

BEARING THE BLACK



—S. P. Andrew photo.

PROFESSOR BORIS G. ALEXANDER.

... "Given equal opportunity the Negro shows equal development."

THERE used to be a saying that, though Americans would send missionaries to the negroes in Africa, they would not speak to the negro at the end of the alley.

That bitter little commentary on American life will be completely forgotten if the dreams of the leaders at LeMoyne College in Memphis, U.S.A., are realised. LeMoyne College is a university college for negroes.

Two of its students, John Byas and Charles Gilton, the sons of negro doctors, are now visiting this country to debate with New Zealand university student teams. One of their teachers, Professor Boris G. Alexander, a Russian by birth, travels with them.

THE first debate, "That Continued Work for Peace is impossible as well as Undesirable," the negroes taking the affirmative against a team from Auckland University College, was broadcast by the NBS on June 28. The second debate, "That the People of America Have Found the Formula for Happiness," the negroes again taking the affirmative against Canterbury University College, will be broadcast on July 18 from 3YA.

During the tour, Professor Alexander, himself a radio speaker and commentator on foreign news from important American radio stations, is giving a series of talks at the main national stations.

Happiness?

IT seemed ironic that the race which had been shipped to the new world in slavery should support the question "That the People of America Have Found the Formula for Happiness"; strange that the race which is still not allowed to travel in Pullman sleeping compartments should speak of the happiness to be found in the United States.

But, as Professor Alexander told me of what the negro was achieving in the new world, it began to seem less strange, almost comprehensible. The negro, trained at institutions like LeMoyne College, is coming into his own.

"With his athletes?" I asked the professor.

Wasn't Joe Louis the world's heavyweight boxing champion? Didn't a black arrow of a negro called Jesse Owen smash records at the last Olympic Games?

Russian Professor at Noted Work Undertaken To Give Independence

THE professor made an impatient movement with his hands. He was not interested in the negro as a human machine with immense physical powers. He was interested in the negro as a man who had mental ability and spiritual qualities, equal to those of the white man.

"That is what LeMoyne College sets out to prove," he said. "That the negro, given equal opportunity, will show equal development."

With his fellow workers at LeMoyne, he set out to prove this in what seemed to me a subtle and striking manner. Contests of a physical nature with other colleges were not sought. Why? Presumably, though the professor did not say so, because the negro might have won by virtue of his great physical inheritance. And, certainly, because negro victories would have rankled in the bosoms of the defeated whites, who would have said, no doubt, "Oh, yes, of course, in brute strength, what can you expect?"

OBVIOUSLY foreseeing this, LeMoyne College used another method. It deliberately chose one of the weapons of its opponents, a weapon in which it might not be so skilled, but the use of which would win it credit in victory.

LeMoyne chose one of the most delicate weapons of the intellect—the debate.

Le Moyne took part in the first inter-racial debate south of the Mason-Dixon line. In 1932, it made a trip to compete with eight other colleges. It debated with California in 1935, and since then has debated with many famous American universities. The Oxford Union sent a debating team to the States in 1936, and LeMoyne was included in the tour. The Anglo-Scottish Union team debated with the college in 1937.

Not Mentioned

WHEN LeMoyne College began, it was never mentioned in the American newspapers at all. Later, the newspapers began to speak of it as LeMoyne Negro College. To-day, it is simply called LeMoyne College.

It is winning its way to equal recognition, it is winning what it wants for negroes: Respect.

HOW the Russian professor became interested in the welfare of negroes goes back a long way to the days of the Russian Revolution, when he had to leave his country. He arrived at an internment camp at Poland, knowing three English phrases: "Yes"; "Please"; and "No plum pudding."

There he met a Welshman, David Griffiths, an agent for the British-American Relief Commission, and from him he learned English and Welsh. The professor had command of the French, German, Polish and Russian languages as well. Later he went to London, and from there to America.

IN America he "talked his way through college," earning his living while he was studying for his degrees in International Law, by giving public lectures. After qualifying, he was given an appointment at LeMoyne College. To the Russian professor, there was no radical difference between the negroes and the white race. He went to LeMoyne first just to make a living.

He soon became vitally interested in the negroes' progress.

GIVEN equal opportunities, the negro will show equal development, the professor said.

"How?" I asked. He gave examples.

There was George Washington Carver, negro biochemist. He had made 275 substances out of the homely-peanut, and 200 out of the sweet potato. He was one of two American