March 1, 1941

It is with a deep sense of responsibility that I arise to address this distinguished audience, gathered to pay homage to one of America's greatest women. My sense of responsibility on this occasion is heightened by the presence of our honored guest, Mary McLeod Bethune, whom each one of us can only strive to emulate but whose accomplishments and rare ability we dare not hope to attain. How frequently have I remarked, that I will never proceed nor follow on the platform the matchless oratory of Mary Bethune. But here I am, in Florida, in her own happy hunting ground, attempting to bring a message which she could so much better present. Conscious of these facts, I nevertheless accepted the invitation to participate in this panel discussion because of the honor I deem it to share in a celebration of the achievements of Mary McLeod Bethune and also because of my admiration for your distinguished President, my fellow townsman and fellow alumnus of the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. William A. Gray, Jr., better known as "Bill Gray".

I have been asked to speak on "The Role of the Negro Women in the Economic Life of the Postwar South." To speak for or about all the Negro women of the South, among whom are many of the most capable leaders and thinkers of this nation in itself appears to be a presumptuous task to be undertaken by any one woman and particularly when that woman lives
in the North. I, therefore, must digress to remind you that I have lived and worked in the South, that as assistant actuary of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company of Durham, North Carolina, one of our greatest business organizations, I learned first hand of the economic problems facing the Negro in the South. I learned that the economic problems that we in the South face are the same ones that we face when we go North. I learned that the pattern out of which the problem is created may vary in its shape and form, but when the pattern is fitted together the mould that holds Negro men and women in economic subjugation in the South grips us in the North. And the pattern produces such a crazy quilt that its form in the North or South is unpredictable. This makes planning to reshape the problem vary, with the many sided patterns by which the problems of the Negroes' economic poverty is spread throughout this country. War does not wait upon the normal processes of evolution upon which we Negroes are always cautioned to wait. The demands of our own nation and of our allies for the materials to fight this war could not be met by white hands only, nor by the hands of male workers only. Our national employment habits had to be disregarded in order to make America the Arsenal of Democracy. When our fighting men need ammunition and arms, hands must be found to produce them. As a result the employment picture of Negroes changed decidedly after Pearl Harbor. According to the data assembled by the War Manpower Commission in their E. S. 270 Report the total number
of workers in establishments covered by this report were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Non-White workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 1942</td>
<td>11,274,950</td>
<td>518,645 4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 1944</td>
<td>14,443,079</td>
<td>1,054,390 7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, the number of Negroes employed in these establishments, covered by the War Manpower Commission, increased 100%, from approximately a half million to slightly more than a million in the 18 months from September 1942 to March, 1944. Ammunition, guns, tanks, boats, and other weapons of war had to be produced and the progress of the War was dependent upon how quickly they were made, not by the race nor sex of the workers who made them. That this is a fact is determined by an examination of the classification of these more than a million Negroes in industry. We find that 464,533, almost half, are employed in one of the five divisions of our war munitions industry; aircraft, shipbuilding, ordinance and communications equipment, basic metals and rubber and "other munitions". These industries are subject to sharp drops in employment when Germany is defeated. We are told by the War Production Board that during the year after the defeat of Germany there will be a cut back of about 40% in these munitions industries. Under that cut back, and with Negro employment remaining at 7.3%, there would be 325,000 Negro workers displaced and seeking jobs during the interim period. Applying the estimated production cut back forecast to the five branches of the war munitions industry, we find these expected releases of Negro workers as follows:
aircraft 60,000;
shipbuilding, 124,000;
ordnance & communication equipment, 64,000;
basic metals & rubber 20,000 or a total decline in
employment of Negroes in these four branches of the munition in-
dustry of 268,000 Negroes. The cut backs releasing these 268,000
Negroes are likely to be permanent. There remains, the fifth,
"other munitions" branch, in which the proportionate Negro cut
back will be 57,000 workers. This category of other munitions
includes industries whose products after reconversion will be
washing machines, refrigerators, sewing machines and other consumers'
durable goods industries in which Negro workers are poorly represented.
The over-all employment in "other munitions" is only 5.7% for Negroes
as compared to 7.3% for Negroes in the five branches of war munitions
as a whole.

The situation sums up this way: the mass of both
white and Negro workers displaced by the 40% cut back can not hope
for reemployment in the four declining branches of our national
munitions industry, and therefore must look for jobs in the fifth
and only expanding branch. But in that branch Negro employment re-
presents only 5.7%, so that only 68,000 out of the 268,000 displaced in
the other four branches may hope for jobs in the fifth, if the 5.7%
Negro employment is to remain during reconversion the same as it is
today. But it remains clear as far as the munitions industry is con-
cerned, and it represented in July 1944 a total of 9,500,000 workers,
that displaced Negroes will be at a distinct disadvantage if they are
to enter the expanding industries only in the proportion to their pre-
sent employment in those industries.

There are too many variables for anyone to make accurate predictions in this field. When it is assumed that Negro workers will be discharged during the 40% cut backs in the same proportion as white workers, that assumption omits certain cut back hazards which are applicable to Negroes alone. Most cut backs will follow on-the-job seniority and so Negro workers, who by and large were the last to enter the war industries, are likely to be the first to go. There is also the very real possibility that attempts will be made to discriminate against Negroes in making lay-offs.

Aside from the 9,500,000 munition workers, whom I have just mentioned there were in July, 1944, 7,000,000 workers in all other manufacturing establishments. To these many displaced Negro war workers will look for employment. I will not hazard a guess as to the extent to which they will be employed by these industries but will cite the extent to which they have been employed and state that opportunities for Negroes are by and large best in those industries where large gains have already been made. In July, 1944 the percentages of Negroes in each of the industries were:

- Lumber and furniture, 12%; stone clay and glass, 6%; apparel and leather, 3.9%; food and tobacco, 14.6%; paper and printing, 8.1%; other manufacturing, 5%.

If we made no greater gains during the war in employment than the figures indicate, we must be realistic and face the fact that employment here will not increase during reconversion.
during reconversion.

A prime factor in determining whether Negroes will be accepted in these industries in the Post-war period is the attitude of the trade unions representing the workers in them. There have been men like Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois who have for years been preaching that the best hope for the people of this country was through labor, organized on a basis of fairness to men and women of all faiths and races. With the organization of the Congress for Industrial Organization there was at last a strong force against racial and religious discrimination. In the union halls and in the factories, the great question of the right to work, is being met by the CIO and by an increasing number of A. F. of L. Unions. For those of you who are not familiar with the work of the CIO, I need only quote a statement by its able president, Phillip Murray, who is also president of the United Steelworkers of America: "If the steelworkers' union is going to discriminate against Negro workers or anybody else, I do not want to be president of the union. Every member and every officer of this union must fight to drive discrimination against Negro workers out of the steel industry."

When labor, white or black, native or foreign born, understands that full employment means greater purchasing power for all the people, which can be obtained only by giving every man capable of holding a job the right to work, labor will have solved its own problems. It is a paradoxical situation that the great masses of labor, both white and black, fail to realize the meaning to them of that simple axiom.
"In union there is strength." The right to work is not a black, nor a white problem but a human problem. The more men and women who are working, the greater is the demand for goods and the more money is invested to build factories to produce goods to satisfy the demands of the workers. Every man should be concerned that every other man is employed, for only in full employment is the individual laborer assured a job.

I need not state to you that full employment for all willing and able to work is also the solution of all over national difficulties. But whereas, this is the ultimate goal in the world's richest country, it is not to be expected that we can shift more than half of our national working force into war work and then withdraw them at the day of victory without having temporary displacements. We should face this situation with a minimum of emotion and a maximum of good hard thinking.

In 1918, war workers poured into industrial centers as they have done before and particularly since December 7, 1941, only to discover now, as in 1918, overcrowded houses or no houses in which to live and rising living costs. The dislocation of people and the war nerves of 1918 period brought a sorry aftermath; not the least of which were the race riots stimulated between Negro and white workers by their fear of insecurity during the 1919 reshuffling of employment. Unemployment did not cause the riots but rather fear that production cut backs would leave workers stranded. The men at the top knew that reconversion to peace time production would
supply jobs. But the workers only knew that the war jobs with high wages were gone and high prices remained. The fear of what might happen put men in a mood to fight for jobs and wherever that struggle took a racial turn there was trouble.

To mention the 26 race riots which happened in 1919 is not to be pessimistic about the coming post-war period. We have profited by our experience in the last war and learned how to manage things better on the present home production front. Today, the orderly supply of war workers by the War Manpower Commission, the brakes placed by the War Labor Board on wildcat bidding for workers, the curb on rising living costs imposed by OPA rationing and price controls, the restraint on luxury production by the War Production Board, enforced savings through investments of salary and wages in government securities, and last but by no means least, the making of non-discrimination in war work a National policy by President Roosevelt's now famous Executive order 8802 thereby making available a much needed supply of labor, all these precautions have kept American war workers better satisfied, their dispositions more even, and their relations toward each other healthier. Will these safeguards to economic opportunity for the Negro be continued in the Post-war world? Will they carry us through the reconversion period when as we have seen great shifts in war employment are inevitable and 325,000 Negro workers now in industry will be displaced and seeking jobs during the interim period?

This is a question of foremost concern not only to
the Negro but also to the American nation. Therefore in posing this question, I do so not as one pleading for special post-war privileges for Negro employment, but rather as one concerned about my country's attaining for all of its citizens those freedoms guaranteed most recently in the Atlantic Charter. Freedom from want and freedom from fear can not be attained at home, when hoards of unemployed men and women are pounding the city streets, and bargaining on street corners against each other for a chance to do a day's work. I hold it the obligation of every American to remove those iniquities which have crept into our national life and caused men to fear want and to fear each other. Just as Congress and the courts have recognized the need to protect child labor, the refusal to allow workers to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining and the right of labor to picket to protect their contracts with management, as well as the unfair economic treatment of women workers, so too by act of the courts or by congressional act must the right to work be guaranteed every able bodied man and woman in America, regardless of his race or religious beliefs. Discrimination in employment because of race, color or religion is an abuse of a right as fundamental as freedom of religion or freedom of speech.

Whether or not the controls that produce freedom to work and result in freedom from fear are invoked by the courts and the Congress, as well as the state law making bodies, will depend much upon the attitudes of the communities to which Negroes have migrated, i.e. the attitude of the people of Los Angeles and Portland on the West-coast; Chicago and Detroit in the Middle-west,
will carry announcements, that the temporary unemployment during reconvert will be a short period. The good community, with the home folks for the declining numbers of jobs, workers who want to stay, will be the man and woman who have worked regularly and punctually in their war jobs, who have been courteous on the job and to those people they met in the street or on the buses going to work, who bought bonds and saved them to come and forget each during the reconversion period. This community, with its traditions, will educate the workers to the causes of unemployment during reconversion and thereby remove from their minds fear of permanent insecurity.

The newspapers, radio, and public halls will carry announcements, that the temporary unemployment during reconversion will be a short period. The good community, with its traditions, will educate the workers to the causes of unemployment during reconversion and thereby remove from their minds fear of permanent insecurity.
version results principally from time-laggs and the geographical difficulties of having available workmen in the same places as expanding plants. Workers will be urged to remain until the plants are reconverted, when all good available labor will be in demand.

That the Negro industrial war worker may be assured that his war record will have listed him among the good workers needed in every Post-war plant, he should tone his jubilation over high wages for an eight hour day, with time and a half for overtime, his pride at the possession of a union card and his satisfaction at being accepted as a fellow American industrial worker, with a deep sense of responsibility. Upon the character of his performance largely depends the opportunity or lack of opportunity for Negro workers in the Post-war World.

The day 14 Negro men and women walked on the platforms of the street cars of Los Angeles a local Negro paper wrote these patriotic, prophetic words:

"The eyes of all Los Angeles are on these fourteen Negro conductors and conductorettes. Our enemies, as well as our friends, are watching every move that will be made. Every word that will be spoken....

Hold your head high, little Negro girl! Collect your fares, direct your passengers to their destinations with the courtesy only you know how to show. Help that old lady, brother, that cripple, with the kindliness and gentleness that seems to have been born within you. You may have nasty things said to you, mean things, things that will make your cheeks
burn and your fingers itch to strike down the person who said them. But don't do it, brother, don't do it. You are fighting as great a battle on your street car platform as those in Europe and the South Seas. You are fighting for the dignity and honor of your race. You have won a bridgehead. You have taken a hilltop held by the enemy. Keep them, hold them, and go on winning others by your high moral courage, your friendliness, your sense of humor, your native tact and courtesy."

Upon the performance of the million and a quarter Negro workers in Los Angeles and other American cities who have been keyed into the working gangs of the vital American industries depends to a large extent the degree to which they will be admitted into Post War industry. These are facts we cannot over stress. Absenteeism, lateness, loafing on the job, imperfections in vital work, will be used as justifiable excuses for firing when the first cutbacks are ordered and for refusing to hire when the Post-war plants are opened. Knowing that we are the marginal workers, the last to be hired and the first to be fired, the workers whose services are only needed in periods of full production, no single Negro man and woman who has gained a bridgehead in American industry can abandon it, for by so doing he loses for himself and his race the first foothold toward permanent integration in Postwar industry.

We Negroes must, therefore, be concerned about any plan for full employment for only by attaining this goal can we be assured of employment. In 1939 there were less than 45 million work-
ers in America with jobs. Now there are 55 million workers with jobs and 11 million men under arms. Experts state that 60 million jobs, or 15 million more than we had before the war, will be necessary if we are to achieve post-war full employment. How are 60 million jobs to be provided? Perhaps we can find the answer by studying the factors that produced 10 million additional jobs for war time full employment. There were as follows:

1. A pressing need for goods.

2. Availability of resources and skills to produce.

3. A people and a government determining to use every resource to win the war.

4. The establishment of planning and controls to keep the productive machine rolling and to protect worker purchasing power, by controls such as rationing and rent regulations; allocation of materials and control of prices, and supplying the needed labor to operate the plants by inserting non-discriminatory clauses in war contracts.

The first two of these factors will be present after the war ends. First, there will be pressing needs. Two out of three farms are without electricity. Large portions of the population are undernourished and improperly clothed. We have 10 million illiterates and literally millions live in slums. Dr. Warren Banner in a recent study of Economic and cultural Problems in Dade County, Florida points out that 15% of the houses occupied by non-white dwellers in Dade County need major repairs. Less than 2% had private baths.
and flush toilets. Ten percent were without running water in the dwelling units and over four in every ten units were overcrowded. These are facts that can be duplicated in many other counties and cities of this and other states, North and South. These are needs which demand the production of goods.

As regards our ability to produce goods, we will come out of this war with the greatest industrial plants the world has known. We will have improved techniques and materials. We will have more skilled workers than ever in our history. What this could mean in living standards can best be realized by noting that even back in pre-war days if our plants and labor had been fully utilized the incomes of all the lower income group would have been above $2,000 per family.

Before discussing the two remaining factors, the determination of the people and government and the establishment of proper planning and controls let us examine our economic machinery as it existed in prewar days, to determine if possible, what caused the unemployment and depressions so well remembered by all of us. During the prosperity of the Coolidge era, there was a great increase in productive efficiency which we referred to as technology, but there was no corresponding reduction in selling prices. Instead of passing the benefits of reduced costs of production in higher wages and lower prices, which create a demand for goods, industry either held or raised prices. These profits were not spent and thereby returned to circulation but were held for future investment
which, because of fear of depressed market conditions, never materialized. As a result the demand for goods no longer existed, producers became overstocked, dividends ceased, employees were discharged and on came the depression. Our economy went into a downward spiral, not because of deficiencies in ability to produce or desire to consume but because our distribution of income was such that the masses had no income to purchase goods and the investors refused to place their income and capital in industry because there was no one with money to buy the products. America had the skill, techniques and materials but lacked a mass purchasing power.

How can we create this mass purchasing power, which is dependent upon raising money, wages and lowering commodity prices, without creating bankruptcy? Only by adopting a national post-war placing policy based upon an equitable tax program that will keep in circulation excess profits which previously have been stored away but should be used for a public works program to clear slums, provide electricity for every farm and reduce illiteracy; (2) higher and broader social security benefits embracing farms and domestic labor; (3) unemployment insurance that will provide migrant war workers with transportation costs back home or to new areas of labor shortage; (4) higher and broader workmen's compensation benefits; and fifth, a guaranteed minimum annual wage that is based upon the relation of a fair standard of living to the cost of living. This is a national not a local problem. It can only be met as we have met our war needs,
through a people and a government determined to use every resource to keep the peace, by planning to provide full employ-
ment.

We Negro Women of the North and South must make ourselves first informed and then vocal concerning the methods of obtaining economic freedom for the masses of our people.

I hope that my discussion has made it clear that two factors will determine the Negro workers post-war status: first, the degree of his integration in the war economy. We have seen that between September 1942 and March 1944 there was a 100% increase of Negro War Workers. The presence of a million and a quarter Negro workers keyed into working gangs of vital American industries is proof that Negro and white workers can work together. In war plants this is a certain, if unheralded fact. Every opportunity for training and employment in war production plants must be sought by Negroes, only those who have had experience and hold seniority can hope to be retained when reconversion comes. Equally important is their record for faithful, conscientious capable work. The second factor that will determine the Negro workers Post-war status is the kind of post-
war economy we have. Whether we retain our gains and whether we are certain to lose them depends upon whether this nation attains full employment. In anything short of full employment, the marginal worker is pressing the bricks on the streets and the Negro will continue to be the marginal worker so long as he has less seniority than other workers. Full employment would mean continuing for the Negro worker
occupational advancement, increased seniority and the removal of fears of economic rivalry on the part of his fellow white workers. It is the only solution to the economic subjugation of the Negro, and of the great masses of white labor. If full employment by determination of the people and the government could be obtained for the destructive purposes of war, why can we not unite to achieve it for the constructive purposes of peace. A vocal, concerned home guard of Negro women must combine with every agency and force working for Full Employment, if the Negro and the great mass of white labor are to be permanently relieved of the fear of those destructive forces which play one against the other and result in economic poverty and want of the masses of the white as well as the black workers of America.

unemployment, which co