RACE RELATIONS IN WORLD PERSPECTIVE

Conference To Be Held in Honolulu, Hawaii, June 28-July 23, 1954

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND RACE RELATIONS.

The impact of problems of race relations upon international politics is one of the most critical developments in our times. Expanding nationalism in the contracting colonial world, revolutionary movements, and international alignments become intertwined with racial considerations in a way which puts the matter of race in a new context and makes it a problem of new dimensions and crucial importance. Race relations have become a problem of world-wide proportions, and a world perspective comparable to the scope of the problem is urgently needed.

EMERGENT NATIONALISM AND RACE RELATIONS.

The awakening of nationalistic aspirations throughout the colonial world and the numerous independence movements which have emerged in recent years, particularly in South-East Asia and Africa, are almost invariably accompanied by a rising flood of anti-white antagonism and a corresponding suspicion of the intentions of American and western European powers. By virtue of their economic and political position in international affairs, the so-called colonial powers, including the United States, have become the principal objects of this antagonism and suspicion and it is now apparent that the security of the emerging world order may well depend upon the skill and perspicacity in dealing with the complicated problems of race relations in the so-called "backward areas" of the world.

NEW INTERNATIONAL POLICIES AND RACE RELATIONS.

In line with the trend toward independence of colonial peoples and with the increasing participation in international decision-making by "colored" peoples in under-developed areas, a new type of international policy is gradually taking form. Underlying this new policy seems to be an increasing recognition of the necessity of aiding "backward peoples" to become active and voluntary participants in the evolving world economy and world society. This policy strikes out along new lines in at least two respects: (1) since it may be undertaken by a dominant power which does not have political control over the areas and peoples that it aids, the success of the policy seems to rest instead upon enlisting the voluntary cooperation of these peoples whose sovereignty and political rights are to be respected; (2) it is not a policy of exploitation for the benefit of a dominant colonial power but one which seeks to foster the development of areas and peoples in order that they may more effectively play a cooperative and self-respecting part in a world-wide economy and society. This new policy is presaged significantly by the Point Four Program and the Colombo Plan. Many who look forward to the achievement of world order through world government see the implementation of such a policy as a necessary step in the right direction.

COMMUNISM AND RACE RELATIONS.

Problems of race relations have also become intertwined with international politics through the extensive exploitation of racial resentments by Soviet Russia in its propaganda and
maneuvering, especially in Asia and in parts of Africa. Communists in most "backward areas" have fostered the view that racial discrimination and "exploitation of suppressed races by the dominant" are inevitable and ineradicable under capitalism; in some colonial areas they have succeeded in identifying communism in the minds of many "colored" inhabitants of those areas with nationalism and with the movement for political independence from "white oppressors." The increasing tendency to characterize international political issues in racial terms demands new approaches and measures in the associations of peoples in the under-developed areas of the world.

The Need For A World Perspective On Race Relations

Implementation of international policies appropriate to the emerging world situation calls for far greater knowledge in the field of race relations than we admittedly have today. The most serious gaps in our present knowledge of race relations as affecting the international scene result from the narrow and provincial character of most existing knowledge in this field. With strikingly few exceptions, American students of race relations have been preoccupied with problems of minority groups in the United States, such as the Negroes, the Jews, the Orientals, or the Mexicans. Much the same can be said of specialists in this field in other countries. The value of this knowledge of minority and racial groups within given nations or territories (Continental United States, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Brazil, South Africa, the Near East, India, Burma, Indonesia, etc.) would be greatly enhanced if placed within a world-wide perspective and if supplemented by knowledge of certain critical political areas where little research has been carried out. Moreover, the limited knowledge available in race relations in many important colonial areas reflects primarily the interests which the colonial powers involved have had in the respective areas, and it lacks the world perspective which the present situation requires.

The Need For A Conference On Race Relations in World Perspective

This, briefly, is the background against which the conference on "Race Relations in World Perspective" has been conceived. The emergence of new problems of race relations on a world-wide basis demands a realistic and empirical approach such as our present knowledge fails to provide. The time has clearly come when, in the interests of international peace and the maintenance of civilization itself, a systematic and scientific approach to the world problems of race relations should be initiated. The conference and the extensive preparation planned for it offer the necessary opportunity to develop a world perspective on race relations and thereby to lay the basis for the cumulative finding of both theoretical and practical knowledge which will contribute directly to meeting more effectively our crucial problems of race relations at the international level. The values of bringing together administrators, scholars, and other observers from the more important areas of race and culture contacts and of providing them with a continuing avenue of contact would, of course, be greatest in helping to formulate this world perspective, in identifying the most serious gaps in our knowledge, and in determining the problems that most urgently need investigation.

The conference may be expected to develop an organization for cooperative and complementary research into race relations on a world-wide basis. The value on both the theoretical and practical sides of such a concerted attack upon the problem of race relations in the emerging world society can scarcely be exaggerated. Nothing of the sort exists today although such agencies as UNESCO have recognized its value.
Advantages of Holding The Conference in Hawaii. Hawaii enjoys a world-wide reputation for its multi-racial population and for the ease with which its numerous immigrant stocks are adjusting to each other and to the emerging Hawaiian-American culture. By virtue of its mid-oceanic detachment from the major points of racial tension and its well-established tradition of tolerance and objectivity on such matters, Hawaii is ideally situated to sponsor a new, bold venture in interracial understanding.

A quarter of a century ago, Honolulu set a precedent for a venture such as the one proposed here. In 1925, Honolulu served as host for the first Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, and out of the friendly and stimulating atmosphere of the Islands was born a movement which has added greatly to the understanding of the political and economic forces which operate within the Pacific Basin. Hawaii provides in itself a somewhat unique observatory of the processes involved in the meeting and fusing of ethnic groups and a working example of effective community living on an interracial basis. Moreover, the Territory, particularly through its University and the Bishop Museum, has become an important center of race relations research and the accumulated files of more than thirty years of investigation and study of race and culture contacts provide special inducements for administrators and scholars to visit the Islands.

Plans For The Conference Three American universities with a major interest in race-relations research -- the University of Chicago, the University of California, and the University of Hawaii -- are jointly sponsoring in the summer of 1954 a conference designed to provide such a world perspective upon their common problems. Invitations will be extended to a limited number of the most acute observers and the keenest analysts from the more significant areas of racial contact around the world for a period of intensive discussions extending from June 28 to July 23 at the University of Hawaii.

The delegates will be selected primarily on the basis of their broad acquaintance with and their demonstrated capacity for penetrating into the intricacies and subtleties of race relations in one or more of the significant areas. It is assumed that a group of scholars drawn from the several social sciences but sharing an interest and research experience in the problems of race relations will constitute the central core of the conference. These persons -- sociologists, political scientists, cultural anthropologists, economists, social psychologists, psychiatrists, and geographers -- are to be selected less for their professional orthodoxy as anthropologists, economists, sociologists, etc., than for their contribution to an understanding of what happens when races meet.

It is felt that, not only the conventional social scientist, but sometimes even more the journalist, educator, or public administrator will have much to offer in the understanding of certain racial problems. One of the major objectives of the conference should be a more effective sharing of insights between the social scientists and the administrators charged with the formulation of policies affecting race relations. It is probable that a number of official and semi-official agencies concerned with problems of race relations, including UNESCO and the economic and social council of the United Nations, will desire some representation in the conference, at least through observers.

The University of Hawaii as the host institution, is prepared to provide, in addition to quarters for the conference and living facilities for the partici-
pants, the necessary library facilities and the assistance of an experienced staff of research scholars in the field of race relations. It is expected that the University of Hawaii summer session with a parallel emphasis on race relations in world perspective will attract students and observers from various parts of the world who might contribute substantially to the conference from their firsthand experience in various situations.