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No. 6: "Know Your Town"— Florence Negro Schools Making Splendid Record

BY SHIRLEY INGRAM
A Member of the F. & T. C. Journalism Class

The Negro school system in Florence is reported to be the best in the State, according to many educational authorities. Much of the credit for this fine reputation belongs to Professor W. H. Lewis, principal of the Florence schools. In addition to the tremendous job of guiding the educational system in general, Professor Lewis teaches two classes at Burrell high school—physics and chemistry.

Since coming to Florence in 1928, Professor Lewis has witnessed much growth in the school system. The number of teachers has increased from seven for both schools to 13 at Slater and Burrell, and will probably increase even more with the completion of the new W. C. Handy elementary school now under construction.

This new school will include 14 classrooms, cafeteria, teaching lounge, modern facilities, and a gymnasium and auditorium combined, with a seating capacity of 248 for recreational use and 985 for regular auditorium use, showers and lockers. The building, known as "Handy Hill," so named for W. C. Handy's grandfather, whose place is nearby. Fifteen acres are included, on which a stadium will also be erected.

Now, C. Handy is certainly one of Florence's most illustrious Negroes. Professor Lewis stated, "But several others, having Burrell high have also made admirable records for themselves." Among these are O. De Frait, former Congressional Representative from Chicago; Walter T. Sherrod, lecturer and specialist of pharmacology at the University of Illinois; and Dorothy two girls who rose from broken families to earn a professional degree at Oberlin College, Ohio, and a degree in education from Columbia University in New York, respectively.

Fair Employment Practices Bill Is Hit By Sen. Hill

Senator Slater Hill called the FEPC bill a "snare and a delusion" in a speech on the floor of the U. S. Senate attacking the so-called civil rights bill.

Hill is one of the group of 21 Southern Democratic Senators that has been able to block passage of all civil rights legislation.

It is not legislation of the FEPC type that will improve the lot of minority groups," Hill declared. "It is constructive, affirmative programs that benefit all our people through education, hospitals and health centers, public health and prevention of disease, decent housing and economic security under our American free enterprise system."

Alabama's senior Senator said the bill would "defeat the solving of the most serious problems in the only way that can be solved—by the people of the South." FEPC would impact through education, hospitals and health centers, public health and prevention of disease, decent housing and economic security under our American free enterprise system.

THREE TRAFFIC DEATHS MONTGOMERY—Colbert county was one of the 53 Alabama counties which reported deaths from motor vehicle accidents during the final three months of last year. That county's total was three. The announcement was made by the State Department of Health. It was based upon provisional reports prepared by the Department's Bureau of Vital Statistics. The total for the entire state was 203. That represented an increase of 18 over the 185 motor vehicle deaths reported during the previous three months. The state totals for the first and second quarters of 1939 were 129 and 134, respectively.

LOCAL CADETS TO BE HONORED

Cadet Lt. Col. William A. White, Florence, and Cadet Major Robert O. Cox, Killen, will be recognized Thursday for outstanding military achievement and academic excellence during a review of the ROTC units at the University of Alabama. Gov. James E. Folsom and his military staff will make the inspection during the annual Governor's Day program at the University.

Hill called the measure a "constant invitation to sabotage" because it would prevent government and defense industries from securing the very information most job applicant's loyalty."

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Most of the students graduating from Burrell and continuing their education in colleges obtain positions elsewhere, except those who enter the teaching profession. There usually return to the Tri-Cities to teach. According to Professor Lewis, approximately 30 of the 55 who will graduate from elementary school this year will go on to high school.

"Those students who do not continue their schooling," stated the principal, "probably turn out to be a regrettable percentage of the community and food for jails." As a remedy, Professor Lewis feels that some branch of social service should be established, similar to that suggested recently by Circuit Judge Robert M. Hill, to care for those children from broken homes who have no one to guide or love them. The same is usually, "I've got to make a living," and they usually go about it in an antisocial way," said the professor.

"It all probably stems from economic conditions," he continued. "Men leave their homes to find jobs elsewhere, and the children left behind need some kind of home in their early years that will guide them later. A unit, or kind of 'Community Center' for these children is greatly needed."

Before coming to Florence, Professor Lewis taught at Snowhill Institute, Snowhill, Alabama. He received his high school diploma from Alabama State College for Negroes at Montgomery, which was then a high school, after which he attended Moorehouse College.

The professor is very proud of

Burrell's football record last year. He has good reason, too. Burrell students scored 233 points against their opponents' 19, won all their games, and were awarded the North Alabama High School Athletic Association trophy.

While the boys fought it out on the field, Burrell's colorful 40-piece band, one of three Negro bands of the schools in this state, played cheerfully on. The school is proud of this band—not only because it is spectacular in marching and playing, but also because the students and other interested persons have helped to make it what it is. A drive spearheaded by the Band Boosters Club (parents and interested individuals) yielded 33 units of uniforms for the band, and the economics teacher, made their home majorette uniforms.

Future plans are to convert Slater into a high school and Burrell into a trade school when the new Handy elementary school is completed. Wider ranges of studies for the students, more participation in sports activities, and becoming a regionally accredited high school are further hopes of Professor Lewis, who will continue to direct progress in keeping with its splendid record and fine reputation.

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