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ORGANIZED LABOR AND THE NEGRO

CHARLES H. WESLEY

Organized Labor throughout its history in the United States has not only failed to unite its forces but it has also permitted racial barriers to maintain additional divisions in its ranks. From the beginning of the organized labor movement to the present day, the status of the Negro worker has presented a situation which has been difficult for labor to settle satisfactorily. The first national labor union, the National Labor Union, which was organized in 1866 and held its first convention in 1869, agreed to admit Negroes to membership.¹ Local unions in subsequent years nullified these statements. These denials led Negroes to establish separate labor organizations. The first of these met in Washington, D.C., in 1869. This convention is important only in the fact that it was the first successful attempt of Negroes to organize on a national basis after the Civil War. The Knights of Labor, which was also organized in 1869, planned, according to its declarations, to unite all workers in a common cause. Negroes joined the organization in large numbers because it claimed to make no distinction of race. These organizations composing the American Labor Movement of earlier years failed in their purposes either to organize labor or to influence the status of Negro workers.²

¹ *Washington (D.C.) Daily Morning Chronicle*, December 3, 6, 9, 11, 1869; See also *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, Vol. IX, pp. 160, 247-253.

² For a detailed account of these events, see Charles H. Wesley, *Negro Labor in the United States, 1850-1925*, Chapters VI and IX. New York: Vanguard Press, 1927.

EARLY POLICIES OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

The American Federation of Labor since its inception in 1881 has declared in various ways that all workers should be organized without regard to race, creed, color, or sex.³ One of its earliest declarations was, "it is the duty of the working people of the United States to organize and cooperate for the protection of all workers without regard to nationality, sex, politics, color or religion." During the Detroit Convention of 1890, a resolution was passed stating that "the convention looked with disfavor upon trade unions having provisions which exclude from membership persons on account of race or color." During the conventions of 1892, 1893, 1894, and 1895, either by resolution or by speeches, similar declarations were made.⁴ When it was reported to the convention of 1897 that Booker T. Washington had said that the labor unions were obstacles to the economic advancement of the Negro as a result of their exclusion of Negroes from membership, the Convention assembled at Nashville, Tennessee, declared that all workers, white and black, were welcome to its ranks and denounced the statement by Dr. Washington "as untrue and without foundation in fact." As an evidence of the untruth of this assertion reference

³ *Report of the First Annual Session of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada at Pittsburgh, Pa., September 15-18, 1881*, p. 16.

⁴ For these and subsequent citations to conventions, see for the years noted, *Proceedings of the Annual Sessions of the American Federation of Labor*.

was made to the records of previous conventions.

From this period, the conventions of the Federation have reaffirmed, in various statements, their welcome to all labor without regard to creed, color, sex, race or nationality. In 1902 the convention passed a resolution authorizing the grant of charters to local unions and central bodies of Negro workers. This action was an acknowledgment of the legal development of the policy of separation. Rapidly the policy degenerated into one in which the Federation declared that it would not force its declaration "upon individual or affiliated unions without their consent." This policy has been followed consistently by the American Federation of Labor.

LATER POLICIES OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

This attitude towards Negro workers again led to action by Negroes themselves in their relation to the American Federation of Labor. Not since the seventies of the nineteenth century when political interests had gained the paramount influence in the independent and separate organization of Negro labor had there been a successful effort to organize Negro workers. It appeared that the efforts of organized labor were equally unsuccessful in its policies and programs for Negro labor organization.⁵ During the World War, dissatisfaction continued to develop among Negroes and increased rapidly. A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen launched an eco-

nomie movement of considerable influence among Negroes. In 1917 these two young Negro Socialists began the publication of the *Messenger*, a journal with militant and revolutionary views. The editors insisted upon the essential solidarity of Negro and white workers. The American Federation of Labor was attacked and described as "the most wicked machine for the propagation of race prejudice in the country."⁶

Another group of Negroes who represented a more conservative part of the Negro population proposed to continue their relations with and their approaches to the American Federation of Labor. Under the leadership of Eugene Kinckle Jones of the National Urban League, a conference was held with the Executive Committee of the American Federation of Labor on April 22, 1918. No positive change developed from this conference in the policy and attitude of the American Federation of Labor towards Negro workers.

When the next convention of the Federation assembled at Atlantic City, New Jersey, in June 1919, a committee to which resolutions were submitted, reported its findings. The report stated that there were internationals which did not exclude Negroes, and it recommended again, in cases of the refusal to admit Negroes to membership, that the Federation organize Negroes under separate charters.

Action by Negroes

Gradually, it was apparent to one wing of the leaders of Negro labor that

⁵T. Arnold Hill, *The Negro and Economic Reconstruction*, p. 20; Charles H. Wesley, "Organized Labor and the Negro" in V. F. Calverton, *Anthology of American Negro Literature*, pp. 337-363.

⁶Spero and Harris, *The Black Worker*, p. 392, quoting the *Messenger*, May-June, 1919, pp. 6, 7; Charles Lionel Franklin, *The Negro Labor Unionist of New York*, pp. 90-91.

the declarations of the American Federation of Labor did not alter the practical policy of the unions. They began to press for action by Negro workers themselves. Randolph and Owen undertook the organization in New York of Negro workers in 1917, with the United Brotherhood of Elevator and Switchboard Operators. In May 1920 they led in the organization of the Friends of Negro Freedom. This project was intended to encourage the unionization of Negro labor and the general advancement of the Negro population. Another organization sprang into temporary activity at the same time, the National Association for the Promotion of Labor Unionism among Negroes, with Owen as president and Randolph as secretary. This was followed by the organization of the United Negro Trades. These organizations represented weak, transitory efforts by Negroes to aid in the unionization of Negro labor.

About the same time, the National Urban League established a Department of Industrial Relations. Among its purposes was "the organization and assistance of Negro mechanics." The Detroit Convention of the League in 1919 adopted a resolution which stated:

We believe that Negroes should begin to think more and more in terms of labor-group movements, so as ultimately to reap the benefits of thinking in unison. To this end we advise Negroes to organize with white men whenever conditions are favorable. When this is not possible, they should band together to bargain with employers and with organized labor alike.

Labor unions and councils were organized under this program.

Five years later, in 1924, the Na-

tional Association for the Advancement of Colored People addressed an "Open Letter to Organized Labor," in which it was stated,

If there is built up in America a great bloc of non-union laborers who have a right to hate unions, all laborers, black and white, eventually must suffer. Is it not time, then, that black and white labor get together? Is it not time for white unions to stop bluffing and for black laborers to stop cutting off their noses to spite their faces?

The letter proposed the creation of an Interracial Labor Commission for the purpose of surveying the attitudes and practices of labor unions towards Negroes and of organizing propaganda against racial discrimination. No action was taken by the labor organizations upon this proposal. T. Arnold Hill of the Department of Industrial Relations of the National Urban League urged in vain on several occasions that the Executive Committee of the American Federation of Labor appoint Negro organizers. The Joint Committee on National Recovery and the National Negro Congress, with John P. Davis as Executive Secretary, have waged valiant fights before code-making bodies and organized labor conventions for the organization and integration of Negro workers.⁷

In the meantime, economic radicals began to manifest interest in Negro Labor. The American Negro Labor Congress, sponsored by the Workers Party of America, met in Chicago, October 25-31, 1925. This Congress declared that

the failure of the American Federation of Labor officialdom, under pressure of race prejudice benefiting only the capitalists of

⁷ *The Official Proceedings of the National Negro Congress*, February 14, 15, 16, 1936. pp. 20, 22.

the North and South, to stamp out race hatred in the unions, to organize Negro workers, and to build a solid front of the workers of both races against American Capitalism, is a crime against the whole working class. If the unions of the American Federation of Labor, through ignorance and prejudice, fail in this duty to the American workers, and continue a policy of exclusion in the face of the influx of Negro workers into industry, we Negro workers must organize our own unions as a powerful weapon with which to fight our way into the existing labor movement on a basis of full equality.*

This organization was ephemeral and made no significant contribution to Negro labor organization. It is important, however, to remember that this Congress proposed that Negro Labor would find its own way towards organization.

At the same time, plans were launched in New York City for the organization of the Pullman Porters. Announcements were made to this effect in June 1, 1925. On August 25, 1925, under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph, editor of the *Messenger*, Ashley L. Totten, and M. P. Webster, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids was formed. The Pullman Company declined to recognize the Brotherhood. A struggle ensued resulting in partial recognition of the Brotherhood under the Railroad Labor Act of 1934. Shortly thereafter the American Federation of Labor issued a charter to the Brotherhood as an international union.

Changes in the Policies of the A. F. of L.

By this time the American Federation of Labor was convinced that the

Negro should be brought into the organized labor movement. Randolph and his followers were in part responsible for this change of attitude. At the Boston Convention in 1930, Randolph, speaking for the Pullman Porters, asked for the assistance of the councils and unions in their fight for recognition. The Executive Committee of the Federation repeated the sentiments previously expressed that all workers in the United States and Canada, skilled and unskilled, were eligible to membership, "irrespective of creed, color, nationality, sex, or politics." Attention was called to Article XI of the laws of the Federation providing for the issuance of separate charters to central unions, local unions, or federal unions, "composed exclusively of colored members where, in the judgment of the Executive Committee, it appears advisable and to the best interest of the trade union movement to do so."

This declaration, as the earlier ones, did not alter the policy of the unions of excluding Negro applicants and of not encouraging their organization. The unions were autonomous and the majority excluded Negroes. In 1934, there were nineteen national and international unions which excluded Negroes from membership and eight of these were affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Four years earlier, in 1930, there were twenty-four national and international unions, ten of which were affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, which excluded Negroes from membership. Accordingly, some progress had been made towards organization of Negro labor by these unions, although this has meant, in the main, their organization in separate locals.

* *Constitution and Program of the American Negro Labor Congress*, p. 9; Robert Minor, "The First Negro Workers' Congress," *Workers' Monthly*, 5:68-9, D 1925.

The Convention of the Federation, meeting in 1934 at San Francisco, appointed a committee to conduct a survey of Negro labor and the unions. Another committee report was made at the 1935 Convention in Atlantic City. Hearings had been held in Washington, D.C., to which there came representatives of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Joint Committee on National Recovery, the National Urban League, the Department of the Interior, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the skilled Negro building trades workers, and Howard University and Fisk University. The facts from these hearings showed that there was a widespread practice of exclusion and discrimination. The Federation committee concluded by recommending that, "all national and international unions and the American Federation of Labor conduct a continuous campaign of education to bring to the white worker the necessity for greater unity of the workers in the labor movement to the end that all discrimination against Negroes will be removed." An effort was made by Randolph, who termed this report as "merely a dignified, diplomatic camouflage," to have the convention adopt a report calling upon the unions to harmonize their rules and practises with the declarations of the conventions. This proposal was referred to the Executive Committee. Again the Federation refused to face squarely the division in its ranks concerning racial lines. At the Houston convention of the Federation in 1938, a resolution was adopted calling upon the national and international unions to cease their color discriminations. President Green sent later a letter urg-

ing them "to eliminate the color bar and all forms of discrimination which serve to exclude workers from membership on account of race or color."

From this period onward, the Federation was seeking to offset the exclusion policy of its unions by organizing Negro workers who were refused by the internationals and locals into separate organizations.

Membership Restrictions

This exclusion led to the creation of dual federal and local unions.⁹ The exclusion devices used were constitutional requirements, rituals, high admission fees and apprenticeship regulations. The Railway Mail Association receives into its membership any regular male railway postal clerk or certified mail substitute railway postal clerk of the United States Railway Mail Service, "*who is of the Caucasian race.*" The Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees admit "*all white persons, male and female, of good moral character.*" The Brotherhood of Dining Car Conductors provide that "*an applicant for membership must be of the Caucasian race.*" Similar provisions are made by the Order of Sleeping Car Conductors, the Order of Railway Conductors of America, the railroad Brotherhoods, the Switchmen's Union of North America, the American Trains Dispatchers' Association, Order of Railroad Telegraphers, the Commercial Telegraphers Union of North America, the National Organization Masters, Mates and Pilots of America, the Air Line Pilots

⁹ Dept. of Labor, Bur. of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 618, *Handbook of American Trade Unions*, 1929 ed., and 1936 ed.; F. E. Wolfe, *Admission to American Trade Unions*.

Association and numerous others. It has been estimated that these exclusion policies have resulted in the denial of membership to approximately 225,000 Negro workers.

UNIONS WITH EXTRA LEGAL BARS

There are other unions which have no bar in their constitutions but who generally are able either to maintain an exclusion policy or they organize separate or auxiliary locals with the consent of the white locals. These include unions such as the Sheet Metal Workers' International Association, which organizes separate Negro locals and then provides that the "*Negro locals are under the jurisdiction of the white locals.*" The International Brotherhood of Blacksmiths, Drop Forgers and Helpers provided for locals for Negro helpers, "*under the jurisdiction of the white local.*" These Negro helpers cannot transfer except to another Negro local and the further provision is that they "*shall not be promoted to blacksmiths or helper apprentices,*" nor "*admitted to shops where white helpers are now employed.*" The result of this policy is that of the approximately 10,000 Negro workers in these trades only 300 are members of this union. The International Association of Metal Workers of New York requires initiation fees which range from \$62.50 to \$160.00 according to the craft and the dues range from \$42.00 to \$60.00 annually in accordance with the wages received. Other unions bar Negroes from representation at conventions, in executive bodies, and from office holding. Still others provide for representation "*by delegates of their own choosing selected from any white lodge.*" This was one

of the qualifications of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees.

THE POLICY AND PRACTISE OF UNIONS WITHOUT LEGAL DISTINCTIONS

Nevertheless, there are many unions which make no distinction in their legislation concerning membership. The International Broom and Whisk Makers' Union states that "*no workers shall be barred from membership in any local union on account of creed, color or nationality,*" and yet this union excludes Asiatic labor. The Cigar Makers' International Union admits "*all persons engaged in the cigar industry, regardless of color or nationality.*" The Lathers' International Union, Wood, Wire and Metal provides that "*no one shall be discriminated against for race or color.*" There are many unions which have no special provisions and Negro workers have found membership in them without difficulty. Other unions exclude Negroes from membership indirectly. The Plumbers and Steam Fitters, for example, provide that only competent journeymen plumbers and steam fitters are eligible for membership and that competency is determined by examination. The fact is that Negro plumbers in such cities as Philadelphia, New York, and Chicago have been unable to obtain membership, although a non-union Negro plumber is permitted to hire union white plumbers.

The assertion that Negroes are not interested in unionism is disproved by the experiences of the United Mine Workers of America, which agreed "*to unite in one organization regardless of creed, color or nationality all work-*

men eligible for membership, employed in and around coal mines, coal washers and coke ovens on the American continent."¹⁰ The International Ladies' Garment Workers Union has enlisted successfully into its ranks Italians, Jews, Spaniards, Negroes, and Puerto Ricans.¹¹ The United Federal Workers of America, a C.I.O. affiliate, admits members from both races, and it is the first international union with a Negro in an executive capacity. Several American Federation of Labor unions have maintained equal policies and practices towards Negroes and whites. The longshoremen, the hod carriers, the seamen and building trades unions have demanded equal consideration for Negroes and whites and have insisted upon full cooperation of all workers. Newspaper workers, teachers and office workers have had similar experiences. President William Green expressed the reality of the situation when he said, "the American Federation of Labor should deserve to perish should it discriminate against workers because of their race, color, creed or nationality."¹²

Wherever Negroes have been admitted without restriction and their interests have been made to parallel those of other union members, they have proved worthy of union membership. They have participated in strikes in the mines and in the cities.¹³ They have shown themselves to be just as loyal to their organizations as other

union members have been, in spite of the fact that both Capital and Labor have permitted them to be regarded throughout several decades as potential strikebreakers. The Negro worker being forced by economic and racial techniques operative in the United States finds himself in a status lower than that of white workers. Having been unorganized and left outside of the threshold of labor organization, Negro workers tend to be individualistic in action. Each Negro seeks to solve his own working problem. A strike means that a Negro worker can get a job and the termination of a strike ends his job. Thus the Negro worker faces another dilemma.

INDEPENDENT UNIONS AS DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Since Negroes were either excluded or not welcomed into many of the unions with white members, they have therefore continued to form independent unions as defenses against inequitable labor conditions.¹⁴ This situation has developed for the most part locally and in the occupations in which Negroes furnished the predominant labor supply, the railroad unions leading the way. Reference has been made to the Brotherhood of Pullman Porters as one of the strong contemporary unions. In July 1919, the Association of Train Porters, Brakemen and Switchmen was organized at Florence, South Carolina. It was called at first the Colored Organization of Railway Trainmen. It was incorporated on December 2, 1919, under the laws of the state of Virginia

¹⁰ F. J. Wayne, *History of United Mine Workers of America*; Charles S. Johnson, "Negro Workers and the Unions," *Survey*, April 15, 1928; A. J. Muste, "The Crisis in the Miners' Union," *Labor Age*, March, 1930.

¹¹ Edith Kine, "The Garment Union comes to the Negro Workers," *Opportunity*, April, 1934.

¹² Quoted in a pamphlet, "Open all Trade Unions to Negro People," published by the *Labor Committee of the National Negro Congress*, Chicago, Ill.

¹³ Charles Lionel Franklin, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-248.

¹⁴ Thomas L. Dabney, "Negro Workers at the Crossroads," *Labor Age*, February, 1927, pp. 8-10; "Attitude of American Federation of Labor toward the Unionization of Negroes," *Monthly Labor Review*, January, 1933, p. 145; Frank R. Crosswaith, "Trade Unionisms—Our Only Hope," *The Crisis*, June, 1935, pp. 166-167.

as the Association of Train Porters, Brakemen and Switchmen with the right to organize branches and locals throughout the United States. Its objects were declared to be "to organize, develop and improve the condition of the colored trainmen of America, to secure fair and just compensation for services rendered and maintenance of proper wages, together with fair working conditions for its members." The membership of this organization in 1936 was 700 distributed in 15 lodges.

Another railroad union composed of Negro workers was the Association of Colored Railway Trainmen and Locomotive Firemen which was organized in 1912 at Knoxville, Tennessee. Its object was "to unite the colored railway employees, to extend their interests and promote their general welfare, to provide aid and assistance to families, to use legitimate, and lawful means of harmonizing and rectifying differences between members of the association and employers." Its membership in 1936 was 3,000 in 60 locals in 17 states.

A third important independent union was the National Alliance of Postal Employees which began its organization at Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1913. It was organized by Negroes in the Railway Mail Service who were excluded because of race from membership in the Railway Mail Association. Its membership privileges were extended in 1923 to include all Negro workers in the Postal Service of the United States. In 1926, its membership was 1,700 distributed in 53 locals in 25 states. By 1936, its membership had increased to 4,800 also in 25 states.

Among the significant movements within the ranks of Negro workers was

the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees which grew out of an organizing movement among the waiters on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad in 1917. The cooks on the same line joined with them in forming the New Haven Cooks-Waiters Union. The dining car employees on other New England roads sought affiliation and the result, in 1920, was the organization of the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees. Its membership was reported in 1936 as 2,700 distributed in subordinate councils on the eastern railroad systems. The Brotherhood and its Western contemporary, the National Brotherhood of Dining Car employees, organized in 1920, were largely superseded by the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' International Alliance, which was an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor. The Joint Council of Dining Car Employees, representing 15 railroad locals of this international, has also been active in labor organization among Negroes. Of the 7,000 members in these 15 locals, 1,500 are white cooks and waitresses.

The United Government Employees was organized in 1936. Its program consisted of one big union throughout the country, a minimum wage of \$1,500, automatic promotions, equal pay regardless of color, civil service status for emergency employees, the amendment of the Social Security Act to include domestic and farm workers, and the appointment of a Negro to an administrative post in the U. S. Civil Service. In 1939, this organization claimed that it had members in 20 states and that 2,300 members were in the District of Columbia organization. It is asserted that over a half

million dollars of salary increases have been won through the efforts of this group. Its membership program continues to grow and it does not fail to have representation before all committee hearings concerning the condition of government employees.

The most recent organization of Negro workers on a national scale was the International Brotherhood of Red Caps. This Brotherhood arose in the spring of 1937. In 1938 representatives of the Brotherhood filed a petition with the Interstate Commerce Commission requesting the amendment or interpretation of its orders "defining and classifying employees and subordinate officials so as to include the work of persons whose duties consist of, or include, carrying passengers' hand baggage and other articles at various passenger stations, and thus bring them under the term 'employee' as defined in the fifth paragraph of Section 1 of the Railroad Labor Act, as amended." The Commission rendered, on September 29, 1938, its decision, which stated that the red caps in passenger stations in cities with populations of over 100,000 were "employees" under the definition of the act. The recent Wage and Hour Act has raised the question, in view of action by the railroads, concerning the classification of tips as wages under this act. A decision has not been rendered, at the present writing, but it will have, when rendered, great influence upon the living standards of about 6,000 Negro workers.¹⁵

Negroes are also in the membership of such unions as the musicians, barbers, hotel and restaurant employees, tobacco workers, longshoremen, work-

ers in the common building trades, and teamsters. Other such unions are the Association of Railway Employees, an industrial union, and the Transport Workers Union affiliated with the C.I.O. The American Federation of Teachers, with a Negro as one of its national vice-presidents, has been making definite effort to organize Negro teachers. The responses of these teachers have led to organization in several places, North and South. Negroes have had representations in the Federation conventions and have been elected to national offices.

ONE BIG UNION

The idea of one national union to embrace all workers has been frequently in the minds of labor organizers since the old Knights of Labor. Several attempts had been made to achieve this purpose. Left-wing labor leaders had not been negligent in this respect. The Industrial Workers of the World, organized in Chicago in 1905, looked forward to this goal. It had declared that all workingmen should be organized regardless of "creed or color."¹⁶ It had also declared that, "Between those two classes (the working class and the employing class) a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production and abolish the wage system." Negroes were members of the I.W.W. and were active in locals and national conventions. It has been estimated that at one time there were 100,000 membership cards issued to Negroes.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Preamble and Constitution, Industrial Workers of the World*, p. 34.

¹⁵ Reginald A. Johnson, "Red Caps Seek a Living Wage," *Opportunity*, April, 1939, pp. 105-107.

¹⁷ Statement of Benjamin Fletcher, a Negro official of the I.W.W., quoted in Spero and Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

only accepted the idea but they have practised it. Several vain efforts were made prior to 1934 to unionize the tenant farmers but it was not until July of this year, when twenty-seven men, black and white, met in an old school house in Tyronza, Arkansas, and organized the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. In spite of the opposition of plantation owners, riding bosses and local officials of the law, the work of organization spread rapidly. This work was carried on in secret. Meetings were held in the fields, the woods and in ramshackled Negro churches, for only in such places in certain Southern areas could the two races meet on equal terms. A group of young Southern Socialists, led by Howard Kester, helped to keep the work active.²¹ The union was incorporated on July 26, 1934, an office was established in Memphis and the union's efforts were directed from there. Dues were set at ten cents a month and the initiation fee was placed at thirty cents. By 1935, the union had become a vigorous force. It sought to negotiate with plantation owners and began to initiate strikes for better working conditions. Two years later, it affiliated on an autonomous basis with the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America. When it was publicly reported and variously rumored that Communists were dominating this organization, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union withdrew its affiliation with this organization in March 1939.²² The sharecroppers under Communist leadership and with 10,000 members, were organized in

Alabama and other states, and have been equally active.²³ Reactions have taken place in several communities to these activities. These have grown the more bitter when it was known that Communists were directing some of the work of organization. Lynchings are reported to have taken place as a result of the activities of Negroes in these unions.²⁴ Nevertheless, courageously, workers, black and white, have continued to move forward together towards the larger unionization of the workers of the soil as well as the workers of the shops, the offices and the mills.

FUTURE STEPS

In the light of the above facts, what are the paths along which organized labor and the Negro may travel in the future? First, there will be the continuation of the efforts to organize Negro workers. It will be necessary to overcome the reluctance and indifference of some of the unions which have believed that the Negro has no interest in unionization. In order to overcome any lack of interest in unionism which the Negro workers have, Negro organizers should be trained and sent among them for educative purposes, just as is done in the case of white workers. They should lead in educating Negro workers to see that, as a result of their unorganized status, they are more subject to exploitation and are without power to bargain collectively. However, Negroes have often found that unionism does not offer them the same security as it does to

²¹ Howard Kester, "Revolt Among the Sharecroppers," pp. 55-58; *New York Times*, April 15, 16, 19, 1935.

²² *New York Times*, March 12, 1939.

²³ James W. Ford and James S. Allen, *The Negroes in Soviet America*, p. 15.

²⁴ *Can the States Stop Lynching* (N.A.A.C.P.) 1936; *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, June 6, 1936; *Arkansas Democrat*, June 8, 9, 1936.

whites. Efforts should be made by educators to show Negro workers and white workers where their real interests are and that labor's future can be advanced only by a united front of all workers. In this connection, the experience of the United Hebrew Trades, organized by Jewish labor leaders and intellectuals, to advance the organization of Jewish labor has lessons for the Negro.

The second path will be reached when the Negro worker realizes that his attitude of passivity with reference to the economic pattern is contributing to his own plight. In addition, he will become, as many Negroes have already become, more courageous in the face of the realities of labor situations. The fearless work of the New Negro Alliance in its job-seeking, its picketing, its idea of proportional employment in terms of purchasing power, and court-testing programs should have significance for Negro labor leadership.²⁵ The attitude of this organization has brought to its support several white labor organizations. Its techniques as ultimate solutions are subject to criticism but these may have some value for separate Negro labor organizations engaged in collective bargaining.

The third path has already been suggested. This will be through an increasing cooperation of black and white workers. This cooperation has not only been achieved nationally in the organizations mentioned but also in local bodies. Miners, sharecroppers, tenant-farmers, garment workers, longshoremen and others have experi-

enced the advantages of this type of cooperation. This path should be widened increasingly. The cooperation should take place not as between superiors and inferiors, one needing the other and perforce is compelled to accept him, but rather between equals in rights and opportunities. Separate racial labor unions are temporary and palliative but they can be the first steps to changes in the organizational pattern which can lead to unionization on the basis of economic and racial equality. The latter is the more desirable objective and the Negro should realize that his ultimate advantages are in *integration* rather than *separation*.

It seems clear that unionization of Negro Labor will move in future years along these two paths. In some cases, integration will take place and in others there will be separation. It can scarcely be expected that there would be an immediate breakdown of racial lines in communities with separate racial social systems, short of economic revolution. It can be well envisioned that racial lines may be broken at first in labor organization, while interracial intellectuals are rationalizing differences, maintaining "good" race relations and waving the "red" flag above labor leaders who insist upon the importance of realizing that fundamentally class lines are more determinative of labor's future than racial ones which are more dependent upon the accidents of birth. The future of white labor and of black labor will be tested by this realization as well as by its collective-bargaining power with American economic leadership.

²⁵ See *The New Negro Alliance v. Sanitary Grocery Co.* Supreme Court of the United States. October Term, 1937. Brief for the Petitioners.