

OTHER PAPERS SAY

THAT GARY "STRIKE"

[Fort Wayne News and Sentinel]

In a current magazine appears a debate between Alain Locke and Lothrop Stoddard on the question, "Should the Negro Be Encouraged to Cultural Equality?" Coincident with the publication of this lively discussion, there has been announcement from Gary, this state, that 1,200 high school pupils of that city, who happen to belong to the white race, have seen fit to stage a "strike," because enrollment at the Emerson school included 24 Colored boys and girls—boys and girls whose ancestors chanced to come from another part of the world than was inhabited by the ancestors of the children who staged a revolt against established authority comparable with the rebels' attack on Fort Sumter.

It would seem that in the person of Alain Locke—the outstanding spokesman of the Colored race, with several pamphlets to his credit as well as the possession of a bachelor's and a master's degree from Harvard university and a professorship in Howard university at Washington—at least one Negro had attained more than ordinary cultural equality, whether encouraged or not. And so we find it extremely interesting and worthy of serious attention that this dark northern student of racial problems disagrees with Lothrop Stoddard, also a northerner and also possessing a bachelor's, a master's and a doctor's degree from Harvard, and also the author of numerous widely known books on racial problems, including "The Rising Tide of Color." Dr. Stoddard takes the negative side in the debate.

This problem is a sociological one, which has been discussed, argued and fought over for many years—long before Gary, Ind., was ever heard or thought of—when what now is Gary was nothing but a heap of wind-swept sand dunes. And pupils—even 1,200 of them—of one of Gary's little "democracies within four walls" (as all of Gary's schools have been so proudly called) are highly presumptuous in thinking that they can, by direct action, so quickly solve a question concerning which authorities of great, mature wisdom differ and have differed for centuries.

But the situation which confronted the mayor and school board of Gary was not, as we see it, primarily a racial question. The issue was one of discipline and authority and the rights of the whole people to enjoy the benefits which have been provided for all, without discrimination on grounds of "race, color or previous condition of servitude." The public schools of Gary, like the public schools of other cities, are presumed to serve all the people all of the time, and the 24 Colored pupils enrolled at Emerson high school not only have the same right to go to school but are required by the state of Indiana to attend school just as many years as white children. And so, all pupils, black and white, strikers or not, who have not passed the maximum age limit should have been, in this and all similar cases, expected—ordered and compelled as the case demanded—to go back to their classes without further bickering or parley.

But they were not so ordered. A super-government, led by children not qualified to exercise the privilege of the franchise, not, therefore, citizens in the full sense of the word, have succeeded in invading the sovereign state—have succeeded in whipping a weak-kneed, jelly-backed set of officials into compliance with their arbitrary and ill-founded demands. When one considers that it is possible in a large Indiana city for 1,200 minor children to overcome the established authority of thousands of adults, he must conclude that Indiana has yet another scandal chalked up against her. When adults in an official capacity find it impossible to hold their own against a group of "striking" children, is it any wonder that there are criers in the wilderness who foresee destruction of the American republic through the agency of internal demoralization? Gary's population is estimated at 102,000, of which some 16,000 are Negroes. Why, then, should officials elected by the whole people permit 1,200 striking white minors to rule out 24 Negroes who are as fully entitled to the benefits of education as if northern winters had bleached the pigment from their skins?

We think that Gary's Emerson high school might profit from indulging some wonder as to whether she has been truly enforcing the discipline of which the "Gary system's" apologists and exponents have boasted for so many years—a discipline based upon the principles of democracy and freedom and dedicated to the cultivation of intelligence, liberty and self-control, with the idea of preparing children for citizenship in a great, progressive republic.