

THE PLEA FOR RACIAL INTEGRITY;
A HISTORY OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CLUBS OF AMERICA

John Cofer Landon
Houston, Texas

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Approved:
Edward Spangler
Robert D. Wood

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On March 20, 1924 the Virginia General Assembly enacted the nation's most comprehensive legislation to insure racial integrity. Behind the bill's political passage lay the work of a white-supremacist organization called the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America. The leaders of these clubs saw themselves as spokesmen for a race-conscious generation that perceived the American Negro's inferiority in biological rather than social terms. Obsessed with the idea of maintaining white racial purity, they believed that the greatest threat facing America was the moral, intellectual, and physical degeneration of its citizens through the interbreeding of white and non-white races. The Racial Integrity Law, which forbade the intermarriage of whites and non-whites in Virginia, was the first step in their plan to prevent the mongrelization of American society. Between the year of the clubs' founding, 1922, and the probable time of their demise, 1930, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America exerted a sporadic but impressive influence on the history of Virginia race-relations. Their story, and an understanding of their leaders' racial creed, will explain Virginia's plea for racial integrity during the 1920's.

When the Racial Integrity Bill passed the Virginia General Assembly it constituted the greatest achievement in the history of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs. The law contained the following provisions. First, it empowered the State Registrar of Vital Statistics to prepare a form on which the race (Caucasian, Negro, Mongolian, American Indian, Asiatic

Indian, Malay or any mixture thereof) of individuals born before June 14, 1912 might be recorded. This form would be known as the registration certificate. The forms were to be sent to the local registrars who filled them out on each person in his district "who so desires." Second, it made it a felony, punishable by one year in prison, for any person to falsify color or race on either the registration certificate or the birth certificate. Third, no marriage license would be granted until the clerk had "reasonable assurance" that the statements on color were correct. The state required the clerk to withhold the marriage license until the couple desiring marriage produced the proof of race. Finally, the law decreed:

It shall hereafter be unlawful for any white person in this State to marry any save a white person, or a person with no other admixture of blood than white and American Indian. For the purpose of this chapter, the term "white person" shall apply only to such person as has no trace whatever of any blood other than Caucasian; but persons who have one-sixteenth or less of the blood of the American Indian and have no other non-Caucasic blood shall be deemed white persons.¹

The Virginia law was a political manifestation of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' creed of white racial supremacy. The creed maintained that only the strictest enforcement of racial integrity could guarantee the biological continuation of white supremacy. The members of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs believed that higher civilization was a particular product of the white race. They attributed this so-called fact to the superior genetic code common to all individuals of the Caucasian race. They then maintained that non-whites, particularly Negroes, possessed inferior genetic makeups. When a white and a non-white mated, the offspring (what the members of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs referred to as a mongrel or a mix-

¹Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia.
Commencing January 9, 1924, An Act to preserve racial integrity,
S.B. 219, Approved March 20, 1924.

breed) was considered to be inferior to either parent. They feared that if interracial marriages continued, amalgamation (the disappearance of the superior white racial traits through interbreeding) of the races would occur. This would result in the destruction of civilized American society.

The racist ideology of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America did not represent an aberration from the scientific and cultural matrix of American life during the 1920's. In fact, the leaders of the organization viewed themselves as spokesmen for contemporary findings in genetics, biology, psychology, and ethnology. In this assumption, they were not incorrect because they reflected the overwhelming commitment of late nineteenth and early twentieth century science to the proposition that the Negro was culturally, emotionally, and mentally inferior to all other races. Scientists empirically proved what most Americans already assumed; that races differed in fundamental ways and that the Negro was not, and never could be, the white man's equal. The alliance, however temporary, between science and popular prejudices helped racist organizations maintain an appearance of social and political respectability.

The widespread belief in racial and ethnic inequality, which helped the Anglo-Saxon Clubs attract members, had its origins in the intellectual atmosphere of the late nineteenth century.² During this period racism found expression in such popular movements as imperialism, nativism, and Anglo-Saxonism. From time to time white Americans lashed out against foreigners and ethnic groups within the nation who they

² For discussion see George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971); John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955.)

thought threatened their economic and cultural ascendancy. Various nationalities, ranging from the Irish to the Chinese, suffered under their attacks. Yet, these attacks did not contain the same vituperation as that reserved for the American Negro. Undoubtedly, anti-Negro thought was the most widely accepted of racist ideas and the majority of Americans considered the Negro to be the most inferior of all races.³

Underlying the belief in Negro inferiority was an unshakable belief in white superiority which gained scholarly expression in the myth of the Anglo-Saxon.⁴ Evolutionary thought provided the scientific basis for the Anglo-Saxon myth. Following the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's Origin of Species, concepts of biological evolutionism were given social application. Both natural scientists and Social Darwinists believed that competition and natural selection determined human progress by permitting the fittest organism to survive. Certain races, such as the Caucasian, endowed their members with superior intellectual and moral traits that enabled them to dominate other races. For the Caucasian these traits included an innate love of liberty, courage, artistic and intellectual creativity, and a strong ambition to succeed in life. Traits like these characterized a dynamic people and guaranteed the progress of the nation. The message of the Anglo-Saxon myth was clear to most white Americans: America was the culminating product of the superior white race, and maintenance of American civilization depended upon the maintenance of the purity of white blood.

³The most complete work on the subject of popular and scientific attitudes on black inferiority is I. A. Newby, Jim Crow's Defense: Anti-Negro Thought in America 1900-1930, (L. S. U. University Press, 1965).

⁴For discussion of the Anglo-Saxon myth see Paul F. Boller, Jr., American Thought in Transition: The Impact of Evolutionary Naturalism, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1969).

In the twentieth century, the academicians and scientists who accepted the contention that races were unequal and that Negroes were innately inferior to other races provided racism with a mantle of scholarly authority.⁵ In an age which increasingly turned to science for answers to the basic questions about life, this support did much to make racism appear respectable and objective. The new science of race drew heavily from the emerging fields of eugenics, genetics, ethnology, biology, psychology, physiology, anthropology, sociology, and geography for its evidence. Breakthroughs in genetics, particularly the rediscovery of Mendelian heredity in 1900, justified the racist's belief that the Negro's inferiority was hereditary and therefore inescapable. Hereditarian investigators held that crosses between disparate races resulted in inferior hybrids with weak constitutions. A number of early twentieth century geneticists, such as Charles Davenport, director of the Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring, New York; Harry H. Laughlin, a co-worker of Davenport at the Eugenics Record Office and the associate editor of the Eugenical News; Edward Murry East, a botanist at Harvard University; Paul Popenoe, the editor of the Journal of Heredity; and Roswell H. Johnson, a professor at the University of Pittsburgh, wrote about the disharmonies produced by race crossing. In their 1918 publication of Applied Eugenics, Popenoe and Johnson maintained that heredity created successful civilization and that miscegenation, particularly between whites and Negroes, courted disaster by going against biological law. After reviewing the historical and biological evidence relating to the Negro race, Popenoe asked:

⁵For the origins of scientific racism see John S. Haller, Jr., Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority 1859-1900, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

Is not one forced to conclude that the Negro lacks in his germ-plasm excellence of some qualities which the white races possess, and which are essential for success in competition with the civilizations of the white races at present day?⁶

Dr. East, one of the most highly regarded research geneticists in America, believed that the white races of Europe had produced the most civilized humans in history. He interpreted the law of Mendelian segregation to mean that in all crosses between Negroes and whites the compatible physical and mental qualities which made the white race superior broke apart. East concluded that only an illogical expression of altruism could sanction an elevation of the black race at the cost of permanently crippling the white race through interbreeding because:

. . . in reality the Negro is inferior to the white. This is not a hypothesis or supposition: it is a crude statement of actual fact.⁷

Between 1900 and 1930, few academicians openly challenged the doctrine of innate Negro inferiority.⁸ In this atmosphere members of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America could anchor their fear of miscegenation upon scientific evidence rather than mere prejudice.

An odd assortment of scientific facts, pseudo-scientific facts, and popular prejudices blended together during the post World War I era to produce a powerful resurgence of the creed of white superiority. After the war, white Americans expressed this creed in the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, the Red Scare, and a renewed interest in immigration restriction. These events reflected a pessimistic view that the traditional

⁶Paul Popenoe and Roswell Hill Johnson, Applied Eugenics, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1918), p. 284-285.

⁷E. M. East and D. F. Jones, Inbreeding and Outbreeding, (Philadelphia, 1919), p.253-254, quoted in William B. Provine, "Geneticists and the Biology of Race Crossing," Science 182 (November 1973): 790-796.

⁸I. A. Newby, Jim Crow's Defense, (L. S. U. University Press, 1965).

American mechanism for assimilation of disparate races, cultures, and attitudes had broken down and needed fixing.⁹ But, rather than fix the mechanism, Americans abandoned their traditional concept of assimilation for a renewed expression of racial chauvinism. The public accepted the simplified version of Mendelian genetics which attributed social and cultural characteristics to individual genes. Since one's race determined many of one's genes they feared that essential characteristics for American citizenship, such as patriotism and duty to country, might be lost if the white race interbred with other races. However, as long as the white race maintained the purity of its blood they remained hopeful for the future of America. The final stanza of the poem "The Conquering Race, or, Blood is Thicker Than Water," expressed white America's spirit of racial confidence.

And when, in the march of races,
 One of earth must ruler be,
 To the stalwart Anglo-Saxon
 God will give the victory.
 Peace and progress, then, his watchwords,
 All of Adams sons to free,
 Worship God by faith and conscience;
 What a glorious destiny.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the "glorious destiny" of the Anglo-Saxon seemed much in doubt to the Virginians who formed the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America. These men, while perhaps not familiar with the writings of East and Davenport, were more than familiar with the apocalyptic forecast which Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard made by using contemporary racial scientific findings. Grant and Stoddard popularized the notion that if there was enough genetic intermixture between the white and non-white

⁹John Higham, Strangers in the Land, (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1955).

¹⁰J. W. Davis, "The Conquering Race, or, Blood is Thicker Than Water," n.p. (written for All-British Party Luncheon, Roanoke, Virginia, May 27, 1927), Edward L. Stone Collection, University of Virginia.

races a mongrel race would overwhelm Western civilization. They believed that mongrelization threatened the immediate future of Western Europe and America, and their racial alarms appeared on the pages of the most widely read magazine in the United States, the Saturday Evening Post. These themes appeared in print in the 1916 publication of Madison Grant's The Passing of the Great Race or The Racial Basis of European History, and four years later in Lothrop Stoddard's The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy. Grant's book dealt primarily with the racial basis of Europe's history and Stoddard attempted to show the impending peril of the Asiatic races to Europe and America. Both authors assigned various mental and psychological traits to each race in addition to their differing physical characteristics. Regarding the importance of heredity in the differentiation of the five major races, Grant wrote:

These races vary intellectually and morally just as they do physically. Moral, intellectual, and spiritual attributes are as persistent as physical characters, and are transmitted unchanged from generation to generation.¹¹

Grant allotted the genes which promoted the principles of democracy and religion to the Anglo-Saxon. The greatest external threat to these institutions was racial amalgamation. Both authors believed that inferior races, with their primitive genetic composition, biologically dominated any racial intermixture. Lothrop Stoddard observed that "in ethnic crossings, the negro strikingly displays his prepotency, for black blood once entering a human stock, seems never really bred out again."¹² Stoddard explained that black blood, like a hidden cancer, could have a

¹¹ Madison Grant, The Passing of the Great Race or The Racial Basis of European History, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), p. 197.

¹² Lothrop Stoddard, The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 90.

degenerative influence upon any individual whose genealogy contained a Negro ancestor.

The growth of scientific racism and the racial interpretation of history by such popularizers as Grant and Stoddard had a great impact on shaping the views of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' leaders. Three Richmond men, John Powell, Virginia's premier pianist and composer; Earnest Sevier Cox, a self-proclaimed authority on race; and Dr. Walter Ashby Plecker, the State Registrar of the Bureau of Vital Statistics, composed the nucleus of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' leadership. Ironically, two of them, Dr. Plecker and Cox, never became official members of the clubs. However, their feverish commitment to the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' creed of racial integrity was indisputable. The racial views of these men were in perfect alignment with the intellectual mood of scientific racism during the early 1920's. Yet, unlike most Americans who sympathized with the racist creed, they converted racial sentiment into a political statement that outlived each of them. The story of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs and Virginia's plea for racial integrity must begin with an understanding of the background and beliefs of Powell, Cox, and Plecker.

John Powell was born in Richmond in 1882 of a distinguished Virginia family.¹³ He attended the University of Virginia when he was sixteen. During his brief two years at the university Powell proved himself a distinguished student. The Raven Society elected him into their society; he wrestled on the school's varsity squad; and he graduated from the university at the age of eighteen with a Phi Beta Kappa key. Powell had

¹³Biographical material on Powell taken from Ernest Mead, "The John Powell Collection at the University of Virginia," The University of Virginia News Letter, v. 15, (November 1972); Virginus Dabney, "John Powell" Richmond Times Dispatch, 17 August 1963.

always shown great interest and talent in playing the piano. At the university he often entertained his friends by his impromptu piano performances. When he turned nineteen he traveled to Vienna to study piano with Theodore Leschetizky, the renowned teacher of such memorable pianists as Paderewski, Gaillovitch, Moiseivitch, and Horszowski. He made a triumphant debut in Berlin in 1907 and went on to perform in Paris, Vienna, and London. All that remained for his fame to be complete was a triumphant debut in the United States, which in 1913 he made in New York. For the remainder of his life, Powell's reputation as the foremost musician and composer in Virginia's history was established.

Paralleling Powell's musical genius was his growing concern over racial problems in the United States. When he returned to America at the outbreak of World War I, Powell was alarmed by what he saw as much greater contact between Negroes and whites.¹⁴ Undoubtedly, his sojourn in Vienna had exposed him to a more pronounced form of race consciousness than he had received in the United States, and he returned with a new appreciation for Teutonic supremacy. The relationship between race and history fascinated Powell and he translated this fascination into his music. He expressed musically his observations on racial characteristics in such compositions for piano as his "Sonata Teutonica" and the "Rapsodie Nègre." Music was only one means for Powell to express his preoccupation with race relations. For a brief time he joined the post war revival of the Ku Klux Klan in Richmond. However, he quickly became dissatisfied with the Klan's failure to focus all of its energy upon the threat of racial amalgamation. Therefore,

¹⁴"Conference of Mr. Stanton D. Wicks, John Powell, E. S. Cox, W. A. Plecker," n. p. November 30, 1935, Earnest Sevier Cox Collection, Duke University.

he and several other friends in Richmond quit to form their own organization for racial integrity.¹⁵

From its inception, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America reflected John Powell's guiding vision more than any other individual's. After he created the clubs Powell conducted an exhaustive campaign across the state to attract new members. He was a powerful and dynamic speaker and he possessed the uncanny assurance that his message carried the greatest of all scientific truths. Powell envisioned his clubs as intellectual forums for white citizens to gather at and discuss, in an academic and scientific fashion, the problems of whites and Negroes living close to one another, without one adversely affecting the genetic balance of the other. In reality, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' meetings seldom attained such dignified expectations.

Within a month of the founding of Post Number One of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs in 1922, Powell gave a highly praised piano concert in New York. The review emphasized Powell's sensitivity and musical talent. This illustrates the irony of a man who was both a musician and a racist. The reviewer for the New York Times wrote of this man who would maintain a steadfast belief in dogmas of white supremacy and Negro inferiority, that he "played with a great beauty, warmth, and variety of tone and with a real penetration into their [the compositions'] poetical significance."¹⁶

Powell's commitment to the Anglo-Saxon Clubs undoubtedly limited the time he had to perform piano concerts for the public. And, while he received national accolades for his music, his stand on the race issue in Virginia met with mixed reactions. For some he became a hero. A letter

¹⁵Earnest Sevier Cox, manuscript for Black Belt Around the World, n.p., n.d., p. 19, Cox Collection, Duke University.

¹⁶Richard Aldrich, "John Powell's Piano Recital," New York Times, 23 October 1922, p. 10.

to the editor of the Richmond Times Dispatch reflected this admiration: "I think our great Virginian, John Powell, cannot be too much praised for his efforts towards preserving racial purity, and some day we are going to realize this more than we do now."¹⁷ Yet, to others, he was merely the leader of a "bunch of cranks."¹⁸ Typical of this sentiment was a disgruntled reader of the Richmond Times Dispatch who complained: "What a pity that this brilliant young pianist should turn from a career so promising and already so gloriously fulfilled to conduct the sort of propaganda that he is conducting in Virginia."¹⁹ Unlike his musical performances, Powell's involvement with the Anglo-Saxon Clubs brought forth a public response of praise mixed with contempt.

At the home of Louise Burleigh, the woman he would later marry, Powell came into contact with Earnest Sevier Cox. Cox was himself a most extraordinary individual. He had spent six years in Africa and South America on a worldwide study of the contact between white and colored races, and now touted himself as an authority on race problems. The two men soon struck up an amiable conversation about racial differences between whites and Negroes and the effect of miscegenation upon society. Of this encounter Cox later wrote: "My meeting with Powell was to lead to a close and sustained friendship and would endure."²⁰ Though Cox never became an initiated member of Powell's clubs, he allowed himself to become an important

¹⁷"A Race Tragedy," Letters to the Editor, Richmond Times Dispatch, 20 August 1925.

¹⁸W.H. Taft called the Anglo-Saxons "cranks," W.H. Taft to Dr. James E. Gregg, 5 December 1925, Gregg Papers, Hampton Institute.

¹⁹L.F. Love, "Letters to the Editor," Richmond Times Dispatch, 21 February 1926, p. 7.

²⁰Cox, manuscript for Black Belt, n.p., n.d., Cox Collection, Duke University.

asset to their political goals. His capacity was that of a scientific mentor. He had recently published the findings of his worldwide study, White America, in 1923, and many considered it to be the finest statement of the race problem and its solution. I. A. Newby writes of him in Jim Crow's Defense:

Cox was perhaps the most important race theorist residing in the South in the period between World Wars I and II. His chief work White America was the most authoritative statement of intellectual-historical racism written by a Southerner.²¹

Cox was born on a 600 acre farm in Blount County, Tennessee. The youngest of eight children, he possessed an uncanny drive for recognition and success. As a graduate student at Chicago University he had written to his sister: "The passion of my life is to turn every energy of my being upon one life of activity and keep at it until I either make a failure or meet success."²² Later, when he was in Africa, he wrote home: "There is nothing I will not endure to accomplish an end once chosen."²³ These were not always idle words, for Cox had an addiction to long hours of work broken only by brief interludes of sleep. In the pursuit of becoming an able man of his generation who brought honor upon himself and his family, he claimed to work sixteen or more hours each day.

Cox's search for success carried him through a variety of schools and would-be occupations. For a short while after he left home he attended the Massey Business College in Columbus, Georgia. He quit school to work as a collector for an Atlanta loan company in their Shreveport, Louisiana

²¹I. A. Newby, Jim Crow's Defense: Anti-Negro Thought in America 1900-1930, (L. S. U. University Press, 1965), p. 61.

²²Cox to Mr. & Mrs. E. D. Pines, 19 March 1909, Cox Collection, Duke University.

²³Cox to Mr. & Mrs. E. D. Pines, 6 May 1911, Cox Collection, Duke University.

branch office. Cox did not care for his work because most of the people he dealt with were Negroes, and he believed that such contact limited his hopes for social advancement. After this he experienced an emotional trend toward the ministry which brought him to Moody Bible College in Chicago. At Moody Bible College he spent most of his time conducting street corner revivals.²⁴ Cox was a persuasive speaker and apparently his brief career as an evangelist brought him some of the attention that he longed for. From Moody, Cox transferred to Vanderbilt University to complete his training in theology. However, he had damaged his throat from preaching at too many street revivals and he decided to abandon the ministry. Besides, Cox had concluded that academics offered a more promising career than the ministry and he left for post-graduate work at Chicago University.

At Chicago, Cox encountered such leading experts in sociology and anthropology as Albion Small and Frederick Starr, and he became fascinated by the academic perception of America's race problem. The subject was not new to him. Cox had earlier expressed his views on this problem in a passionate letter to his sister just after the Atlanta Race Riot in 1906. Showing little of his training in Christian compassion he proclaimed:

No newspaper has within 26 yrs. published anything that has received my attention so eagerly as the trouble in Atlanta.

No warfare ever waged was more righteous than this defence [sic] of home, family, and posterity. There is nothing half so important to my people as the disposal of the Negro. . . .

The white man of the South has borne with Negro outrages upon white womanhood longer than any man whom God has created would have borne; and the wonder of future generations will be, not that forty brutes have been sacrificed but that the whole brute race has not in

²⁴There are two sources for Cox's biography, Earnest Sevier Cox, Black Belt Around the World, (Richmond, Virginia: 1963); Ethel Wolfskill Hedlin, "Earnest Cox and Colonization: A White Racist's Response to Black Repatriation, 1923-1966," (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1974).

red stains been blotted from our civilization. The conditions are intolerable and there is but one way of escape. Vengeance must have her fullest satiation until our white brethren the world over will aid us in deporting this black savage again to his native jungle. . . .

The rational thing to do is to recognize the inevitable, viz. wholesale butchery must come and its coming will awaken the nation to the fact that the Negro must be moved. He must be taken back to the Jungle the glare of which is still in his eye. Every white boy should receive military training and every white girl taught to shoot. When the conflict does come let us be so prepared as to conquer with the least loss of life to the whites.²⁵

Surprisingly, few of Cox's later pronouncements on the Negro appeared so vehement. However, his studies at Chicago, and after he left Chicago, reflected a preoccupation with the Negro's presence in American society.

At the University of Chicago, Cox, with the aid of one of his professors, conceived of the idea for a worldwide study of the contact between the white race and all colored races.²⁶ Unable to secure a fellowship for this study, he resolved to finance the trip himself. Once in South Africa, Cox financed his research by working in the gold and diamond mines. His job enabled him to observe Negroes closely. He soon reached three hypotheses which remained the essential components of his philosophy on race for the remainder of his life.

- 1) All civilizations have proceeded from the white man
- 2) The white man retaining ethnic purity has not lost civilization
- 3) The white man become hybrid has invariably declined in civilization, usually suffered elimination of civilized culture²⁷

The Negro, in this framework, represented the greatest threat to white civilization through his mere presence. To account for the Negro's ancestry Cox favored a multiple origins theory.²⁸ He was unsure whether or not the

²⁵E.S. Cox to Mrs. Emma D. Pines, 1 October 1906, E.S. Cox Collection Duke University.

²⁶Cox, Black Belt Around the World, (Richmond, Va.: 1963), p.55-57.

²⁷Cox to Mrs. E.D. Pines, 1 August 1914, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

²⁸Ibid.

Negro race was actually a separate species. However, he did believe that Negroes branched off early in the evolutionary history of man and evolved separately. This meant that their mental and physical characteristics had become so inbred that they were no longer subject to environmental changes.

Cox's interest in the Negro soon took a new perspective. He wrote to his advising professor back at Chicago, Dr. Charles R. Henderson: "I left America interested in the political status of the Negro under other Governments but soon realized that a mixture of blood is the real danger. . . ." ²⁹ He simplified his view of blood and black inferiority by way of a mathematical formula. "In every country and at all times the intensity of civilisation (regarding the cultural and technological achievements) is in direct relation to the numerical proportion of negroes in the population." ³⁰ Such findings excited Cox and he considered them to be original and profound. ³¹ He remained steadfast in this belief long after the scientists and scholars had repudiated it.

When Cox returned to America in 1916, he believed that his trip and research had been successful and that his notes written up as a book would sell well. The war interrupted his writing. He quickly enlisted and spent the next two years in France as an army artillery major. After the war he returned to Washington D. C. where he had lived a brief time before traveling overseas. In the nation's capital, Cox encountered Senator James K. Vardaman of Mississippi, who showed much interest in

²⁹Cox to Dr. Charles R. Henderson, 1 May 1913, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

³⁰Cox to Senator James K. Vardaman, 19 September 1916, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

³¹Cox to John B. Cox, n.d. (circa 1910-1913), Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

in his work.³² Senator Vardaman used many of Cox's ideas and notes in his testimony before the Senate Committee on Immigration Restriction. Yet, for all of Cox's plans to be recognized as the world's foremost author on color problems, he never found a place in Washington. Sometime in 1921 he went to work in Richmond, Virginia as a salesman for the Laburnum Realty Corporation.³³ Cox took this job only to finance his real career as the South's leading authority on race.

It was just after Cox met Powell late in 1921 that the latter was contemplating the founding of a less abrasive and more scientifically ideological organization than the Ku Klux Klan.³⁴ During this time, Cox was finishing work on his first book, White America. He was also considering the organization of his own movement to promote racial awareness which he would call the White American Society.³⁵ However, Cox decided to put off the founding of his society in order to help Powell promote his Anglo-Saxon Clubs.³⁶ On July 22, 1923 Powell and Cox collaborated on the feature article for the Sunday Magazine of the Richmond Times Dispatch. Their question, "Is White America to Become a Negroid Nation?" and their proposed answer in the form of a petition for a new racial integrity law, attracted the interest of many Virginians. Among those most interested in their solution was the State Registrar of the Bureau of Vital Statistics, Dr. Walter Ashby Plecker.

³²Cox to Mr. E. D. Pines, 1919, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

³³"Terms of Employment," 7 July 1922, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

³⁴Cox, manuscript for Black Belt, n.p., n.d., Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

Plecker, whom Cox labeled "the old War-Horse of the enforcement of racial integrity legislation," was born in Augusta County, Virginia, April 2, 1861.³⁷ He graduated from the Hoover Military Academy at Staunton in 1880 (now Virginia Polytechnic Institute in Blackburg), spent a year in the University of Virginia, and then enrolled in the University of Maryland Medical School from which he graduated M.D. in 1885. Between 1890 and 1910 he pursued a successful private practice in Hampton, where he was also county health officer of Elizabeth City County. On June 12, 1912 the state Board of Health appointed him Registrar of Vital Statistics.³⁸

Plecker undertook a reorganization of the state office which he renamed the Bureau of Vital Statistics. Federal officials soon recognized that his newly created bureau was one of the most efficiently conducted offices of vital statistics in the nation. Plecker had a penchant for efficiency and minutiae which to his co-workers, at times, bordered on the obsessive. One day a traveling musician stopped on the pavement before the Richmond Office Building, which housed Plecker's bureau, as well as other state offices, and sang a catchy song while playing the guitar. In a humorless letter to the governor, Plecker estimated that the song brought about two hundred state employees to the windows. He dryly concluded:

I estimate that if there were two hundred thus stopped from their work for fifteen minutes, the total amounted to the loss of fifty hours of time, something over seven days, which at the rate of \$4.00 a day would be about \$28.00 which the state lost by that song, beside the demoralizing effect upon the routine work of the office.³⁹

³⁷Cox to Lothrop Stoddard, 5 Oct. 1933, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

³⁸American Historical Society, Virginia Biography, vol. 5 (Chicago & New York: 1924), p. 397-398.

³⁹W. A. Plecker to Governor Trinkle, 26 September 1922, Governor's Papers, State Library Richmond.

Plecker, a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church, was a serious man with little time for frivolity. But the issue which consumed most of his attention during the 1920's and 1930's was that of racial integrity.

Plecker's job as State Registrar enabled him to indulge his interest in eugenics and racial integrity. The record of every wedding, birth, and death of each citizen in the state passed through his bureau. From the demographic records at his disposal, Plecker gained an estimate of the frequency of miscegenation in Virginia. What he found alarmed him. Like Cox and Powell, Plecker feared the mulatto and saw the mongrelization of Virginia in the near future unless the state took drastic measures immediately. He estimated that there were "Probably ten to twenty thousand or more near-white people in Virginia" and that "many of these are so near white that they might easily pass themselves off as such."⁴⁰ This situation threatened the time honored institution of Virginia's color line (the tradition of social segregation between the white and Negro race which allowed certain forms of contact and forbade others) because:

. . . securing a standing as white by those of negro admixture, is the move towards definite admission into the white race, with the privilege of attendance upon white schools and finally of marrying into white families.⁴¹

Plecker therefore committed most of his energy as State Registrar to preventing miscegenation and upholding the color line. Marshalling all of the resources that he possessed at the bureau, he supported the Clubs' campaign for the passage of the Racial Integrity Bill, and after it became law, pursued its enforcement with an obsessive zeal. Plecker

⁴⁰Plecker to George C. Dyer, 19 March 1924, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

⁴¹Plecker to John Stewart Bryan, 23 September 1926, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

believed that the new law had a chance to stem the mulatto tide. But, only if other states enacted similar laws could it exert any national influence. In a foreboding mood he warned a Mississippian interested in racial integrity:

To be doomed, all that is necessary is to sit still and do nothing. Complete amalgamation of the race will thus be accomplished, and the negroes themselves place the time limit at two hundred years. I believe that we will be able, if we can get the law now in use in Virginia adopted in other states, to hold off for five hundred years.⁴²

Predictably, Plecker believed in the Negro's genetic inferiority. He also believed that a new type of Negro was emerging in American society. No longer would the Negro conform to the stereotype of the faithful plantation servant. In one of his official letters, he was asked to express his views on the Negro's psychology. Plecker replied in an extended passage which illustrated his general opinion of the Negro:

I have not made a special study of negro psychology and religion further than from my own observations. They are all more or less religious, but it is of an emotional nature. Some perhaps have a correct understanding of christianity, but many, even their preachers, we believe do not. As a rule a negro is improvident, easily satisfied, especially if he has the opportunity for sexual relations, and is not dependable. There are few negroes who can resist the temptation to steal, at least in a small way. Before the war between the states, however, the negro had reached the highest state of development that he has ever reached. Then his faithfulness to his master was one of the most notable things in relation to the present amongst us of the South. All of this, however, has entirely changed since the new ideas have been introduced from the North and since the horrors of the reconstruction days. His attitude is antagonistic to the white race as is evidenced by their newspapers, magazines, and other publications. This attitude is very greatly increased through the efforts of their mulatto leaders, especially the New York Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who have the endorsement of a certain type of influential and moneyed white people.⁴³

Like Cox, Plecker clung to his prejudices despite changing social attitudes

⁴²Plecker to Stone Deavours, 15 April 1925, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

⁴³Plecker to John K. Gailey, 21 May 1925, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

and scientific reversals on racial hypotheses. As the campaign for racial integrity progressed, Plecker vented much of his hostility and disgust toward the Negro in a manner which caused some Virginians to doubt his appropriate temperament for being a public official. Nevertheless, he remained State Registrar and devoted the work of his bureau to the maintenance of white racial integrity until he retired in 1946.

Powell, Cox, and Plecker composed the Anglo-Saxon triumvirate. Powell organized the clubs and waged an exhaustive campaign to disseminate their views on racial integrity across the state. Cox furnished the scientific and ethnological philosophy which invigorated the racist principles of the clubs. Plecker marshalled an array of demographic statistics which transformed the abstract threat of amalgamation into an imminent statewide crisis. The philosophy of these three men shaped the development of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America. In turn, their philosophy was inextricably linked to the broader racist creed of their age.

The Anglo-Saxon Clubs' racial creed combined the scientific research of Davenport, Laughlin, and East, with the pseudo-scientific teachings of Cox, Grant, and Stoddard, with a long tradition of Southern prejudice, and produced an intricate manifesto of anti-Negro thought. Cox, Virginia's most imaginative spokesman on racial differences, best articulated the Clubs' creed when he explained that "civilization issues from the white race and in preserving the white race we preserve civilization."⁴⁴ Cox believed that the primary law of racial welfare centered on racial integrity and the separate advancement of each race to its

⁴⁴ Earnest Sevier Cox, "Is White America to Become a Negroid Nation?" Richmond Times Dispatch, 22 July 1923, Sunday Magazine.

natural level of cultural achievement. Racial welfare was subject to the greatest biological truth: "That a race problem is produced by the contact of races and that it is of such nature that it cannot be solved except by mixing the races or by separating them."⁴⁵ This "truth" permeated all of Cox's writings. He offered white Americans only two solutions, amalgamation or total separation. The stakes for this decision were the greatest in America's history. Again and again, Cox reminded his audiences:

We are fighting for the continuation of the white type of man in America, the gravest struggle, probably, that has occurred in human history, for if North America loses the struggle for the white race, South America cannot win for the forces against her will be too great. The entire Western World, if we lose, after being won by the white race will be abandoned by the mongrel.⁴⁶

The Anglo-Saxon Clubs justified their abhorrence of racial intermarriage through the use of biological and historical evidence. Cox set forth the biological proposition that "Negro race traits and predisposition revert in misbreeds far removed from the pure Negro."⁴⁷ This meant that the slightest portion of black blood in a family that appeared white could reassert its dominance in future generations and produce babies with Negroid characteristics. Cox also maintained that near-white mulattoes, no matter how miniscule the portion of Negro blood, lacked the "temporal edge of the creative intellect, [and] the refined moral and social sensibility."⁴⁸ John Powell explained the genetic

⁴⁵Cox to John Cunningham, 15 May 1931, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

⁴⁶Cox to Grover W. Ayers, 17 May 1931, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

⁴⁷Ernest Sevier Cox, "Is White America to Become a Negroid Nation?" Richmond Times Dispatch, 22 July 1923, Sunday Magazine.

⁴⁸John Powell, "Sorrels Case," n.d., n.p., (later published as "The Breach in the Dike; An Analysis of Sorrels Case"), Powell Collection, University of Virginia.

theory behind all of this:

Mendel's law of heredity shows that in crossing two varieties, the more primitive, the less highly specialized, variety always dominates in the hybrid offspring. This is true, not merely physically but mentally and psychologically as well. This is why every race that has crossed blood with the Negro has failed to maintain its civilization and culture.⁴⁹

Throughout history, Mendel's law had acted to prove the contention that "no race even slightly tainted with Negro blood has failed to decay culturally."⁵⁰ Reflecting upon the past Powell observed:

In 6,000 years history does not furnish one instance where races living together have not amalgamated, and not one instance - where the white race has absorbed the negro - which did not result in the complete disintegration of its civilization.⁵¹

The historical precedents for this observation came from Cox's book, White America. In the chapter entitled, "Civilizations that Have Perished Through Contact With Colored Races," the author warned that the fate of Egypt, India, China, Mexico, and Peru was only a few generations away from America unless her white citizens took definitive action. These arguments easily convinced the Clubs' members that if racial intermarriage continued it would lead to an amalgamation of the white race and continue until the disintegration of American civilization.

As if to confirm the darkest fears of the Clubs' leaders, the national statistics on miscegenation in America climbed steadily upwards. The United States Census Report showed that the increase in the mulatto population between 1890 and 1920 had been 47.3%. This statistic gave tangible evidence to Plecker's observation "That the process of amalgamation

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰ John Powell, "Is White America to Become a Negroid Nation?" Richmond Times Dispatch, 22 July 1923, Sunday Magazine.

⁵¹Richmond Times Dispatch, 13 February 1924.

is progressing with great rapidity is a matter of common knowledge."⁵² The Clubs' creed demanded that the citizens of Virginia act immediately. Powell resolutely declared the alternative to such action: "If a solution be not found by the present generation, it will never be found, and our civilization and our race will be swallowed up in the quagmire of mongrelization."⁵³

The intensity and urgency of the Anglo-Saxon message can be likened to the evangelical fervor of a camp revival. Cox, the one-time street evangelist, now exhorted:

Let us labor without ceasing; for we labor for a holy cause. We who wish to solve the Negro problem are better citizens than those who wish to continue it. We who wish to preserve race are better men than those who wish to destroy it.⁵⁴

An emphasis upon one's duty to future generations also appeared in the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' rhetoric. Powell reminded his audience that "our first responsibility, is to the unborn generation: our children's children must and shall at all costs be spared the curse of sharing with them [future mulattoes] their tragic lot."⁵⁵ Sometimes the evangelical spirit of this racial creed rose to dizzy heights. The editor of the Newport News Daily Press, Walter Scott Copeland, proclaimed:

The Anglo-Saxon race has no moral right to amalgamate with any colored race, for in so doing it would destroy itself. . . . Amalgamation would mean the destruction of the Anglo-Saxon race

⁵²W. A. Plecker, "Racial Improvement," read before the 56th annual meeting of Medical Society of Virginia at Richmond, October 13, 1925, (reprint from Virginia Medical Monthly, November 1925), John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

⁵³John Powell, "The Last Stand," Richmond Times Dispatch, 16 February 1926, p. 7.

⁵⁴Ernest Sevier Cox, "Let My People Go," pamphlet, White American Society, n.d.

⁵⁵John Powell, "Sorrels Case," John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

in America and the substitution of a race of mulattoes. Rather than that should be, we would prefer that every white child in the United States were sterilized and the Anglo-Saxon race left to perish in its purity.⁵⁶

The leaders of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America worked to inspire an enlightened race consciousness among white Americans. They also hoped to shake them out of their false sense of security. In an address before the authorities of the American Public Health Association in 1925, Plecker warned: "We are now engaged in a struggle more titanic and of far greater importance than that with the Central Powers from which we have recently emerged."⁵⁷ Powell, Cox, and Plecker feared an impending racial Armageddon unless whites awoke to the danger of amalgamation. They hoped to enlist every white American in their struggle. In a series of articles written for the Richmond Times Dispatch in 1926, Powell hoisted the banner of racial integrity and proclaimed:

Virginians awaken from your lethargy of pleasure and prosperity. The call has pealed forth for the last stand. Arise and gird your loins for victory!⁵⁸

The leaders of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs sincerely believed that their movement was predicated upon scientific truths. Powell saw himself and his Anglo-Saxons as part of a new generation: one enlightened by the latest scientific and historical evidence on race. He believed that "the views of the succeeding generations have been formed under the influence of modern biology, by the new ethnology, by the new philosophy of cultural

⁵⁶Newport News Daily Press, n.d., clipping from John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

⁵⁷W.A. Plecker, "Shall We All Be Mulattoes?" The Literary Digest for March 7, reprint, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

⁵⁸John Powell, "The Last Stand," Richmond Times Dispatch, 19 February 1926, p.7.

history, [and] by the knowledge that institutions and civilizations are the effect and not the cause of racial psychology."⁵⁹ In addition he observed: "That 'one drop of negro blood makes the negro' is no longer a theory based on race pride or color prejudice, but a logically induced scientific fact."⁶⁰ Powell assumed that the mere presentation of such scientific facts would jar Virginians out of their complacency. He reasoned that any clear thinking individual confronted by this knowledge would immediately join the Anglo-Saxon cause. The inevitability of amalgamation "should be sufficiently obvious, it would seem, to a blind man or even to an ostrich."⁶¹ On this matter, Powell optimistically concluded:

There is practical unanimity among those acquainted with the facts. As knowledge of the facts becomes general, this unanimity will embrace the whole population.⁶²

It was this type of spirit, an amalgamation of science, prejudice, and fear which formed the core of the Clubs' creed. Powell, Cox, and Plecker expressed this spirit more clearly than other Virginians. Nevertheless, there were many others who shared their general feelings about racial integrity. Over two hundred thousand Virginians signed the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' petition for a racial integrity bill. Their signatures were needed to send the bill before the General Assembly for consideration in the 1924 session, and they reflected the public's willingness to support the clubs' campaign for racial integrity. Without this support, it is doubtful whether the Anglo-Saxon Clubs would have exerted as great an influence on Virginia's racial politics during the 1920's.

⁵⁹ John Powell, "Sorrels Case," John Powell Collection, Univ. of Va.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ John Powell, "The Last Stand," Richmond Times Dispatch, 2 Mar. 1926, p. 20.

⁶² Ibid.

The history of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs chronicles the efforts of Powell, Cox, and Plecker to convert their racist ideology into political action. For a brief time, these men and their message captured the public's attention and the number of clubs and members grew phenomenally. Yet, despite their hopes, the Clubs never developed into a viable national movement. Instead, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs suffered the fate of any movement dependent upon a volatile emotional issue for its public support. Once the issue was resolved they faded from public attention. The post-war suspicion of all things "un-American" and mood of hysteria had helped the Anglo-Saxons' appeal. However, as the decade progressed, this mood dissipated. Only by generating new issues could they maintain the public's attention. In the end the Anglo-Saxons lost support not through rejection, but through apathy.

Sometime in September of 1922, John Powell and a coterie of friends met to begin Post Number One of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs. For their constitution they drew up a loosely defined set of principles. The goal of the constitution was the maintenance of Anglo-Saxon institutions and ideals. This involved a host of precepts, such as fair play and honor; support of the United States Constitution and the laws of the nation and state; free public schools; the separation of Church and state; "Wise limitation of immigration and the complete exclusion of unassimilable immigration"; the preservation of racial integrity; "Supremacy of the white race in the United States without racial prejudice or hatred"; and "All principles of liberal Americanism conceived in the spirit of broad patriotism."⁶³ Eligible for membership were all native-born,

⁶³"Constitution of The Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America," pamphlet, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

white, male American citizens over eighteen years of age who possessed temperate habits, a good moral character, and a willingness to exercise the franchise. (Unlike the Ku Klux Klan, membership in the Anglo-Saxon Clubs was open to all white male citizens regardless of religious background.) To join the clubs, the applicant filled out a standardized form which included his occupation and the names of references. A black-ball system determined admission. One negative vote necessitated a re-vote. If two or more negative votes occurred during the second vote, the Anglo-Saxons barred the candidate from their ranks.

The clubs dawned with little journalistic fanfare and operated in silence for the first few months. However, they steadily attracted new members. On June 5, 1923 an article written by one of the members appeared in the Richmond News Leader.⁶⁴ The article explained the clubs' petition for a stricter racial integrity law and estimated the membership of the Richmond Anglo-Saxon Post to be about four hundred. In addition, it cited the existence of a strong post at the University of Virginia, two posts in Newport News, and a post at William and Mary. Five other posts were being formed and plans for a national convention were underway. If rapid growth like this had continued, the hope of John Powell for a sweeping national movement might have been borne out.

During their second year, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs grew rapidly. On Saturday, October 13, 1923, they convened their first national convention. The site was Murphy's Hotel in Richmond and the atmosphere was charged with a profound sense of duty. Fifteen posts from across the state sent representatives who participated in the founding of a national organization.

⁶⁴"Post No. 1, Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America," pamphlet, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

The national officers included President, Dr. Lawrence T. Price, a prominent Richmond M.D. then serving on the city council; Vice-President, Dr. J.L. Jarman, president of the State Normal School at Farmville; and Treasurer, Dabney S. Lancaster, state supervisor of agricultural education.⁶⁵ During the convention, the clubs circulated their petition for the enactment of the bill to preserve racial integrity. Furthermore, they discussed the desirability of a national movement to introduce similar bills to every state in America. However, the clubs lacked a concrete design for future development. Beyond the state and national promotion of their petition, few members expressed any opinion on a more lasting purpose.

The most important activity in the first two years of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' existence was their statewide campaign for the racial integrity bill. The heart of their petition called for the mandatory registration of race for every Virginia citizen and the legal restriction that whites could marry only whites. They defined a white person as one who possessed no blood other than Caucasian and they required that marriage licenses be granted only after the proper proof of racial registration was supplied by both the bride and the groom.⁶⁶ The machinery existed to carry out this proposal in the Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics. A 1912 law required the racial registration of every child born in the state thereafter. However, this law allowed individuals with less than 1/16 Negro blood to pass as whites and to register their children white. The Anglo-Saxons focused their petition against the continuation of such practices. As the

⁶⁵"Anglo-Saxon Club Starts National Organization," Richmond Times Dispatch, 14 October 1923, p. 4.

⁶⁶John Powell, "Is White America to Become a Negroid Nation?" Richmond Times Dispatch, 22 July 1923.

1924 session of the Virginia General Assembly approached, their rhetoric of racial purity increased dramatically.

The Anglo-Saxons aroused much interest in their petition with the support of Richmond's leading newspapers, the Times Dispatch and the News Leader. Both papers endorsed the proposed legislation and offered Powell and Cox column space to express their views. In an editorial entitled, "For Racial Integrity," the editor of the Times Dispatch, Robert D. Ford, gave the bill his enthusiastic approval: "The program now before the Legislature is conservative, it is reasonable, it is based on scientific principles, [and] it is necessary if the future is to be safeguarded."⁶⁷

Racial authorities, such as Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard, welcomed the proposed legislation with praise. Madison Grant wrote Powell that he gave the petition for racial integrity "my unqualified endorsement."

The enactment of the proposed legislation would immediately place Virginia in the lead of this matter and her example would be followed by her immediate neighbors and finally, I hope, by at least some of the Northern and Western states.⁶⁸

Lothrop Stoddard sent his unqualified endorsement also. He wrote:

I hereby state that I consider such legislation as is proposed in said petition to be of the highest and greatest necessity in order that the purity of the white race be safe-guarded from possibility of contamination with non-white blood.⁶⁹

E.S. Cox called the legislation "the most perfected legal expression of the white ideal."⁷⁰

⁶⁷"For Racial Integrity," Richmond Times Dispatch, n.d. clipping in John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

⁶⁸Madison Grant to John Powell, 1 February 1924, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

⁶⁹Lothrop Stoddard to John Powell, 1 February 1924, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

⁷⁰Cox, White America, (White America Society, Richmond, 1923), p.393.

Around the state the members of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs worked feverishly to generate the greatest amount of support possible. They distributed pamphlets and they conducted public debates. The Clubs' national president, Lawrence T. Price, addressed this appeal to Virginia's citizens:

A most sacred heritage is in your keeping and we feel sure that you will not prove faithless to your charge. We earnestly request your support of the legislation set forth in the pamphlet, that our country, and our forefathers may be maintained for the coming generations. We are relying upon your good judgement, your knowledge of historical and biological facts, and upon your patriotism.⁷¹

The General Assembly convened on January 9, 1924. Both Powell and Cox spoke before the Assembly and presented letters of recommendations from authorities across the nation. There was little debate over the racial merits of the proposition and the majority of representatives showed sympathy to the idea of racial integrity. However, the bill presented by Powell called for the compulsory registration of all people in Virginia (prior legislation only guaranteed the registration of race for those individuals born after 1912), and the cost of such an undertaking would be large. The House objected to the bill on this account, but passed it on to the Senate. Here, the debate over the cost issue was much fiercer. Just when the Senate was about to vote the whole measure down, Powell and his retinue offered to make registration optional.⁷² With this amendment the bill to preserve racial integrity sailed through the Senate with a vote of 72 yeas and 9 nays. Following the passage of the law, the Governor of Virginia, E. Lee Trinkle, instructed Plecker at the Bureau of Vital Statistics to send copies of the new Virginia

⁷¹Lawrence T. Price to all Anglo-Saxon clubs and concerned citizens, n.d., John Powell Collection, University of Virginia.

⁷²Plecker to W.B. Hesseltine, 21 August 1924, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

law to every state in the nation, appealing to them to join Virginia in a united campaign to preserve America as a "White Nation."⁷³

The first individual to voluntarily register under the new law was Governor Trinkle, whom Powell called a "real enthusiast in the movement."⁷⁴ Many Virginians heralded the law as a great moment in the state's history. The Times Dispatch proudly announced that Virginia's Racial Integrity Law:

. . . stands out as a law which may take rank in history with the half-dozen major reforms which have contributed most to the advancement of civilization It marked the promulgation by a law-making body of the theory that the survival of civilization in this country depends on the survival of the Caucasian race.⁷⁵

Even Lothrop Stoddard, in a festive mood, sent his congratulations:

"That's excellent, the way the new law is smoking out the colored gentleman in the white woodpile."⁷⁶

Yet, beneath the surface of victory lay significant problems with the law which plagued the Anglo-Saxons for the next six years. The greatest weakness arose in the failure of the Assembly to make the registration of race for Virginians born before 1912 mandatory. Another problem emerged because the county clerks responsible for granting marriage licenses lacked any guideline, other than that of "reasonable assurance," to determine whether a couple falsified their race. The third problem involved the law's inclusion of "persons who have one-sixteenth or less of the blood of the American Indian and have no other non-Caucasic blood,"

⁷³Times Dispatch, 15 June 1924.

⁷⁴Times Dispatch, 19 April 1924.

⁷⁵Times Dispatch, 15 June 1924.

⁷⁶Lothrop Stoddard to Cox, 21 October 1924, Cox Collection, Duke University.

as "white persons." This allowed mulattoes to claim Indian blood rather than Negro blood and register themselves as white. Finally, the law passed without one dollar of special appropriation. The money to finance the administration and enforcement of the law came from a percentage of the registration fee. Since registration was voluntary, the Bureau of Vital Statistics had no guarantee that it would have the money to effectively implement the law. The Anglo-Saxons knew that their law lacked teeth, but until the next General Assembly they were powerless to do anything about it. The key figure in the battle for racial integrity now became Dr. Plecker.

Plecker's task appeared enormous but he met it with aplomb. First, he notified the state workers under his supervision about the law through the March 1924 issue of the Virginia Health Bulletin. His message, like that of the Anglo-Saxons, was straightforward and simple:

This bill aims at correcting a condition which only the more thoughtful people of Virginia know the existence of.

It is estimated that there are in the State from 10,000 to 20,000, possibly more, near white people, who are known to possess an intermixture of colored blood. . . .

Their children are likely to revert to the distinctly negro type even when all apparent evidence of mixture has disappeared. . . .

The public must be led to look with scorn and contempt upon the man who will degrade himself and do harm to society by such abhorrent deeds.⁷⁷

Next, he contacted the county registrars and asked them to take great care in guaranteeing correct statements of race on registration certificates and on birth and marriage certificates. The large number of personnel under Plecker's supervision aided him in the task of implementing the law. Writing to the American Medical Association he observed:

We are able to handle the situation in a manner that is surprisingly

⁷⁷"The New Virginia Law to Preserve Racial Integrity," Virginia Health Bulletin, (March 1924), vol.16.

effective. I have the supervision of 6,000 midwives; 2,500 physicians; 1,300 local registrars and about 2,500 undertakers who report deaths, beside the Clerks who report marriages and divorces. These have all been very carefully instructed as to the law and warned as to the enforcement. We thus have one or more representative in every local community within two to five miles of every person.⁷⁸

Over the next few years, Plecker and the Bureau of Vital Statistics compiled scattered records of family histories in an effort to correctly list, by race, the population of the state. His office became a clearing house for all information on racial integrity. School authorities, in particular, appealed to the bureau for information regarding the racial standing of various mixed families who tried to enter their children in white schools.⁷⁹ However, despite the bureau's flurry of activity over race records and registration, Plecker found the new law practically unenforceable.

Problems affecting the workability and effectiveness of the Racial Integrity Law mounted daily. The law threatened the status of a large number of racially mixed residents. Prior to the legislation, individuals with a tiny percent of Negro blood had passed as whites, married whites, and sent their children to white schools. The law attempted to stop this. But, as Plecker sadly observed: "Even since the new law became effective, although the county and city clerks have been diligent in the enforcement of the law, marriages have occurred between whites and those of negro descent."⁸⁰ Near-whites circumvented the law by claiming to be of Indian-white descent rather than of Negro-white descent. The men who bore the

⁷⁸Plecker to American Medical Association, 10 September 1924, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

⁷⁹Plecker to Dr. Sam W. Small, 9 August 1930, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

⁸⁰W. A. Plecker, "Racial Improvement," reprint from Virginia Medical Monthly, November 1925, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

responsibility of preventing such a pass-over were the county clerks.

W. E. Landings, Clerk in the Circuit Court of Amherst County, prophetically wrote Powell:

The law as it stands now is certainly unsatisfactory, there being no specific manner by which a person's color can be determined, and unless some provision is made, I am afraid the law will soon become a dead letter.⁸¹

As might be expected, large numbers of complaints from county officials came into the State Registrar's office over the difficulty in classifying individuals who claimed Indian rather than Negro blood. The clerks were not judicial officers and they lacked the authority and legal devices necessary to exact the true racial identity of a couple seeking a marriage license. If the clerk had "reasonable doubt" then he was forced to rely upon the evidence of witnesses chosen by the couple to testify in their behalf.

Plecker and the Anglo-Saxons did their best to enforce the law but judicial decisions blocked them. The Sorrels Case dealt the Anglo-Saxons a legal blow. It was the first test case of the Racial Integrity Law and it came early in 1924.⁸² Atha Sorrels was of the Irish Creek tribe, a group of dubious Indian and white mix. After a clerk refused to grant her and her fiance their marriage license she entered a mandamus action to compel its issuance. At the trial the defense said that the colored classification on her birth certificate meant Indian blood. Under testimony, the called witnesses refused to state that Atha Sorrels had Negro blood. The presiding judge, Henry W. Holt, found the evidence in

⁸¹W.E. Landings, County Clerk in Amherst County, to John Powell, 18 January 1928, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

⁸²John Powell, "The Sorrels Case," n.p., n.d. manuscript, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

favor of Miss Sorrels. In his decision he attacked the Racial Integrity Law because it was too vague for literal application. The Anglo-Saxons girded themselves for an appeal. When they enlisted the aid of Virginia's Assistant Attorney General, Mr. Leon M. Bazile, however, he advised Powell to drop the case.⁸³ Powell complied with his advice and decided that the Anglo-Saxons had too much to lose if they lost the appeal. However, he wrote Judge Holt on April 6, 1925: "I have prepared a paper on this case for publication, which I am enclosing to you, the purpose of which is to cover our temporary retreat, and to consolidate our position to resist the next attack."⁸⁴ Nevertheless the retreat had begun.

From the growth of the clubs, however, one would not suspect that the Anglo-Saxons accepted this retreat. By April of 1925, just two and a half years after the Clubs' founding, there were thirty-one posts in Virginia. Furthermore, posts had been started at Columbia University, Staten Island, and the University of Pennsylvania. Efforts were underway to open a number of posts in the main towns of North Carolina. In a high mood of optimism Powell speculated:

We hope within a short time to expand over the whole country, as expressions of keen interests and sympathy have come to us from all sections, the Pacific coast, the Northwest, the Middle West, and New England.⁸⁵

The largest official undertaking in the Clubs' development came on September 21, 1925. That Monday, representatives from twenty-six posts met with delegates from the leading civic organizations of Richmond

⁸³Leon M. Bazile to Powell, 26 November 1924, Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

⁸⁴John Powell to Judge Henry W. Holt, 6 April 1925, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

⁸⁵John Powell to Stone Deavours, 20 April 1925, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

in the Flemish Room of the Jefferson Hotel. This banquet began the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' second major convention. It commenced a public relations campaign to enlist the support of Richmond's more influential citizens. The guest list included representatives from the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, the Richmond Bar Association, the Richmond Medical Association, and the Richmond Ministerial Union. The clubs' members hoped to gain publicity and converts for a new piece of legislation coming before the General Assembly.

Earlier that year, in the spring of 1925, a new issue had erupted which inflamed the race consciousness of the Anglo-Saxons. On March 15, the editor of the Newport News Daily Press, Walter Scott Copeland, opened an attack on Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, one of the nation's most prestigious all-black schools, that led to a new segregation law. Copeland came from a wealthy planter family which had owned slaves, and his views on the Negro's place in society reflected that heritage. A Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Virginia, he had been the publisher and editor of both the Newport News Daily Press and Times Herald since 1909.⁸⁶ The incident which set off Copeland's editorial attacks on Hampton Institute appears relatively inoffensive. The school possessed the community's best auditorium, Ogden Hall, and often speakers, musical productions, and plays were performed there for the benefit of both the school and community. At one of these productions, Copeland and his wife found themselves seated too close to Negro students.

Some thereafter, the Daily Press published a fiery editorial entitled "Integrity of the Anglo-Saxon Race." In sweeping generalizations

⁸⁶Albert Nelson Marquis, ed. Who's Who in America, 1928-29, vol. 15, p. 547.

Copeland wrote:

Powerful influences are at work, . . . to wipe out the color line and place the two races upon terms of absolute equality. And the ultimate aim of that movement is amalgamation; absorption of the Negro race by the white race. And that must be the cherished ambition of the Negro race - to use the blood of the Anglo-Saxon race to rid the Negro of objectionable characteristics in their form and features. It has been said of the Negro race that it was trying to "find itself." The fact is, it is trying to lose itself in the Anglo-Saxon race.⁸⁷

Copeland expanded his attacks upon Hampton Institute to include a list of alleged racial crimes meant to shock the sensibilities of any right thinking Southerner. At the top of his list was the allegation that the school taught its Negro students the heresy of racial equality. Next he charged that white teachers met with Negro teachers and students on terms of social equality and also sat together at the same table for their meals. Finally, Copeland concluded that the seating at Ogden Hall, irrespective of race, proved the crowning insult to Virginia tradition.

P. B. Young, the editor of the black Norfolk newspaper, the Journal and Guide, immediately took up the defense of Hampton Institute. Young correctly perceived that Copeland's attacks involved not only the Institute, but the entire Negro race. He reprinted the Daily Press' charges word for word and advised his readers:

It does not make very pleasant reading, but this paper feels it should be presented to our readers for the value of information it contains. It is important to know who are our friends and who are not.⁸⁸

Young felt that Negroes in Virginia desired to prevent racial amalgamation as much as any white. He believed that Negroes approved with admirable tolerance and goodwill the separation of the races only as long as such separation did not carry with it any degradation. Races could live

⁸⁷Daily Press, March 15, 1925.

⁸⁸Norfolk Journal and Guide, 28 March 1925.

peacefully side by side if both respected the rights of the other. But, Young added, Copeland's accusation misled public opinion and harmed the Negro's effort toward peaceful cooperation. Any Negro of intelligence would regard as unfriendly and threatening broad generalities that impugned his motives, stigmatized his race, disparaged his achievements, and caused needless social friction between the races.⁸⁹ He concluded his rebuttal to Copeland's demand that Hampton enforce social inequality with a stirring statement for equality:

The Daily Press should know that a human being cannot be educated to feel and act inferior. The highest aim of education is to refine, to uplift, to ennoble and to inspire. There never was any sort of education or civilization that could enslave a human soul or degrade a human instinct. Therefore its demand that the students at Hampton be taught to feel and act inferior to other humans is inconsistent with reason, and impossible.⁹⁰

Copeland refused to abandon his attacks. Instead, his polemics set the atmosphere for the founding of a Hampton post of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America. When the situation reached Powell's attention, the pianist resolved to terminate the "infection" before it spread through the social body. Powell feared, as did Copeland, that unless Hampton Institute was punished, its graduates would carry their "liberal" and "unfounded" views of equality into the community and endanger the color line. He therefore arranged with several influential citizens from the Hampton-Newport News area to speak before an audience in early May and organize an Anglo-Saxon Club post at Hampton. The Daily Press reported that Powell's presentation before a packed crowd stirred up much interest and excitement. He "proclaimed the doctrine of the purity of the white race with all the force and vigor he could produce," and "gave his hearers

⁸⁹Norfolk Journal and Guide, 14 February 1925.

⁹⁰Ibid., 28 March 1925.

strong, convincing, and absolute reasons for his organizing the Anglo-Saxon Clubs."⁹¹ Following this presentation the crowd elected officers for the post, who then vowed to campaign against the Institute until it changed its "antisocial" policies.

Back in Richmond, Powell called a meeting of Anglo-Saxon Club Post Number One on July 14. As a result, the Anglo-Saxons sent letters to twenty-two prominent Southerners who were serving as members of the Hampton-Tuskegee endowment fund, including the Governors of Virginia and North Carolina. The letters cited the allegations against Hampton Institute and urged each member to resign because:

We have our traditions in the South, our peculiar customs, our instincts and the Hampton Institute. . .has no moral right to teach and practice anything which is contrary to the Virginia spirit and our sense of propriety, nor to ignore in any degree our time honoured customs.⁹²

For the next few months, Copeland and members of the Hampton Anglo-Saxon Post kept the Hampton crisis before the community. Their campaign intensified when the Anglo-Saxons sponsored a public meeting on November 27, 1925 to protest the alleged teaching of social equality and mixed seating at the Institute. Disgruntled citizens packed the Hampton courthouse; standing room was at a premium. The crowd heard two addresses. E. S. Cox lectured on "The Racial Relations History," in which he repeated the ethnological theories found in White America, and John Powell spoke about the role of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs in maintaining racial integrity.⁹³ During the meeting, several confrontations

⁹¹"Large Crowd Heard John Powell Here Last Night," Newport News Daily Press, 3 May 1925, p.15.

⁹²Copy of letter sent by Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America, Archives Hampton Institute; Newport News Daily Press, 17 July, 1925, p. 4.

⁹³Newport News Daily Press, 28 November 1925.

occurred between the Anglo-Saxon supporters and teachers from Hampton Institute who came to defend their school. The crowd shouted down Major J. B. L. Buck and Frank Foster, two teachers. Those present asked Mr. Foster to leave after he had antagonized them by calling them mongrels. The momentum of the crowd was not to be stopped. They drew up a resolution that asked the Virginia General Assembly to compel the separation of the races in places which charged public admission:

Be it resolved by 300 citizens of Elizabeth City county Virginia. . . We protest against the doctrines and teachings of social equality, with its resultant tendency towards racial amalgamation and the indiscriminate seating of whites and blacks in public halls, as fostered, fashioned, and founded at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute.⁹⁴

Those present requested that their newly-elected Delegate, George Alvin Massenburg, introduce the resolution before the upcoming General Assembly. Henceforth the resolution would become known as the Massenburg Bill.

The Anglo-Saxons encountered resistance to their bill from the liberal editor of the Norfolk Virginia-Pilot, Louis Isaac Jaffe. Jaffe, a member of the Norfolk Interracial Commission, believed in the preservation of racial integrity but not in the "flat ethnology" that the legislature of Virginia pursued in its effort to secure it. He criticized the members of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs and the General Assembly for their general ignorance of ethnology and science. In an insightful editorial on the Massenburg "nostrum" to racial amalgamation, Jaffe observed:

At this particular moment in our communal thinking we are obsessed with the fear that the white race will be mongrelized and its culture lost to the world. The pseudo-scientific alarms of our Lothrop Stoddards and Madison Grants have, with the lumbering assistance of the Ku Klux Klan and later, with the help of the refined casuistry of our Anglo-Saxon Clubs, been invested with apostolic authority. As if the subject had not been already

⁹⁴Ibid.

sufficiently bedeviled by the emotional alarmists, the professional politicians have added a touch of dementia all their own. . . .⁹⁵

While Jaffe accepted the "expediency of social separateness" for the white and black races, he nevertheless resented the Clubs' method of enforcement. He felt that their claims were exaggerated and unfounded. Furthermore, he thought that the Massenburg bill and the ideology behind it undermined any effort to handle the race problem in a calm and rational manner. He concluded with the quip: "May heaven preserve us from the antics of our present race of purifiers."⁹⁶ (Three years later, Jaffe, because of his promotion of the nation's first anti-lynching law, received the Pulitzer prize for the best newspaper editorial of 1929.)⁹⁷

During the Anglo-Saxon campaign for the Massenburg Bill, the white principal of Hampton Institute, Dr. James E. Gregg, and his board of trustees received pressure from the black community to publicly refute the accusations against their school. Instead, they chose to follow a course of silence and discretion because they did not want the Anglo-Saxons to exaggerate their statements.⁹⁸ Early in the battle for segregation, Gregg showed a willingness to fight the bill publicly. However, William Howard Taft, the president of Hampton Institute's Board of Trustees, like a majority of the trustees, believed that an official protest would be unwise.⁹⁹ Therefore, Gregg kept away from the public hearings on the

⁹⁵The Virginia-Pilot, 8 February 1926.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷A.N. Marquis, ed., Who's Who in America, (Chicago, Ill.: 1934-1935), vol. 18, p. 1268; see also Jaffe Papers at University of Virginia.

⁹⁸Howard V. Young, Jr., "William Howard Taft and Hampton Institute," in Keith L. Schall, ed., Stony the Road, (University of Virginia Press, 1977).

⁹⁹James E. Gregg Papers, Hampton Institute.

bill in order to give the Anglo-Saxons and their political allies no opportunity for asking embarrassing questions that might cause a sensation.

On March 22, 1926 the act requiring the separation of white and colored persons at public halls became law. Reflecting upon this event, Gregg wrote one of his friends:

I myself am anxious not to put the Institution into the position of fighting with the people of Virginia, for I believe that the great majority of them, especially of those who do their own thinking, are sympathetic and friendly. Certainly the Governor is; he [Harry F. Byrd] told me himself that he regretted the passage of the bill, should have voted against it if he had been in the Senate, and was willing to let it become law only without his signature.¹⁰⁰

Beyond alienating the Negroes in Hampton, the law had little real effect on the Institution. When they learned that the bill had become law, Gregg and the trustees decreed that all pay entertainments, church and chapel exercises, and other assemblages were to be considered as private affairs and thus not subject to the law's jurisdiction. In effect, this limited the school's facilities to its students, alumni and family, employees and their families, and the black community.¹⁰¹ While Gregg considered taking the law to court, and most of his black faculty supported this plan, he soon resolved to let the issue fade from the mind of the public. As one of his academic allies, R. E. Blackwell, president of Randolph-Macon College, observed: "The mob has had its victim and might be satisfied, but if the victim is suddenly snatched from it, it will turn on you in other ways."¹⁰² Blackwell spoke for the majority of liberal Virginians when he said that nothing would be more harmful to the cause of racial

¹⁰⁰Dr. James E. Gregg to John Weymoth, 31 March 1926, Gregg Papers, Hampton Institute.

¹⁰¹"Notice to Students, Alumni and Employees of Hampton Institute," poster 8 June 1926, Gregg Papers, Hampton Institute.

¹⁰²R.E. Blackwell to Gregg, 23 March 1926, Gregg Papers, Hampton Institute.

good feeling than the continued agitation of the subject which would follow a legal battle. This would not only prejudice the people of the state against Hampton Institute, but it would arouse in the minds of Negroes false hopes of destroying all segregation.¹⁰³ Rather than dispel race prejudice such an event would merely confirm the Anglo-Saxon's fear of a mulatto conspiracy.

The philosophy behind the Massenburg Bill reflected the Anglo-Saxons' obsession with maintaining the racial integrity of the white race. To many Southerners, particularly to the members of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs, social equality for the Negro was synonymous with racial intermarriage and amalgamation. Symbolically, the Massenburg Bill reaffirmed the color line, and the color line established the boundary that defined the Negro's inferior role in society. If Virginians allowed the color line to waver then, they feared, Negroes might gain social equality with whites. The Anglo-Saxons imagined that black equality would inevitably lead to greater social, which included sexual, contact. Once this happened, the social fabric, as they perceived it, would be irreparably damaged.

Racial separation was the key to maintaining the color line. Virginians, such as Powell and Copeland, considered segregation to be the best means of keeping the Negro in his place and thus guaranteeing social harmony. Writing to the editor of the Richmond Times Dispatch Copeland observed:

The races live together in peace and friendliness because they live separately, however paradoxical that may seem. And the preservation of the customs and traditions of Virginia, are necessary to preserve the peace.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Blackwell to Gregg, 20 April 1926, Gregg Papers, Hampton Institute.

¹⁰⁴Copeland to Editor of Times Dispatch, 3 March 1926, Copeland Papers, Univ. of Virginia.

If separation of the races ended, Powell claimed, violence and bloodshed would be inevitable. He reasoned that individual contact with Negroes could not be avoided but that all relationships, even if only the outer semblance of social contact, had to be uncompromisingly frowned upon.¹⁰⁵

In the minds of the Anglo-Saxon Club members, the Hampton crisis threatened the traditional structure of inequality and separation. The Massenburg Bill was a reminder to Negroes and liberal whites that attempts to challenge Virginia's color line would not go unpunished by the majority of white citizens.

The philosophy behind the Massenburg Bill also reflected the Anglo-Saxons' opinion of Negro education. Traditionally, black education in Virginia was designed to prepare Negroes for their inferior role in white society. Recently, however, the Anglo-Saxons perceived a trend in black education in which Negroes learned to question their inferiority and their separate place in society. The Anglo-Saxons interpreted this as another indication that blacks wanted to pass over into white society. Thus, according to Plecker: "The universal education of the negro in recent years has made mulattoes and near-whites in particular, ambitious to leave their race and become lost in the white."¹⁰⁶ This trend appeared especially in Northern states and Southerners feared that it might spread southward. As one of Cox's correspondents crudely described:

The trouble now is that with the breaking down of this caste system in the north the mulatto, especially since the Great War, has begun to clamor for social equality, including white intermarriage and unless this idea is checked at once by statute or public sentiment or both, the negroes in the north will rapidly bleach out, which

¹⁰⁵ John Powell, "The Last Stand," Richmond Times Dispatch, 2 March 1926, p. 20.

¹⁰⁶ Plecker to Charles Murphy, 27 November 1929, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

in turn will mean that the southern negro will be affected by similar views.¹⁰⁷

Such beliefs enabled the Anglo-Saxons to view the situation at Hampton Institute as part of a larger Negro conspiracy to undermine white supremacy. Given their ideology, and the atmosphere created by Copeland's Daily Press editorials, it seems inconceivable that they could have reacted otherwise.

When the Massenburg Bill passed in 1926, approximately forty posts of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs existed throughout Virginia. The members had just experienced their second legislative victory; it was high tide for the Anglo-Saxons.

The Racial Integrity Law, however, was not working properly. The Sorrels case illustrated the law's greatest weakness: the clause which allowed persons with no more than 1/16 Indian blood to register as white. This clause permitted Atha Sorrels to win her case and countless other mulattoes and mix-breeds to claim Indian rather than Negro ancestry. Therefore, the Anglo-Saxons attempted to amend the 1924 Racial Integrity Law. They planned to introduce their amendments before the 1926 session of the General Assembly. Their amendment defined a white person as one "whose blood is entirely white, having no known demonstrable or ascertainable admixture of the blood of another race."¹⁰⁸ The Anglo-Saxons believed that this definition would give Placker and his local registrars a clearer criterion to deny marriage licenses to those of questionable ancestry.

¹⁰⁷ William W. Gregg to Cox, 16 June 1924, Cox Collection, Duke University.

¹⁰⁸ House Bill 224 To amend and react an act entitled "An act to preserve racial integrity," Rough House Bills, Session January 13-March 23, 1926, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

On February 16, 1926 the Richmond Times Dispatch ran a series of articles written by Powell entitled, "The Last Stand." The articles contained examples of miscegenation, furnished by Plecker and the Bureau of Vital Statistics, and they came from every Congressional district in the state. Powell presented the cases in an effort to illustrate the need of the General Assembly to amend the Racial Integrity Act of 1924. The main failing of the present law lay in its inability to correctly classify the pseudo-Indian groups across the state, such as the Chickahomins, Croatan, Melungeons, Irish Creek, Pamunkeys, and the Mattaponis. Powell, who had been advised by Plecker on the matter, claimed that all of these Indians had Negro blood and should be classified as non-whites. A book entitled, Mongrel Virginians, by I. E. McDougale, a sociology professor at Goucher College, and Dr. A. H. Estabrook, a specialist in eugenic research at the Carnegie Institute of Washington, provided additional information on the pervasive existence of Negro blood among Virginia Indians.

In "The Last Stand" series Powell noted that the mulatto population actively resisted the law. He quoted an informant who warned: "If they should learn that I am the informant I would have to leave the community or live in fear and dread as I know my life would be in danger."¹⁰⁹ For too many years near-whites had passed as whites and the proper recording of these citizens, Powell reflected, now met with open hostility. One citizen of Blacksburg predicted that it would be necessary to take a company of troops into the county if any attempt was made to correctly register the citizens.¹¹⁰ Powell sadly observed:

¹⁰⁹ John Powell, "The Last Stand," Richmond Times Dispatch, 27 February 1926, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 24 February 1926, p. 7.

It is almost impossible to get frank reports on vital statistics. Such reports would endanger the lives of the local registrars and doctors.¹¹¹

Throughout the "Last Stand" series, Powell hoped to show the widespread occurrences of miscegenation in Virginia and the existing law's failure to cope with it. He tried to rally public support to the amendments before the General Assembly. To the disappointment of Powell and the Anglo-Saxon Clubs, the amendments failed to pass. However, because the Massenburg Bill passed, there was little cause for anxiety. The Clubs resolved to try again.

In 1928, the Anglo-Saxons took a different approach to amending the Racial Integrity Law. They attempted to amend Section 67 of the Code of Virginia, which defined colored persons and Indians. Under the 1924 code, this section maintained that only persons who had 1/16 or more Negro blood were colored.¹¹² Of course such a definition was unacceptable to leaders like Powell who believed that "one drop of Negro blood makes the Negro." Therefore, the Anglo-Saxons' amendment defined a colored person as anyone "who is descended on the part of the father or mother from negro ancestors, without reference to or limit of time or number of generations removed."¹¹³ In addition, they defined an Indian as: "Every person not a colored person, having one fourth or more of Indian blood." Again the Senate rejected their amendments.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹Ibid., 25 February 1926, p. 7.

¹¹²Virginia Code of 1924, Section 67.

¹¹³House Bill 2, "A bill to Amend and re-enact section 67 of the Code of Virginia, defining colored persons and Indians," Rough House Bills, Session Jan. 11 - March 19, 1928, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

¹¹⁴See Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia for 1926 and 1928.

Finally, in 1930, the Anglo-Saxons succeeded in amending Code 67. Their bill defining colored persons passed both the House and Senate, and in part read: "Every person in whom there is ascertainable any negro blood shall be deemed and taken to be a colored person."¹¹⁵ To appease the members of the Indian tribes, like the Pamunkey and Chickahomony, whose lobbying efforts had largely been responsible for the bill's defeat in 1926 and 1928, the code further stated that members of Indian tribes living on reservations "having 1/4 or more of Indian blood and less than 1/16 of negro blood shall be deemed tribal Indians so long as they are domiciled on said reservation."¹¹⁶ This amendment was the Anglo-Saxons' final political expression. With it, the clubs achieved, at least on paper, the primary political objectives which they had set in the fall of 1922.

The political achievements of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs are public record and thus they can be documented. However, the inner workings of the Clubs, how they developed, who their members were, what went on during their meetings, and the general response of the public to them, are more difficult to understand. The Clubs left few records and therefore little is known about them. They published no newsletter and exceptionally few pamphlets. Newspapers recorded their meetings, but only when they concerned political issues like the Racial Integrity Act and the Massenburg Bill. Yet, with some imagination and the assistance of Powell's and Cox's manuscripts, one can partially reconstruct the Clubs' internal developments.

¹¹⁵Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, Commencing January 8, 1930, An Act to amend and re-enact Section 67 of the Code of Virginia.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

The years between 1922 and 1926 witnessed a period of Anglo-Saxon growth that reflected Powell's technique of expansion. He explained the methods used to organize a club in a letter to a Mississippi gentleman interested in forming a post there:

. . . we have no specific order of procedure in organizing our posts. The usual method has been to get together groups of men in the various localities, present the subject to them, request a vote as to the willingness of the group to proceed further, and elect officers.¹¹⁷

The opening meeting would center around presentations by Powell and Cox on the threat of mongrelization and the ways to stop it. After the Racial Integrity Law passed, they distributed Plecker's registration certificates among the audience and urged every man present to register his race and that of his family. Usually, the Anglo-Saxons experienced little difficulty in starting a post if newspapers reported a race problem which captured the community's attention. When this occurred, the formation of a club became a vehicle for outraged citizens to band together and lobby for racial legislation, as in Hampton, on May 2, 1925. It appears that the expansion of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs paralleled the growth of the public's political sensitivity to race problems. After the Racial Integrity Law of 1924 and the Massenburg Segregation Law of 1926, few racial issues generated the political notoriety necessary to attract Virginians into the clubs.

Who exactly were the members of these clubs? In the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' constitution, Powell boasted: "We have already among our membership the leading citizens of this state, men prominent in education, medicine, law, finance and leading ministers of the Gospel

¹¹⁷John Powell to Stone Deavours, 20 April 1925, John Powell Collection, University of Virginia.

irrespective of political affiliation."¹¹⁸ It is difficult to determine whether or not this claim was an idle boast. Few membership lists remain, but what can be drawn from the leadership of the movement is that many of the officers were indeed professional men. Probably, a mindset of racial determinism predisposed their attitudes about society. They saw themselves as community leaders and felt responsible for the maintenance of order in a white society. Oftentimes, club members came from the ranks of established organizations like the American Legion and the Kiwanis Club. Some were in positions of power and influence. For example, a member of Post Number One, John Archer Carter, worked for the Richmond Times Dispatch. He wrote Powell:

Please call upon me whenever I can help us with news story or editorial. The editorial may not always find its way to the paper, for I am not the last authority in such matters. But sometimes it will.¹¹⁹

In addition, the involvement of politicians such as Governor E. Lee Trinkle, lawyers such as the state's Assistant Attorney General, Leon M. Bazile, ministers such as the Reverend Beverly D. Tucker, Jr., rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, and college professors on the campuses of the University of Virginia, William and Mary, Randolph Macon, Virginia Military Institute, University of Richmond, University of Pennsylvania, and Columbia, gave some support to Powell's assertion that the membership came from influential sectors of society.

The Anglo-Saxon Clubs suffered from organizational problems.

In local matters, each post usually pursued its own interests. No network

¹¹⁸"Constitution of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America," pamphlet, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

¹¹⁹John Archer Carter to John Powell, 10 December 1924, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

of communication existed to give the posts any centralized directive. Two kinds of posts existed; regular posts, which influenced public opinion, and college posts, which prepared students for future leadership in the movement.¹²⁰ Regular posts lobbied for racial legislation while college posts usually sponsored lectures dealing with race problems and race history. (Ironically, by the time most students graduated, the clubs were no longer active.) Little evidence exists that the clubs maintained regular meetings, or even that they met after the initial meeting to elect officers, talk about a particular race issue, and maybe sign a petition. With the exception of the 1923 and 1925 conventions, representatives never met to organize a national movement. Due to the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' decentralized structure, separate posts remained active only so long as tangible political goals remained to enlist their support.

Overall, the public's response to the Anglo-Saxons and their ideology was favorable. With the passage of the Racial Integrity Law, Virginians appeared to take on a new interest in race. In his spare time, Powell continued to speak in behalf of the Clubs on the importance of racial integrity. The response of the Richmond's Woman's Club librarian to his presentation was typical: "Mr. Powell's talk awakened considerable interest in the race problem, and I wish to place several books, dealing intelligently with the subject, in reach of our club members."¹²¹ Equally typical was the doctor from Abington, Virginia who expressed an interest in forming an Anglo-Saxon Club in his town, but

¹²⁰Lawrence T. Price, "Methods of Inaugurating Posts," Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America, pamphlet, 1925, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

¹²¹Alice B. Coleman to Cox, 11 December 1924, Cox Collection Duke Univ.

was unwilling to take on an active role because of the possible effect it might have upon his practice. However, he promised to arouse interest in the Clubs in his own quiet way.¹²² Brigadier General A. J. Bowley, commander of Fort Bragg, North Carolina, expressed a similar reservation. After receiving Anglo-Saxon literature from John Powell he wrote:

Please be very careful not to mention my name in connection with this propaganda, or under any circumstances to allow my name to be published in print. You will understand that in my official position, I cannot afford to have it known that I have taken any interest in your organization. However, I can do a great deal more good by quiet work on the side than I could in the open.¹²³

Many people seemed willing to agree with the Anglo-Saxons' goals and support their proposed legislation. Yet, when it came time to publicly commit themselves as full-fledged members, the number of such supporters decreased.

Nevertheless, the Clubs were not without their critics. At a meeting of the Washington and Lee Anglo-Saxon Post in 1925, a member of the faculty who had been favorably disposed to the idea of racial integrity, made this report to Dr. Plecker:

I honestly believe that Mr. Powell's position is based upon a profound misconception of the data of history, and upon a series of logical fallacies so patent that even a college freshman could point them out. I attended the lecture by Mr. Cox (?) with sympathetic leanings toward anything which would offer any suggestion that might prove helpful in solving the Negro Problem. But Mr. Cox's (?) treatment of the subject was so obviously superficial and uninformed in spite of the claims made for him by Mr. Powell as to his erudition and scholarship that I was much disappointed and entirely alienated.¹²⁴

The leading reason behind such alienation was Powell's and Cox's promotion

¹²²Plecker to Cox, 24 October 1924, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

¹²³A.J. Bowley, Brigadier General U.S. Army, to John Powell, 7 February 1925, John Powell Collection, Univ. of Virginia.

¹²⁴Albert Levitt to Plecker, 19 April 1925, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

of colonization as the solution to the race problem. Colonization (or repatriation) was Cox's scheme whereby the United States Congress would pass a Constitutional Amendment that would provide for and finance the return of all Negroes in America to Africa. By 1925, Powell had publicly committed the Anglo-Saxon Clubs to the support of Cox's plan. Many staunch believers in racial integrity found this solution to be nothing short of fantastic. Powell and Cox continued to support racial integrity legislation, but only as a temporary expedient to the final solution, colonization.

The black response to the Anglo-Saxon Clubs was predictably hostile. Plecker reported in 1925 that the Anglo-Saxons' Racial Integrity Law aroused bitter animosity from Negro newspapers across the country and from such groups as the New York Association for the Improvement of the Colored Race. These Negroes conducted a campaign of opposition by mailing to the Bureau of Vital Statistics marked copies of literature that refuted the Anglo-Saxon claim of black inferiority. Almost always, Plecker threw them away before reading them. With typical insensitivity he remarked: "I had no idea that the negroes were as bitter, and as determined to pass over into the white race."¹²⁵

The Virginia black newspaper which opposed Powell, Cox, and Plecker most often was P. B. Young's Norfolk Journal and Guide. Young believed that the Anglo-Saxons distorted the race issue through the dissemination of slanderous propaganda. He particularly attacked Dr. Plecker for sending such material through the Bureau of Vital Statistics under official sanction.¹²⁶

¹²⁵Plecker to Stone Deavours, 15 April 1925, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

¹²⁶Norfolk Journal and Guide, 14 February 1925.

(This episode nearly cost Plecker his job.) Whenever possible, the Journal and Guide rebelled against the pseudo-scientific literature on race. In a book review of Cox's White America, Walter Jeremiah Scott acidly wrote: "We may readily infer, all things being equal, that the present civilization is, indeed in danger of deterioration, if a work like this from a so-called trained intellect can gain the public ear and pass muster as the genuine article."¹²⁷

Other black newspapers learned of the activities of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs and wrote editorials against their racist campaigns. The Pittsburgh Courier on September 19, 1925 stated: "The negroes of Richmond are fed up on the kind of 'rot and drival' that has continually been issued by such men as John Powell, Earnest Cox, Dr. W. A. Plecker and there [sic] gang of white supremacy craving hoodlums."¹²⁸ The editor of the Philadelphia Tribune wrote Cox:

Has it ever occurred to you and other white men with the superiority complex that the mere fact that you are scared stiff on account of the strength and rapid progress of the race that you brand inferior, kills the argument that the Negro cannot compete effectively with the white race?¹²⁹

Of course, the heart of the race problem was the Anglo-Saxons' determination to prevent Negroes from disproving the racist dogma of innate Negro inferiority. Thus, Cox ignored the Tribune's editor just as easily as Plecker threw away most pro-Negro literature without reading it. No argument from either Negro or Caucasian could dissuade the Anglo-Saxons

¹²⁷Walter Jeremiah Scott, "Book Review on White America," Norfolk Journal and Guide, 22 August 1925.

¹²⁸The Pittsburgh Courier, 19 September 1925.

¹²⁹E. Washington Rhodes to Cox, 8 April 1925, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

from their commitment to racial integrity. Like religious fanatics they closed their minds because they already possessed the truth.

The Anglo-Saxons did not realize it but the intellectual atmosphere conducive to scientific racism was coming to an end. Toward the close of the 1920's, professional scientists and academicians began to publicly denounce their past role in supporting racism.¹³⁰ New schools of thought developed in anthropology, sociology, psychology, genetics, and biology, that questioned the extent to which heredity determined an individual's psychology and mental ability. Anthropology was the first academic field to challenge racial stereotypes.¹³¹ Under the tutelage of Franz Boas at Columbia University, several generations of young anthropologists emerged to spread the doctrine of cultural relativism. One of Boas's students, Robert Lowie, wrote an important article for the American Anthropologist in which he expressed his rejection of racist doctrines. Lowie challenged the evidence which supported either the superiority or inferiority of one race over another. He concluded that it was the duty of psychology and anthropology "to denounce the charlatanism so prevalent in this field and to repudiate not biology but sham biology that invents facts and even biological 'laws' to support personal view."¹³²

A new appreciation for the interrelationship between heredity and environment grew during the twenties and by 1930 a large number of influential

¹³⁰For discussion see Stanley Coben, "The Assault on Victorianism in the Twentieth Century," American Quarterly, volume 27 (December 1975), 604-625; George W. Stocking, Race, Culture and Evolution, (The Free Press, 1968).

¹³¹Annemarie de Waal Malefijt, Images of Man, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974).

¹³²Robert H. Lowie, "Psychology, Anthropology, and Race," American Anthropologist, vol. 25 (July-September, 1923), p. 470.

social scientists had publicly testified to drastic changes in their opinions about race.¹³³ Among the more prominent social scientists to undergo a radical readjustment of attitude were Howard Odum, Professor of Political Science at Columbia; Edward A. Ross, Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin; and Carl C. Bigham, the Princeton psychologist who helped devise the army intelligence tests during World War I. In 1928, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science devoted a second volume to the Negro because of recent scientific breakthroughs on race and heredity. In the introduction, Donald Young, the editor and an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, announced:

Much has happened since 1913 to make it desirable that another volume be devoted to the relationships between the colored and white races in the United States. In fact, since that time students of race as well as laymen have had to discount or even reverse many of their theories concerning 'trends' and 'solutions' of Negro developments and 'problems.'¹³⁴

To document the new trend in science the Journal of Negro Education conducted a survey of scientific attitudes on race in 1929. Out of the scientists surveyed, only four per cent still believed in the genetic inferiority of Negroes, nineteen percent agreed that Negroes seemed inferior, and about half denied the existence of racial differences and even doubted the significance of race.¹³⁵

Increasingly, scientists examined, and found unsupportable, assumptions which racists accepted. In genetics, research by Thomas

¹³³Stanley Coben, "The Assault on Victorianism," p.613.

¹³⁴David Young, ed. "The American Negro," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol. 140 (Nov. 1928), cited by Stanley Coben, "The Assault on Victorianism."

¹³⁵Charles H. Thompson, "The Conclusion of Scientists Relative to Racial Differences," Journal of Negro Education, vol. 3 (1934), 494-512, cited by Stanley Coben, "The Assault on Victorianism."

Hunt Morgan showed that human heredity was more complex than geneticists had previously thought. In psychology, the former professor of Experimental Psychology, John B. Watson, turned away from hereditarianism and argued for the limitless plasticity of the infant irregardless of race. W. E. Castle, the eminent biologist and geneticist, attacked the biological assumption that racial interbreeding threatened either race's mental or psychological characteristics. His 1926 article, "Biological and Social Consequences of Race Crossing," ended: "So far as a biologist can see, human race problems are not biological problems any more than rabbit crosses are social problems."¹³⁶

As a result of the changing attitudes on race among American scholars during the late 1920's, racist popularizers such as Grant, Stoddard, Cox, and their followers came increasingly under the attack of social scientists. The influence of the pseudo-scientists remained but it lacked any pretense of academic approval. After 1930, blatant racist assumptions fell from the social discourse of men and women who claimed to be educated and reasonable. In this altered atmosphere the Anglo-Saxons found themselves increasingly on the defensive. Of course there is no evidence that Cox, Powell, or Plecker came to doubt their views. Instead, Powell warned his audiences to avoid men who called themselves ethnologists and anthropologists and he particularly criticized the contentions of Professor Boas.¹³⁷ Years later, Cox would refer to Boas as "a naturalized citizen of the United States, who labored long and with great energy to break down the American concepts of race and promote

¹³⁶W.E. Castle, "Biological and Social Consequences of Race Crossing," American Journal of Physical Anthropology, vol. 9 (April-June 1926), no. 2, p.156.

¹³⁷Newport News Times Herald, 6 May 1925.

general miscegenation."¹³⁸ And so, Powell, Cox, and Plecker went on with their work oblivious to the intellectual changes of their time, mindful only of an unreasonable fear, amalgamation.

The demise of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs came about perhaps not so much because of the changing intellectual climate but because of the inertia of their leaders and lack of interest from the public. Powell created the Clubs primarily as a means to generate public support for racial integrity legislation. While he envisioned a spreading national movement he did so in terms of a lobbying movement for better racial integrity laws. According to Powell's original conception, Anglo-Saxon Clubs would spread to states without strong miscegenation laws. Through a grass roots effort, similar to that made in Virginia, these states would pass stricter laws to protect the Caucasian's racial purity. In Virginia, after the desired laws passed, the clubs lacked any issue to keep them busy and to keep the public aroused. They were a means to an end, and once they achieved the end, they disbanded.

Another aspect to the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' demise was Powell's growing interest in the repatriation of the American Negro. Powell increasingly used his Anglo-Saxon platform to publicize Cox's colonization efforts. Meanwhile, Cox devoted more and more of his time to Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. Garvey wanted America's Negroes to return with him to Liberia. After Cox's publication of White America, Garvey recognized a racial temperament which his movement could find useful and a temporary alliance was arranged.¹³⁹ By 1925,

¹³⁸E.S. Cox, "My Printed Words," description of Cox collection at Duke Univ.

¹³⁹For a full discussion of the alliance between Cox and the U.N.I.A. see Hedlin, "Earnest Cox and Colonization."

Cox had convinced Powell that nothing short of the complete geographical separation of Negroes could fulfill his wish for absolute white racial integrity. The Anglo-Saxon movement and racial integrity were therefore temporary expedients until Congress amended the Constitution and passed a colonization bill. For obviously practical reasons, few Virginians showed any willingness to support such a bizarre scheme.

A final reason for the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' demise was their failure to find adequate leadership and finances.¹⁴⁰ While Powell inaugurated the movement and Dr. Lawrence T. Price served as the national president, neither could take time from their professional work to promote the Clubs over any extended length of time. Plecker was a state official and Cox devoted his spare time to the repatriation movement. Thus, no one remained to provide the leadership necessary to turn the Anglo-Saxon Clubs into a movement capable of sustaining itself. Furthermore, the Clubs had little or no money. They could not employ agents to organize new clubs and they lacked the funds to publish a newsletter. With neither funds nor prolonged leadership, the Clubs had little chance to grow beyond the events of 1924 and 1926.

In 1935, the Eugenics Research Association requested to know what became of the Virginia organization that had fostered the Racial Integrity Act. Dr. Plecker responded that after the passage of the 1930 amendment to Section 67 of the Virginia Code, the original purpose of the Clubs had been achieved and they ceased to function. He observed that the same people who were once active in the clubs still lived and showed interest in racial matters, but that no active organization remained. All that

¹⁴⁰Plecker to Milford W. Howard, 10 September 1925, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

remained of the Anglo-Saxon movement for racial integrity was his work at the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

At this time our office, the Bureau of Vital Statistics, is, as far as I know, the only active agency in Virginia working to further the cause of racial integrity and the prevention of racial intermixture. . . . I know of no other similar effort being made in this country or elsewhere.¹⁴¹

What became of the triumvirate and how did they assess their accomplishments? For Powell, the Clubs' achievements were ephemeral. In a 1935 conference with Stanton D. Wicks, a representative from the Eugenics Record Office, he expressed his belief that a deliberate effort to destroy the white race in America still existed but that whites failed to grasp the gravity of the danger. In a resentful mood he observed:

Negroes are the only ones to take up this with any enthusiasm. Whites have ignored us.¹⁴²

Powell continued to perform piano concerts and write musical compositions which the critics always praised. However, his days as an organizer of a racist political movement had ended. After his death in 1963, Virginus Dabney, editor of the Richmond Times Dispatch wrote:

Mr. Powell's passing at 80 removes one of the genuinely great Virginians of modern times. In personality and character he was truly exceptional, and as a pianist and composer he was unique in the annals of the Old Dominion.¹⁴³

Today, Virginians remember John Powell the musician and composer, not John Powell the racist.

Cox remained active in the colonization movement and published two later books, Teutonic Unity and Black Belt Around the World. During

¹⁴¹Plecker to Hilda H. Wullen, 4 November 1935, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

¹⁴²Conference of Mr. Stanton D. Wicks, John Powell, E.S. Cox, W.A. Plecker, 30 November 1935, n.p., Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

¹⁴³Virginus Dabney, "John Powell," Richmond Times Dispatch, 17 August 1963.

the 1950's and early 1960's he became a hero and an inspiration to the Citizens Council anti-desegregation movement . The fame and success that eluded him as a young man came during the final years of his life. He was the last of the Madison Grants and Lothrop Stoddards. A new generation of white supremacists respected him because he was the final survivor of an age which had been more hospitable to racism. For over forty years Cox never abandoned his dream of colonization. A reporter for the Richmond News Leader said in 1966 that Cox "spoke of the matter as still pending, and he expected to be called back at any time to testify once more." Cox never married. When he died in 1966 "he was known to be living in a small furnished room in an ancient building. . .surrounded by books stacked to the ceiling, ignored by and ignoring Richmond while he carried on a world-wide correspondence, and universities vied for his personal papers."¹⁴⁴

The final figure in the Anglo-Saxon triumvirate, W. A. Plecker, was perhaps the most important figure in the Anglo-Saxons' plea for racial integrity. Without his commitment to white racial purity, the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 would have existed only on paper. Plecker's zealous enforcement of the law kept the issue of racial integrity alive during the 1920's. His bureau became one of the nation's most important informational centers on the effect of amalgamation and cross-breeding of races. When it came time to assess the bureau's achievements in the field of racial integrity Plecker observed:

In spite of almost a single-handed contest, we have accomplished a great deal and have several thousand of these people [near-whites] definitely listed as to their racial origin. We have prevented a number of marriages and assisted in the annulment of other interracial marriages.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴Richmond News Leader, 30 April 1966.

¹⁴⁵Plecker to Dr. W.B. Palmer, 25 March 1935, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

Plecker allowed no taint of sentimentalism to interfere with his enforcement. As he responded to the editor of the Lexington Gazette: "We cannot afford to let pity for these miserable people influence us in what is safe and right."¹⁴⁶ For Plecker this meant the preservation of the white blood line at all costs. In 1935 he wrote to Dr. W. Gross, Director of the Bureau of Human Betterment and Eugenics in Berlin:

I have been much interested in the newspaper reports of the sterilization of some six hundred children born to German women by negro fathers following the stay of these troupes [sic] in Germany. I hope that this work has been completed and that not one has been missed. I sometimes regret that we have not the authority to put some measures in practice in Virginia.¹⁴⁷

By this time, Plecker was 74 years old and firmly convinced that any means toward racial integrity justified the end of continued Western civilization. He remained the director of Virginia's Bureau of Vital Statistics until 1946, one year before his death.

After Plecker died, no one in the bureau took up his uncompromising pursuit of racial integrity. But the law remained. In 1955, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals ruled in Naim v. Naim that Virginia's miscegenation law did not constitute a denial of due process and that racial classifications were indeed valid. The court maintained that it found no requirement in the United States Constitution that states must "permit the corruption of blood even though it weaken or destroy the quality of its citizenship."¹⁴⁸ In its unanimous decision, the court reiterated one of the Anglo-Saxons' basic claims:

¹⁴⁶Plecker to William R. Kennedy, 16 September 1924, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

¹⁴⁷Plecker to Dr. W. Gross, 3 July 1935, Cox Collection, Duke Univ.

¹⁴⁸Naim v. Naim, 197 Va. 80 (1955).

Both sacred and secular history teach that nations and races have better advanced in human progress when they cultivated their own distinctive characteristics and culture and developed their own peculiar genius.¹⁴⁹

Virginia's Racial Integrity Law survived until 1967, when the United States Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional.¹⁵⁰ The case, Loving v. Virginia, was a landmark decision for the civil rights movement. The court unanimously ruled that Virginia's law to prevent marriages between persons solely on the basis of racial classification violated the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. With this decision, a new atmosphere of racial awareness finally caught up with the old.

The Anglo-Saxons regarded themselves as the precursors of a new generation enlightened by modern scientific and historical "truths," but their ideology actually reflected the worn racist fears of an older age. They hoped that their clubs would be the cornerstone of a nationwide movement for racial integrity. Instead, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs formed the capstone to intellectual racism in America. The Clubs' leaders could not imagine that the political structure of racism would ever collapse. Such an event has apparently occurred since the onset of the civil rights movement. Today the plea for racial integrity is anachronistic, yet, even now, the sentiment behind it, unfortunately, is not.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Loving v. Virginia, 388 U.S. 1 (1967).

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