

# THE NEGRO QUESTION

By J. R. JOHNSON

The place of the Negro is in the very vanguard of the revolutionary movement for socialism. That is the major theoretical contribution which the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers Party have made towards a clear and precise understanding of the role of the Negro in the solution of the difficulties now facing humanity.

Whereas even the Communist Party in its revolutionary days saw the Negroes essentially as an appendage, however valuable, to the revolutionary movement, we on the other hand, see the Negroes as foremost among those who will struggle against the crimes and barbarities of the capitalist system. The reason for this lies in the very nature of the Negro's position in capitalist society. The most exploited, the most oppressed, the most discriminated against, Negroes are the ones who experience most acutely and most unbearably the overwhelming burdens which capitalism places upon the masses in every country. Negroes haven't to read in books about the fraud of capitalist democracy. Karl Marx and Lenin have little to teach them about the fact.

## Prejudices Must Be Overcome

This conception of the role of the Negro has hitherto been obscured by the racial prejudices instilled into the different sections of the working class by American capitalism. The revolutionary party therefore is faced with the tremendous difficulty of overcoming this division. Yet difficult as this task is, it is a difficulty of tactics and not of strategy. The important question is not so much that of winning the Negroes for the revolution, but of instilling the Negro masses with the conviction that they can place their trust and confidence in a revolutionary party composed largely of white workers, as is inevitable in American society. That task successfully accomplished, the Fourth International is confident that the large masses of the Negroes will fight against imperialism of all kinds with a bravery and endurance that will be surpassed by no other section of the population.

Such a generalization, of such profound importance for the American revolution, and the world revolution as a whole, is best tested by the reaction of Negroes to great events such as for instance the present war. Anyone who has contacts of any kind with Negroes will know that they have been profoundly stirred by the outbreak of war in Europe. In a series of articles in this column, we shall examine the attitude to the war taken by various groups of Negroes. This attitude is in many respects confused and in some dangerous. What has been most striking, however, is that of all political and social groups in America, they have been the least bamboozled by the thesis that the imperialist war is a war for democracy against fascism. From the harsh experiences of their own lives and their knowledge of the exploitation and indignities endured by their brothers in Africa, they see the realities of the imperialist conflict much more clearly than many other sections of the American workers who are better organized and have more education and experience in the day to day politics of America. What is true of the American Negro is also true of Negroes everywhere.

A general mass sentiment of this kind inevitably produces at one stage or another some political organization, some political expression which points the road by which the confused but revolutionary instincts of great masses can be transformed into effective political reality. Such an organization already exists in the Fourth International and its sections in America, Great Britain, Africa, etc. The Fourth International, in its call for the revolutionary struggle against imperialism, expresses the aspirations and shows the future road for all the workers, white, Negro, Indian, whatever color, whatever race, whatever creed.

## Int'l African Service Bureau

But there are Negroes, not affiliated to the Fourth International, who have arrived at a political position which places them side by side with the Fourth International on the war question. They are conscious that nothing but the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism can give any final solution to the permanent burdens, and additional sufferings placed upon Negroes everywhere by the imperialist war. In Great Britain, an organization of Negroes known as the International African Service Bureau, during the last few years has carried on a wide propaganda for African independence and Negro emancipation. This propaganda has not been confined to Great Britain, but has been spread in all parts of the world where Negroes live and suffer. These Negroes have seen that the colonial masses of the East are allies of the Negro and contacts have been made with organizations in India and in Ceylon. The work of the bureau has been assisted by various industrial and political organizations of the British workers, which to a smaller or greater degree, recognize how vital to their own emancipation is the emancipation of the Negro people all over the world. In the crisis over Czechoslovakia, the Bureau issued a call to the Africans and to the British workers, to fight in unity against the imperialist lie of "war for democracy." And with the approach of this war, the Bureau issued another manifesto, "A Warning to the Colonial Peoples" which is published in another column. The manifesto calls upon the colonial masses in Africa, in India, in Burma, in Ceylon, to struggle against the war-mongers both fascist and "democratic." It appeals to the British workers to do the same against the common enemy—imperialism.

## Struggle against War Is International

This manifesto is of enormous importance, and must be closely studied and assimilated by all the workers in America, Negro and white. The Negroes in particular must realize that it is their duty to follow the lead so clearly and courageously given by a group of their brothers operating in Great Britain, the heart of the British Empire and of world imperialist reaction. Today the struggle against war is international and the Bureau manifesto has appealed not only to Negroes but to all workers, in the colonies and in Europe. It is impossible to have an equivocal position on war. One must be either with the imperialists and for the war, or against the imperialists and against the continuance of their system which inevitably breeds war. The manifesto says clearly and simply: Colonial and white workers, oppose the war.

It is of great significance that this manifesto comes into our hands just at the moment that our series of articles on the Negro and War in this column of the Socialist Appeal have come to a conclusion. That series will be republished in a few days as a pamphlet of 32 pages under the title of "Why Negroes Should Oppose the War". Negroes of all shades of political opinion must study this pamphlet carefully, compare it with the manifesto issued by the International African Service Bureau, and realize how the consciousness of oppression and an insight into the mechanism of modern society lead inevitably to the one conclusion: that all the workers, of whatever race, must unite in revolutionary struggle against the imperialist war-mongers, whether fascist or "democratic". The pamphlet "Why Negroes Should Oppose the War" and the manifesto "A Warning to the Colonial Peoples" are events of major importance in the political crystallization of the Negro instinct for revolutionary struggle.

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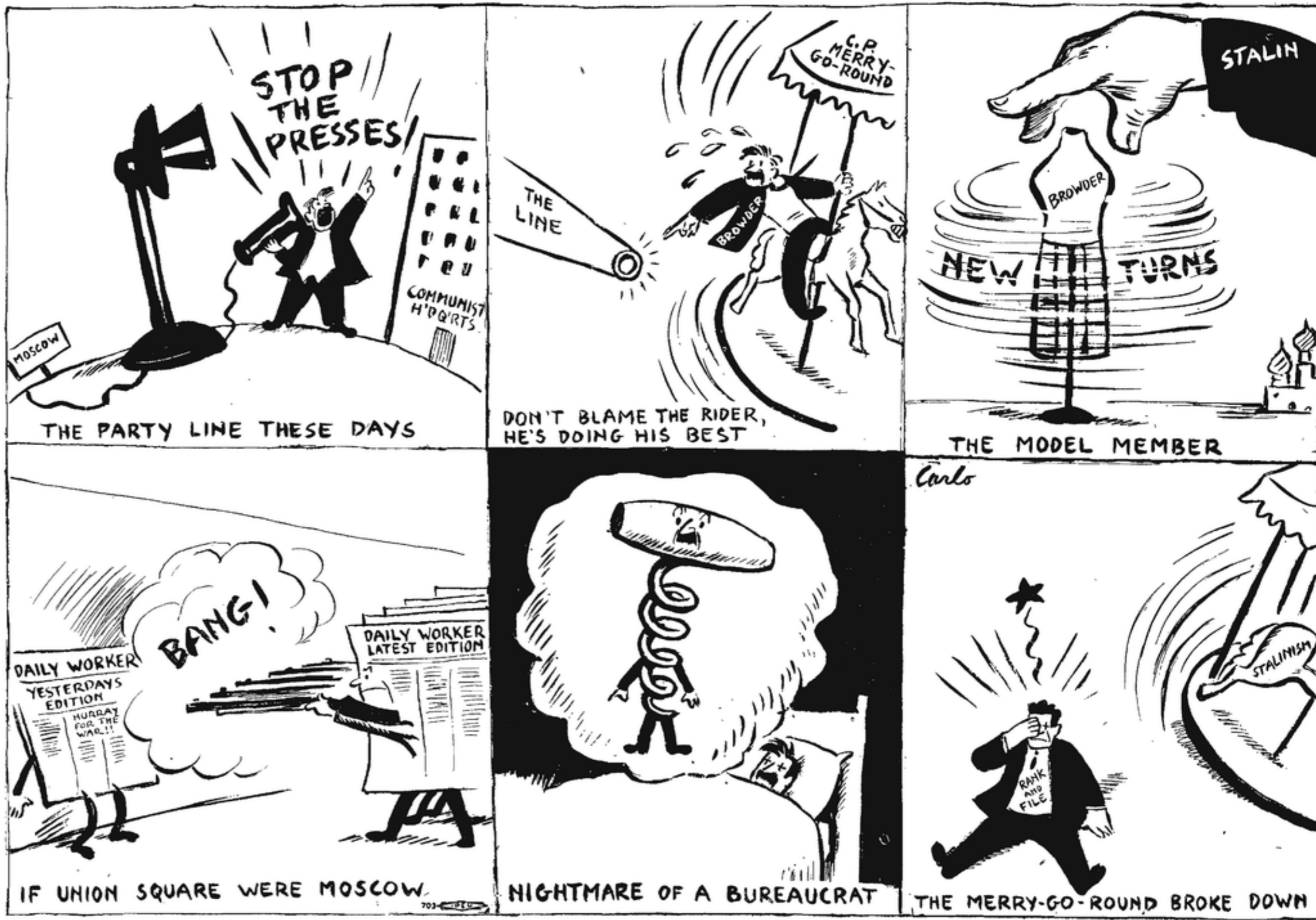
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# Our Line's Been Changed Again!



# Bosses Get Inside Tip on Labor Control

By JOSEPH HANSEN  
ARTICLE IV

The greatest worry confronting the individual capitalist at the brink of American participation in the second World War is the lack of certainty about the most powerful factor involved in both prosecuting the war and in producing the desired flow of profits—the labor movement.

Will each capitalist be assured of an adequate labor supply? Of a low level of wages? Of an efficient blacklisting system which will permit the weeding out of all those who might interrupt the lucrative harvest of war profits? And above all, will the nightmare that preys upon the mind of every capitalist—working class revolution—end this slaughter as it did the last one?

Big Business wishes to allay the fears of the capitalist class as it plunges the country into war—any group entering a struggle without complete confidence in itself is beaten before the battle starts. Big Business as the leading section of the capitalist class wishes to impress every capitalist with a sense of its authority, strength, and complete awareness that the real enemy from their point of view is the working class here in the United States.

## Tightening Grip on Government

In the most authoritative tones, Big Business is tightening its grip as ruler and informing all factions of the capitalist class that it has prepared for the labor factor with detailed blue prints drawn up by the best brains that could be purchased on the market.

Stifling of the labor movement, suppression of all civil liberties is assured—this is the inside tip passed out by Big Business through the confidential bulletin issued by the Tax Research Institute. Forget your fears about labor. The road is clear for WAR PROFITS; open up the throttle!

"Labor: The assurance to industry of an adequate labor supply, both in numbers and by occupational qualification, will require the organization of a labor administration with an Administrator of Labor appointed by and directly responsible to the President. Among the more important problems to be considered are the minimizing of excessive migrations of labor; the prevention of unethical competition for labor by war industries; compilation, for the information of the President, of lists of industrial deferments from the draft of individuals required for efficient operations of war industries; the avoidance and settlement of labor problems; and the coordination of employment services."

## Guaranteeing War-Time Profits

This paragraph is one of the most important in the whole bulletin from the viewpoint of labor. It reveals exactly what is in store for the working man upon the entry of the United States into the war:

(1) "Assurance of . . . adequate labor supply." Wall Street cannot be assured of its profits if there are not enough hands to keep up with the war expansion of its machine and factories and to turn out the necessary goods, or if the labor supply becomes so scarce that the demand for it acts to raise wages and so cut into profits.

(2) "Administrator of Labor appointed. . . ." Like Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the trade unions must become government-controlled, regimented in order not to disrupt the steady flow of profits into Wall Street's vaults.

(3) "Minimizing of excessive migrations of labor. . ." Again like Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, laws will be passed preventing a working man from leaving his job to go to another one at a higher rate of pay. Mussolini and Hitler require a labor passport for every working man in order to enforce this provision, the passport being held by the employer. Without the passport a man cannot get a job. Roosevelt may extend the use of a fink book such as the one he attempted to foist on the seamen, or he may use the Social Security card, the possession of which is already required in order to obtain a job.

(4) "Prevention of unethical competition of labor. . ." If one industry sees a chance to make greater profits by a sudden expansion and in order to obtain the necessary manpower offers lucrative wages, this would be considered "unethical" and the military dictatorship would cancel these higher wages in favor of the lower level.

## Blacklist Arranged for

(5) "Compilation . . . of lists . . . of individuals required for efficient operations. . ." This is nothing less than a blacklist. If the colonels and Wall Street henchmen at the head of the military dictatorship decide a given individual is not "efficient" he may be shipped to the front in order to help "make the world safe for democracy" by dying on a bayonet, or he may be simply jailed for the duration of the war.

(6) "Avoidance and settlement of labor problems. . ." Wall Street will decide such questions as hours, wages, and working conditions and whether or not a man may be permitted to belong to a union. Violations of Wall Street's decisions will receive the appropriate punishment at the hands of the Wall Street henchman who head the military dictatorship.

(7) "Coordination of employment services. . ." This means the end of union control of hiring and even the end of separate employment agencies. All hiring, all black-listing will be done through one Wall-Street-controlled agency. This agency will extend its tentacles across the whole nation and strangle the labor movement in its grasp.

## Methods of "Controlling" Labor

The confidential bulletin describes the concrete methods that will be used against labor in the following section:

### "The Labor Controls to Be Used"

"One of the major problems the War Labor Administration must face is the one which caused greatest dissatisfaction during the World War on all sides—labor migration.

"T.R.I. Observation: Solution of the labor problem, particularly that of migration, may be attempted by the use of four means. These are:

(1) Control of the cost of living and the keying of the real wages to that of living cost for all workers. [Just as W.P.A. wages in the North have been slashed to correspond to a slight raise in the South.—J.H.]

(2) A single unified employment service for prevention of competition for labor. [Competition for labor would tend to raise wages.—J.H.]

(3) The development of public opinion. [That is, flooding the public with skillful propaganda fed through the press, the pulpit, the radio, whispering campaigns, etc.—J.H.]

(4) Compulsory arbitration of disputes after all means of conciliation and mediation have been exhausted. [The old system of the boss sitting tight, mediators lying to workers, and then cracking down with National Guard.—J.H.]

"The methods which will be used to cope with the labor problem will involve direct and indirect contact and co-operation with other government agencies. [Labor spies, police, propaganda department, social security department, labor administration will all work together.—J.H.] Thus, the division entrusted with the labor problem, the War Labor Administration, will:

(a) Foresee and forestall, wherever possible, and in other cases take prompt action, to adjust labor difficulties in industrial facilities producing the Army's requirements.

(b) Maintain liaison with any interested Federal and state labor agencies in order to advise them of the labor needs of facilities producing Army requirements.

(c) Maintain close liaison with the Director of Selective Service and with industrial management in order to insure the deferments of such workmen as are vitally essential to the munitions producing program.

(d) Maintain liaison with national labor organizations and with agencies having to do with labor welfare."

## Sixty Families Fear Labor

This entire plan to regiment labor under the bayonet, from the viewpoint of the Big Business men sitting in luxurious Wall Street office suites look foolproof. But the very detailed minuteness of these blue prints shows that there is a profound basis for the fears of the capitalist class.

It is one thing to draw up complicated blueprints with which to straitjacket and slaughter the tens of millions who constitute the working population of the country. But these prints have an entirely different color when it comes to imposing them successfully.

One thing is absolutely certain: when the working population of the United States understands as a whole that the Wall Street dictatorship is composed of only a handful of men whose numbers are in inverse proportion to their wealth and greed, and when the working population understands that this war is being conducted for nothing but the insurance of capitalist profits, they will rise in consuming wrath and wipe capitalism from the face of the earth, blueprints, greed, military dictatorship and all.

In place of capitalist minority rule, they will construct socialism, and through socialism the working man will gain peace, decent living conditions, and a new era that will relegate war to the museum beside the dusty bones of the dinosaur and the capitalist.

THE END