

earlier preference for doctrinaire Freedom; that he will in short shed his ink and his blood on behalf of a less partisanly Democratic interpretation of American national policy.

The Superfluous Negro

TO the northern Negro the war in Europe has been of immense and unexpected advantage. It has shut out the immigrant, who is the Negro's most dangerous competitor, has doubled the demand for the Negro's labor, raised his wages and given chances to him which in the ordinary course would have gone to white men. If immigration still lags after the war, or is held down by law, the Negro will secure the great opportunity for which he has been waiting these fifty years.

The average Pole or Italian arriving at Ellis Island does not realize that he is a deadly foe to the native Negro. He hardly knows that there are Negroes. He takes the first job he can get, competes seemingly with other white men, and, as he rises to higher industrial reaches, makes room for other white men. All the while, however, he is unconsciously fighting the Negro. By filling all the jobs in the North, the immigrant forces the Negro back on the South, where wages are lower and industrial development is more backward. It is a silent conflict on a gigantic scale.

In the half-century between 1860 and 1910, the foreign-born in the United States increased from about two millions to over thirteen millions, of whom the overwhelming majority—over 95 per cent—remained in the North. Industrially they filled the North to the saturation point. In the same period, the Negroes increased from about four and one-half to ten millions. But of these, almost nine-tenths were forced to remain in the South. They were held there as effectively as though the white immigrants stood on the Mason and Dixon line, armed with machine guns.

Because of race prejudice, the individual Negro cannot easily rise above his race, as the individual German, Greek, Jew or Italian in America rises. He is never a man among men, but a Negro sharing the common lot of Negroes. And that lot is bad because industrially the northern Negroes are superfluous. They hold no monopoly of skill, and are largely debarred from acquiring skill or using it if acquired. In the common occupations, on the other hand, where numbers count, they are too few. In southern cities, in Atlanta, Memphis, Birmingham, Richmond, Nashville, Savannah, Charleston, Mobile, Negroes constitute one-third to one-half of the population, and more than that proportion of the wage earners, and are given a chance to earn their

living, because without them the work of these cities could not be done.

In the city of Philadelphia, on the other hand, Negroes form only 5½ per cent of the population, in Chicago only 2 per cent, in New York a little less than 2 per cent. In almost every occupation they are a hopeless minority. If white men will not work with them, if the employer is forced to choose between a large supply of white labor and a small supply of Negro labor, he will choose the former. There are always enough white men or white women, thanks to our immigration, to do the work. The Negroes can be replaced by whites, but cannot replace whites.

The New York example proves how replaceable, and therefore weak and defenseless, the northern Negroes are. The colored population of the greater city—one hundred or perhaps one hundred and ten thousand—does not equal New York's annual increase in whites. If these hundred thousand Negroes were to leave, their places could immediately be filled from Ellis Island. In almost every occupation the Negro is numerically weak. If the twelve thousand white barbers of New York refuse to work with the two hundred Negro barbers, the latter must submit. If the thirty thousand white carpenters and joiners choose to draw the color line, the one hundred Negro carpenters must look for odd jobs or work for their own people. The Negro gets a chance to work only when there is no one else. He is the last served; his are the industrial leavings and scraps. Being superfluous, possessing no industrial weapon against race prejudice, he is forced to work for a grotesquely low wage at menial jobs, which the white man disdains.

We often wonder what the reflective Negro thinks as he listens to our orators, who welcome the immigrant to this land of liberty, to this free world of opportunity for all men. What does he think of our democracy, morality, religion, as he views it from his side of the color line?

The Negro asks for little. A half century of the contempt and exclusion which we call "freedom" has taught him to be modest. He does not look to the big prizes of life, but is content with the common things, the right to walk unnoticed and uninsulted through the streets, the right to live where his purse permits, the right not to be robbed by landlord, tradesman and employer, and last and most fundamental, the right to earn a living at the work for which his skill and intelligence fit him. Yet, because the immigrant has given us all the labor we need and has made the black man superfluous, we deny these rights to the Negro. He becomes the bell-boy, elevator-boy, Pullman porter, the obsequious tip-receiver. Debarred from lucrative occupations, he receives low wages in the occupations

into which he is forced; debarred from living in most neighborhoods he pays exorbitant rents in the districts into which he is crowded. Thus our unobtrusive race prejudice means that the Negroes—and among them capable, cultured, sensitive men and women—die of bad lodgings and bad food, of over-crowding and over-work. It means that their married women are forced to work at wage-labor, and their children exposed to the perils of the street. The wronged are always wrong, and so we blame the Negro. If we are fair, however, we must place the responsibility of a social effect upon those responsible for the cause. If the northern Negroes have a higher death rate and breed a larger proportion of criminals and prostitutes than do the whites, it is in large part our own fault.

We cannot understand the problems of the Negro in the North unless we constantly bear in mind this fact of industrial opportunity. The northern Negro has the right to vote, the right—and duty—to send his children to school, and, technically at least, many civil and political rights. We do not put him into Jim Crow cars or hold him in prison camps for private exploitation. Nevertheless the pressure upon him is almost as painful, though not nearly so brutal or debasing, as that upon the southern Negro. The northern Negro is urged to rise but is held down hard. He is kept out of the white man's restaurant, the white man's hotel, the white man's theatre, the white man's civilization. Ordered to segregate himself, adjured to build up a little black civilization within our big white civilization, he is not given the necessary means. For a civilization costs money, and men cannot get money unless they get work.

How can a small minority, even a wealthy minority, duplicate all the costly machinery of civilization? And the Negroes are not only very poor, but are prevented from growing rich. To live at all they must work for the white man at jobs which no white man wants. They have no economic surplus with which to erect a civilization, or indeed to give more than a meagre living to their own professional and mercantile classes, who are also discriminated against and must live in the main from the patronage of their own race. That the northern Negroes have managed to progress at all under their double burden of race discrimination and competition with the more numerous, better equipped white immigrants is an encouraging sign. Their progress, in wealth, education, refinement, does not prove that they can do the impossible, but is at least an earnest of what they might accomplish if given a chance.

Such a chance seems now about to offer to the Negro. Immigration after the war seems likely to be kept at a lower level during several years

or possibly decades. If, then, the supply of immigrant labor is reduced, while the demand for labor maintains itself, the Negro who has equipped himself, should find a wider range of activities open to him, and a stronger demand, especially for unskilled labor. But if the northern Negroes increase in numbers while their opportunities widen and increase, they will be less dispensable, and more able to make terms. It is the Negro's chance, the first extensive widening of his industrial field since emancipation.

To just what extent the northern Negro will grow to his new opportunities, it is impossible to predict. On the average he is probably not yet so efficient or so tenacious as the white man. He must combat certain racial virtues and vices. Yet from what we know of how ability responds to opportunity, and of how the Negro has advanced under almost impossible economic and social conditions, we cannot but draw hopeful conclusions.

Money Wanted

THE strike in the cloak industry is putting New York City to a drastic moral test. Many citizens have declared sympathy for the strikers and have hoped that they would win. Little has been done to make them win. People look on in benevolent impotence, their hearts stirred, their hands idle. While the city sympathizes, the strikers, who are fighting the public's battle as well as their own, starve. They need money, of which New York has more than any city in the world; and they are given sympathy. Unless they get money they will be beaten and all the tearful sympathy will count for nothing. The question is, "What is good will worth?"

For a policy of doing nothing there is the excuse neither of ignorance nor of non-partisanship. We have recognized that while in the past both sides have made mistakes, the wage-earners in this present struggle represent industrial progress and democracy while the manufacturers stand for a despotism tempered by anarchy. The workers are willing to accept mediation and the advice of outsiders, in other words, to recognize that a public interest attaches to private industry. The manufacturers, on the other hand, adhere to the obsolete and anarchic theory that the public has no concern with their business. They demand that the public hold off while they use the power of their money to starve tens of thousands of wage-earners into submission.

We wonder if these manufacturers, some of whom were once workmen, actually understand what this policy of starvation means. Of course it is not a literal starvation; the wage-earners will not