

MAY 11, 1940

The Negro Question

Robert L. Birchman

The Chicago Defender, in an editorial (May 4) on the recent sessions of the National Negro Congress, states:

"But of the National Negro Congress, we expect much, for much is indeed needed. We expect leadership of a high political order. Jobs for Negroes in all spheres of our industrial life; relief for Negroes without discrimination, schools and still more schools, medical aid free and adequate, these are the needs of the hour."

"Let there be a demand for a five billion dollar housing program to be continued for five years. . . ."

"Negro America needs to be heard. Let its voice be heard so loudly at home that it will resound abroad."

"The All-Indian National Congress has challenged the democracy of Britain and held it up for the scorn of civilized men. Let the National Negro Congress do the same here."

"There is no need to be squirrelish. If we want democracy let us act that way. Democracy is never given. It must be taken."

"Black America will follow if the National Negro Congress will lead."

Many of the sentiments expressed in this editorial are objectives that should be the aim of the Negro people of America. The voice of the Negroes needs to be heard and in no uncertain terms in the fight for jobs, economic security, against discrimination, and above all in the fight against war. But to expect that this job will be achieved by the National Negro Congress is hoping for that which will not be.

The National Negro Congress was not, as some delegates expressed it, "kidnapped" by the Communist Party at the sessions in Washington. The Congress has from the very beginning been the baby of the Stalinists. They organized it in the heyday of their People's Front line. What makes it less acceptable to many now is the change in line of the Stalinists from one of support of Roosevelt to one of opposition. This was the basic cause of the reason for Randolph's refusal to take the lead of the Congress.

The main actions of the Congress were:

- 1. The acceptance of the offer of John L. Lewis to establish a working agreement with Labor's Non-Partisan League.
2. To condemn "this imperialist war" and the policies of the Roosevelt administration which lead toward war, and to cooperate with the progressive and labor forces working for peace.
3. To press for immediate passage of the anti-lunching bill.

There is no question that the Negroes must align themselves with the organized labor movement in the formation of a Labor Party representative of the interests of the oppressed and exploited masses of the workers and Negroes. But one cannot expect any real action in this direction from the Stalinist-manipulated "National Negro Congress," which will betray the Negroes tomorrow just as they did yesterday and today.

The Negro people of America must organize on a militant basis in cooperation with the organized labor movement in a Labor Party. That is the only way that they can achieve jobs, economic security, fight discrimination. The Chicago Defender is right when it says: "Democracy is never given. It must be taken." The only way in which democracy can be taken is to organize for the abolition of the social system that refuses to grant democracy. Democracy can only be achieved when the Negroes in co-operation with their white brothers create a socialist society. The Stalinists are the deadliest enemy of socialism, as Stalin's bloody rule over the workers of Russia demonstrates.

Canadian Seamen in First Major Wartime Strike

Strike Began April 15, Lasted Six Days Despite Wartime Government Pressure; Compromise Gives Men \$7.50 Raise

TORONTO, Canada—The first major wartime strike in Canada has been conducted with militancy and determination by over five thousand Great Lakes seamen, 90% of those manning the lake boats, who voted to strike when the bosses refused to negotiate or even meet the Canadian Seamen's Union to reach a new agreement.

After a week of heroic struggle in which the seamen stood firm against a murderous combination of shipowners, federal government officials, their cops and courts, and a campaign of lies and slander by the kept press, the union membership accepted a settlement arrived at by the union negotiating committee, for a \$7.50 increase in wages for all ratings, with a board to be set up to conduct hearings on the further demands of the seamen.

Despite the blows directed against them from all directions during the strike, the seamen stood firm, ably answering opponents with their own press, leaflets and public meetings. The men showed every readiness to fight on to complete victory.

War Raised Living Cost

Like the rest of labor, the seamen felt the impact of the war in the rising cost of living. The 15% increase in living costs made intolerable the already low seamen's living standards—deckhands, the most numerous rating, were getting \$55 a month—driven like slaves for seven months of the year, usually spending the other five months on relief, picking up odd jobs or bumming dimes. They were working a 12-hour day, seven-day week on the boats.

During the latter part of the winter, therefore, in locals spread out in a far-flung net from Fort Williams to Quebec City, the union membership hammered out a series of demands to be served on the shipowners. Their main demands were:

- 1. A closed shop, with all hiring through union halls. "Every ship a union ship" was the slogan. Under the 1938 agreement they had had a preferential clause, whereby the shipowners were forced to hire through the union halls in preference to taking non-union hands, and the bosses were out to do away with this.
2. Three extra men on board each ship. This would permit three shifts, thus introducing the eight-hour day.
3. A \$15 increase in monthly wages.
Since September the companies had raised shipping rates for wheat, their largest cargo, from 3 1/2 cents to 7 cents a bushel, thus doubling their profits. But the shipowners were de-

GEORGE CLARKE OPENS NATIONAL TOUR; IN BOSTON-LYNN NOW



GEORGE CLARKE

George Clarke, member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, opened his coast-to-coast speaking tour Friday night in New Haven.

Tonight, tomorrow and Monday he will be speaking in Boston and Lynn.

As we go to press, word comes from Youngstown of special pre-

parations being made there by our party branch to secure a big turnout of steel workers to hear Comrade Clarke speak on "New Deal Turns War Deal—the Government Drive Against Labor."

The Youngstown meeting takes place Sunday, May 19, 8 p.m., at 123 1/2 E. Federal Street. Questions and discussion from the floor will follow Comrade Clarke's address.

The rest of Comrade Clarke's schedule on tour follows:

- Syracuse Tues., May 14
Rochester Wed., May 15
Buffalo Thurs., May 16
Pittsburgh Fri.-Sat., May 17-18
Youngstown Sun., May 19
Akron Mon., May 20
Cleveland Tues., May 21
Toledo Wed., May 22
Flint Thurs., May 23
Detroit Fri., May 24
South Bend Sat., May 25
Chicago Sun.-Tues., May 26-28
Twin Cities Wed.-Fri., May 29-31
Omaha Sun., June 2
Denver Tues.-Wed., June 4-5
Salt Lake City Fri., June 7
San Francisco Mon.-Sun., June 10-16 inclusive
Fresno Mon., June 17
Los Angeles Tues., June 18

Workers Dissatisfied A considerable part of the union membership did not agree with the committee's actions in thus compromising with the shipowners. At a meeting of one of the largest locals a member from the floor proposed agreement on one condition, that all the scabs first be removed from the boats. In effect this would have meant a closed shop, exactly what the membership saw as necessary if the union was not to be weakened by the presence of scabs on the boats. The whole local to a man raised their fists and in a mighty roar shouted: "Aye, first clear the scabs off the boats." It was only after some of the union heads had harangued the men for about an hour that the men finally agreed to a counter-proposal by the leadership that "they take every measure to see that the scabs are cleaned off the ships."

As was predicted by those who held out for a closed shop, the companies have refused to fire the scabs and strikebreakers and to date hundreds of union seamen, signed up with their ships before

owners then sent another agent to meet the union committee in the person of McLarty, minister of labor. On entering the committee room the first words he uttered were in effect: "This illegal strike must end at once." The negotiation committee agreed to the government - shipping company proposals of a \$7.50 increase per month and a board to hear the dispute.

SUBS ARE POURING IN FOR THE "FOURTH INTERNATIONAL"

An exciting six-day period has followed the launching of "Fourth International," new Monthly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party. Subscriptions and bundle orders have rolled in from all over the country.

- Chicago 7
Toledo 5
San Diego 4
Quakertown 3
Indianapolis 3
Kansas 4
Ohio 3
New York State 3
Pittsburgh 2
Lynn 2
San Francisco 2
Washington, D.C. 2
Allentown 1
Houston, Texas 1
Philadelphia 1
Nebraska 1
Tacoma, Wash. 1
South Carolina 1
Louisville, Ky 1
Wisconsin 1
Connecticut 1
Total 99

And branches and sympathizers assure us that they haven't even started!

This is a good record of party activity, but we still have a great distance to travel to go over the top. Get those dollars up, comrades and friends. And get out your contact lists to round up a second week's subscriptions that will outstrip by far this excellent first week. Build the press of the Fourth International!

Behind

(Continued from Page 1)

step toward improving these defenses is likely to be an early step toward construction of the much-discussed, long-delayed international highway through Canada to link Canada with its Alaska territory. From other sources it was learned that the two men had discussed the grave world crisis in relation to the pledge given by President Roosevelt in a speech at Kingston, Ontario, in August, 1938.

That speech was Roosevelt's famous pledge that the U.S. "will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire."

It is interesting to note that the Tribune headlined this story: "Highway would be vital for troops if Russia or Japan should attack." There was no mention of this little detail in the body of the story. Like the projected fortifications of the Aleutian Islands, close both to Russia and Japan, the proposed highway would be no less important "if the United States should attack Russia or Japan."

James Connolly, Symbol of Irish Freedom Fight

May 12 is the 24th anniversary of the execution of James Connolly, foremost Irish revolutionary.

Connolly is the symbol of the 700 year struggle for Irish freedom. But he is more than just a symbol of a nationalist struggle. He is the symbol of the only force in society that can lead the struggle for national liberation of oppressed peoples. The words of Connolly, written thirty years ago, are equally true today:

"But on whom devolves the task of achieving the downfall of the ruling classes in Ireland? On the Irish people. But who are the Irish people?"

"Is it the dividend-hunting capitalist with the phraseology of patriotism on his lips and the spool wrung from sweated Irish toilers in his pockets; is it the scheming lawyer—most immoral of all classes; is it the slum landlord who denounces racking in the country and practices it in the towns; is it anyone of these sections who today dominate Irish politics? Or is it not rather the Irish working class—the only secure foundation on which a free nation can be reared—the Irish working class which has borne the brunt of every political struggle, and gained by none, and which is today the only class in all Ireland which has no interest in perpetuating either the political or social forms of oppression—the British connection or the capitalist system."

"The Irish working class must emancipate itself, and in emancipating itself it must, perforce, free its country. The act of social emancipation requires the conversion of the land and the instruments of production from private property into the public or common property of the entire nation. This necessitates a social system of the most absolute democracy, and in establishing that necessary social system the working class must grapple with every form of government which could interfere with the most unfettered control by the people of Ireland of all the resources of their country."

Connolly stood for industrial unionism. He held that the craft unions divided the workers where above all they should be united, in their daily toil in the fields and workshops. The division must be ended by a union embracing all workers of "hand and brain" in each industry. He envisaged these industrial unions as the main instruments of social revolution, the very foundation of the future society.

Connolly was an internationalist and a revolutionary fighter against the imperialist war. During the war the headquarters of the union which he led, the Transport Workers Union—Liberty Hall in Dublin—was decorated with a huge banner that read: "We serve neither King nor Kaiser!" Connolly was bitter in his attacks against those who supported the war—the Irish bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois nationalists. He openly preached revolutionary defeatism. He looked upon the pending struggle not merely as an Irish affair: "Starting thus, Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture are shrivelled up on the funeral pyre of the last war lord."

He was no pacifist. He was a partisan of the war of the working class and colonial peoples against the imperialists.

The inspiration of Connolly to the Irish labor and nationalist movement still lives. Despite the government ban, huge meetings were held commemorating the Easter Week rising of 1916 for which Connolly was executed. Meetings now taking place against conscription, and the growing ing cost of living, are clear indications that the strike wave for increased wages to meet the rising cost of living, are clear indications that the struggle for Irish freedom continues. James Connolly is the father of today's struggles.

The Struggle for a Proletarian Party

By JAMES P. CANNON National Secretary, S.W.P.

(This is the fourth of a series of articles by Comrade Cannon, to acquaint our readers with the party's estimate of the dispute which arose in the party, was debated in a seven-months' discussion, and was settled by a decisive majority at the Third National Convention, April 5-9.)

The Intellectuals and the Workers

The outspoken proletarian orientation of the majority is represented by Burnham as an expression of antagonism to "intellectuals" as such, and as an ignorant backwoods prejudice against education in general. In his major document, "The War and Bureaucratic Conservatism," he writes: "Above all, an 'anti-intellectual' and 'anti-intellectuals' attitude is drummed into the minds of party members. The faction associates are taught, quite literally, to despise and scorn 'intellectuals' and 'intellectualism.'"

For reasons best known to themselves, Shachtman and Abers sign their names to this protest and take sides in a conflict where they have every right to proclaim neutrality. The Workers' Age, organ of the Lovestonites, which is following our internal discussion with unconcealed sympathy for the opposition, enters the scuffle as an interested partisan. Commenting on a remark in my published speech, to the effect that worker elements engaged in the class struggle understand the Russian question better than the more educated scholastics, the Workers' Age of March 9th says: "This is obviously aimed at Burnham, who has the 'misfortune' of being educated. What is this kind of a slur but the old Stalinist demagoguery contrasting the virtuous, clear-sighted 'proletarian' element to the wicked, confused 'intellectual'? It is the same kind of rotten, unprincipled demagoguery, make no mistake about it!"

for the workers' movement." It is a slander on the Marxist wing of the party to attribute such sentiments to us. On the other hand, we are not unduly impressed by mere "learning" and still less by pretensions to it. We approach this question, as all questions, critically.

Our movement, the movement of scientific socialism, judges things and people from a class point of view. Our aim is the organization of a vanguard party to lead the proletarian struggle for power and the reconstitution of society on socialist foundations. That is our "science." We judge all people, coming to us from another class, by the extent of their real identification with our class, and the contributions they can make which aid the proletariat in its struggle against the capitalist class. That is the framework within which we objectively consider the problem of the intellectuals in the movement. If at least 99 out of every 100 intellectuals—to speak with the utmost "conservatism"—who approach the revolutionary labor movement turn out to be more of a problem than an asset it is not at all because of our prejudices against them, or because we do not treat them with the proper consideration, but because they do not comply with the requirements which alone can make them useful to us in our struggle.

In the Communist Manifesto, in which the theory and program of scientific socialism was first formally promulgated, it was already pointed out that the disintegration of the ruling capitalist class precipitates sections of that class into the proletariat; and that others—a smaller section to be sure, and mainly individuals—cut themselves adrift from the decaying capitalist class and supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress. Marx and Engels themselves, the founders of the movement of scientific socialism, came to the proletariat from another class. The same thing is true of all the other great teachers of our movement, without exception.

Lenin, Trotsky, Plekhanov, Luxemburg—none of them were proletarians in their social origin, but they came over to the proletariat and became the greatest of proletarian leaders. In order to do that, however, they had to desert their own class and join "the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands." They made this transfer of class allegiance unconditionally and without any reservations. Only so could they become genuine representatives of their adopted class, and merge themselves completely with it, and eliminate every shadow of conflict between them and revolutionists of proletarian origin. There was and could be no "problem" in their case.

The conflict between the proletarian revolutionists and the

petty-bourgeois intellectuals in our party, as in the labor movement generally in the whole world for generation after generation, does not at all arise from ignorant prejudices of the workers against them. It arises from the fact that they neither "cut themselves adrift" from the alien classes, as the Communist Manifesto specified, nor do they "join the revolutionary class," in the full sense of the word. Unlike the great leaders mentioned above, who came over to the proletariat unconditionally and all the way, they hesitate half-way between the class alternatives. Their intelligence, and to a certain extent also their knowledge, impels them to revolt against the intellectual and spiritual stagnation of the parasitic ruling class whose system reeks with decay. On the other hand, their petty-bourgeois spirit holds them back from completely identifying themselves with the proletarian class and its vanguard party, and re-shaping their entire lives in a new proletarian environment. Herein is the source of the "problem" of the intellectuals.

The revolutionary workers' movement, conscious that it "holds the future in its hands," is self-assured, imperious, exacting in the highest degree. It repels all flatterings and half-allegiances. It demands from everyone, especially from leaders, "all or nothing." Not their "education," as the Lovestonite sympathizers of our party opposition maintain, brings the intellectuals into conflict with the proletarian cadres of the party, but their petty-bourgeois spirit, their miserable halfness, their absurd ambition to lead the revolutionary labor movement in their spare time.

It is not true that the advanced militant workers are hostile to education and prejudiced against educated people. Just the contrary. They have an exaggerated respect for every intellectual who approaches the movement and an exaggerated appreciation of every little service he renders. This was never demonstrated more convincingly than in the reception accorded to Burnham when he formally entered our movement, and in the extraordinary consideration that has been given to him all this time. He became a member of the National Committee without having served any apprenticeship in the class struggle. He was appointed one of the editors of our theoretical journal. All the recognition and the "honors" of a prominent leader of the party were freely accorded to him.

His scandalous attitude towards the responsibilities of leadership; his consistent refusal to devote himself to party work as a profession, not as an avocation; his haughty and contemptuous attitude toward his party co-workers; his disrespect for our tradition, and even for our international organization and its leadership—all this and more was passed over in silence by the worker elements in the party, if by no means with approval. It was not until Burnham came out into the open in an attempt to overthrow our program that the worker elements of the party rose up against him and called him to order. His attempt now to represent this revolutionary action as an expression of ignorant prejudice against him because of his "learning" is only another, and most revealing, exhibition of his own petty-bourgeois spirit and petty-bourgeois contempt for the workers.

A proletarian party that is theoretically schooled in the scien-

tific doctrines of Marxism cannot be intimidated by anybody, nor disoriented by a few unfortunate experiences. The fact that the learned Professor Burnham revealed himself as just another petty-bourgeois may possibly engender a little more caution in regard to similar types in the future. But it will not change anything in the fundamental attitude of the workers' vanguard towards the intellectuals from the bourgeois world who approach the movement in the future. Instructed by this experience it is possible that the next one who comes along will have to meet stiffer conditions. It is hardly likely that in the future anyone will be permitted to make pretensions to leadership unless he makes a clean break with his alien class environment and comes over to live in the labor movement. Mere visiting will not be encouraged.

The American movement has had very bad experience with intellectuals. Those who have appeared on its horizon up to date have been a pretty shabby crew. Adventurers, careerists, self-seekers, dilettantes, quitters-under-fire—that is the wretched picture of the parade of intellectuals through the American labor movement as painted by themselves. Daniel De Leon stands out as the great exception. He was not merely an intellectual. He was a man and a fighter, a partisan incapable of any divided allegiance. Once he had decided to come over to the proletarian class, the stale atmosphere of the bourgeois academic world became intolerable for him. He departed from the university, slamming the door behind him, and never once looked back. Thereafter, to the end of his life, he identified himself completely with the socialist movement and the struggle of the workers. Revolutionary workers of the present generation remember him with gratitude for that, without thereby overlooking his political errors. Other, and we hope, greater De Leons, will come to us in the future, and they will receive a whole-hearted welcome from the party of the proletarian vanguard. They will not feel sensitive if we scrutinize their credentials and submit them to a certain apprenticeship. They will not be offended if we insist on an explicit understanding that their task is to interpret and apply the proletarian science of Marxism, not to palm off a bourgeois substitute for it. The new De Leons will readily understand that this preliminary examination is simply a precaution against the infiltration of intellectual phonies and does not signify, in any way whatever, a prejudice against intellectuals who really come to serve the proletarian cause.

The genuine Marxist intellectuals who come to us will understand the cardinal point of our doctrine, that socialism is not simply a "moral ideal," as Burnham tries to instruct us in the year 1940—92 years after the Communist Manifesto—but the necessary outcome of an irreconcilable class struggle conducted by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. It is the workers who must make the revolution and it is workers who must compose the proletarian vanguard party. The function of the Marxist intellectual is to aid the workers in their struggle. He can do it constructively only by turning his back on the bourgeois world and joining the proletarian revolutionary camp, that is, by ceasing to be a petty-bourgeois. On that basis the worker Bolsheviks and the Marxist intellectuals will get along very well together.