



Delegates register for the Convention at Cortland

## NEW YORK STATE CONVENTION OF UNIVERSALISTS

The 131st annual Convention of New York State Universalists opened on Sunday, October 14, in Cortland, beginning the three days of outstanding programs. Sunday afternoon Dr. Kenneth Munson of St. Lawrence University spoke to early arrivers about the use of music in the liberal church, after which Nanita Johns spoke on religious dance. The afternoon session was brought to a creative conclusion with a demonstration of dances by three of the teachers from Miss John's school. At the evening session Ashley Strong of Schuyler Lake officially opened the Convention, and the Rev. Alfred Taylor, executive secretary of the Cortland

County Council of Churches, enthusiastically welcomed the delegates to the community. Dr. Arthur Swift, vice-president and dean of the School of Politics and Social Studies of the New School for Social Research in New York City, gave the keynote address.

Dr. Swift, speaking on "A Free Man in a Free World", emphatically decried the loss of American freedom and encouraged individual and group participation in those areas that may insure continuation of the ideas of liberty. He said that freedom is "a coin stamped on its obverse side with responsibility." "The less we do from personal compulsion and the less we are

driven from our own desires the more we are puppets of the wills and wiles of others", he said. Admitting that we are influenced by forces that play upon us, he nonetheless stressed that change is possible and that man can change his life.

He said that even in the United States freedom is oppressed by assaults on academic freedom, interference with scientific freedom, oppression by legislative investigating committees, denial of personal freedom by restrictive immigration laws, and denial of civil rights by segregation. He continued his observations by remarking that this nation is presently caught in hysterical fear, noting that where there is fear there is also hate. He called upon churches to stand as bulwarks of liberty to renounce gross materialism, tradition, and social indifference.

Monday's session brought delegates a variety of programs. Among them was the A. U. W. Friendship Luncheon, Ministers Luncheon. Unirondack Supper get together, and the evening service and occasional sermon. At the service, conducted by the host minister, the Rev. Theodore Webb of Canton, New York, spoke on the subject, "At This Juncture: Neo Liberalism." Following the occasional sermon Dr. Max Kapp of the St. Lawrence Theological School led the congregation in a symbolic Communion Service. Following these services the Resolutions Committee sponsored several "buzz" groups in discussion of several proposed resolutions.

At two of the afternoon sessions the ministers and A. U. W. elected officers. The Rev. Richard Woodman of Binghamton was elected as president of the Ministerial Association; the Rev. Albert Ciarca of New York City, vice-president; the Rev. Leon Simonetti of Little Falls,

secretary, and the Rev. Robert Sterling, Central Square, treasurer. For the A. U. W., Mrs. Donald Beebe, Kenmore, was elected president; Mrs. Leon Simonetti, vice-president; Mrs. Palmer Cutter of Utica, second vice-president, and Mrs. Robert Sterling, secretary. Mrs. George Tennant was elected treasurer while Mrs. Alex Hanson was named financial secretary. Mrs. James Wilson of New York City was elected director for three years; Mrs. Charles Davis, Gouverneur, director for one year, and Mrs. Robert Fisk of Williamsville, director to complete the two year term of Mrs. Max Kapp.

On Tuesday those who attended the religious education luncheon and program sessions found a stimulating program on worship by Rev. Walter R. Jones of Floral Park; audio-visual aids by Mrs. Ruth Moore of Rochester; curriculum and philosophy by Miss Doris Trafton of Buffalo, and creative activities by Mrs. Josephine Gould of Syracuse. At the religious education luncheon Dr. Lucille Lindberg of New York City spoke on "Education for a Free World." That night the high light of the Convention was reached when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Montgomery, Alabama, spoke on "Non-Violent Procedures to Interracial Harmony" (a summary of his talk may be found in this issue of the E. S. U.)

The additional meetings, social action programs, reports, and fellowship of the Convention provided an outstanding program that attending Universalists will long remember. The positive nature and friendly atmosphere, even in controversy, characterized this Convention. We must hope that when New York State Universalists meet in New York City in 1957, the quality and character of the 1956 Convention will be in evidence.

## NON-VIOLENT PROCEDURES TO INTER-RACIAL HARMONY

It is impossible to look out into the wide arena of American life without noticing a real crisis in race relations. This crisis has been precipitated, on the one hand, by the determined resistance of reactionary elements in the South to the Supreme Court's momentous decision outlawing segregation in public schools. This resistance has often risen to ominous proportions. Many states have risen up in open defiance. Legislative halls of the South ring loud with such words as "interposition" and "nullification". In many states a modern version of the Ku Klux Klan has arisen in the form of so-called respectable White Citizens Councils. All of these forces have conjoined to make for massive resistance.

The crisis has been precipitated, on the other hand, by the radical change in the Negro's evaluation of his nature and destiny of himself. It is true to say that there would be no crisis in race relations if the Negro thought of himself in inferior terms and patiently accepted injustice and exploitation. It is at this very point that the change has come. The tension which we witness in race relations today must be explained in part by this revolutionary change in the Negro's evaluation of his nature and destiny. A brief survey of the history of the Negro in America reveals this change in terms that are crystal clear.

It was in the year of 1619 that the first Negro slaves landed on the shores of this nation. Unlike the Pilgrim Fathers, who landed at Plymouth a year later, they were brought here against their wills. Throughout slavery the Negro was treated in a very inhuman fashion. He was considered a thing to be used, not a person to be respected. He was merely a depersonalized cog in a vast plantation machine. The

famous Dred Scott decision of 1857 well illustrates the status of the Negro during slavery. In this decision the Supreme Court of the United States said, in substance, that the Negro is not a citizen of the United States; he is merely a piece of property subject to the dictates of his owner.

After his emancipation in 1863, the Negro still confronted oppression and inequality. It is true that for a time, while the Army of Occupation remained in the South and Reconstruction ruled, the Negro had a brief period of eminence and political power. But he was quickly overwhelmed by the white majority. So in 1896, through the Plessy V. Ferguson Decision, a new kind of slavery came into being covered up with certain niceties of complexity. In this decision the Supreme Court of the nation established the doctrine of separate-but-equal as the law of the land. Following this decision there was a strict enforcement of the "separate" with not the slightest intention to abide by the equal. **So the Plessy Doctrine ended up plunging the Negro across the abyss of exploitation where he experienced the bleakness of nagging injustice.**

Living under these conditions, many negroes came to the point of losing faith in themselves. They came to feel that perhaps they were less than human. The great tragedy of physical slavery was that it led to the paralysis of mental slavery. So long as the Negro maintained this subservient attitude and accepted this "place" assigned to him, a sort of racial peace existed. But it was an uneasy peace in which the Negro was forced patiently to accept insult, injustice and exploitation. It was a negative peace. True peace is not merely the absence of some negative force — tension, confusion, or war; it is the



presence of some positive force — justice goodwill and brotherhood. So the peace which presently existed between the races was a negative peace devoid of any positive and lasting quality.

Then something happened to the Negro. He began traveling more. His rural plantation background was being supplanted by migration to urban industrial communities. His economic life was gradually rising through the steady decline of crippling illiteracy. A myriad of factors and happenings came together to cause the Negro to take a new look at himself. Negro masses began to re-evaluate themselves. The Negro came to feel that he was somebody. His religion revealed to him that God loves all his children, and that the important thing about a man "is not his specificity but his fundamentum," not the texture of his hair or the color of his skin, but the texture and quality of his soul.

With this new self-respect and new sense of dignity on the part of the Negro, the South's negative peace was rapidly undermined. The tension which we are witnessing, in relations today can be explained, in part, by this revolutionary change in the Negro's evaluation of himself and his determination to struggle and sacrifice until the walls of segregation have been finally crushed by the battering rams of surging justice. This is the meaning of the whole crisis.

This determination of Negro Americans to win freedom from all forms of oppression springs from the same deep longing for freedom that motivates oppressed peoples all over the world. The rhythmic beat of the deep rumblings of discontent from Africa and Asia is at bottom a quest for freedom and human dignity on the part of people who have long been the victims of colonialism. The struggle for freedom on the part of oppressed people in general and the American

Negro in particular is not suddenly going to disappear. It is sociologically true that privileged classes rarely ever give up their privileges without strong resistance. It is also sociologically true that once oppressed people rise up against their oppression there is no stopping point short of victory. So realism impels us to admit that the struggle will continue. Since the struggle will continue, the basic question which confronts the oppressed peoples of the world is this: How will the struggle against the forces of injustice be waged?

There are two possible answers to this question. One is to resort to the all too prevalent method of physical violence and corroding hatred. We all know the danger of this method. Violence solves no social problems. It merely creates new and more complicated ones.

There is still a voice crying through the vista of time saying to every potential Peter, "Put up your sword." History is replete with the bleached bones of nations and communities that failed to follow this command. If the Negro succumbs to the temptation of using violence in the struggle for justice, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness. His chief legacy to the future would be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.

The alternative to violence is the method of non-violent resistance. This method was made famous in our generation by Mohandas K. Gandhi, who used it to free his country from the domination of the British Empire. Several basic things can be said about non-violence as a method in bringing about better racial conditions. First, this is not a method of cowardice or stagnant passivity; it does resist. The non-violent resistor is just as opposed to the evil against which he is protesting as the person who uses violence. It is true that this method is passive or non-aggressive

in the sense that the non-violent resistor is not aggressive physically toward his opponent, but his mind and emotions are always active, constantly seeking to persuade the opponent that he is mistaken. This method is passive physically, but it is strongly active spiritually; it is non-aggressive physically, but dynamically aggressive spiritually.

A second basic fact about this method is that it does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding. The non-violent resistor must often voice his protest through non-cooperation or boycotts, but he realizes that non-cooperation and boycotts are not ends within themselves; they are merely means to awaken a sense of moral shame within the opponent. The end is redemption and reconciliation. The aftermath of non-violence is the creation of the beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.

A third fact that characterizes the method of non-violence is that the attack is directed to forces of evil, rather than persons caught in the forces. It is evil that we are seeking to defeat, not the persons victimized with evil. Those of us who struggle against racial injustice must come to see that the basic tension is not between races. As I like to say to the people in Montgomery, Alabama: "The tension in this city is not between white people and Negro people. The tension is at bottom between justice and injustice, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. And if there is a victory it will be a victory, not merely for 50,000 Negroes, but a victory for justice and the forces of light. We are out to defeat injustice and not white persons who may happen to be unjust."

A fourth point that must be brought out concerning the method of non-violence is that this method not only avoids external physical violence, but also internal vio-

lence of spirit. At the center of non-violence stands the principle of love. In struggling for human dignity the Negro must not succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter or indulging in hate campaigns. To retaliate with hate and bitterness would do nothing but intensify the existence of hate in the universe. Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can only be done by projecting the ethics of love to the center of our lives.

In speaking of love at this point, we are not referring to some sentimental and affectionate emotion. It would be nonsense to urge men to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense. When we refer to love at this point we mean understanding goodwill. There are three words in Greek for love. First there is *eros*. In Platonic philosophy *eros* meant the yearning of the soul for the realm of the gods. It has come now to mean a sort of aesthetic or romantic love. *Philia* is another Greek word for love. It meant intimate affectionateness between personal friends. *Philia* denotes a sort of reciprocal love; the person loves because he is loved. When we speak of loving those who oppose us we refer to neither *eros* nor *philia*. We speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word *agape*. *Agape* means nothing sentimental or basically affectionate; it means understanding, redeeming goodwill for all men. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. It is the love of God working in the lives of men. When we rise to love on the *agape* level we love men not because we like them, not because their attitudes and ways appeal to us, but because God loves them. Here we rise to the position of loving the person who does the evil deed, while hating the deed that the person does.

Finally, the method of non-vio-

lence is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice. It is this deep faith in the future that causes the non-violent resistor to accept suffering without retaliation. He knows that in his struggle for justice he has cosmic God in on the side of truth and justice comes down to us from the long tradition of our Christian faith. There is something at every center of our faith which reminds us that Good Friday may occupy the throne for a day, but ultimately it must give way to the triumphant beat of the drums of Easter. Evil may so shape events that Caesar will occupy a Palace and Christ a cross, but one day that same Christ will rise up and split history into A. D. and B. C., so that even the life of Caesar must be dated by his name. So in Montgomery, we can

walk and never get weary, because we know that there will be a great camp meeting in the promised land of freedom and justice

This, in brief, is the method of non-violent resistance. It is a method that challenges all people struggling for equality and freedom. God grant that we will wage the Companionship. This belief that struggle for justice with dignity and discipline. May all those who are confronted with oppression in this non-violent resistance. It is a method of retaliatory violence and choose the method that seeks to redeem. **Through wisely and courageously using this method we will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice.**