

The Negro's Northward Exodus

BROADER GROW THE BLACK BELTS in Northern cities—in New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Chicago.

Northward and cityward the Southern Negro is wending his way.

Census figures released in Washington now focus the attention of the nation's editors on this significant trend; and not a few of them seek to unearth the meaning of what the Asheville (N. C.) Citizen calls "a population shift of the greatest potential importance." This paper summarizes the census statistics:

"Out of a total Negro population of 11,891,143, the census shows that 9,361,577 are in the South, an increase for the decade of 6 per cent.; while 2,409,219 are in the North, an increase for the decade of 63.6 per cent. The West now has 120,347 Negroes, or 53.1 per cent. more than 1920.

"During the ten-year period the Negro population of the North and West increased by 978,666, as compared with an increase in the South of 449,346.

"It is clear from these figures that at least three-quarters of a million Negroes migrated from the South during the decade.

"Three Southern States—Georgia, Virginia and South Carolina—showed an actual loss in Negro population. Michigan showed a Negro gain of 182 per cent., New York of 108 per cent., Illinois of 80 per cent., New Jersey of 78.3 per cent., Ohio of 66.1 per cent., and Pennsylvania of 5.15 per cent.

"These are striking changes. The great bulk of the Negro population is still in the South, but the implications of the fact that almost two-thirds of the whole increase in Negro population from 1920 to 1930 occurred in the North are the more far-reaching, because this is true."

THE Raleigh News and Observer notes that the boll-weevil in the deep South first drove the rural Negro from the cotton-fields to the great urban centers.

The Washington correspondent of the Baltimore Sun is more interested in the political potentialities of this migration from cotton belt to city streets. Is a Negro bloc imminent in municipal politics? The Sun correspondent speculates:

"Concentrated increases in the Negro population of certain Northern States, as contrasted with slight gains—and in some cases actual losses—in numbers of the race in the South, is giving pause to practical politicians concerned with the specter of an organized Negro bloc.

"Whether such a development is imminent is open to question, but political leaders agree there is a trend in that direction through continuing migration of the Negro from those States where voting is difficult, if not downright impossible for him, to havens where he enjoys the franchise without interference."

Writing in the New York Herald Tribune, Rev. Henry Hugh Proctor, colored pastor of the Nazarene Congregational Church, Brooklyn, asserts this exodus to be "the greatest since Israel left Egypt." This analyst gives three reasons for the drift:

"The first of the three reasons was the call for labor from the North, due to the labor vacuum caused by the World War.

"Another was due to the ill-treatment they have received in the South as the aftermath of slavery.

"The other was the passion of a race, long suppressed, to find itself in the American democracy, inspired as its militant sons were by their experiences in the World War."