

ROY WILKINS
Editor

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National Association
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January
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1945

My dear Mr. Secretary:

We are attaching a copy of the January issue of The Crisis, on page 8 of which you will find an editorial, "Mass Crucifixion," which deals with the recent "mutiny" trial of Negro sailors on the West Coast.

Very sincerely yours,

Roy Wilkins
Editor

Secretary of the Navy, James V. Forrestal
United States Navy
Washington, D. C.

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SOCIAL SCIENCES

The CRISIS

January, 1945

• Fifteen Cents



Maurice Seymour

Happy New Year!

Editorials

New Year Resolution

THE public conduct of some members of the Negro population in all parts of the country is a source of concern to thoughtful sections of their own group and to all persons interested in increased opportunities for minorities and decreased racial tensions.

Scores of committees on race relations set up during the past year will admit privately, if they do not assert publicly, that this conduct is one of the major items contributing to interracial misunderstanding and friction.

No section is free of it. Name any center of population from Miami to Milwaukee, from Los Angeles to Long Island, and obnoxious public conduct will be found. It flourishes on buses, trolleys and trains, on street corners, in busy downtown retail districts, and in factories and other places of employment. Last fall, when a number of brilliant Negro football players performed on important college and high school elevens in the East and Middle West, their deeds on the gridiron which brought credit and glory to the race were almost completely nullified by the rowdy conduct of their fellow race members in the stands. Women, it pains us to state, are as guilty as men, and of times more so.

Negroes have a right to demand the same treatment as other people. They have been mistreated so long that it is understandable in this wartime that they would break out into breezy exuberance over the turn of fortune that has forced them into better jobs at better pay, and into other opportunities not hitherto enjoyed. But this is no excuse for loud and boisterous talk and laughter, for profanity and other filthy language, for bluff, bluster and belligerency. Many whites are no better than Negroes, but the latter are marked in the public mind because of their color.

We should not fool ourselves. The "rough-and-ready" among us are hurting the whole race and endangering our chances of continuing with our just percentage of postwar employment. Let us make a New Year resolution to crusade against this type of conduct until it is rooted out. Let every minister, newspaper, club, lodge, union, and civic organization join the campaign. We must demand our rights and we must be firm about them; but we do not have to be ugly in our conduct. We must remember that with *rights go responsibilities*, and one of the chief of these is to be decent citizens among our fellow citizens.

Mass Crucifixion

THE navy courts-martial which found 50 Negro seamen guilty on a "mutiny" charge, and the army courts-martial which

found 28 Negro soldiers guilty of rioting constitute nothing less than a mass crucifixion of the Negro race and its contribution to the war effort.

The sailors were given savage sentences ranging from five to fifteen years in prison. At this writing the soldiers have not yet been sentenced. The sailors were supposed to have conspired to disobey orders to load ammunition ships at a West Coast port. The incident happened right after 250 Negro sailors had been killed in an explosion loading ammunition at the port. The soldiers were supposed to have rioted against Italian prisoners of war stationed with them at Fort Lawton, Wash.

The sailor's defense was that they did not refuse to obey an order to load ammunition, that they were asked whether they wanted to go on loading after the fatal blast and a certain number of them said they did not wish to continue. The detailed record in the trial of the soldiers is not yet available, but it is known that they were incensed over the preferred treatment given Italian ex-enemies, in contrast to the Jim Crowism and humiliation meted out to them in the uniform of their country.

In both trials the statement appeared frequently in the press that these were the largest trials ever held by the army and navy in their histories, giving the clear impression that Negroes upset historic American tradition by mass disloyalty and violence in wartime. *The Crisis* recognizes the necessity for absolute discipline in time of war and does not condone mutiny or rioting by soldiers; but we cannot escape the belief that while these trials were staged under the cloak of enforcing discipline, there was the added purpose of smearing and crucifying the entire race. The boards of review in both cases ought to consider carefully this aspect, as well as the records and the pleas of counsel.

"You Must Prove Ability"

THE Town Meeting of the Air broadcast December 6 on the question of a permanent Fair Employment Practice Committee brought up once more, through Ray Tucker, a speaker for the negative, that old contention that Negroes must prove themselves if they would enjoy certain benefits as American citizens. Mr. Tucker never explained how a Negro worker could prove his ability on a job if an employer refused to hire him because of his color. In Camden, N. J., they are still chuckling over this story:

A young Negro radio technician applied for work at a large corporation and was refused. Some months later he was inducted into the army and assigned to radio work.

He perfected a process and the corporation in Camden was asked by the army to set up a model and go into production. The corporation replied that it had no man in its employ with the training and knowledge necessary for this task, whereupon the army sent the young Negro to do the job!

We need a permanent FEPC in order to place the power of the government behind the simple American proposition that no man shall be denied employment and a chance to prove himself in a job simply because of his race, color, religion, or national origin. The bill creating this FEPC will come up in the new Congress. It was endorsed in the Republican party platform and by President Roosevelt in his campaign speeches, but the united support of citizens will be needed to insure its enactment.

No Jim Crow Conscription

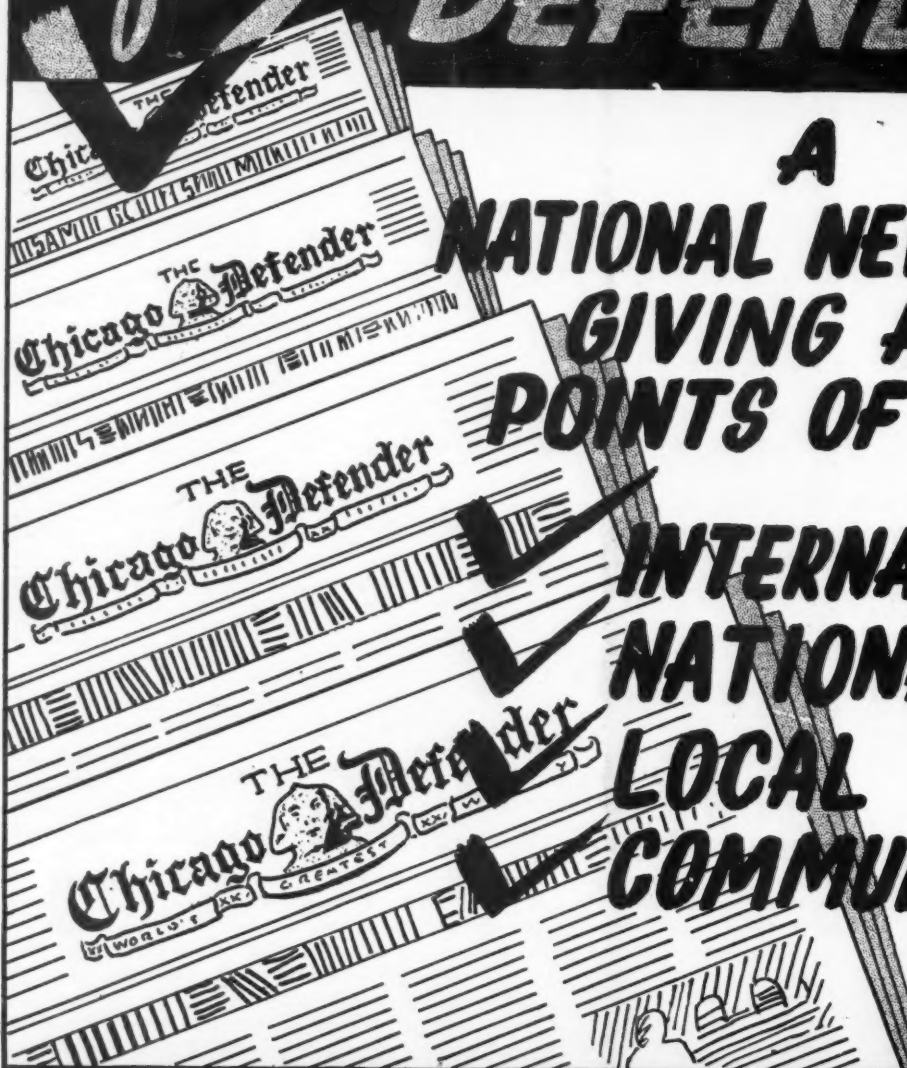
A TREMENDOUS amount of pressure is being put behind the movement for peacetime military conscription of all boys who reach the age of 18. Hearings will be held as soon as the new Congress convenes and a bill will be rushed to the floor. Negroes should oppose this conscription bill because it will continue and strengthen the pattern of racial segregation in the army. We have had enough of Jim Crow army units. Every family in the land with a member in the armed forces has received overwhelming first hand testimony of the evil and hatred generated by the segregated system. For us to consent to the continuation of this system into the future, perhaps forever, would be to abandon altogether the fight against segregation of the Negro in American life.

For the other evil in this plan, aside from the perpetuation of the well-known mistreatments which are part and parcel of Jim Crowism, is that millions of white boys annually will be indoctrinated with the segregation philosophy. They will return to civilian life after their training period imbued with the idea that separate schools, separate recreation, separate housing, and separate transportation should be set up for the Negro. Moreover, since the army definitely limits the kinds of tasks Negroes perform in uniform and stresses "service" units, it is not unlikely that young Americans will be convinced that Negroes in civilian life should be barred from certain types of employment.

There is untold danger in this conscription bill and it should be fought with every weapon at the race's command. This editorial is strictly a "racial" argument, but we have no apologies for such an argument in those instances where America forces Negro Americans to think first in terms of race and second in terms of the general welfare.

Your

CHICAGO DEFENDER



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