Wilkins Explains ‘Basis For Crisis’

By PHIL GARON
Thresher Staff Reporter

“Selma has forced the realization upon the American people that the old order will not do for the middle twentieth century. It served to dramatize the deprivation of the right to vote.”

Roy Wilkins, the Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, discussed desegregation in the South and its repercussions in the rest of the country in the Rice Memorial Center Tuesday evening.

Wilkins had been brought to campus to discuss “Future Plans of the NAACP” by Wiess College, and he was greeted by an audience that filled the spacious Grand Ballroom and interrupted the Negro leader’s speech with frequent applause.

Discusses History
Wilkins developed his topic by giving a brief discussion of the history of the civil rights movement, specifically in the realm of test trials before the courts in which the NAACP had been involved.

“Selma and Birmingham were merely phases in the overthrow of the ‘separate-but-equal’ interpretation of the Constitution,” Wilkins commented. “Imagine for a moment the feelings of the Negro living in Alabama.

“He is subjected to a state legislature in which he has no voice, and the whims of a governor in whose election he was not allowed to participate.

Revolutions Compared
“Couple this with the emotional fervor brought about by the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation and you have a situation not unlike that which came about in the days prior to the American revolution. The basis for crisis here is the contrast between the states’ rights and federal government theories.”

Wilkins then talked about two current projects on the agenda for the NAACP. The first concerns increasing the forces working for voter registration in the South. This phase of operations will again require the assistance of vast numbers of college students.

Wilkins criticized the voting clause of President Johnson’s Civil Rights bill as being one of the most unclear sections of that document. He announced

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WILKINS—

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that the Civil Rights Commission had already presented recommendations for appointment of federal marshals to ensure the enforcement of the clauses.

Clinics Established

The second phase of the NAA-CP program is concerned with the establishment of Citizenship Clinics, concerned with career guidance of Negro youths in the South.

One duty of these youth-maintained clinics will be to see that the Negro youth receives proper counseling and job training while still in high school, so as to dispel the popular image of the Negro as having 'education skills' and to make him better able to fit into the age of mechanization.

Clinics will also aid in a re-interpretation of crime rates and statistics as pertinent to the Negro community, it is hoped that a dissemination of this information can aid in an overall reduction of crime.

This branch will also be concerned with setting up a program to combat juvenile delinquency.

Strengthen Families

Finally, the Citizenship Clinics will attempt to strengthen Negro family life and, subsequently, to insure a greater morality. Wilkins pointed out that "there needs to be a front-line attack on evil-as-evil, whether it be black or white."

"The Negro needs to establish in his own community a sense of what is right and what is wrong, for there is the current label in the United States of pasting a 'racial label' on attitudes of morality."

Wilkins concluded his talk by quoting excerpts from President Johnson's inaugural address and his speech of March 15, as concerned voting rights. He delivered his speech in his characteristically benign and soft-spoken manner which he won over so many audiences, and, although, one student appeared with a "Wallace for President!" sign and was not allowed entrance to the speech, most of the evening went without incident.

Abolish Tests

In a brief question-and-answer period following his speech, Wilkins exchanged ideas and carried with several members of his audience. Among his comments on specific issues:

On the literacy tests: "Despite the fact that they are not supposed to be used in this manner, they have been used as a device to deprive the Negro of the vote. If administered fairly, a universal literacy test could be of some use, but I personally favor its abolition. "People vote on issues that are directly pertinent to themselves and to their families, and no PhD intelligence is needed to cast this type of vote."

Public Is Public

On the public accommodations section of the Civil Rights bill: "I don't see how a law which applies to everyone can infringe upon private rights. A man in business is inviting the public to come in. He just can't invite part of the public and exclude another part."

On the passing of the Civil Rights Act:

Rights Act: "The first task of the Negro was to establish his status as a citizen enjoying equal privileges with every other citizen. Until then, everything was meaningless."

On whites and Negroes in the South: "I don't think the Negro is out to take the white man's job. What the Negro is asking is, if we're going to have unemployment, let's all suffer equally."

"The Negro does not want to have a house in a white neighborhood simply to be living with whites or integrate the schools simply to go to school with whites; he just wants to maintain the best possible decent standard of living."

ROY WILKINS
Spoke Tuesday