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Reprint from
Southern Viewpoint
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Pittsburgh Courier
Saturday, January 30, 1943

Would It Not Be Wise For Some Negro Schools To Make Joint Appeal To Public For Funds?

One of the most severe catastrophes of the present war, so far as the American people are concerned, is what is happening to our private colleges throughout the length and breadth of our nation today. They are receiving a double assault- that which comes from the loss of the majority of the male student population and that which comes through inability to receive adequate support through the taxing program now necessary to fight this war and to insure the broad social programs upon which this nation has engaged for the past seven or eight years.

If this is true of private colleges in general where it may be said that these colleges have a definite constituency upon which they place a financial claim, the situation is trebly more grave with the Negro colleges of a private nature which heretofore have relied largely on gifts from substantial members of the white race for their support and maintenance. There is occasion therefore for serious alarm as to what may happen to such institutions as Atlanta, Fisk, Dillard, Morehouse, Hampton and Tuskegee to say nothing of a large number of smaller church schools.

Is Public Interested?

The handwriting is on the wall so far as substantial northern support is concerned. The question remains as to whether or not these institutions have sufficiently impressed their worth on the general public and there has been sufficient growth in the public conscience to permit the quality of widespread, if small, individual generosity that is necessary to offset the substantial gifts of the past.

The general public probably does not realize that most of the substantial progress for human betterment has come through the aegis of private and charitable institutions. In the case of education the freedom to experiment and blaze new trails was a pioneering service responsible for much of the progress we know in this field today. Even now, this service is needed because of the more or less fixed pattern which governs the educational programs of most publicly supported educational institutions. In not a few instances the political pot boils incessantly that anything beyond the merest traditional routine is out of the question.

Unified Appeals

Private colleges for Negroes have carried the brunt of our educational effort for the better part of this experience. They yet educate to the extent of their means nearly 50% of those who receive college training. They have provided the bulk of the educational leadership administering to colleges both public and private. They, too, have pioneered in areas, until recently, hardly possible in few if any state supported institutions.

These Negro institutions may well take a cure from the general program of organization which seems to involve most charitable efforts today. Various and sundry drives are being unified with a reduction in overhead for publicity and in behalf of a more purposeful and pointed approach to the giving public. The idea may not be new but it seems most propitious at this time that the several institutions which they are spending for campaign and publicity and that they make a unified appeal to national conscience.

How to Split Gifts

The first question which naturally arises is who will get how much of the funds collected. The only reasonable way to handle this would be to work out certain range limits of individual budgets and then see that the given percentage of a dollar that went to any institution was in terms of this range in its ratio to the whole. If there is included approximately ten institutions this should not be a too difficult mathematical problem. A given institutional range could be determined for a base period similar to that used in the cotton allotment program so as to be sure that a fair estimate of the operating budget is taken.

Negroes Should Start

Such a campaign might well begin with Negro people of America. There are few of us who have any sort of employment who haven't enough intelligence and interest, I am sure, to appreciate the importance of a such a program to these institutions of higher learning. The fact that all types of education would be involved would overcome the objections which might result if a single institution were to make an appeal. In addition to this there would be the savory feeling that this contribution would be made so that a large number of individuals would benefit regardless of their educational choice.

It is also possible that by starting with the Negro people in a campaign of this kind each individual institution could continue to appeal to the donors and special friends it had developed over a period of years. The nominal contribution of one dollar per person could be sought over this wider range without any important conflict. At least during these critical times, a unified financial campaign for several Negro colleges seems to be an idea worth toying with.