

Labor & Immigrants Propagate Negro Bondage

WASHINGTON - (NPI)--While a record number of whites were holding down increasingly better-paying jobs, unemployment among Negroes rose during the summer, as Labor Department spokesmen disclosed that a steady decrease in Negro joblessness during the last five years had come to an end.

FOR MANY Negroes, it meant being thrown out of work at a time of ever-rising prices. For others, in two Northern states, it meant having to work on farms in near-slavery conditions hardly changed since the Civil War.

A Labor Department report revealed that 8.2 per cent of non-whites were out of a job during August, compared to 7.9 per cent, for the period May through August, and 7.1 per cent from January through April.

For unskilled laborers, both white and Negro, the jobless rate in the period between May and August was 7.6 per cent, up from 6.7 per cent in the period from January through April. The 8.2 per cent joblessness among Negroes in August compared with 3.4 per cent among whites. Negroes thus were two-and-a-half times more likely than whites to be out of a job that month.

NEGRO TEENAGERS really had it bad. Some 27 per cent of them were out of a job this summer--about the same as last summer. The percentage among white teenagers dropped from 14 to 12 per cent from last summer to this one. According to Arthur M. Ross, commissioner of labor statistics, rioting in Washington, D.C., was prevented only by government programs to give out-of-work teenagers "constructive activity" during the summer.

An increase in jobs and pay for skilled workers, combined with a decrease in unskilled jobs, tended to put the bite on low-paid workers the most as inflation sped ahead. Skilled workers--both white and Negro--were generally able to keep ahead of inflation through pay raises. But for the unskilled and those on relief, the constant rise in the cost of groceries and other necessities meant even deeper poverty in an economy growing so fast that it could not keep pace with consumer and war demands.

IN TWO Northern states, instances of grinding poverty in the midst of plenty came to public attention. In Southern Illinois, often called "Little Egypt" because of its identification with the city of Cairo, the NAACP charged that Negro farm workers were living in near-slavery conditions.

A federal investigation of the peonage life of these farm workers was urged. Southern Illinois, which extends farther south than much of Missouri, to this day maintains Dixie-like near-slavery conditions for poor Negroes. Before the Civil War, many Southern Illinois leaders sought to preserve slavery there and opposed

Lincoln in his efforts to contain slavery.

In Bridgeton, N.J., migrant farm workers were found to be putting in 12 hours a day for \$6 a day at most as they pick beans on the farms of Louis Pizzo, one of the major growers in the country. Most of the 23,000 or so laborers are Negroes. Many are driven to and from the fields daily from Philadelphia and Newark.

At one fly-infested camp in the area, workers live in chicken coops, and even 10-year old children must help their parents with the farm work. Federal volunteers seeking to set up child-care and literacy centers are banned from the camps.

"THOSE PEOPLE (the migrant workers) ain't nothing and never will be nothing, and you and me and God Almighty ain't going to change them," said Pizzo, in explaining why he will not allow workers from Volunteers for Service in America (VISTA) to enter his camp.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Welfare Conference charged that the labor movement is willing to fly in the face of public opinion when strictly trade union interests are at stake but has been "calculatingly prudent" in civil rights matters.

Many Negro leaders "quite legitimately" ask, the conference said, when the labor movement will move in on unions that still practice racial discrimination. The conference is the administrative arm of the Roman Catholic Church in this country.

In New York, banks that discriminate against Jews and other minorities in hiring were warned that they may be denied millions of dollars in city deposits. City Finance Administrator Roy M. Goodman urged such action as he announced that he will investigate charges that Jews are restricted from management posts in the city's major banks.

Also in New York, the city's Human Rights Commission began an investigation into charges of hiring discrimination by the construction industry.

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