Unfortunately, several of the unions on the organizing committee denied membership to Negro workers—which made it possible for the millowners to import carloads of Negro workers as strikebreakers. Although the men held out for several months, the strike was finally broken. The workers were defeated by a combination of employer-inspired violence, strikebreakers, racial and national conflicts and jurisdictional bickering among the various unions. The men in steel mills learned the hard way that "discrimination costs you money."

Eighteen years later, when the Steel Workers Organizing Committee was formed, it welcomed Negro and white members alike. Sons of Negro steel men who had been strikebreakers in 1918 became volunteer union organizers in 1936.

Steel management, however, clung to its prejudices for many years. Negro workers employed for 20 years or more, were frozen as "blacksmith's helpers" or in other dirty, exhausting jobs, while the white men they trained moved up to higher work and better pay. When union action broke this pattern in one Southern steel plant, some 300 Negro "helpers" got wage boosts of a dollar an hour and their first chance to bid for skilled jobs throughout the plant.

Blatant discrimination—by no means limited to the South—is still obvious despite the efforts of local steel union leaders, vigorously backed by their international officers.

In October, 1946, a historic battle was fought over the upgrading of a Negro worker at the National Tube Plant in Lorain, Ohio. A young Negro veteran, fresh from the battlefields of Europe, decided to exercise the plant seniority guaranteed him by the union contract. He applied for a skilled-trades apprentice gang.

Despite the contract, there never had been a Negro apprentice in the plant. Management was determined to keep it that way. Only after the case had been fought through three stages of grievance procedure and was about to go to arbitration did the company finally yield. Then, just as the

Negro was about to start his new job, 96 white craftsmen and apprentices walked out.

For a time, this walkout threatened a shutdown of the entire plant and its 11,000 workers. Under pressure from the union, management told the insurgents they would be fired unless they worked a full shift. The union backed the company's position, telling the men that it would not allow any further violation of the union's non-discrimination policy. On the next regular shift, the workers were back at their jobs. Now, as vacancies occur, Negroes are taken on as apprentice electricians, painters, maintenance men and welders.

Another series of wildcat walkouts took place in 1950, when wage differentials based on race were wiped out. White workers in Birmingham, Chicago, Youngstown and Detroit walked off their jobs in protest; but the International remained firm. Faced with the loss of their union charters, the insurgents backed down.

Top Steelworker leadership has refused to give discrimination a foothold even when large-scale rebellion threatened. Four thousand members of a Northern steel local threatened to walk out if management hired a Negro crane operator. This highly responsible job had been reserved for whites. But the union's President, the late Philip Murray, acted promptly and without compromise. If the walkout occurred, he warned, the International would immediately take over the local and administer it under a trusteeship.

The Negro crane operator went to work—and not a single white worker deserted his job. Today, the plant is fully integrated; initial resentments have been forgotten. The union is better off and so is the company, which can hire the best man for the job.

In 1954, another important step took place when North-South wage differentials were wiped out.

In August of the same year, United Steelworkers President David J. McDonald, together with the other top union