

★ One Viewpoint ★

by Ed Friedman

The purpose of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is probably more clearly defined in its title than is the purpose of many other organizations in their charters. Yet when the Bucknell Chapter of N. A. A. C. P. recently launched a membership drive it nearly failed because there were rumors drifting through the campus to the effect that the purpose of N. A. A. C. P. is not in harmony with our American ideals, or to put it in the vulgar vernacular, its a subversive organization.

Evidence tends to show that not only is it not subversive but that it has done great good in the past to further the equality of races in the country—not exactly out of harmony with the constitution. If then we label the N. A. A. C. P. subversive because the Communist party line also advocates the equality of all men we must indeed revise the constitution. If this thesis is followed to its logical conclusion, Milan will beat out McCarthy for the presidency in '56—in a one party race.

But perhaps the most important and strikingly pathetic implication of the whole mess is that it illustrates well the complete apathy of the student body not just to a cause that is based on the first principles of democracy, but towards a realization of what constitutes security and personal liberties. For it would seem that we have so little desire to help our fellow citizens, and students, and our country, and ourselves, that we do not even bother to investigate the situation to see if by neglecting an organization we are not harming the country and ourselves more than if we had joined it.

As for those who would like to help the Negro Race free itself from the vicious clutches of authoritarian Jim Crowism, but were afraid to join an organization that would have helped them realize their ideals, they have placed themselves in a situation analagous to that of the people they want to help. These Americans who were afraid to join or did not even bother to investigate the truth of the charges are themselves held rigid by a new type of Jim Crowism. This new conformity that creeps from among the fertile dairy farms of Wisconsin into the fertile minds of American college students lacks a strong anti-Negro character, but it does engender superiority complexes in the enslaved conformers.

The whole problem is basically one of security. We want security in the form of a substantial job after graduation, and we also want security from the fear that a totalitarian regime might destroy our individual liberties that are the very essence of democracy. But we are striving for the short-range goal. Obviously there is not much security in a substantial job if it can be lost by the mere whim of an authoritarian government. But one will always have the opportunity for a substantial job in a state that is assuredly free—this is the fundamental security.

Thus, here is the hysteria conceived paradox: We eagerly sacrifice our personal liberties and desires now in the hope that we will have them when we get out of school, but at the same time we are doing nothing to assure ourselves that this country will be in a position to grant us these liberties when we graduate.

The very foundation of our government is based upon the sovereignty of the individual and the existing fear that the Communist danger threatens to make the state supreme is genuine. We call those people who do not recognize the danger naive (or Communists). But the present apathy which blindly encourages self-subordination to an authoritarian conformity is by its very nature the death of the individual.

NAACP...

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Army, wrote the following, 'I want to give my personal assurance that the Department of the Army does not consider the National Association for the Advancement.. of.. Colored People is connected with communist activities'."

Vic Scott, president of the campus NAACP explained with the following statement why the group was concerned about this rumor:

"As president of an organization which holds.. a.. liberal.. viewpoint, I think it is our duty to oppose any and all types of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. The situation whereby college students will believe a vicious rumor without trying to test its validity is definitely a type of narrow-mindedness—a type which I feel it would be the duty of NAACP to attempt to correct whether it was directly involved or not."

Dr. Smith explained in his letter to the Navy that, "My interest in this matter stems from the fact that I am faculty adviser to the NAACP chapter and am under the distinct impression that this national organization has been successful in preventing any infiltration by subversive elements. The organization on campus has been highly respected and has done worthwhile work especially in the field of providing scholarships for needy students, as well as combating prejudices and discrimination."

Dr. Smith also wrote a letter for the ~~Bucknellian~~ expressing a comparison of the local atmosphere with the national scene of which the last paragraph is as follows:

"In a small way we have seen at Bucknell what is happening all over our country today. Wholly American organizations are being destroyed by these false charges and rumors. It may come to pass that the socially conscious person will be unable to find any organized groups with which to work. Everyone who becomes aware of this danger owes it to his country to speak out before it is too late. I hope that this incident will increase the number of Bucknellians who have the courage to do so."