

Toward Freedom

DEMAGOGIC journalism struck a new low in last week's Pittsburgh Courier editorial on "National Service . . . Menace to Democracy." It is fortunate, indeed, that only rarely does one find in the Negro press a political line so helpful to Hitler and so harmful to the democratic aspirations of the Negro people.



Let us grant, at the outset, that the question of national service legislation is about which men of good will have strong and legitimate differences of opinion. It is not because I support such legislation that I here denounce the Courier statement of opposition; rather it is because of the scurrilous and dangerous distortions to which the Courier resorted in an effort to make its case.

If there ever was an editorial which warranted the label "Made in Germany," this is it. The piece could hardly have been worse if it were deliberately calculated to disassociate Negroes from our country's war effort, to destroy confidence in our wartime government, to divide America from her Allies, and thus to help lose both the war and the peace.

In the Courier editorial in question: There is not the slightest recognition that our country does, indeed, face a critical manpower problem, just at this most decisive

by **Doxey A. Wilkerson**

stage of the war; and that Negro Americans not only should, but by and large are eager, to make their maximum contribution to the common victory.

THERE is the completely irresponsible assertion that in proposing wartime national service legislation President Roosevelt is "advocating for all Americans in 1945, a status suffered by . . . colored Americans prior to Jan. 1, 1863;" that it "is simply involuntary servitude or slavery."

There is the deliberate charge that the President's proposal comes in bad faith, that government wartime regulation of available manpower would be extended indefinitely into the peace, for "no one knows when the war will end actually, and it does not end officially until the Government so states, which could be years and years hence."

Our most powerful ally and the one making the greatest contribution to victory and the liberation of subjugated peoples, the Soviet Union, is placed in a class with our fascist enemies. Says the Courier: A national service act would "make totalitarianism supreme in the United States exactly as it is in Russia, Germany and Japan, thus defeating our war aim of destroying totalitarianism."

The preposterous claim is made that to conscript men unfit for Army service and

Does the Pittsburgh Courier Want to Win the War?

have them engage in essential war work which they can do represents "discrimination of the worst sort—penalization of Americans because of physical unfitness for which they are not responsible."

WE ARE used to reading this kind of political poison in the pro-fascist Hearst-McCormick-Patterson press, which informed citizens now recognize as the journalistic mouthpiece of Hitler in America. We find it difficult, however, to believe that the Courier's motives are the same as theirs.

It would be well for the Courier to decide whether it wants us to win the war or not; whether it is on our side or on that of our fascist enemies; whether it wants to help push forward the Negro's democratic rights through the fullest possible integration of Negroes into all aspects of the war program—the only basis upon which such advances are now possible, or whether it prefers instead to defeat the democratic aspirations of the Negro people by bringing them into opposition to the war.

Once this basic question of principle is clear in the Courier's own mind, it will either adjust its editorial policy to the progressive currents now emerging into dominance in the world, or it will further isolate itself (not the Negro people) from the onward march of mankind to greater freedom and security. We hope the Courier decides to join in the march toward freedom.