

day practice. They have given thousands of dollars to aid organizations that are working for freedom and human dignity of the South. Because of the forthright stand of the packinghouse workers in the area of civil rights, they have aroused the ire of some persons who are not so committed. But in spite of this, they have continued to work courageously for the ideal of brotherhood of man. It is tragic indeed that some of our reactionary brothers in America will go to the limit of giving Communism credit for all good things that happen in our nation. It is a dark day indeed when men cannot work to implement the ideal of brotherhood without being labeled communist.

We sincerely hope that nothing will happen to deter the significant work being done by this dedicated labor organization. Again we express our confidence in the integrity and loyalty of the officers and members of the United Packinghouse Workers of America.

III

*“We, the Negro people
and labor . . . inevitably will sow
the seeds of liberalism.”*

The United Automobile Workers (UAW) union and its charismatic president, Walter Reuther, provided powerful financial and organizational support for King and the southern civil rights movement, starting with \$5,000 in donations to the Montgomery Bus Boycott. King came to see Reuther as one of his strongest allies. Reuther had led the purges against alleged Communists in the labor movement and had an ambivalent record on internal civil rights policies. African Americans held few significant offices and remained mostly blocked from workplace advancement in the auto industry, especially in the South, where Reuther moved cautiously against white privilege. As late as 1963, the UAW still had segregated locals in the South, and blacks made up only 1.5 percent of the union's skilled workers. The UAW did not elect an African American to its large executive board until 1962.

Despite difficulties integrating his own union, Reuther welcomed the direct action phase of the civil rights movement. He believed the black student sit-ins and freedom rides of 1960 and 1961 disrupted the “consensus” of the conformist Cold War era and provided an opening for

change. An ambitious organizer and expansive thinker with a huge union budget, Reuther and his 1.6 million-member union underwrote the "heyday of American liberalism" and became a major player with President Kennedy and his successor Lyndon B. Johnson. Many saw the UAW bureaucracy as stifling to rank-and-file democracy, yet few could deny that Reuther knew how to use his bureaucracy and budget to bring change at the legislative level.

King's speech before the UAW at its twenty-fifth anniversary convention in 1961 thus strengthened a powerful alliance between the two leaders. King delivered this speech to 5,700 union members and guests—the overwhelming majority of them white men—in Detroit's Cobo Hall. King drew parallels between the auto sit-down strikes of 1936 that led to the UAW's success in bargaining with General Motors and the black student lunch counter sit-ins; he warned against automation that would sweep away unionized industrial jobs; he harked back to the enslavement and Jim Crow laws that had turned black workers into cheap labor; and he called for a powerful alliance between unions and the civil rights movement. The UAW newspaper Solidarity also noted King's peace theme, headlining an article about the speech as "Nonviolence or Nonexistence." As at Highlander, King insisted that progress came only through hard work.

In the aftermath of the speech, the UAW took up King's call for President Kennedy to issue a second Emancipation Proclamation for economic and civil rights reforms. Reuther, head of the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department and an architect of the merger between the CIO and the AFL, also called upon the federation to "put its own house in order" by making its members' unions comply with the federation's nondiscrimination policy.

—♦♦♦—

United Automobile Workers Union
DETROIT, MICHIGAN, APRIL 27, 1961

Mr. Chairman, President Reuther, distinguished secretary of labor Mr. [Arthur] Goldberg, Senator [Phillip] Hart, all of the distinguished guests assembled here on the platform, delegates and friends of UAW, ladies and gentlemen. I need not pause to say how very delighted I am to be here this evening and to be a part of this auspicious occasion, and I cannot stand here without giving just a word of thanks to this great union for all that you have done across these twenty-five years. You have made life more meaningful for millions of people, and I'm sure that America is a better place in which to live as a result of the great work that has been done by UAW. You have given to this nation a magnificent example of honest democratic trade unionism. And your great president, Walter Reuther, will certainly go down in history as one of the truly great persons of this generation. (Applause)

I bring greetings to you this evening from the hundreds and thousands—yea, millions of people in the Southland who are struggling for freedom and human dignity. I bring greetings to you from the thousands of Negro students who have stood up courageously against the principalities of segregation for all of these months they have moved in a uniquely meaningful orbit, imparting light and heat to distant satellites. And, as a result of their nonviolent and yet courageous struggle, they have been able to bring about integration in more than 139 cities at the lunch counters. (Applause) I am sure that when historians look back over this particular era of our history, they will have to record this movement as one of the most significant epics of our heritage.

Now, as I think with you tonight and think about this significant occasion, I would like to open by saying that organized labor has come a long, long way from the days of the strike-breaking injunctions of federal courts, from the days of intimidation and firings in the plants, from the days that your union leaders could be physically beaten with impunity. The clubs and claws of the heartless anti-labor forces have been clipped, and you now have organizations of strength and intelligence to keep your interest from being submerged and ignored. This is certainly the glorious meaning of your twenty-fifth anniversary.

Negroes who are now but beginning their march from the dark and desolate Egypt of segregation and discrimination can gain from you real inspiration and encouragement for the hard road still ahead. But though we have a multitude of problems almost absorbing every moment of our time and consuming almost every ounce of our energies, we cannot be unmindful of new problems confronting labor. And toward these problems we are not neutral because they are our problems as well.

The autoworkers are facing hard-core unemployment. New economic patterning through automation and relocation of plants is dissolving the nation's basic industries. This is to me a catastrophe. We are neither technologically advanced nor socially enlightened as a nation if we witness this disaster for tens of thousands without finding a solution. And by a solution I mean a real and genuine alternative providing the same living standards and opportunities which were swept away by a force called progress, but which for many is destruction.

A society that performs miracles with machinery has the capacity to make some miracles for men if it values men as highly as it values machines. This is really the crux of the problem. Are we as concerned for human values and human resources as we are for material and mechanical

values? The automobile industry is not alone a production complex of assembly lines and steel-forming equipment. It is an industry of people who must live in decency with the security for children, for old age, for health and cultural life. Automation cannot be permitted to become a blind monster which grinds out more cars and simultaneously snuffs out the hopes and lives of the people by whom the industry was built.

Perhaps few people can so well understand the problems of autoworkers and others in labor as Negroes themselves, because we built a cotton economy for three hundred years as slaves on which the nation grew powerful, and we still lack the most elementary rights of citizens or workers. We, too, realize that when human values are subordinated to blind economic forces, human beings can become human scrap.

Our kinship was not born, however, with the rise of automation. In the birth of your organization as you confronted recalcitrant antagonists, you forged new weapons appropriate to your fight. Thus in the thirties, when industrial unionism sought recognition as a form of industrial democracy, there were powerful forces which said to you the same words we as Negroes hear now: "Never . . . You are not ready. . . . You are really seeking to change our form of society. . . . You are Reds. . . . You are troublemakers. . . . You are stirring up discontent and discord where none exists. . . . You are interfering with our property rights. . . . You are captives of sinister elements who would exploit you."

Both of us have heard these reckless charges. Both of us know that what we have sought were simple basic needs without which no man is a whole person. In your pursuit of these goals during the middle thirties, in part of your industry you creatively stood up for your rights by sitting down at your machines, just as our courageous students

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are sitting down at lunch counters across the South. They screamed at you and said that you were destroying property rights—but nearly thirty years later the ownership of the automobile industry is still in the hands of its stockholders and the value of its shares has multiplied manifold, producing profits of awesome size, and we are proudly borrowing your techniques, and though the same old and tired threats and charges have been dusted off for us, we doubt that we shall collectivize a single lunch counter or nationalize the consumption of sandwiches and coffee. (Applause)

Because you persisted in your quest for a better life, you brought new horizons to the whole nation. Industry after industry was compelled to civilize its practices and in so doing benefited themselves along with you. The new unions became social institutions, which stabilized the nation, fortified it, and thrust it up to undreamed of levels of production. There are more ties of kinship between labor and the Negro people than tradition. For example, labor needs a wage-hour bill which puts a firm floor under wage scales. Negroes need the same measures, even more desperately, for so many of us earn less than one dollar and twenty-five cents an hour. Labor needs housing legislation to protect it as a consumer. Negroes need housing legislation also. Labor needs an adequate old-age medical care bill and so do Negroes. The list might be extended ad infinitum for it is axiomatic that what labor needs, Negroes need, and simple logic therefore puts us side by side in the struggle for all elements in the decent standard of living.

As we survey the problems of labor from the chilling threat of automation to the needs in housing and social welfare generally, we confront the necessity to have a Congress responsive to liberal legislation. Here again the kinship of interests of labor and the Negro people expresses

Link between
Black political rights & economic rights
"ALL LABOR HAS DIGNITY"
29

itself. Negroes need liberal congressmen if they are to realize equality and opportunity. The campaign to grant the ballot to Negroes in the South has profound implications. From all I have outlined, it is clear that the Negro vote would not be utilized in a vacuum. Negroes exercising a free suffrage would march to the polls to support those candidates who would be partial to social legislation. Negroes in the South, whether they elected white or Negro congressmen, would be placing in office a liberal candidate, if you will—a labor candidate. (Applause) No other political leader could have a program possessing appeal to Negroes.

In these circumstances, the campaign for Negro suffrage is both a fulfillment of constitutional rights and a fulfillment of labor's needs in a fast-changing economy. Therefore, I feel justified in asking you for your continued support in the struggle to achieve the ballot all over the nation and in the South in particular. We, the Negro people and labor, by extending the frontiers of democracy to the South, will inevitably sow the seed of liberalism, where reaction has flourished unchallenged for decades. A new day will dawn which will see militant, steadfast and reliable congressmen from the South joining those from the northern industrial states to design and enact legislation for the people rather than for the privileged.

Now, I need not say to you that this problem and all of the problems which we face in the nation and in the world, for that matter, will not work itself out. We know that if the problem is to be solved, we must work to solve it. Evolution may be true in the biological realm, but when we work to apply it to the whole of society, there is very little evidence for it. Social progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals. Without this hard work, time itself becomes the ally of the insurgent

the chilling threat of automation

and primitive forces of social stagnation. So in order to realize the American dream of economic justice and of the brotherhood of man, men and women all over the nation must continue to work for it. . . .

We will continue to work, and work with the faith that this dream can be realized. I believe it will be realized. For although the arc of the moral universe is long it bends toward justice. Before this dream is realized, maybe some will have to get scarred up; before the dream is realized, maybe some will have to go to jail; before the dream is realized, maybe some will have to face physical death; but if physical death is the price that some must pay to free their children from a permanent life of psychological death, then nothing could be more honorable. (Applause)

There is something in this universe. So we must continue to struggle for economic justice—the brotherhood of man—with the conviction that there is something in this universe which justifies Carlyle in saying, “No lie can live forever.” There is something in this universe which justifies William Cullen Bryant in saying, “Truth crushed to earth shall rise again.” There is something in this universe which justifies James Russell Lowell in saying, “Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne. Yet that scaffold sways the future.”

This is our hope. This is the faith that will carry us on and if we will stand by this and continue to work for the ideal, we will be able to bring into being that new day. This will be the day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing anew with the Negro slaves of old, “Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last!” (Applause)

IV

If the Negro Wins, Labor Wins

George Meany—a white plumber from New York who boasted that he had never been in a strike or even on a picket line—became AFL-CIO president with the 1955 merger and was in his mid-sixties by 1961. He and the federation had done little more for civil rights than pass nominal resolutions and listen to reports from its Civil Rights Committee (chaired by white males). Dissatisfied with the AFL-CIO performance, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), under the leadership of its labor secretary, Herbert Hill, undertook a series of investigations of racism that tainted many unions. At the AFL-CIO’s 1959 convention, A. Philip Randolph, one of the federation’s two black vice presidents, spoke out against railroad brotherhoods that prohibited blacks from membership in their constitutions and building trades unions that excluded or segregated black workers. In the same year, Randolph and other black trade unionists also organized the Negro American Labor Council (NALC) to pressure the federation and its member unions. In February 1961, the NALC held a meeting of five hundred members that heard speeches by King, UPWA president Ralph Helstein, and others demanding

equal rights and condemning racism among various unions within the AFL-CIO.

In a war of words, Randolph accused the AFL-CIO of "moral paralysis, pessimism, defeatism, and cynicism." He said the federation should exercise the same vigor in disciplining or expelling racist unions as it had in expelling unions supposedly dominated by Communists. (The American Federation of Teachers earlier did expel its segregated southern locals.) At the AFL-CIO's 1959 convention, Meany had testily asked Randolph, "Who in the hell appointed you as guardian of the Negro [union] members in America?" The AFL-CIO executive committee later set up a three-person subcommittee that wrote a report censuring Randolph and blaming him for widening the gap between the black community and the unions. Black newspapers played up the conflict and the New York Times editorialized that the AFL-CIO was "knocking at the wrong door" in blaming Randolph for trouble in labor's race relations. King called the censure of Randolph "shocking and deplorable." Herbert Hill, at the NAACP annual meeting in January 1961, published a scorching report on union racism in the five years since the merger of the AFL-CIO.

King stepped into this loaded, tense atmosphere at the AFL-CIO's Fourth Constitutional Convention at the Americana Hotel in Bal Harbour, a suburb of Miami Beach, in December 1961. On day one, President Meany began his fourth two-year term to a standing ovation of three thousand delegates and started the convention with a vitriolic speech condemning Communism and putting unions on the side of U.S. foreign policy. President John F. Kennedy immediately followed, praising unions as a bulwark of American freedom. On day three, King spoke to an audience consisting mostly of older white male union leaders who gained their ascendancy in the 1930s but

who now discussed union issues near the seashore in upscale hotels.

His AFL-CIO speech remains perhaps King's most well-known call for a special and enduring alliance between African Americans and organized labor. King came to the AFL-CIO convention in Miami Beach after a lengthy flight from Los Angeles and through Chicago after bad weather canceled his first flight. Undoubtedly fatigued, King addressed the unionists in sober fashion, obviously reading a speech that provided few openings for applause (and, indeed, there was little of it). He began by painting a picture of the exploitation of workers in pre-union days and made a classic appeal for unity of unions and civil rights forces that could improve the lot of all workers but especially those at the bottom. But King did not allow members of his audience to clap themselves on the back for a job well done. Randolph had mentored King and repeatedly organized defense funds when southern authorities tried to imprison him on phony charges, and King vigorously backed up Randolph in his conflicts with the AFL-CIO.

In a balanced but critical tone, King urged "thoughtful examination of Randolph's criticism of labor's efforts to end discrimination within its own ranks" and spelled out some of the ways the unions had disappointed civil rights proponents. King's complaints included a previous plan by AFL-CIO unions to raise two million dollars for the civil rights movement that never materialized. The relatively tiny UPWA had done much more than the awesome AFL-CIO to help finance the southern movement. The black newspaper the Chicago Defender called King's speech a "sound rap on the knuckles of the world's largest and most powerful labor federation."

But King's speech also outlined the basis for what Randolph called the "Negro-labor alliance" and affirmed the

idea that "if the Negro wins, labor wins." King cited black voters helping to defeat a ban on the union shop in Louisiana as one example of how the civil rights movement could help labor. But King also sounded a dire warning against deindustrialization, racial division, and the rise of an ultra-right alliance between business, Republicans, and southern Democrats. Unless stopped by a powerful labor-civil rights and community alliance, he argued, the ultra-right would threaten "everything decent and fair in American life." In a chilling prediction of organized labor's future decline, he said failure to meet this challenge potentially could "drive labor into impotency." King thus offered a prophetic challenge to unions that seemed to be at the height of their power but, in fact, remained highly vulnerable. King pointed out as well that the ultra-right, not "scattered reds," posed the real threat to unions.

In this speech, King helped Randolph break the silence around the AFL-CIO's internal racism. The next day delegates followed King's speech with discussions of reports and resolutions on civil rights, led off by Randolph. The UPWA's Charles Hayes praised King's speech and called on the AFL-CIO "to close the gap" between fine resolutions and real action, while the UPWA's Russell Lasley also pointed out that there were "only a handful of Negro delegates present here." The AFL-CIO convention responded by passing a major civil rights program but did not raise the funds for civil rights King had hoped for. Meany had praised King and pinned a union button on his jacket to great applause, but the federation never brought King back to another national convention. The federation also failed to endorse the most famous mass march in American history, the 1963 March on Washington. Yet King's speech and the escalation of the civil rights movement did make a major impact on organized labor. Pushed also by the UAW, the AFL-CIO subsequently pro-

vided much of the pressure to pass the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts of 1964 and 1965, and Meany spoke repeatedly in favor of desegregation and equal rights.

Four days after King's AFL-CIO speech, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover discovered that King's trusted New York advisor and fund-raiser Stanley Levison had written its first draft. Levison once raised funds for the Communist Party (CP) and although Hoover knew that he had completely broken his ties with the party in 1957, Hoover led President Kennedy to believe that Levison remained a CP member. The FBI also warned Kennedy about Hunter Pitts (Jack) O'Dell, who had been purged from the National Maritime Union during the Red Scare. After being purged, O'Dell defiantly joined but later quit the CP to work full-time with King in voter registration and fund-raising. President Kennedy insisted that King fire O'Dell, and he did. In response to the unfounded fears stirred up by Hoover, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy also ordered FBI wiretapping and surveillance of King's associates and recorded King's conversations as well. This violation of privacy and constitutional rights expanded and continued under two presidents until King's death. It began with the FBI's obsession with King's allies in the labor left.



AFL-CIO Fourth Constitutional Convention

MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, DECEMBER II, 1961

President Meany, delegates to the Fourth Constitutional Convention of AFL-CIO, ladies and gentlemen . . .

Less than a century ago the laborer had no rights, little or no respect, and led a life which was socially submerged and barren.

despotism of Bosses

He was hired and fired by economic despots whose power over him decreed his life or death. The children of workers had no childhood and no future. They, too, worked for pennies an hour, and by the time they reached their teens they were worn-out old men, devoid of spirit, devoid of hope and devoid of self-respect. Jack London described a child worker in these words: "He did not walk like a man. He did not look like a man. He was a travesty of the human. It was a twisted and stunted and nameless piece of life that shambled like a sickly ape, arms loose-hanging, stoop-shouldered, narrow-chested, grotesque and terrible." American industry organized misery into sweatshops and proclaimed the right of capital to act without restraints and without conscience.

Nice Victor Hugo, literary genius of that day, commented bitterly that there was always more misery in the lower classes than there was humanity in the upper classes. The inspiring answer to this intolerable and dehumanizing existence was economic organization through trade unions. The worker became determined not to wait for charitable impulses to grow in his employer. He constructed the means by which a fairer sharing of the fruits of his toil had to be given to him or the wheels of industry, which he alone turned, would halt and wealth for no one would be available.

This revolution within industry was fought bitterly by those who blindly believed their right to uncontrolled profits was a law of the universe, and that without the maintenance of the old order, catastrophe faced the nation.

But history is a great teacher. Now everyone knows that the labor movement did not diminish the strength of the nation but enlarged it. By raising the living standards of millions, labor miraculously created a market for industry and lifted the whole nation to undreamed of levels

of production. Those who today attack labor forget these simple truths, but history remembers them.

Labor's next monumental struggle emerged in the thirties when it wrote into federal law the right freely to organize and bargain collectively. It was now apparently emancipated. The days when workers were jailed for organizing, and when in the English Parliament Lord Macaulay had to debate against a bill decreeing the death penalty for anyone engaging in a strike, were grim but almost forgotten memories. Yet, the Wagner Act, like any other legislation, tended merely to declare rights but did not deliver them. Labor had to bring the law to life by exercising in practice its rights over stubborn, tenacious opposition. It was warned to go slow, to be moderate, not to stir up trouble. But labor knew it was always the right time to do right, and it spread its organization over the nation and achieved equality organizationally with capital. The day of economic democracy was born.

Negroes in the United States read this history of labor and find that it mirrors their own experience. We are confronted by powerful forces telling us to rely on the goodwill and understanding of those who profit by exploiting us. They deplore our discontent, they resent our will to organize, so that we may guarantee that humanity will prevail and equality will be exacted. They are shocked that action organizations, sit-ins, civil disobedience, and protests are becoming our everyday tools, just as strikes, demonstrations, and union organization became yours to ensure that bargaining power genuinely existed on both sides of the table. We want to rely upon the goodwill of those who would oppose us. Indeed, we have brought forward the method of nonviolence to give an example of unilateral goodwill in an effort to evoke it in those who have not yet felt it in their hearts. But we know that if we

are not simultaneously organizing our strength, we will have no means to move forward. If we do not advance, the crushing burden of centuries of neglect and economic deprivation will destroy our will, our spirits, and our hopes. In this way labor's historic tradition of moving forward to create vital people as consumers and citizens has become our own tradition, and for the same reasons.

This unity of purpose is not an historical coincidence. Negroes are almost entirely a working people. There are pitifully few Negro millionaires and few Negro employers. Our needs are identical with labor's needs: decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old-age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children, and respect in the community. That is why Negroes support labor's demands and fight laws which curb labor. That is why the labor-hater and labor-baiter is virtually always a twin-headed creature spewing anti-Negro epithets from one mouth and anti-labor propaganda from the other mouth. (Applause)

The duality of interests of labor and Negroes makes any crisis which lacerates you, a crisis from which we bleed. And as we stand on the threshold of the second half of the twentieth century, a crisis confronts us both. Those who in the second half of the nineteenth century could not tolerate organized labor have had a rebirth of power and seek to regain the despotism of that era while retaining the wealth and privileges of the twentieth century. Whether it be the ultra-right wing in the form of Birch societies or the alliance which former President Eisenhower denounced, the alliance between big military and big business, or the coalition of southern Dixiecrats and northern reactionaries, whatever the form, these menaces now threaten everything decent and fair in American life. Their target is labor, liberals, and Negro people, not scattered "reds" or

even Justice Warren, former presidents Eisenhower and Truman and President Kennedy, who are in truth beyond the reach of their crude and vicious falsehoods.

Labor today faces a grave crisis, perhaps the most calamitous since it began its march from the shadows of want and insecurity. In the next ten to twenty years, automation will grind jobs into dust as it grinds out unbelievable volumes of production. This period is made to order for those who would seek to drive labor into impotency by viciously attacking it at every point of weakness. Hard-core unemployment is now an ugly and unavoidable fact of life. Like malignant cancer, it has grown year by year and continues its spread. But automation can be used to generate an abundance of wealth for people or an abundance of poverty for millions as its humanlike machines turn out human scrap along with machine scrap as a by-product of production. And, I am convinced that our society, with its ability to perform miracles with machinery, has the capacity to make some miracles for men—if it values men as highly as it values machines. (Applause)

To find a great design to solve a grave problem, labor will have to intervene in the political life of the nation to chart a course which distributes the abundance to all instead of concentrating it among a few. The strength to carry through such a program requires that labor know its friends and collaborate as a friend. If all that I have said is sound, labor has no firmer friend than the twenty million Negroes whose lives will be deeply affected by the new patterns of production.

Now to say that we are friends would be an empty platitude if we fail to behave as friends and honestly look to weaknesses in our relationship. And unfortunately there are weaknesses. Labor has not adequately used its great power, its vision, and resources to advance Negro rights. Undeniably, it has done more than other forces in Ameri-

can society to this end. Aid from real friends in labor has often come when the flames of struggle heighten. But Negroes are a solid component within the labor movement and a reliable bulwark for labor's whole program, and should expect more from it exactly as a member of a family expects more from his relatives than he expects from his neighbors.

Labor, which made impatience for long-delayed justice for itself a vital motive force, cannot lack understanding of the Negro's impatience. It cannot speak with the reactionaries' calm indifference, of progress around some obscure corner not yet possible even to see. There is a maxim in the law—justice too long delayed is justice denied. When a Negro leader who has a reputation of purity and honesty which has benefitted the whole labor movement criticizes it, his motives should not be reviled nor his earnestness rebuked. Instead, the possibility that he is revealing a weakness in the labor movement which it can ill afford should receive thoughtful examination. A man who has dedicated his long and faultless life to the labor movement cannot be raising questions harmful to it any more than a lifelong devoted parent can become the enemy of his child. The report of a committee may smother with legal constructions a list of complaints and dispose of it for the day. But if it buries a far larger truth, it has disposed of nothing and made justice more elusive.

Discrimination does exist in the labor movement. It is true that organized labor has taken significant steps to remove the yoke of discrimination from its own body. But in spite of this, some unions, governed by the racist ethos, have contributed to the degraded economic status of the Negro. Negroes have been barred from membership in certain unions and denied apprenticeship training and vocational education. In every section of the country, one can find labor unions existing as a serious and vicious

obstacle when the Negro seeks jobs or upgrading in employment. Labor must honestly admit these shameful conditions, and design the battle plan which will defeat and eliminate them. In this way, labor would be unearthing the big truth and utilizing its strength against the bleakness of injustice in the spirit of its finest traditions. (Applause)

How can labor rise to the heights of its potential statesmanship and cement its bonds with Negroes to their mutual advantage?

First—labor should accept the logic of its special position with respect to Negroes and the struggle for equality. Although organized labor has taken actions to eliminate discrimination in its ranks, the standard expected of you is higher than the standard for the general community. Your conduct should and can set an example for others, as you have done in other crusades for social justice. You should root out vigorously every manifestation of discrimination so that some internationals, central labor bodies, or locals may not besmirch the positive accomplishments of labor. I am aware that this is not easy nor popular—but the eight-hour day was not popular nor easy to achieve. Nor was a closed shop, nor was a right to strike, nor was outlawing anti-labor injunctions. But you accomplished all of these with a massive will and determination. Out of such struggle for democratic rights, you won both economic gains and the respect of the country, and you will win both again if you will make Negro rights a great crusade.

Second—the political strength you are going to need to prevent automation from becoming a Moloch, consuming jobs and contract gains, can be multiplied if you tap the vast reservoir of Negro political power. Negroes given the vote will vote liberal and labor because they need the same liberal legislation labor needs.

To give just an example of the importance of the Negro vote to labor, I might cite the arresting fact that the

Automation

only state in the South which repealed the right-to-work law is Louisiana. This was achieved because the Negro vote in that state grew large enough to become a balance of power, and it went along with labor to wipe out anti-labor legislation. (Applause) Thus, support to assist us in securing the vote can make the difference between success and defeat for us both. You have organizing experience we need, and you have an apparatus unparalleled in the nation. You recognized five years ago a moral opportunity and responsibility when several of your leaders, including Mr. Meany, Mr. Reuther, Mr. [David] Dubinsky [president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU)], and Mr. [David] McDonald [president of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA)] and others, projected a \$2 million campaign to assist the struggling Negroes fighting bitterly in handicapped circumstances in the South. A \$10,000 contribution was voted by the ILGWU to begin the drive, but for reasons unknown to me, the drive was never begun.

The cost to us in lack of resources during these turbulent, violent years is hard to describe. We are mindful that many unions thought of as immorally rich, in truth, have problems in meeting the budget to properly service their members. So we do not ask that you tax your treasures. Indeed, we ask that you appeal to your members for one dollar apiece to make democracy real for millions of deprived American citizens. For this you have the experience, the organization, and, most of all, the understanding.

If you would do these two things now in this convention—resolve to deal effectively with discrimination and provide financial aid for our struggle in the South—this convention will have a glorious moral deed to add to an illustrious history.

The two most dynamic and cohesive liberal forces in the country are the labor movement and the Negro free-

dom movement. Together we can be architects of democracy in a South now rapidly industrializing. Together we can retool the political structure of the South, sending to Congress steadfast liberals who, joining with those from northern industrial states, will extend the frontiers of democracy for the whole nation. Together we can bring about the day when there will be no separate identification of Negroes and labor. There is no intrinsic difference as I have tried to demonstrate. Differences have been contrived by outsiders who seek to impose disunity by dividing brothers because the color of their skin has a different shade. I look forward confidently to the day when all who work for a living will be one with no thought of their separateness as Negroes, Jews, Italians, or any other distinctions.

This will be the day when we shall bring into full realization the dream of American democracy—a dream yet unfulfilled. A dream of equality of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land *Yes* where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few; a dream of a land where men will not argue that the color of a man's skin determines the content of his character; a dream of a nation where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of human personality—that is the dream.

As we struggle to make racial and economic justice a reality, let us maintain faith in the future. At times we confront difficult and frustrating moments in the struggle to make justice a reality, but we must believe somehow that these problems can be solved.

There is a little song that we sing in the movement taking place in the South. It goes something like this, "We shall overcome. We shall overcome. Deep in my heart I

do believe, we shall overcome." And somehow all over America we must believe that we shall overcome and that these problems can be solved, and they will be solved. Before the victory is won, some of us will have to get scarred up, but we shall overcome. Before the victory of justice is a reality, some may even face physical death. But if physical death is the price that some must pay to free their children and their brothers from a permanent life of psychological death, then nothing could be more moral. Before the victory is won some more will have to go to jail. We must be willing to go to jail and transform the jails from dungeons of shame to havens of freedom and human dignity. (Applause) Yes, before the victory is won, some will be misunderstood. Some will be dismissed as dangerous rabble-rousers and agitators. Some will be called reds and Communists merely because they believe in economic justice and the brotherhood of man. But we shall overcome.

I am convinced that we shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice. We shall overcome because Carlyle is right, "No lie can live forever." We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right, "Truth crushed to earth will rise again." We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right, "Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne. Yet that scaffold sways the future."

And so if we will go out with this faith and with this determination to solve these problems, we will bring into being that new day and that new America. When that day comes, the fears of insecurity and the doubts clouding our future will be transformed into radiant confidence, into glowing excitement to reach creative goals, and into an abiding moral balance where the brotherhood of man will be undergirded by a secure and expanding prosperity for all.

Yes, this will be the day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands all over this nation and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last." (Applause)