

Race, Class and Social Security

by Doxey Wilkerson —

THE organized Negro doctors of Jackson, Mississippi, have just reminded us of an important truth which we tend too often to forget—that the Negro people are not an undifferentiated mass, but are becoming increasingly stratified along class lines; and, moreover, that every once in a while the (assumed) class interests of some well-to-do Negroes often lead them to betray the interests of the great masses of the Negro people. The Associated Negro Press reports from Jackson, Mississippi that:



"The Mississippi Medical and Surgical Association, an organization of Negro physicians, in a letter addressed to members of the state's congressional delegation last week, went on record as being unalterably opposed to the Wagner - Murray - Dingell bill, which would provide health insurance for all citizens. . . .

"Following the lead of the American Medical Association, the Mississippi doctors stated they were against the bill because: (1) it was out of harmony with the great American tradition of industry and thrift; (2) it is wholly Socialistic, Communistic and would do more to lay the foundation for communism in this country than all other efforts combined; (3) it would destroy interest in the practice of medicine; (4) it would drag the noble practice of medicine down to the quagmire of petty politics; (5) passage of the bill would be the mistake of ages; and (6) Socialized medicine is not the remedy. What we need is not free medicine but more physicians."

Mississippi Today

Get clearly in mind the setting from which this statement emerges. These doctors are surrounded by approximately one million of the most sorely oppressed and exploited Negroes in America, and by another million white Mississippians whose plight is but little better. It is precisely here that the health and other social security needs of the masses of people are most acute. More-

jected to the same dominant caste-like discriminations from which the masses of Negroes suffer.

Now, in terms of this setting, just look what it is that this organization of Negro physicians denounces in such harsh terms. The Wagner - Murray - Dingell bill, now before Congress, proposes a much-needed and comprehensive extension of the social security program which the American people initially won through hard struggles about a decade ago.

What the Bill Provides

1. It provides for pre-paid personal health insurance to cover the costs of medical care (not a program of state or "socialized" medicine).
2. It provides unemployment and temporary disability insurance benefits of from \$5 to \$30 per week up to 26 weeks, and up to a year for unemployment if funds are available.
3. It liberalizes existing benefits for retirement, survivors and total disability insurance, with a minimum of \$20 and a maximum of \$120 per month.
4. It proposes to credit \$160 wages under the social insurance system for each month of military service.
5. It would extend the benefits of the social insurance system to approximately 15,000,000 persons not covered by existing legislation—including farmers and domestics, whose exclusion from the present system leaves the bulk of Negro workers unprotected.
6. It provides for a National Advisory Council with labor-management representation.
7. It authorizes a ten-year, \$950,000,000 program of federal grants and loans for the construction and expansion of hospitals and health centers.
8. It proposes to finance the whole program, in addition to direct subsidy from state and federal, although these doctors enjoy a higher living standard than the masses of Negroes in their state,

still they, themselves, are sub-eral government, through employe contributions of about four percent of income, matched by equal contributions from the employer.

These are the main provisions of the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill which the Mississippi Medical and Surgical Association rails against as a peril to the foundations of our society.

Not Thinking Of Negro People

It is obvious that these doctors are not thinking in terms of the critical needs of the Negro people, of whom they are a part. Rather, they are thinking in terms of the interests (which they mistakenly identify as their own) of the czars of the American Medical Association to whom restrictive control and absolute domination of the profession is a real matter of "big business."

These Negro doctors are isolating themselves from the broad progressive currents of American life which alone can guarantee the liberation of the Negro people, including themselves, from the still dominant Jimcratism of our society. They are betraying the interests of the Negro people and the nation as a whole for what they presume to be the interests of their class. Fortunately, they do not speak for the great bulk of "upper-class" Negroes, nor even for the majority of those in their own profession.

Most Negroes with better-than-average incomes realize that their future is tied inexorably with that of the Negro masses, which, in turn, is bound up with that of the masses of all Americans. That is why most Negro doctors support the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill. That is why they and most other petty-bourgeois Negroes are ever more ready to join hands—as they will at the Negro Freedom Rally at Madison Square Garden Monday night—with the labor and progressive forces of our nation in fighting for increased freedom and security for all men.

— Worth Repeating —

FRANCO SPAIN should not receive further recognition, says Vincent Sheean in an article in the current (June) issue of *Four World* magazine, which opens: To those who have fought and suffered for years to achieve our present degree of victory over fascism it seems monstrous and almost unbelievable that the western democracies, vowed to muddle and confusion to the end, are still supporting Gen. Franco's dictatorship in Spain.