

We Still Fight Gloriously For Civil and Social Rights

By DOXEY A. WILKERSON

JUST half a century ago, the militant little band of Negro intellectuals who formed the Niagara Movement went on a pilgrimage to the scene of John Brown's martyrdom near Harper's Ferry. There—at dawn, barefooted—they made this solemn vow: "We shall not be satisfied with less than our full manhood rights. We claim for ourselves every right that belongs to a free-born American; civil and social, and until we get these rights we shall never cease to protest and assail the ears of America with the stories of its shameful deeds toward us."

And they went on to spell out the civil rights goals for which the Negro people have been struggling ever since—"manhood suffrage"; an end to "discrimination in public accommodations"; the right to associate with such people as wish to associate with us; "the laws enforced against rich as well as poor, against capitalists as well as laborers, against white as well as black"; and finally "we want our children educated."

One of these men—William Edward Burghardt DuBois—is still fighting gloriously to implement the vision of the Niagara Movement, and so effectively has he impressed this struggle as an integral part of all mankind's quest for freedom and security and peace that progressive men and women in almost every nation of the world now join in celebrating his 89th birthday.

THE young Dr. DuBois went to Atlanta University in 1897 to pioneer in developing a systematic, rounded, 100-year program of studies of Negro life, operating on "the firm belief that race prejudice was based on widespread ignorance," and that the "long-term remedy was Truth: carefully gathered scientific proof that neither color nor race determine the limits of a man's capacity or desert."

He began to produce these studies, one a year for more than a decade, on selected aspects of Negro life. His plan was to repeat them, in a recurring cycle of ten studies in succeeding decades—"until gradually a foundation of carefully ascertained fact would build a basis of knowledge, broad and sound enough to be called scientific in the best sense of that term."

But DuBois's outlook for a serene life of scholarship was soon shattered by the murderous, racist violence directed against his people with the maturing of U. S. imperialism around the turn of the century. He tells us:

"I faced situations which called—shrieked—for action, even before any detailed, scientific study could possibly be prepared. . . . I saw before me a problem that could not await the last word of science, but demanded immediate action to prevent social death."

And so it was that, in 1910 at the age of 42, W. E. B. DuBois left the relative calm of academic life and plunged into the urgent practical struggles "Along the Color Line"—as a founder and leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and, until 1932, as the fighting editor of its magazine *Crisis*. He continued the highly perceptive student of society; but he had come to understand that "there could be no rift between theory and practice"; that "the social scientist could not sit apart and study in vacuo"; and that even "the ordered knowledge which research and tireless observations might give" must be sought "in the midst of action."

HEREIN, I have often thought, lies one of the keys to the development of this remarkable man: a profound unity of scholarship and struggle—of theoretical insight com-

Born February 23, 1868



Dr. DuBois as a youth at Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, in 1887. He was editor of the college monthly, took part in the political life of the community, and taught in rural schools during va-

combined with practical leadership in the arena of social conflict—the one continuously reinforcing and deepening the other. It is a rare synthesis—reminiscent of a Marx or a Lenin—and it has led to one of the most productive lives of our time. On the one hand, here is the au-

Dr. DuBois on Woman Suffrage:

'Difference Does Not Argue Inferiority'

By ELIZABETH LAWSON

I AM writing this piece in the pleasant, sunny study which Dr. W. E. B. DuBois has arranged for himself in his home in Brooklyn. He was 89 years old on Saturday, Feb. 23. The first volume of his great trilogy, "The Black Flame," a novelized version of the history of the American Negro people from 1876, has just been accepted by Mainstream Publishers. Already his desk is piled high with new projects. The World Peace Council wants something from his pen to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. An almanac of Negro history is in the making, and surely he is the best person in the world to whom to entrust it, so he has begun another major work.

This is the study and library of a scholar—surely one of the greatest scholars living. The four great walls are lined with books—we have just moved 70 cartons of books from his former office in Manhattan, and they now stand on the shelves, a magnificent private collection. Many of them are his own work, from "The History of the Suppression of the African Slave Trade," dated 1896, to the children's life of Benjamin Franklin published a few weeks ago by the World Council for Peace in Vienna. Between these dates, histories, biographies, novels, pamphlets, plays, poems, reviews, articles have poured from his pen.

Somehow, room must be found for these books and for the hundreds of books by others, and for the framed degrees and tributes



Dr. W. E. B. DuBois in recent photo.

from Fisk University, from Harvard, from Howard, from Wilberforce, from the University of Berlin, from Atlanta University, from the University of Pennsylvania, from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, from the Pan-African Congresses. What this man has accomplished in one lifetime, most men could not achieve in a dozen. He has been writer, editor, organizer, educator, a leader of the Negro liberation movement, and a leader in the struggle for peace.

IN DISCUSSING such a man, it is hard to limit oneself, but I must. Here I want to speak of Dr. DuBois' work for woman's rights, and

No Less Than "Our Full Manhood Rights"

From the Winston Salem Journal and Sentinel article entitled "The NAACP . . . A Look at the Record and Plans of One of the Nation's Most Controversial Organizations" (reprinted as a folder by the NAACP):

"This policy of self-improvement did not satisfy militant young Negro intellectuals like W. E. B. DuBois, then a teacher in a Negro school in Atlanta.

"DuBois openly broke with Booker T. Washington in 1903. He challenged the older man's philosophy of compromise and self improvement, saying that the Negro must fight for certain fundamental civil rights before self improvement was really possible.

"In 1905 DuBois called his fol-

lowers, then a very small group, to a secret meeting at Niagara Falls. There he reached his doctrine of organization, and militant—though legal—agitation.

"This group, now known as the Niagara movement, met again in 1906 at Storer College in Harper's Ferry, West Va. There, in the shadow of the tradition of abolitionist John Brown, DuBois stated his creed:

"We should not be satisfied with less than our full manhood rights. . . . We claim for ourselves every right that belongs to freeborn Americans—political, civil and social—and until we get these rights, we shall never cease to protest and to assail the ears of America with the story of its shameful deeds toward us."

thor of such solid and definitive works of scholarship as *Suppression of the African Slave Trade*, *The Philadelphia Negro*, *John Brown, The Negro, Black Reconstruction*, *Black Folk: Then and Now*; *The World and Africa*; along with such literary gems as *The Souls of Black Folk*, *Darkwater*, *Dusk of Dawn*, several novels, many plays and poems, hundreds of articles; plus the founding and editing during the early 40s (following his return to Atlanta) of *Phylon—The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture*.

And to this partial list there now must be added DuBois' epic trilogy, *The Black Flame*, dramatizing Negro life from the post-Civil War South to the present—the first novel of which, *The Ordeal of Mansart*, is scheduled for publication this month by Mainstream Publishers (and, incidentally, is being offered as a subscription renewal premium by *The Worker* and *Daily Worker*).

On the other hand, here is the leader of hosts of spirited battles on the Negro freedom front, founder and continuing chairman of the Pan-African Congress, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Liberia, Consultant to the UNO, co-chairman of the Council on African Affairs, long-time fighter for peace (including the founding of the Peace Information Center, for which the U. S. Government tried to imprison him in 1951),

ALP candidate for the U. S. Senate, world traveller now deprived of his passport, and uncompromising fighter for civil liberties—which explains his repeated appearances as defense witness in Smith Act and other civil liberties trials and proceedings. Although never a member of the Communist Party, Dr. DuBois has been an advocate of socialism for about 45 years; he twice visited the Soviet Union, which he greatly admires; and he looks confidently to the socialist future of all mankind—which he says "is coming as sure as the rolling of the stars."

IN A LIFE which spans a good part of modern history, DuBois has probed deeply into and helped interpret the meaning of our times, all the while contributing enormously to its development on many fronts—and the process continues with a zest and enthusiasm which seem to grow with age!

If this rare synthesis of scholarship and social action constitutes "one of the keys" to the development of this remarkable man, another—no less basic—is the fact that he is a Negro, living in the United States in this epoch. The ever-growing unity of theory and practice characteristic of DuBois has found expression through lifelong involvement in the Negro liberation movement—with its inherent antithesis to imperialism, its strong and manifold international ties, and its burning fervor for democratic freedom. Thus it is, I believe, that the idealistic young scholar who began his work at Atlanta University nearly 60 years ago now emerges as a recognized leader and spokesman of the people's forces for peace, democracy and socialism on a world scale.

Some marvel at the accomplishments of DuBois "despite" his being a Negro; but I think their analysis is shallow. It is because this remarkable human being is a Negro—and propelled by that fact in the direction his life has followed—that he has grown in stature to the point where extremely few men now living can claim to be his peers.

Not long ago, I had the pleasure of chatting with Dr. DuBois and his gifted wife, Shirley Graham DuBois, in the study of their home; and I was greatly impressed with his positive outlook on the prospects for Negro freedom, for world peace and for socialism. Apparently quite unshaken by certain negative developments on all these fronts in the recent period, he seemed to look beyond the zigs and zags of current events, and to find solid basis for confidence—and, with it, a sparkling and contagious personal animation—in the movement of fundamental social forces which are destined to shape the history of our time.

As I talked with him, I thought of many progressives who now seem to lose their bearings in the face of immediate events which, tomorrow, will register only as unpleasant foot-notes to the forward march of mankind; and I wished that we all might share the social insight and historic perspective that seem to sustain the confidence of W. E. B. DuBois.

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