

Merited Tribute to A Cultured Woman

Read the record and you will find that, 35 years ago, a small group of persons met in the home of Mary T. Seymour on New Britain Avenue. Connecticut industries and farms sent recruiters to Southern states and new people, Negroes, were coming to Connecticut to work. Mary T. Seymour, a Negro whose dedication to the freedom of the spirit was attested by her work for the liberation of the Irish and the Hindus, was the mainspring of the meeting prompted by the migration. From it came the first local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People.

Next week those who admire the good in the human spirit will pay tribute to Mrs. Seymour. For in that interval of thirty-five years, members of the race have advanced, socially, scholastically and economically. They are an integrated part of Hartford life and are contributing to the common good. The program that was set forth thirty-five years ago by Mrs. Seymour was aimed at reducing prejudice and increasing understanding. The ultimate in these goals can probably never be reached. But the status of the Negro as a second-class citizen has changed dramatically.

Nearly all human progress is the work of a few dedicated persons. It is fortunate that there are men and women who are willing to look beyond themselves and to work for ends that concern them, not narrowly as individuals, but on the wider basis of human fellowship. Among those who met at 420 New Britain Avenue, thirty-five years ago, were Dr. Rockwell Harmon Potter, dean of the Hartford Seminary Foundation; Dr. James Weldon Johnson, who later achieved fame as author and diplomat; and Dr. W. E. M. Dubois, then editor of *Crisis*, who later won the Spingarn medal for his outstanding service.

But most of all the honor must go to this frail pioneer, this woman of culture whose mind and heart went out, not only to the oppressed people of her own race, but to subject people everywhere. It is good for today's generation to be reminded of the work that Mary T. Seymour started in Hartford 35 years ago. In the ceremonies honoring her next week we shall learn again that good citizenship and civic responsibility are not new virtues. For Mary Seymour and her husband, too, during his life, were active in everything that would promote the public good. "Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as go the unknown ways, Pioneers, O pioneers!"