

Idea for UW Blacks Takes Hold

By JOHN NEWHOUSE
(Of The State Journal Staff)

The Subcommittee on New Curricula — six faculty members and three students — has the ticklish task of meeting the needs for new black oriented courses at the University of Wisconsin.

The nine are in a particularly sensitive area, as evidenced by "demands" — of varying intensity — at schools throughout the country.

THE BIRTH of the committee was late last May, but conception was earlier — on the night of the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King.

"It began on the night of Mr. King's assassination," former Chancellor William Sewell said, from New York where he is on leave with the Russell Sage Foundation.

"A group of black students called my office. They wanted to hold their own, quite separate, memorials. They asked if they could use classrooms.

"SINCE WE planned to dismiss classes the next day, this was possible. I also asked them to join a committee the next morning in my office to discuss what the university should do. Fifteen or 20 of them showed up.

"As they were leaving, one said, 'But what good will it all do? Whites will be upset, and then they'll forget.' I suggested that they hold open meetings, of whites and blacks."

The meetings were held in about a dozen classrooms. Some lasted late into the night. Sewell

stood in the background at one. He was recognized.

"ONE OF the leaders followed me," he said. "We talked in the hall. I invited him, and his friends, to my office. They came. Four or five times."

The result was that Sewell set up a Committee on Studies and Instruction in Race Relations.

There was distrust in the first meetings between blacks and faculty, he recalled. But "it lasted only a few minutes."

There were no threats.

"AT FIRST, the desire was for curriculum to bridge the gap which would help the blacks. I insisted, however, that it was also important to get white students in the black courses."

In his letter setting up the committee, Sewell wrote:

"For a long time, most thinking people have been concerned about race relations in America, but it has never been easy to convert that concern into action.

"As a result, in recent weeks, all of us have had to search our consciences to see if we and our institutions are doing all the things we ought to do."

HE CALLED FOR "action." He asked that students be involved. He wanted results as rapidly as they could be obtained, but he wanted them through channels which would preserve the integrity of the educational process.

The "big" committee, chaired by Prof. Wilson Thiede, of Curriculum and Instruction, met. The subcommittee, under Prof.

Fred Hayward, of political science, was organized.

ON IT were Prof. David Cronon, chairman of the history department; Prof. John Willis, of history; Prof. Seymour Spilerman, sociology; Prof. Herbert Lewis, anthropology; Michael Lipsky, assistant to Chancellor Edwin Young, ex officio; Sterling Fishman, of Educational Policy, and three students, David Payne, Kuelewa Furaha, and Helen Robertson.

The subcommittee surveyed existing courses, to find which had black interest, and published the list in the Daily Cardinal in the fall.

IT RECOMMENDED setting up of a Race Relations Center, to give persons interested in black curricula a place to find information. The center was set up.

A meeting was held with some 100 students, to get ideas. One of several presented was that of segregated classes. The idea, however, has not been a major factor in committee discussion.

IN A November proposal which was later endorsed by the full committee, the subcommittee wrote:

"The rising demand for black curricula in this university, as indeed in several universities, must be seen and understood as a reflection of the changing attitude of many black people toward themselves and toward non-blacks.

"Five years ago, the watchword of the civil rights move-

ment was meaningful integration; today the watchword is increasingly cultural alienation, as witnessed by the significant number of culturally starved black students who have rightly questioned the absence of black content in courses which purport to deal with America and Americans."

THERE IS A vital need for this curriculum change, the subcommittee said. It cannot be met solely by new courses with substantial black content or by hiring black professors. Students need a "cultural focal point."

To that end, the subcommittee recommended an "Afro-American Concentration" of courses in the existing American Institutions program, leading to a bachelor's degree. This was done.

IT SUGGESTED such "core courses" as Afro-American literature; Ghetto Politics, and special history courses. It suggested that the Afro-American concentration be under policy made by a committee consisting of teachers of the Afro-American course, with students to be on the committee as elected by those students concentrating in the course.

Day-to-day direction, it said, should be in a faculty member with the title of director of Afro-American studies. The director should be black.

The report called for new courses to begin in the 1969 spring term.

"**AFRO-AMERICAN** Intellectual and Cultural Traditions" had its first meeting Wednesday night. Some 250 students are enrolled, despite its only announcement being word of mouth since it was formed too late to get word out officially.

The problems of faculty were surmounted by asking 11 lecturers, nine of them black, to come to Madison as visiting scholars.

And a black literature course has been started.

Turning to staff, the report said:

"This means we must make a concerted effort to recruit black faculty, especially for courses in which they have a special contribution to make. The concern of the subcommittee in this area is also reflected in the widespread unhappiness of black students about the terribly small number of black faculty members here.

"**THE CONTINUED** absence of black faculty members teaches more to students — all students — about American race relations and about established institutions than any course."

The subcommittee is still meeting, Hayward said. The hope is to have another three or four courses in the Afro-American concentration by next fall, along with other courses in other schools.