

Population Changes and Negro-White Unity

By John Swift

THE DRAFT PROGRAM of the Communist Party stresses the *self-interest* of the *whole* American people in the attainment of Negro freedom. It points out that "all America has a stake" in this objective and "stands to gain by it."

Why this central emphasis? Because the ruling class, through its ideology of white supremacy, seeks to conceal the identity of white-Negro interests. It strives to confuse the white people into believing that their interests are opposed to those of the Negro people. It fosters the erroneous belief that every gain, every right won by the Negro people is obtained, somehow or other, at the expense of the white masses. It is this insidiously false notion which stands as a barrier to rallying larger numbers of white workers, farmers and middle class people for joint struggles with their Negro brothers and for full equality.

One of *the main levers*, therefore, by which to combat white supremacist ideology and to forge Negro and white unity is to convince the white masses that Negro equality is not only in the interests of the Negro people but is *in their own interests* as well.

This emphasis is heightened by a number of important changes that have occurred in recent years in the class composition and geographic location of the Negro people. (1) The Negro people are now in their majority an urban people; (2) One-third of the Negro people are now in the North; (3) The shift from the land to the city has become an increasing tendency *in the South as well*.

These changes underscore anew the vast stake of the whole working class and all democratic forces in the attainment of Negro rights. They also are bound to have an important bearing on this struggle. It will be the purpose of this article to discuss these changes and to show their significance toward forging white and Negro unity on a scale and with a strength hitherto unmatched.

1. NEGRO URBANIZATION

The U.S. Census Report for 1950 shows some 60%, or over nine million, of the Negro people, residing in towns and cities with a population of 2,500 or more. How rapid the process of Negro urbanization in recent years has been can be seen by comparing it with the same process at

work in the white population. Already by 1920, a majority, some 53%, of the white population, was urban, but only one-third, some 34%, of the Negro people, was similarly located. By 1950, however, this difference in the extent of white and Negro urbanization had shrunk to about 4%. Approximately 64% of the white and 60% of the Negro population were urban dwellers.

What is the significance of this development? In the first place, it indicates that the Negro people are becoming transformed into nonfarm wage workers at a faster pace than the white population. In March, 1940, some 42% of employed Negro men and some 21% of employed white men were engaged in agriculture. In April, 1950, about 25% of Negro men and 15% of white men were so employed. But by April, 1952, it was estimated that only 19% of employed Negro men were engaged in agriculture (including forestry and fishery).*

The urban Negro population is more predominantly working class than the urban white population. "The proportion of Negroes in the labor force has been consistently higher than whites. . . . About 63% of all Negroes aged 14 years and over were in the labor force compared with 57% of all whites."* This is not the full story. The classification "labor force" includes much more than industrial or even wage workers. In 1950, only 4% of employed Negro men and 6½% of employed Negro women were listed as in "professional, technical and kindred" occupations, and

as nonfarm "managers, officials and proprietors." This compares with 19% of employed white men and 17% of white women.*

The process of Negro urbanization, therefore, has been a process of Negro proletarianization. Under today's conditions the question of forging a lasting and firm alliance between the working class and its natural ally, the Negro people, cannot be achieved without the unity of the white and Negro workers. Negro and white *class unity* is an essential prerequisite for white and Negro *people's unity*.

This can be seen by the following additional facts. The proportion of employed Negro men working in manufacturing industries rose from 15% in 1940 to an estimated 26% in 1952. (This does not include the estimated 2% engaged in mining, the 8% in construction and the 7% in transportation and communication.) The proportion of employed Negro women engaged in manufacturing industries rose from 3½% in 1940 to an estimated 7% in 1952. This does not represent stable continuous rise, for in fact employment in manufacturing for Negro men dipped from 24% in 1944 to 22% in 1950 and only climbed again because of the Korean War boom. As for Negro women, the peak in manufacturing employment was reached in 1944, in the midst of World War II, when it grew to 13%. It since has shrunk

* U.S. Senate Labor Committee Report, *Employment and Economic Status of Negroes*, published in 1952.

steadily—to 9% in 1948, 8% in 1950, and 7% in 1952.*

These fluctuations prove once again that the Negro workers are still the last to be hired and the first to be fired. As for the Negro women, they are the very last and the very first.

Unemployment among Negroes between 1947 and 1951 was "more than 50% above that for whites."* Especially in periods of economic decline, as was true immediately following World War II, and as is true at this time, Negro employment in general, and in manufacturing in particular, takes a nose-dive. This tendency exists side by side with the tendency toward a greater relative employment of Negroes in industry.

"The Negro worker is becoming a very important factor in industry," observes William Z. Foster, in his most recent and very important book on the Negro people. "Negro workers," he writes, "are estimated to comprise 11% of all industrial workers. In the coal mines Negro workers constitute about 25%, in steel and auto plants about 15%, and in meat packing plants about 30%" (Foster's, *The Negro People in American History*, pp. 531-2).

This means that the white workers cannot achieve even their most limited objectives of defending their living standards and trade-union organization, nor improving them, without the Negro workers at their side. This will be even more so as unemployment increases and a new economic crisis breaks forth. The

policy of the bosses to fire Negro workers first and to discriminate against Negroes in upgrading is not to the advantage of the white workers, even if it so appears at a superficial glance. It is aimed at splitting the working class along color lines, at pitting Negro and white class brothers against each other. Thus the shaft of discrimination aimed at the Negro worker also has as its target the white worker.

This simple truth is beginning to be understood by larger numbers of white workers. It is this which has led to a greater awareness of the importance of the Negro question and to a greater degree of white and Negro trade-union unity. But it is necessary to warn emphatically that the continued growth of this unity cannot be taken for granted, as something which will come of itself. The increased proportion of Negro industrial workers creates objective conditions favorable toward greater Negro and white working-class unity. But it must be remembered constantly that these very same objective conditions, under conditions in which much of the labor officialdom gives lip-service to the principle of Negro equality, could lead to opposite results—to a retrogression and deterioration of this unity. And job discrimination has increased, as can be seen by the following shocking facts:

In 1949, the average income of urban Negro families was almost 58% of the average among white families—

* U.S. Senate Labor Committee Report.

a decline from 66% in 1945. . . . Between 1945 and 1949 the average income of white families had increased by over \$500, while among Negro families it remained practically unchanged.*

That is why an *offensive* against every form of job discrimination is of such vast importance at this time. That is why the proposed Draft Program places the demand for a *strictly enforced federal FEPC*, as the first demand in behalf of Negro rights to be fought for today.

2. NEGROES IN THE NORTH

During the 1940-1950 decade the Negro population increased by some two million in the North, while remaining stationary in the sixteen states and the District of Columbia listed as "South" by the Census. Thus, there has been a proportionate increase in Negro population in the North.

How large has been the increase in some Northern States can be seen by the following facts. The Negro population in the State of Michigan more than doubled—from 208,000 in 1940 to 442,000 in 1950, while its white population increased by 17%. In California, the Negro population more than tripled—from 124,000 in 1940 to 462,000 in 1950, compared with a 52% increase in the white population. In New York State the Negro population increased by 60%—from 571,000 to 918,000—the white population by 8%. In Illinois, the Negro population increased by 66%

—from 387,000 to 645,000—the white population by 7%. In Ohio, the increase in Negro population was 51% and in Pennsylvania, 36%. The same trend is to be seen in *every industrial state from coast to coast*.

Negro migration to the North has been a movement to the main industrial centers. In 1950, there were 27 cities with 50,000 or more Negroes. Fourteen of these were in the North. "Only two . . . Southern cities had increases of more than 100% in their Negro population over the decade, while 43 cities, widely dispersed throughout the rest of the country, had doubled their Negro population."*

New York, Detroit, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, Cleveland, San Francisco, Newark and Oakland were the cities in which the Negro population increased by more than 50% between 1940 and 1950. In Chicago, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Newark and Nashville, there was an actual decline in the number of white residents due to the shift of white middle-class people to the suburbs.

What is the effect of this absolute and relative increase of Negro population in Northern industrial areas—an increase which has continued since 1950? In the first place, as we already have noted, it has greatly strengthened the role of the Negro people in industry and forced upon the labor movement the issue of white and Negro unity as crucial to its very existence.

* U.S. Senate Labor Committee Report.

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It also has had important political effects. The concentration of increasing numbers of Negro people in the most populous key industrial states has added to their political weight in the country as a whole. The Negro electorate has grown more rapidly than the general country-wide increase in Negro population because a majority of the Negro people in the South are still disfranchised, many of them getting their first right to vote when they come North. Furthermore, the Negro vote is now a significant force in every key state from New York to California. Lastly, the Negro vote, concentrated in densely populated communities, is both highly organized as well as distinctly conscious.

The Negro people are increasingly aware of their new nationwide strength. Their changed class composition has given them a sense of power which goes beyond their numerical increase. It also makes possible working-class leadership of the Negro people's movement. The Negro people realize that by their organization and unity they can deliver important blows against segregation and discrimination both North and South.

The dispersal of Negro population—only in the sense that one-third of it is now spread throughout the North—has not had the effect, therefore, of weakening the solidarity and feeling of "one-ness" of the whole Negro people. On the contrary, it has enhanced them. The Negro people in the South look upon those in

the North as extremely important reserves, capable of doing much to awaken the understanding of the whole American people to the significance of Negro oppression. On the other hand, the Negro people in the North maintain close ties with the South and realize that the source of their segregation and discrimination stems from the state of Negro oppression in the South. What happens in the South has swift reverberations and repercussions among Northern Negroes. Contrariwise, what happens in the North, every victory won for Negro rights, encourages and stimulates the struggle of the Negro people in the South.*

The growth of the Negro minority in the North, its increased working-class composition, and its growing unity and consciousness have helped impress larger numbers of white progressives with the need for white and Negro political unity. Even in the '30s, it was the militant *joint* struggles of Negro and white masses which helped make possible the progressive advances of that period. If such unity was needed then, how much more is it needed now, when reaction is in the saddle and when the Negro people make up such a critical balance of power? *Under present conditions no progress is possible whatsoever without growing Negro-white unity!*

It would be folly, however, to believe that this unity will grow of itself, merely because objective condi-

* See the article by Charles P. Mann, *Political Affairs*, April, 1952.

tions favor it. What is required is consciousness of its decisive importance and unremitting struggle in its behalf, because the very objective conditions which compel greater political unity also create counter currents which must be clearly seen and firmly fought.

It must be borne in mind that there are powerful economic and political forces which are determined to prevent Negro-white unity. Not only is the ruling class opposed to this unity, but many white labor and middle-class leaders are chauvinist in their outlook and do not favor white-Negro unity based upon full equality. Furthermore, the growth of the Negro population in a given area, temporarily at least, activates the chauvinism of backward white elements, previously dormant. In some Northern areas, such as Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and California, there also has taken place an influx of prejudiced white masses from the South. These aggravate the problem. On top of this, there are many whites who, while considering themselves progressive-minded and free from racial bias, fail to consider the special *new* problems confronting the Negro community as a consequence of the growth of population. They even fail to comprehend that gains won yesterday can easily evaporate in face of the changed conditions and the vastly greater needs of today.

Let us take any one of the Northern industrial cities in which the Negro population has expanded rapidly. Have housing facilities for Negroes

expanded correspondingly?—or, is the larger mass of Negro humanity being compressed into the dangerously over-crowded ghetto? Have job, educational and cultural opportunities multiplied to the same degree as population? Have the Negro people obtained the greater representation in government—city, state and national, which their increased numbers make so imperative? Or, have the political subdivisions been gerrymandered to guarantee that the Negro people retain only the same token representation of the past?

In how many cities can these questions be answered affirmatively? Yet, we are not dealing at this point with how to win new advances in equal rights—and new advances must be won continually! We are dealing with the fact that there is no guarantee that even the extremely limited rights won yesterday will be maintained at the same proportionate level. And the Negro people will never be satisfied with anything less than their full rights! Nor should their white brothers!

Thus, where there is a failure to appreciate the new problems arising from the growth of Negro population, there is the acute danger of Negro-white hostility instead of growing unity.

The conclusion from all this is that the possibilities for growing Negro and white unity in the North have never been better, for life itself dictates to the white masses the urgent need for this. At the same time this will not happen by itself. It must

be fought for. In that lies the only guarantee.

3. URBANIZATION IN THE SOUTH

The South still remains the most backward region of the country. Yet, within this framework, industrialization is increasing.

Both sides of this picture must be seen to understand that which is new in the South today. The increase in industrialization is shown by the increased proportion of capital investments for *new* manufacturing plant and equipment going to the South. In 1939, the South (Maryland to Texas), got 21% of all such expenditures; in 1947, 23%; and in 1951, 25%. How this compares with other regions—the East (New England to Pennsylvania), the Midwest (Ohio to Kansas), and the West (Colorado to California)—can be seen by the following table:

REGIONAL COMPARISON OF EXPENDITURES FOR
NEW PLANT AND EQUIPMENT — FOR 1939, 1947, 1951*

	1939	1947	1951
United States	100%	100%	100%
East	33%	29%	28%
Midwest	38%	37%	36%
West	8%	11%	11%
South	21%	23%	25%

Thus, the Eastern portion has declined. The Midwestern has also declined somewhat, although this region received more than one-third of the total. The two regions which showed an increase in their share

were the South and the West.

While the *rate* of Southern industrialization has increased, its *extent* is nowhere near that of the North. This is shown by a comparison of population size with that of workers engaged in manufacturing production** and with new manufacturing investments. The following table compares these for the four regions.

These figures indicate two things: (1) The backwardness of the South as compared with the rest of the country on a per capita basis. With 31% of the country's population, it has only 20% of its production workers.*** (2) Even at the *present* higher rate of industrialization, the South can *never* catch up with the North. To catch up, its proportion of new manufacturing expenditures would have to be considerably above its per capita proportion. But it is still 6% below this ratio!

It should be noted that the num-

ber of production workers increased from 1939 to 1951 by some 60% nationally and by 61% in the South.

* Manufacturing does not include construction, communications, transportation, or mining (whether coal, metal or petroleum).

*** All references to production workers pertain to those in manufacturing only.

* *Statistical Abstract*, Department of Commerce.

REGIONAL COMPARISON OF POPULATION, PRODUCTION WORKERS AND EXPENDITURES FOR NEW MANUFACTURING PLANT — FOR 1951

	<i>Percents of population</i>	<i>Percents of prod. workers</i>	<i>Percents of invest. for new mfgs.</i>
United States	100%	100%	100%
East	26%	36%	28%
Midwest	29%	35%	36%
West	13%	8%	11%
South	31%	20%	25%

The largest increase was in the West—120%, and the second largest in the Midwest—72%. The smallest increase was in the East—41%.

The 61% increase in Southern production workers represents a substantial increase. To this should be added—that from 1940 to 1950 there also was a 21% increase in mining employees in the South, an 85% increase in construction workers, and a 50% increase of those employed in transportation, communication and other public utilities. All together, these indicate a significant growth in the Southern industrial working class.

Before going over to an examination of some of the effects of this development, it is necessary to make clear that the rate of industrialization has by no means been uniform for the entire South. It has been extremely uneven. Thus, the *general* rate of increase for the South as a whole may be at great variance with the *particular* rate in any given state or area.

Let us compare a few of the most striking disparities. From 1939 to 1951, the number of production

workers in the State of Texas increased by 132%—twice the national and Southern average! At the other end of the see-saw, North Carolina increased its production workers by only 38%. Kentucky was a second high with 97% increase, while South Carolina was a second low with 48% increase.

The dissimilarity in the rate of Southern industrial development is a factor of considerable importance for two reasons. In the first place, it makes possible a break-up in what has been known as the "solid South." The border states, with one foot in the rural, semi-feudal South and with the other in the industrial North, have been traditionally pulled in two directions at the same time. This pull has now become accelerated and is being exerted in deeper areas of the South as well. It is bringing about a process of sharp differentiation and bitter struggle.

But this great unevenness of development also has a negative side. It means that contrary to the wishful thinking of some people, the present industrialization is not putting an end to the root cause of Negro op-

pression. The Black Belt area of the South, where the Negro people are an oppressed majority, is precisely the section with the *least* industrialization. These states continue to lag behind even in relation to the remainder of the South. In these states of the plantation belt, as shown by Victor Perlo in his recent work, *The Negro in Southern Agriculture*, the semi-feudal agrarian economy is still dominant and the exploitation on the land is as severe, and in some respects more severe, than ever. The very mechanization of Southwestern cotton agriculture has not lessened the burden on the sharecroppers and tenant farmers of the Southeast. It has only compelled them to pit their sweat and toil, and that of their children, in inhuman competition with the motor driven tractor and cotton-picker.

Thus the disproportionate industrial development which makes possible a break-up of the "solid South," must lead to only greater attention to the root of Southern backwardness—the semi-feudal agrarian economy which is at the bottom of the oppression of the Negro nation in the Black Belt.

Most important of all developments in the South, in the sense that it opens the door to progressive change, has been the process of urbanization which has accompanied the increased industrialization. This has greatly enlarged the size of the Southern working class and with it those sections of the urban middle class which are most directly dependent

upon the income of the working class (professionals, merchants, small business people, etc.).

Southern cities experienced a much larger relative growth in the period from 1940 to 1950 than those in the North, although, again, this has not been uniform. However, while the increase in Southern urban population has been the result of a much larger influx of both Negroes and whites, the proportional increase of Negro people exceeded that of whites in only three Southern cities. Thus, despite a very considerable growth in the absolute number of Negroes in most Southern metropolitan areas, there was in these areas a relative decline in the Negro proportion of the population. This is explained by the greater migration of Negroes to the North. This, in turn, is explained by still another fact—the intense Jim Crow discrimination which bars most Negroes from industrial employment in Southern cities.

There can be no doubt that the white masses in the South have gained more from industrialization than have the Southern Negro people. "The white labor force in the Southeast," for example, "is distributed between high income and low income occupations much more favorably than is the nonwhite labor force. Whereas one-fourth of the white labor force is in the five low-income occupations, two-thirds of the nonwhites are so located. Conversely, two-fifths of the white labor force is in high income occupations, but among nonwhites the proportion

is only one-tenth."^{*}

This relative better position of the Southern white worker does not alter the fact that his standard of living too is dwarfed as compared with the Northern worker. The pernicious system of Southern white-supremacy is the reason for this. It makes possible the lower wage differential in the South. Thus the special oppression of the Negro people is the lever which forces down the standard of living of the white masses as well. This is graphically illustrated by income comparisons.

REGIONAL COMPARISON OF MEDIAN** INCOME — 1949*

	<i>white persons</i>	<i>nonwhite persons</i>
United States	\$2,053	\$ 961
East	2,246	1,622
Midwest	2,143	1,652
West	2,114	1,445
South	1,647	739

The Jim Crow system, therefore, is a monstrous millstone around the neck of the Negro people. It is also no featherweight burden on that of the Southern white people.

Slowly, and yet more perceptibly than in the past, this simple elementary truth is beginning to percolate into the consciousness of a section of the Southern white people. This is taking place side-by-side with continued prejudice expressed by the very same people who are first beginning to see that the Jim Crow system

also hurts them. On the part of the workers, in particular, elementary class interests are beginning to collide more openly with what have been considered as hereditary white caste interests. Gradually, a tie-up is being made between low wages, vicious state anti-labor laws, lack of trade-union organization, poor educational facilities, backward social legislation, and the Jim Crow system.

This certainly is the significance of the resolution adopted two years ago by the Texas CIO, as quoted recently by John Pittman in *The*

Worker. The resolution reads:

Be it resolved that the 16th Annual Convention of the Texas CIO goes on record as supporting the immediate elimination of all forms of racial segregation in the public school system of Texas . . . and that the Texas CIO continue to work with and extend its assistance and cooperation to the NAACP in the State of Texas until all citizens are assured of equal justice under the law.

Likewise, the tremendously important movement of the twenty-seven oil and chemical unions to form a united union in the industry has been made possible because a glimmer of new light is being cast also on the Negro question. The oil

* U.S. Senate Labor Committee Report.

** Median income is that which is at the exact middle—with one-half receiving less than this amount and one-half above it. It is somewhat misleading because it includes all incomes—that of top income brackets as well. It still proves how great is the gap between Negro and white and North and South incomes.

workers of the land have been afflicted for many years with heart-breaking disunity and lack of organization. One of the important reasons for this has been the past refusal of the Southern white oil workers to join together with their Negro brothers.

Those white urban middle-class groups whose prosperity depends upon the achievement of a higher standard of living for the Southern masses also cannot avoid facing up to the heart of this problem—the special oppression of the Negro people. Even when they attempt to bring about minor reforms by breaking through the hardened crust of Dixiecratism at the ballot box, they meet up with the same obstacle in the form of the disfranchisement of the Negro people. For without winning the vote for the Negro people of the South, Dixiecratism and McCarthyism cannot be beaten in that region.

Hence, while there still is no recognition of the Negro people as an oppressed nation in the Black Belt region of the South, and while there is still too little understanding that the root of Negro oppression lies in the semi-feudal plantation system, nonetheless, there is a growing recognition among progressive-minded white Southerners that conditions in the South *must change* and that the Negro people must get at least economic and political equality.

In many ways, even more important than these visible signs of change among Southern whites has been the recent militant and heroic struggles

of the Southern Negro people. Nor can one separate these two closely intertwined developments. The militancy of the Negro people helps make progressive white masses realize that the status quo cannot be maintained. In turn, the first rudiments of change among progressive whites encourages the Negro people of the South, for it shows them the existence of a potential ally in the fight for a progressive South.

The Negro people in their struggle for freedom have been inspired by the great victories of the colonial peoples of the world against imperialism. They feel themselves a part of this world movement. They realize that the Negro question in the United States has become a world question—something which has been pointed out many times by our Party, particularly by Ben Davis, Henry Winston and Pettis Perry. The many glib speeches of Washington officials about “democracy” and the “free world” do not go unnoticed by the Negro people. They insist on payment on these promissory notes—and they want the whole world to know the truth about Negro oppression in this country.

The determination of the Negro people of the South to win their rights has expressed itself with particular vigor in the struggle for the right to vote and representation in government. From one end of the South to the other, Negroes are fighting for their ballot rights and are increasingly filing Negro candidates for school board, city council and

legislative positions. For the first time in fifty years, Negroes are being elected here and there with the support of white votes. Some weeks ago two Negroes were elected to the City Council of Crowley, Louisiana, a town of 15,000, with the support of whites and the winning white mayorality candidate. Two Negroes also were elected for the first time to the Democratic County Committee in Mobile County, Alabama. These instances are still few and far between. But they do represent a *new* trend, one which has been *growing*. There are reported to be fourteen Negro City Councilmen in the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, and Louisiana. To cite this pitifully small figure as one indicating progress, as we do, is only to place added stress on how heavy, harsh and horrible has been and continues to be the oppression of the Southern Negro people!

* * *

These developments in the South have great meaning, not alone for the Negro people, or, for Southerners in general, but for *all Americans*, because the Jim Crow South has been and is today a major bulwark of reaction. The significance of the new trend, weak and feeble as it still may be, is that it opens up the possibility for transforming the South from a bastille of reaction into a bastion of progress. *The South does contain the forces for such a change!* This was emphasized in the special *Common Program for the South* issued by our Party a year ago. In fact, it is the

heart and soul of that Program. This is also the estimate contained in the extremely important articles on the South written by Comrade James Jackson a few years ago. It was also dealt with in the excellent report by Comrade Hugh Bradley* at the National Conference of our Party, and in articles by C. P. Mann.

What a changed South would mean for the whole country was well understood by Karl Marx. Writing to two American friends (Siegfried Meyer and August Vogt), in 1870, Marx compared the treatment of Negroes in the South with that of the Irish in England. He wrote:

Every industrial and commercial center in England now possesses a working-class population *divided* into two *hostile* camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish workers he feels himself a member of the *ruling* nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists *against Ireland*, thus strengthening their domination *over himself*. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker.

Marx then notes that the attitude of the English worker toward the Irish "is much the same" as that of the poor white in the South to the Negro. Marx also shows who is responsible for this and what are its consequences:

This antagonism is artificially kept

* *Next Steps in Negro Liberation*, by Hugh Bradley.

alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. *This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class*, despite their organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. The latter is well aware of this.

(*Letters to Americans*, p. 78—All emphasis as in original).

Marx wrote the above after the Civil War but before the great betrayal of Reconstruction in 1876. He wrote, therefore, before the present Jim Crow system had been imposed upon the backs of the "free" Negroes. He also wrote before the vast Negro migration to the North. Furthermore, he wrote before the imperialist epoch and the general crisis of world capitalism, therefore, before the general trend of American capitalism became that of reaction and fascism. How much greater significance has the Negro question for the America of today!

That the impotence of the Southern working class is caused by the artificially contrived antagonism between the white and Negro masses is clear to anyone who crosses the Mason-Dixon Line and looks about him with eyes not blinded by prejudice. It is also an important factor in the impotence of the whole American working class. The Draft Program is correct when it states:

If there were no oppression of the Negro people in our land, there would be no wage differentials between the North and South. Thus, Southern white

workers, together with their Negro brothers, would receive higher wages, while Northern labor could put an end to run-away shops and Southern cheap labor competition. In this way wage levels could be raised for the whole country.

If there were no oppression of the Negro people there would be no poll-tax Congressmen. Without poll-tax Congressmen it would have been far more difficult for the reactionaries to pass the Taft-Hartley, the Smith and the McCarran Acts.

If there were no poll-tax Dixiecrat Congressmen in Washington there also would be a better chance to get improved social security legislation, price and rent controls, more federal aid to education, a federal housing program, greater aid for the unemployed and the aged, and far more equitable tax laws.

The great significance of the South for the whole democratic struggle in the country can best be understood when one considers what is required to arrest the present offensive of reaction and then to defeat it. Can anyone, for example, conceive of a farmer-labor government in this country, such as outlined by the Draft Program, without first achieving a major change in the South? Without such a change a farmer-labor government is impossible!

As we have already pointed out, the possibilities for change in the South have greatly improved. Not only the valiant struggle of the Negro people but also the vital self-interest of the white masses increasingly compels this. But, once again, as in respect to the other developments we have discussed, such change

is not assured in and by itself. For with the new possibilities there are also new dangers. The *old* never gives way to the *new* without bitter struggle. The Talmadge-Byrnes-Shivers Dixiecrat forces of die-hard white supremacy will try to move heaven and earth to prevent non-segregation and equality for the Negro people.

It also is necessary to see that the process of increased industrialization of the past decade-and-a-half was the consequence of war and preparations for war. As the general economic trend is one of decreased production levels, and as a major economic crisis is approaching, new industrialization will taper off greatly. Millions of new Southern workers will find themselves unemployed. At the same time the crisis in cotton agriculture, aggravated by the mechanization of the Southwest cotton fields, will throw even more masses of Negro and white share-croppers and tenant farmers on to the labor market. This can become an objective factor leading to an upsurge of white and Negro unity on the land. But the most reactionary forces will endeavor to utilize these same conditions to stir up animosity and antagonism between white and Negro, trying to get the white masses to translate their general dissatisfaction into anti-Negro hatred.

Furthermore, the most reactionary forces of finance capital are exceedingly frightened at the possibility of a white-Negro alliance which makes the South a great force for progress. It is no accident that McCarthy has

so many cronies in Texas and in other parts of the South.

To realize the immense possibilities which exist in the South requires, therefore, the concentrated attention of the labor and progressive movements throughout the country. In the first place, the job of organizing the unorganized workers of the South is a task of utmost importance at this time. If this is not accomplished, the unorganized South with its wage differential will more and more compete with Northern labor, endangering wage levels and union organization. Already the tendency for run-away shops to go South is quite pronounced. With many of the newer plants in the South among the most modern in the country, the danger of Southern competition cannot be lightly viewed. It is this which on top of other factors *must* compel the trade-union movement to enter the South with both feet!

Organizing the unorganized industrial workers must also include a serious effort to begin organizing the Negro and white farm laborers, share croppers and tenant farmers. For on the land, too, the basis for Negro and white unity is growing. And while this article is limited to a discussion of the three population changes referred to at the outset, the struggle for a new South *must not be limited*. It must include as one of its most important components *a change on the countryside*, particularly in the plantation belt. In fact, the greater urbanization we have discussed, the new changes in the outlook of sec-

tions of Southern Negro and white masses, have already had their positive effects on the countryside and inevitably will produce more of them. The Southern worker has close ties with the countryside. Many of them still live on the land as worker-farmers.* Thus, organizing the unorganized workers can flow over into a movement for organization on the land as well. But one need not wait on the other.

The fight for the right to vote is also one which requires the active support of all democratic forces. It requires *federal action to prohibit the poll tax* and federal action to *enforce* the right of all citizens to the ballot. The slogans of "Proportional Representation" and "Majority Rule" are of great importance in the fight for democracy in the South.**

It is the task of our Party nationally to closely watch, influence and give leadership to the great struggle for a *New South*.

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From all of the foregoing, it can be seen that the self-interest of the white masses is the main lever by which to win increasing numbers of them to support and take up the struggle for Negro rights. This is not always understood. Many labor leaders and liberals view the Negro question as a humanitarian one. They see

the struggle for Negro rights as something "just for the Negro." It is the task of Communists, particularly white Communists, to show the white masses their stake in the struggle for Negro equality. The immorality of Negro oppression is a monstrous crime. But this crime, like the earlier one of Negro slavery, cannot be corrected without winning important sections of the white masses, particularly the white workers, to an understanding that Negro freedom is needed not as abstract morality, but in the best interests of the white masses themselves.

It was this thought which Marx stressed to the British workers in analyzing the Irish question. In 1869 he wrote that he had "become more and more convinced—and the only question was to bring this conviction home to the English working class—that it can never do anything decisive . . . until it separates its policy with regard to Ireland in the most definite way from the policy of the ruling classes. . . . And, indeed, this must be done, not as a matter of sympathy for Ireland, but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat."

To paraphrase Marx: The Negro people must have their rights "not as a matter of sympathy," but as a demand made in the interests of the American working class and American democracy.

* See Victor Perlo's book, already cited.

** See the article by Pettis Perry in May, 1954, *Political Affairs*.