

THE EAST SAINT LOUIS RACE RIOTS

Condemnation of the conduct of the Germans in Belgium would seem like rank hypocrisy in East St. Louis, where the massacre of unoffending negroes has startled so many who want to see the world safe for democracy. But those who see in it only a manifestation of racial division are far enough from a true apprehension of the causes that have given rise to it. The importation of negroes into East St. Louis to take the places of workmen of white skin—the old slavery in a new form—is the occasion for this outbreak of savagery.

If that brilliantly edited organ of the colored race, the *Crisis*, as well as other papers of the same class, would but note this fact, it would help to clarify their conception of certain social phenomena. The emancipation of the colored race was but a half-way emancipation. When we struck off the chains of chattel slaves, we brought them as workers into immediate competition with their white brothers. With a somewhat lower standard of living the competition for employment presented itself in a very formidable and threatening aspect. The superficial fact of a difference in color merely accentuates the antagonism of two economic groups; certain latent racial aversions inherited as historical or political traditions, serve as emphasis. But the basis of the division is not purely racial. Any mere physical characteristic, eyes oblique, hook noses or club feet, if generally possessed by a group of laborers with a lower standard of living, would separate them quite as positively into an obnoxious group, and subject them to the same discrimination at the hands of the lawless and vicious.

That this is not the whole question may be conceded. But that it serves in part to explain the deplorable occurrences in East St. Louis, as well as many other manifestations of race prejudice, is a fact which should be of interest to those working for the emancipation of the colored race.

In this connection these weighty words are to be considered. They are from an article by Prof. Jerome Dowd, of the University of

Oklahoma, in the January number of the *Journal of Negro History*:

"A country where there is an abundance of free land—in such a country it is impossible for one man to secure another to work for him except by coercion; for when a man has a chance to use free land and its products he will work only for himself, and take all the product for himself rather than work for another and accept a bare subsistence for himself. On the contrary, where all the land is appropriated, a man who does not own land has no chance to live except at the mercy of the landlord. He is obliged to offer himself as a wage-earner or a tenant. The landlord can obtain, therefore, all the help he may need without coercion. Free labor is then economically advantageous to both the landlord and the wage-earner, since the freedom of the latter inspires greatly increased production. From these facts and considerations, verified by history, it may be laid down as a sociological law that where land is monopolized, slavery necessarily yields to a regime of freedom."

GETTING VACANT LAND INTO USE

At the 1916 session of the Alberta legislature, the tax laws were amended so that the local authorities may compromise (subject to the approval of the Provincial Minister) arrears of taxes on vacant subdivided areas, provided the lot plan is cancelled and "land which is not and may never be required for subdivision purposes, put to some use whereby it may be an asset to the community."

Discussing this legislation the Department of Municipal Affairs in its report for 1916 says:

"Many of our rural municipalities, which include territory adjacent to cities and the larger towns, have had their records burdened with uncertain assets in the shape of arrears of taxes on subdivided areas which should never have been subdivided and were only of use as farm land. Under the added powers above mentioned, many owners of subdivided areas have been issued clear tax receipts on payment of a sum amounting to a good deal less than the outstanding taxes. As such a compromise has always been approved sub-