CLOTHING WORKERS COMBAT PREJUDICE

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, which covers the men's clothing industry, does not tolerate racial or religious discrimination in its ranks or in the industry. Equality is written into every ACWA contract, it is the job of every union official to see that the contract is honored.

Years ago, immigrant workers supplied the backbone of the highly skilled journeymen tailors' trade. Today, these older workers are retiring, and there is much concern about

who will take their place. In one large border city, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and Urban League proposed that Negro workers be included in a management apprenticeship program to train new workers. At first, employers resisted but the union continued to press for this goal. Today, Negroes are receiving apprenticeship training and make up a new skilled labor reservoir for the entire industry.

In 1949, in Cleveland, employers refused to consider Negro girls as trainees in the men's clothing field. The Amalgamated, again in cooperation with the Urban League, arranged for one of the firms to lend six power machines to the Phyllis Wheatley Association, a social agency which undertook to train the Negro applicants. In the past few years, ACWA has helped more than 100 colored power machine operators find work in Cleveland clothing factories.

In one large New Orleans clothing factory, Negroes and whites traditionally worked in separate divisions. When Amalgamated organized the plant, the local, too, was divided into two sections. But a union program soon brought the two units together. Because the union felt that common economic interests were a strong uniting force, a joint negotiating committee was formed. Later, a joint executive board was elected; by tacit understanding each unit provided one of the local's chairmen.

It was in the midst of a particularly pressing bargaining crisis that the white co-chairman moved to abolish the separate sections and elect one chairman for the entire local. The motion was carried and the changeover proceeded smoothly.

In a small Northern mining town the owner of a shirt factory hired a Negro girl without consulting the union or the other workers. On her first day on the job, two Negro friends drove her to work and sat in their car outside the factory while the other girls were arriving. Some of the old employees noticed the Negro men; before an hour had passed, the girls stopped their machines and announced that they would not work with a Negro operator.