negroes will not miss the point though. Better behaved is the Southern term for a 'good nigger', i. e., one who will take orders from the white bossess against the interest of the Negro."⁴¹

The National Urban League had been founded in New York City in 1911. Its first director was Columbia University graduate, Dr. George E. Haynes, who had headed the Negro Economics Division of the Department of Labor during the war. According to Richard Sherman, the League was "mainly concerned

³⁹Ibid., p. 389. Messenger, III (July 1919), p. 33.

⁴⁰Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 82.

⁴¹Messenger, VI (April 1922), p. 390.

with improving housing conditions, neighborhoods and playgrounds, and with finding jobs for Negroes, rather than with civil rights."⁴² Spero and Harris argued that the League "showed no evidence of conversion to the idea of working-class unity. It was a middle-class social service body interested in getting jobs for Negroes."⁴³

The major dispute with the N. U. L. was over the question of scabbing. The Messenger editors perceived scabbing as a totally disrupting factor in the promotion of working class solidarity. Roger N. Baldwin of the A. C. L. U. and executive board member of the League declared in 1921, "if the Urban League did help break strikes, or oppose unions, or take a stand against any working-class or radical cause, I would sever my connection at once."⁴⁴ But in fact, that very year the Detroit Urban League freely furnished Negro labor to plants affected by a strike in the metal trades industry. One day a League secretary actually escorted 150 black strike breakers to the Timkin Co., marching them past the pickets, who were afraid to attack so large a group. The secretary escaped, unnoticed, through a side exit.⁴⁵ Charges of strikebreaking were leveled against Urban League locals in several cities.

This type of economic behavior was predictable, the socialists argued,

⁴²Sherman, The Republican Party and Black America, p. 127.

⁴³Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, p. 140.

⁴⁴Messenger, V (August 1921), pp. 228-9.

⁴⁵Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, p. 140.

since the major N. U. L. contributors were wealthy capitalists.⁴⁶ Baldwin and another board member, Abraham Lefkowitz of the Teacher's Union, were merely used as "window dressing" by the capitalist contributors.⁴⁷ Owen and Randolph were disappointed with Haynes, however, for not offering a reconstruction program.⁴⁸ Another League director, Eugene Kinckle Jones, stood in a more favorable light with the radicals because he had urged serious efforts at organizing the Negro. Jones was also a Messenger contributor throughout the period.

Unfortunately, as far as calling for active trade-unionism and anti-strikebreaking, the socialists were a voice in the wilderness. Spero and Harris reported that the dominant Negro leadership advocated scabbing, opposed trade unionism, and was favorably inclined to the employer.⁴⁹ The usually militant Whip advised "black people at large to align themselves as far as possible with the wealthier classes in America."⁵⁰ Even Marcus Garvey instructed the black worker to side with the employer until he achieved economic independence and became his own employer.⁵¹ Actually the Messenger itself, desperate and

⁴⁶Messenger, V (August 1921), p. 229.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 230.

⁴⁸Messenger, III (May-June, 1919), p. 12.

⁴⁹Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, pp. 128 & 133.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 137.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 135.

frustrated, was forced to admit, "Taking the jobs of white workers is absolutely justified whenever Negroes are denied entrance to the unions."⁵²

The institution that most affected black thought was organized religion, and thus it provided a most difficult obstacle for the socialists. Hubert Harrison was one socialist who recognized the problem; "Show me a population that is deeply religious, and I will show you a servile population, content with whips and chains, contumely and the gibbet, content to eat the bread of sorrow and drink the waters of affliction."⁵³ Blacks were foolish enough, said Harrison, to even worship the same God as white people.⁵⁴

Owen and Randolph felt that the Negro churches had been converted to businesses, controlled by white money, and run for profit with collections occupying three-fourths of the time of most services.⁵⁵ They charged the church with failing to educate the people because the ministry was "ignorant of the modern problems of capital and labor."⁵⁶ The two men complained that no confederation of Negro churches had ever gone on record as endorsing unionism. Chandler Owen called the Negro ministers "spineless" and demanded that in the church, information and education be given out in place of ". . . these dead

⁵²Messenger, VI (July 1922), p. 450.

⁵³Harrison, The Negro & The Nation, p. 44.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 16.

⁵⁵"The Future of the Negro Church" Messenger, III (October 1919), p. 6.

⁵⁶Ibid.

creeds and spurious bible verses. More punch and less prayer, more information and less inspiration, more culture and less creed, more sense and less sermon, more good and less God, more life talk and less death talk, more this world and less the other world would directly redound to the interest of the people."⁵⁷ But a little over twenty years later he could refer to the churchmen as "leaders in the fight for equality" and praised the "high quality of religious leadership as one of the glories of Negro culture in the United States."⁵⁸

The Messenger took direct credit for cleaning up Negro politics in Harlem, New York. Before 1916 most of the Negro politicians were found at Matthey's Saloon, at 135 Street and Seventh Avenue, drinking liquor and smoking cigars. No attempt at electioneering was made save a beer and sandwich campaign prior to voting day. This kind of politicking disgusted the socialists for as Chandler Owen noted, not one of the Messenger staff ". . . is a liquorterian or tobacco worm! Not a one of them tries to look important with a cigar in his mouth and make this practice do duty for thought . . . Last year we forced the Democrats and Republicans to attempt some kind of educational campaign for about six or eight weeks prior to the election -- all over the Negro section of New York."⁵⁹

When Tammany created a Negro party for the 1920 election, the Liberal Party, the radicals called it a "vaudeville, the greatest political joke

⁵⁷Owen, "The Remedy For Lynching," p. 12.

⁵⁸Owen, "Negroes and the War," 1942, p. 8.

⁵⁹Messenger, VI (April 1922), p. 391.

in the political history of the Negro." It stood for the election of a Negro President. "If this was not tragically inane, senseless, foolish, absurd, and preposterous, it would be humorous and childish."⁶⁰

While it is true that Owen and Randolph were often guilty of vituperation, they, nevertheless, were also accurate in many of their accusations. The leadership was, to a great degree compromising the social, political, and economic progress of the race. To Owen the leaders were:

. . . a disgrace to Negroes and the laughing stock among whites . . . it makes us ashamed to consider what men like Prof. Charles A. Beard, Scott Nearing, Overstreet, Albert Bushnell Hart and E. R. A. Seligman must think when they read these pigmy opinions and this puerile, incredulous interpretation of history from men who have supposed to have given their lives to the study of science, but who are little short of mental manikins and intellectual lilliputions.⁶¹

By advocating worker solidarity through unionism, Owen and Randolph were not only strengthening the cause of the proletariat, but were leading the Negro to develop a new leadership from the labor movement itself, which would be forever independent of the traditional race leadership.⁶²

In 1937 Opportunity analyzed the socialist position with regard to this question:

⁶⁰Messenger, IV (November 1920), p. 130.

⁶¹Owen, Messenger, II (January 1918), pp. 23-24.

⁶²Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, p. 145.

Whatever may be said of the Messenger, this much is true, that its criticism of the philosophy of Negro leadership had a salutary effect since it caused that leadership to take stock and to evaluate its effectiveness in the light of the actual economic and social condition of the Negro people. More than that Randolph, with the late Hubert Harrison, Abram Harris, George Schuyler, and others riddled assumptions of Negro racial characteristics with pitiless logic that levelled for all time the formidable structure of racial myth.⁶³

But James Weldon Johnson views the Harlem radicals as failing to "bring about a correlation of the forces they had called into action, to have those forces work through a practical medium to definite objectives."⁶⁴ However, Johnson adds that they prepared the groundwork for a man who accomplished just that, "a man who was one of the most remarkable and picturesque figures that have appeared on the American scene - Marcus Garvey."⁶⁵

⁶³"In the News: A. Philip Randolph," Opportunity, XV (October 1937), p. 294.

⁶⁴Johnson, Black Manhattan, p. 251.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 251. Edmund Cronon also believes the Harlem radicals paved the way for a mass movement such as Garvey's. Black Moses, 1962, p. 36.

This little black man . . . (is) . . . the greatest threat to Negroes.

W. E. B. Du Bois

B. Marcus Garvey

On August 1, 1914, Marcus Garvey organized the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Jamaica for the purpose of ". . . drawing the people of the race together."¹ The motto of the Association was indeed stirring: "One God! One Aim! One Destiny!" The preamble to the constitution of this new organization contained a strong plea for universal brotherhood, but noted that the realization of this goal must come through the united action of the Negro people of the world.²

In addition to its program of race redemption, the U. N. I. A. had definite plans of action for Negro betterment in Jamaica. The heart of this local program was the establishment of educational and industrial colleges for Jamaican Negroes. The model was Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute which had been the inspiration for similar programs in Negro education. While receiving support of many prominent whites on Jamaica, blacks were generally indifferent and mulattoes were openly hostile.³

By 1915 Garvey reached the conclusion that it was necessary to call upon American Negroes for support of his Jamaican program. He had originally written Booker T. Washington about his plans and received an encouraging reply

¹Edmund David Cronon, Black Moses, 1962, p. 16.

²Ibid., pp. 17-18.

³Ibid., p. 18.

advising him to come to the United States and visit Tuskegee. But the elderly leader was dead when Garvey finally landed in New York March 23, 1916. His first exposure to Harlemites came when Hubert Harrison introduced him at a Liberty League rally June 12, 1917, where he made a favorable impression.⁴ That same year Garvey opened up the New York division of the U. N. I. A., which was smashed later in the year by Negro politicians whom Garvey had tried to expel. Immediately making a fresh start, he claimed to have 1,500 members after only two months. During 1919 and 1920, the Improvement Association grew amazingly fast. Garvey travelled widely across the United States, establishing branches in urban areas with large Negro populations. Edmund David Cronon, a Garvey biographer, states:

By the middle of 1919, Garvey was making the dubious claim of more than two million members and thirty branches. Whatever the exact membership of the U. N. I. A. at this or any other time, and Garvey's figures are always questionable, there is no doubt that large numbers of Negroes were listening with ever increasing interest to the serious black man whose persuasive words seemed to point the way to race deliverance.⁵

With the establishment and increasing successes of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the Garvey movement ". . . became more than a movement; it became a religion, its members became zealots . . . it was impressive if for no other reason than the way it impressed the throng."⁶

⁴Johnson, Black Manhattan, pp. 252-3.

⁵Cronon, Black Moses, p. 44.

⁶Johnson, Black Manhattan, p. 255.

A formal court was created complete with royal titles and military regalia. No lady below the age of 18 or gentleman below the age of 21 could be presented at the court reception.⁷

One of the major reasons for Garvey's success was the appearance in January, 1918, of the Negro World, the U.N.I.A.'s New York newspaper. Edmund Cronon calls it ". . . one of the most remarkable journalistic ventures ever attempted by a Negro in the United States, and it drew from Claude McKay, a sometime Garvey critic, the grudging praise of being the best edited colored weekly in New York."⁸ Within a few months the Negro World was one of the leading Negro weeklies, drawing a circulation of over 60,000 until it was banned by many colonial governments for its extreme nationalism.⁹

The initial Messenger reaction to Garvey was ambivalence. A. Philip Randolph himself was selected as a U.N.I.A. delegate to Versailles in 1919 but was refused a passport by the State Department. The first article on Garvey appeared October, 1920 and was entitled "The Garvey Movement: A Promise or Menace to Negroes." In April, 1922 the editors were still opposing assaults on Garvey's nationality, such as those made by Roscoe Conkling Simmons in the Chicago Defender. For Owen and Randolph, it did not seem sensible to say: "If Garvey doesn't like this country, let him go back to Jamaica, where he came

⁷ Ibid., p. 254.

⁸ Cronon, Black Moses, p. 45.

⁹ Ibid., p. 46.

from. "10 The radicals criticized such an attack as "a little barrack behind which mental impotency hides when it cannot answer logic. "11

In fact, the Messenger credited Garvey with doing much good work,

putting into many Negroes a backbone where for years they have had only a wishbone. He has stimulated race pride. He has installed a feeling into Negroes that they are as good as anybody else. He has criticized the hat-in-hand Negro leadership. He has inspired an interest in the Negro traditions, Negro history, Negro literature, and Negro art and culture. He has stressed the international aspects of the Negro problem. 12

But the socialists were quick to point out that he had also done much harm. He opposed social equality, his African Empire dream was obsolete and undesirable, and his steamship line was impractical. Besides, even if it had been successful, the Negro problem was not one of transportation. Finally, they added if American Negroes were going to attack Garveyism, "do it like the Messenger editors. Be fair. "13

Only three months later, however, the Messenger declared war on Garvey, letting it be known that their purpose was "to drive Garveyism from American soil. "14 By September, Chandler Owen was openly calling for Garvey's

¹⁰Messenger, VI (April 1922), p. 387.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., (July 1922), p. 437.

deportation. No longer "being fair," the Messenger opened the New Year with a referral to the "diseased brain of this Supreme Negro Jackass from Jamaica."¹⁵ This rather insulting language over Garvey's nationality led to an exchange in the March issue between Owen and the West Indian, Domingo. Jervis Anderson believes Domingo had the better of the debate.¹⁶ Regardless, it was over this issue that Domingo resigned from the Messenger.

On January 15, 1923, while Garvey was awaiting trial for charges of using the U. S. Mails to defraud the public, eight prominent blacks signed an open letter to U. S. Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty urging him to "vigorously and speedily push the government's case." The return address of the letter was 2305 Seventh Avenue, the Messenger office. Besides Chandler Owen, the letter was signed by Harry H. Pace, a Harlem phonograph salesman; Robert S. Abbott, editor of the Chicago Defender; John E. Nail, a Harlem real-estate broker; Julia P. Coleman, president of a cosmetic company; William Pickens, Robert Bagnall, and George Harris, member of the New York City Board of Alderman. Garvey called the letter "the greatest bit of treachery and wickedness that any group of Negroes could be capable of."¹⁷

But these were not the men responsible for Garvey's downfall. In fact no American Negro was. In 1919, under the leadership of Cyril V. Briggs, the West Indian Communists formed the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) and the

¹⁵Messenger, VII (January 1923), p. 561.

¹⁶Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 136.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 136-7.

Crusader became its official organ. Nothing about the Brotherhood was innovative, including its "Back to Africa" and separatist schemes. The ABB was firmly opposed to Garvey and Harold Cruse calls their onslaught against the man as ". . . one of vituperation, rancor and bitter accusations of deceit, dishonesty, fraud, lunacy, racial disloyalty, charlatanism and ignorance."¹⁸ Even the West Indian W.A. Domingo says that the ABB, and not the Americans, secretly engineered Garvey's fall by reporting the activities of the Black Star Line to U.S. legal authorities.¹⁹

The Brotherhood went through essentially three transition periods, nationalist-socialism to socialist-nationalism to Communism. This transition implies the denial of the revolutionary potential of the American Negro by the West Indians. For Briggs, Otto Huiswood, and Richard Moore, the American Negro was simply not included in the category of oppressed colonial nationals, such as the West Indians or Africans.²⁰ Finally in 1925, Moscow ordered that the Brotherhood be replaced by the American Negro Congress (ANLC). At its head was placed an American, Lovett Fort-Whiteman, formerly of the Messenger group.²¹

Harold Cruse states that while the Brotherhood sought co-operation with Garvey in 1921, they switched and plotted against him in 1923.²² Mr. Cruse

¹⁸Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, p. 118.

¹⁹Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 133.

²⁰Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, p. 133.

²¹Ibid., p. 135.

²²Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, p. 134.

further notes that the Cyril Briggs - Garvey fight " . . . represented an inner-group West Indian conflict between integrationist and nationalist trends, which was more related to the position of the West Indians in the United States than to Briggs' avowed interest in Africa."²³ The problem of assigning responsibility, Cruse continues, rests on the fact that Garvey's West Indian critics were not prominent leaders like Du Bois and Randolph.²⁴

The immediate cause of Garvey's downfall was the collapse of the Black Star Line in December, 1921, a fantastic scheme which swallowed up hundreds of thousands of dollars. As James Weldon Johnson has observed, "Neither Garvey nor anyone with him knew how to operate ships. And if they had known they could not have succeeded at the very time when ships were the greatest drug on the market."²⁵ But the basic reason for his failure was his impossible African dream. Monroe Trotter and Ernest Rice McKinney have come to the heart of the matter when they observed that Negroes are Americans and not Africans;²⁶ and perhaps even more American than Negro. For example, in 1919, Trotter announced that the Boston Guardian would no longer use the word Negro in its editorials, a decision reached in response to Garvey's excessive use of that term.²⁷ Harold Cruse declared Garvey failed " . . . because of

²³Ibid., p. 120.

²⁴Ibid., p. 145.

²⁵Johnson, Black Manhattan, p. 256.

²⁶Fox, The Guardian of Boston, p. 251, and McKinney interview, August 13, 1974.

²⁷Ibid.

opposition in Africa, his own egotism, and financial incompetence."²⁸

No one really knows how much of a following Garvey actually had. Cruse contends that his following was predominantly West Indian and no matter how many American Negroes were attracted, "it was not an Afro-American movement."²⁹ The few Americans that Garvey did attract to his cause were recent migrants from the South. As Spero and Harris note, "The more sophisticated industrial workers were less impressed." This was "particularly true of the miners and longshoremen whose unions had large colored memberships and long traditions of equal treatment to all races."³⁰

If for no other reason Garvey had to be opposed because he fought all other Negro organizations in the country, especially the N. A. A. C. P.³¹ Garvey once accused the Association of hiring agents to dismantle the machinery on his ships, a charge he knew to be false.³² Here again it was probably his supreme egotism, which Johnson says amounted to "megalomania", that was the foundation of his antagonism toward other black organizations. Garvey even conducted his own trial, calling and examining witnesses, "the temptation for an audience being too much."³³

²⁸Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, p. 125.

²⁹Ibid., p. 124.

³⁰Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, p. 136.

³¹The only American leader who worked with Garvey was Emmett Scott. See Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, p. 19. In fact, he was knighted by Garvey, receiving the official title of Commander of the Sublime Order of the Nile. E.D. Cronon, Black Moses, 1962, p. 70.

³²Messenger, II (April 1922), p. 287.

³³Johnson, Black Manhattan, p. 258.

A. Philip Randolph has related to Jervis Anderson his position regarding the whole Garvey affair:

I had nothing to do with the letter to the Attorney General But I don't see how we could have avoided mentioning Garvey's nationality. For one thing, he was doing something no American Negro would do - dividing the race between the light-skinned and the pure black.³⁴ All of us had to admit he was an organizational genius. He organized more Negroes than any other single Negro in the history of the country A lot of people really believed that their problems would be solved by simply going back to Africa. What you needed to follow Garvey was a leap of the imagination, but socialism and trade unionism called for rigorous social struggles-hard work and programs-and few people wanted to think about that. Against the emotional power of Garveyism, what I was preaching didn't stand a chance.³⁵

Perhaps James Weldon Johnson has best grasped the saddest aspect of the whole Garvey episode. ". . . the heart of the tragedy is that to this man came an opportunity such as comes to few men, and he clutched greedily at the glitter and let the substance slip from his fingers."³⁶

It is necessary at this point to briefly examine leaders and groups outside of Garvey and the "old crowd" which attracted Socialist attention. These individuals, while not falling into the two major categories, are nevertheless important figures of the period.

In 1919, like their white counterparts, the African Blood Brotherhood

³⁴Garvey's resentment against mulattoes was perhaps even greater than against whites. Negroes in the U.S., regardless of complexion, had always maintained a solid front on the race question.

³⁵Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 27.

³⁶Johnson, Black Manhattan, p. 258.

split with the Messenger radicals over the question of revolutionary tactics and the class struggle. It was not, as Harold Cruse indicates, ". . . over whether to support the Russian Revolution's Bolsheviks,"³⁷ any more than it was the reason for the white socialist-communist split. The SPA continually sought 3rd International membership throughout the early Twenties until 1923 when it tired of such attempts and began to resent Soviet criticism of its leadership.³⁸ The split resulted from 3rd International demands that Marxists rise and immediately seize power in their respective countries. This the socialists refused to do, but they continued to insist that the Allies withdraw their Siberian forces and called for protection and aid to the socialist mother country.

Thus the 1919 split can be generally characterized as a native vs. foreign dispute. Basically West Indian Negroes joined the foreign language federations in establishing a communist party while American blacks remained with native whites in the SPA fold.³⁹ Even John Reed and the small number of American whites who did leave the SPA did not follow the foreign element, choosing instead to organize the Communist Labor Party.

Owen and Randolph left no doubt as to how they stood regarding the Negro Communists:

³⁷Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, p. 40.

³⁸Weinstein, The Decline of American Socialism, pp. 239 & 246.

³⁹The only major exceptions were Lovett Fort-Whiteman of Texas and Grace Campbell of New York.

(They are) . . . a menace They are disruptive . . . they are either lunatics or agents of the Dept. of Justice. They seek to wreck all constructive progressive programs on the grounds that they are petty bourgeois. Are they paid tools of W. J. Burns? . . . How foolish, then, is it to advocate Communism to the Negro workers before they have even grasped the fundamentals and necessity of simple trade and industrial unionism! Nor are we impressed with the sincerity of the Negro Communists, for their statements have revealed that they are utterly devoid of any respect for fact, truth, or honesty.⁴⁰

There were a few Negro individuals that the Messenger believed were working successfully for their race and class. One man, Benjamin Fletcher, was a "Wobbly" organizer who was sentenced to the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth during the great I. W. W. trial. The Messenger took the lead in urging Negro lodges, churches, N. A. A. C. P. branches, and labor organizations to demand his release. The editors declared, "He has been of more service to the masses of the plain Negro people than all the wind-jamming Negro leaders in the country."⁴¹ Fletcher's sentence was commuted in 1923 by Warren Harding, and he was released. In 1933 Franklin Roosevelt granted him a full pardon.⁴²

Robert Abbott of the Chicago Defender received socialist praise for advocating an opening up of all trade unions and trades to the Negro. "That the largest Negro newspaper in America, with more circulation than all the others combined, should take this advanced economic position - is a tribute to its

⁴⁰Messenger, VII (August 1923), p. 784.

⁴¹Ibid., III (August 1919), p. 28.

⁴²Phillip S. Foner, "The I. W. W. and the Black Worker," Journal of Negro History LV (January 1970), p. 59.

courage and its enlightened self-interest."⁴³

Finally, the militant Monroe Trotter, leader of the National Equal Rights League and editor of the Boston Guardian, was another favorite of the radicals. Trotter had supported America's entry into World War I with scepticism. As Philip Randolph noted, "He was the one individual in Boston who had the courage to preside at an anti-war meeting planned by Chandler Owen and myself."⁴⁴ Like the socialists, Trotter was against Ft. Des Moines⁴⁵ from the beginning, claiming it would jeopardize future demands for integration in the armed forces. For "closing ranks", he called Du Bois "a rank quitter of the fight for our rights."⁴⁶

The race leadership, then, was as diffused as that of any large ethnic or political group. Bickering was not just confined to tactics but even to goals as was evidenced by the dispute over the issue of "social equality." Robert Kerlin estimates that the Houston Informer of November 1, 1919 represented 95 percent of the colored press. "Is not the term social equality confused by these disciples of alarm and protectors of the public weal and welfare (more noble scions of democracy!) with the term of 'social intermingling?'"⁴⁷

⁴³Messenger, VI (April 1922), p. 392.

⁴⁴Fox, The Guardian of Boston, p. 216.

⁴⁵The segregated training camp for black officer candidates which was initiated through the efforts of the N. A. A. C. P.

⁴⁶Fox, The Guardian of Boston, p. 218.

⁴⁷Kerlin, The Voice of the Negro, 1919, p. 68.

As far as the Messenger was concerned, social equality was ". . . the first uncompromising goal of the New Negro."⁴⁸ It was apparent to the socialists that those who didn't want social equality evidently desired social inequality, since things were either equal or unequal.⁴⁹ In the March 1919 supplement of the Messenger entitled "The Negro and The New Social Order," the editors asked, "How may social equality be achieved? History shows that the growth of equality - political, social, and economic - has grown out of the two cardinal and corollary principles of 'identity of treatment' and 'free interchangeability.'⁵⁰

Co-operation among the leadership and the socialists over major issues or demands was almost non-existent. The only major exception occurred when the leadership united to free the men of the 24th Infantry involved in the Houston riot. On February 7, 1924, petitions were presented to Calvin Coolidge demanding their release.⁵¹

⁴⁸Messenger, III (December 1919), p. 20.

⁴⁹Ibid., VIII (March 1924), p. 83.

⁵⁰"The Negro & The New Social Order," Messenger (March 1919), Supplement, p. 9.

⁵¹See Appendix C for a sample petition.

"Future historians will marvel at the political contradictions of a race of tenants and workers accepting political leaders selected by landlords, bankers, and big capitalists."

A. Philip Randolph - 1918

IV. CONCLUSION

By 1925, Owen and Randolph were no longer actively involved in radical activities. For Chandler Owen it was a bitter end, ultimately driving him into the ranks of conservatism. It all began when his brother Toussaint, a highly skilled tailor from South Carolina, came to New York in 1922 seeking employment. Owen discovered that being co-editor of a socialist magazine was of no help in attempting to find his brother a job for he was virtually ignored, even by the Marxist needle-trade union. After failing to secure employment, Toussaint Owen died in March, 1923. As Jervis Anderson has observed, "Embarrassed, disillusioned, and bereaved, Owen dropped out of the radical movement, toward the end of 1923, and left for Chicago."¹ George Schuyler, Owen's heir-apparent on the Messenger, noted at the time that "Owen and I were quite in agreement about their (socialist) labor-union hypocrisy only paying lip-service to the Brotherhood of Man."²

But for A. Philip Randolph, the break with active socialist politics embarked him on a successful new career as a trade-union organizer. In 1925 he began organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and eventually became

¹Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 142.

²Schuyler, Black & Conservative, p. 138.

its president. Writing in New America, Paul Feldman indicates the scope of Randolph's success, "Randolph is the trade union leader who has had the greatest influence on reshaping labor's racial policies and uniting black and white workers in struggles for their common interests."³ As for the Messenger, it became the Porters' official organ until it ceased publication in 1928.

The fate of black socialism was irrevocably related to the course of American Marxism. By the mid-Twenties, Harlem, like the rest of the nation, lost interest in political and economic radicalism and focused instead on Babe Ruth, sex, bathtub gin, mah jong, and crossword puzzles. James Weinstein declared, "After 1925, as the old socialist party disintegrated, and the farmer-labor movement collapsed, the Communist Party emerged as the central force of American radicalism."⁴

In order to analyze the Messenger, we must consider the question offered by Spero and Harris:

Were the economic radicals a sport phenomenon, the momentary efflorescence of Negro unrest? Or, were they sincere adherents to the philosophy of class struggle, who, despite their belief in the revolutionary dissolution of capitalism as a prerequisite to complete realization of their ideals, attempted to direct Negro unrest into channels of constructive economic reforms?⁵

³Paul Feldman, New America, XII, September 30, 1974, p. 5.

⁴Weinstein, Decline of American Socialism, p. xi.

⁵Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, p. 398.

The question is not an easy one to answer. Without a doubt the Messenger flourished in a period of widespread Negro unrest, without which it would have been difficult to survive. A radical religious journal, The World Tomorrow, was serious when it stated, "It is difficult to exaggerate the growing and entirely explicable bitterness among the Negroes."⁶ If the Messenger was merely advocating black militancy, we might simply end here; however, it is important to remember that this was a periodical whose readership Chandler Owen once admitted was two-thirds white! The Messenger socialists differed from their white comrades only in their belief that the plight of the Negro posed a special problem in the make-up of American capitalism. Segregation and discrimination were problems unknown to white workers, but they existed in every minute of every day for the vast majority of black Americans. But orthodox Marxism, which the SPA officially adhered to, declared that the class-struggle was color-blind, and thus no special appeals could be offered to the various races.

The toll of centuries of slavery and discrimination was evident in the socialist attempt to recruit blacks. As Spero and Harris aptly observe, "To expect a people who have such a background and who have been chiefly employed in agriculture and domestic services to embrace social radicalism when white workers with older industrial traditions have not, is to expect the miraculous."⁷ This goes far in explaining why black radicalism was slower in developing than it was among whites. Loren Baritz notes in The American Left that "Racial

⁶The World Tomorrow, II, August 1919, p. 208.

⁷Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, pp. 400-401.

oppression combined with economic repression effectively submerged black Americans to a pre-political level. Their struggle was one of sheer survival, and there can only be occasional politics in the jungle."⁸

There were also other factors involved in the downfall of the black radicals. Spero and Harris see Randolph's "ambition to play the role of scholar, economist, journalist, race leader, and union organizer all in one" as ". . . suggestive of the shortcomings of economic radicalism."⁹ Another factor concerns the questioning of traditional religious roles. Although Owen and Randolph probably were not atheists, this was the popular perception, and as Spero and Harris again note, ". . . any Negro movement which rests upon a social theory strongly tinged with atheism is not likely to receive large support from Negroes."¹⁰ Lastly, as Randolph himself admitted, the Messenger was "over the heads of the masses of the people."¹¹ An old resident of Harlem has said that the socialists did not speak the language of the masses. They ". . . should not have been standing in front of churches, they would have been better off in poolrooms and bars."¹²

Sterling Spero and Abram Harris have excellently grasped an important

⁸Loren Baritz, ed., The American Left, Radical Political Thought in the Twentieth Century, 1971, p. 271.

⁹Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, p. 398.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 400.

¹¹Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 145.

¹²Ibid., p. 147.

aspect of the radical operations within the black community;

Because of economic and political unrest a people inured to conservatism and habituated to servility might willingly adopt a militant and race-conscious leadership dedicated to the acquisition of their political rights and the protection of their civil liberties. They are not likely to give lasting support to a form of leadership which predicates betterment upon the reorganization of industrial society.¹³

Kenneth B. Clark has concurred with this argument. Writing in Dark Ghetto, he concluded that ". . . few blacks see their salvation in the destruction of American society."¹⁴ We should not forget that the "cooperative commonwealth" was an avowed goal of the Friends of Negro Freedom.

Harold Cruse attributes the lack of socialist success to the unique problems of Harlem itself. He argues that "Harlem exists for the benefit of others¹⁵ and has no cultural, political, or economic autonomy."¹⁶ Thus no protest movement in Harlem can be successful unless it is at the same time a political, economic, and cultural movement. Cruse cites the Messenger's attempt to focus on politics and economics, (which were borrowed from whites), while ignoring culture, as instrumental in its downfall.¹⁷ Christopher Lasch

¹³Spero & Harris, The Black Worker, pp. 400-401.

¹⁴Kenneth B. Clark, Dark Ghetto, 1965, p. 219.

¹⁵Here Cruse is referring to the absentee white real estate, banking, and business combines.

¹⁶Cruse, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectuals, p. 86.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 40-41.

in The Agony of the American Left sums up the problem this way:

Thus in Harlem the issue was not merely whether art had anything to do with politics but whether black people were to develop their own forms of expression or to continue as cultural dependents of the white community. (But) the defense of art implied a defense of ethnic culture and thus ran counter to the integrationist politics then advocated by black socialists¹⁸

But Owen and Randolph were not oblivious to the emergence of the new black culture within Harlem. As Langston Hughes notes, it was the Messenger that bought his first short stories.¹⁹ But as Americans, the socialists understood quite well that any move toward cultural separatism would be disastrous and should be avoided. Seeing first hand the damage of Garvey separatism, the socialists knew, as Kenneth Clark has put it, that ". . . the American Negro is no more African than he is Danish, or Irish, or Indian. He is American His culture is the culture of America."²⁰

It is axiomatic that the American culture by 1925 no longer enjoyed the exciting game of radical politics. As has been suggested, the SPA was no longer a salient factor on the political scene. Its collapse was evident as early as 1924 when V. L. Reynolds, Vice-Presidential candidate of the Socialist-Labor Party wrote, "Absolutely lost without the prestige of its former well-filled theatres, martyr-loving crowds, and large cash and check contributions, it can

¹⁸Christopher Lasch, The Agony of the American Left, 1969, p. 49.

¹⁹Langston Hughes, The Big Sea, 1945, p. 234.

²⁰Clark, Dark Ghetto, p. 219.

well be expected to flock, with much flapping of wings, right into the big tent, as can its vomited progeny, the Workers' Party. "21

Radicals and conservatives alike no longer viewed the SPA as a serious political threat. Martin Littleton, speaking in 1925 before the New York City Republican Club, described what the Socialists had become. "And the little white philosopher of peace, known as the socialist who doesn't wish to hurt anybody or to harm anybody, now wishes some comfortable parlor on a bright afternoon where he can meet an assemblage of ladies and gentlemen not otherwise occupied, to deliver to them the soft strains of seductive socialism. "22

For Randolph and the Messenger the love-affair with radicalism was over because socialism itself was dead. While Randolph's analysis of the American social structure may have been correct, the vast majority simply believed it to be false. Randolph expressed his hopes for America best in a pamphlet written in 1919 entitled "The Truth About Lynching:"

The conditions are that white men and black men and white women and black women are unconsciously treading upon the crater of a social volcano whose molten lava of class passions, emotions, and race hatred threaten to drench the land in blood; to wash away the dykes of our false civilization; to sweep on in its course the derelict kings of capitalism and the slimy and poisonous germs of race prejudice and to erect upon the ruins thereof a new civilization, a new democracy, a new humanity, fortified and armed with universal suffrage and universal education.²³

²¹V. L. Reynolds, "Is America Ripe for a Labor Party," Modern Quarterly, II (1924), p. 48.

²²Martin W. Littleton, "Are Radical Activities Weakening American Institutions," 1925, p. 6.

²³A. Philip Randolph, "The Truth About Lynching," 1919, p. 8.

APPENDIX A

The following are the dates of publication for the Messenger until it began regular monthly publication in 1922.

- Volume I - November, 1917
- Volume II - January, 1918
July
- Volume III - March, 1919 and supplement
May/June
July - denied 2nd class mailing privileges
August
September
October
December
- Volume IV - February, 1920
March
April/May
August
September
October
November
December
- Volume V - March, 1921
July - re-admitted to 2nd class mails
August
September
October
November
December

APPENDIX B

The content of the Messenger was divided under various section headings. The three most important were Editorials, Economics and Politics, and Education and Literature. The bulk of the magazine was devoted to these topics with equal space generally devoted to each. Two headings appearing fairly regularly were Who's Who and Open Forum, a letter column. Others appearing less frequently included Theatre-Drama-Music, Poet's Corner, Book Reviews, Labor World, and Notes on the F.N.F. The Messenger rarely exceeded thirty pages in length. Its cover usually portrayed a photograph or drawing. (See following sample copies.)

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D

Vol. II. No. 7

- 78 -

JULY, 1918

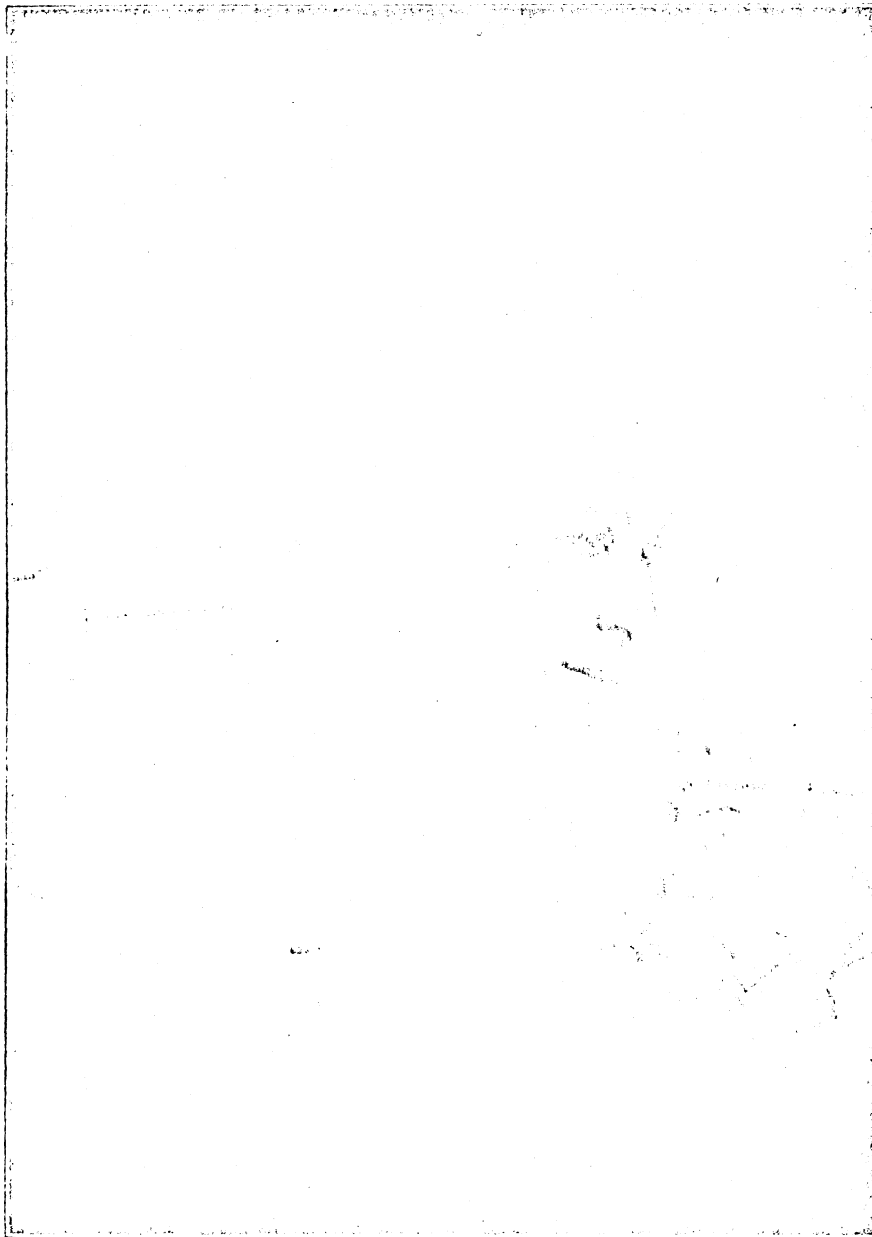
THE

MESSENGER

"ONLY RADICAL NEGRO MAGAZINE IN AMERICA"

Edited by

Chandler Owen — A. Philip Randolph

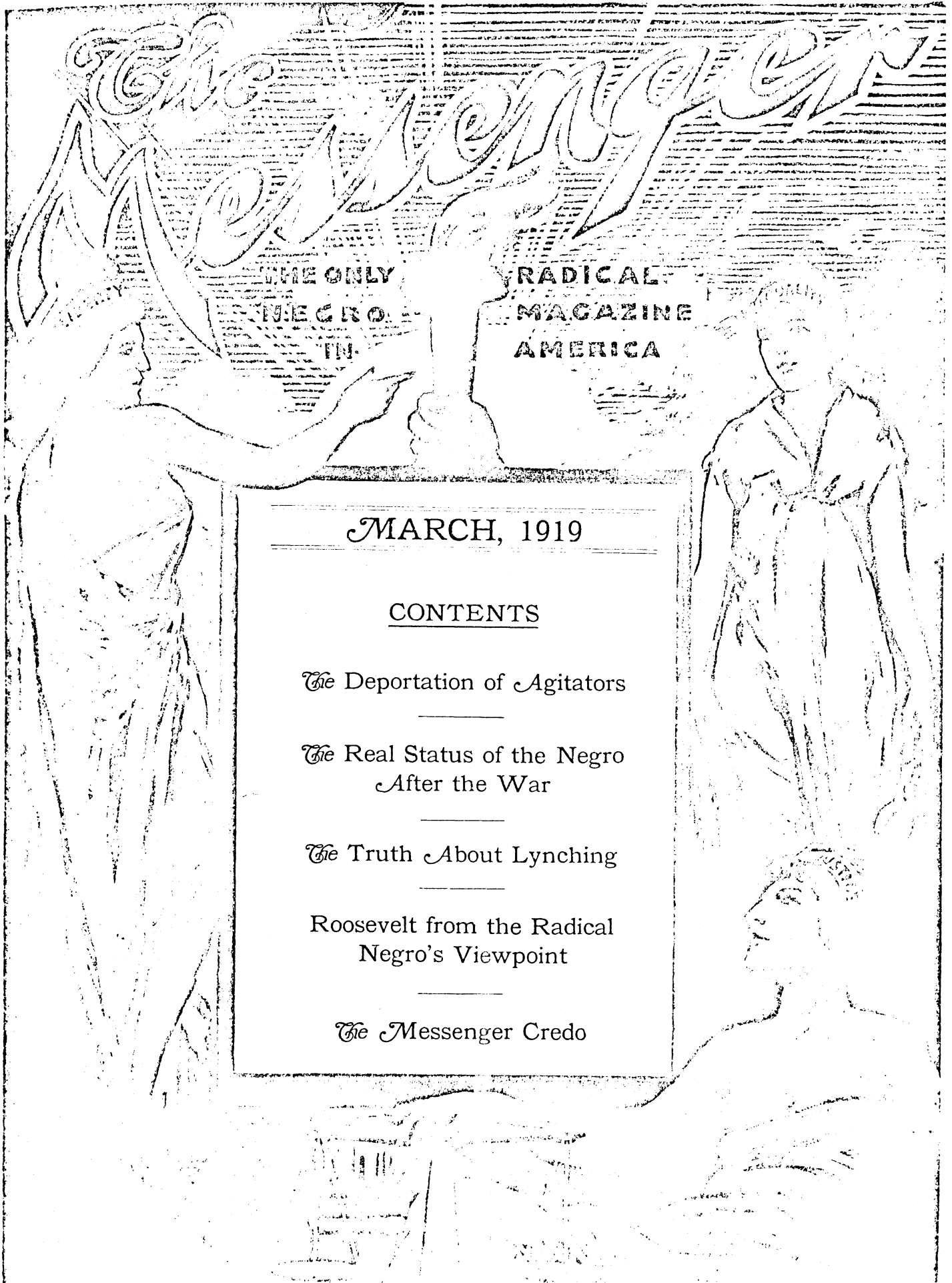


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- 79 -
The Negro and the New Social Order



THE ONLY
NEGRO
IN
RADICAL
MAGAZINE
AMERICA

MARCH, 1919

CONTENTS

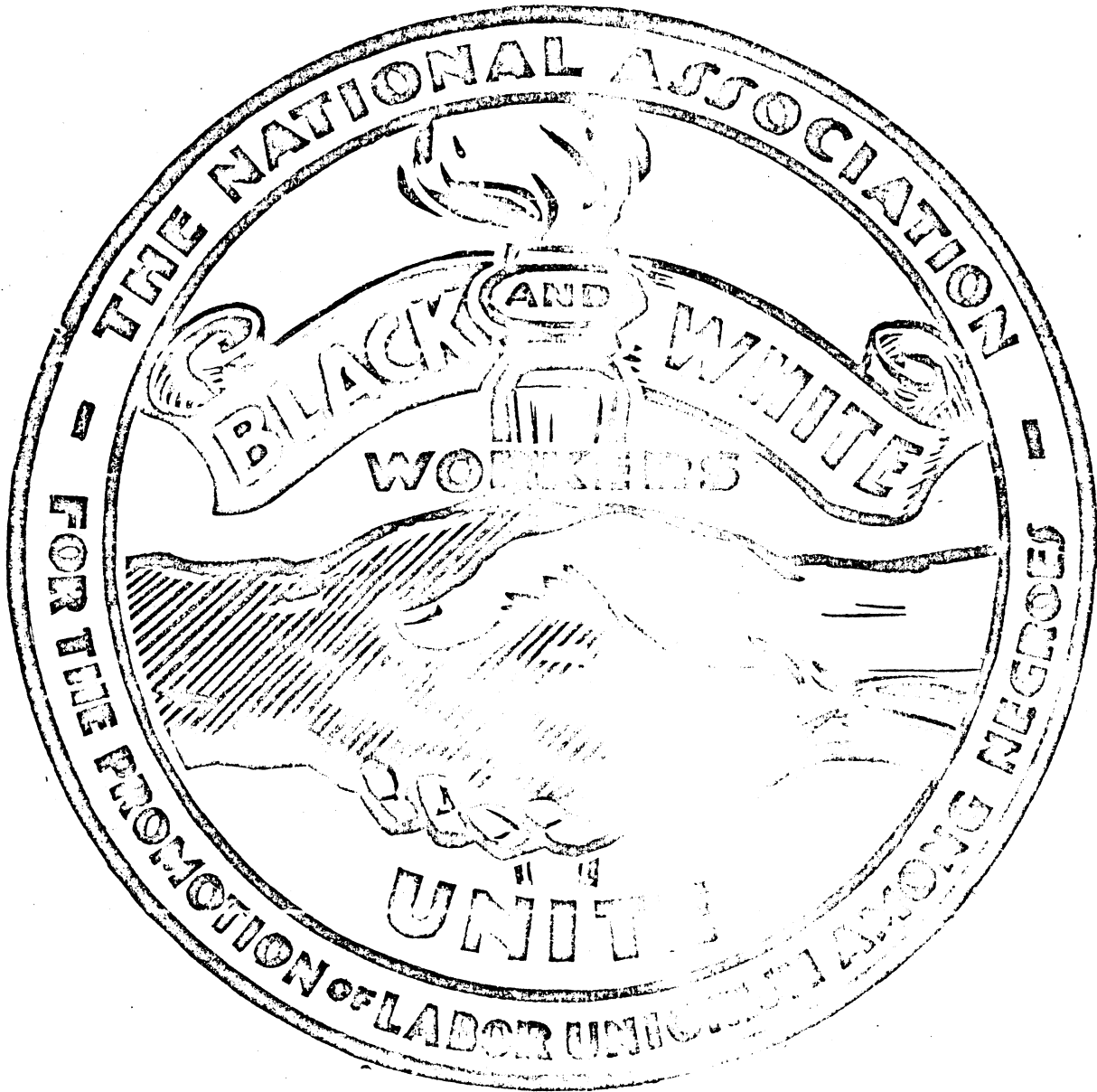
The Deportation of Agitators

The Real Status of the Negro
After the War

The Truth About Lynching

Roosevelt from the Radical
Negro's Viewpoint

The Messenger Credo



Until the workers of all races, creeds, nationalities and colors are joined hand in hand against their common foe—the capitalist exploiters, for the achievement of a common aim—their emancipation, their fight will be futile, useless.

As long as the black and white working dogs keep fighting over the issue of race prejudice, the capitalist dog will continue to...

Race wars have been fought for the benefit of the Owing Class.

Some Reasons Why Negroes Should Vote the Socialist Ticket

1. Because the Socialist Party is the Party of the workingman.
2. Because 99 per cent. of Negroes are working people.
3. Because the Socialist Party advocates the abolition of high rents by taxing land to its full value.
4. Because the Negroes of New York suffer more than any other people from high rents on account of being segregated and being compelled to live in a special part of the city.
5. Because the Socialist Party advocates the establishment of city markets to sell meat, milk, butter, eggs and vegetables at wholesale prices.
6. Because this market will be run for service and not for profits: it will cut down the present high cost of living.
7. Because the Negroes are the first and hardest hit victims of the high cost of living on account of the starvation wages which they receive.
8. Because the Socialist Party advocates the ownership and operation of the subway, elevated and surface car lines, the electric, gas and telephone companies.
9. Because this will cheapen the price of gas, electric light, telephone service and transportation.
10. (a) In Cleveland, Ohio, the city-owned car lines charge only 3 cents for car fare.
(b) In most European cities, gas, electric light, telephone service and transportation cost much less than in American cities because they are owned and operated by the cities.
(c) Just as the Post Office, which is run for the benefit of the people and not for the benefit of a few rich individuals, carries your letter for 2 cents instead of 5 cents, which was the case when private companies carried the mails, so will you get cheaper light and transportation when the city owns the public utilities and operates them for service and
11. Because the Socialist Party is the party of economic and political justice.
12. Because this will open up large avenues of employment for Negroes where they will receive more wages, perform more healthful work and have more leisure.
* * * All Negroes must ride to work.
Negroes must use gas to light their houses.
Negroes must use gas to cook their food.
Negroes must use the telephone to telephone the doctors.
Hence they must be cheap in order that you may be able to use them when you have to.
13. Because the Socialist Party advocates more and better schools for the children.
14. Because this will enable the Negro child to get a better education.
15. Because the Socialist Party advocates free books, free food and free clothing for school children.
16. Because this will enable poor Negro families to keep their children in school.
17. Because the Socialist Party advocates more playgrounds for children.
18. Because this will prevent Negro children who, on account of the lack of playgrounds, play in the street, from being run over and maimed and killed by automobiles.
19. Because the Socialist Party advocates more efficient police system, which will use more brains than billies.
20. Because this protects Negroes from ruthless assaults by policemen.
21. Because the Socialist Party advocates equal industrial and political opportunity to all men and women regardless of race or color.

examinations for positions as conductors, ticket collectors, ticket sellers and ticket checkers in the subway and elevated stations, and as inspectors of the subway and elevated lines, and as inspectors of the gas and electric utility meter service, and as inspectors of the city-owned car lines.

the Socialist Party is the party of economic and political justice.
the Socialist Party is the party of economic and political justice.
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