

Point of View



Christmas Is For You, Col. Brown

By Marshall C. Darnell

Time is just a measure of Earth's travels through the heaven's Man has, but the role of a guest on this sojourn, with nothing more to do than enjoy the views. Yet, it is regrettable that most men realize after the journey is nearing an end, That they have not noticed the grandeur, at their feet and over their heads, But have labored in vain to strike a balance within themselves. They didn't know that Christmas was for them! The answer to our struggle lies in the essence of this season. When we pause for a moment and gaze to the heavens, for a sign of the King. Look now fellow travelers for we approach our rendezvous with Him. When we can know again--He has returned to rule the world, And, He will say--children enjoy the view, for I am--He who has made your journey possible, and Christmas is for you.

A Victory For Black Workers And The Black-Labor Alliance

by Norman Hill

Sometimes, important blows in the battle for social and economic justice are struck outside the glare of the public spotlight. Recently one such telling blow was struck in the small, backwater town of Indianola in the Mississippi Delta, and its impact could reverberate throughout the Deep South.

It was in Indianola that the United Food and Commercial Workers Union made a major breakthrough in this traditionally anti-union, right-to-work state with a dramatic organizing victory at Delta Pride Processors, Inc., the largest cat-fish processing plant in the nation. By a vote of 489 to 349, the workers -- 90 percent of them women and virtually all of them black -- opted to have the UFCW represent their interests.

It was not an easy victory. The union had to overcome a concerted management drive -- spearheaded by the New Orleans union-busting law firm of Kullman, Inman, Bee and Downing -- that included radio ads, letters mailed to workers' homes, and signs posted throughout the plant

warning that a vote for the union would lead to layoffs and a plant shutdown. Yet disinformation and intimidation did not deter the workers, whose average wage was a paltry \$3.90 an hour (an ridiculously low \$156 per 40-hour week before taxes), who received no paid sick leave, inadequate health benefits and who were subjected to draconian regulations and unfair labor practices. Moreover, the company frequently restricted bathroom privileges and regularly forced workers to punch out and wait outside the building, without pay, until shipments of fish arrived for processing, a violation of federal wage-hour laws that mandate pay for required waiting time.

The union effort succeeded largely because it hinged on a potent coalition of civil rights, community, religious, labor and A. Philip Randolph Institute activities. Ministers preached from the pulpit

To Be Equal

The Jobs Mismatch

by John E. Jacob

In our highly fluid labor market, some jobs go begging while people remain unemployed because the jobs aren't where the people are or because the available people don't have the skills for the available jobs.

We hear a lot about job shortages in the suburbs and how hard it is to find people for entry-level employment outside the cities. Unemployment is disproportionately concentrated in the inner city, where people have neither the contacts nor the transportation to apply for and get suburban jobs.

Long term, a more serious mismatch exists between the skills required for the job occupations that are growing and the skills available to the urban jobless.

The manufacturing jobs once available to less skilled individuals and high school dropouts are fast disappearing. They're being replaced by new jobs that require higher skills levels and a college education.

In support of the UFCW campaign and against the companies exploitation of its workforce. The state NAACP joined the campaign because, according to state field director Cleve McDowell, "a labor union was doing what we had always hoped they would be doing," adding that he hoped that unions would intensify their organizing efforts among "the poor people in the Deep South." The union assailed the region's "plantation-type economy," and the adverse impact of low wages at the plant on community businesses and institutions. Workers at the nearby Pride of the Pond catfish plant, which was unionized only a few weeks earlier, came to Delta Pride to urge workers to vote for the union.

The union victory could have broader implications. As UFCW Vice President Willie L. Baker put it: "The

New York City, for example, lost over 100,000 manufacturing jobs since 1980. Those are the jobs traditionally held by low-skill workers and which offered entry-level opportunities for minorities.



John E. Jacob

At the same time, the City gained almost 200,000 new jobs, but these were in white collar service and information processing occupations, demanding the educational background and skills not characteristic of the city's unemployed.

That pattern is repeated nationally, in city after city. Old factories close down and new office buildings go up.

toughest state to organize is Mississippi. The toughest part of Mississippi is the Delta. And this the heart of the Delta." A union victory in this region may indeed inspire other workers in the Deep South to organize. But perhaps even more importantly, the victory underscores the potency of the black-labor alliance, particularly in the heretofore largely non-union South. It is clear that the future vibrancy and expansion of organized labor in this region will significantly depend on its ability to organize black and minority workers.

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The people who worked in the factories are jobless and their children can't find entry-level work. Meanwhile, the new jobs go to suburbanites with the skills and education to fill them.

That's one big reason why the urban economic fate is tied to better schools, which provide the basic skills young people need to survive

males had not completed high school.

The picture is similar in the midwest and in other urbanized areas, suggesting that the mismatch between available jobs and the labor force has crucial racial significance.

Black economic progress is directly linked to vast improvements in the public

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in this changing economy and the solid educational background that encourages them to seek the college education that will prepare them for the new job opportunities.

Better schools are of special importance for blacks, who constitute a growing share of the urban population at a time when the urban economy has changed to require stronger educational backgrounds than most blacks have had.

The Census Bureau says that in the cities of the northeast only 22 percent of adult black males have had at least one year of college, as against 37 percent of whites.

At the same time, 43 percent of black males and only 29 percent of white

schools. Unless the schools can be made to work for black students and can provide them with the skills they'll need in this changing economy, the black economic condition will deteriorate.

Three out of four of the new jobs being created today required at least some post-high school education. We can no longer tolerate high black dropout rates and inferior education that stifles learning and aspirations.

And we can't afford to kid ourselves that those old low-skill entry-level jobs will ever come back. They're being automated out of existence and we'll have to learn to operate the machines of the information age or be crunched by them.

Words of Marcus Garvey

By Kofi Tyus

"God Almighty created each and every one of us for a place in the world."

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