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GIVING NEGROES AN OPPORTUNITY

(Editorial in New York Times)

The Commission on Interracial Co-operation is not heard of often by the mass of Americans. But ever since the commission was formed in the South in 1919 it has been doing remarkable work in adjusting racial contacts. It has prevented some race riots; it has aided greatly in providing the Negro population of the South with parks and schools; and it has ameliorated the social condition of black people in that part of the country where they are most populous. Formed in 1919 by whites and Negroes, fearful lest the changed demeanor of returning Negro soldiers would provoke massacres all over the land, the commission has worked so intelligently, so efficiently and withal so quietly that what everyone in 1919 discussed as an impending social crisis has passed out of the national consciousness.

In the single matter of lynching, while the Commission cannot claim the improved statistics in that respect as its personal contribution, two facts are admitted. One is that when the interracial body was formed there were eighty-three lynchings the other is that in 1929 there were ten. Aided by preponderant Southern opinion, national newspaper support, many Southern Governors and by other associations, the commission has made a continuous drive against mob execution. When, in 1926, the number rose from seventeen the previous year to twenty-nine, the drive was maintained with added fervor. But this reform is a necessary sequence of its other reforms. Through the work of the commission where whites and Negroes meet in conference to discuss the Negro's problems, a gradually increasing group on both sides has learned to know the aims and sympathies of one another. Goodwill spreads in a community as oil on the water.

Perhaps an inspection of the personnel of the commission will help to explain why its work has been effective. Dr. Moton of Tuskegee represents the sanest force seeking social and economic progress for his race. Mr. Peabody of New York stands for the most sympathetic of white cooperation. Ex-Governor Byrd of Virginia embodies the merciful viewpoint of the dominant Southern aristocrats to whom the Negroes long were slaves and upon whom they still are, in a large degree, dependent. Dr. Poole and Mr. Eagan represent the Christian pity of eminent Southern churchmen for the lowly man and brother, helpless in the white man's land. Dr. Anson Phelps Stokes is of a family which for generations has sought and striven to help the Negro. There are many other shining names on the list; so officered and manned, the commission's intelligent and effective direction was assured from the beginning.

In a current booklet dealing with its record the commission finds much work yet to do. It knows of "one secluded county" where there is no Negro; of counties where the white school fund is unfairly out of all proportion to the Negro; of "Sections" where the Negro may still be

shot down without legal punishment of a few—a very few—communities where the dominant race does not care what happens to the oppressed. But in general it sees the light spreading more and more broadly over the Southern country. Most significant of all passages in the booklet perhaps is the one opposing "arbitrary segregation of one race by another . . ." One of the most profound causes of racial friction "the world over." A trend toward the spread of this segregation is discernible, and the commission is at work on a scientific study on which to base a policy. Here, as its Southern members must realize, there is especial need for all the tact and experience which can be applied.

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