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Raab (Ed.): American Race Relations Today: Studies of the Probulems Beyond Desegregation

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Most sociologists, like cubist painters, represent life in a manner accessible only to their own kind. They crossbreed themselves into intellectual malnutrition and loneliness. The potential reader retreats in the face of semantic barbed-wire and terminological mazes unaware of the insights and unexposed to enlightenment. The ignorant fringe reacts with sporadic hysteria to cases of "block busting" or "de facto integration." Inbetween crises, the bland are leading the bland.

Sociological opera have their rare exceptions: witness a slim volume with the forbidding name: American Race Relations Today edited and partly written by Earl Raab. Says Raab:

... the problems of race relations are broader than the problems of discrimination which they include. It is now clear that the social objective all along was not just equal opportunity and desegregation but equal achievement and integration; and it is also clear that the former will not automatically—or perhaps swiftly enough—lead to the latter. Indeed the formula may have to be reversed under certain circumstances: extended individual opportunity may depend finally upon group achievement.

This is, hypothetically, the new frontier of race relations: to deal with those factors other than discrimination which seriously deter equal group achievement and integration.¹

Even professional anti-professionals are unlikely to close the book at this point. And rightly so. For the book, in its thirteen essays, opens rare vistas and initiates ferment. There are no books like it on our scene for succinctness, challenge and that razor strop quality for alert minds.

In the first essay, Ending the Past,² Raab points out that the process of learning does not appear to cause a decline in bigotry among the students of southern colleges.³ Nonetheless, there is an indirect impact of education on racism as learning expands the range of students' interests. The newly acquired interest in education (or law and order, or economic development) may prevail over the interest in segregated living, when alternatives are framed in exclusive terms of integrated education or lawlessness, integrated employment or no government contracts.⁴ Obviously, these "countervailing perspectives" do not "countervail" until the margins for evasion are removed. Gradualism stiffens resistance.

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² Pp. 23.
³ Pp. 24-25.
⁴ Ibid.
Margins for evasion can be removed. In the essay entitled *The Prejudiced Society*, we read that Southern whites inducted into the army accept integration with cold morning showers, as the "army way." Their situation as inductees is unfamiliar to them and new situations admit new patterns of conduct and foster new attitudes. Significantly, the "army way" was instituted by executive order some years ago. In pragmatic terms which oversimplify the potent of the essay, executive order and legislation could accomplish similar results in other areas—by conditioning the availability of housing, schooling, employment or public accommodations on a policy of non-discrimination, and by utilizing the "newness" of new situations.

Margins for evasion will be removed, we are told in the third essay, *The Sit-Ins and the New Negro Student*. The new Negro in the South discovered the power of passive resistance and economic boycott. He mobilizes allies and appeals to public opinion. He is no longer alone. And he is no longer patient.

The three essays abstracted above are 5, 26 and 7 pages long. They represent cubic miles of sociological research. Conclusory in presentation, laden with bare minima of supporting evidence, they are as stimulating in their content as they are pleasing in their form. Their only flaw, if flaw they have, is shortness. Consider, for instance, the dimension that could have been added to the book with the inclusion of the following restatement of Raab's views that the point of greatest instability in race relations occurs not when conditions are worst, but at some point in the scale of their improvement.

The desire for equality and status accelerates as these goals become more attainable. ... Caught in the surge, traditional leaders and organizations step up their own pace, sometimes in sheer defense ... dramatic protest ... and slight case of anarchy ... lead inevitably to actions and demands which appear as "excesses"...

It follows that the white liberal and the NAACP lose ground. New leadership emerges and at times it is less than stable. Collaboration becomes difficult where heads are used as battering rams. Bigots, in search of rationalization for their free floating hatred, focus on "excesses" of the New Leadership. Turning his back on patterns of weakness and gradualism characterizing his elders, the New Negro seeks his self image for his new role. This search, psychologically unexplored, yet so apparent in modern Negro literature and so reminiscent of the need of many minorities to act more than equal in order to feel equality with others, looms large over any discussion of legal and sociological solutions to racial tensions. It provides a significant transitional bridge between the first part of this collection called *Ending the Past* and the second part entitled *Beginning the Future*.
That “future” is set in the urban areas of the North and West where “the gap between equal opportunity and equal achievement has been most striking...”. Residential patterns determine educational patterns, which determine economic patterns, which determine residential patterns. Our metropolitan areas bifurcate into cities which are increasingly Negro and suburbs of exclusive Whiteness. Politically, socially and economically, race relations permeate our whole existence. Elections, city planning, taxation, education, labor relations, law enforcement problems, all are inextricably interwoven with race relations. They are the increasingly explosive ingredient of our economy, society and government, un-defused only at gravest peril.

In the area of education, this is nowhere made clearer than in Nathan Glazer's statement that while "Southern segregation has to be abolished independently of its import on education; Northern school concentration becomes a problem that demands action primarily because it may lead to inferior education for Negro children." The statement, as indeed the volume itself, emphasizes and assumes an agreement on the lowest common denominator: abolition of discriminatory legislation. Hence, abolition of southern segregation. But from there, the debate shifts into the new frontiers: from equal treatment under the law to equal opportunity for the deprived, even if it calls for inequality favoring the Negro. Earl Raab, Morton Grodzins, Dan Dodson, Nathan Glazer and James Conant elaborate on the inadequacy of the "color blind" doctrine, on the practice of selecting a lonely "exhibit A" Negro to mask continued segregation in universities, on the "tipping point" phenomenon, disintegrating integration and "benign quotas." While the discussion is not ideally balanced (Will Maslow's point of view is nowhere in evidence even though future legal battles may well be fought in the area delineated by him), it drives explosive lucidity through much factual material.

Since continency requires eschewing details, let us limit ourselves to one part of James Conant's sub-section on *de facto* segregation. Vide Conant in a nutshell: The real issue is not racial integration but socio-economic integration. By reductio ad absurdum Conant sneers that if a child's self-respect requires integration on racial lines, economic integration may be equally necessary, and white slum children should be transported into schools in high income residential districts. To Conant, de facto integration is at best a slogan and more likely to be a hindrance by diverting energies from real solutions: "... I think it would be far better for those who are agitating for the deliberate mixing of children to accept de facto segregated schools as a consequence of a present housing situation and to work for the improvement of slum schools whether Negro or white." The "real" solution, Conant states, is "through the existence of at

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11. Ibid.
14. P. 159.
15. P. 162.
16. P. 163.
least some mixed schools, integrated teaching staffs, and increased expenditures in slum schools. . . ."

Conant’s views are contained in four pages—and bulky tomes could be written in rebuttal. Even granting arguendo that Conant is right, how wise is it to underestimate slogans at a time when an underprivileged people pulls itself by its bootstraps into a new society? Considering the psychological reality of the Negro quest today, is it too much to ask that in the beginning be The Word? Is it really so evident that de facto integration and the solutions urged by Conant, are mutually exclusive? Moreover, if Conant acknowledges that the existence of “some mixed schools” is important in stemming inferiority feelings of the Negro children, has he not admitted the place of the de facto integration battle in the total scheme of things? Hence, cities attempting to integrate are not “on the wrong track”; they merely refuse to accept the status quo, as Conant does; having accepted the value of integrated schools they have proceeded logically to implement and extend integration. In short, Conant seems to err by elevating his complementary remedy into exclusiveness. Civil rights people seldom fight for integration without stressing remedial classes, integrated teaching staffs and employment opportunity. And Conant’s argument—of the absurdity of equalizing education for rich suburbs with that available in poor slums by creating heterogeneous school districts through bussing or zoning—far from being absurd, lends added support to open enrollment plans.

Above all one senses a confusion in Conant’s terms between “slum children” and “Negro children.” Naturally, not all slum children are Negro and not all Negroes are slum dwellers. The solution of the slum issue rests in remedial classes, higher horizons programs, playgrounds, home betterment, counselling, placement, training programs and housing anti-discrimination laws. This should not be confused with the solution of the Negro “problem.” Hurt people, struggling for self respect and a self image in the encircling world of whites need stronger solutions. They must know that wherever possible (and no one demands more than that) boundaries will be drawn to alleviate ghettoization; whenever possible, new sites for schools will be chosen to eliminate, not to perpetuate, the housing moats. We must end the horror of racially constricted horizons. It is the least we can do, still leaving the undone vast. Conant’s piece should be approached with enthusiasm heightened by disagreement. For such is the nature of dialogues that a thought begets a thought and an argument breeds counter arguments.

In conclusion Raab articulates major premises and presents us with a framework for facing big issues. This he does with grace and power and, above all, with wisdom befitting one of our great sociologists. If this little volume suc-

17. Ibid.
18. The last three essays in the volume, on American Mexicans, or Puerto Ricans and on Black Muslims, are in a lesser category altogether. One suspects that symmetry rather than quality, prompted their inclusion. On the other hand, references to Jews, Mexican Americans and others, strewn through the book, are always timely and interesting.
ceeds in wedging several large questions in a hopefully significant number of bellies, it would have accomplished a significantly hopeful bit of intellectual integration of its own.

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