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REPORT

congress of Industriel Organisations

of the NATIONAL C.1.O. COMMITTEE to Abolish Racial Discrimination.



Report of George L-P Weaver, Director National CIO Committee to Abolish Racial Discrimination August 16, 1944

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Industrial Union Council Anti-Discrimination Committees

The number of state, county and municipal committees has increased from fifty as of March 15, 1944 to eighty-five committees as of August 15, 1944. Three of the newly organized committees are located in Michigan. Ohio has increased from four to twelve, California from five to six, Indiana from five to six, Pennsylvania from three to eight, Connecticut from one to two, Iowa from one to four, Massachusetts from one to two and New York from one to two. New committees have been organized for the first time in Georgia, Massachusetts, Colorado, Delaware, Minnesuta, North Carolina, West Virginia, Alaska, Kentucky, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, Washington, Texas, Kansas and Alabama. The policies and procedures adopted at the March 20th National Committee meeting remain the guide for the day by day activities of the local committees. This healthy increase in the number of committees represents a close adherence to the policy adopted at the March 20th meeting.

Anti-discrimination committees as well as a great majority of the working committees in the CIO are devoting a considerable amount of time and effort to supplementing the activities of the CIO Political Action Committee. According to the reports sent to the National Committee and personal observations of the Director and Officers, the anti-discrimination activities of these committees has fallen off in direct proportion to the time the committee members are spending on political action. However, a brief summary of the better organized state and local committee activities indicates satisfactory progress is being made with their various programs.

The Ohio State Committee inaugurated a project which consisted of holding a series of conferences in various cities throughout Chic. The primary object of these conferences was to intelligently determine the most important problems in each community and then arrive at a program leading to their ultimate solution. The first of this series of conferences was held in Columbus, Ohio, on April 23, 1944. The conference, which was the first of its kind in the country, included approximately two hundred CIO local union delegates from Central Ohio. Also in attendance were students of Religious Education who came to observe and study the union approach to these voxing problems.

The merning session was devoted to outlining the general objectives of the National, State and Local Anti-Discrimination Committees. The afternoon session was made up of three discussion groups led by

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James B. Carey, Chairman of the National Committee to Abolish Racial Discrimination, the Director of the National Committee and Boyd L. Wilson, a member of the National Committee.

The first group considered the responsibility of the Union toward minority groups. The discussion developed the need of union insistence upon fair and just terms in union management contracts. The importance of upgrading and seniority rights without regard to racial background was stressed. Personal interviews and consultation by union officials with union members in need of additional education along racial lines were recommended as a successful technique used by many CIO Unions.

The second group considered the problem of union responsibility toward promoting democracy in the community. The discussion pointed to the need of educating our public school teachers toward a more tolerant attitude. The use of text books and songs spreading unconcious prejudices was pointed out as one of the evils to be eliminated. The Church was recommended as a proper and effective instrument to preach racial and religious tolerance. Active participation as CIO Union members in social, educational and recreational agencies within the community was stressed as an effective means of liberalizing these institutions which are guilty of undemocratic practices.

The third discussion group centered around the responsibility of the Union in the post-war period in relation to the minority question. The importance of maintaining full employment was considered the key to many of the racial and religious questions. Without full employment, the scramble of returning soldiers and war workers to compete for too few jobs will pit minority groups against majority groups and take from the minorities the hard-won gains of recent years. Special importance was attached to passage of adequate social security legislation and the enactment of a law making the Fair Employment Practices Committee a permanent institution.

The evening session was arranged so that the public was invited. The chief purpose was to enable the community leaders to better understand the objectives of the CIO in the field of racial relations and to enable all persons present to get a broader view of discrimination and its relation to economic and social problems now and in the post-war period. The evening meeting was very successful. The speakers for the evening meeting were Messrs. Carey, Weaver and Harris, and President Kroll. All in all, it was a very successful conference. The conference was attended by delegates from all of the CIO Unions in the Ohio area. Among non-CTO conference delegates, were representatives of the Urban League, the War Manpower Commission, the Columbus Religion-Labor Group, Ohio State University, Wilberforce University, Antioch College, the Columbia Council for Democracy, the YMCA and the YWCA.

Since this conference was the first of a series which will be held in industrial centers of Chio, techniques were planned on a rather experimental basis. The next conference is scheduled to be held in the Canton, Ohio, area some time in September. Our personal observation of

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The Michigan State Committee, under the chairmanship of Brother Richard Carter, General Executive Board member of the IUMSWA, with the wholehearted support and edvice of National Committee member Harry Read, reported the successful prosecution of a Detroit downtown restaurant owner for violating the Michigan Civil Right Law in refusing to serve a Negro girl. The case grew out of a dinner date between the Negro girl, who is private secretary to the Michigan Director of the CIO Allied War Relief, and the private secretary to the Director of the Michigan CIO political Action Region. Upon arrival in Detroit's Old Colony Bar and Restaurant, the two girls entered a booth. The waitress furnished them with menus and went away. Later the white girl's attention was attracted by the waitress, who beckened her out of the booth and told her she was very sorry but she could not be served because of the young lady who was with her.

The matter was brought to the attention of Brother Read who was joined by a committee member of the Michigan CIO Committee in obtaining action in this case under the Diggs Civil Right Law. Following a formal complaint to the Police Department, the proprietor of the restaurant was brought into the Prosecutor's office where he denied that his restaurant maintained any discriminatory policies. He blamed the watiress and said she had quit her job the same night. When the girl was brought in, she assumed responsibility for the whole thing. This was an obvious move to take the blame for the restaurant proprietor and was readily seen through by the committee. Before a jury of ten men and two women, a guilty verdict was reached in ten minutes when the case came up for trial. was pointed out that this was the second time within five years that a jury had returned a guilty verdict in Detroit in a case involving the civil rights of Negroes. Attorneys in the past have always been able to appeal to the prejudices of the jury and thus obtain "Not Guilty" verdicts.

Brother Read also reported to the National Committee another legal case that the Michigan State Committee is prosecuting. It involves discrimination arising at the Cody Hotel, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on July 11 during the session of the Michigan CIO Convention. The delegation from Local 208, UAN-CIO, had arranged to house their delegates at this hotel. The Local had written confirmation from the manager of the hotel agreeing to house the entire delegation. The first delegates to arrive were white and were housed. Later when the Negro members of the delegation arrived, they were refused housing. Led by committeeman Read and endorsed by the National Committee, the following recommendations were

the first of the first property of the state and a survival of the survival and the survival of the surviva was recommended by the contract of the contrac submitted to the Convention and unanimously endorsed: "That the hotel be criminally prosecuted and that until these issues are resolved in favor of CIO policy, the Hotel Cody be placed on the unfair list and all affiliates of the Michigan State CIO Council be notified of the action taken."

The next day, a complaint was made out charging a violation of the Civil Right Statute, a warrant served on the hotel manager and August 10th was set down for trial. President John Gibson of the Michigan State CIO Council agreed to underwrite the cost of prosecution of this action.

Brother Read's work in the Michigan area, with the cooperation of the National Committee, is outstanding. Since the March 20th meeting, he has investigated an ugly situation in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, involving a Local of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. A copy of his report to the National Committee is available to any interested committee member. He also forwarded to the National Office a report concerning the Pontiac Lebor Club, which he was instructed to investigate at the last National Committee meeting.

One of our newest committees, the Philadelphia Industrial Union Council, deserves special mention. This committee was appointed in April of 1944. It is fairly representative of the major industries, steel, shipbuilding, textile, Amalgameted Clothing Workers, Electrical Workers and Utility Workers. The Committee has successfully handled four cases involving the steel industry and one involving the electrical industry. Three of these cases involved discrimination in upgrading Negro workers in certain departments in the steel industry in the Philadelphia area. One was a job as narrow gauge engineer, a job never before worked on by a Negro. An attempt was made a few years ago, but there was an interruption of production when the white engineers refused to work alongside a Negro.

When it was known that an Anti-discrimination Committee existed, the Committee was appealed to for help. The chairman of the Committee, James Jones, International Representative of Steel, began an investigation of the problem. Management was reminded that the ultimate decision to be made was one for management to make, that they must abide by the provisions of the contract, and that the Local Union must abide by its constitution. After contacting the white members and notifying them that the Negro was to be upgraded, he was placed on the new job. After a brief demonstration by a few "diehards", everything was peaceful and before the week was ended, one of the "diehards" was helping the Negro solve a problem of "frozen brakes". The feeling of the Committee is that this case opened the way for future upgrading in this department.

Another case this Committee handled was the result of a complaint received at the National Office from the local chapter of the NAACP. The complainant charged that he was discharged due to discrimination by the Company and laxity on the part of the Local Union. We sent the complaint to the Local Committee asking them to conduct a thorough

investigation. This the Committee proceeded to do, promptly sending the results of its investigation to the National Office. The investigation indicated that it was not a case of discrimination but inexcusable laxity on the part of the employee. We forwarded the results of the investigation to the local branch of the NAACP, who accepted the results and thanked us for our prompt action in the case.

This Committee's activities in a very short period, demonstrate how effective these committees can be under the proper direction and guidance.

Many other complaints lodged with the National Office have in a like manner been referred to the appropriate local committees for action. The various members of the National Committee have also been referred cases that fell within their respective International Unions. Various International Unions have requested the services of the Committee, ranging from information and advice to making investigations of racial situations involving their Unions. This type of service we have faithfully attempted to discharge.

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Local 36, I.U.M.S.W.A.-C.I.O., Dravo Shipyards

The tension existing in the Wilmington, Delaware, Dravo Shipyards was reported to the Committee at the April 1943 meeting. After repeated conferences with the local leadership, we feld obliged to call to the attention of President John Green the existing conditions. Shortly thereafter, President Green suspended the local officers and appointed an administrator. We visited the Vilmington area recently and found conditions vastly improved. Today, Negro members are participating in greater numbers in the Local affairs and there are now Negroes on every major committee of the Local. There is a trustee, three shop stewards, fourteen or fifteen assistant shop stewards and eighteen on the executive board as compared to none last year.

The working conditions are greatly improved. There is a newly elected gridvance committed with more efficient gridvance machinery. After the new gridvance machinery was established, it was discovered that about 85% of the cases involved Negro workers. It is estimated that about 75% of these cases were satisfactorily settled.

While the present conditions at Dravo are not all we could hope for, the progress in a year's time, has been praiseworthy. One of the most valuable lessons that can be inferred from this Local is that the minority workers have learned the lesson "that the best way to change conditions is by fuller participation." We can also infer that we have a larger percentage of "trade-unionists" than we had in this shippard a year ago.

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Miscellaneous

During the period since the last committee meeting, the President's Fair Employment Practices Committee has worked fairly closely with the National Committee wherever complaints arise that involve CIO Unions, or industries where the CIO holds the bargaining rights. However, due to this collaboration, we feel that we can contribute to the more successful operation of the FEPC by recommendations to Chairman Ross of the FEPC, from this Committee. Such recommendations will be embodied in a separate memorandum which will be available to interested committee members.

The San Diego Industrial Union Council Committee has been engaged in a campaign to improve the relations between the Mexican element in the population and the majority group. The police force of San Diego is charged by the Committee with being guilty of gross brutality and stupidity.

The International City Managers Association has just published a booklet entitled "The Police and Mincrity Groups". It suggests methods of police selection, training and departmental organization by which police can improve their handling of problems and situations involving members of diverse racial, national or religious groups. The booklet is intended primarily for the use of police chiefs and other nunicipal officials who are in a position to make practical application of the suggestions it contains. It will also furnish material to citizen groups and organizations that are actively working for improvements in local government. We strongly recommend this pamphlet to the various CIO Committees, as it is a practical guide from which to work in the different communities.

In May 1944, the Marion Ohio County Industrial Council reported to the Committee an alarwing condition facing this community involving a group of recently imported Mexican workers. When the case was reported to the Committee, violence between the Mexican workers and the white workers was imminent. From the evidence, it seemed as if the misunderstanding was due to unfamiliarity and the fear that the Mexican workers would be used as a tool to lower the standards of the American workers. We called to the attention of the Council the agreement entered into between the Mexican Government and the American Government regulating the standards under which Mexican workers were to be imported into this country. The National Committee also called this situation to the attention of Mr. Ernesto Garalzo of the Pan American Union. We also advised the Council to attempt to establish friendly relations with the Mexican workers.

These recommendations were carried out with very good results. The last report received from one of the officers of the Council was to the effect that the danger of conflict was removed and the Mexican workers had sought the assistance of the Council in organizing them into a trade union.

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From time to time, the National Committee has received letters, petitions and resolutions to the effect that the traditional seniority principles should be relaxed or compromised in order to prevent mass unemployment among Negroes in the post-war period. The arguments can be summarized to the effect that traditionally the Negro is the "last to be hired and the first to be fired". After the war, the Negro will legally be the first to be fired under the established rules of seniority, as he was the last to be hired during the early days of the defense effort, and since approximately 85% of the defense industries are organized and working under collective bargaining contracts. Needless to say, this proposal has gained countless adherents among Negro groups who are not aware of the importance to the labor movement of the principle of seniority. However, the dangers inherent in this type of proposal are readily apparent. There are two points that should be emphasized:

- 1. The large group of whites, who would be unfairly displaced as a result of the relaxation of the seniority principle, would become not only anti-Negro but also enti-union.
- 2. This proposal would serve to remove the onus of discriminatory hiring policies from management and would transfer it to the shoulders of the labor movement where it does not belong as management has consistently fought for and retained the sole right to determine the qualifications for hiring.

The United Transport Service Employees of America meeting in convention in May 1944 fully discussed the pros and cons of this proposition and passed a clearcut resolution to the effect, that they considered seniority rights the cornerstone of organized labor and indicated their wholehearted opposition to any plan or scheme that would maintain any worker, group of workers or race of workers on the job by an abridgement of the fundamental principle of seniority.

In June 1944, at an Educational Political Action conference called by the Douglas-Washington Institute, approximately two hundred Negro trade union representatives from every important Union in the CIO and representatives from two or three AFL Unions, after a full and complete debate, unanimously passed a resolution upholding the established principles of seniority and condemning any proposal that would serve to compromise this principle. It is our considered opinion that the National CIO Committee to Abolish Racial Discrimination should take a similar position. The over-all and only workable solution to this vexing problem is full employment.

The volume and types of cases remain fairly constant, with the possible exception of two or three which will be brought to the attention of the Committee by the merbers of the respective Unions involved. The remaining cases are being progressed through the regular approved procedural channels.

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Government Agencies

On May 1, 1943, we conferred with Mr. Emmerich, who was then Administrator of Federal Public Housing Authority, regarding the housing needs of Negro defense workers. At that time, we objected very strenuously to the decision arrived at by the FPHA regarding the refusal to admit Negro defense workers to the Willow Run project outside Detroit. From time to time, we continued to voice our objections, along with countless other trade union and civic groups. These objections culminated in a conference called by Mr. John Blandford, Administrator of the National Housing Agency, to consider the whole question of Negro housing. The CIO was represented by John L. Yancey, Secretary-Treasurer of the United Transport Service Employees and the Director of this committee. At this conference, the greatest emphasis was placed upon the undemocratic decision of the Housing authorities relative to the Willow Run project.

Shortly thereafter, we were called in and the cooperation of the Committee along with other CIO Unions was sought in order to work out an orderly reversal of the Housing authorities: position on the Willow Run project. The results have been very favorable, and contrary to the theories expressed by many groups, there has been no violence, etc. when Negroes were moved into the Willow Run project. To date, approximately 75 Negro families have been moved into this project without any incidents whatsoever.

John M. Thornton, Negro field representative of the United Steelworkers of America, was nominated by President Philip Murray as a member of the Labor Policy Committee in the Office of Price Administration. The appointment was confirmed by OPA Administrator, Chester W. Bowles. Thornton will represent the CIO in this Agency with five other CIO representatives. The full OPA Labor Policy Committee is composed of an equal number of representatives of the CIO, AFL and the Railroad Brotherhoods. Its duties are to advise the Administrator on matters dealing with labor and related consumer problems. This culminates a year's activity by this committee working with the OPA in attempting to eliminate any inequities affecting minority groups.

Starting a little over a year ago as a result of our efforts, the OPA, Administrative Order Number 4 was issued on May 7 regarding the qualifications of Board members, which stated in effect, that the Board and Panels should include housewives, members from labor, from agricultural and various minority and racial groups, to be represented on the various war price and rationing boards. We likewise asked the staff members of the OPA to constantly enforce this Administrative Order and other Administrative Orders dealing with this subject.

On July 15, 1943, an Administrative Order was issued setting up the position of special assistant to the Administrator, whose functions and responsibilities were to assist in developing methods for the inclusion and participation of all minority groups in the OPA program. His responsibilities were to see that:

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- 1. The appointment of minority members and employees to local War Price and Rationing Boards.
- 2. Information services for the distribution of informational materials to minority groups, educational institutions, publications and other public relation outlets.
- 3. To provide methods of securing compliance with the enforcement of price, rent and rationing regulations in Negro areas.

In February 1944, working in cooperation with Negro trade unionists from the AFL, we arrived at an additional agreement with the OPA. This agreement provided for the appointment of a Negro Labor Consultant to the labor staff of the OPA. John Hargrove, an official of the Joint Council of Dining Car Employees, was appointed. At this time, the Administrator of the OPA agreed to appoint a Negro nominee from the AFL, CIO and the Railway Labor organizations to the OPA Labor Policy Committee. He further agreed that nominations from state or local AFL, Railway Labor groups and the CIO, to the OPA District Directors, of Negro labor representatives would be promptly appointed by OPA District Directors to District Labor Advisory Committees. The appointment of John Thornton culminates this year and a half activity by the OPA.

In April, Local 1 of the United Federal Workers of America, CIO, filed a complaint with the Committee charging discrimination in violation of Executive Order 8802 against the Federal Housing Authority. The complaint alleged that a Negro employee in the central files of the FHA was dismissed after an argument between this employee and two white supervisors over the use by Magroes of a washroom used by white supervisors. The Union appealed to the Administrator of this Agency for the reinstatement of this girl and the elimination of the Jim Crow policies complained of. After investigating the case, an additional unhealthy situation was unearthed in this division of the FHA. It seemed to be the personnel practice to assign all Negro clerical help to one department which, in effect, meant that there were Jim Crow departments in the Federal Government. After the Union appealed to Mr. Ferguson, Commissioner of the FHA, to reinstate this employee and the appeal was denied, the Committee accepted the case. As a member of the CIO National Subcommittee on housing, the Director took the case up with Commissioner Blandford, the over-all Administrator of all the constituent housing agencies. As a result of several conferences with the top administrative officials of NHA, along with the grievance committee of the Local, we were able to secure the reinstatement of this employee and the elimination of the conditions heretofore mentioned.

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Going into our second year of activity, we are of the opinion that the Committee is offering a type of constructive leadership in minority affairs that sets a forward example for other groups of like size and influence to follow. This month's issue of The Crisis Magazine, organ of the NAACP, in reporting on its national convention held in Chicago, states about Mr. James B. Carey, Chairman of the National CIO Committee to Abolish Racial Discrimination: "Mr. Carey, long noted for his progressive attitude on the Negro, delivered one of the outstanding speeches of the conference on the stake of organized labor and the Negro in the Nevember election."

On August 1, 1944, President Philip Murray received the following letter from the Central Conference of American Rabbis:

"Dear Mr. Murray:

The following resolution, proposed by the Commission of Justice and Peace, was adopted by an overwhelming majority of the members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

'We applaud the unflagging efforts of the Congress of Industrial Organizations to end discrimination in industry and to extend the principle of racial conciliation to all aspects of our national life. We urge other labor unions to follow their enlightened policy of admitting to membership men of all backgrounds.'

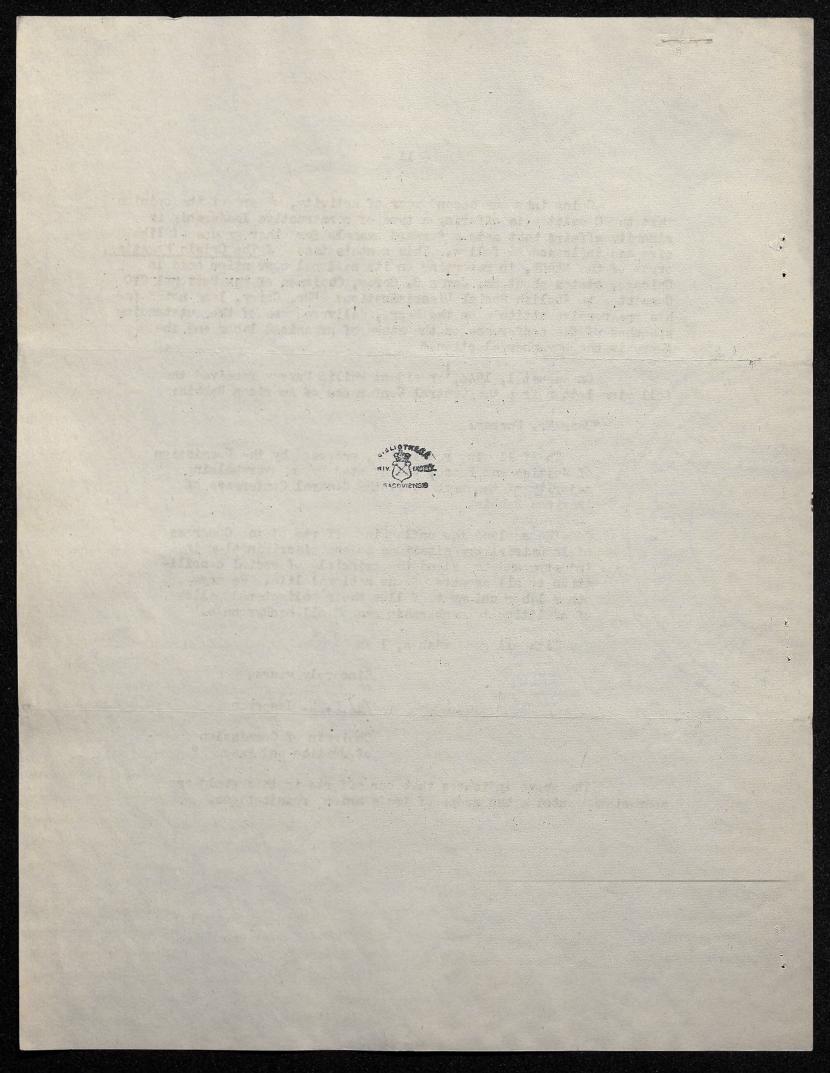
With all good wishes, I am

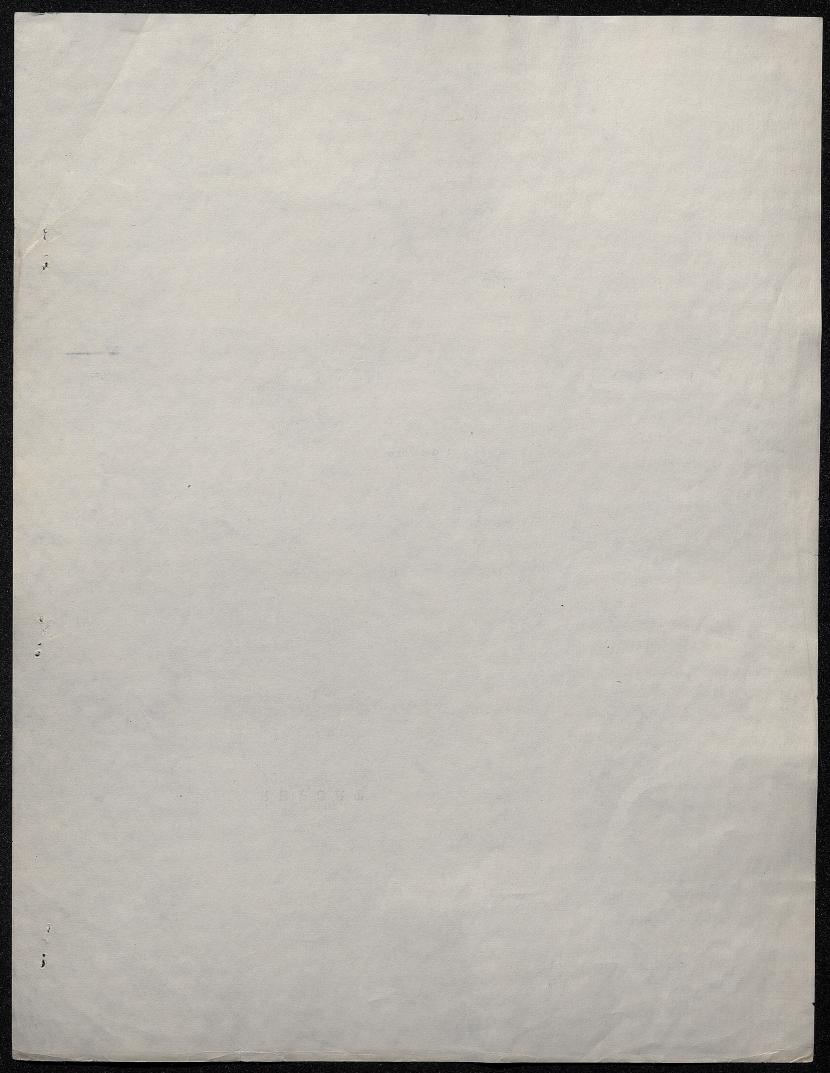
Sincerely yours,

/s/ F. M. Isserman

Chairman of Commission of Justice and Peace "

The above indicates that our efforts in this field are appreciated outside the scope of trade union organizations.





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George Leon-Paul wearer (1912-1995).



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