

Toward Freedom

LAST week's nonpartisan "Declaration by Negro Voters" is a statement by the authoritative leaders of a politically mature and progressive people. Both major political parties would do well to heed their pronouncements. This is no less true of certain would-be leaders of the Negro people.

We have come a long way from the time when the Negro vote could be bought for cash or token appointments or nice-sounding declarations of good intentions. In the words of leaders of 25 national Negro organizations with a combined membership of more than 6,500,000 citizens:

"The votes of Negroes cannot be purchased by distributing money to or through party hacks. They cannot be won by pointing to jobs given a few individual Negroes. . . . Negroes are no longer persuaded by meaningless generalizations in party platforms which are promptly forgotten on election day."

We have also come a long way from the time when the Republican or the Democratic Party could count the Negro vote as "in the bag." As last week's declaration by Negro leaders pointed out: "Negro voters played an important part in the election of a Negro Communist to the New York City Council, a Negro Republican as judge in the same community, a Democratic Mayor of Cleveland,



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a Republican Governor in Kentucky, and in cooperation with organized labor and other progressive forces, in the withdrawal and defeat of hostile Congressmen in Alabama, Texas and California."

MOREOVER, the time is now past when "Negro rights" was the sole political issue to which Negro voters would respond. The Negro people are learning that the future of Negro democratic rights depends fundamentally upon the triumph of democratic political and economic policies in the country as a whole.

Thus it is that these national Negro leaders declare, with a statesmanship that few groups in our country can match:

"The Negro people, like all other Americans, recognize the war as the chief issue confronting the country. We demand of any political party desiring the support of Negroes the vigorous prosecution of the war. . . . In evaluating the merits of parties and candidates we must include all issues—those touching the life of Negroes as a group, as well as those affecting the entire country."

On the question of democratic rights for Negro and other oppressed peoples, the elected spokesmen of approximately one-half the entire Negro population are equally specific and direct. They demand: (1) the right to vote in every state; (2) federal anti-lynching

Negro Leaders Reflect Political Maturity of Race

and anti-polltax legislation; (3) use of cloture to stop Senate filibusters; (4) a permanent FEPC; (5) the end of Jim Crow and other discriminations in the armed forces, and (6) the end of imperialism and colonial exploitation.

THIS admirable statement does more than reflect credit upon its authors. It correctly expresses the growing political maturity of the people for whom they speak.

There are some clever politicians meeting in Chicago this week who are eager to find some trick by which to lure Negro votes. Others will assemble there in July. Let them heed well this "Declaration by Negro Voters," lest their political fortunes come to an untimely end.

There are some clever Negro publishers and other would-be leaders who are on the point of endorsing the Dewey Republican enemies of all that to which Negro and other democratic Americans aspire. Let them also beware, lest they find themselves trampled under by the forward march of a people who have learned the lesson of progressive political action.

It is clear that the recent "Declaration by Negro Voters" adds up to full support for President Roosevelt and the progressive foreign and domestic policies for which he continues to fight. Whoever would influence the Negro vote, regardless of his race or party affiliation, let him begin by recognizing this basic and commanding truth.