

GUEST EDITORIAL

Spingarn And Bunche: Militants In The Finest Sense

BY BAYARD RUSTIN

Like many aspects of society, the civil rights movement is subject to the snap judgments and inaccurate labeling which so typifies the press. There is no more illustrative example than the distortion of the word "militant."

The dictionary defines a militant as one who is "aggressively active" in the pursuit of a cause. But for many journalists and commentators who cover the black struggle, militant assumes a different shade of meaning; for them, one can be "aggressively active" on behalf of certain causes, those who believe otherwise, no matter how insistently, are termed "moderates." Thus one can be militant for separtism, but moderate for integration. Those who preach revolutionary cant are militants, while the advocates of non-violence are moderates.

Militancy has thus come to have negative connotations for many Americans: the term frightens uneasy whites while the majority of blacks perceive it as a symbol of unproductive and sometimes suicidal tactics. This is unfortunate, for militancy can represent many fine ideals: unswerving commitment to radical and economic justice, unyielding opposition to violence, and the refusal to adopt, no matter how fashionable, those philosophies one believes unjust and unwise.

Ralph Bunche and Arthur Spingarn were true militants, in the finest sense of the word. Their recent deaths have saddened all who have labored for peace, brotherhood and racial equality; our grief is tempered only by the knowledge that death came at the conclusion of full lives and productive careers.

The newspaper accounts which followed their deaths contained well deserved tributes to Dr. Bunche's accomplishments as a diplomat and to Arthur Spingarn's life as civil rights activist. These accounts, however, also devoted attention to those who had criticized Dr. Bunche and Mr. Spingarn for their supposed lack of militancy and commitment.

There is an irony to the situation where newspapers which 30 years ago were denouncing black activists and their white allies as subversives now go out of their way to provide a forum for those who dismiss their philosophies as out-dated or irrelevant.

The contents of newspapers are of course, dictated by fashion. But fashionability never influenced the actions of Ralph Bunche or Arthur Spingarn. Their ideals were shaped by learning and experience; their goals were accomplishment, not publicity.

There is no need to recount the well-known details of Dr. Bunche's career with the United Nations. His service to the world peace organization, however, overshadowed the tangible role he played in the civil rights struggle. It was his research, as an assistant to Gunnar Myrdal in the late 1930's, which helped provide the framework around which the civil rights movement shaped the goals which it achieved 20 and 30 years later. During the Protest Era, Dr. Bunche made many important, but quiet contributions to the movement, for which he sought neither thank nor recognition. Although already in failing health, he was one of the key participants in the great marches on Washington and Montgomery.

Arthur Spingarn is best known for his over half century of service to the NAACP, with 26 years as president. Few recall how radical, even un-American, the NAACP was considered during its early existence. Few recall the danger of physical harm which threatened those, like Arthur Spingarn, who participated in picketing, demonstrations and other campaigns 40 and 50 years ago.

As a Jew, Arthur Spingarn certainly was personally acquainted with the prejudices which pervaded American society. As a Jew engaged in radical causes, he was doubly suspect. And as a white man, he later endured the hostility of black separatists who felt his usefulness to the

"CAN DO"



movement had come to an end.

Ralph Bunche and Arthur Spingarn qualify as militants according to its dictionary definition, for they were throughout their long careers "aggressively active" on behalf of the causes in which they believed. But they were also militants in the higher sense: they respected a man's worth, not his rhetoric; they refused to compromise those ideals which were basic to their personal philosophies; they refused to hate, even when it might have been understandable and they understood the folly of violence, and never shirked from speaking against it.

Fittingly enough, the ideals which had served as ever-present beacons to Dr. Bunche and Arthur Spingarn have taken on a new relevance as the philosophies of the fringes have been discredited. We now recognize, as they did, that there are certain principles and objectives which are constant, no matter how elusive or distant they may appear. For Ralph Bunche and Arthur Spingarn, a society free from prejudice and discord often seemed far on the horizon, a dim light, flickering. Yet this light never extinguished, despite the many discouragements, and much of their patience and vision has been vindicated. For this, along with their accomplishment, they will be remembered, long after the names of their critics have been lost in the pages of history.

Minority Report

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(Editor's Note: Central State University does not necessarily agree or disagree with the opinions of Dr. Alsbrook.)

BLACK AMERICANS HAVE STRONG ARGUMENT TO GET COMPENSATION BILLIONS

Will millions of black people get the billions of dollars some argue are due them for 246 years of slave labor in America?

This question was brought into focus just a few

days ago when the Government unintentionally took its biggest step toward implied endorsement of the concept of compensation for black slavery.

Congress passed and President Nixon signed into law a big land claims bill paying the Alaskan Federation of Natives nearly one billion dollars in cash and allocating to them undisputed surface rights to 40 million acres of land in Alaska.

The land and money go to some 55,000 Eskimoes, Indians, and Aleuts who have been pushing Alaskan land claims against the United States Government for 104 years. Anyone able to show one-fourth blood relation to any of these early Alaska natives can qualify for benefits.

Earlier this year Nixon signed an agreement returning thousands of acres of land to Indians in the New Mexico-Arizona area.

CLAIMS JUSTIFIED (bfclc)

These and similar concessions granted by the Government are acknowledgements that the Indians and other American aborigines displaced by force have a morally valid and reasonable claim to American lands. These various groups were occupying this land for centuries before the white man arrived; and by moral law and some phase of legal reasoning, the land remains theirs even though occupied for varying numbers of years by European settlers and their descendants, the present Americans.

Now, with Government establishment of the concept that the forced seizure of LAND should be compensated for, what about payment for the 246-year forced seizure of LABOR--the slavery

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