

Declaration of Principles

BY WHITE DELEGATES ATTENDING NATIONAL NEGRO LABOR COUNCIL CONVENTION, OCTOBER 27 AND 28, 1951

The National Negro Labor Council reproduces this statement of principles which was signed by most of the white delegates in attendance at our Founding Convention because we consider it an historic milestone in the relationship between Negro and white workers in America, and a long step forward in the common effort to weld the firmest bonds of Negro-white unity.

In an approach that is entirely new to the American Labor Movement, the white delegates at the National Negro Labor Council Convention not only re-

ject any concept that they are called upon to lead and instruct Negro workers in a fight for Negro rights, but in a self-critical mood, spell out the responsibility of white workers in fighting to bring other white workers to the support of the Negro people.

We feel that this document deserves the serious appraisal of every trade union leader, Negro and white, in the American Labor Movement.

We, the white delegates to this Founding Convention of the National Negro Labor Council, have been profoundly impressed by what we have seen and experienced here.

We see here a mighty demonstration of the new temper and spirit which stirs and moves the Negro people of America.

In vast areas of the world, the white man is on trial. The colored peoples of the world are demanding freedom and they are making those demands for an end to every manifestation of oppression and discrimination, whether it be in governments, in nations, in communities, in trade unions, in any kind of organization.

We hail the founding of this new movement which means the Negro unionists are now taking their rightful place of leadership in the developing fight of Negro workers for their economic rights. We see the special significance of this movement of Negro workers taking its place side by side with other Negro organizations in the struggle for full freedom of the Negro people.

We are deeply conscious that the movement here being launched is not in the interest and for the benefit of Negro workers only. White workers and Negro workers have the same enemies, the same ultimate goals.

We know that every step forward for the Negro worker makes possible a step forward for the white worker. We know too that every new attack on the lives and rights of Negro workers and their families holds within it the seed of a fresh assault on the lives and rights of white workers. One cannot be defended without a vigorous, militant defense of the other.

The Ciceros of 1951 do not take place in a vacuum.

They are cut out of the same cloth as the wage freeze, mounting taxes, sky-rocketing prices, the Taft-Hartley and McCarran Acts, and all the other attacks on all workers.

Especially, in the Deep South, do we see the close tie between the interests of white and Negro workers. There the exploitation of both Negro and white workers is even more intense than in the industrial centers of the North.

What white workers do to smash Jim Crow can no longer be done in the spirit of the Boy Scout performing his good deed for the day. It can be done only in the frank and honest recognition of the fact that we white workers can achieve gains only to the extent that we do our part to forge genuine Negro-white unity.

Unity on that basis — on the basis of an alliance in which the white worker does his part as a responsibility in his own self-interest rather than as a favor — can mean that we all move ahead together. It means that the balance of political power in the deep South can be taken from the hands of the southern landlords and Dixiecrat congressmen and placed in the hands of the people — where it belongs. It means that the balance of economic power which now spells out the super-exploitation of divided Negro and white workers alike can be taken from the hands of northern corporations.

On every hand, vast numbers of Negro workers — both North and South — are demonstrating in a thousand ways their boundless determination that this time the Freedom Train will roar through to its destination, no matter how big the road blocks thrown in its path.

In effect, our Negro brothers are saying to us:

"Take heed, brother, there is something new here! We are asking for your cooperation, but not your permission!"

We, the white delegates at this Convention, accept the challenge! We embrace the new and clearer concept of Negro-white unity which is required here and now — today.

Under that concept, we have a special responsibility, the responsibility to bring more and more white workers into the fight for full freedom for all.

We are not misled by the white labor leaders who spread the malicious slander that this is "dual unionism" in a desperate attempt to cover up their own failure to fight for Negro rights.

We, too, are determined that the Freedom Train shall roll once more!

To these ends, we white trade unionists will accept the responsibility of seeking the support of all white workers for the program of action of this Convention.

We pledge to start in our own shops, Locals and Unions:

To help and encourage the formation and development of Negro Labor Councils all over America.

To press the proposed campaign for establishing a Fair Employment Practices Commission by Executive Order of the President.

To step up the fight for jobs for Negroes, to assure upgrading of Negro workers, to break through the lily-white departments and shops, and to guarantee that Negro workers are given full opportunity to achieve positions of union leadership.