

# Observations

## The Trend of Current Thought and Discussion

### The Patronage Issue

By THEODORE W. JONES

(In the Richmond Times-Dispatch)

Your issue of March 23 contained an editorial headed: "Hoover and the South." In that editorial occurred these lines: "It means the end of the influence of Perry Howard, Negro committeeman from Mississippi, who is now being held for trial on charges of selling federal offices; and it is taken for granted that Joseph W. Tolbert, national committeeman for South Carolina, will be deposed."

The obnoxious custom of selling federal offices in the South has come down from the reconstruction period and is hoary with age. According to Harry S. New, ex-postmaster general, it is participated in by Democrats and Republicans when their respective parties are in power. This abuse of power, then, is as great a reflection on one party as on the other. If Negro committeemen have been ensnared in this vicious custom, they are no worse than white committeemen who inaugurated and have perpetuated the system.

Selling patronage, as charged against these Negro committeemen, is bad indeed, but not as bad as the acts of federal officers in selling leases to the oil lands of the government, which transactions reek with graft, bribery and corruption. And what about the public scandals in Oklahoma and Louisiana, which include such distinguished names as Governor Henry S. Johnson and Governor Huey P. Long?

These Negro committeemen are accused of nothing more heinous than misuse of their appointing power. Their records will seem clean compared with the records of white men—governors of great states who have been impeached for gross incompetency, misappropriation of public funds and other scandals. There is an impeachment resolution now in the house of representatives charging the governor of the state with habitual drunkenness, attempted corruption of the judiciary and plotting murder. Today a United States congressman, said to be endorsed by the Anti-Saloon league, is under a federal indictment for turning rum runner and dry law violator, and these are not all. Can greater charges be filed against the worst Negro criminal in the Southland than these against white representative southern leaders?

It is not unusual to find white men

high in public and private office who have faltered, failed and fallen, and they will keep on falling until Gabriel blows the horn. Is it reasonable to expect and demand perfection in the black man? When a white man proves recreant to his trust and is driven from power another white man is put in his place. Will this rule be followed in the event that these Negro committeemen are removed? Will other Negroes be put in their places, and if not, why not?

Whether or not these Colored men wore their honors well and worthily is insignificant. Their fate will not affect the Negroes' weal or woe. Their names are not connected with any economic, social or political achievement for their race. The Negroes' standing in the Republican party has been on the decline during the operations of these men as national committeemen and today it is worse, so they have availed nothing in that direction. They did help nominate and elect Mr. Hoover, who has repaid their loyalty by turning against them. If they are guilty of misconduct in office and deposed, no one will be dragged down with them.

As a matter of fact the future or destiny of the Colored race does not depend on Negro national committeemen; does not depend upon any political party, the friendly decisions of any court of law, or even upon President Hoover. The future or destiny of the race depends upon the Negro himself and the good will of the white people among whom his lot is cast.

For example, Negroes are not financiers, speculators, oil magnates or merchant kings. The overwhelming majority are workers, they must toil with tools, must labor with their hands for centuries yet to come. There is no law, no political party, or the exercise of any franchise that will force an individual, firm or corporation to employ a Negro, if a forger will render better or more efficient service.

There are legions of southern white people ready and willing to encourage the Negro if he is sober, sensible and will stick to his job. To repeat, believe it or not, the future or destiny of the Negro lies largely with himself and the friendly relations he is able to maintain with the white people among whom he must live, and here he must work out his salvation.