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DAILY BOOK REVIEW

Negro Revolution—Causes, Problems and Paradoxes

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE NEGRO? By Robert Penn Warren. 454 pp. Random House. \$5.95.

By Maurice Dolbier

"I'M SOMETIMES viewed as different, or a special instance," said Ralph Ellison to his interviewer, "when in fact I'm special only to the extent that I'm a fairly conscious example, and in some ways a lucky instance, of the general run of American Negroes." "And I," said his interviewer, Robert Penn Warren, "encounter the same thing, I suppose, in a way. I've been congratulated by well-meaning friends who say, 'It's so nice to meet a reconstructed Southerner.' I don't feel reconstructed, you see. And I don't feel liberal. I feel logical..."

Mr. Warren, logical Southerner, has written the best book yet about the Negro revolution in modern America: its causes and possible consequences, its problems and its paradoxes, and the issues that unite, and that divide, its leaders and spokesmen. Logic and Southernness account for a part of the value and the power, of his book, but to them are joined Mr. Warren's deep moral commitment as an artist and citizen and his technical skills and integrity as a reporter.

This book, he says, "is a

record of my attempt to find out what I could find out" about the people who are making the Negro revolution what it is. It consists of a great number of tape recorded interviews, and of the author's commentaries on them. Mr. Warren is an excellent interviewer; there are certain questions, prepared in advance, that he addresses to almost all of his subjects, and from the answers to which there emerges a picture of "the enormous variety of personality and talent... of attitudes and policies" among the individuals who are Negro leaders—but as

his conversations go on, and new and sometime unexpected subjects arise, he is able to build upon these, and the results are often surprising and always freshly revelatory.

Among the people interviewed are Roy Wilkins and James Farmer, Bayard Rustin and Whitney Young, Dr. Martin Luther King jr., and James Forman, Rep. Adam Clayton Powell and the late Malcolm X, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin, Dr. Kenneth Clark and Carl Rowan, Judge William Hastie and John Hervey Wheeler, Aaron Henry and Charles Evers. Mr. Warren

talked to many others, young and old, South and North.

"There is, in one sense," he writes, "no Negro leader. There are, merely, a number of Negroes who happen to occupy positions of leadership... It would not be easy to imagine a higher level of idealism, dedication and realistic intelligence. If leadership of that quality is supplanted by other, less savory types that are already lurking in the wings, and that certainly do not have any vision of a reconciled society, the white man has only himself to blame."