

AUGUST 28—

ANNIVERSARY OF A DREAM REBORN

AUGUST 28, 1963 remains a significant date in the calendar of events. The Nation's Capital was the stage upon which a mighty pageant of protest was acted out. Thanks to the wide, wide eyes of television and photo-journalism, the whole world was the audience. Gathered there on the mall, between Lincoln's Monument and the skyscraper obelisk to George Washington, were 250,000 men, women and youth, Negro and white.

The mass voice of the quarter million who converged on Washington that day, bearing the credentials of the 20 millions of black Americans, was to resound across the land in proclamation of the will of a whole people to secure a new birth of freedom, a final fulfillment of their rights as Americans.

Where do we stand, two years after that day of high resolve?

There have been heavy exertions in the intervening period. There have been innumerable battles on a wide-rambling front of almost continuous struggle against the patterns of segregation, discrimination, racism. The South remains the challenge, the problem, the battleground where decision is sought and which will determine the outcome of the whole cause. But the cities of the non-South are levers which respond to the pressures of the militant Negro masses for justice and equal rights in such a fashion as to raise the level of the Southern struggle to new heights.

South or North, the Negro freedom struggle is a front of mass action of singular quality of social and political significance. That is to say, the struggle for Negro freedom continues to exercise its decisive impact upon all issues of general political import and social significance.

This struggle *is itself* a vital gear in the motor-mechanism of the whole nation. The Negro freedom movement has already set in motion wheels which move the country forward. Not only is it a matter of the Negro movement contributing to improvements in the structure of the democracy through forcing the enactment of some kind of voter-rights legislation, but broader social measures as the anti-poverty program itself are a response in some inadequate degree to the demands of the Negro people for jobs and against economic discrimination and mass unemployment.

Notwithstanding a lengthening list of local gains against outrages

to the human dignity and civil rights of Negroes; notwithstanding real advances over the prejudices in "the minds and thinking" of white masses; the substantive material gains of Negro Americans have been limited to tokens and symbols in both political representation and in economic status during the two years since the March on Washington.

The very latest Government data graphically illustrates "how far the promised land." It discloses that the per cent of unemployed of the Negro work force is twice that of the per cent of unemployed whites in the white work force that is, 9% as compared to 4.3%.

Those with work have mainly the jobs which pay the least. Of the employed Negroes, 41.9% are blue-collar workers, another 31.4% are low-paid service workers, while only 18.4% are in white-collar jobs.

The appalling poverty of the mass of Negroes in the deep South was recently highlighted by a new study of 460 Southern counties made by the Urban League which found the per cent of Negroes living below the poverty level (that is \$3,000.00 per family of four) in four of the deep south states to be as follows: for Mississippi—82.8 per cent, for South Carolina—76 per cent, for Alabama and Georgia—67.7 per cent.

We do not conclude from this that the March on Washington was a failure. On the contrary, what is required is a new manifestation of unity of the breadth of August 28, 1963, and new actions for full freedom, of the sweep and scope of the quarter million who marched on that day.

Such statistics as the above also point to the fact that real advances toward equality in employment and other areas that cost money require big struggles to force the big profit-makers in the economy to disgorge adequate sums from their gluttony to meet the development needs of a genuine economic equalization program. It also suggests that the "Movement" needs to combine forces with all those seeking an end to bloody, destructive and wasteful wars of intervention in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, and to redirect national energies and funds toward the elimination of poverty and prejudice in our land.

The Editors