

Toward Freedom

Negro Postwar Layoffs and Teheran

By Doxey Wilkerson

cussed by Roy Hudson in yesterday's *The Worker*. I would add here merely the following:

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FIRST, I did read Earl Browder's masterful Marxist analysis, *Teheran—Our Path in War and Peace*. One of the things it stressed is that the enduring peace and expanding world prosperity and freedom envisioned by the concord of Teheran are now entirely possible of attainment, but they must be worked for, and their achievement is practically impossible without a strong and united labor movement playing a much larger role in the political life of America.

The firm unity of Negro workers with their white fellow-unionists and the continued and strengthened alliance of the Negro people and labor generally are indispensable if the labor movement is to fulfill its crucial responsibilities in achieving the perspective of Teheran. But that unity and that alliance can (and probably will) be broken, with disastrous consequences for the unions and the nation, if postwar cutbacks result in the ousting of the bulk of Negro war workers from their jobs.

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SECOND, the attainable goal of full postwar employment in no way implies that there will not be a temporary period of mass unemployment during reconversion from wartime to peacetime production. There will be such a period, in practically all war industries (including UE's), and the dangers it presents are not met by long-time programs of full employment.

Third, I share fully my critic's appreciation of the fundamental importance of seniority for the protection of workers' gains. Among those gains are the hundreds of thousands of new jobs which the unions have done so much to win for Negro war workers. The policy of seniority must be vigorously defended against its enemies. At the same time, it must be applied in this new historic era so as to promote, not destroy, the interests of the workers.

I again repeat that recent union conventions failed to face this special problem of Negro postwar cutbacks squarely. There is considerable unclarity on the question, even among some Negro trade union leaders. But the problem must be faced; it is crucial for the whole new perspective which the agreements of Teheran have opened up for our world.

"A UE-CIO Worker," quite indignant over my last Monday's column, wrote to the *Daily Worker*: "I wonder if Doxey read *Teheran*. If he didn't I'll excuse him for writing that column. . . . But I'm most sure he did read it; therefore, I can't understand how he underestimates the union's seniority clause. Is he going to take a defeatist attitude and say that there will be millions of unemployed and that we must try to save some of the Negroes' jobs?"

The letter continues: "Is it not our job to see that everybody who is willing to work has a job to earn a decent living? Then why must we of the unions discriminate against people, such as Negroes, soldiers, old men or women? That's what it would amount to, and some of the whites would hate Negroes for it."

"A UE-CIO Worker's" letter raises important issues concerning my proposal "to modify the application (not the principle) of seniority so as to assure that Negro workers will not bear a disproportionate share of postwar cutbacks." These issues are thoroughly dis-