

A SERIOUS, WELL-DOCUMENTED BOOK ON NEGRO LABOR

By CLAUDIA JONES

Negro Labor by Robert Weaver gives us a valuable study of the past, present and future potentialities of Negro working men and women. Mr. Weaver appropriately stresses the truth that "the economic fate of the Negro has never been and never will be dissociated from that of all labor in the nation."

This is the obvious reason for today's unprecedented unity of Negro and white workers in their fight for higher wage levels on the picket lines.

Mr. Weaver, in his discussion of the Negro worker's past, and his status today, gives credit to labor's recognition and that of the Negro people that the two are indissolubly bound up together.

COMMENDS CIO

The heart of the book, naturally, deals with the problems faced by Negro workers: barriers to Negro employment; ending of the color bar during World War II in certain basic industries and the resultant problems of today; governmental approaches, Negro-union relationships, the role of management; remaining barriers to Negro workers in such unions as the Boilermakers, etc.

He commends the forthright challenge by the trade union movement, particularly the CIO, in its fight to integrate Negro workers in basic industries. The stories are many that Mr. Weaver relates from his intimate experience in varied government posts especially as Director of Negro Manpower Service in both the War Manpower Commission and the Office of Production Management. At present he is director of Community Services, American Race Relations Council.

One feels however, that Mr. Weaver is somewhat over-cautious in his praise when he speaks of "relative" credit to the CIO as contrasted to the official AFL position. Mr. Weaver likewise minimizes the role of Negro trade unionists.

However, he makes a point when stressing the need for the entire labor movement, and the CIO especially, because of its advanced policies, to follow through the actions of its affiliates like the UERMWA and National Maritime Union. He duly praises these affiliates for championing the fight

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for Negroes' job rights as well as their educational programs for their white and Negro membership.

In his chapter on "The Role of Management," the author states unqualifiedly "management has learned much" from its experience in integrating Negro labor in World War II. He states that they have arrived at "sound and effective approaches to this problem."

But Mr. Weaver entirely misses the relationship of the Negro's plight in employment, which he correctly stresses, to the role of the monopolies. It is obvious that the well-springs of the problem rest in the role of Big Business—its present-day attempts to destroy and weaken the labor movement, to destroy Negro-white unity, to scalp the gains of Negro workers by its fight against a permanent FEPC which Mr. Weaver so forthrightly urges as a federal policy.

GRAPHIC AND FACTUAL

In the main, the entire study is graphic and factual. It was conceded generally during the '30's that the Negro was losing his quest for economic security and occupational advancement. Tracing the war years, 1940-44, Mr. Weaver shows that the changes of that period of four years represented more industrial and occupational diversification for Negroes than had occurred in the 75 preceding years.

At the same time he takes stock of the unskilled occupations of Negro workers (1 out of every 5) although several thousand were in production work.

Mr. Weaver's book is a serious, well-documented study. It requires reading and study especially by white and Negro trade unionists and all progressive who understand that the two strongest forces for democracy are represented by the labor movement and the Negro people—led by its Communist vanguard.