

MIGRANTS AND MINERS

Migration always disrupts the industrial and social life of both the sections to and from which the migration comes. History shows no exception. Still the quest for a better living goes on. In the case of the Southern Negro migrants to the North, there have been good and bad results. There is a disposition on the part of Negroes, however, to loudly acclaim the good results and ignore, or only whisper about, the bad ones. While the black migrant has gained better wages and school facilities for his children, as well as privileges denied him in the section from whence he came, and the Negro communities have gained in population, wealth and political importance, there have been some losses too. Segregation and discrimination have crept into many places where before it treaded only lightly, serious congestion has been brought about which has adversely influenced health and morals, while in many places the migrant has been directly responsible for cheaper wages.

The revelations contained in The Pittsburgh Courier last week regarding the mining situation in Western Pennsylvania, is a case in point. A great corporation, The Pittsburgh Coal Company, doubtless in order to weaken the United Mine Workers and lower wage scales, brings in tens of thousands of unskilled Negroes from the agricultural South used to a low standard of living. Inexperienced, they sacrifice lives and money while orienting themselves in the new field of labor. Used to a wage of \$2 or \$3 a day, \$4 or \$5 seems to them an excellent wage. Unused to the trickery of calculating employers and ignorant of the safeguards gained by experienced union miners, they are easily exploited. Ignorant, too, of the impossibility of an unorganized worker getting fair treatment, they refuse to join the union. The result has been the weakening of the union, the lowering of wages and the breaking down of the safeguards to life and pocketbook that the union forces the mine owners to inaugurate. Not only is this true in Western Pennsylvania, but it is true also of the West Virginia and Kentucky fields.

There are Negroes quick to attack organized labor (and with justification) for its attitude toward Negro workers, but the attitude, deplorable as it is in many cases, has nothing to do with the principle of labor organization and the necessity of its application. One could as well attack the use of razors because they are occasionally used for purposes other than removing beards. When ignorant, inexperienced labor with a lower standard of living enters a community, it constitutes a serious menace to resident labor until it develops a standard of living equally high. Out of such material grow race hatred and conflicts between groups. The ounce of prevention in such a situation is organization of the migrant workers. The United Mine Workers eagerly invites the Negro miner to join the union. The necessity for doing so cannot be too forcibly stressed.