

THE COMING NEGRO MIGRATION

The economic barometer indicates an accelerated migration of Negroes from the South to the North.

The cause of this accelerated migration will be the further collapse of the cotton economy which all government efforts have failed to prevent.

At one time the South dominated the cotton markets of the world and the section enjoyed a relative prosperity compared to many other agricultural regions of the world.

The spread of extensive cotton culture to many other lands such as Brazil, Egypt, southern Russia, India, China and other sub-tropical regions has greatly increased world cotton production while tending to lower the price.

To counteract this trend toward cotton price decline there has been a wide-spread introduction of machinery into cotton culture and a gradual change in the status of cotton labor from sharecropping and tenantry to farm labor.

It was believed by some that the European war would boost the world price of cotton and thus return a measure of security and stability if not prosperity to those Southern regions dependent upon cotton.

This hope has not been realized because of the sharp decline of the British pound sterling to \$3.75 instead of the old rate of \$4.86, thanks to the tremendous expenditures incident to military and naval activities.

Since Britain and France must pay cash for whatever they buy in the American market, and since the exchange is against them, they have been restricting their purchases to implements of warfare and essential commodities only obtainable in the American.

Instead of increasing purchases of cotton, they have been decreasing them, and last week cotton prices in Liverpool dropped to the lowest limit.

This low price cannot help but hurt the American cotton grower whose standard of living is pitched on a higher

plane than that of any other in the world today.

In seeking for other means of maintaining the economic standards of life, the South has been encouraging by every means the industrialization of the region, making attractive offers to manufacturers to establish more mills and factories in the region.

The new Southern industries are employing only a small number of the Negro workers displaced by the change in the status of cotton, and in many factories no Negroes at all are employed.

This, coupled with the inadequate relief payments to unemployed Negro workers, is the cause of the growing migration of these people to the North and East.

They are coming to the cities where already from 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the Negro population is receiving relief and unable to get employment.

They will increasingly compete with Negroes already in the cities for the inadequate number of jobs available to colored people, and this competition will tend to further lower wages, especially in unskilled and domestic work in which the bulk of urban Negro workers are engaged.

The whole picture is extremely gloomy and a sharp challenge to leadership regardless of race.

In the coming political campaign Negroes will do well to carefully scrutinize the platforms and personalities of the various parties to see how they intend to handle this increasingly serious problem.

It is clear that any curtailment of relief payments, as advocated by some politicians will be fatal to the Negro population.

It is equally clear that some intelligent national policy is needed to halt or lessen this coming migration by improving economic conditions in the South.

Any political party or candidate that ignores this serious problem or tries to deal with it by issuing platitudinous planks signifying nothing fundamental does not merit and should not receive the support of Negro voters.