

THE NEGRO IN THE MAJOR INDUSTRIES AND
BUILDING TRADES OF PITTSBURGH

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FOREWORD

This study consists of investigations into the status of the Negro worker in the major manufacturing industries and building trades of Pittsburgh. They were undertaken at a time of relative depression in industry, when a comparison of the status of colored labor with that of other years, when labor was scarce and opportunities more favorable, would be significant.

The questionnaire method of investigation had been so widely followed in this district in surveying the subject that little or no material was available from that source. All data herein obtained, unless otherwise stated, were gathered through one or more visits to the plants, and by interviews with employers and workers who were in position to give definite statements about the labor situation as it affected the Negro.

The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Mr. John T. Clark, Secretary of the Urban League of Pittsburgh, who made possible numerous contacts and gave valuable suggestions.

CHAPTER I
THE INCREASE IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF NEGROES IN THE PITTSBURGH
INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT 1916-1926

The recent Negro migrations (1916-26) have created problems that have not been associated with any other mass movement of the Negro race since the days of the Underground Railroad. Aside from being the most problematical migrations they have brought about a greater change in the economic status of the Negro than has ever been witnessed in a short span of seven years. The recent movements were toward the city industries, both North and South. The Pittsburgh district, with 68,723 Negroes in 1924(1), of whom 55% were recent migrants, was one of the ten industrial districts of the North that faced the greatest problems in their feeble attempts to adjust thousands of Negroes who were entering industry for the first time.

Aside from the many problems of living conditions-housing, health, recreation, and schooling-that were accentuated by this sudden increase, there appeared other factors more closely related to the very root of the Negro's existence-his job. The negroes who came to this district were, in the main, agricultural workers. Social scientist doubtless realized the economic waste that would of necessity accompany the allocation of farmers and farm hands to industry, but there was no alternative as well as no determining policy of labor control at the time. Through practical experience employers and employee learned many things about each other, and the Negro was given his "baptism of fire" in basic industry. Many problems arose; some were settled, others were not. Needless to say, industrial relations were affected and new ideas and methods were brought to the fore.

The furor of the war period subsided, the boom of 1923(2) which brought so many negroes to this district has been followed by a period of depression which only recently has been lessening. Labor is not now at a premium. We therefore find the period from 1916 to 1924 a favorable one in which to observe

TABLE A
GAINFULLY EMPLOYED MALES IN SELECTED OCCUPATION IN PITTSBURGH*

| Occupation | 1910 Negro | 1920 | | 1924 Negro |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------|---------------|---------------|
| | | Native | Foreign Negro | |
| Apprentices | | | | |
| machine | | 362 | 37 | 3 |
| others | 6 | 270 | 26 | 11 |
| Boilermakers | 3 | 680 | 307 | 14 |
| Brick and stone masons | 36 | 1159 | 575 | 28 |
| Builders and Contractors | 34 | 209 | 152 | 11 |
| Carpenters | 58 | 1437 | 1302 | 65 |
| Electricians | 11 | 870 | 213 | 33 |
| Forgeman, hammer men, welders | 159 | 128 | 155 | 5 |
| heaters, metal | | 99 | 167 | 24 |
| Iron moulders | | 165 | 498 | 69 |
| Laborers | 1226 | | | 41 |
| Brick, Tile, etc. | | 250 | 112 | 51 |
| Building, general | | 1744 | 1110 | 562 |
| Glass Factories | | 74 | 101 | 16 |
| Halters-articles | 248 | 140 | 271 | 168 |
| blast Furnaces | | | | |
| Hollings Mills | 507 | 2429 | 11245 | 4360 |
| Other Iron & Steel | 15 | 783 | 1980 | 197 |
| Mechanics (M.C.S.) | | 810 | 379 | 95 |
| Millwrights | | 105 | 155 | 7 |
| Building painters | | | | 5 |
| glaziers, varnish- ers | 36 | 655 | 369 | 40 |
| Racer Hangers | 50 | 135 | 50 | 48 |
| Plasterers and cement finishers | | 115 | 152 | 82 |
| Plumbers | 7 | 742 | 346 | 10 |
| Radlars | | 92 | 192 | 41 |
| Rollers and hands | 26 | 132 | 395 | 116 |
| Semi-skilled in Iron and Steel | | | | 97 |
| blast Furnaces | 3 | 558 | 553 | 37 |
| rolling mills | 51 | 515 | 1051 | 226 |
| Laborers, road | 151 | 55 | 257 | 65 |
| Sanitors and sextons, | 892 | 243 | 464 | 1084 |
| Total | 2126 | 15926 | 23157 | 7481 |
| | | | | 6659 |

*Figures for 1910 compiled from the Thirteenth U.S. Census, Occupations, Vol. IV pp.590-591

Figures for 1920 compiled from the Fourteenth U.S. Census, Occupations, Vol. IV pp.1197-1199

Data for 1924 is a cursory estimate made by the Department of Public Welfare in its survey of the Negro population of Pennsylvania, 1924.

The consequences of a wholesale influx of new workers on the Negro himself as well as upon the industries and their labor policies.

The Gainfully Employed. In 1910 of the 9,940 male Negroes gainfully employed in Pittsburgh 33% were engaged in personal and domestic service (See Table A.) The manufacturing and mechanical industries at that time employed 2,319 or 23% of the total number. In 1920 when the number of males gainfully employed had increased to 15,071 the number in personal and domestic service had decreased to 22.1% of the total while the number in the manufacturing and mechanical industries increased to 7,791 or 52% of the total number.

TABLE B

NEGROES AND IMMIGRANTS IN INDUSTRY IN PITTSBURGH AND ENVIRONS*

| Locality | 1920 | | 1921 | | Decrease or Increase | Total | |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|
| | Negroes-Immigrants | Negroes-Immigrants | Negroes-Immigrants | Negroes-Immigrants | | | |
| Allegheny Co. | 18726 | 82515 | 10010 | 84477 | -40.2 | -34 | -28.6 |
| Pittsburgh | 8083 | 21212 | 4561 | 14727 | -43.3 | -52.8 | -35.9 |
| Homestead | 1391 | 5194 | 694 | 3053 | -50.3 | -41.2 | -37.9 |
| McKeesport | 584 | 5856 | 280 | 4720 | -52.8 | -19.5 | -15.6 |
| McKees Rocks | 682 | 3090 | 456 | 2202 | -33.1 | -29.9 | -27.6 |
| Ford City | 310 | 1800 | 151 | 792 | -51.3 | -39.1 | -31.8 |
| Butler | 122 | 1782 | 44 | 945 | -63.9 | -46.9 | -38.6 |
| Monessen | 805 | 3339 | 552 | 1628 | -31.4 | -51.2 | -34.2 |
| Carnegie | 107 | 1502 | 13 | 825 | -87.9 | -45.1 | -37.3 |
| Bradnock | 1548 | 4961 | 702 | 3554 | -54.7 | -26.7 | -31.9 |
| Coraopolis | 194 | 993 | 91 | 641 | -53.1 | -18.3 | -17.9 |
| Sarantum | 191 | 3155 | 92 | 1390 | -51.8 | -55.9 | -44.1 |
| Duquesne | 569 | 2688 | 252 | 3021 | -50.7 | -23.9 | -24.5 |

*Compiled from Statistics as found in Industrial Census, Department of Internal Affairs, Pennsylvania, 1920, 1921.

That Negroes were employed in large numbers in the major industries in 1920 is also shown in the Industrial Report of the Department of Internal Affairs of Pennsylvania. (See Table B.) The industries of Pittsburgh are classified into 233 groups, Negroes being employed in 125 of them which represents a total of 2292 establishments. In 1921 there was a total decrease of 36.9% among the wage earners of the city. Yet, the number of Negroes decreased 43.3% while the immigrant group decreased 52.8%. This proportion of decrease is unusual for in only three cases did the number of immigrants decrease in larger proportions than other groups. This tremendous decrease among the Negro workers may have been due, either to the unskilled nature of his work, "the last hired and the first fired" or, to the fact that larger numbers returned to their native haunts to escape the difficulties of the winter.

Number of Negroes in Selected Industries. For consideration of the problem of the Negro in the industries of the district we have selected twenty-seven plants, twenty-two of which employ Negroes in large numbers, three not employing them, and two employing five or less.

Different reasons are given for the small number or non-employment of Negroes in these five plants designated. The Oil Well Supply Company employs five Negroes as firemen, and states that they are not needed in the other parts of the plant. The plant has never used Negroes for other work. These men employed have been there from five to eight years. THE UNITED STATES GLASS COMPANY explains the absence of Negro labor through its location. There are very few Negroes living in that part of the South Side. Relatively low wages are paid. Not more than one or two Negroes have ever been employed in those parts of the plant where skill is required. THE MACINTOSH-HERRHILL COMPANY used Negroes when their foundry was located at the city plant. The plant is now chiefly a machinery works, employing a large number of mechanics. On account of the small numbers of Negroes who are eligible for the work and the unwillingness of the white mechanics to teach Negro apprentices they have not

TABLE C

NEGROES IN SELECTED PLANTS IN PITTSBURGH DISTRICT*

| Plant | Prior to 1918 | Highest during war | August 1923 | November 1924 | March 1925 |
|---|---------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| Chicago Steel City Mills Homestead (1500) | 4000 | 6758 | 2300 | | 580 |
| Duquesne (Clairton) | | | | | 1500 |
| Bradlock | | | | | 720 |
| | | | | | 600 |
| | | | | | 1150 |
| Jones & Laughlin 4 plants | 400 | 1500 | 2900 | 1200* | 2000 |
| Westinghouse Electric Co. | 25 | 900 | 950 | 529 | 560 |
| Harbison-Walker Co. | 50 | 250 | 350 | 75 | 107 |
| Nat'l Tube Co. | 100 | 250 | 600 | 500 | 705 |
| Frasch Steel Car Co. | 25 | 25 | 1700 | 500 | 532 |
| Pittsburgh Iron & Forge Co. | 0 | 50 | 150 | 70 | 123 |
| American Steel & Wire Co. | 25 | 25 | 880 | 400 | 450 |
| Oliver Iron & Steel Co. | 0 | 50 | 150 | 70 | 123 |
| Crucible Steel Co. | 150 | 400 | 650 | 125 | 370 |
| A.H. Myers Co. | 0 | 200 | 350 | 250 | 260 |
| Lockhart Iron & Steel Co. | 0 | 160 | 350 | 270 | 300 |
| Mesta Machine Co. | 0 | 50 | 30 | 25 | 25 |
| Standard Sanitary Mfg. Co. | 0 | | 250 | 275 | 200 |
| Fort Pitt Malleable Iron Co. | 0 | | 250 | 100 | 125 |

TABLE C, (Con't)

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|-------|------|-------|
| Westinghouse Air Brake Co. | 45 | 90 | 3300 | 135 | 200 |
| Pittsburgh Plate Glass, Ford City | | | 350 | 700 | 700 |
| Pittsburgh Steel, Monessen | | | 200 | 118 | 157 |
| Duquesne Steel Ry. | | 344 | 275 | | |
| Standard Steel Car Butler | | | 475 | 250 | 250 |
| MacIntosh Hemphill | 200 | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Reliance Steel Casting Co. | | | | 35 | 51 |
| Oil Well Supply Co. | | | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Crane and Co. | | | | 3 | 3 |
| U. S. Glass Co. | | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Armstrong Cork Co. | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Manroe Boiler Works | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 2295 | 8495 | 17234 | 7586 | 13046 |

*Vide

- (1) Epstein, Abram, The Negro Migrant in Pittsburgh, Social Economics Study, University of Pittsburgh, 1917, p.31.
 (2) Harris, Abram, L., The Negro Worker in Pittsburgh, Master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1924, pp.45-46.

seen fit to employ Negroes in this work. CRANE AND COMPANY employs Negroes as janitors only. THE ARMSTRONG CORK COMPANY has never employed Negroes, and states this to be a "matter of policy". The superintendent of the MUNROE BOILER WORKS states that their adequate supply of skilled white labor has never made the employment of Negroes necessary.

The remaining plants, comprising the primary and secondary metal industries in particular, are no doubt more typical of the trend of Negro employment. Prior to 1916 the number of Negroes was relatively small, increasing during the war and decreasing during the period of depression, 1921-22, and reaching its maximum in 1923. The course of the business cycle has affected greatly the number of Negroes employed. On the up-curve large numbers of Negroes were employed.

Prior to the war the Negro was a negligible factor in the industrial life of Pittsburgh. It has been observed however that even then the Negro enjoyed a greater inclusion into all parts of industry than he did in any other section of the state. (3) With the coming of the masses of colored folk competition grew and the problems of adjustment in industry as well as civic life increased. The Negro's advent was influenced by the same method used to entice immigrants to go west in the earlier days-attractive propaganda concerning advantages offered-high wages and the like. It was his first opportunity to enter the industrial field of this district in large numbers except as a strike-breaker. The advantage this new position gave him doubtless was understood by him as is illustrated by the following criticism of the attitude of the Negro during the steel strike of 1919; "in the entire steel industry, the Negroes, beyond compare, gave the movement less cooperation than any other element, skilled or unskilled, foreign or native."

(4) At the time of the strike there were approximately 800 employed in the Homestead district; only eight of them joined the union and struck. In Duquesne 344 Negroes were employed but none struck. In Clairton out of 200

Negro workers, 10 joined the union and struck for 6 weeks when they decided to return to work. In Bradlock, of 600 employed, none struck nor joined the union. (5)

As the strike was really among the unskilled and the work was only hampered because of the shortage of common labor, Negroes temporarily filled that gap. They were transported from plant to plant and aided in defeating the strike. This was to the Negro's advantage, and gained him consideration from the employers even though it may have injured his standing with the foreign born workmen.

This situation doubtless was quite important in making the Negro a fixture in this district as an unskilled laborer. His entrance into the higher branches of work in both the primary and secondary metal manufactures was more difficult and depended on many other factors.

Types of Occupations. The work of the steel plants is primarily unskilled. A conservative estimate states it to be from 60 to 70%. The Negro being largely unskilled because of his lack of industrial experience and training found his lot cast with this group. He is yet largely unskilled; for in spite of the large growth of population the proportion of skilled workers has not increased accordingly. The use of job specifications has so divided the field of labor that only a slight difference exists between semi-skilled and unskilled labor. One company has more than 1500 job specifications. Negroes are employed on 256 of these jobs, none of which is highly skilled. Thus the whole field is complicated by this new technique of employment. But such classification does not hide the fact that the Negro remains in unskilled group in these industries.

Following the great steel strike the Senate Investigating Committee classified the kinds of work in the steel industry as follows: (6)

(a)-common labor- shifting- replaceable by any body-the "know-how" requiring from one day to two months wage from 40 to 50¢ per hour. Ex-

TABLE D
SKILLED AND SEMI-SKILLED WORKERS IN SELECTED
INDUSTRIES

| Plant | Skilled | Semi-Skilled | Unskilled. |
|----------------------------|---------|--------------|------------|
| Westinghouse Electric | 18 | 220 | 532 |
| Carnegie Steel* | | | |
| Duquesne | 45 | 140 | 535 |
| Homestead | 75 | 300 | 1125 |
| City Mills** | 30 | 170 | 480 |
| Clairton | 25 | 100 | 475 |
| Jones and Laughlin | | | |
| Somo and South Side | 102 | 490 | 1048 |
| Westinghouse Airbrake | 0 | 100 | 100 |
| Pittsburgh Plate Glass | 165 | 195 | 540 |
| Pressed Steel Car Co. | 53 | 250 | 514 |
| Standard Steel Car Co. | 120 | 155 | 200 |
| Standard Sanitary Mfg. Co. | 0 | 120 | 170 |
| Reliance Steel Casting | 14 | 16 | 21 |
| Crucible Steel Co. | 20 | 95 | 155 |
| Pittsburgh Steel Menessen | 19 | 54 | 275 |
| Total | 701 | 2325 | 5962 |

* Estimated from percentage as given by employment managers.

** In 1920 there were 350 Negroes employed in the finishing mills of whom 300 were skilled or semi-skilled.

Example-yard laborer.

(b)-low-skilled-steady work requiring knack and a slight responsibility wage from 40 to 50¢ per hour. Example-skip operator on blast furnace.

(c)-semi-skilled-trained workers, potentially able to do a skilled job and occasionally doing it-wages from 50 to 60¢ per hour. Example third helper on open hearth.

(d)-skilled-experienced and trained workers on set jobs involving adeptness, judgment, and responsibility-wages from 60 to 75¢ per hour. Example first helper on open hearth, floor moulders.

(e)-highly skilled- the master mechanic of the plant-wages from 70¢ to \$1.00 per hour. Examples-rollers in rolling mills, blowers and moulders.

The many different jobs in the steel mills make the task more minute classification difficult. Among the Negro workers the number that is found in any particular skilled job in a plant is always very small. Negroes will boast of colored millwrights, chemists, and foremen that are found in the plant, but will lay little or no emphasis on any further classification. In such cases as these just mentioned the Negro who got the position usually was much better than another employee in line for the same job. Often, as in the case of the millwrights at Jones and Laughlin's South Side plant, the job came as the result of long periods of faithful service. Some plants employ Negroes on certain skilled jobs when other plants will not. Four of the steel mills studied do not have Negroes in their boiler department, three do not employ them as core makers. There is a large number of moulders. Negroes are used chiefly as machine moulders, an occupation that has come to be regarded chiefly as a semi-skilled occupation. Of the skilled Negroes who came from the South many of them had been engaged in this work for many of the Southern foundries had used Negro moulders for a generation.(7) It appears that in the boom period of 1920 Negroes were employed on practically all jobs in some of the plants, only to be relieved of many of them during the slack period. Many however remained through the dull period in advantageous positions.

In ascertaining the skilled and semi-skilled jobs on which Negroes were most frequently employed in these industries the following are given as groups using at least 75% of those employed: stockers, stove tenders, moulders, cinder men, bottom fillers, top fillers, larry men, larry helpers, skip operator, stove keepers, stove helpers, iron handlers, melters, vessel men, third helpers, crane men, "trest, dip, and insulate," clippers, prinders and chippers. Twenty per cent were distributed in the following occupations: first helpers, grinders, pourers, pressers, rollers, strippers, clippers, puddlers, shearers and cappers. The remaining five per cent were employed in the more highly skilled, or in minor executive positions. Examples of these are chemist, millwright, machinist, foreman.

In the Ford City plant of the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company Negroes were employed as machinists, layers, grinders, polishers, chemical mixers and pot makers. They were not employed in the more highly skilled occupations as those of silvering and polishing mirrors. One experiment with Negroes in these departments was used as conclusive evidence that they could not do this work. This is also true in the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company where Negroes are not employed as enamellers the most specialized work in the plant. It is felt that Negroes cannot do the work. The reason is based on one experiment with a Negro who said he was an enameler and was given a job but failed to do satisfactory work. It is this generalization from one or two instances that has played a large part in keeping Negroes out of some jobs. The foreman in the last named plant went so far as to say that if Negroes were used in that department all of the work would have to be turned out as "seconds".

On the other hand some plants have a large nucleus of skilled Negro labor. The Standard Steel Car Company was in need of riveters and secured a large number of Negro riveters from the Norfolk, Virginia district. These men were quite efficient and the employment of more was decided on. When the labor scout of the company was sent out to seek more riveters he reported that he could find

no Negroes that would be satisfactory. At the same time men were writing the company from the aforementioned district saying that they had heard men were needed but the scout had refused to take Negroes.

Again, the Reliance Steel Casting Company employs 51 Negroes at the present time. Of this number 30 are either skilled or semi-skilled. These men are chiefly chippers and grinders. There is very little group work and the men that are at work have proved satisfactory. They are believed to be different from "the ordinary run of Negroes".

TABLE B
AVERAGE WAGE RATES IN BASIC INDUSTRIES
PITTSBURGH AND DISTRICT

| Occupation | Wages per hour | |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| | Colored | White |
| Boiler Makers | .70-.90 | .70-90 |
| Chippers | .50 and bonus | .45-.65 and bonus |
| Core makers | .60 | .60-.90 |
| Grinders | .55 | .40-.60 |
| Machinists | .60 | .70-.90 |
| Machinists helpers | .60 | .60 |
| Millwright | .60-.90 | .60-.90 |
| Moulders | .60 | .75 |
| Polishers | .55 | .65 |
| Rolling mill hands | .60 | .75 |
| Mill laborers | .40-.50 | .40-.60 |

Wages. The Negro has been regarded as one of the sources of this country's cheap labor supply. One of the criticisms of the Negro by labor organizations has been on this score. This was doubtless true for the Negro found himself a competing non-competing group in the labor market. The formation of definite wage policies has been the result of the many and experiences with this class of labor. It was not cheap; it was the most expensive kind of labor. By standardizing the wage scale it is possible to get better results from the worker, create a stable class of workers and reduce the production costs. This is the policy of the plants we have studied.

The point was raised that Negroes receive a lower wage per hour than the whites on the same job. This point was raised by one of the workers, who had so long been accustomed to receiving less than other workers that it seemed natural that it should be so.

Upon analysis the point yields to the methods of computing wages in the industries. The many different jobs with their minute classifications allow great variance in the scale. It is true that where the wage scale is higher the preference is given the white worker, but where the same job is concerned the wages are the same, except in such cases as the following: Believing that the minimum requirements of the assigned job were not being filled by the crew of Negroes employed at the Westinghouse Electric Company a change in the method of wages was effected. By this method a flat rate was paid for production to a certain point, which was less than the previous wage paid and all work over that amount was paid as piece work. In this way the men were forced to work at least the major portion of the time if they wished to maintain their old scale, and with increased effort if they wished to make more.

Another tendency that appeared was that influenced by the different wage scale of different shops. In smaller shops the wages for skilled work was often higher than that of the larger plants. Coupled with this fact is the fact that the wages are higher in those shops where Negroes are not employed in those occupations. They are also higher in occupations that are in-

fluenced by the unions.

It was also shown that a Negro may be running a machine that would ordinarily require a machinists wage. He will be classed as a machinists helper and receive wages accordingly.

In the unskilled work there is no difference in the wages paid white and colored. It was determined in all cases by the plant in which the man was employed and the class of work he was doing. The difference in the wage scales as shown in Table E are influenced by the aforementioned factors. It is also evident (as in the case of the core makers, moulders and mill hands) that the wage is influenced by the kinds of work on which you are employed. On this basis a Negro who is making #3 cores would receive less than a white worker who was making #1 coils. A moulder of simple patterns would receive less than a moulder of more intricate designs. Negroes, on the whole, were employed in the lower branches of the work.

An interesting experiment was conducted by the Westinghouse Electric Company. On hydraulic disc making machines three shifts of six men each are employed. Two shifts are white and one is colored. Production from these machines had fallen off. The colored group working from 11 P.M. to 7 P.M. produced less than either of the others. When the workers were mixed the results were no better. A change in wage policy produced the desired results. By this method a certain basic production by the group was required. A group bonus was then paid for all production in excess of this amount. Not only was the production increased, but colored boys were placed on all three shifts.

There is a marked tendency toward experimentation with wage policies. Although a fair remuneration based on steadiness of employment, skill required, difficulties of the job, the pleasant feature, the outlet to more remunerative work and other things are appraised in the consideration the effort is more strongly inclined toward piece wages where this is possible. Negroes above the rank of the unskilled are more and more beginning to work on this basis.

Whether the method followed is piece rates, bonus, or premium systems of various kinds inasmuch as the attempt is made to pay what the work is worth, as nearly as that can be determined, the result is the same. The wage scale is not formed for Negroes as a group, rather because of certain limitations and restriction he fits into only a small portion of it, and that of the lower extreme.

Negro Foremen. The employment of Negro foremen and straw bosses in this district is an innovation of the war. In 1923 eighteen of the twenty-three plants had Negro foremen. In March 1925 eleven of that number were still using them as "bosses". The experiment was initiated in an effort to better solve the problems of the colored worker, especially when he was working in groups. After some experience it was found that the Negroes did not do much better under a colored foreman unless he was in a mixed gang. On the other hand, we have the statement of one of the colored "straw bosses" at the Westinghouse Electric Manufacturing Company that he is "through with Negroes" and is going to use none save foreigners in his gang if possible. He maintained that the colored workers took advantage of him and made his job harder to keep.

The general idea of mixing the groups and giving them a foreman of a different race seems to be the accepted one. Thus Negroes are used in this capacity over foreigners and Negroes. In the strict sense of the word there are very few Negro foremen. To become one of the minor executives a Negro must possess far more than the average ability that would be required of white men. Thus high-grade Negro artisans are found in such positions as foreman of transportation, track foremen, foreman in the power plant and foremen of laborers. In general the "straw bosses" are found at the blast furnaces, open hearths and labor groups. One employment manager pointed out that although he did not have colored foremen in that plant he was sure that the chief thing to be considered was how he could get along with the workmen of other racial

groups.

"A Negro straw boss is sure to get the work done", said a foreman of the Park Works of the Crucible Steel Company, "but he may antagonize his men while doing it. He feels that he is responsible, which is just the thing we want all colored workers to feel." The Negro feels that he can rise only slightly higher than the position he then holds and endeavors all the more to make this one advantage a sure one. Petty jealousies among the colored workers often cause disagreements with the colored foreman. These are avoidable however and satisfaction usually depends on the tact and skill of the foreman in handling his men.

CHAPTER II

PROBLEMS OF NEGRO EMPLOYMENT IN THE MAJOR INDUSTRIES

Turnover among Negro workers. The chief criticism of Negro LABOR IN THE LOCAL INDUSTRIES is that they are not steady workers and that their turnover is too high. The many community factors that contribute to high turnover rates are sometimes underestimated by the employers who put the whole blame on the irresponsible Negro who "will not stick on the job". It is true that large numbers of colored workers return to the South each winter, that many of them get tired of the monotony of industry and drift into the ranks of floating and seasonal workers-the bone of American industry-but little has been done to prevent irregularity. One employer of more than 500 Negroes says that they would prove an asset to the plant if they would only remain on the job and lower the high turnover that handicaps industry. Yet, this plant is located in a small borough where there are no recreational facilities; the plant has no welfare worker or any provisions for the diversions of its employees. The men are mainly single men without families or responsibilities or homes, and live in bunk houses or company houses. Such a situation is not one designed to hold the steadier man.

The employment manager at the Pressed Steel Car Company says: "If Negroes will but stay on the job better consideration will be given them. High turnover makes the experiment of having Negroes doubtful." This company according to the statement of its former employment manager took Negroes in 1920 because it could not get immigrants, and planned to use them only until an adequate supply of immigrants was available-which time has not yet come. Meanwhile letters were written to the Commission of Immigration at Ellis Island soliciting immigrant labor. Such a policy, or lack of one, in itself tends to create a larger number of floating laborers and concurrently a greater turnover.

There are a number of possible remedies for this deplorable situation.

One is a more intelligent employment policy involving the selection of workers. One company has introduced such a process in its hiring (Jones and Laughlin, South Side plant). After this technique was applied the average length of time that $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Negro employees remained in the mills increased from one month to three and one half months. After methods include the distribution of workers according to racial adaptability to the many kinds of plant work. See Appendix IV). Although it was found that such a plan would not work as well as was anticipated it gave an impetus for further methods in solving the problem.

And, the problem of turnover is not unique with the Negro worker. In the local plant of the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company it seems to have been a problem that affected the whole labor force. In an effort to remedy the bad situation responsibility was placed entirely on the shoulders of the employment manager. This plant employs 1100 workers, three hundred of whom are Negroes. A bonus is paid the employment manager on the basis of the stability of the working force, as it is related to production. A high turnover means a lower bonus. As the turnover becomes less the bonus increases. He has full power of adjustment among the workers in the plant. The scheme has been effective, for in 1924, with a higher production than any year since the war, the turnover was reduced to a fraction more than 2%.

Just as the economic motive worked to stimulate the manager in this case it may be applied to the workers. In plants where bonuses are paid, and pensions or insurance plans, and forms of stock purchase participation provided the turnover tends to be reduced and a stable class of workers provided. This is true among Negroes only when they have been made to realize the value of the pay received in other forms than wages. In the Standard plant it took two years for the plan of stock participation to "get over" to the Negroes. In 1925 the employment office is using great precaution to keep the Negro workers from over subscribing. In the Westinghouse Electric plant there

is group insurance provided for the employees. The colored employment advisor states that only now are they able to get Negroes to see the good in getting insurance free. Its effect is seen now in the fact that their turnover for Negroes is nearly the same as that of whites. In 1923 though the same insurance plan was in effect 200 men were hired to keep 400 jobs open for Negroes. As an understanding and an interest is consummated better results are evident.

These many difficulties are counteracted by Efficient Employment Service. The power of foremen to hire men is thereby limited and final authority placed in the hands of experts in employment management who seek to make adjustments and replace the men rather than discharge them. Of the plants studied only two were without an organized employment department. In many cases it is not as efficient as it could be. Only in those cases where the selective process of hiring is carried on efficiently are favorable results shown. For instance, in December 1924 when business was on the rise, the Southside mills of Jones & Laughlin Company hiring only those men who had worked there before and had maintained good records. As long as this procedure is followed good results are assured.

In efficient employment service plants employing colored labor will include the use of Negro welfare safety and employment men. In 1923 thirteen of the plants listed in Table I were employing one or more welfare and employment workers. In March 1925 nine of these companies still continued to employ such workers. These men engaged in pioneer work succeeded in allaying many difficulties among colored workers. Some failed in their efforts and were dismissed, others were dismissed when the quota of workers was reduced in 1924.

The chief work of these employees was along the lines of recreational supervision and employment. Where women were used some effort was made to teach the wives and daughters of the new workers more up-to-date ideas and methods in the care of the family. Classes in the rudiments of education,

clubs of various sorts, and programs of general interest are fostered by the Negro welfare worker.

But it appears that the basic consideration in the problem of the industrial worker is often neglected entirely by the greater number of these welfare workers. Few of them seem to realize the real facts in industrial employment as they affect the Negro worker. Little in the way of training for industrial fitness is given the Negro laborer. If this is due to the failure of industries to permit such instruction, or to the inability to select men capable of giving it the situation is to be deplored. If it is due to the neglect of the welfare worker he has omitted the greater portion of his job. Of course there were few trained men ready for such positions when they were created. These should have learned through their experiences, but few seemed to have profited by them. They were either inarticulate or failed to analyze many problems effectively as well as develop constructive plans for meeting them.

Among the obvious contributing factors to high turnover in these plants to which adequate consideration especially in the case of Negro workers has not been given, are

(a) Inadequate Housing. The improvement in the housing situation since the war has been so slight that the problems remains until the present time the most acute phase of the labor supply problems. The Secretary of the Employers' Association of Pittsburgh in a letter of July 6th, 1920 remarked: I find that our employment office is turning away about 250 Negroes every week. The reason we are obliged to turn away so many is that our members cannot promise them a place to live, which is the most unfortunate circumstance, as otherwise we would be able to use large numbers of them. Camps, bunks, and boarding housing were the chief methods of housing Negro labor. Only four of the companies listed in Table A had any definite program for permanent housing facilities for workers and their families. These, moreover, were in such small numbers as to be a practically negligible factor in

meeting the problem. At the present time the Negroes are forsaking these bank houses as rapidly as possible, only to be replaced by new ones when they are obtainable. The Negro Welfare Worker at the Carnegie Steel Company, Homestead plant, reports that there are no more than five or six men living in each of the four bank houses provided by the company. As soon as the men can find another place to live they move to boarding houses and private homes. This creates a greater evil in the congregation of great number in crowder quarters, creating health and moral hazards involving women and children.

The bad labor situation is being met in a number of instances by the provision of more adequate housing. Three companies built new houses for Negro workers. One company put Negroes in old houses and put white workers into new ones. The idea that almost anything would do for the Negroes is well shown in the statement of one manager when he said, " We have typical houses for Negroes". Though some plants have taken a step forward in preparing for these new workers there is danger that another period of another boom will find most of them quite unprepared and will see the striking conditions similar to those of 1923, wasteful to the company and the workers alike.

The problem is really that of preventing those who are indifferent from living under conditions which endanger the rest of the community and the persuading employers to make more adequate provisions for the living conditions of men they bring in.

Illustrations of the relations of housing to the turnover among Negro workers are provided by the following cases. In the case of Company A: "After careful analysis of turnover among colored workers who lived in comfortable houses are compared with the turnover of those living in the crude camps adjacent to the plant, it appeared that the annual percentage of turnover in the first instance was only 107% as compared with 1060% in the later instance (6) Company "B" reported a monthly turnover of 40% among Negro workers in 1925, 10

houses or recreational facilities were provided.

Company "C" employing 250 Negroes, providing suitable homes and employing a Colored Welfare worker reports a turnover of less than 70%*

Difficulties on the Job. The foreman is the crux of the problem of unskilled labor in industry as it is conducted at present. When foremen have the power to hire and fire their men indiscriminately the Negro often suffers. Case upon case has shown that the prejudice of the foremen plays a large part in the high turnover existing in some plants. Where centralized employment departments exists the situation is changed. But even when foremen do not have the power of employing men, summarily or discharging them the problem still exist. The employment manager who knows his minor executives will not send a foreman Negroes if he knows they are not wanted. Often a foreman can and does make the job so unpleasant that the man will quit.

For instance, just this month (April 1925) a bad situation came to the attention of a Negro social agency in the by-products plant of Jones and Laughlin Company. Here a new experiment was being tried and all of the foremen save two or three were native southerners being chiefly from Alabama and Mississippi. This plant employ approximately 300 Negroes. The corollary of the new situation was the Negroes are being pulled off the jobs and replaced by foreigners. One man who had been employed steadily for two years failed to notify his foreman when he was off for one day and on his return found his job taken. Another noticed a foreigner standing at his bench every morning when he came to work for a week. He became suspicious and started coming earlier. In the second week his foreman told him that he was dissatisfied with his work and he could go. The foreigner went to work the same morning.

There is no better example of the situation than is given in the following statement of an employee in the city offices of the Carnegie Steel Company. * Westinghouse Airbrake Company, Wilmerding, Pennsylvania.

In 1923 the Carnegie plant at Clairton, Pa., was reported to not desire any more Negroes. To quote Mr.-- : "The employment manager at the Clairton plant is asking for more men daily. I asked him if he wanted white or colored, and he replied, "No don't send me any more 'niggers," I am sick and tired of them".

"I was just talking with Mr. Jim. Memphis, of Duquesne Steel plant, this afternoon over the phone and he said, "Can you find colored men who are worth the trouble of taking on out here for the masonry department?" I told him that I could get all the men he wanted, but they could not be found on the streets of Pittsburgh at present.

I tell you that it is a shame the way colored men have been treated by the corporations in this district. The good men worked here during the strike and helped to break it and then went home during the winter and all will return in the spring, if they can feel that they will get a square deal. Another thing that is absolutely necessary--houses-- so that the colored men from the South can come up here and bring their families with them. I believe that all the trouble about being able to get steady labor will be ended if the corporations will loosen up and spend some money for decent houses for the colored workmen to live in. I do not mean that they should repair old shacks and stables for them, but give them good houses with modern conveniences, and let the Negro feel that he is regarded as a man.

"Now, the next vital step to make the colored family man a fixture in the mills, is to give him an equal opportunity to hold the, or any job, he qualifies to fill. You can't blame any sensible man, be he colored or white, for doing as Negroes are under such disgraceful treatment as the colored man gets at nearly all of the plants.

"I just told one Superintendent of a Carnegie Mill on yesterday that he is mistaken about the colored man not being able to hold down jobs in the mills. I told him that the niggers, (that is just what I said), have not

been given a dog's chance. And he finally had to admit that the colored men had not been treated right.

"Then there is another thing that is a great drawback to keeping Negroes with the Company; and it is simply this: he goes into the plant and works his very guts out, trying to work up to a better position and then sees a foreigner who had not been in the plant but a short time, placed on a better job. Wouldn't that disgust any man with an ounce of sense? This thing is done in all of the plants.

"Another thing that makes it difficult to keep colored men on the job, is the general practice of having foreigners as foremen. In addition to this bad thing, too much authority is placed in the foremen. In most cases foremen do not know how to handle men. They, too often, fire men on account of little petty things. I believe that more intelligent men should be foremen.

"I am fully aware of the great things that corporations were enabled to do in breaking the strike by the loyalty of colored men, and I think it is a shame the way they are treating colored men after that.

"Colored men, who I know are A-1 have called at this office almost daily complaining about the way they were treated when the foreigners came back after the strike. We would call up the plants and be told to send the men back and they would be put to work. On every occasion when the colored men would go back to the plant they would be offered a laboring job and they would not take it.

"Another thing that makes it very hard to keep colored men satisfied is a tendency, in fact it is a practice at most of the plants, to work the colored men at the furnaces during the hot summer months and in the winter to supplant them at the furnaces with foreigners. This makes the colored man sore and they quit. Who could blame them?

"I am of the opinion that if this discrimination was properly brought to the attention of the corporation would correct these evils. I am sure

that they are not aware of this yet it would be very difficult to correct in the U. S. Steel Corporation as the General Superintendents, at the several plants are clothed with absolute authority in the matter of methods at their respective plants. They are put there to get results and that seems to be all they strive for.

"This corporation has made money and is making money under the old and present method and therefore I believe it will be quite a task to induce them to adopt and enforce another method, but as one engaged as I am and hearing the complaints as I do, I am thoroughly convinced that something must be done in an effort to give the colored workmen a better show.

"When you talk about getting the right sort of colored workmen in your plants, and I mean by that married men with their families, the corporations must first build suitable houses, then give them an equal chance to advance according to ability. If such a thing is done, take it from one who knows, Negroes will be standing at the gates each morning asking for employment."

Opinions Concerning Negroes in the Major Industries. The employment of Negroes has given rise to the most perplexing paradoxes. If it is a question of what a Negro is mentally or physically able to do there are as many affirmations of his competence as there are denials of it. This is well shown by the replies to the questionnaire sent out by the Department of Public Welfare in Pennsylvania on the Negro problem. (See Appendix IV) An Associated Press Dispatch for September 19, 1923 reads: Negro labor has not proved satisfactory, steel men say for paid work. In the mills the Negro apparently cannot adapt himself to the presence of the machinery overhead and other conditions with the result that while large numbers have been attracted to the Pittsburgh district in the last few years by the prospect of high wages, they seldom remain long in the employ of the steel mills. Many find that living expenses are higher than they anticipated while the winters are rigorous and they drift southward.

This only gives one view of the opinions of the District. The employers differ in their beliefs with wide variance. This variance may be noted in their several statements.

"In the main they are good workers. In the recent depression some superintendents preferred keeping colored men because of their efficiency."

Jones and Laughlin Company, S. S. plant.

"Our experiment with using Negroes, starting seven years ago is satisfactory."

A. H. Myers Co.

"Negroes do more work and will quit the job orderly."

Jones and Laughlin, Sohio plant.

"The Negro is more peaceful. He quits the job by himself which is not the case with the immigrants."

Pressed Steel Car. Co., McKees Rocks.

"Negro labor is fair, best results are obtained when they work in gangs under white foremen." "As laborers in our foundries, operators of moulding machines and similar work, we have had the best success with the subjects of old Austria, Poland, and Russia and as long as a supply of the above nationalities exists the employment bureau feels that preference should be given them."

Westinghouse Airbrake Company.

"There is too much of a general indifference among Negroes"

Westinghouse Electric and Mfg. Co.,

"When times are good Negroes are not so dependable as whites. Too much pay day lay off."

Pittsburgh Steel Co., Monessen, Pa.

"Production is our aim. We do not have discrimination. Negroes are given the same considerations as anybody else that is any good."

Park Works, Crucible Steel Co.

"We have a good set of Negro workmen. Mexicans? They're too treacherous."

Standard Sanitary Mfg. Co.,

"Negroes are naturally lazy but do very well on piece work."

National Tube Company, McKeesport, Pa.

"Turnover is too high to depend on the Negro for a permanent labor force."

Standard Steel Car. Company, Butler.

The Negro workmen differ as much as the employers in their opinions of the work. Many of them are sensitive on any issue that arises affecting them, considering themselves discriminated against. Others are more discerning on their views and are able to distinguish any attempts at discrimination from the presentation problems of general purport. Some of the typical opinions are:

"Working conditions are very good. We don't have very good houses but have been promised better ones."

"We have two safety men here who get us anything we want."

"They expected too much from the 'green' Negroes who came here from the South. These old men don't help at all."

"We have no kick about discrimination, especially in the last three years. Colored men work everywhere here."

"I've worked here 19 years. There are just two things to remember. One is that you're a Negro, another, if you can do a thing show them-you'll get your chance."

"The foreman said when I asked for that job that 'niggers' were hired to do rough work. All the soft jobs were for the white men."

"Plenty of hard work here but there is no chance to get anywhere. Colored men work at the same jobs from year to year while white men and foreigners are promoted in two or three months after coming here."

Some employers feel that mass segregation of the Negro in industry is necessary for successful results. Others are of the opinion that intermingling with other racial groups will encourage the Negro worker to remain on the job. On the other hand some believe that the Negro is naturally lazy, describing

him as the "original efficiency engineer". If there is an easier way to do a thing the Negro is certain to find it they say. Others say they are equal to whites and in many cases superior to foreigners in his work. Examples of this personal rating are reflected in these comments.

"On a tonnage basis we pay our Negro shearers slightly more than white men because of better work. On intricate patterns Negroes can't be excelled."

"In the handling of precision tools and equipment the Negro is far superior to south Europeans."

"Southern Negroes are slow in movement, but our operation charts show that there is less loss through accidents to equipment and men than among foreigners."

The opinions naturally vary but it is apparently true that where the opinions are unfavorable there is a tendency to keep the respective status of white and colored as nearly intact as the interest of industry will permit.

CHAPTER III

THE NEGRO IN THE BUILDING TRADES.

No kind of occupation more clearly illustrated the difficulties of the Negro worker than the building trades. The very fact that Negroes formed only 3.8% of those employed in these occupations in Pittsburgh in 1910 and 4.1% of that number in 1920 makes the issue of the Negro's success in this unique American industry a problematical one.

The building field, in contrast with that of basic industry is essentially skilled. Adequate training is necessary and to this the Negro, in most cases does not access. On the other hand he has been engaged in these occupations as a "jack-of-all-trades", and in the South as skilled workers since the day of slavery. He was often without technical knowledge of the job and has remained more or less inefficient. In any case his advancement has been very slow.

The Atlanta University Studies #7, The Negro Artisan, shows that in 1890 there were in Pittsburgh the following number of colored skilled workers:

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Bridgesmen | 35 |
| Carpenters | 17 |
| Cabinet makers | 5 |
| Apprentices | 3 |
| Plasters | 2 |

The figures for the last census when compared with those of 30 years ago show a lack of proportionate advancement in these occupations, even along with the dearth of numbers in other occupations the number of apprentices likewise failed to increase. An increase in only one occupation in the building trades appears in large proportions and this is in the unskilled work. Though the census figures are only approximately they give the most reliable index of the number thus employed. The bigness of the Negro population have had little little effect on the number of Negroes engaged as skilled craftsmen in those

occupations in Pittsburgh.

Yet, no complete understanding or interpretation of the problem is possible unless one knows the relationship that has existed between the Negro and organized labor. Union principles and policies have retarded the development of Negro skilled workers, for large numbers have been prevented from entering the occupations. Indeed the Negro has often been victimized through ostracism and organized competition. An analysis of the issues involved should precede any interpretation of the situation.

TABLE F
NEGROES IN BUILDING TRADE*

| Occupations | 1910 | 1920 |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | total-Negro | total-Negro |
| Brick & Stone Masons | 1667- 36 | 1184-28 |
| Carpenters | 3999- 68 | 3685-85 |
| Plasters | | 453-52 |
| Painters | 1845- 36 | 1549-40 |
| Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters | 1669- 7 | 1884-10 |
| Electricians | 1643- 11 | 1613-33 |
| Painters, Glaziers, Varnishers | 1845- 36 | 1549-40 |
| Laborers, building | 793-248 | 3243-562 |
| Apprentices | | 270- 3 |
| Paper Hangers | 527- 50 | 303-45 |
| Total | 12607-522 | 15808-928 |

*Figures for 1910 compiled from the Thirteenth U. S. Census, Vol.IV pp 590-591.
Figures for 1920 compiled from the Fourteenth U. S. Census, Vol.IV pp 1197-1198.

Wages. The wages in the building industry are determined by the union scale, which is in normal times the highest wage paid in the industry. Unless Negroes are members of the unions their pay is not only lower than the highest union wage, but lower than that of the unorganized white worker in similar occupations. It is also true that where white and colored workers may be secured for the same union scale the preference is given to the white worker. The Negro hoisting Engineers experienced this discrimination in 1906 when they were at work on the Oliver building. While on this job they were admitted into the local. Their rates increased and the contractor then asked for white labor.

Since the average wage for Negroes is lower than that of the whites there is keen competition between the workers. Underbidding is almost inevitable. The Negro is forced to take a job for less money, realizing smaller profits in order to meet the competition. He is "cheap" from the union point of view. Yet, he cannot be otherwise and survive in this occupation. An analysis of the wage table following, shows that in only 8 of the eleven occupations listed are Negroes receiving the same high wage as that of the whites. It must also be noticed that there is only a small percentage of the colored workers that receive this wage.

TABLE G
WAGES IN THE BUILDING TRADES

- Average wage per hour for colored workers and the

| Occupation | union scale | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------|
| | Colored | Wages Union Scale |
| Bricklayers | \$1.00-\$1.50 | \$1.50 |
| Cement Workers | .90- 1.25 | 1.25 |
| Electricians | .50- 1.25 | 1.37½ |
| Lathers | .80- 1.25 | 1.57 |
| Painters | .80- 1.57 | 1.44 |

TABLE 3, (Cont.)

| Occupation | Colored | Union Scale |
|--------------|----------|-------------|
| Plumbers | .60-1.44 | 1.60 |
| Plasterers | .75-1.25 | 1.60 |
| Roofers | .75-1.25 | 1.25 |
| Stone Masons | .90-1.25 | 1.25 |
| Hod Carriers | .80-1.25 | 1.00 |
| Laborers | .70-1.25 | .70 |

Higher wages in the building trades are supposed to offset the inconveniences of a small number of work days. If this is true the Negro is handicapped in several ways by not belonging to the unions. It is certain that he cannot maintain a reasonable standard of living with his wages lower and his work days less frequent than that of other people and occupations.

The Negro in the Unions of the Building Trades. Eighteen Unions in Pittsburgh are affiliated with the Building Trades Council. Of this number Negroes are members in good standing of but eight. The Bridge and Constructional Iron Workers, Plasterers, Plumbers, Elevator Constructors, Electrical Workers, and Sheet Metal Workers do not have Negro members. Of the eight with Negro members one, the painters, admit them into separate locals. The increase in the number of Negroes employed in the industry, and the changing attitudes of many of the unions gives a new interpretation to the organization of Negroes.

The Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers Union has a larger a larger Negro membership than any other group of the building trades. John R. Commons told of this union (5): In 1908 the hod carriers and mortar mixers among them secured \$3 a day or a scale of 37¢. (Two dollars a day was the standard wage at this time.) This rate was due to the institution of the Building Laborers and Hod Carriers Union established by American born, English speaking common laborers, white and colored to protect themselves against the "green" Slavs and Italians. It is a work union protected by the organized building trades."

The membership of this union in Pittsburgh is divided among three locals. One of these is composed of foreigners, the others of Americans, white and black. The membership of the local #11 was given by the secretary as approximately 400. On the bulletin board at the time there was a list of 28 skilled and 88 unskilled members who were in good standing financially (less than three months in arrears) at the time.

The District Council of this union has membership in the Building Trades Council and enters into agreement each year with the Building Trades Employers' Association of Pittsburgh. At the expiration of their agreement on January 24, 1928 there was an effort made by the Employers to reduce the wage scale which resulted in a strike by the laborers and hod carriers who were receiving 70¢ and \$1 per hour respectively. No adjustment was made. This notice which was posted in one of their halls shows the results.

"All men who were laid off jobs because of wage reductions will return to work at the same rate of 70¢ and \$1 with the understanding that we will receive a wage in raises in the near future."

(Signed)

District Council Wage Committee.

Common laborers when organized are now receiving 70¢ per hour while the average unskilled laborer, unorganized, is receiving from forty to fifty cents per hour.

TABLE H
NEGROES IN UNIONS OF BUILDING TRADES IN
PITTSBURGH

| Unions | Local Number | Number of Negroes | Negro Apprentices |
|--|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Bricklayers | 2 | 22 | 0 |
| Cement Finishers | 526 | 38 | 0 |
| Wood & Metal Lathers | 33 | 7 | 3 |
| Hoisting Engin- eers | 399 | 18 | 0 |
| Hoist Carriers, Building and Common Laborers | 11 | 116 | 0 |
| " " | 293 | 237 | 0 |
| Structural Iron Workers | 44 | 3 | 0 |
| Carpenters Dist. Council | | 5 | 0 |
| Painters | 18 | 32 | 0 |
| Total | | 478 | 3 |

The new wage agreement calls for a scale of 50¢ for the laborers and \$1.25 for the hoist carriers. Such an adjustment upward of unskilled labor wages is without precedent in the district, and will doubtless serve its purpose by enlisting more unskilled workers.

This union is the only one in the trades with a colored district organizer. Both of the mixed locals have Negro secretaries.

The Cement Finishers, Rock and Asphalt Workers' Union is composed chiefly of foreign born and Negroes. More harmony seems to prevail here than in any other union. The total membership is 350, forty five of whom are Negroes.

The Latherer Union #31 is the only mixed union of the trades that has Negro apprentices. In the past year they have added 3 Negroes making the total number of apprentices of all races 22. Were it not for the fact that these apprentices have relative who are members of the union it is doubtful whether it would be possible for any Negroes to be thus engaged. Efforts of other colored boys to become apprentices have been met with continued and persistent refusals.

There are seven Negroes in this union who are receiving the union scale of \$12.50 per diem. In June this is to be raised to \$12.90 with no work on Saturday. Negro latherers who are not in the unions are paid by the thousand, their wages varying from six to eight dollars per thousand. seldom can one place more than 1400 laths per day.

There is only one colored metal lather in the city and he is a union man. Incidentally he was asked by the union to affiliate with this body.

The Bricklayers' Union #2, with approximately 1200 members, has twenty-two Negro members. Negroes are permitted to join, but are not encouraged. Race friction is very prominent in the organization among individual members. Many refuse to work on the jobs with colored union men, which means that one of them has to leave—usually the Negro. The attitude of the local itself has

not always been impartial for some members can remember when the local suspended four white members for working on the same job with a Negro from another union who had been refused membership in this local.

Singularly, the greatest race difficulty in this union is among the Negroes themselves. The Secretary claims that there are two or three colored "hell-raisers" who make trouble for the other Negroes as well as for the union. Wm. Z. Foster is the name of one of that class, ironically enough.

The Plasterers' Union has practically closed its doors to the Negro. They are not members of the locals and the District Council has refused to authorize a separate local. The census figures from 1910 and 1920 show that the white workers are not only leaving this field, but reducing the number of apprentices. Yet, the number of colored plasterers has not increased perceptibly. All of the work done by the Negro plasterers is non-union. Instead of union scale of \$12.80 per day he averages from eight to ten dollars. They are employed mainly by colored contractors, or real estate companies, both of whom pay a lower wage than the unions.

The Plumbers are staunch in their refusal to admit Negroes. The examinations given to applicants are often of such nature as to cause a man to fail. The one outstanding colored plumber in the city is not a member of any union or association but is furnished with Union help when it is desired or necessary. The opposition to Italians and other foreign groups is as strong as that toward Negroes.

The Carpenters Union was threatened in February 1920 by the immigration of new Negro carpenters and petitioned the State Federation to encourage the organization of colored workers in the field by appointing a colored district organizer who would take charge of the task. (9) The petition was accepted but no action was taken, or has been taken since that time. The colored members in the union have been members for a number of years. No effort is made to encourage more to join.

Negroes entered the Hoisting Engineers' Union #66 because of the fierce competition that they as a "scab" organization, gave the local body from 1901 to 1906. For ten years they were members in good standing, having little or no difficulties. In the period after the war disension arose and a movement was launched to exclude Negroes and foreigners. It resulted in the establishment of another local #889, which was composed of thirty or more of the native whites who were victims of the racial propaganda of the period. The National body upheld the establishment of the new local, much to the chagrin of #66. In deciding which local should have the jurisdiction of the Pittsburgh territory the matter was referred to the courts. The decision of the lower court, upholding Local #66 was sustained by the State Supreme Court in 1921.

Structural Iron Workers. "Few Negroes are engaged in structural iron work," said the secretary of the local union. "We have three in our local, all of whom brought transfer cards from other cities and are working on small jobs in this vicinity." Where there is excess danger, and a possibility of racial friction Negroes are not employed. The risks are too great.

The many requirements of the Electric Workers make membership for Negroes almost impossible. Should one pass all of the examinations there is certain to be a rejection of his trial work by the inspector. The Negroes who are employed as electrical workers, about forty, are used in plant work and are not organized.

The Painters have a separate local for Negro members. It is the only union of the building trades following such a plan. It is said that there are 2300 organized painters in this district, distributed among the three locals. Local #18 composed of colored members, has a membership of 65. The organization has five apprentices, while a full waiting list is always to be found. Union painters have recently received a wage increase which brings their wage scale to \$11.50 for eight hours.

Union officials do not encourage Negro membership in mixed locals. The consensus of opinion is that a separate local would promote a better organization as well as aid the Negro group, for,

(1) Arguments between white and colored workers in the meetings often become personal and end in trouble.

(2) After the Negro enters the Union he usually wants the distinction of being the only Negro in there and will not encourage others to join.

(3) It is harder collecting the Negroes' dues.

(4) Negroes "naturally" get second choice when men are being sent out on a job.

On the other hand, the Negroes seem to violate the union rules more frequently than the white members. This may be partly accounted for in the fact that his chances appear to him less favorable than those of the white workers. Thus, the union officials claim that he will "loaf" when he gets a chance, will work overtime for "straight-time" wages and will work with non-union men. These officials believe that a separate local will weed out the major portion of these problems though the policies which may be formed to meet the special needs of the group.

The Attitude of Organized Labor. The American Federation of Labor has never declared itself opposed to Negro membership yet the color question has been one of its unsolved problems ever since it has been organized. The late Mr. Compers often found occasion to clear the clouded atmosphere and explains the bemuddled situation that occurred in the national unions under the titular supervision of the Federation. His pronouncements were often downright and unequivocal. He said, in 1890, "It is not a question of personal prejudice or color prejudice the white men are willing to sacrifice their positions and their future in order to secure a recognition of the rights of the colored workmen".

(10) Two years later he wrote in the American Federationist, "The antipathy that we know some union workers have against the colored worker is not because

of his color, but because of the fact that he is generally a "cheap man." (11) Through the twentieth century this discussion of the matter continued until we find at the Montreal and Atlantic City meetings of the Federation some of the most heated arguments arising over the inclusion of Negro members in some of the Nationals. The Federation continued to hold its point of view although it has little power over the policy of the national or international bodies. Though the A.F. of L. continues to issue its far reaching statement that its national unions have no clauses prohibiting the admission of Negroes the question remains unsettled, for far more subtle means that restriction are used in their efforts to "protect" the building industry.

Thus we find the Negro restricted because of a unanimous vote of local union, required by some unions, others by the two-thirds vote, and in others by the examination process. The whole administration of organized labor is run in such a fashion with no particular effort being made to obtain Negro members.

We may generalize and say that in skilled work requiring membership in unions, Negroes are employed only in small number, and membership is not encouraged unless the union is threatened. Since apprentice recruits are discouraged and the number few, the safety of the union from this point of attack is never jeopardized by an unorganized Negro minority in the craft concerned.

Organized labor is lethargic or antagonistic; Negroes are skeptical untrained and individualistic. As long as the motives and interest vary so "never the twin shall meet."

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS

The labor situation as it affects the Negro worker presents many complexities. Any analysis of the factors related to the Negro's condition would reveal difficulties that have no single solution. Among these difficulties may be noted, first, communities made little or no effort to relieve the tension caused by the sudden coming of Negro labor. The problems of housing, schooling, health and recreation were neglected to such an extent that the communities may be justly and to a great extent held responsible for the many problems that arose. Secondly, organized facilities for training the workers, from the agricultural districts of the South, for better jobs were, and are, practically next to nothing. It is true that the Negro came with an opinion that the North was a heaven, though it was cold, and failed to find it the place of his dreams, but that does not explain all of the difficulty. The very fact that these communities and districts failed to provide training facilities created a mass of "inefficient groping, seekers," who became itinerant and drifted, hit or miss into any occupations which were held out to his unskilled hands. Some returned South, but others continued to drift. Even others remained and succeeded in gaining a stable place in Pittsburgh industries. But even now the masses work from day to day with that weak tenure and frequent change of place from which all unskilled, unorganized laborers suffer under modern industry.

The prejudice of the industrial world is the third factor in the problem. This prejudice may be due, in part to:

- (1) The insufficiency of the Negro as a skilled worker,
- (2) The failure of employers to discriminate between efficient Negroes and the masses of unskilled,
- (3) The fear of his white fellow-worker that he will be a successful competition,

(4) The belief that the Negro should remain a "hewer of wood and a drawer of water."

On the other hand as shown in large numbers of instances carefully investigated, the opposition to the Negro in industrial plants is due to a whimsical dislike of any workman who is not white, and especially of one who is black." (9)

Immigration. The immigrant group, which has supplied the bulk of labor in the basic industries, will gradually decrease as long as the present quota is maintained. During this time the Negro is sure to take advantage of the opportunity offered and intrude himself more deeply into the industries of the community. At the present time there is much competition between the Negro and immigrant groups, due to the relative scarcity of jobs. Employers are continually weighing the relative advantages of the two groups. The immigrant lacking a comprehensive knowledge of the English language often causes many difficulties. No better example may be given than the walkout of 500 foreign-born workmen at the Fressed Steel Car Company, McKees Rocks, on April 29, 1925. A notice had been posted to the effect that the work day would be lengthened half an hour with no work on Saturday in order that the present work force might be maintained. Interpreting this as an effort to increase their work day the immigrants refused to work. They returned upon satisfactory explanation by the management. On the other hand the Negro presents his problem. When the eight hour day was instituted by the Jones and Laughlin corporation 200 Negro workers threatened to strike. They felt that unless they were able to work for 10 to 12 hours they could not make enough money with which to support their families. When the Negro welfare worker had shown them the relative merits of the plan they returned.

But the labor question is not to be decided upon such issues at such a time. Immigrants will not be available in large numbers and use must be made of existing markets. It is for this reason; if for none other, that the Negro is to find an opportunity in industry. That will doubtless excel any

Remedying the Situation.

The slow but sure gains that the Negro worker has made in the major industries have come largely from the new understanding of human relationships as exists between the working classes, regardless of color. This attitude is giving the Negro worker an opportunity to prove his mettle, a chance that he has not had. If his worth is to be proven he cannot be treated as a member of an inferior class who are to be content with lower standards and unskilled labor, regardless of ability. (12) Should this be the fundamental idea the Negro would not be able to obtain the respect and consideration that the major population must have if he is to work and live in an industrial community. This is true not only of Negroes, but of all peoples. It is quite true that to a certain extent the industrial communities are as responsible for the class of Negroes they have as well as for the low standards of living, indifference to the job, and "clannishness" that is supposed to mark his presence there. Thus the problem becomes one of communities and should be regulated in part by policy. If such a policy were established many of the evils of distribution of workers would be solved, the destructive forms of recruiting labor would be eliminated and better opportunities would be available for the Negro worker. The policy would also involve direct associations with the various industries. The raising of standards for workmen and uniformity of laws and regulations governing them would play a prominent part in the consideration of hiring new applicants. The whole question takes into the consideration of the problem the responsibilities of industry. The benefits from such a system being of benefit to employer and employee should be accepted and followed by both.

The relative scarcity of skilled Negro workers illustrates the imperative need of vocational guidance, as well as, industrial training for that group. After the Negro enters industry little chance is given him to increase his technical knowledge. Negro workers, in the main lack this technical foundation.

Nothing could excel the benefits of an industrial education for these workers. Results from this source could be expected however only in the second generation. Even then time employers would do well to institute part-time arrangements whereby the Negro may work at his job for a certain number of hours per day, spending the remaining time receiving instruction in more advanced stages of the plant work. If such were not possible, these courses of instruction could be carried on in connection with the "vestibule" schools. The efforts of the Negro workers must be directed in channels of opportunities and assiduous endeavors.

Americanization has been fostered for the immigrant though there remains in American the native Negro who, as a group, have not assimilated the ideas of the age. Were such a movement as that launched for immigrants, used in adjusting the Negro to the civic and industrial problems, many of the evils that accompany his coming to new communities would be removed. Negro welfare workers have aided greatly in eliminating many of the problems, but they are too few in number, and the load is too great to be handled by so few individuals. If the problems of housing, health, schooling, and delinquency are to be adequately handled, they must become the concern of the community. The Negro worker can do much himself but he needs help that he may not lose what he has gained in his efforts. Accompanying his survival in the ranks of industry there is certain to come a spirit of cooperation that this period of industry requires.

Unions have proved one of the greatest handicaps to the Negro worker. As long as these bodies close the doors of their apprenticeship schools to men of color the Negro cannot be prepared for tasks that preclude years of practical experience. As long as Unions deny or limit Negroes' membership for Negro workers unfavorable conditions are certain to exist. To remedy this situation should be the aim of Negro labor. Undoubtedly, competency will prove a most formidable weapon, yet that is insufficient. Coordinated efforts

on the part of many Negro organizations to unstill into labor bodies that the Negro is prepared for Union membership have not caused these unions to change their attitude. Only when rife competition between organized and unorganized groups exists, and the union is threatened is the Negro solicited for membership. Thus, in the time of strikes he is welcomed with open arms.

Many opinions have been given as to the attitude the Negro should assume on the union question. Some have encouraged his attempts to join, others have advocated separate racial unions while others feel his greatest hope to be in remaining out of organized labor entirely. But, since the Negro is an integral part of the labor movement no hope for him nor the movement can be expected unless he becomes a part of it. Only when racial trade organization are used as stepping stones whereby Negroes may gain admission into the larger fields are they of value. Thus, Chandler Owen's (12) advocacy of a United Trades Union fashioned after the United Hebrew Trades, or, the Station Chamber of Labor would serve to defeat its own ends unless Negro labor became numerically stronger.

At the recent Inter-racial Conference, held in Cincinnati in March, the question of whether or not the Negro should relinquish his weapon of strike breaking was discussed. Opinions varied, but the majority held that in situations where the Negro has been rejected or subverted by the parties engaged as strikers, he was justified in being a strike breaker as an effort to gain the desired results of unqualified admission into all trades. This, however, is one of the strategic points in the problem that can only be handled as the situations occur.

It is true that the potency of the Negro laborer has been found in his individual bargaining. In agriculture, private and domestic occupations where he is a personal factor the problem of collective bargaining was never considered. As he has moved into other occupations he has brought with him this cankered tradition which has failed to benefit the group. Through bitter ex-

perience he is changing and this personal factor gives precedence to the good of his group. Leaders have become aware of the situation and are instilling into Negro youth the knowledge and values of organization. Tuskegee Institute has recently instituted a Student Trades Union. Each one of its trades schools is organized into a union, with its own constitution and by laws governing its members and protecting its field. These several unions are controlled by a federation, composed of representatives of the individual unions elected as officers. There is hope for a more favorable situation among Negro workers when such practical plans are instituted in the schools.

Is there an outlet for Negro workers on Pennsylvania farms? Since it is evident that if the Negro workers in the future will form a greater portion of the labor market than ever before, and, that the greater number of them will be obtained from the South where they have been engaged in agricultural pursuits, will continue to be a move of population toward this as well as other industrial fields. As has been true in the past, many of these workers will prefer farm life to that of the city. What are the possibilities of placing these workers on Pennsylvania farms?

It is estimated that at present there are 30,000 idle farms in Pennsylvania. In adjusting the new Negro farm worker who prefers farming no more efficient and economic plan could be fostered. Yet it is to be noted that the total number of Negro farmers has steadily decreased since 1900, while the number of owners has increased.

Although there were only 585 colored farmers in Pennsylvania in 1900 by 1910 the number had decreased to 543, while in 1920 despite the migrations of 1916-17 the number had decreased to 451. Were steps taken to allocate Negro workers agriculturally inclined, on the farms there would be a much more favorable opportunity for weeding out the industrial habits that accompany any wholesale introduction into industry of any group.

Yet this experiment would only prove satisfactory when it would be possi-

X ble to place the Negroes in groups of several families. With small communities thus formed there is created a contact that will serve as an inducement for Negro families. Workers are needed on these farms and the Negro farmer can relieve this situation, as he has the industrial one, but only when these community groups can be formed.

In conclusion, with both organized and unorganized Negro labor becoming more potent each day, in council as well as on the job, to the end that human relationships may be considered and shaped to meet the need, it is to be expected that labor gains, both profitable and peaceful, are to be made in the industrial field.

Atlanta

The Westinghouse Air Brake Company now reports 49 houses built for Negro families renting for twelve, fifteen and eighteen dollars a month. The company also reports that there are between 15 and 20 colored men employed on a salary basis in skilled or clerical occupations.

Appendix I

EMPLOYMENT OF NEGROES IN PITTSBURGH*

MALE AND FEMALE

1924

| Classification | Numbers |
|---|---------|
| Domestic & Personal Service | 8274 |
| Agriculture, Forestry, etc. | 27 |
| Manufacturing and Mechanical Industries | 5546 |
| Trade | 631 |
| Professional Services | 322 |
| Clerical Occupations | 393 |
| Transportation | 1400 |
| Public Services | 260 |
| Extraction of Minerals | 73 |
| Total | 16928 |

* Compiled by Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare in Survey of Negroes in Pennsylvania, 1924.

Appendix II

INCREASE OF NEGRO CHILDREN IN SELECTED SCHOOLS OF THE HILL DISTRICT

| School | Number Oct. 1917* | Number June 1934 | Per cent Increase |
|-------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Franklin | 99 | 354 | 356 |
| Miller | 57 | 100 | 90 |
| Madison | 20 | 77 | 175 |
| Northend | 222 | 292 | 27 |
| Minersville | 271 | 325 | 20 |
| Letsche | 160 | 256 | 61 |
| McKelvy | 120 | 219 | 83 |
| Bowers | 209 | 291 | 7 |
| Watt | 529 | 689 | 60 |
| Ross | 198 | 364 | 84 |
| Total | 1293 | 3167 | 65.7 |

* Figures in this column taken from A. Epstein, The Negro Student in Pittsburgh, p 71.

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Appendix IV

EFFICIENCY AND REGULARITY OF NEGRO WORKERS
IN PENNSYLVANIA*

| Efficiency | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| | Number of Industries | Negroes Employed |
| Better than white | 14 | 1780 |
| As good as white | 32 | 6400 |
| Poorer than white | 10 | 1120 |
| | 56 | 9300 |
| Regularity | | |
| Better than white | 3 | 491 |
| As good as white | 28 | 6321 |
| Poorer than white | 25 | 2548 |
| | 56 | 9300 |

*Compiled by Department of Public Welfare in Survey of Negro Population, 1924.

Appendix V

OPEN LETTER TO THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR, RAILWAY BROTHERHOODS AND OTHER GROUPS OF ORGANIZED LABOR.
PRESS RELEASE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE.
July 3, 1924.

For many years the American Negro has been demanding admittance to the ranks of organized labor.

For many years your organization has made public profession of your interest in Negro labor, of your desire to have it organized and of your hatred of the black "scab".

Notwithstanding the apparent surface agreement, Negro labor in the main is outside the ranks of organized labor, and the reason is first, that white union labor does not want black labor, and secondly black labor has ceased to get admittance to union ranks because of its increasing value and efficiency outside the union.

We thus face a crisis in inter-racial labor conditions. The continued and determined race prejudice of white labor, together with the limitation of immigration is giving black labor tremendous advantage. The Negro is entering the ranks of the semi-skilled and skilled labor and he is entering mainly and necessarily as a scab. He broke the great steel strike. He will soon be in the position to break any strike when he can gain economic advantage for himself.

On the other hand, intelligent Negroes know full well that a blow at organized labor is a blow at all labor; that black labor today profits by the blood and sweat of labor leaders in the past who have fought oppression and monopoly by organization. If there is built up in America a great black block of nonunion 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 face?

We therefore propose that there be formed by the N. A. A. C. P., the A. F. of L., the Railway Brotherhoods, and any other bodies agreed upon an inter-racial labor commission.

We propose that this commission undertake:

(1) To find out the exact attitude and practice of national labor bodies and local unions toward Negroes and of Negro labor toward unions.

(2) To organize systematic propaganda against racial discrimination on the basis of these facts at the great labor meetings, in local assemblies, and in local unions.

The Association hereby solemnly warns American laborers that unless some step as this is taken and taken soon the position gained by organized labor in this country is threatened with irreparable loss.

APPENDIX VI

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ative need of vocational guidance, as well as, industrial training for that group. After the Negro enters industry little chance is given him to increase his technical knowledge. Negro workers, in the main lack this technical foundation.

for Negro workers unfavorable conditions are certain to exist. To remedy this situation should be the aim of Negro labor. Undoubtedly, competency will prove a most formidable weapon, yet that is insufficient. Concerted efforts

V I T A

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