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EDITORIAL

Lady Bird, We Love You!

(An Open Letter to our First Lady)

Dear First Lady:

Lady Bird, you are one doll. We love you madly for being yourself.

We believe that you are "the greatest" and you could not have happened to a better fellow than your gentleman, LBJ.

Your recent swing through the West has started the machinery that will push forward toward the realization of three American ideals.

- 1) Reestablishment of implicit confidence in the integrity of the White House;
- 2) Revitalization of the seed of American prosperity;

(From the New York Times)

Who Speaks for the Negro?

The call by the leaders of the country's major Negro organizations for a suspension of mass demonstrations and a concentration on voter registration and other political activity in support of civil rights is a welcome indication of maturity and responsibility in a period of national trial for Negro and white alike.

Men of the caliber of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young have been painfully aware that the riots of recent weeks have intensified the backlash of white resentment against Negro pressure for swifter progress toward full equality. This resentment could inflict great damage to the Negro cause in the national elections this fall and make vastly more difficult the eradication of the entrenched problems created by a century of social neglect.

The big question now is how successful the Negro groups will be in discouraging more explosions. A large part of the answer must rest with the white community. If the moratorium on demonstrations causes any relaxation in the sense of urgency municipal officials now feel about searching for answers to the problems of jobs, education and housing and promoting better interracial cooperation, the Negro leaders will find themselves helpless to bottle up the indignation of their people.

Indeed, there is already reason for doubt that any Negro spokesman, however distinguished his record of accomplishment, can speak for—or even speak to—the Negroes who have been quickest to take up bricks and bottles in street fighting with the police. Those who urge responsible solutions to the complex problems of adjustment find that they alienate themselves from the most disaffected elements in the Negro ghettos by the very fact of their responsibility.

Thus, in strife-racked Rochester, City Manager Homer complained that Negroes who started to work with white officials to ease racial tension were promptly accused by their fellow-Negroes of "selling out to the whites." In New York a group of prominent Negro writers, artists and intellectuals agreed that the established Negro leadership could not reach the vast, submerged Negro "lumpenproletariat"—the floating, jobless, unaffiliated mass with no stake in the social and economic order.

"Responsible Negro leadership," the civil rights organization said last night, "needs desperately responsive white leadership as it relates to jobs, improved housing and educational opportunities." That is a message that must be taken to heart in every city if genuine racial peace is to be established.

ciently relate Congress to the other liberatory movements, particularly the All-African Convention, the Liberal Party, the Unity Movement, and the Pan-Africanist Congress.

These criticisms do not detract, however, from the overall judgment that Africanists and all those interested in the struggle for sanity and decency in South Africa will be long indebted to Mary Benson for her useful and unique contribution.

AFRICA in Today's World

By CHARLES I. WEST, M.D.

(The following book review by Pierre L. van den Berghe appeared in a recent issue of "Africa Report." We found it most interesting and trust you also will do so.)

THE AFRICAN PATRIOTS, by Mary Benson (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 310 pages, photographs, \$5.95.

"This is a committed book," confesses the author, and, on the whole, the book is all the better for it. This sympathetic account of the African National Congress of South Africa fills an important gap in knowledge of that country. For the first time, students have a full length treatment of one of the oldest and most remarkable protest movements in Africa.

Edward Feit's recent short book on the same subject is based mostly on printed sources and reveals little "inside" knowledge. White politics in South Africa have received extensive attention from Gwendolen Carter, Michael Roberts, A.E.G. Trollip, and others. Various episodes or aspects of the liberatory struggle have been described by Leo Kuper, Anthony Sampson, and E. Roux, not to mention the autobiographies of Gandhi and Albert Luthuli. Now at last, however, Mary Benson's well-written and well-documented work tells the fascinating and moving story of a half century of non-violent resistance to oppression.

That the author was able to gather this mine of information under such adverse conditions, and without increasing the jeopardy under which all leaders of the Congress movement find themselves, is indeed a tour de force. No doubt to protect people, she could not reveal all she knew, but, even so, this constitutes, by far, the most informative book on the history of the African National Congress now in existence.

The author's ideological commitment does not prevent her from analyzing incisively the sources of weakness and division within Congress, the latter's tactical blunders, and the petty quarrels between clashing personalities, but it also makes for a remarkably warm and readable "inside" account of the movement.

The book suffers from three main shortcomings:

- 1) The specialized scholar will find a disconcerting paucity of references and a very inadequate bibliography. Some important and directly germane works (such as Leo Kuper's *Passive Resistance in South Africa* and Gandhi's autobiography) are totally ignored. A list of Congress publications and pamphlets would have been enormously useful. (There is only one reference each, for example, to *New Age and Fighting Talk*.)

- 2) Substantively, the work is almost entirely descriptive as opposed to analytical. It does not leave one with a clear perception of the organizational structure of the ANC, the social composition of its members and leaders, or its relationship to the rest of South African society, except for its dealings with the police state.

- 3) The book does not adequately analyze the contribution of the various ideological currents which have made the ANC so unique and fascinating. None of the four major intellectual strains which created Congress—the Gandhian, the Christian-liberal, and, more recently, the Socialist and the Pan-African ones—gets adequate treatment. Nor does Miss Benson suffi-

- 3) Reassurance against fears of revolutionary changes in our democratic ideology.

You, Lady Bird, shall have a permanent niche in history for having integrated a new format for First Lady service to the nation.

There has, perhaps, never been a period in American history when a miracle was more urgently needed to tranquilize our domestic tensions; to provide us with the necessary strength that is spawned from a united people. Our nation must have cohesive unity to maintain its position as world leader in these days of world-wide frustration and powder-keg tensions.

You must have been destined for the role of miracle-maker by "the Man upstairs." We pray that you will find a full head of steam ready at all times to keep your crusade moving ahead.

In these days of multiple crises both at home and abroad, it is imperative that the American people have unfaltering confidence in their leader. You are doing a magnificent job in that area by being your charming, natural self. Your unaffected Southern accent is the key to bringing the South firmly into the movement for national unity.

When you were show-cased into American homes by TV, that deep Southern accent gave the Negro a tremendous boost in his dream of being included and being wanted. The Negro now need no longer associate a Southern accent with denial and injustice.

You have given the Southern Caucasian who truly feels the Golden Rule in his heart the spark of courage he has lacked for three centuries. He can now speak his convictions without fear and without shame. You have shown the way.

Your TV exposure on your recent tour of Western states has stimulated thousands of American tourists to "see America first." This will amount to a great stride along the road to prosperity, and will deal a heavy blow to poverty in many unfortunate areas of our nation. The tourist dollar spent in those areas will amount to the "fastest gun" to shoot down the monster, poverty, and thereby provide the impetus to wipe out this cancerous growth forever.

Your campaign for Democratic candidates is our secret weapon against the threat of extremism, which at this moment adds up to the most dangerous enemy our way of life has faced. The candidates that you sponsor represent our strongest front line offense to destroy Democracy's enemies. You are playing a most important part in salvaging Democracy from the invasion of the Ku Kluxers, the Commies and the Birchers.

Keep it up, Lady Bird, you are really an American doll. We love you just as much as we love your gentleman, LBJ.

We sincerely hope that the love we give to you will in some small way compensate for all of those precious moments that you have had to sacrifice in sharing the President with us. I am certain that our convictions are shared by multitudes of other right-thinking Americans.

We urge you, Lady Bird, to keep up your crusade, and to always remain your warm, sincere, and unaffected self. You are "the greatest" First Lady of them all.

Democratically yours,
Charles I. West

Help yourself while you help your country
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Las Vegas **Voice**

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