

Quaker Brotherhood

Interracial Activism and the American Friends Service Committee, 1917-1950

By Allen W. Austin

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012. Pp. 257. Notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00.)

“The dilemma,” writes Allen W. Austin in his introduction to *Quaker Brotherhood*, “facing a minority religious community that wishes to make a change in the world is this: which is better, to retain the doctrinal purity of judging secular society from outside the society...or to work from within the society, thereby risking compromise and the loss of doctrinal purity?” (p. 6). Historically, Friends have chosen both positions with mixed results. They have striven to hold consistently to their religious tenets while confronting challenges to these relationships.

In this book, Austin focuses on the American Friends Service Committee’s (AFSC) work on race relations. He argues that Rufus Jones and other Friends helped create AFSC as a locally based “brotherhood” of women and men. Seeking to do justice in post-World War I America, these individuals could not always effectively transform religious faith into positive race relations.

As a community-centered organization, the AFSC had to address local realities in its race relations work. If a community expressed indifference to interracial activities, that indifference affected local relationships. When the AFSC hired African Americans, for example, local sentiments against

integration could jeopardize the employment prospects of Friends and African Americans alike. In many Indiana communities, clear barriers impeded the formation of interracial coalitions, and Quaker religious and social organizations often refused to discuss racism at all. Friends, then, participated in racist and paternalistic behaviors towards minorities simply by virtue of their refusal to acknowledge race as the basis of inequality. This decision—often made based on the notion that to work exclusively on aiding African Americans represented a form of unequal treatment based on skin color—played into culturally accepted racist practices. In addition, some well-placed Indiana Friends held membership in the Ku Klux Klan and supported racism more overtly.

In 1935, Henry Cadbury, a Harvard theologian with a long Quaker ancestry, “tried to convince Friends to stop resting on the laurels of long-ago abolitionists, arguing that past successes meant little in a present in which African Americans were excluded from Swarthmore [College] and many Friends schools” (p. 91). The AFSC often hired African Americans—Quaker and non-Quaker alike—exclusively in race relations work as if African Americans could only focus on race issues. Often,

Friends “worked to ‘improve’ blacks by instructing them on how to appeal to what they [Friends] believed were ‘white’ stylistic and cultural sensibilities” (p. 97).

Even though Friends exhibited condescending attitudes towards African Americans, they often did so unintentionally. Friends did believe in equality, but they frequently failed to address race and class divisions amidst shortsighted attempts to cre-

ate artificial equality. Austin’s book poses a set of provocative questions that examine the relationship between doctrinal purity and social change.

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The Rise of Gridiron University *Higher Education’s Uneasy Alliance with Big-Time Football*

By Brian M. Ingrassia

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On November 21, 1925, before more than 85,000 spectators crammed inside Ohio State University’s stadium in Columbus, “Red” Grange, lionized by fans and immortalized by Grantland Rice, played his final collegiate football game, leading the Illini to a 14-9 victory. Five minutes after the contest ended, the most famous student-athlete in America told a group of reporters that he planned to drop out of the University of Illinois and play professional football. The next day, he signed a contract with the Chicago Bears that earned him approximately \$100,000 for a nineteen-game barnstorming tour.

The fact that Grange cashed in on his fame with the speed of an Olympic sprinter gave many journalists and university administrators pause. One Illinois editor wrote that Grange’s

decision to chase money rather than a degree “must be distinctly harmful to any institution in that it confirms critics who contend colleges have gone daft on interscholastic athletic contests and that education had been lost in the shuffle.” Others agreed. Football had come to epitomize the decline of American educational values.

About the same time, Howard Savage, a staff member for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, issued a preliminary statement on the study his team was compiling on intercollegiate sports. When the full report came out in 1929, it discussed the road to the current sorry state of affairs, which included paying athletes, overlooking academic abuses, and misplacing priorities. Savage found more than