

Report on the Universal Negro Improvement Association
Convention - August 1929.

By O. E. Huiswood

As in the past, the Convention of the U. N. I. A. was little more than a talk-feast. Thirty-one days were wasted in cheap oratory, charges and counter charges of mis-management and mis-appropriation of funds. Only from the reports of the rank and file delegates could one get a picture of the real economic and political situation confronting the Negro masses. And invariably their speeches touched on the labor situation in the respective communities. Only in the one session devoted to reports from delegates was there a semblance of reality in the Convention, when these delegates brought into the discussion the exploitation of Negro labor and the race oppression from which the Negro workers suffer.

Garvey dominated the Convention from start to finish and ruled with an iron hand. And when any of his opponents dared to challenge him, his henchmen and the mob were ready to throw him out or even resort to physical violence. Nevertheless there was an opposition group in the Convention, composed mainly of Americans. This group is definitely opposed to the rule of Garvey and opposed to the removal of the U.N.I.A. headquarters from America to Jamaica, where it will be under the complete domination of Garvey. This opposition is not one based on principles however. It is rather a question of control of the finances of the organization and to break Garvey's influence and power.

In spite of Garvey's attitude towards the leaders of the opposition, whom he denounced during the Convention as scoundrels (though not naming any individuals) he was compelled, because of the conditions facing the organization, to have them elected to the highest posts, such as Assistant-President General and Secretary General. Garvey realized well enough the disintegration taking place in the organization and further, that since he depended on America for his financial support, he could not afford to push aside these elements, though they are his bitterest opponents. It must also be taken into consideration that there are two organizations with the name U.N. I. A. During Garvey's imprisonment, his "enemies" got control of the organization and it became the U. N. I. A. incorporated with Fred Toote as its President. After Garvey's deportation a split took place, some of the members adhering to Garvey and others to Toote. As a result of this there were formed in a number of states "Garvey Clubs Inc". These Clubs are composed of the most loyal adherents of Marcus Garvey.

Apart from the fact that there has been a tremendous loss in membership, the U.N.I.A. is at present disintegrating. A ten year record of nothing but failures, incompetent management and financial irregularities have caused a great deal of disaffection. And, adding fuel to the flame, he rewarded his "enemies" to the dissatisfaction and utter disgust of his staunch supporters and friends. His action is interpreted by his supporters as an affront and will be one more source of disaffection.