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Woodrow Wilson and Federal Segregation

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WOODROW WILSON AND FEDERAL SEGREGATION

When Woodrow Wilson assumed the presidency in 1913 many Negroes believed that he would champion their cause for advancement. An unprecedented number of Negroes had cast their vote for Wilson, risking ostracism or ridicule from others of their race for so departing from the ranks of the Republican party.¹ This deviation from the traditional line of Negro support was nurtured by discontent with the Republican and Progressive candidates, Taft and Roosevelt, and their platforms. It was spurred by the stirring assurances of wholehearted support to the Negro race by Woodrow Wilson.

Yet it was in Woodrow Wilson's administration that the most bitter blow to Negro hopes of advancement fell: the introduction of segregation into several of the federal departments.² This action raised questions of vital concern to government-race relations, and created a sensation among nearly all elements of the colored world as well as among some of the white.

The subject of Negro-white relationships in government was raised in a cabinet meeting, April 11, 1913, soon after the new administration had come into power. Albert Burleson, the southern-bred Postmaster-General expressed his concern to that small, closed meeting regarding certain "intolerable" conditions in the Railway Mail Service where, he said, whites not only had to work with blacks, but were forced to use the

¹ Statistics on Negro votes in the 1912 presidential election are non-existent. Of those ten northern cities with the largest colored population according to the 1910 Census, none have kept such records. However, numerous accounts in Negro newspapers (*Democrat*, *Republican*, *Independent*) as well as accounts by leading Negro figures have convinced this writer that the shift in votes was indeed large. See Washington, D. C. *Bee*; Richmond (Va.) *Planet*; *Kelly Miller's Monographic Magazine* (May, 1913), copy in *Woodrow Wilson Papers*; William P. Morton, "The Future of the Negro in Politics," pamphlet and letter to Wilson, March 14, 1913, and Morton to Wilson, November 9, 1912; *Oswald Garrison Villard Papers*; Alexander Walters, *My Life and Work* (New York, 1917); W. E. B. DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn* (New York, 1940), and Interview, November 29, 1955. For a leading secondary source, see Arthur S. Link, "The Negro as a Factor in the Election of 1912," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXII (Jan. 1947).

² This subject is touched upon in Arthur S. Link, *The New Freedom* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1956), vol. 2. See also the author's article "Woodrow Wilson's Appointment Policy and the Negro," *Journal of Southern History*, XXIV (Nov. 1958), 457-71.

same drinking glasses, towels, and washrooms. Burleson contended that it was to the advantage of both races to be separated in their work. He announced plans to implement this philosophy of segregation in the Railway Mail Service, in a gradual way, and continuing the employment of Negroes where such "would not be objectionable." The project was aimed at only one section of the federal service, but Burleson voiced a hope that segregation could be promoted in all departments of government.³

If there was any dissension to Burleson's plans, it was not recorded. President Wilson was noted as saying that he desired, above all, to avoid friction in Federal service posts. Later events were to show that a large measure of support for governmental segregation was given by other cabinet members, particularly William McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury, Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, and Burleson.

Coincident with the secret cabinet talks on segregation was the formation of a non-governmental group in Washington, D. C., the National Democratic Fair Play Association, whose purpose was the same as Burleson's. In fact, Burleson's attention had perhaps been drawn in the first instance to the Railway Mail Service's integrated organization by a letter from the Fair Play Association. Four days before the above-mentioned cabinet meeting, a form letter had been circulated by the Fair Play Association, condemning the "low and criminal elements" employed in the Railway Mail Service, and a copy was sent to the Postmaster General. The writer, an unidentified postal clerk working in St. Louis, Missouri, called for abolition of a mixed service because, he said, the existing setup was driving away all worthy whites.⁴ The Fair Play Association was concerned not only with the Railway Mail Service. At its first mass meeting, May 1, 1913, the group pledged itself to fight for segregation in all government offices, and, citing figures that 24,500 of the 490,000 workers were Negro, anticipated an arduous campaign. The climate of opinion is seen in a letter, said to be written by a white

³ Josephus Daniels' Desk Diary, April 11, 1913 entry, *Daniels Papers*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

woman working in the General Land office of the Department of the Interior, which the president of the group read to the assembly. The writer complained that she had to take dictation from drunken Negroes. "I also worked for a dark-skinned, wooly-headed Negro. I then felt if a human would ever be justified in ever ending his existence I would then, for I was a Southern woman, my father a distinguished officer during the Civil War. . . ."⁵ In the following weeks and months, the Fair Play Association employed effective Negro-baiting techniques to acquaint all who might not know, of the "invidious situation" in the government. Mass meetings, petitions, circulars, and personal letters to high-ranking officials spread the news of white women who had to work alongside some "greasy, ill-smelling Negro man or woman." These conditions, it asserted were "UnDemocratic, UnAmerican, and UnChristian."⁶ President Wilson was sent copies of these letters.

Soon the fondest hopes of the Fair Play Association were being realized in several new governmental departments. Although that group did not know definitely of the April 11 cabinet discussion, news of segregationist activities began to leak out. Presently a whole new pattern was apparent for all to see.

The departments involved at first were those of the Post Office, under Burleson, and the Treasury, under McAdoo. No executive orders were issued, and changes were discreet and gradual. Such respectable papers as the *New York Times* carried only a few indirect references to those activities, and the various apparently disconnected segregation actions found publicity largely in the Negro press alone. In June, articles began to appear asking questions about the reported screening off of Negroes in a certain office, or directed attention to separate lavatory facilities for Negroes in another area. The trickle of news regarding federal segregation soon became a flood. It was becoming apparent to white and black alike that the government's segregation policy was no accident, nor confined to a few separate offices, but was an official

⁵ *New York Times*, May 4, 1913.

⁶ Fair Play Association Circular, May 9, 1913, Copy in *Wilson Papers*.

and widespread program, albeit enacted with no executive orders.⁷

By the end of 1913, segregation had been realized in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Post Office Department, the Office of the Auditor for the Post Office, and had even begun in the City Post Office in Washington, D. C. This involved not only separated or screened-off working positions, but segregated lavatories and lunchrooms.⁸ Segregation appeared to a lesser extent in the office of the Auditor of the Navy. In the Navy itself, Negroes traditionally held menial posts, but segregation in the Auditor's office was new. Screens set off Negroes from whites, and a separate lavatory in the cellar was provided for the colored clerks.⁹

While Federal segregation was being enacted to keep Negroes and whites apart, other steps were taken to appoint Negroes only to menial posts or to restrict them from obtaining Civil Service jobs. Photographs were required of all candidates for Civil Service positions from 1914 on. This was explained as a necessary device to prevent impersonation and to enable appointing officers "to form some opinion in regard to eligibles certified."¹⁰ But many Negroes charged that official used the photographs for one purpose alone, that of weeding out colored applicants. Equally useful for such officials was the rule whereby appointing officers were given three names of candidates from which to choose their staff replacements. This was a Civil Service practice of long-

⁷ "The President and the Negro," *Nation*, XCVII (August 17, 1913), 114; *Crisis*, VI (June 1913), 60-61, 79; *Crisis*, VII, (November 1913), 332 for summary of newspaper comment on segregation; "Segregation in Government Departments," *Ibid.*, 343-344; "Race Discrimination at Washington," *Independent*, LXXVI (November 20, 1913), 330; "The President and the Segregation at Washington," *North American*, CXCVIII (December 1913), 800-807; McGregor, "Segregation in the Departments," *Harper's Weekly*, LIX (December 26, 1914), 620-621. The National Negro Press Ass'n., representing 126 publications, protested to Wilson on federal segregation October 13, 1913, copy in *Wilson Papers*; the NAACP sent an open letter of protest to Wilson August 15, 1913, *Wilson Papers*, and reprinted in *N. Y. Times*, August 18, 1913.

⁸ O. G. Villard, "The President and Segregation at Washington," *North American*, CXCVIII (December 1913), 800-807.

⁹ L. J. W. Hayes, *Negro Federal Government Worker, 1883-1938* (Washington, 1941), p. 37.

¹⁰ U. S. Civil Service Commission, "Minutes of Proceedings," May 27, 1914, minute 12, p. 228, cited in Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

standing, but now Negroes asserted that such department heads as Burleson continually by-passed any Negro in the eligible group. Whatever the techniques, it is apparent that there were ample means to avoid the appointment or advancement of Negroes in the Civil Service. That discrimination did result is evidenced in the many accusations by Negroes against the practices.¹¹

The question inevitably arose, how much did President Wilson know of the segregation policy of Burleson, McAdoo and Daniels? When the first minor changes were performed in spring and summer, 1913, many of the persons concerned blamed only Wilson's cabinet members, particularly the three named above. Wilson, they said, perhaps was not aware of their actions.¹² There was, after all, no executive order.

But Wilson did know about the plans for racial separation in the government. He approved of them. He vigorously defended the official policy of segregation in a series of personal letters to one of his closest friends and most loyal supporters, Oswald Garrison Villard. Villard was editor of a leading liberal newspaper, the *New York Evening Post*, and had been an active worker for Wilson in the presidential campaign. Villard, the grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, was involved as well in the activities of the young National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the "radical" group which was challenging the more conservative group of Booker T. Washington. As a co-worker with W. E. B. DuBois and as a correspondent with DuBois' rival, Booker T. Washington, Villard was the natural person to question the President on the federal segregation.

Villard asked Wilson bluntly if he were aware of the actions which had been taken in several departmental offices. Did Wilson realize, he wondered, the extent to which these actions had gone, and the dangers involved? Did he know

¹¹ See *Crisis*, XV (March 1918), 218; *Republican Campaign Text Book, 1916*; Kelly Miller to Woodrow Wilson, July 6, 1918, *Wilson Papers*; *Crisis*, XXXV (1928), 287-288; *Cong. Record* 70 Cong. (1928) 1 Sess. No. 79, p. 10657, 6486, 7593.

¹² Villard to McAdoo, November 9, 1913; "Another Open Letter to Woodrow Wilson," *Crisis*, VI (September 1913), 233-236; "The President and the Negro," *Nation*, XCVII (August 7, 1913), 114.

that they would lead to a return of Negroes to the Republican Party? He received an answer to this letter of July 21, 1913 two days later. Wilson, in reply to the "distressing letter" affirmed the presence of federal segregation, begun upon "the initiative and suggestion of the heads of departments." He knew about it, and believed it was in the interests of both races. It had been introduced, Wilson continued, "with the idea that the friction, or rather the discontent and uneasiness which had prevailed in many of the departments would thereby be removed." He expressed sorrow that Villard should so misjudge his action which, he said, was intended to render Negro federal workers "more safe in their possession of office and less likely to be discriminated against."¹³

Now that Wilson's position was clear, Villard went on to try and convince the President that it was an erroneous stand to take. He urged Wilson to accept the plans put forth earlier by the NAACP for a race commission to study scientifically the entire Negro-white situation in the United States. Wilson had indicated great interest in the idea to Villard in 1912, promising to consider it when he reached the White House, and in May 1913 Villard had submitted the tentative plan. But in August, Wilson wrote Villard that he could not accept it in view of the sentiment of certain senators. This was a bitter setback to Villard and the NAACP which sponsored the Commission plan. But more urgent was the fight against federal segregation, and Villard quickly renewed his efforts to influence Wilson against it.

Villard added strength to his arguments that Negroes were bitterly resentful of the new policy by forwarding a letter to the President from the outstanding Negro leader in the country, Booker T. Washington. Opposition was not only from the militant Negro wing. Washington wrote, in part, "I have recently spent several days in Washington, and I have never seen the colored people so discouraged and so bitter as they are at the present time." Washington asked Villard to seek a change from the "hurtful" policy before it went further.¹⁴ Wilson was not encountering a divided Negro

¹³ Villard to Wilson, July 21, 1913, *Villard Papers*; Wilson to Villard, July 23, 1913, *Wilson Papers*.

¹⁴ Villard to Wilson, August 24, 1913, *Villard Papers*.

opinion on the segregation issue. Negroes were divided on other questions of race philosophy, but they were united in their condemnation of federal segregation.

Wilson was deeply troubled by the unexpected and violent attacks on a policy which he felt to be moderate, conciliatory and just. But he believed that segregation was essential to the avoidance of friction. He urged Villard "to see the real situation down here," to understand that what he, as President, was trying to do "must be done, if at all, through the cooperation of those with whom I am to sit in the government." Nothing could be accomplished, he warned, if a "bitter agitation" were inaugurated. "I appeal to you most earnestly to aid in holding things at a just and cool equipoise until I can discover whether it is possible to work things out or not."¹⁵

In September, 1913, Wilson wrote similar sentiments to a prominent Negro minister, Reverend H. A. Bridgeman, editor of the *Congregation and Christian World*. This was the President's first public statement on federal segregation. "I would say that I do approve of the segregation that is being attempted in several of the departments," he wrote.¹⁶ Later on in the year he promised a Negro delegation, led by the fiery young editor of the Boston *Guardian*, William Monroe Trotter, to investigate the segregation. One year later the group returned to demand the reason for continued segregation. Wilson reported to them that investigations by him and his cabinet revealed that federal segregation was necessitated by friction between Negro and white workers, and was not instituted to embarrass or harm colored workers. He admired the progress the Negro race had made and wanted to see it "continue along independent lines," but inasmuch as prejudice still remained and it would take "one hundred years to eradicate this prejudice," he said, "we must deal with it as practical men." Wilson stressed his contention that harm was interjected when Negroes were told that federal segregation was a humiliation.¹⁷

¹⁵ Wilson to Villard, August 29, 1913, *Villard Papers*.

¹⁶ Wilson to Bridgeman, September 4, 1914, *Wilson Papers*.

¹⁷ *Crisis*, IX (January 1915), 119-127.

Segregation would be continued, but Wilson told the group he would gladly investigate any specific cases of discrimination which were presented to him from time to time. He maintained that the whole question had no place in politics; it was a "human problem" not a political one.¹⁸ The *New York Times*, which carried the story of the delegation's visit on page 1 under the headline, "President Resents Negro's Criticism," wrote this description of Wilson's answer to Trotter's warning that he would never again gain Negro support unless his policies were altered:¹⁹

With some emotion he asserted that he was not seeking office, and that a man who sought the office of the Presidency was a fool for his pains. He spoke of the intolerable burden of the office and the things he had to do which were more than the human spirit could carry. After labelling Trotter's words on the Negro vote as blackmail, Wilson dismissed the delegation.

From Autumn 1913 on, after Wilson's approval of federal segregation had been made public and evidence on the size and extent of the official policy mounted, Negro opposition was united, hitting hard at what was felt to be the most serious blow at Negro rights since the days of slavery. Important and little-known Negroes, important and little-known groups found common ground in demanding its abolition.

Wilson himself received letters of protest from every state in the Union, from blacks and whites. DuBois, Villard and other officers of the NAACP sent both public appeals which were published in the NAACP news organ, *Crisis*, and private letters. Booker T. Washington expressed the concern of his group in the letter forwarded by Villard. Prominent members of the scholarly world of which Wilson had been so recently a part, joined in the protest along with such political personages as the governors of Massachusetts and Michigan. The Wilson Papers are full of letters from Negroes and whites in every walk of life.²⁰

¹⁸ *Crisis*, IX (January 1915), 119-127; *N. Y. Times*, November 13, 1914.

¹⁹ *N. Y. Times*, November 13, 1914.

²⁰ E.g., Governor Woodbridge N. Ferris, Michigan to Wilson, August 1, 1913; Governor Eugene N. Foss, Massachusetts, to Wilson, October 20, 1913; Alfred Hayes, Professor of Law at Cornell to Wilson, September, 1913; George Cook, Secretary and Business Manager of Howard, September 19, 1913. The latter are but two of many strongly worded entreaties from educators. Private letters of protest appear in the *Wilson Papers* from over thirty-four states.

Petitions were another method of protest. Circulated in cities throughout the country and sent to the President, they varied in size from a few hundred signatures to one brought by William Monroe Trotter which was purported to contain over 21,000 names. The NAACP led the drive, collecting signatures of both Negroes and whites. Several church organizations joined the crusade. The National Council of Congregational Churches of the United States registered its official resolution against federal segregation which was passed at the October, 1913 convention. The International Council of Churches added a more universal censure in a letter to Wilson August 21, 1913.²¹ Many other church groups and individual ministers of all faiths protested. No religious group appears to have written Wilson in favor of the federal segregation policy.

Another method of attack was that of mass meetings. NAACP branches held open hearings on the mounting evidence of segregation, and NAACP national officers toured through such eastern cities as Boston, New York, and Washington to arouse and inform the public. Trotter, representing the National Independent Political League, a Negro group which had been recognized by the Democratic Party and had supported Wilson in the election, stood before enormous audiences in Boston and called for a united Negro front to stop the advance of "Jim Crowism" in Washington, D. C.

Villard turned to the public in October 1913 through the medium of mass meetings after his letters and talks to Wilson convinced him that the President would not change his policies. Prior to a meeting scheduled for late October, Villard advised McAdoo what he intended to say there, and alluded to the deep sorrow he felt in opposing Wilson. "I told the President the other day that I should have to do this, but that I should do it with complete respect both for your sincerity and for his, and I have tried to put that note into this address. It is harder for me to make this speech than you could have any idea of."²² McAdoo's reply was intended to correct "cer-

²¹ Congregational Churches of U. S. to Wilson, November 14, 1913; International Council of Churches to Wilson, August 21, 1913; Unitarian Conference of Middle States and Canada to Wilson, November, 1913, *Wilson Papers*.

²² Villard to McAdoo, October 25, 1913, *Villard Papers*.

tain erroneous statements" in Villard's speech. There was no segregation issue in the Treasury department, he wrote. They had planned to make the Registry section an all-colored division under a Negro supervisor, he explained, and when the Negro candidate for Registrar of the Treasury withdrew from candidacy, the experiment was abandoned. Now there were sixty per cent white and forty per cent black workers in that area. Of the alleged discrimination, McAdoo stated, "There has been an effort in the departments to remove the causes of complaint and irritation where white women have been forced unnecessarily to sit at desks with colored men. Compulsion of this sort creates friction and race prejudice. Elimination of such friction promotes good feeling and friendship." He chastised Villard's "unjust" speech as reflecting wrong on Wilson "than whom no truer, nobler and braver soldier in the cause of humanity has appeared since the death of Lincoln."²³

This letter from McAdoo was read to the mass meeting in Washington on October 27, 1913. It was a packed hall, and over 4000, chiefly Negroes, had been turned away for lack of room. Villard related the outcome to McAdoo. McAdoo's letter had not been received well, he said, because a great number in the audience were segregated clerks. When the sentence, "There is no segregation issue in the Treasury department" was read, a great derisive laugh had risen from the throng. Villard insisted that all the facts he had presented were true, based on painstaking research conducted both by the NAACP and by himself. He would continue to spread these facts.

If mass meetings, petitions, and letters were the major weapons of the anti-segregationists, the press was equally important in publicizing conditions within the departments and in covering those method of protest which were being employed to put an end to federal segregation. The major burden was assumed by the Negro newspapers and magazines. White progressive papers as Villard's *Evening Post* added their strength, and from time to time a number of

²³ McAdoo to Villard, October 27, 1913, *Villard Papers*.

²⁴ Villard to McAdoo, October 28, 1913, *Villard Papers*.

white papers of Republican or Independent leanings remarked on the changing conditions among colored government workers and questioned the merit of the change.²⁵

The breadth of Negro opposition to Federal segregation was suggested in the fact that colored newspapers and magazines whose policies were ordinarily opposed to each other, united on this one cause. The National Negro Press Association, representing 126 newspapers at its national convention in August 1913, sent a petition to Wilson to end the separationist policy. This group was reputed to support the policies of Booker T. Washington.²⁶ The *Crisis*, edited by Washington's adversary, W. E. B. DuBois, was another potent journalistic voice raised in opposition to Wilson's policies. Not the least of the services of the Negro press was to editorialize on the effects of segregation, to present the united voice of Negro opposition and its reasons for opposition.

That the protest was a large one was clear. Moreover its weapons were sharp. Its arguments were serious, thoughtful analyses of the present and potential threat federal segregation presented.

The major Negro arguments against federal segregation were repeated in petitions, mass meetings, letters, and editorials. They began on the general theme that the present situation was unfair and unwarranted, for "never before has the federal government discriminated against the civilian employees on the ground of color."²⁷ The government was presenting segregation in violation of accepted policy. Conditions had not changed to justify this abandonment of a non-segregated federal service. Negro employees had worked alongside white employees for many years, under Republican and Democratic administrations, with no apparent dissatis-

²⁵ See footnote 7. The *N. Y. Times* was not of this group. Its stories relating to Negroes, few in the first place, applied largely to the more optimistic pronouncements of Booker T. Washington, to aggressive, belligerent Negro meetings, or to charges made by the Fair Play Association. One *Times* editorial advocated repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment.

²⁶ Meier, "Booker T. Washington and the Negro Press," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXVIII (January 1953), 57; B. F. Lee, "Negro Organizations," *Annals*, CIL (September 1913), 135.

²⁷ DuBois, Villard, Storey to Wilson, August 15, 1913, *Wilson Papers*.

faction on either side. The President wished to remove friction where friction did not even exist.

The arguments became more specific. The separate departmental facilities were said to be equal, but in reality they were not. Negroes were separated *from* whites, not the reverse. Negroes invariably were allocated the less desirable rooms, the inconveniently located lavatories, the poorly-lit alcoves. Instead of lessening insults, it created an opportunity for them by presenting the Negro in an inferior position. Already Negroes were being treated as social "lepers."²⁸

Furthermore, it was charged, the faith Wilson had made with Negroes before the election had been violated. The Negro policy he supported now was inconsistent with his campaign promises of "fair play" and at variance as well with his entire Christian and Democratic philosophy.²⁹ Despair was rising in the Negro race. Never again would it support either Wilson or the Democratic Party for political office. The great gain won in splitting the solid Negro vote was lost.

But even more important harms would follow, the protest continued.

Federal segregation was by far the worst blow dealt the Negro race in its years of freedom, for it signified official approval of a practice against which Negroes were fighting by gradual or active means. It was an "establishment of caste in this free Republic." Segregation invariably led to excesses and abuses, for "injustice once started is bound to spread apace."³⁰ Now that the government was entering the arena of segregationist activities, such tendencies would increase and would operate with official sanction. The arguments Wilson gave to explain the government's conduct were similar to those defenses of segregation which were so familiar in the South. Perhaps Wilson was sincere when he said segregation in the government was in the best interests of the Negro. But regardless of his sincerity, segregation could be and was being used by whites to subjugate the Negro. The

²⁸ NAACP Report on Segregation, August 13, 1913, *Wilson Papers*.

²⁹ Petition to Wilson from Seattle, Washington, September 8, 1913, *Wilson Papers*.

³⁰ Calvin Chase to Wilson, August 2, 1913; *Congregational and Christian World*, October 1913, *Wilson Papers*.

President said he favored segregation so that the Negro could have freedom in his own circle to advance independently, but in practice segregation actually was used to curtail the Negro's advancement. It did not matter what reasons were given to support segregation. In the end, the results were the same.

Furthermore, the protesters continued, departmental segregation was inconsistent with the tenets of the New Freedom which promised equal rights for all in every area of activity, as well as with that philosophy upon which the United States had been established. The President had neither moral nor legal right to declare a political division on the ground of racial difference, no matter what his personal beliefs. The federal government had always refrained from defining social customs, yet Wilson's administration was in essence doing that very thing. The government did not exist "for the purpose of formulating rules of social etiquette." Departmental segregation was undemocratic in its recognition of the aristocracy of birth. A government which was unfaithful to its own principles was, in reality, hurting itself. Constitutional validity was also involved. Perhaps the Constitution was wrong in giving equal political rights to all, "but at least it is the law of the land and as such is not to be nullified by any individual who happens to believe that in this respect the Constitution is inversely drawn."³²

Segregation in the nation's capital had special significance. Washington, D. C., although a southern city, was the center of Negro society, and the social status of the Negro there had been unequalled anywhere else in the country.³³ It had the largest Negro population of any city in the United States, 94,446 in 1910 according to the official census. Federal segregation, with its concomitants of residential and transportational segregation, was therefore a heavy burden for these Negroes who had enjoyed a measure of equality with whites for so long.

The importance of the Negro protest may be assessed in

³¹ *Crisis* VI (November 1913).

³² Lowell (Mass.) *Courier-Citizen*, as cited in *Crisis* IX (January 1915).

³³ Interview with W. E. B. DuBois, November 21, 1955.

several ways. Most immediate was the impact it had upon the system it was attacking. Villard reported late in 1913 that federal segregationists had been ordered to take a back seat because of the rain of complaints.³⁴ A newspaper in Boston reported in December that segregation in the Post Office Department was being abandoned. The trend to remove segregation continued, and January 6, 1914 the officers of the NAACP wrote President Wilson of their joy at the reported checking of federal segregation. Two months later, a news source stated that the last vestiges of federal segregation were being destroyed under order of Assistant Secretary of the Treasury C. S. Hamlin.³⁵ It is improbable that integration was restored in full, but segregation as a recognized system was banished. Negro opposition had been strong, and was victorious.

It was upon Negroes themselves that the protest left a deeper mark. Federal segregation had been an issue upon which the colored population had leveled a full-scale attack, and out of this attack emerged new spokesmen and new ideas. The first decade of the Twentieth Century had seen the stirrings of a group of young Negroes who were dissatisfied with the moderate teachings of the accepted leader, Booker T. Washington. Of the rebels, the most outstanding was W. E. B. DuBois, the northern-born, Harvard Ph.D. who was active in the founding of the NAACP in 1910. His criticisms of Booker T. Washington had been strong, but as a member of the National board of the NAACP and as editor of its magazine the *Crisis*, his philosophy reached a far wider audience.

The segregationist activities of the Wilson administration provided an explosive issue against which the contrast philosophies of Washington and DuBois could be tested. Both of the men condemned the federal segregation, but their methods of protest were far different. Washington, a supporter of Taft and Roosevelt in the past, had little connection with the Democratic administration, was no longer the advisor to

³⁴ Villard, *Fighting Years, Memoirs of a Fighting Editor* (N. Y. 1939), p. 241.

³⁵ *Boston Advertiser*, December 10, 1913; NAACP to Wilson, January 6, 1914, *Wilson Papers*; *Boston Advertiser*, March 7, 1914, drawn to the author's attention by Arthur S. Link in letter, September 10, 1957.

the President on matters which affected his race. Nor did he consult Wilson, with the exception of that letter sent through Villard. If he worked in secret against federal segregation, it was not recorded, and his public utterances were the same optimistic statements on the growth of Negro economy or the alleged decrease of lynching.³⁶

In contrast, DuBois was outspoken in demanding the repeal of federal segregation. He gave voice to the growing feelings of racial solidarity. Federal segregation had intensified the Negro's sense of racial entity and convinced an increasing number of Negroes that Booker T. Washington's gradualism, while advancing the race's position in some areas of endeavor, would never answer the problems raised by white resentment and fear.

In effect, federal segregation had turned the spotlight upon the NAACP and DuBois. The *Crisis* stressed tangible and aggressive steps which must be taken to win political, economic and social equality for the Negro race. Negroes should fight obstructions by making courts fair, seeking remedial legislation, winning national aid to education, gaining the removal of all legal discrimination based on race and color. The circle of human contact between the races should be increased, and the publication of truth about the Negro extended. Economic cooperation between the races should be promoted. The *Crisis* encouraged pride in race as well, with its emphasis upon the revival of Negro art and literature, and its attempts to enlighten the Negro voter by publishing the answers of all presidential and congressional candidates to NAACP questionnaires which called for the candidates' stands on such issues as segregation and lynching-laws. The Negro should continue to organize, and the NAACP was ready to extend its ranks.³⁷

How successfully the NAACP appealed to the Negro may be seen in the rapid growth in membership and branches. In 1912, there were 329 members and three NAACP branches;

³⁶ E.g., *N. Y. Times*, January 12, 1913. An exception to his usual optimistic public statements is an article on segregation published after his death: Washington, "Segregation," *New Republic*, cited in *Crisis*, XI (February 1916), 176.

³⁷ E.g., DuBois, "The Immediate Progress of American Negro," *Crisis* IX, 311-312.

by 1914, 3000 members and 24 branches; by 1916, 8785 members and fifty branches. From 1917 to 1920 the number jumped from 9282 to 88377, the branches from 80 to 356.³⁸ The early years of its growth, those years of activity against Wilson's program, and conditions in the country at large, were important ones for the Association. They provided vital issues upon which the NAACP centered its program. The intense vigor and spirit with which this program was pursued attracted the attention of the discouraged Negro race. Although the Board of Directors was composed of twenty-seven whites to seven Negroes in 1910, the NAACP was essentially a Negro group, for as DuBois has recently pointed out, the life-blood of the Association was Negroes, in branch membership and in financial contributions.³⁹ The phenomenal jump in membership is evidence of the mounting faith of Negroes in the NAACP.

Thus the Negroes weathered the first administration of Woodrow Wilson. Loss of federal offices, anti-Negro bills in Congress by the score, increases in lynching of Negroes, the introduction of segregation into federal departments — these and other actions pointed to a marked decrease in Negro status. They contrasted sharply with the idealistic phrases of Wilson's New Freedom.

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³⁸ *Crisis*, XIX, (March 1920), 241.

³⁹ Interview with DuBois, November 21, 1955; Letter from DuBois, September 19, 1957.