WHERE IS THE NAACP GOING?

THE ILGWU HAS, FOR MANY YEARS, given its backing to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and to every other bona fide organization in the struggle for equal opportunity. Our support was in line with an historic and traditional policy of the union: the fight for full human rights and equal opportunity. This has been our belief and our practice.

As recently as this very month, the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing wrote that “for more than a decade, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union has given wonderful cooperation and unfailing support to the work of the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing... it would be presumptuous to say ‘thank you’ to an organization which has long been in the forefront of the battle for human rights.”

This policy of equal opportunity applies not only to the Negro members of the ILGWU but to every member, including the most recent arrivals: the Spanish speaking. America's outstanding authority on this subject, Dr. Clarence Senior, formerly of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Office of Labor in New York, wrote just last year: “The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union probably carries on more activities designed to incorporate the Spanish-speaking workers into its rank than any other international.”

At the last convention of the ILGWU, in May 1962, in discussing a resolution to endorse the NAACP, President Dubinsky noted that a staff member of the NAACP, its labor secretary, was trying to use his organizational position to create dissension between the NAACP and the ILGWU, but that, notwithstanding his irresponsible acts, we would back the NAACP because of agreement with its purposes.

Since then, this same individual has intensified his disruptive actions; first through the misuse of a Congressional “inquiry” that the AFL-CIO Executive Council described as “political blackmail;” then, through the widespread distribution of the same individual's testimony that the Congressional Committee.

Weeks after Mr. Hill's initial letter, I received a second letter from Mr. Hill, this one printed only in Spanish. It is just as veiled in ambiguity as the first. A third letter, from Mr. Hill, was received by the Board of Trustees of the Legal Defense Fund of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

MR. HILL SUGGESTS THAT LOCAL 22, to which Negro and Puerto Rican dressmakers belong, shares with Local 60A an inferior status. I think it only fair to note that these Negro and Puerto Rican dressmakers share Local 22 with our Jewish members and with members of some 32 other racial, religious and national groups.

I, personally, am a member of Local 22. I was its manager for over 25 years. At the risk of seeming immodest, I will say that under my leadership Local 22 became one of the best-known and most respected local unions in this country. It retains a very high standing today. To suggest that Negro and Puerto Rican workers are discriminated against when, as Mr. Hill puts it, they are “limited” to Local 22 is simply nonsense.

As for Local 60A, just about everything Mr. Hill says about it is wrong. Through Local 60A, in a relatively short period, the earnings of shipping clerks in our industry have been more than doubled.

It should be further understood that Local 89 has no separate contract. Its members work alongside members of other Dress Joint Board locals in the same shops and under the same conditions. The Dress Joint Board alone negotiates and enforces contracts in our industry. And all ethnic groups in our union, and we have all of them, can be found, in significant numbers, working in all crafts and on all price ranges, sharing equally in our benefits and opportunities.

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