

Assessment of Race Relations--1957

Following are the concluding paragraphs of the "44th Annual Report to the American People on Developments in Race Relations" of President L. H. Foster, Tuskegee Institute on January 15, 1958. The entire report may be obtained by writing to: The Department of Records, P. O. Box 68, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama

A SURVEY OF LEGAL and group action during the year (1957) leads to the conclusion that race relations in the Southern States are in a more unsettled and disturbed status than a year ago. The divergent segregationist and desegregationist points of view are held more resolutely now than in the recent past. There is urgent need for realistic and constructive communication on the southern scene, if serious difficulties are to be avoided in the near future.

Several factors operate currently to affect the state of race relations in the South: Segregationists have at their command substantial control of the economy, extensive authority in political affairs, and considerable influence on the publication policies of most media of mass communication. There is, too, the momentum of decades of operation of these resources in behalf of a segregated society. Desegregationists, on the other hand, have the support of an awakened and expressed national concern for the welfare of all the American people. They also have the urgent pressures for freedom on the international front, and the widely proclaimed doctrine of human brotherhood.

One obstacle to favorable race relations is the misinformation and misinterpretation about the national welfare. Public officials representing the South rarely make it clear in their talks or writings that America's welfare depends critically upon the strength of democracy at home. These spokesmen often express the opposite opinion, saying in effect that the international impact of poor race relations in America is inconsequential.

Segregationists have made attempts to divert attention from their policies of restriction on Negro rights in the South. Instances in the North of racial discrimination and episodes of violence have been widely publicized in the South. However, the legal support for racial discrimination in the South is in sharp contrast to the legally desegregated situation which prevails generally in the North. This significant difference is not mentioned by segregationist spokesmen in their attempts to draw a parallel between racial developments in the two areas.