

THE NEGRO QUESTION

"LABOR WITH A WHITE SKIN CAN NOT EMANCIPATE ITSELF WHERE LABOR WITH A BLACK SKIN IS BRANDED"—KARL MARX.

By J. R. JOHNSON

The Negroes in Industry

The future of the Negro is bound by unbreakable chains of iron and steel to the industrial system of this country. We, as a revolutionary party, must therefore have a very clear conception of the relationship of Negroes to this system, and the Negroes too must see the position as it is. Ninety-nine Negroes out of every hundred, to be more accurate, 999 out of every 1000, firmly believe that Negroes are discriminated against in industry because they are black. "We could get such and such jobs. Only one thing prevents us. As soon as they see our black skins they turn us away. Obviously it is because we are black."

The reasoning seems unanswerable. But it is false. In fact it is not the least exaggeration to say that the Negro's skin has nothing at all to do with the fundamentals of this question. Let me repeat that. The color of the Negro's skin has nothing at all to do with the fundamentals of the question.

And now for the proof of this apparently bewildering statement. In India, Hindus and Moslems are quite often, the same color to the last shade. They, however, are divided by their religious differences. Therefore one of the chief strategies of the British government in India is to push fire between Hindus and Moslems in industry, in politics, and in every sphere of life. By this means they divide the Indians, particularly the masses, and make their own position more secure.

Take again Northern Ireland. There the population is white. The British ruling class must find some method of division. They find it in the different religions, one group Catholic and the other group Protestant.

The technique employed is simple as daylight. The Prime Minister and the chief spokesmen always preach about the necessity of unity, how the government duty is to keep the peace, protect the rights of all citizens, etc. So much in words. In action, however, the Government drives wedge after wedge between Catholics and Protestants, and keeps the antagonism at fever pitch.

In Germany Hitler found another source of dividing the workers, the peasants, and the lower middle class: he foamed at the mouth whenever he mentioned the Jews and persecuted them when he came to power.

Divide In Order to Rule

It is perfectly clear that your capitalists, your representative of the ruling class, seeks above all to divide in order to rule. In Britain where so much of the population is of the same racial type and of the same religion your capitalist is in difficulty as to how best to divide the workers. He does it by paying higher wages to some and creating a body, relatively small, of privileged workers. These, being quite satisfied, then become conservative and act as a check on the millions whose dissatisfaction with their lot would be a constant threat to the system if it were not suppressed by this privileged section within their own ranks.

Your capitalist must divide the workers in order to weaken them. In India he fans the flame between Hindus and Moslems. In Ireland between Protestant and Catholic, in many other countries between Jew and Gentile. But the Negro has a black skin. This makes him easily distinguishable from others. Your American capitalist, therefore, at his perpetual game of dividing the workers, leaps with joy and rubs his hands at the good God who made the Negro black. It is so easy to say: "There, don't you see his black skin? White workers, my good friends, let us keep that black man in his place."

The black skin business is only an excuse, as Hindu-Moslem, Catholic-Protestant, Jew-Gentile is only an excuse. Now you can't look at a man and say whether he is Catholic or Protestant, Hindu or Moslem. But a Negro is seen to be different to the white man at first glance. Hence the viciousness and the obviousness of the discrimination against Negroes. But the root of it is in the system which gives the capitalist the need and the power to divide. And the cure is the abolition of the system which breeds this necessity to divide.

The Wherefore of Race Prejudice

Both Negroes and white workers who are advanced politically beyond their fellows must understand this. Must have it in their bones. That is the truth and nothing but the truth. Naturally, there are other aspects of the question. Your capitalist does not say this openly. That would ruin everything. He builds up great theories of Negro inferiority, Negro incapability, etc. These are taught in schools from generation to generation, and millions of unsuspecting people learn this and never think that it is in reality nothing else but capitalist rationalization for the benefit of capitalist pockets.

Having imbued these ideas with their mother's milk so to speak and seeing Negroes living in dirt and slums, most white workers think what they hear all around them is quite true. And when white workers find that being black means the possibility of working in any factory and being black means exclusion from half of them, that being white means 70 cents an hour and being black 45 cents an hour for the same type of work, then these capitalist ideas receive a powerful material enforcement in the working class. This is the reason for race prejudice among the white workers. What the white worker does not see is that by combining with the Negro both can get 90 cents, or overthrow the system altogether. Your capitalist sees that quite clearly however.

How to clarify the minds of workers, both white and black, is the revolutionary problem. Propaganda and agitation to break down the capitalist propaganda; but above all joint action. As the economic crisis deepens, the white workers are driven to revise their previous conceptions. The crisis drove some 400,000 Negroes into the CIO. Thus millions of white workers have begun to think differently about Negroes. Another sharpening of the crisis, another stride forward of the organized workers, will bring thousands upon thousands of Negroes into the ranks of organized labor. But we cannot wait for these developments. We must work in preparation for them.

The first thing therefore is to know something about the Negro's position in industry, not to know in the abstract, but to be familiar with it. How did the Negro enter into certain industries, what was his status there yesterday, what is it to-day? It is by this study that we can get some real living conception of the role of the Negro in the working class movement. Few white workers have any conception of the history of this development. Still more tragic, fewer Negroes know anything about it.

Periodically this column will examine the Negro's role in industry, the understanding of which is an indispensable preliminary to correct revolutionary action. In the next issue we shall have a general survey of the Negro in industry during the last hundred years, after which we shall examine his situation in steel, meat packing, etc. There we shall see how in the South, the employer used 5 Negroes to one white in skilled industry before slavery was abolished, how after emancipation he used five whites to one Negro, how he started to use more Negroes to break the fighting power of the whites. In other words we shall see concretely how little the color question means to the employer where his pocket is concerned.

In Mexico

Stalinists Publish Anti-Semitic Attack on Trotskyist Movement

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ment of scabs used during the rallies and their native allies. In the last few weeks Latin America's startled eyes saw the same Stalinists, ever obedient to their master's newest wish, swing over to the fascist beast. And just as formerly they spoke the language of their democratic capitalist allies, so now they are beginning to use the language of "anti-Semitism . . . down to and including the anti-Semitic note!"

Peddling Lies

Naturally the Stalinists join this scandalous anti-Semitic note with their usual slanderous anti-Trotskyism. For some time, both in Mexico and in the United States, the Stalinists have been peddling the lie that the Trotskyists are supporting the candidacy of the reactionary General Almazan. Time and again the Mexican section of the Fourth International, the Partido Obrero Internacionalista (Internationalist Workers Party), has denounced that slander and pointed out that since there is no independent working class candidate the POI supports no candidate but utilizes the occasion of the campaign to spread its program. One of the POI statements to that effect was reprinted in English in the Socialist Appeal of Oct. 10. But a little thing like the truth doesn't deter the pen-prostitutes of "La Voz de Mexico" and the "Daily Worker" from repeating their slanders.

Yesterday the Stalinists fabricated stories about Trotskyists supporting the reactionary Almazan and about Almazan supporters being Trotskyists, calling them all "fascists" and "allies of Hitler." Today the same Stalinists are still at their dirty work, but now that they themselves are allied to Hitler they talk instead of "Jewish elements," "capitalist Jews," "Trotskyist Jews," etc. Gone is the cry of "fascist"; the word isn't even mentioned in the article.

It is clear by now that the people referred to in the article are not Trotskyists at all—but that is just a little detail. The poor fellows are obviously Jews (such names! — Abrahams, Rubinstein, etc.). — and vociferously anti-Stalin Jews at that.

UNSER WORT

The new issue of UNSER WORT, containing articles on the war situation will appear shortly. Order it from Dale Edwards P. O. Box No. 173, Sta. D, New York, N. Y. (12 copies 60 c.)

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STALINIST ANTI-SEMITISM



NEW YORK S.W.P. CALLS FOR AN ANTI-WAR VOTE IN THE ELECTIONS

(Continued from Page 1)

write-in vote for the Manhattan candidate of the SWP. Referring to the provisions of the City Charter governing a write-in vote, the Campaign Committee asks all workers to follow the special instructions. According to the City Charter, "To vote for a person whose name is not printed on this ballot, write his name on a blank line under the names of the candidates and put a number in the square opposite to show which choice you wish to give him."

Covering the populous working class districts of the Bronx with anti-war election leaflets and heavily engaged in staging numerous outdoor election rallies, the Bronx Branch of the Party has won the praise of the Campaign Committee. Marvelling at the schedule of work assumed by the Bronx militants, Shachtman and E.R. Frank called upon members of the party in the other boroughs to assist in the election activities.

Bronx Rally

Responding to an earlier call by Comrade Frank, City Organizer of the Party, scores of party members were on hand Saturday night, October 28, for a series of outdoor mass meetings in the Tremont area of the Bronx. While meetings for Michael Quill and Isadore Begun, Stalinist candidates, folded up completely in the face of cold weather, the outdoor rallies for Shachtman drew large crowds at Tremont and Mapes Avenues and Vyse Avenue and 174 Street.

This Friday evening, Nov. 3, Candidate Shachtman will speak at Herman Ridder Junior High School, Boston Road and 173 Street, under the auspices of the Campaign Committee.

Tuesday, Oct. 31, Candidate Paine will address a meeting of the American Women's Club,

Vote for MAX SHACHTMAN Choice No. 1 For Councilman For the Bronx

553 West 57 Street, at 8 p.m. The Campaign Committee announced today that an additional 30,000 issues of the special campaign edition of the Socialist Appeal will be off the press by the end of the week for distribution in the Bronx and Manhattan. More than 150,000 anti-war election leaflets are also being prepared for distribution.

TWENTY-FIVE W.P.A. STRIKERS GO ON TRIAL

Defense Committee To Appeal Verdicts Of First Two Trials

(Continued from Page 1) Federal court to continue the present grand jury for another six months.

Appealing Verdict

The AFL-WPA Defense Committee, set up by the Central Labor Union, announced that it was appealing the verdict in the first two trials, determined to prevent the establishment of legal precedents which would endanger organized labor everywhere.

The Minnesota State Federation of Labor last week issued a circular letter to all unions in the state, urging that contributions be made to the defense of the indicted WPA strikers. The Defense Committee has appealed to unions everywhere to donate generously to the defense fund. Checks and resolutions should be mailed to L. Clair Johnson, secretary-treasurer, Minneapolis AFL-WPA Defense Committee, care of Central Labor Union, 18 North Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

By Dwight Macdonald

SPARKS IN THE NEWS

Business Looks at the War

"Without steel modern war would be impossible—Airplanes, tanks, artillery, armor plate, battleships, shells, torpedoes, barbed wire are all principally made of steel.

"The machines of war are being continually destroyed and replacements use up tremendous additional quantities of steel.

"Steel companies, during the last war, were swamped with business which proved highly profitable to them and to their stockholders.

"Steel stocks have always been among the first to respond to the stimulus of war-buying.

"We believe that sound steel stocks, purchased around current levels, will prove very profitable—repeating, in many instances, the spectacular performance of the last war.

"We have prepared reports on three very attractive steel stocks. . . ."

—Market Letter issued by Bonner & Bonner members of N.Y. Stock Exchange.

"A 100% loss of first-line combat planes in the first months of fighting is expected by the U.S. Air Corps if ever its new armada flies to war."

—Time, Sept. 25, 1939.

"We conceive it to be necessary, without sounding any note of alarm, to bring vital information to fathers of sons approaching young manhood. . . . We do not suggest acquiring life insurance through unreasonable fear. We do recommend weighing its present purchase in the light of complete knowledge and past experience. No advice can foretell whether a youngster motivated by a spirit of adventure and patriotism, will develop an uncontrollable leaning towards aviation."

—Sales Letter sent out by the John G. McNamara Organization, life insurance brokers, 17 John Street, New York City.

"The most important fact about the probable effects of the war on American business is that they are likely to be meager unless and until the nature of the warfare changes. Stalemate trench fighting would produce large orders, and so would open field operations, but economic blockades are quite unlikely to do it."

—Cleveland Trust Company Business Bulletin, October 15, 1939.

"Future of Business: Prevailing opinion seems

to be that the first quarter of 1940 will be down from the current quarter. Drop of 10 points, or more, is believed to be likely.

"War-ifs make qualifications, of course. "If early full peace, then six to nine months of recession.

"If continued war—a dragging war, conserving war materials—then probably further pick-up here after the first quarter of 1940.

"If fast & furious war, full tilt, then a boom year in 1940."

—The Kiplinger Washington Letter, Washington, D. C.

"WE ARE NOT NEUTRAL. . . . The present so-called neutrality law will not of itself keep us out of direct involvement in war. Revision of the law, as asked by the President and favored by majority public opinion, will not of itself draw us into war. In the final analysis we will go to war if and when our vital interests are threatened. Otherwise not. Whether our vital interests will or will not be threatened at some later stage of this war is entirely unpredictable and will not be determined by the kind of law that Senator Borah wants or the kind that Mr. Roosevelt wants. What are our vital interests? To cite two of the most obvious, the survival of the British navy is a vital interest to us and even more so is maintenance of the status quo in our entire hemisphere, including islands as far distant as Bermuda.

"Meanwhile we engage in bitter debate on 'neutrality' although, in the strict sense of the term, we are not neutral. We are not neutral in sentiment, for we favor victory for the Allies. We are not neutral in fact, for present law permits the British and French to buy from us most of the types of materials essential to prosecution of war, while circumstances prevent such materials going to Germany."

—"The Trend of Events" section, Magazine of Wall Street.

"If America becomes involved, as some observers prematurely are predicting, Congress would not hesitate to make any President virtually a dictator.

"But it is well realized that, after seven years of expanding powers, the central government is now so strong that its further growth into a war machine would end our democratic system and it would be well-nigh impossible to return to it."

—Article by Kendall K. Hoyt in a recent issue of The Annalist.

N. M. U. Bureaucrats Skirt Real Demands of Maritime Workers

(Continued from Page 1)

demands that essentially concern the mass of the maritime workers in this present crisis:

1. A general wage increase of at least 25%, which has been long overdue the maritime workers. This wage increase, given by the Maritime Commission shortly after a brief job-action in the port of New York as a "war-bonus," should actually today be the basis of any new agreement. Let the shipowners plead poverty but at the same time let them cut down on their fat salaries and subsidies. "Labor's fair return" is by no means true of the shipping industry.
2. A genuine war bonus of not less than \$50 for a single crossing through belligerent waters of danger zones. A genuine war-risk insurance of not less than \$10,000 per man, including a restitution of \$150 for the loss of personal possessions in the event of a sinking.

3. A drastic revision of the shipping articles in connection with the amount of what constitutes a ship's crew and thus included many hundreds of unemployed seamen on criminally undermanned vessels. This is one of the worst features of the American merchant ships. An end must be put to one-man-in-two-jobs! In that way safety at sea can become a reality and also sanitation at sea along with it.

4. The inclusion in the new agreement of a bona-fide and rigid system of seniority promotion. The abolition of the majority of the phoney "key-position" privileges of the shipowners that still allows their stooges and spies to interfere in the daily life of the seamen. A system whereby seniority promotion would be placed squarely in the hands of the duly elected Ship's Committees with the heads of the departments sitting in an advisory capacity only.

5. The continuance of the closed shop and the free and rotary hiring hall.

These five basic economic demands are actually to be considered as a minimum. These are the demands that should be presented to the Administration-shipowners' alliance with the solid back-

ing of a militant membership behind them. Such absolutely reasonable concessions must be obtained by the maritime workers from the Shipowners' Association and Maritime Commission before we can consider that any real progress has been made towards the goal of decent working conditions and safety plus sanitation at sea. But this is not the forcible manner in which the present leadership of the NMU has responded to the trade-union problems of the maritime workers. On the contrary, they have answered each new boss offensive with a whole lot of editorial indignation but with no real practical and militant trade-union action. A common question on the lips of many NMUers is: "Well, so what's our union doing about it?"

In the face of this, to declare that "our main demand is that the present agreement be clarified so as to expedite the mechanics of interpretation," means that the present misleaders have no intention of seeking any concession whatever for the maritime workers. Its verbal garbage means that the misleaders are content with the "status-quo" at a time when nobody else is. (To be Concluded)

Let the People Vote on War!

CHICAGO CELEBRATION of the 22nd ANNIVERSARY of the Russian Revolution

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