

**economics
and integration**

**the economic thought
of
e. franklin frazier**

dale r. vlasek

During a career which spanned over forty years E. Franklin Frazier produced numerous analyses and critiques of the Afro-American experience. Best remembered, perhaps, are his scholarly investigations of the family that secured his reputation as a sociologist and his polemics against the black middle class that established his notoriety as a social critic. Far less known, however, are his plans for social reform, particularly his programs for black economic development. In the early 1920s, soon after his return from an examination of rural Danish co-operatives, he argued extensively that co-operative enterprises were a solution to black economic problems. During the 1930s he abandoned this approach for a more radical one and proposed that black and white workers unite in a common struggle against exploitive capitalism. Finally, by the 1940s he discarded this idea and came to look upon governmental policies that encouraged full employment and provided social services as the answer. He moved in effect from co-operative capitalism to eclectic radicalism to welfare statism with each move reflecting a continuing search for an economy in which Afro-Americans might gain the benefits of full citizenship and the recognition of human equality.¹

Frazier, of course, was not an economic theorist; he lacked any sort of formal training in the discipline; and his shifting programs appear to be more the dabbings of an economic dilettante than the work of a

serious economic reformer. Nevertheless, his economic writings are significant because they reveal certain central tendencies and patterns in his larger social thought. Throughout all of his work one theme predominated—a deep concern for the integration of the black man into the political, social and cultural institutions of American life. In recent years, however, this theme has been misread by critics who see him as a denigrator of Afro-American traditions and values. While some of their critiques are valid, they tend to treat him out of historical context and to overlook his racial goals.² Writing at a time when scholars were only just beginning to renounce the idea of race as a legitimate scientific concept and during a period when many Americans continued to reject blacks as social and cultural inferiors, Frazier saw his task as not only destroying the myths and misconceptions which supported racial prejudice but also creating theoretical and practical techniques to speed up the integration process. His prescriptions for economic reform were designed as part of that larger program. They were to be facilitators of integration. And, therefore, although they are tangential to his sociological studies, they are an important aspect of his vision of a better society. Neglect of them has left a part of his thought obscure and has contributed to critical interpretations that miss or distort the larger thrust of his writings and hopes.³

Some brief treatments of his economic ideas have appeared, but in general they have missed the search for integrationist tools that motivated Frazier's examination of economic institutions and produced his changing economic prescriptions. G. Franklin Edwards, for example, merely categorized Frazier's economic programs as a form of democratic socialism, while St. Clair Drake called him a "maverick neo-Marxist." Raymond Wolters and James O. Young described his economic thought as typical of a widespread generational radicalism among young black intellectuals. All of these accounts ignore Frazier's rejection of the binding tenets of any economic philosophy, the extent to which his economic ideas reflected his concern for integration, and the programmatic flexibility that accompanied his changing perceptions of how integration might be achieved.³

The purpose of this article is to illuminate Frazier's economic thought. In specific terms, it will do two things. First, it will trace the development of his thought on two levels, one being the changing prescriptions set forth in his writings, the other his changing definitions of the role that economic programs and actions could play in the social development and eventual integration of Afro-Americans. Second, it will attempt to relate these prescriptions and definitions to the context in which they appeared and to Frazier's changing perceptions of what was needed to end segregation and discrimination.

Frazier's concern with the problem of integration was evident from the very start of his career. Born in Baltimore in 1894, Frazier graduated

from Howard University in 1916 and spent three years as a teacher in various segregated schools in the South. In the early 1920s after receiving a Master of Arts degree in sociology from Clark University, he accepted a position in Atlanta, Georgia that combined an instructorship in Sociology at Morehouse College with the directorship of the newly founded Atlanta School of Social Work. During these years as Frazier grew to maturity, his experiences in the South together with his personal observations of American social practices impressed upon him the need for some sort of program to improve the status of Afro-Americans in the United States.

Frazier's first such program grew out of his early ideas of societal organization and evolution. As a young scholar Frazier had encountered Franklin Giddings' *The Principles of Sociology*, and he drew upon it heavily to argue that race relations in the United States were based upon anachronistic principles characteristic of an earlier stage of social evolution. Societies, he explained, had evolved through three stages, with each stage having its own unique principle of social cohesiveness. Primitive society, for example, had organized itself around kinship lines, but when it began to expand and conquer other groups it reorganized itself around the lines of authority to recognize the subordination of certain groups. This authority or subordination was institutionalized by establishing hereditary classes and by rewarding those classes with specific privileges or rights. The coming of the "revolutionary era" and industrial capitalism ushered in a reorganization of society along the modern principles of social equality and citizenship. Under these principles a person had rights and privileges not as a member of a hereditary group but as an individual member of the society.⁴

Unfortunately for blacks the societal evolution of America had stalled. At approximately the same time that the new principles were coming into operation blacks entered the social order as slaves. The introduction of a hereditary subordinate group provoked a return to the archaic authoritarian principles and reinstated the practice of assigning rights by class. Even after Emancipation, society continued to treat blacks as members of a separate and subordinate caste, not only denying them their civil rights but also, Frazier said, committing "the greatest crime of the age," denying their existence as human beings.⁵

Frazier felt that the solution to this problem was two-fold. First, blacks had to demand that American society recognize the modern principles of social organization and treat them as citizens and humans; and secondly and simultaneously, they must work to end those things that had facilitated their banishment to a caste outside of American society. Whites, as he saw it, would not willingly or passively recognize the principle of social equality. They would yield only to forceful demands and political pressure, and these could be made more effective if blacks could eradicate those factors which created a caste system.⁶

As Frazier viewed matters, the walls of caste rested on three intertwined circumstances. First, blacks were racially different from whites; that is, their Negroid characteristics, while not representing any innate barriers to social equality, had acted as symbols of the other elements of caste status. Second, blacks were economically dependent on whites. Due to the pattern of black and white economic development most blacks spent their lives in poverty, working for white employers, buying from white merchants and renting from white landlords. Third, because of an incomplete assimilation of American culture, isolation from the cultural mainstream of American life and inadequate educational and cultural facilities, blacks had a lower level of culture than whites. Together these things were denying blacks access to American society. They posed "unnatural" barriers to integration, and to overcome them, Frazier urged not only pride in racial characteristics and racial heritage but measures to reduce economic dependence and remedy cultural deficiencies.⁷

As early as 1920 Frazier identified acculturation and economic independence as the central problems facing blacks. In a study of black longshoremen in New York City, he explained that their already oppressed existence was worsened by their failure to understand the values and habits of urban living. They could benefit, he felt, from "sane" and "liberal" methods of Americanization. Later as he became more familiar with the problems of Southern blacks through his position in Atlanta, he argued repeatedly that their chief need was "socialization." Many blacks, he wrote, were "ignorant," not only illiterate but ignorant of the "traditions, knowledge, and ideals which all people acquire by living in the social and physical environment to which they have become adapted." But as of the 1920s they had neither the time nor the opportunity to fully assimilate the culture of western whites. Black America's first step in racial advancement had to be the completion of the assimilation process, for, unlike other racial or ethnic groups blacks did not have a culture outside of American life to draw upon. If they chose to shut themselves off from western culture, according to Frazier, their development would be arrested and they would remain on the level of "barbarism."⁸

During this same period, Frazier was also aware of the black economic plight. His observations of the effects that the agricultural, mercantile and financial systems of the South had on rural blacks together with his contacts with the degraded and impoverished life of urban blacks led him to categorize blacks in general as "the most preyed upon of the economically dependent classes." Realizing, then, that blacks needed to conform to middle-class standards of behavior and culture and that they also needed economic security he hoped to devise a program that would solve both problems.⁹

Frazier's promotion of black economic and cultural advancement was, of course, not a particularly original idea. Black spokesmen had advo-

cated comparable programs since Emancipation, if not before. But despite its similarities to earlier proposals Frazier's version had its own new and unique aspects. In devising it, Frazier drew upon a variety of ideas then current in the American intellectual community. In particular, he borrowed extensively from the race-conscious socialistic programs of people like A. Phillip Randolph, Chandler Owen and Marcus Garvey. At the same time, he retained selected concepts from the entrepreneurial ideas of capitalist groups like the National Negro Business League. And finally, he appropriated the vision of an economy synthesizing socialist insights, trained intelligence and a capitalist spirit from any number of thinkers in the 1920s. The result was an amorphous economic and cultural program that might be labeled co-operative capitalism. Frazier hoped that by participation in economic activities—especially co-operative enterprises—black Americans would acquire a cultural education and an economic security which would, in time, assist their entrance into American life.¹⁰

Frazier's decision to use co-operative enterprises as his specific cultural and economic tool emerged over a number of years. Like many young intellectuals in the period before the First World War, Frazier had been attracted to socialism and Marxist ideology. As an undergraduate at Howard University he had been an active member of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society. Later, during his research for his master's thesis he began to see more precisely how a collective economy might work for the betterment of the Afro-American. Examining the black radical publications of the day, he became acquainted with and impressed by the designs for economic independence set forth by A. Phillip Randolph, Chandler Owen and Marcus Garvey. These men, he felt, had moved beyond Booker T. Washington's advocacy of independence through individual initiative and urged the more workable and more realistic approach of collective action. And most important of all, they practiced what they preached. Their periodicals in which they promoted co-operative or collective enterprise were themselves co-operative ventures.¹¹

This interest was strengthened still further in 1921 when Frazier had the opportunity to see a co-operative economy at work. Supported by a fellowship from the American-Scandinavian Foundation he spent a year studying the rural co-operatives of Denmark. In the course of his examination he discovered that these enterprises had brought "wealth to the inhabitants," raising Danish farmers from "poverty and dependence to self-respect and comfort." He was so impressed by their success that he hoped to introduce similar institutions to America and to utilize them in solving the problems of the black community. Frazier was extremely confident that such organizations would help blacks to escape from their economic dependence and remedy their cultural deficiencies.¹²

As Frazier envisioned it, these co-operatives could take a variety of forms. For black farmers, he suggested the formation of collective market-

ing associations. These associations would be interracial in structure and designed on the basis of a thoroughgoing analysis of market conditions and productive modes for each agricultural area. In order to break the back of agricultural subjugation, he also recommended that black and white farmers cooperate in the formation of credit unions where they could obtain financial assistance at reasonable rates. Finally for both rural and urban blacks, he proposed the creation of consumer co-operatives—consumer controlled stores in which blacks might purchase what they needed at competitive prices and share in any profit through the distribution of dividends.¹³

Frazier felt that co-operatives in any form, but particularly consumer co-operatives, were potentially powerful weapons in the battle to obtain economic independence. First, they were simple to operate. In the case of consumer co-operatives, their underlying principle of selling at the current market price and dividing the profits in proportion to the amount of goods purchased was a simple and readily understandable system of organization. Moreover, it was not only financially feasible given the limited resources of the community, but it was a relatively safe investment, for the co-operatives had, in effect, a guaranteed body of customers. Second, such institutions were in harmony with the development of modern capitalism. At a time when small businesses were having increasing difficulties, co-operatives could take advantage of their large volume and guaranteed market to utilize some of the same administrative, purchasing and marketing methods being used by large corporations and chain stores. Indeed, as Frazier saw it, they were probably more advanced than the modern corporation, for by their very nature they reflected the co-operative principles of the future.

Third, co-operatives would enable blacks to develop the kind of business system in which they had genuine opportunities for advancement and an equitable share of the rewards. Although long extolled as a means of advancing the race, black enterprises had been largely confined to marginal and exploited areas of the economy. Every year black capitalists had started hundreds of independent stores and small businesses without realizing the inherent difference between the tobacconist at the corner and the tobacco trust. Co-operatively organized, blacks could break this pattern. They could participate in the development of natural resources, the preparation of them for consumption, and the movement of them to market while by-passing white merchants and employers. Black consumers could be served by black stores drawing on black suppliers and hiring black workers. Blacks would become in effect the producers of their own wants and needs in the distributive process—while remaining consumers—and the facilitators of employment opportunities in fields long denied to the race.¹⁴

Besides acting as an aid to economic development, co-operatives could also give “the colored population as a whole an education in business”

and thus act as a stimulus to acculturation. Many black businesses had failed, Frazier explained, because their managers were ignorant of the simplest concepts of capitalism. Like the grocer who sold stock to meet his payroll, they were incompetent to function as entrepreneurs; this condition could be corrected by participation in co-operative structures. Beyond this, co-operatives could also train blacks in the essentials and practice of democracy, something that was badly needed for a people who had been denied access to political participation. And above all, they could mean an increase in white-collar, clerical and skilled employment and a corresponding decrease in unskilled and domestic employment. Blacks moving into these new jobs would gain in self-respect and assertiveness. They would learn to be self-reliant, industrious, thrifty and task-oriented and thus operate "in harmony with our economic system."¹⁵

Although Frazier advocated collective rather than individual action the thrust of his proposals was to create a self-reliant and enterprising middle class. For him the resultant economic and cultural benefits were more important than the precise type of economic activity. When acculturated and economically secure groups appeared through the efforts of individual entrepreneurs, he was more than willing to accept them as representative of black progress toward an integrated society because he felt that their appearance demonstrated the validity of his contentions concerning the obstacles to integration. In 1925 he found such a group in Durham, North Carolina; in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* he proudly displayed proof that acculturation and economic independence could be instrumental in ending caste barriers and racial discrimination.

Durham was a city of remarkable economic development. Its black owned or controlled enterprises included brickyards, a lumber mill, an iron works, an unsuccessful textile mill and a very successful insurance company. Under the leadership of John C. Merrick, founder of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company and operator of a bank, a realty company and two drugstores, black entrepreneurs had made Durham "the capital of the black middle class," and in doing so had taken a major step toward the elimination of caste and the achievement of integration.¹⁶

In most of the country, Frazier explained, black society had been divided into two classes: a professional group, which considered itself an elite and modeled its behavior on that of the white aristocracy, and a working class, composed not of artisans but of unskilled and domestic workers. Pervading both of these groups, moreover, were traditions amounting to a strange amalgam of what Frazier called the "peasant" and the "gentleman." Like peasants, blacks worked only to supply their immediate wants and needs; and like gentlemen, they possessed a love of leisure and a penchant for consumption. During slavery, blacks had acquired aristocratic habits through imitation of their gentleman masters,

and afterwards they had lacked the incentive to engage in productive activities. Only in places like Durham was the cultural baggage of the Afro-American experience being discarded and “the promise of a transformed Negro” moving toward realization. In Durham, Frazier proudly announced, no longer could it be said “that the Negro is shiftless and a consumer. He has gone to work. He is a producer. He is respectable. He has a middle class.” Durham demonstrated, if any place could, that black entrepreneurs were capable of acquiring the spartan and frugal virtues of the struggling bourgeoisie—of making hard work and long hours their rule, not out of necessity but out of the desire to expand their business and invade new fields. Their personal values and behavior patterns had become those of the white bourgeoisie. They valued progress and respectability, detested waste and immorality, and turned from aristocratic consumptive patterns to those characteristic of rising capitalists.¹⁷

Although Durham’s achievements had not come through co-operative organizations, the city illuminated the potential for racial progress when black economic and cultural problems were solved. First, it demonstrated that the Afro-American could acquire the bourgeois mentality and cultural attributes of western civilization. The Durham entrepreneurs were virtually indistinguishable from their white counterparts. Through their economic activities they had internalized the “typical spirit and push of modern industrialism,” and had there been no color restrictions, their economic prowess and cultural achievements would have enabled them to mingle with the most conspicuous and prosperous commercial classes of the New South. Second, and more importantly, it showed that when blacks had a cultural life similar to whites and when they had a secure economic position, racial tensions were diminished. While racial discrimination had not vanished in Durham it had moderated slightly. White businessmen recognized the existence of common values beneath skin color; they knew that the Durham middle class respected property rights and “would no more vote for Debs than they”; and they acknowledged and supported the group’s economic accomplishments.¹⁸

In many ways, to be sure, the Durham experience was unique; the “savage” racial prejudice of the lower South was absent and direct interracial economic competition was minimal. But nevertheless, it confirmed Frazier’s belief that economic development, cultural acquisition and racial integration were closely linked. And while co-operatives had not been needed in this particular situation, their successful use elsewhere could provide the leverage to begin a transformation of race relations.

As the decade wore on, however, Frazier did begin to have some doubts about capitalist development as an avenue for racial progress. Economic activity, he had hoped, would enable blacks to acquire wealth that would be used for the benefit of the group. But those who did acquire such wealth, and with it its attendant bourgeois mentality, seemed

far less concerned with helping the rest of the race than with accomplishing their own individual escapes. "A Negro businessman," Frazier wrote, "who gets out of the white man's kitchen or dining room rightly regards himself as escaping economic slavery." Yet once out, he would probably "maintain himself by exploiting the Negro who remains in the kitchen" and would take "consolation in the feeling that if he did not exploit him a white man would."¹⁹

At approximately the same time that Frazier was becoming disenchanted with economic activity as an acculturation tool, he was discovering a new one. Having left Atlanta in 1927, in the midst of a furor created by his authorship of an article which likened the mental processes of racism to those of insanity, he took up graduate studies at the University of Chicago. There, under the tutelage of the Chicago School's urban theorists, he borrowed ideas like Robert E. Park's concepts of segregation and selection, William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's dualism and disorganization-reorganization and Ernest W. Burgess' theory of concentric zones and molded them into a theory of urbanization as a socializing process. According to Frazier, the city took rural blacks, exposed them to urban living and thus transformed them over time into dark-skinned Americans having the habits and attitudes of the larger white society. Urbanization, he felt, created the opportunity for the more "intelligent" and "efficient" elements of the race to escape the traditional status of the black masses and to acquire a higher level of culture and civilization.²⁰

In his dissertation (later published as *The Negro Family in Chicago*, 1932) and in a number of articles, Frazier illustrated the acculturating powers of the city. Using the black family as a representative unit, he examined the cultural levels within the black community in relation to the inherent organizational structure of both the ghetto and the larger metropolis. Unlike other scholars, he portrayed the ghetto as a microcosm of urban social organization rather than an undifferentiated conglomeration of blacks. And within its confines, he found that black families underwent the identical processes of disorganization and reorganization, selection and segregation that occurred in the larger metropolis. The outcome, moreover, was essentially in conformity with the gradients for urban growth described by E. W. Burgess. The urban structure through its sifting and sorting mechanisms produced an ecological pattern revealing the varying degrees of acculturation to white middle-class norms. Newly arrived blacks settled in the deteriorated areas near the central city. But after a period of cultural disorganization and reorganization, accompanied by economic improvement, they moved out toward the periphery. Correlating this intra-ghetto migration with family patterns, Frazier found that the farther blacks located away from the center of the city, the more their family structure and habits approximated those of the white middle class.²¹

At the same time that the city was acting as an acculturation tool it was also helping to restructure black economic life. During the 1920s many blacks enjoyed a modest amount of economic success. The massive migration of the war years had enabled a number of them to abandon their traditional occupations and gain employment as white collar and industrial workers in the growing economy of the North. Moreover, through the increased opportunities for contact and competition with other groups and through the exposure to new ideas and concepts offered by urban living, blacks were acquiring a racial pride and group consciousness previously unknown. They were becoming, in Frazier's eyes, a race-conscious proletariat having the potential for the further transformation of its economic position.²²

This promising situation, however, was short-lived. As prosperity gave way to depression, thousands of these new workers found themselves joining the growing ranks of the unemployed and destitute. Forced to subsist on limited savings and meager public relief, large segments of many black communities were reduced to dire want and poverty. In order to meet this problem Frazier formulated a second economic program designed to capitalize on the power of the newly acculturated and urbanized black worker. He now abandoned his schemes for co-operative capitalism and joining together with young black intellectuals like Ralph Bunche, Benjamin Stolz and Abram Harris, he proposed the unification of all downtrodden workers, both black and white, into a movement to replace capitalism with the new and unspecified economic system. He envisioned his new system as not only alleviating black poverty and oppression but also leading ultimately to the integration of American society.

Frazier's new designs are interesting because they indicate a shift in his thinking. In his pre-depression writings he had felt that the newly urbanized and industrial workers were neither a revolutionary nor even a mildly radical force. As newcomers to the industrial world, radical doctrines did not appeal to them. They were "wedded" to bourgeois ideals and lacked the leaders who might radicalize them. The depression, when it came, changed Frazier's views both in regard to black potential for radicalism and more importantly in regard to the role of economics in black advancement and integration. While he had always emphasized the need for economic betterment as a necessary foundation for civil and social equality, Frazier responded to the intellectual currents of the 1930s and accepted, as many scholars did, a position more fully embracing the idea of economic determinism. The depression revealed to him the "true" nature of black oppression in the United States. To his new way of thinking, the status of an individual or a group was determined by his or its position in the economic organization. What this meant for Afro-Americans was that their position as landless peasants and menial workers had had more to do with their inferior social ranking than did

the working of racial prejudice. Frazier, of course, did concede that the latter had accentuated the harsher features of economic exploitation, but he insisted that the "relentless operation of dominant economic forces" in American capitalism had brought about the "degradation of black and white alike." The key, then, to the improvement of black life and ultimate integration was to create a non-exploitive economic system—a system which would enable blacks to achieve positions of economic security and human dignity. Frazier was certain, moreover, that the newly urbanized black proletariat was coming to this same conclusion and that it would and indeed should band together with its oppressed white counterpart in a struggle against the "owning classes." If this struggle was successful, Frazier was confident that it would do more to help black advancement than any amount of racially based actions.²³

In their attempt to create a new non-exploitive economic system Afro-Americans, Frazier felt, had to avoid one pitfall in particular: being misled and having their power misused in the naïve creation of a racially separate economy. Such schemes had long been popular in the black community and with the coming of the depression they gained an enhanced attractiveness. Among those attracted to them was the influential and prestigious W. E. B. Du Bois. Rationalizing that black America stood alone in this crisis, Du Bois proposed to tap black consumptive and productive potential to construct a self-sufficient and racially separate socialist economy. While he realized the inherent complexities of the system, he felt it could succeed if blacks would selflessly renounce the profit motive for racial service.²⁴

When Frazier learned of Du Bois' plan, he was so appalled at its economic and cultural implications that despite its superficial similarities to his earlier suggestion of co-operative capitalism and his own personal admiration for Du Bois, he leveled a scathing ad hominem attack upon Du Bois and his program. Du Bois, Frazier explained, had lost touch with reality. Not only did his proposals suggest that blacks would be willing to run an economy for service instead of profit but they ignored the black community's limited purchasing power, lack of investment capital and absence of vital economic skills. In economic terms, Frazier felt it amounted to a program of "Share Your Poverty," while in cultural terms it was little better. Du Bois, Frazier claimed, was a "marginal man"—a cultural hybrid who despite his occasional sensitivity toward blacks lacked a real sense of kinship or sympathy with the great mass of black men and women. His entire program was little more than a plan for locking up the black American "within his ghetto and there letting his petty social elite parade as the leaders and upper class in the Negro group."²⁵

In Frazier's eyes Du Bois' ideas were more of a hindrance than a help. Creating false expectations, they kept blacks from gaining a realistic appraisal of capitalism and the hopelessness of their situation within it.

Frazier was joined in this assessment by young black intellectuals such as Ralph Bunche, Abram Harris, Benjamin Stolz and Sterling Brown, who like him were both anti-capitalist and anti-separatist; working together with them he moved towards his own radical solution.²⁶

The correct approach, as Frazier and the others outlined it, was first to recognize the identity of interest between blacks and other economically oppressed groups; second, to accept the failure of capitalism as a workable economic system; and third, to co-operate with oppressed whites in building a new economic system. Just what this non-capitalist economy would look like, however, was never very clear. At a NAACP conference held in 1935 to formulate a coherent plan to meet the economic crisis, the young intellectuals had urged everything from fascism to communism to reformed capitalism. The only thing that Frazier and the other conferees could agree upon was the need for common action. The situation was not much different the following July when the NAACP established a committee under the chairmanship of leftist Abram Harris to design a new organizational program. Although Frazier and the other radicals exerted a great deal of influence on the committee, particularly through parliamentary maneuverings and the delegation of authority to advisory groups which they staffed, the final report contained only vague suggestions designed to promote a biracial labor movement.²⁷

For Frazier, as for his associates, the precise economic goal was unclear. In his mind the installation of a particular type of economic system was not as important as upgrading the position of blacks within the economy. And consequently throughout the 1930s he continued to insist that black America had reached a "crossroads" in its economic development and that to refuse to explore the possibilities offered by non-capitalist economic systems was "intellectual Uncle-Tomism," while never explicitly spelling out what path blacks should follow. His emphasis, instead, remained on mobilizing the power of the black masses and forging an alliance with white workers. Although he undoubtedly realized the difficulties in this approach, he was sure it was possible, and he was confident that it would have beneficial results. He was impressed, for example, by the emergence of a biracial organization of sharecroppers in Arkansas and by the relative success of an interracial miners' union in Alabama that was so powerful that the mineowners had to use the power of the state to break its grip. To Frazier these small scale operations pointed to future success. In the meantime he was not above trying to organize and direct the power of the masses himself. In 1934 he argued that mass organization was the way to correct the policies of the National Recovery Administration. Later in 1936 he and fellow radical Ralph Bunche were central figures in the institution of an economic boycott against a Washington, D.C. department store that had established Jim Crow restrooms.²⁸

Despite his faith, the power of the masses never crystallized into an

economic movement. It remained diffuse, scattering itself in fruitless strategies and contradictory tactics. Most blacks, and indeed most whites, preferred a reformed capitalism to an uncertain socialism as the solution to their economic dilemma. Consequently, as America entered the 1940s, the depression-born radicalism of Frazier and his associates faded away. Like many other Americans they abandoned their leftist answers and began to link black economic progress to the growing power of industrial unionism and the effectiveness of the nascent welfare state. Frazier and the others saw that the new labor organizations, particularly the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), recognized the economic potential of black workers and went out of their way to create an interracial alliance. At the same time, the federal government, under the control of Franklin Roosevelt and other "liberal forces," came to see urban black voters as important constituents who deserved an equitable share of the New Deal's relief and recovery program.²⁹

While Frazier was pleased at this turn of events, he nevertheless felt that these two developments had produced only modest gains for the race. Even as late as the beginning of the Second World War, blacks were still, in his estimation, a "submerged element in the industrial life of the country." It was not until the militancy of the urban-proletariat asserted itself through A. Phillip Randolph's threatened March-on-Washington, in 1941, that action designed specifically to remedy black economic problems emerged. With the issuance of Executive Order 8802—affirming the policy of non-discrimination in the government and the forbidding of discrimination by government contractors—and the creation of the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to implement it, the federal government finally "struck at the root of color caste." By confirming the right to work according to ability, the government, Frazier felt, had not only signaled the abandonment of its laissez-faire policy towards race relations but had made a "covenant" with blacks guaranteeing them equal opportunity in employment. Through most of the war, however, the executive order and the FEPC were only partially successful in fulfilling that covenant. To overcome the resistance they faced from powerful labor unions, influential industrial leaders, and important congressional blocs, Frazier constantly urged the institution of a more powerful FEPC backed by explicit and effective civil rights legislation.³⁰

By the war's end Frazier was convinced that the course of black welfare and racial integration could best be advanced by further expansion of the federal welfare and regulating apparatus. Properly done, this could prevent economic contraction and mass unemployment, both of which were likely to strike blacks the hardest and to spark destructive forms of racial conflict and social alienation. And with these prevented through programs guaranteeing full employment and expanded social

services, blacks would be able to build upon their wartime gains and make further progress towards acceptance as full-fledged citizens.³¹

Over the years Frazier had retreated from a youthful radicalism to an acceptance of the welfare state as a solution to the economic problems of blacks. In this respect he followed a path trod by many Americans, including many of the young black and white radicals of the 1930s. But for him this conversion represented more than a simple mellowing that comes with age. His acceptance of the federal intervention was clearly tied to his new conception of how integration might be achieved. All through the 1930s, even as he preached his doctrine of eclectic radicalism, Frazier continued his sociological investigations of the Afro-American experience. Using the theoretical insights and methodological techniques acquired from his Chicago mentors, Frazier discovered that the forces inherent in urban-industrial society had transformed the Afro-American and redefined his position in American life. Through urbanization blacks lost their mental and cultural isolation, liberated themselves from the petty racial restrictions of the small town, gained a sense of racial consciousness, entered the political system, joined the ranks of the industrial and white collar work forces and eventually adopted the habits and behavior patterns of the white majority. Through increased economic participation and membership in biracial labor unions, blacks acquired both economic independence and a voice in the economic affairs of the nation. Through the expanding role of the federal government blacks became the recipients of much needed economic and social aid. Through the diplomatic struggles of the Cold War for the loyalty of the emerging and former-colonial nations, the United States was compelled to place more importance in the solution of its own racial problem. And finally through the mass communications media and increased public awareness many whites came to see American race relations as a crisis confronting the nation as a whole.³²

All of his studies indicated, at least to Frazier's satisfaction, that by the late 1940s the problem of integration had changed. Blacks, as he saw them, were no longer a caste-bound group, isolated by economic and cultural deprivation. Nor were they an oppressed proletariat, crushed by impersonal economic forces. Instead, the forces of American life had made them a racially conscious minority group, comparable to European minority groups; given them allies in the form of the federal government, labor unions and concerned whites; and stood them on the threshold of integration.³³

Frazier's hopeful conclusions gained additional support from two other sources: the American intellectual community's "optimistic" view of race relations and his own personal and professional successes. By the late 1940s many, if not most, social scientists, having abandoned the earlier views of race, were confident that their investigations could lessen racial and ethnic hostilities and promote inter-group harmony. In works

like Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944) they proclaimed their faith in the ultimate elimination of racial injustice. As a responsive social scientist, Frazier was as optimistic as the rest and in many ways he had more reason to feel confident than many of his colleagues. At a time when black sociologists had to travel by Jim Crow railway cars to attend professional meetings and use the freight elevators to reach the lecture halls, Frazier's well deserved scholarly reputation secured for him the presidency of the Eastern Sociological Association (1944) and later the American Sociological Association (1948).³⁴

Through the interaction of all these factors Frazier came to define the problem of achieving integration and human and social equality differently. By the late 1940s and early 1950s the solution was to take advantage of the changes which had transformed the Afro-American and his relationship to American society and to destroy whatever barriers still remained. Frazier realized, of course, that many of these impediments would be formidable and consequently he wished to enlist the federal government as a partner in this struggle. And he was confident that given the further implementation of the welfare state's prescriptions for economic and social advancement, "the progressive forces in America" would be able "to combat racial prejudice and intolerance and make further attacks upon the caste restrictions of the South."³⁵

Throughout Frazier's career the desire for total integration into white society remained a constant. What changed were his perceptions of the barriers involved and the means of overcoming them. As a young man he saw the Afro-American as being locked into a caste position through cultural deficiencies and economic dependence. Consequently, he designed an economic program under which co-operative enterprise would become a tool for dissolving these barriers. In the 1930s he saw an emerging urban-industrial proletariat ground down by an oppressive economic system. And like many intellectuals of the period he sought a radical program encouraging recovery and ultimate integration. Finally, out of the experience of the 1940s, he came to accept the federal government in the guise of the welfare state as the best instrument for achieving his social goals. He was neither without economic thought nor as easily labeled as some accounts of his life have held. For Frazier, economic change was one of the keys unlocking the doors to racial integration.

University of Iowa

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1. E. Franklin Frazier, "Co-operatives: The Next Step in the Negro's Development," *Southern Workman*, 53 (November, 1924), 505; Frazier, "The Status of the Negro in the American Social Order," *The Journal of Negro Education*, 4 (July, 1935), 307; Frazier, "The Negro Now," in *Britain Between West and East*, Book 2 of *Contact* (1946), 63.
2. For a sampling of the type of criticism Frazier's works have received see: Charles G. Valentine, *Culture and Poverty: Critique and Counter-Proposals* (Chicago, 1968); Oliver C. Cox, "Introduction" to Nathan Hare, *The Black Anglo-Saxons* (New York, 1970 ed.), 15-30; L. Paul Metzger, "American Sociology and Black Assimilation: Conflicting Perspectives," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 70 (January, 1971), 631-32; Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (New York, 1976); and Herbert Gutman, "Persistent Myths about the Afro-American Family," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 6 (Autumn, 1975), 181-210. For a view of Frazier's sociology during the 1930's in the context of black thought see: S. P. Fullinwider, *The Mind and Mood of Black America* (Homewood, Illinois, 1969).
3. G. Franklin Edwards, "E. Franklin Frazier," in *Black Sociologists: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. James E. Blackwell and Morris Janowitz (Chicago, 1974), 87; Edwards, ed. "Introduction" to Frazier, *On Race Relations* (Chicago, 1968), vii-xx; and Edwards, "E. Franklin Frazier" in *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 5 (New York, 1968), 553-54; St. Clair Drake, "Introduction" to Frazier, *Negro Youth at the Crossways* (New York, 1967 ed.), ix; Raymond Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression* (Westport, Connecticut, 1970); James O. Young, *Black Writers of the Thirties* (Baton Rouge, 1973); Arthur P. Davis, "E. Franklin Frazier: A Profile," *The Journal of Negro Education*, 31 (Fall, 1962), 435. One reason that detailed treatments of his thought have not been done is that his personal papers are not yet available for research. Frazier was, however, an extremely productive scholar, writing eight books and over 120 articles during his career. Such a large body of published work, I feel, is more than adequate to support the examination of the broad programs of an American intellectual.
4. Frazier, "Social Equality and the Negro," *Opportunity*, 3 (June, 1925), 166-67; Frazier, "What is Social Equality?" *The World Tomorrow*, 9 (April, 1926), 113.
5. Frazier, "Social Equality and the Negro," 166-67; Frazier, "What is Social Equality?" 113; Frazier, "The Negro and Non-Resistance," *Crisis*, 27 (March, 1927), 213.
6. Frazier, "Danish People's High Schools and America," *Southern Workman*, 51 (September, 1922), 429; Frazier, "Social Equality and the Negro," 167.
7. Frazier, "Social Equality and the Negro," 167. For an example of his thought regarding the development of racial pride see: Frazier, "Racial Self-Expression" in *Ebony and Topaz*, ed. Charles S. Johnson (New York: National Urban League, 1927), 119-21 and "Folk Culture in the Making," *Southern Workman*, 57 (June, 1928), 195-99.
8. Frazier, "A Negro Industrial Group," *Howard Review*, 1 (June, 1924), 230-31; Frazier, "Three Scourges of the Negro Family," *Opportunity*, 4 (July, 1926), 210; Frazier, "Is the Negro Family a Unique Sociological Unit?" *Opportunity*, 5 (June, 1927), 166; Frazier, "How Present Day Problems of Social Life Affect the Negro," *Hospital Social Service*, 13 (1926), 384; Frazier, "Racial Self-Expression," 120; Frazier, "A Note on Negro Education," *Opportunity*, 2 (March, 1924), 77.
9. Frazier, "Some Aspects of Negro Business," *Opportunity*, 2 (October, 1924), 297; Edwards, "Introduction," x-xi; Drake, ix.
10. For a sampling of the ideas present in the black community prior to the First World War see: August Meier, *Negro Thought in America: 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor, 1963).
11. Theodore Kornweibel, *No Crystal Stair* (Westport, Connecticut, 1975), 206-7; Tony Martin, *Race First* (Westport, Connecticut, 1976), 53-55; Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Berkeley, 1975), 24-29; Frazier, "New Currents of Thought Among the Colored People of America," Unpublished Master's Thesis, Clark University, 1920, 69.
12. Davis, 430-32; Edwards, "Introduction," x-xi; Frazier, "Co-Operatives: The Next Step," 505. For some indication of the impact of the Danish trip on his early thought see: Frazier, "The Folk High School at Roskilde," *Southern Workman*, 51 (July, 1922), 325-28; Frazier, "Danish People's High Schools," 424-30; Frazier, "The Co-Operative Movement in Denmark, Part I," *Southern Workman*, 52 (October, 1923), 479-84; Frazier, "The Co-Operative Movement in Denmark, Part II," *Southern Workman*, 53 (March, 1924), 123-30.
13. Frazier, "Co-Operation and the Negro," *Crisis*, 5 (March, 1923), 228-29; Frazier, "King Cotton," *Opportunity*, 4 (February, 1926), 51-53; Frazier, "Co-Operation and the Negro," 228; Frazier, "Co-Operatives: The Next Step," 509; Frazier, "Co-Operation and the Negro," 228.

14. Frazier, "Co-Operatives: The Next Step," 505-9; Frazier, "Some Aspects of Negro Business," 295, 293-97; Frazier, "New Currents of Thought," 69.
15. Frazier, "Co-Operatives: The Next Step," 506-7; Frazier, "Some Aspects of Negro Business," 295-96.
16. Frazier, "Durham: Capital of the Black Middle Class," in *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke (New York, 1925), 333; Edwards, *Black Sociologists*, 92-95.
17. Frazier, "Durham," 333, 339-40, 333-34, 338.
18. *Ibid.*, 339-40.
19. Frazier, "Some Aspects of Negro Business," 296-97; Frazier, "La Bourgeoisie Noire," in *An Anthology of American Negro Literature*, ed. V. F. Calverton (New York, 1929), 386.
20. Frazier, "The Negro Family in Chicago," Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1931, 1-300; Frazier, *The Negro Family in Chicago* (Chicago, 1931), 252. The article that forced Frazier's departure from Atlanta was: "The Pathology of Race Prejudice," *Forum*, 70 (June, 1927), 856-62.
21. Frazier, *The Negro Family in Chicago*, 117-219. See also: Frazier, "Chicago: A Cross Section of Negro Life," *Opportunity*, 7 (March, 1929), 70-73; Frazier, "The Negro Community: A Cultural Phenomenon," *Social Forces*, 7 (March, 1929), 415-20; Frazier, "Occupational Classes Among Negroes in Cities," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 35 (March, 1930), 718-38; and Frazier, "The Occupational Differentiation of the Negro in Cities," *Southern Workman*, 57 (May, 1930), 196-200.
22. Frazier, *The Negro Family in Chicago*, 242-52.
23. Frazier, "La Bourgeoisie Noire," 381-82, 386-88; Frazier, "Quo Vadis?" *The Journal of Negro Education*, 4 (January, 1935), 129; Frazier, "The Status of the Negro," 304-7; Frazier, "Seventy Years Too Late," *The Journal of Negro Education*, 5 (April, 1936), 273; Frazier, "The Status of the Negro," 293.
24. Francis L. Broderick, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis* (Stanford, 1959), 162-69; Elliot M. Rudwick, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Propagandist of the Negro Protest* (Philadelphia, 1968 ed.), 282-85.
25. Frazier, "The Du Bois Program in the Present Crisis," *Race*, 1 (Winter, 1935-36), 11-12; Frazier to Walter White, May 17, 1934, quoted in Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression*, 255. Despite this attack, Frazier had a great personal admiration for Du Bois. In 1939, he sent him a copy of *The Negro Family in the United States* and noted his belief that he and the other black sociologists were "building upon a tradition inaugurated by you." [Frazier to Du Bois, August 2, 1939, *Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst, 1976) II, 194.] Frazier also dedicated his study of *The Negro in the United States* (1949) to Du Bois. And in 1951, after Du Bois' reputation had suffered because of his leftist politics, Frazier organized a party in honor of his eighty-third birthday and gave it in spite of the opposition of the authorities in New York City and the withdrawal of many of the scheduled speakers. (Davis, 435.)
26. Frazier, "The Du Bois Program," 11-13.
27. Ralph J. Bunche, "The Programs, Ideologies, Tactics, and Achievements of Negro Betterment and Interracial Organizations," Memorandum for the Carnegie-Myrdal Study, II, 208-9; Young, *Black Writers of the Thirties*, ix-xii; Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression*, 221-26, 310-15.
28. Frazier, "The Negro in the Industrial South," *Nation*, 125 (July, 1927), 83-84; Frazier to Walter White, May 17, 1934, quoted in Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression*, 224-25; Letter to the Editor, "Comment on Charles S. Johnson's 'Caste and Class in an American Industry,'" *The American Journal of Sociology*, 42 (September, 1936), 252-53; Frazier, "The Status of the Negro," 305; *The Baltimore Afro-American*, January 6, 1934, 15; *Ibid.*, May 23, 1936, 6; *Ibid.*, June 27, 1936, 15; *Ibid.*, January 6, 1934, 15; Frazier, "What Now?" *Nation*, 140 (June, 1935), 692.
29. Frazier, "Some Effects of the Depression on the Negro in Northern Cities," *Science and Society*, 2 (Fall, 1938), 488-89; Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago, 1939), 298; Frazier, "The Role of the Negro in Race Relations in the South," *Social Forces*, 19 (December, 1940), 257; Frazier, "The Negro and Racial Conflicts," in *One America*, eds. Francis J. Brown and Joseph S. Roucek (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1945), 461; Frazier, *The Negro in the United States* (New York, 1957 rev. ed.), 617-22.
30. Frazier, "The Negro and Racial Conflicts," 400; Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, 605; Frazier, "The Negro Now," 62; Frazier, "The Negro and Racial Conflicts," 459-60; Frazier, "Ethnic Groups in Wartime with Special Reference to the Negro," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 48 (November, 1942), 372-73; Frazier, Carey McWilliams, and Robert Redfield, "Race Tensions: A Radio Discussion," *The University of Chicago Roundtable*, No. 276, July 4, 1943 (Chicago, 1943), 16-17; Frazier, "The Negro and Racial Conflicts," 460.
31. Frazier, "The Racial Issue," in *Unity and Difference in American Life*, ed. R. M. MacIver (New York, 1947), 47, 55, 56-59; Frazier, "The Negro Now," 63.
32. Frazier, "The Negro in the United States," in *Race Relations in World Per-*

spective, ed. Andrew W. Lind (Honolulu, 1955), 351-58; Frazier, "The New Negro," *Nation*, 183 (July 7, 1956), 7-8; Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, 605, 704-5; Frazier, "The Negro Now," 61. Frazier's transformation from the left to a more moderate position was not unique among the young radicals of the 1930's; John B. Kirby's "Ralph J. Bunche and Radical Thought in the 1930's," *Phylon*, 35 (June, 1974), 129-41, traces a similar movement in Bunche's thinking.

33. Frazier, "The Negro in the United States," 351-58; Frazier, "The Negro Now," 61; Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, 605, 704-5.

34. Roland F. Wacker, "Race and Ethnicity in American Social Science," Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1975, 133-35; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern America* (New York, 1944), xlvii-xlviii.

35. Frazier, "The Negro in the United States," 351-58; Frazier, "The New Negro," 7-8; Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, 605, 704-5; Frazier, "The Negro Now," 61.