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age county in the state. And in view of the latter fact it is not difficult to understand why Walker County Negro children are above average for their race in their scholastic progress. The most surprising feature of an educational system favoring the white child is the fact that the Negro children in this instance, despite inferior equipment and instruction, enroll in proportionately larger numbers and maintain a higher rate of daily attendance than the white children of the county.

Negro teachers receive so much less salary than the white teachers principally because their preparation for teaching is inferior, their standard of living is lower, and finally, because they are *Negroes*. While information gathered through this investigation bears out the current belief that there is a decided difference in the training of white and colored teachers, the fact must be faced that inferior compensation for inferior training works an injustice on the Negro teacher in that it serves economically to block his efforts toward advanced training. Furthermore, there can be little incentive for self-improvement in a rural elementary teacher salary of \$40.50 a month.

According to an old adage, a chain is as strong as its weakest link. Applied to the educational situation, a public school system might be said to be as good as its weakest unit, in this case, the underpaid rural elementary Negro teacher, attempting to lay character foundations in future citizens under the strain of financial insecurity. Whatever the economic arguments one may advance (the disproportionately small amount of taxes paid by the Negro, his generally lower living standards and consequent ability to live on less income than the white man) the fact of educational differentiation on a *racial* basis remains. And as long as the mores of the white community condone inequalities of educational opportunity for the races, so long will the colored children be obliged to prepare themselves for life adjustments in schools of inferior equipment and inferior instruction. In the present relief work of the government, the basic factor in determining the amount of relief given is one of "need." One might readily ask, "Why should not the same principle apply to the South's provision for Negro education?"

THE NEGRO MINER IN WEST VIRGINIA

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ALTHOUGH studies of Negro migration of the past two decades have pointed out the fact that every large exodus of Negroes from the south has contained a number whose destination was the mining fields of West Virginia¹ no sociological study has ap-

peared of the Negro in this area.² Here Negroes occupy a unique position; more Negro miners work in the coal mines of West Virginia³ than in those of any other

¹ See, for example, C. G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration*, Associated Publishers, 1918; *Negro Migration in 1916-17*, U. S. Dept. of Labor, Division of Negro Economics, 1919.

² Greene and Woodson's *The Negro Wage Earner*, Charles S. Johnson's *The Negro in American Civilization*, and Spero and Harris's *The Black Worker* all contain valuable material but are limited largely to economic discussion. Additional material is to be found in the reports of the West Virginia Bureau of Negro Welfare and Statistics from 1921 to 1932.

³ According to the West Virginia Department of

state. Although they formed only 6.6 per cent of the population of the state in 1930 they constituted 21.8 per cent of all miners.

The purpose of the study, of which this article is a brief summary, is to provide sociological data concerning this group, first, by discussion of the origin, development, and present status of the Negro miners of West Virginia, and, second, by describing in some detail certain aspects of the Negro culture in the mining fields.

METHOD

Information was obtained by personal interviews with employers, miners, Negro teachers, preachers, and other persons who could furnish factual material concerning the Negroes in the mining fields; by extensive correspondence with persons not available for interview; by wide reading, especially in the West Virginia State Library; and by study of coal company records. Two schedules were used, an employer's schedule and a miner's schedule, in Logan, Kanawha, McDowell, Raleigh, and Fayette, counties where 74.6 per cent of all Negro miners live. Six hundred miners' schedules were taken, while the schedules of 44 operators employing almost half of the Negro miners in the state were obtained.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Negroes have probably been employed in the mines of West Virginia since the early years of the nineteenth century after coal supplanted wood as the fuel used in the Great Kanawha Valley salt furnaces in 1819. In the late ante-bellum years

Mines there were 25,335 Negro miners in 1927, 23,987 in 1928, 23,941 in 1929, 23,521 in 1930, and 21,514 in 1931. Later figures are not yet available. In spite of the decline in their numbers during the depression, Negroes have lost a smaller proportion than either native whites or foreigners.

Negro slaves were largely used in the coal mines and cannel coal oil factories of Kanawha County. With the building of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad and consequent opening of the New River coal field in 1873 the Negro population of the southern counties increased rapidly. These newcomers, coming mostly from Virginia to work on the railroad,⁴ remained to work in the mines. The transition from railroad workers to miners was duplicated in the building of the Norfolk and Western Railroad from 1883 to 1892, the Virginian in 1909, and in the later extensions of these railroads.

In the state as a whole Negroes and native whites constituted the bulk of the mining population until the great expansion of the industry after 1892. Following the great strike in 1902 both Negroes and native whites were supplanted by foreigners,⁵ the percentages of native whites and Negroes in 1907 being only 36.3 and 17.6 respectively.⁶ The foreigners outnumbered the Negroes every year until 1925. Since then, however, the Negroes have been more numerous than they, the percentages of native whites, Negroes, and foreigners in 1931 being 61.1, 21.9 and, 17.0.⁷

MIGRATION

The Negro miners are largely a migrated group. Only 14.0 per cent of the 600

⁴ The Negro legendary hero, John Henry, was supposed to have worked at the Big Bend Tunnel on the C. & O. Railroad during its construction, 1870-72. (See Guy B. Johnson, *John Henry*, U. of N. C. Press, 1929, p. 54.)

⁵ Reports of the U. S. Immigration Commission, 1911, Vol. 7, p. 151.

⁶ West Virginia Department of Mines, Annual Report, 1907. No reports prior to 1907 contained any data on racial or national groups in the mining population.

⁷ West Virginia Department of Mines, Annual Reports, 1907-31.

miners interviewed were born in West Virginia; 47.8 per cent came from Virginia; 11.8 per cent from North Carolina; 11.2 per cent from Alabama; 4.5 per cent from Tennessee; 3.3 per cent from Georgia; 2.5 per cent from South Carolina; and the remaining 4.9 per cent from five southern and six northern states. Various reasons were given by the migrated miners for coming to West Virginia. Chief among these were economic, the "pull" of higher wages and increased opportunity being almost universal. Crop failures and bad conditions of the farms from which many of them came constituted a "push" which rendered the economic "pull" of the mining fields more effective. Economic reasons, however, while powerful, were by no means the only ones given. Better schools for their children and a greater opportunity for civic and personal liberty were also named, particularly by the more articulate migrants. Crises of various kinds which interfere with the accustomed tenor of life influenced others to leave their native states and wander. Death of a relative or a wife and offenses against the law by them or their parents were not infrequently given as personal reasons for migration. Desire for travel and new experience led many young men to "venture out."

The movements of migrants may be classified into nine directional types: (1) From states south of Virginia direct to West Virginia. (2) From southern states north of Alabama to that state and thence north to West Virginia. (3) From the southern states northward with one or more stops the last of which was in Virginia from which the migrant came to West Virginia. (4) From southern states with one or more stops the last being in Kentucky from which state the migrant came to West Virginia. (5) From states south of Virginia direct to northern states and thence back to West Virginia. (6)

From northern states directly to West Virginia. (7) From southern states to the western states such as Kansas or Missouri and thence to West Virginia. (8) From Virginia to West Virginia direct. (9) From Virginia to Kentucky, thence to West Virginia.

FUNCTIONS PERFORMED BY THE NEGRO MINER

Negroes occupy all of the labor positions in the industry, both skilled and unskilled, but rarely a position of authority. The greatest number of Negroes are employed in underground positions, or "inside labor." Of the 2,411 Negroes concerning whom detailed information was obtained, 96.3 per cent were employed in these occupations. Coal loaders constituted 75.7 per cent of all Negroes in the group. Negroes choose this occupation not only because it is the most available of all but it is one of the most lucrative and provides the least supervision with the greatest amount of personal freedom in work hours. Other jobs and the percentage of the Negro group in each are as follows: brakeman, 6.8; trackman, 5.5; motorman, 4.9; and machine man, 2.3. Only 3.2 per cent were employed in "outside labor," a term applied to surface work in preparing the coal for shipment and in maintenance of equipment. Only 11, 0.5 per cent of the 2,411 Negroes studied, were in positions which, even by the most liberal stretching of the term, could be called positions of authority. The position of mine foreman was the highest held by a Negro unless that of the one Negro safety director with the State Department of Mines be counted as a mining position.

EFFICIENCY OF THE NEGRO MINER

So far as employer opinion is an index, Negroes are efficient workers in most of the positions they occupy. Race prejudice on the part of whites and jealousy

of other Negroes have greatly limited the success of Negro bosses. They must face the opposition of white workers, the the suspicion of employers, and the antagonism of members of their own group who expect special favors. While the opinions of employers varied widely, the average opinion rated Negroes higher than native whites as coal loaders and brakeman and higher than the foreigners as machine men, motormen, and tippel men. They were considered inferior to the native whites as machine men, track men, motormen, and tippel men, and to the foreigners as coal loaders and track men. In all-round desirability, however, the Negroes for many employers are preferable because they are, in addition to being good workers, good company customers and "more easily handled" than other workers.

WAGES OF NEGRO MINERS

The daily wage of Negro miners appears high; the irregularity of work, however, cuts down the amount of annual wages received. Study of payrolls of three companies revealed that in 1929 the average semi-monthly wage of 142 Negroes was \$59.15, or about \$118.30 a month. By 1931, however, wages in three Kanawha County mines dropped 50.9 per cent from the 1929 figures, a condition somewhat typical of mines in every county. In 1932 conditions were more depressed than in 1931. With the operation of the NRA over several months of 1933 the earnings were undoubtedly higher.

Negroes in the mines studied paid back to the company in charges of some kind 71.9 per cent of their earnings. Foreigners spent only 32.5 per cent of their earnings with the company, while native whites spent 51.4 of theirs. Foreigners, although receiving an average wage of \$18.86 each semi-monthly period more than the Negroes, spent an average of \$17.15 less

with the company. The chief items of expenditure are for groceries, furniture, and supplies at the company-store; rent, powder, and miners' tools; doctor and hospital fees; fuel; light; and burial fund. In spite of the large part of their earnings spent with the company 119, or 19.8 per cent of the 600 miners interviewed reported ownership of real estate. One hundred and twenty-three, or 20.5 per cent, owned automobiles, while 43.8 per cent either owned an automobile or had previously owned one.

THE COMPANY-OWNED TOWN

Coal development in isolated areas has forced coal companies to build houses for shelter and to provide all other resources necessary to even the simplest and rudest life. The resulting "company-owned" towns vary from those in which the state of disrepair, in the words of the United States Coal Commission, "runs beyond the power of verbal description."⁸ to those with paved streets and running water in the houses superior to many non-mining rural communities.

In all of these towns a sort of feudalistic paternalism on the part of the company inevitably exists. Company stores found at every operation as a rule enjoy a monopoly since no other store is allowed on company property. The building of good roads, however, has provided the miners with some outside markets. The health of the miners is cared for by "company doctors" who, although paid by the workers, usually consider themselves employees of the company and identify themselves with its interests. Miners live in "company houses" for which they must sign contracts which specifically state that they do not create the relationship of landlord and tenant but only of master and servant. They further stipulate that the miner will

⁸ Reports of the U. S. Coal Commission, 1923, Pt. III, p. 1431.

allow no one on the premises objectionable to the company. By these means, and a local police system under company pay in some localities, the companies have made most difficult the organization of miners by labor unions.⁹

THE FAMILY

In the drab life of the mining fields are to be found comparatively few unmarried Negroes. Of the miners interviewed, 76.0 per cent were married and 6.5 per cent more were either separated, widowed, or divorced. The traditional Negro family in which the mother is the stable quantity is tending, under the influence of mining conditions, toward standards of the white majority group. The miner must be working for a company in order to hold his house. Employment opportunities for wives are limited; hence, the man is necessarily a more stable element in family life than in many other occupations.

Birth rates for Negroes in mining counties are lower than for whites.¹⁰ The reason for this fact probably lies not in the absence of large families but in the frequency of childless marriages. Of the 495 married miners, 22.2 per cent were childless, while 37.2 per cent had more than three children. The largest family contained 17 children. Scarcity of large houses in the mining fields has resulted in 64.6 per cent of the people in Negro miners' families living under what are ordinarily considered as overcrowded conditions.

In the early days Negro migrants took up with women and maintained them as common-law wives. Some of these unions are still to be found although the requirement of a marriage license by the state in order for a wife to receive "compensation"

⁹ The "freedom" of the companies has been somewhat limited by the NIRA. See Title I, Section 7a.

¹⁰ Birth, Stillbirth, and Infant Mortality Statistics for Birth Registration Area of the U. S., 1929, pp. 127-128.

for the death of a husband led most of them to marry. Negro sex and family mores are slowly approaching the standards of the white group.

EDUCATION

Of the Negro miners interviewed 9.5 per cent had no schooling; 12.8 per cent finished the eighth grade; 4.4 per cent finished high school; while six, or 1.2 per cent, had some college work. Their children are provided with comparatively good schools, since the state spends practically the same amount per capita for Negro and white education. The children of Negro miners are taking advantage of their opportunities; a slightly larger percentage of all Negroes in the mining fields between 5 and 20 years of age are enrolled in school than of native whites of the same ages.¹¹ A larger proportion of the Negroes in school remain for the high school years than in any other southern or border state.¹² A large proportion of the students in the two Negro state colleges are children of miners, forming according to the Dean of the Bluefield State Teachers College 93.9 per cent of their 232 students and a somewhat smaller proportion of those of West Virginia State College.¹³

A heightened racial self-respect is given the children of Negro miners by race-conscious teachers. The different rates at which children and their parents assimilate white standards create a wide gap between them; some are bewildered by the conflict of standards and family tensions increase. Hypersensitivity concomitant with the developing racial psychosis leads many children to see in the mining situa-

¹¹ U. S. Census Population Bulletin, West Virginia, Composition and Characteristics of the Population, 1930, p. 9.

¹² U. S. Bureau of Education Bulletin, No. 20, 1931, p. 73.

¹³ Information secured through correspondence and interview with the officials of the two institutions.

tion only racial exploitation. They leave to face deadlines of other industries. Some are successful; others return in defeat to add their more articulate voices to the undertone of discontent which is always present.

RECREATION

Recreational facilities are definitely lacking in the mining fields. Much of the enforced leisure is spent in time killing rather than in activities likely to promote individual or social improvement. Loafing "visiting," gossip, pool, checkers, and horseshoes take much of the miners' time. Baseball is also popular with the young people of both sexes. In more prosperous times automobile riding was greatly enjoyed by Negro miners, but many of them have lost their cars or can not buy gasoline for them during the depression. Fishing is indulged in to a very limited extent since not all mines are on streams where fish are plentiful. Many Negroes keep "hunting dogs" which they use upon occasion.

Negro churches and lodges have traditionally filled the need for recreation. Funerals, weddings, and "baptizings" are well attended. Schools have also seen their responsibility and provide programs of various sorts, particularly for adolescents. Negro musical organizations are prevalent, especially vocal quartettes. These quartettes represent different mining towns compete for prizes.

RELIGION

Most of the Negro miners are church members, 71.6 per cent of those interviewed belonging to some denomination. Baptists are most numerous, constituting upwards of 80 per cent of all church members in the coal fields.¹⁴ Fifteen and seven-

tenths per cent of the miners whose schedules were taken were Methodists, while 3.7 per cent were adherents of the "Holiness" Church. Negro preachers range all the way from college and secondary graduates to uneducated "preaching" miners. Some "professional" jealousy exists between these groups.

All gradations between the extremely emotional, uninhibited, rhythmic service¹⁵ and that identical with urban white churches exist. Study of the Negro churches in the mining fields indicates that diverse cultural elements, even in a group with racial homogeneity and bonds of common disadvantages, may not have their religious needs met in the same way. Simple Negro peasants lately from the south, caught in the maelstrom of economic maladjustment, desiring the ecstasy which only a certain type of religion can give them, complain that they cannot "understand" the preacher. Educated and race-conscious Negro ministers, for whom the adoption of white standards constitutes the most important desideratum complain because they must "talk down" to their congregations. Both are unsatisfied.

SOCIAL CLASSES

Negroes in the mining fields are by no means a homogeneous group. Social rank among Negro miners rests not so much upon economic bases as upon cultural differences, sharp distinctions being made between West Virginia and Virginia natives and those from further south. The Virginians and West Virginians consider the southerners "crude," emotional, and "mean," and tend to avoid them. Alabamans particularly are objectionable.

¹⁴ *Religious Bodies: 1926*, I, 69. Further information was secured from J. J. Turner, State Director of Religious Education and Missions of the Baptist Church.

¹⁵ Cf. H. W. Odum, *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro*, p. 54 ff; E. T. Kreuger, "Negro Religious Expression," *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXVIII, July, 1932; N. N. Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, Univ. of N. C. Press, 1926, Chapter VIII.

Isolated by the majority group of Virginians and West Virginians the southerners either become "clannish" or attempt to escape discrimination by denying their origin and passing as Virginians or West Virginians. Other bases of social status are church membership and, in some places, denominational adherence. Upper classes further hold aloof from the "criminals" as they term them, meaning thereby those who habitually run afoul of the law.

RACE RELATIONS

Race relations are relatively intimate and friendly even though whites and Negroes work in closest contact. The stable equilibrium of the present time comes as one stage in a cycle the other stages of which may be said to be isolation, economic welcome by employers, industrial and social conflict, accommodation and quiescence.¹⁶ Race consciousness is present to a limited extent among miners and to a greater extent among their children, teachers, and preachers. Sporadic growth of Garveyism in the mining fields, however, was concomitant with the growth of the Ku Klux Klan.

The interracial situation in the mining fields provides sufficient evidence for questioning the extent of applicability of the common generalization that race prejudice exists in inverse proportion to the status of the white person. Ordinarily acculturation of the white has led him to expect the Negroes to be necessarily lower; when Negroes approximate the position of the white, prejudice is aroused. Under the stimuli of controlled competition of the company-owned town the white no longer expects the Negro to receive lower wages or occupy a definitely lower plane. Negroes and whites receive equal pay in the same positions; their respective numbers are determined by company policy to

which both races must become accommodated. Over a period of years the status of the groups has become, thus, more nearly identical, with eventual decrease rather than an increase of race prejudice, quite contrary to the usual generalization.

PROSPECT

Although their proportion in the mining industry of West Virginia has increased during the depression, owing to the departure of thousands of whites,¹⁷ Negro miners are, as a whole, a dissatisfied and downcast group whose future depends pretty largely on the fate of the coal industry itself. Attempts have recently been made, after a favorable decision of the Supreme Court, to stabilize conditions by means of coöperative sales organizations of competing operators,¹⁸ and some gains have been made by labor under the NRA. It is too early yet to say just what the ultimate results will be. If the Negroes remain while whites leave and through some means order replaces chaos they may be able to preëempt for themselves a place in the mining industry superior to any they have yet occupied. If, on the other hand, the new control devices mean only anarchistic competition and production by larger units the conclusion seems inescapable that the Negro youth of the mining fields will continue its exodus to other parts, the void will be filled by recruits from the South, brief periods of prosperity will alternate with squalor, and Negro miners will continue, as in the past, to be "more easily handled."

¹⁷ Between 1930 and 1931 there was a decrease of 9.2 per cent in the number of miners employed while the proportion of Negroes employed increased 0.1 per cent. (West Virginia Department of Mines Reports, 1930 and 1931.) Study of company pay rolls indicated that a much larger percentage of whites left in 1932 while Negroes tended to remain.

¹⁸ See *Coal Age*, Vol. 36, pp. 65, 648; Vol. 37, pp. 34, 85, 123; *Coal Mining*, Vol. 9, p. 97; Vol. 10, p. 24.

¹⁶ Cf. E. S. Bogardus "A Race Relations Cycle," *American Journal of Sociology*, 35, p. 612 ff.