



of the **Chicago Defender** readers were told of the benefits to be found in living in the North and they took Abbott's invitation and headed for Chicago.

The **Defender** did more than just talk about the North, it led in the formation of clubs that could avail themselves of railroad group rates for the trek from the South. In a short space of time the Black population had nearly tripled to 111,000. The **Defender** could not, of course, have done this by itself, but given the choice of living in the hell of the South, or chasing a dream up North, there is little wonder that so many people chose to chase the dream.

At its peak, in 1971, the **Defender** was selling 230,000 copies a week. The decline set in during the Depression of the 30s when circulation dropped to about 73,000 and Abbott, now grown old, was never able to regain the commanding position the paper once held.

The **Pittsburgh Courier**, the **Baltimore Afro-American**, and other Black newspapers became organs of influence during this period. At the same time, under the brilliant editorship of W.E.B. DuBois, the NAACP had begun publication of **The Crisis Magazine**, which was to become one of the most powerful voices in Black America.

Accustomed as it was to hearing only muted Black voices, white America found these new strident tones somewhat difficult to adjust to and the time for testing whether these new publications could survive the displeasure of the government and certain segments of the white power structure was not long in coming. The First World War served as its initial testing ground.

There was a basic contradiction in America's participation in an overseas war to save democracy while at the same time Black people were subjected to intolerable treatment at home. When this issue was first raised in the Black press there were forces in the government who viewed such heresy as close to sedition or treason. Example: In 1971, the following article by one of its correspondents, Uziah Miner, appeared in the **Richmond Planet**:

"Unless President (Woodrow) Wilson speaks out like Colonel (Theodore) Roosevelt, unless I am assured that the flag will offer protection to the 12,000,000 colored people in the country, and unless I am convinced that world democracy includes Black men as well as white men, I shall consider myself a disgrace to my race and country by freely volunteering to fight for a democracy across the seas, because I firmly believe and maintain that democracy like charity should begin at home and spread abroad."

Acting on the premise that nothing should be allowed to interfere with the country's mo-

bilization, the postmaster ordered all copies of the issue containing the article held at the Richmond Post Office and threatened to revoke the second-class mailing privileges of the **Planet**. Eventually, the copies were released, but a clear warning had been sounded as to what could happen to dissenters.

The irony of how freedom of the press was being interrupted by the government was not lost on the Black press and in its August 11, 1917 edition, the **Afro-American** commented: "There would be little difference between democratic America

and autocratic Europe if citizens should feel themselves obligated to remain silent under real or fancied injustices."

In 1918, a Black magazine, **The Messenger**, actually lost its second-class mailing privilege for three years for publishing a satirical article, "Pro-Germanism Among Negroes". The May-June issue of the same magazine was denied the use of the mails entirely for what the government considered its radical content.

There was never any question that Blacks did not have reasons to complain - the lynching total

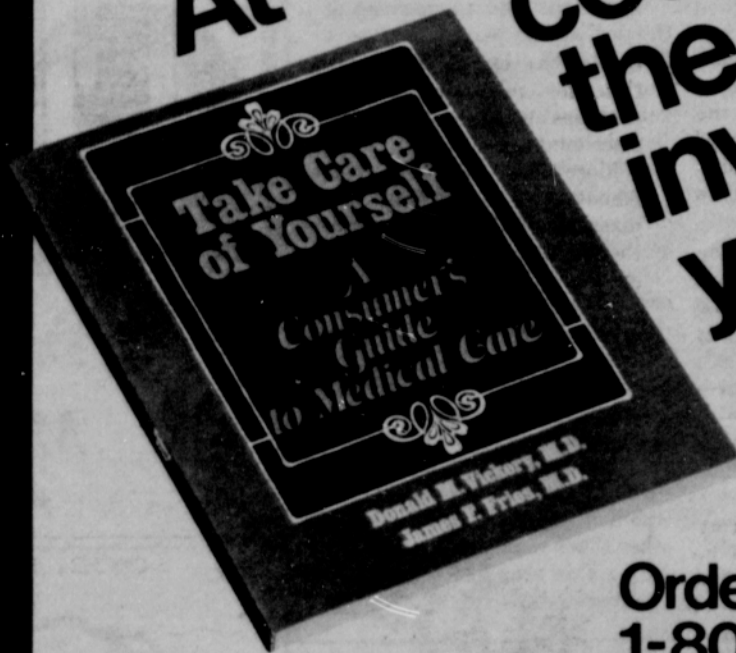
was 50 in 1916, 36 in 1917 and 60 in 1918 - but the government wanted criticism kept to a minimum during wartime.

The year 1919 was the worst of all. James Weldon Johnson called it "The Red Summer" and red it was - red with blood. As Black servicemen began to return home, 26 race riots broke out in the country with the largest occurring in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Omaha, Knoxville, Longview, Texas, and Phillips County, Arkansas. Six persons were killed and 150 wounded in the nation's Capital; 15 whites and 23 Blacks were killed in

Chicago and 537 injured, and in Omaha, a mob lynched and burned a Black man, attempted to hang the mayor who tried to intervene and set fire to the county courthouse.

Against this background of violence, the Black press protested mightily. The government responded by issuing a report - "Radicalism and Sedition Among The Negroes, As Reflected in Their Publications". The report ignored the riots and lynchings and, in effect, charged the Black press with stirring things up. The report was prepared by the Justice Depart-

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