Introduction

WE OPEN THE GATES is a frank effort to accentuate the positive in labor's long campaign against racial and religious discrimination on the job. These are the success stories—examples of vigorous union action in accord with the highest ideals of labor and the nation.

Racial and religious discrimination in employment and in union membership is contrary to the policy and the fundamental faith of the American trade union movement.

A common purpose unites the men and women who work for wages and binds them together in the trade union movement. Workers join unions to help and protect one another. By bargaining collectively, they try to establish fair wages, hours and employment conditions, and job security.

But union membership must mean "one for all and all for one." The standards that unions set and advance can last only if they become universal. If any group of wage earners is barred from union membership, those workers must usually work below union standards. Before long, the lower standard is bound to undercut the higher level won by the union. That's why discrimination in union membership hurts not only excluded workers, but also those unionists who favor the exclusions.

Thus, unions oppose discrimination first, because it is morally wrong, and second, because it endangers the very standards which unions have worked so hard to win.

America's trade union movement has always realized this fact. As far back as 1894, the American Federation of Labor refused to grant a charter to a national union because it barred qualified Negroes. But discrimination and prejudice have gained a temporary foothold in some segments of the labor movement, just as they have in other sections and areas of our national life.