Negro Strikers Lose Ground In The South

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THE SMOKE of the night fire destroys property in the Negro community, and the Negroes, fighting for "rights," lose in battle against the stores and merchants.

The smoke gradually clears from the blaze of the Negro sit-in movement across the South to its present position as a defeated movement, the Negro community facing the problem of how to continue the struggle to achieve their "rights." The Negro community must now decide whether to continue the movement or to accept the status quo.

FOR EVERY victory the sit-downers have achieved, there have been corresponding defeats. In Galveston, San Antonio, and Little Rock, the Negro community has suffered defeats at the hands of the white community.

In Marshall, the most explosive situation in the country today, the Negro community has suffered a defeat. The interracial commission which had kept down racial friction since 1875 has ceased to function. And in numerous Southern cities, the Negro community has suffered defeats.

THE FIRST tragedy is that the whole thing is not a spontaneous expression of the Negro people, but a carefully organized program by the NAACP and other extremist Negro groups. Aid by northern news reporters in "the big story" than in accurate reporting; these agitators have attempted to stir up nationwide anti-South resentment in time to strengthen the civil rights bill now pending in Congress.

The second tragedy is that the sit-down method the students are using is neither legal nor moral. There has been so much talk about the "right" of the Negroes to be served that it should be made as clear as black and white that no such right exists. Private property remains private, and the owner of any private, non-monopoly establishment has every right in the world to deny service to anyone, Negro or white, that he chooses. It is a privilege, not a right, to obtain service at a restaurant. And it is not only not morally right to take up seats at a business establishment, to deny a proprietor of his trade, and to contribute to a violent situation when the "right" one is supposedly defending is not even his right.

THE ERROR the Negroes have made is to employ the sit-down method — not a justifiable form of protest, because it stops legitimate business and opens the door to widespread violence and re-resentment. But still this does not mean that the Negroes must passively accept something which they feel is wrong.

They certainly have the right to refuse to patronize the store which refuses him lunch. And, employed on a concerted scale by large numbers of Negroes, the ensuing economic pressures would put the problem clearly in focus: whether the community and the storeowner would rather preserve segregation, or lose the trade which the boycott would take away. This is the Negro's unquestioned right, and it is the only way he can properly state his case.

THE SOONER the Negro student learns that sit-downs will win him only arrest and fines, the sooner it will be that he realizes the boycott (and not the violence-provoking plays for publicity at lunch counters) is the thing which will ultimately do most toward achieving his goals. And when these goals begin to coincide with the views of, and be supported by, the average Negro rather than the radical agitators of the NAACP, we will be on the road to racial understanding.