

EDITORIALS

The Bozo Principle

Way back in 1899, the carnival people contrived The African Dip where a rube could throw balls and, when he hit the target hard, a fellow was dumped into a barrel of water.

The slogan read: "Hit the Tiger, Dump the Nigger."

That thing lasted until 1949, when an aroused press raised Cain up at Florence in South Carolina. Nowadays, the fellow suspended over the water is usually a clown and the promotion reads:

"Dump Bozo."

That is a considerable improvement, in our opinion. But it is not precisely the final solution to the Negro aspiration for justice, educational opportunity, economic advance, and cultural improvement.

This is what Dr. Benjamin Perry was telling us last week when he spoke at the University of Florida. He was winding up the two-day Governor's Conference on Education Opportunities for the Disadvantaged.

Dr. Perry is a black man and president of Florida A&M University in Tallahassee. In three words, he told us the "Bozo Principle" is not enough:

"White people must realize that no longer will they be able to hide their prejudices behind insincere smiles. The Establishment needs to change its attitudes from one of intolerance to one of full acceptance of the individual."

His reminders:

- Out of 7,300 attorneys in Florida, only 69 are black.
- We have not referred the

plight of 200,000 migrant farm laborers, mostly black, despite public hue-and-cry about their virtual peonage.

- Up to 15,000 disillusioned blacks from the North are returning to the South each year and will form a core of dissent, possibly violent.

- Florida state government must become active in providing better housing and fair employment.

- Education must become more easily available and adapt to the needs of the disadvantaged.

Dr. Perry is an educator and a cultured man who does not sock his audience with sensational statements. He is the voice of reason and not a Man-Man and, tragically, his message is easily put aside as not urgent.

The American public is pretty placid until the Mau-Mau comes along and hits us hard — like the farmer who strikes his mule on the nose with a two-by-four so he can get the mule's attention.

So, in this moment of racial calm before the warmth of spring opens up the streets again, we want to put in a few good words for the Dr. Perrys of this world — those who speak in sensible terms for humanity's sake as contrasted to raucous black-shirts who hurl threats and sometimes bricks.

We are adhering pretty well to the "Bozo Principle" by taking the "Negro Only" signs off the water coolers and standing in line together at Morrison's. But we are not sinking much of a dent economically and culturally.

That is what Dr. Perry is saying, perhaps too quietly.

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