

# Negro Role for '44

—By **Doxey Wilkerson**

The future of Negro freedom will be influenced decisively by the course of world and American history during 1944. At the same time, the changing relations of the Negro people to America will markedly influence this year's most basic issues before the nation and the world.

Although the outlook for 1944 is far from dark—for the Negro people or the nation, still, the tasks which loom ahead are truly imposing. Several of these tasks are of special concern to the Negro people, but their achievement is a job for the entire nation.

**First, the war must be won decisively—in the shortest possible time.**

This goal of all patriotic Americans is of especial importance to the Negro people. It is they who would suffer most were the pro-fascist forces of our nation and the world to be strengthened, as they surely would, by a long, drawn-out war ending in a negotiated imperialist peace.

As the war enters its most crucial stage, the win-the-war forces of America will sorely need the help of the Negro masses to combat the increasing attacks and disruption of defeatist reaction. Fully to involve the Negro people in all aspects of the home front struggle for victory and a progressive peace is one of the



most urgent 1944 tasks for the win-the-war camp.

Let the Negro people fully understand, however, that this home front fight against defeatist reaction is their fight. In its success lies their only hope for freedom.

**Second, the still vast reservoir of Negro manpower must be thrown fully into the urgent tasks of war production.**

Just when maximum production is imperative to support the coming invasion of Europe, the wartime trend toward fuller use of Negro workers seems about to face its most serious challenge. The flaunting of FEPC's directive in the southern railroads case, the reactionary Smith Committee's "investigation" of FEPC—these are but the opening guns of a large-scale attack to destroy FEPC and negate the fair employment principle upon which it is founded.

The Negro people will have to struggle with all their might in 1944 to maintain the current trend toward increased job opportunities. Nor is this their task alone. Organized labor can gain added strength or lay itself open to disruption and defeat, depending upon the vigor with which it attacks the problem of full employment opportunities for Negro workers. So likewise with all other progressive win-the-war groups. This is a job for the entire nation.

**Third, the civil liberties of the Negro people must be extended on many fronts.**

The Soldier Vote Bill, the Anti-Poll Tax Bill, and the Civil Rights Bill for the District of Columbia

must all be pressed. Traditional Jim Crow practices everywhere must be increasingly challenged during 1944. Racial bars to full and equal citizenship now seriously weaken the war effort. They must be uprooted completely from our national life.

Although the Negro people, themselves, must be in the forefront of this fight for civil liberties, organized labor and other progressive groups must bear the main burden of the struggle. Victory in war and peace is now tied up with the question of full civil liberties for the Negro people. The whole win-the-war camp must play the decisive role in achieving this goal.

**Fourth, our win-the-war President must be returned to the White House, and his policies for victory and a progressive peace must continue to guide our nation.**

Upon the reelection of President Roosevelt and a win-the-war Congress largely depends the attainment of the nation's other goals for 1944. The alternative is a corporate-controlled government, bordering on fascism, which would seek to sabotage both the victory and the peace, and which would surely wipe out all the wartime gains of the Negro people.

Here, as everywhere, the dominant wartime interests of the Negro people coincide with those of organized labor and the win-the-war camp as a whole. Each must seek the firmest possible alliance with the other during 1944. Upon their effective union largely depends the freedom of the Negro people and of the entire nation.