

San Francisco Labor

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THREE IMMEDIATE AND URGENTLY-NEEDED steps toward solving the problem of Negro unemployment in San Francisco were proposed last month by the San Francisco Labor Council.

"1. We need the truth... A comprehensive survey and analysis of the facts to serve as the foundation of a better future structure.

"2. We need a common program... a general attack on unemployment, increased growth rate, and an improvement of the economic conditions of all.

"3. We need buttons pressed... about twenty or thirty corporation presidents could probably press the buttons that could get things done."

The "main problem", the Council's statement declared, is the estimated 17,000 Negroes who are unemployed in the Bay Area... "or these 80,000 unemployed in our state of California; or these 1½ million unemployed Negroes in our nation."

"An unemployed person", the statement continued, "without job or income, obviously cannot help himself in reaching for rightful equality, acceptable integration, a fair shake in education, or for decent improvements in housing or in standard of living."

"LET'S TAKE AFTER the main problem," the Council urged. "And let's do it without finger pointing (particularly at Labor). And let's do it without pious statements (particularly by Labor)."

The Council warned that it is a complex problem, sometimes compounded by the simple truth that "many very human beings" are involved. If Negro unemployment is in the forefront, it must be considered in the light of the Orientals, the Spanish

The main target: jobs for 17,000

speaking, as well as Caucasian groups who are also having trouble finding jobs in today's labor market.

"Our concern for equality of opportunity applies to all working people," the Council declared, "and particularly to those workers of limited training and from so-called minority groups."

A high school diploma is a "must" for youth entering the labor market today. With the median years of education completed by our total work force only 12.1 years, it "indicates that the Negro is not the only one who is receiving insufficient, yet highly necessary education."

BUT THE NEGRO'S problem is complicated by the fact that half of the Negro youth complete no more than 10 years of schooling. And often his education experiences limit his ability to compete in the economy.

But, the Council emphasized, no matter what the excuse or alibi for the failure to employ the Negro, "the basic fact yet remains that neither morally nor economically can we ignore these 17,000 unemployed Negroes in our Bay Area."

The Labor Council has seen half of its production jobs leave the city in the past decade. Two hundred warehouses close each year. With them have gone jobs for workers of limited skills and training.

"But the powers that be decided San Francisco should change its characteristics. It should be a city of business, distribution, finances, entertainment and conventions. And in this planned change, spearheaded by our Chamber of Commerce, a great number of simple production jobs went down the drain."

LUXURY HOUSING replaced low-income areas—when the Council protested, a San Francisco supervisor remarked, "Let them move to Oakland."

Apprenticeship offers no immediate answer for the 17,000 unemployed Negroes. In the entire San Francisco-San Mateo apprenticeship area, there were only 2,429 registered apprentices. Up to June 1, less than 500 new apprentices were started.

"Even if the percentage of Negroes was increased to 50 per cent, and these young men could be recruited and employers would accept them, little impact would be felt in resolving our basic problem of 17,000 unemployed Negroes."

To meet the problem, the Council called for a survey and analysis on the entire subject of minority employment. It called for broad support, without sectionalism or partisanship, for President Kennedy's program to speed economic growth and cut down unemployment.

BUT MOST OF ALL the Council called on the "power structure"—the twenty or thirty corporation presidents who could press the buttons that get things done—to press the buttons "that would influence the development of a San Francisco wherein all Americans might reasonably seek and find employment."

These powerful leaders "played an important part in creating the present economic situation from which these problems flow." They have a responsibility for a serious concern with the "welfare of our people" in their future planning.

The Council rejected Mayor Christopher's proposal of separate committees, saying it would not "be segregated by any politician."

But "if a united, community effort is desired on the part of the leadership that is capable of producing results, the San Francisco Labor Council would be most happy to lend sincere and earnest participation."

