

Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

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ON RESOLUTION FOR INDEPENDENT WESTERN UNION

January 25, 1949

To the Political Committee
Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

At the last two meetings of the SYL Buro, the question of Independent Western Union as posed in the resolution on it adopted by the Political Committee was discussed at length. In the opinion of the majority of the Buro, the resolution is unclear on a number of basic points. For our own clarification and that of the Party as a whole, and to facilitate the Buro's course of action, we have formulated the questions below, directed to the Political Committee. We urge the Political Committee to reply to these questions before the convention and in time for the New York membership meeting on the question of Independent Western Union.

1. What is meant by "Workers' Government" in the resolution?
2. Is the British labor government a "Workers' Government"?
3. Is it the opinion of the Political Committee that social-democratic governments like the British labor government could carry out an Independent Western Union?
4. Would the formation of a Western Union or federation (like Benelux) by the present governments be considered a progressive step forward?
5. Is the Political Committee for supporting the arming and military preparations of an Independent Western Union under:
(a) present governments; (b) social-democratic governments?
6. The resolution calls for an Independent Western Union which will "exclude any infringement upon the democratic right of national self-determination of any participating by any other," abolish all customs barriers, establish a single currency, renounce all imperialist 'rights' to dominate colonies and possessions now under their rule," remove any obstacles placed in its path by private ownership of financial and industrial monopolies. Can this kind of a Western Union be accomplished by: (a) a Western Union of present governments; (b) a Western Union of social-democratic governments?
7. Is it possible that a Western Union based on capitalist property relations "can make possible a harmonious reconstruction of these countries on the basis of economic independence from American imperialism"?

Comradely,
J. Falk
For the National Buro

February 1, 1949

National Bureau
Socialist Youth League

Dear Comrades:

The resolution on "The Slogan of an Independent Western Union" was recommended by the Political Committee to our Party so that it could contribute to solving the crucial problem facing the European Marxists today, that "of finding a way out of the impasse in which Europe finds itself today, which can become a new point of departure and a new impulsion for a reawakened and reoriented working class and socialist movement." That is the primary purpose of the resolution. It is not written for the purpose of stating or restating, much less of calling into question the basic principles of Marxism. It finds no need to do so. These principles are taken for granted and are implicit in every paragraph of the resolution. Furthermore, the resolution aims to influence sections of the European labor and socialist movements far beyond the restricted confines of the tiny revolutionary Marxist groups. If all this is borne in mind, no Marxist should have any difficulty in understanding not only the line of the resolution but even its structure, its "style," and the very way in which its ideas are formulated.

Question 4: There is no ground for believing that the present governments of Europe (including the British Labor Party government with its present program and policies and leadership) could actually unite the continent or its Western section on a democratic and anti-imperialist basis that would cause us to consider it "a progressive step forward" or to hail it as some kind of installment on the road to an Independent Western Union. Insofar as the slogan of Western Union or Independent Western Union is put forward by bourgeois states or bourgeois politicians, it is a deception or a utopia. It can be achieved under bourgeois auspices -- and even then only in part -- either as an imperialist military alliance primarily, with or without subordinate economic agreements, as a common slave camp under totalitarian domination, or as a single bloc which is the economic and political vassal of a more powerful nation. According to all past and present indications the achievement of a future Western Union under bourgeois auspices on a democratic basis is not a practical political possibility. To be sure, if, contrary to all such indications, this takes place, the Marxists will have no difficulty about "admitting a mistake" and proceeding with the struggle for socialism with the new situation as their new point of departure. But thus far the question is on the abstract theoretical level.

From the political point of view, however, the question is much more important. Instead of emphasizing academic discussions about the theoretical possibility of a democratic and independent Western Union under bourgeois auspices, the political situation and the political struggle in Europe demands of the Marxists a concentration of all energy upon exposing the imperialist or utopian character of the bourgeois plans for Western

Europe; upon instilling in the working class a consciousness and confidence that it and it alone can unite Europe as it should be united. Our resolution says clearly enough: "The working class of these (Western European) countries represents precisely the kind of social power which is capable of uniting Western Europe into an economic and political union. It is the only social power capable of uniting it on a democratic and socialist basis, as the first and most important step in the direction of achieving a United States of all of Europe." Again, the working class "is the only power capable of doing it (uniting Europe) in a manner that contributes decisively to the reconstruction, peace and freedom of the peoples." And once more: "An Independent Western Union is possible, and can be counterposed to all imperialist schemes under that name, only on the basis of the boldest and most thoroughgoing application of democratic principles."

Our resolution, furthermore, is so drafted as to avoid posing the question falsely. It aims to rescue from negativistic phrasemongering any European Marxist who would simply answer the bourgeois and social-democratic talk about "Western Union" with the declaration: "No, this is an imperialist scheme, nothing more; I am for a Socialist U. S. of Europe, or Western Europe, or for workers' governments, for socialism." It is one thing to put forward a demand or a slogan for realization today which, in the opinion of the Marxists, will actually be found to be realizable only under workers' governments. It is another thing to refuse to put forward such slogans and to substitute for them simply the slogan of a workers' government, or of socialism. Our resolution takes the former approach, which, we believe, is not only required by Marxist principles but required by the situation in Europe today.

If the idea of Western Union finds any echo among the workers, it is not because it is an imperialist plan but because it seems to offer them the hope of uniting atomized and multi-walled Europe and warding off war. The Marxists should take up this idea and champion it in their own way. "We are for a Western Europe because it is a first indispensable step toward prosperity and independence from the two big warmongers who threaten to bleed us white again. We oppose our governments on this point because what they have in mind is a Europe whose economy and manpower will be at the service of Washington. That way, we will have neither prosperity, democracy nor peace. To achieve these ends, we are for an Independent Western Union brought about in the following way and committed to the following program. If we have our own governments, we can accomplish our aims. Etc., etc."

There is no doubt that, and it is very important that, among the present capitalist governments of the world, there is a greatly heightened trend toward international integration of one sort or another. This trend has so far found expression in such things as the Marshall Plan, the presently contemplated North Atlantic Pact, the formation of Benelux. This trend is not merely a capitalist-imperialist plot; it is a reflection of the desperate objective need of European society for integration,

unification, federation, etc. But it is -- and it necessarily is -- a distorted, crippled reflection of this overwhelming objective need, distorted and crippled precisely by the capitalist-imperialist nature of the present governments. As we have said about so many phenomena, there is a "progressive kernel" in all this, undoubtedly -- just as the patriotism of sections of American working class in the late war had its progressive kernel (anti-Nazism), just as the development of monopoly capitalism has its progressive kernel (the readying of the economic structure for socialization, given a transfer of political power), etc. We do not denounce or "oppose" the simple fact that three tiny countries formed a partial federation (Benelux), any more than we oppose the simple fact of large-scale production. Our fight in both cases is directed along a different line. To this capitalist trend toward integration, which necessarily takes an anti-democratic, imperialist form, we counterpose a democratic, anti-imperialist, independent Western Union; and we point the road along which it can be achieved: namely, only by a working-class struggle against the bourgeois sponsors of various ~~Western~~ Union schemes. Benelux, of course, involves only 3 tiny countries; a "Benelux" on a larger scale -- i.e. a Western European scale -- would show up starkly the real nature of bourgeois integration as it is today, along the lines discussed in the resolution.

Question 7: From the Marxian point of view, a "harmonious reconstruction" or construction of economic life is impossible in general on the basis of capitalist private property, be it in one country or in several. However, a capitalist reconstruction of the economy of the Western European countries -- a contradictory, unharmonious economic reconstruction which increases the misery of the masses or prepares the way for it, which leads to war and not to peace -- is entirely possible. Given certain changes in the relationship of political forces, it is not even excluded that Western Europe can be united by capitalism without being economically dependent upon American imperialism. But there is no ground for believing that such a theoretically-possible unification of Western Union could be achieved democratically.

Under continuing capitalism, especially in its present decaying stage, Europe (or Western Europe) can be united only by force imposed from above, that is, imperialistically, that is, by subjecting all the nations and peoples involved to the rule of a superior power. German imperialism united most of Europe during the war. American imperialism "seeks to organize Western Europe into a single bloc." British imperialism aims "to establish a union of Europe under British domination." The resolution cites all three examples, but it cites them only to emphasize the fundamental difference between such "unions" and ~~the~~ Independent Western Union we advocate. Then, to make absolutely sure that there is not even the remotest reason for uncertainty the resolution adds several times the thought referred to above, regarding the role of the working-class.

Questions 1, 2, 3: The resolution, in pointing to workers' governments as the kind of governments which can achieve an independent Western Union, uses this term in what we believe

be its usual sense, as used in our slogans and propoganda. It is perfectly true that in a broad way, and in a certain context of explanation, the term has been used as a general description for any government formed by a working-class party. But we have no desire nor is there any need to enter into lengthy abstract discussions revolving around terminology. As regularly used in the propoganda and propoganda slogans of the Marxists, the term "Workers Government" refers to the class character of a government, and not merely to the composition of its cabinet at any given time. Thus there have been on many occasions government cabinets organized by working class (particularly social-democratic or labor) parties which functioned merely as temporary caretakers for a state power which remained fundamentally bourgeois in class character. On the other hand, a "workers' government" is not merely synonymous with, or a pseudonym for, a revolutionary socialist government.

To put it briefly, insofar as that is possible: a workers' government, in the Marxist sense, is a government formed by a working-class party (or parties) and democratically supported by the mass of workers, which carries out a program for the achievement of the most basic and important interests of the workers regardless of the institutions of private property and capitalist ownership and unhesitatingly removing all obstacles to the fulfillment of its program constituted by private ownership of industrial or financial monopolies. As is well known, it is, so to speak, an "algebraic" expression. To the Marxists the above is sufficient to guarantee that such a government will turn out to be a revolutionary socialist government, or will have to take socialist steps, if it is really to carry out its program. To workers, however, who are not yet ready to fight for a revolutionary socialist government as such, or are not convinced of the necessity of fighting for it, there may exist illusions about the possibility of achieving the program without coming in basic collision with capitalism. In launching the slogan of a workers government, the Marxist is saying to such workers: Fight for a government which will do this, this and this; we will fight for it with you; we will see in the course of the struggle whether you are right or we are right. It is in this sense that, while possession an opinion on the subject, the Marxist does not give such a dogmatic answer to the workers as would preclude the mobilization of the working class in struggle with them for the achievement of a certain program.

The same is true with regard to "the question as to whether or not the social-democratic and laborite parties can achieve genuine workers' governments and a Western Union that is genuinely independent of imperialist domination, alliances and policies." It must be borne in mind (without this any possibility of Marxist work along these lines is meaningless today in Europe) that our proposal for the European Marxists is that they should be inside these social-democratic and labor parties, as their left wing. It would be absurd and sterilizing (as well as incorrect theoretically) for the Marxist to tell his social-democratic comrades that their common party cannot achieve a workers' government to exclude that. What is his duty as a Marxist is to explain that "our party" cannot achieve this program under its present program,

policies and leadership, that these will have to be radically changed, etc. The same applies to the question whether governments formed by "our party" could achieve an independent Western Union. We believe that the resolution makes perfectly clear this basis for not giving a "dogmatic answer" -- and, theoretically, a wrong answer -- to these questions in the fight for our program inside the social-democratic masses today. All this is, or should be, the ABC of Marxism. "In putting forward this position, and these slogans, the Marxists remain fully aware of the nature and limitations of social-democracy and reformism in general," says the resolution. We did not, and do not, believe it necessary to repeat in this resolution on an Independent Western Union the analysis of social-democracy and reformism which is accepted by our movement and which is in the International Resolution, to which the Western Union resolution is attached.

The answer to question 2 should be clear from the above. Under its present leadership and policies (particularly, its blatant role as caretakers for British imperialism), the Labor Party government in England is not a workers' government in class character, in the sense described above. If, contrary to our "Marxist prejudices," the present leadership and policies of the British Labor Party lead to socialism, we will no doubt unhesitatingly renounce our prejudices and forthwith hail reformism as the road to working-class freedom. But if, as our "Marxist prejudices" tell us, this leadership does not carry it through, if it resists the pressure of the socialist workers, if it compromises its stated goals, if it repulses the intervention of the working masses, it will be easier to win the support of the workers for a new program, new methods, a new leadership, a new (or "renewed") Party, a new government.

Question 5: The answer to this question should be perfectly clear from the International Resolution to which the resolution on Western Union is attached, and in the case of part (a) of the question, from the answer above regarding the bourgeois plans for Western Union. There can be no question of revolutionary socialists voting for or supporting the arms budgets of the present governments, which are so plainly a part of the preparations for the third imperialist world war. This applies no less to the British Labor government of today. As for supporting the arms budgets of social-democratic governments, as we have known them up to now, the same position retains all its validity, since they have acted as instruments of the bourgeois state or have followed an imperialist policy abroad. Abstractly, it is certainly possible to conceive of circumstances under which the Marxists would give military support to (say) an independent German social-democratic government, pushed by a working class moving rapidly to the left, in the face of a military attack on the country by Western or Stalinist imperialism aiming at once to subdue Germany and its growing revolutionary mass movement -- but such abstract hypotheses or hypothetical situations neither face us nor are imminent in any country of Europe today. While careful to reserve our position for extraordinary circumstances, the important point for those who would follow our course on the

slogan of an Independent Western Union is to emphasize their opposition to the military budgets of all the present European governments, including the British Labor government, as imperialist and designed for imperialist purposes. For Britain, the caution need only be added that this opposition would be conditional -- i.e., subject to withdrawal, if "our party" and "our government" should pursue, or be headed by those who would pursue, an anti-imperialist policy of peace consistent with the interests of democracy and socialism.

While we gladly take this opportunity to explain and elaborate, for the comrades of the SYL Bureau, the relationship of the slogan of an Independent Western Union to other points in our program, we wish to point out that all of what has been said above is to be found, in even greater detail, in the documents and resolutions of the Party which are required to deal with them, and particularly in the International Resolution of the Political Committee, and that all the essential points made above are indeed in the resolution on the slogan of an Independent Western Union itself, or readily flow from what is there written. We would like to emphasize, however, that it is not only completely unnecessary to include in the Western Union resolution itself such elaborations as these on our general political program, but that to overload this resolution in this way could only have an exceedingly harmful effect on the purposes of the document, which is -- first and foremost -- to present the slogan of Independent Western Union as sharply as possible particularly to European Marxists. These answers to your questions provide, naturally, at least a part of the context within which the slogan of an Independent Western Union has to be understood by us who put it forward. We sincerely hope that it will help the comrades of the SYL to give the resolution their unqualified support.

With best Party greetings,

Political Committee
Workers Party

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THE SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA GROUP AND THE NEGROES

By Larry O'Connor

..The 1946 convention of the Workers Party adopted a resolution on the Negro Question in America which indicated the fundamental strategic orientation of our party on this question.

Specifically, the resolution sought to combat the notion that the Negroes in America, because of their double oppression and exploitation, can lead the struggle against capitalism as the spearhead of the working class.

The resolution laid emphasis on the role of the Marxists as the special advocates of the necessity for the labor movement to struggle for the complete equality of Negroes as part of its struggle for its own rights and eventually for socialism. It stressed the importance of the independent struggle of Negroes through their own organizations for equality, while pointing out that this struggle must be coordinated and combined with that of the working class as a whole. Finally, that a prerequisite for this coordination is the exposure of the petty bourgeois program and leadership of the existing Negro organizations in the course of the common struggle against all manifestations of Jim Crow in which we support these organizations and work in them while at the same time making a conscious effort to replace this leadership and program with a proletarian leadership and a socialist program.

Despite the correct orientation for work among Negroes given the party by this resolution, during the past two years we have shown no appreciable increase in Negro membership nor any enhanced influence and prestige in the Negro community.

We must assess the reasons for this failure, and indicate a road by which the party can advance in this field.

The failure to recruit and hold Negro members has been no greater in degree than our failure to recruit and hold white workers. Yet it is safe to conjecture that every branch which has made serious efforts to work among Negro proletarians has found an initial response which was far greater than that accorded its efforts by any comparable group of whites.

This, at least, has been the experience of the San Francisco Bay Area Branch. An historical sketch of our experience may be useful in pointing up the problem. Let the comrades judge for themselves whether or not our experience has been typical.

Through neighborhood LABOR ACTION sales, through personal or trade union acquaintance, the branch gets in touch with a group of say four or five Negroes. They start coming to socials and bring their friends. Eventually from the group thus contacted, four or five show political, as distinguished from purely social, interest. One or two competent comrades are assigned to

teach a class for them and their friends. The class appears to be a bang-up success. Over a period of months it acquires a constant attendance of from five to ten people, and a floating attendance double that number. The class discusses fundamentals of Marxism, applies them to the special problem of the Negroes in America, goes into the question of Stalinism, the NAACP, etc.

A number of the members of the class come along with gratifying speed. They quickly pick up the terminology of the movement, engage in the discussions, show enthusiasm for the ideas and the Party. They are invited to join, and do join and start attending meetings.

Up to this point, everything is for the best. The comrades feel that they have made a real start on the road to successful Negro work. The facility with which it has all been done makes them kick themselves for not having started years before. Here is living proof of the fact that the most oppressed members of our society are also latently the most revolutionary. And the most gratifying thing of all is the fact that the particular Negroes involved are not exceptional people. They are pretty average workers and trade unionists. Hence, the field seems almost unlimited.

The comrades realize that much remains to be done with the new members. Accordingly they organize branch educationals on a level which they feel will be most interesting for them. In the most favorable circumstances, they are in the same union with some of the white comrades, and every effort is made to integrate them in the Party by organizing them in a fraction and engaging in practical work with them in the union.

Yet, somehow, instead of the new members becoming even more interested and more active, they seem to be gradually losing interest. The business meetings of the branch seem to bore them. The educationals, however "elementary", don't seem to hold the same punch for them as the classes did, for after all, they cannot be made to constantly revolve around the special problem of the new Negro members.

As they were average trade unionists to begin with (i.e., guys who just attended meetings when they had to) it is most difficult to get them keenly interested in the work of the fraction (assuming that the fraction is a small one and not the core of a large progressive group which is engaging the Stalinists or the bureaucrats in a violent struggle).

Gradually they stop attending branch meetings. They will behind in their dues. Embarrassed to meet the comrades because of their inactivity, they stop coming to socials, or show up once in a long time. One day one realizes that they are no longer members of the Party. If one ever sees them again, they are friendly but aloof. In some cases, where there is a powerful CP in their union or community, one discovers that some of them here started going around to the social and perhaps political functions of the CP.

The details will vary with the branches, but isn't the pattern pretty typical? If the branch does retain a Negro member isn't it because he or she is an exceptional person, one who could have been won to the Party quite aside from his or her status as a Negro, quite aside from the "Negro Question"?

Perhaps in the above one important element in the experience of some branches has been left out. That is the participation of the branch or some of its members in a particular campaign against Jim Crow. Even if contact and recruitment has resulted from such a campaign where the Party has shown that it is anxious to practice what it preaches, the fact that we rarely have the numbers to dominate such a campaign, and that we nowhere have the numbers to engage constantly in such campaigns leads to the same final results.

If the experience described above is, in its fundamental aspects, the common experience of the Party, what is wrong? Is our problem one of ineptness, lack of consistency, unconscious "Jim Crow in Reverse," lack of seriousness and attentiveness to the special problems of new Negro members....?

All of these may play a certain role in our failure to do successful Negro work. Yet the degree to which they are present or absent simply affects the speed of the process and may result in the retention or loss of an isolated individual here or there. They are not the fundamental cause of the process, and hence their complete elimination from the Party might make it possible for us to recruit and hold a few dozen Negroes (in itself a good thing), but it would not make us successful in Negro work.

The fact of the matter is that the average Negro will not stay in a revolutionary socialist propaganda group any longer than will the average white worker. The difference is simply that it is much easier to get an average group of Negroes to attend a class which lays emphasis on their special problem than it is to get an average group of white workers to attend any class that we might organize for them.

The obvious reason for this is that most average Negroes are interested in their special problem. They rarely have the opportunity to meet on an equal basis with white people who are willing to discuss this problem. They are attracted and excited by the fact that these whites are conscious of their problem and willing to talk about it and do something about it. The fact that they also talk about changing the whole social order, of eliminating the exploitation of the working class as well as the special degradation of the Negroes is also interesting, but there is no greater reason to expect that the average Negro will make this socialist ideal and perspective the center of his life at the present time than to expect it of the average white. Yet to join and remain in our revolutionary socialist propaganda group at this time requires precisely that a person accept this ideal and perspective as the center of his life.

The average Negro, like the average white worker, wants re-

sults, and now. Because he has a special problem, the average Negro is quite likely to become a rank and file activist in a movement for his rights which is large enough and powerful enough to have the prospect of producing concrete, tangible, immediate results. But he is no more and no less likely to remain a loyal adherent and activist in a propaganda group than the average white fellow worker.

The Party must understand this. Every member must understand it. Otherwise, we will continue to revolve on the merry-go-round of activity, recruitment and loss described above. For this merry-go-round is most attractive for every comrade who wants to do fruitful work. The initial success in attracting and apparently educating and recruiting a number of Negro proletarians is almost irresistible. Vast energies can be poured into it. And disillusionment and demoralization are as bound to follow as the night the day.

We are a socialist propaganda group. In Negro work, as in all other fields we can only hope to achieve that which is possible to a propaganda group of our size in these times. We can only hope to attract and recruit and hold the advanced worker, both Negro and white. This means that in initiating any project, or in deciding to engage in any activity which opportunity opens to us, we must ask ourselves: are we working with or talking to or engaging in a campaign or activity through which we can contact and attract advanced workers?

We cannot be snobbish, or apply political I.Q. tests to our contacts and potential contacts. Yet we can consciously choose to concentrate on those individuals and groups who show actual promise, who show a level of intelligence and social consciousness which is capable of being developed into socialist consciousness now and by us and not eventually and by the contradictions of capitalism.

The resolution presented below for the consideration of the comrades and for adoption by the convention is based on ideas presented in this article, as well as on the general and traditional conceptions of the Party on Negro work.

For the present period the Workers Party lays down the following tactical principles for Negro work, based on the strategic orientation of the resolution on this question adopted by our convention in 1946.

- 1) In the unions and all popular organizations, Party members will seek to be the outstanding champions of the struggle for full social, political and economic equality for Negroes.
- 2) Whenever opportunity offers, the Party will seek to participate as an organization in specific struggles against Jim Crow, while carrying on constant propaganda and educational activity on this question by all means available.
- 3) Where feasible, Party members will enter and work actively in organizations such as the NAACP as loyal participants in

the struggles engaged in by these organizations.

4) While engaging in the struggle for full equality for Negroes in all types of organizations or independently, the Party and its members will seek to play the additional role of propagandizing and implementing our conception of the relation of the Negro struggle to the general struggle for socialism recorded in the fundamental resolution on this question passed by our 1946 convention.

5) In all phases of this activity, the Party and its members will seek to approach, educate and attract those Negroes who display an advanced degree of initiative, responsibility and social and class consciousness with the aim of recruiting in this period a real cadre of Negro members who are capable of giving socialist leadership to their people in the struggles which lie before them.

6) To facilitate this activity, the Party will publish as soon as possible a pamphlet directed to this stratum of Negro workers. It will also make available to all its members the resolution on the Negro question of 1946 and initiate a discussion in all branches based on it.

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RESOLUTION ON THE NEGRO QUESTION

The present resolution on Party political and organizational activity among Negroes in the United States is a continuation of and extension of the resolution on the same subject adopted at the 1946 convention of the Workers Party. That resolution made a basic theoretical and political analysis of the relations of the Negro to capitalism and to bourgeois society in the United States. The present resolution is a supplement to the 1946 resolution and takes as its point of departure the analyses contained in that resolution.

Despite significant and important gains which the Negro has made in the struggle for democratic rights, for economic, social and political equality, the over-all national framework of Jim Crow remains as the structure in which the Negro lives in the U. S. Furthermore, what gains have been made are largely in the realm of tendencies and trends, that is, they are "token" gains. The chief reasons for this situation are dealt with in the resolution of the 1946 convention.

The lessening of Jim Crow as a practice was initiated after Pearl Harbor as a war measure. In order to get out production it was imperative that the number of "hands" be increased for operations in the fields, mines, factories and forests. The one sure way to accomplish this was to hire Negroes; the very people who had for so many decades been virtually barred from industry, except for the heaviest, dirtiest, the lowest paid and meanest tasks. A further factor operating to assure the employing of Negroes was the low ebb of immigration. Not only was this due to the quota system but also to the fact that the potential European immigrants were engaged in the "war effort" in their own countries, either in industry or on the battlefield. It was thus primarily the importunity of the capitalist ruling class in the United States which gave the Negro his "opportunity" in industry.

No only were Negroes employed in far greater numbers than ever before, but at operations and jobs which had been denied to them on the ground that "the Negro has no skill," "white labor will not work with Negroes," "we did not know that Negroes desired factory jobs." Also, the Negro had been denied access to the skilled jobs or at times and places to any factory employment because of the enmity of white workers who took the position that "this is white man's job." Many of these workers of course were the same ones who opposed the employment of women because they "are taking men's jobs."

One outstanding result of the entry of the Negro into the factory was the opportunity to get away from the most menial occupations and tasks. This was particularly the case with Negro women who seized this opportunity to be delivered from the ignominy of domestic service which had been their economic lot in the U.S. for 300 years.

A major contribution to this change in the customs of the country was the existence of the industrial union movement - the CIO. The vast bulk of wartime production took place in the plants under contract to the CIO. It was here that the great bulk of Negroes were organized.

Not only was the economic status of the Negro altered because of the demands of wartime production but also because the war which was being fought was heralded far and wide, to all the peoples of the earth, as a crusade against fascism. Implicit in this position, of course, was the rejection of "racism," of Jim Crow. Therefore, something had to be done to mitigate the lot of the Negro, to the end that this country could stand before the people of the world, most of whom are non-white, as a genuine practitioner of the democratic virtues.

There were the major considerations which actuated the capitalist ruling class in proclaiming their interests in "our Negro fellow citizens." When we say that these were the major considerations, we are mindful of the fact that the Negroes themselves and their friends among the liberals were of considerable weight in effecting what transformation there was. The March on Washington Movement, although it never marched nevertheless played a potent part in bringing about some change in the treatment dealt Negroes. That is to say that the bourgeoisie, as is so often the case, had to be shown where its interests lay and to be prodded into orienting itself in the proper way to protect its interests and achieve its aims in the war.

The Negroes or their allies made no radical or revolutionary proposals. Their demands and their program were fully within the framework of capitalism and the pattern of bourgeois society. There was never any opportunity for doubt on this point and the Negroes made no pretense that they were demanding anything more than the formal democratic rights established by the Constitution and the various statutes of the nation and of the several states. All of the leading Negro organizations emphasized that Jim Crow was a deterrent to the effective prosecution of the war. There was no organized movement among Negroes in opposition to the war, only to their participation in the war on a Jim Crow basis. The only opposition to the war by Negroes was by the handful of Negro leaders in the Communist (Stalinist) Party before the change of line of the CP after the attack on Russia by Hitler Germany. After this event, these Negro Stalinists were for the war, Jim Crow and all, just as was the most rabid pro-war white Stalinist.

What was taking place in industry was not duplicated in the government service, including the army and navy. The armed services remained glaringly Jim Crow, Negroes being segregated in separate outfits. Also, Negro personnel was subjected to all manner of insult and indignity, not only in and by the officialdom of the armed services, but also by the white personnel and particularly in the South by the white civilian population. Segregation remained in effect in the Government at Washington. This was, of course, tempered by the appointment of Negroes to posts in the government which they had never held before and in

far greater numbers than ever before.

This description of what took place in government and industry is what we mean by the persistence of the pattern of national Jim Crow in the U. S.

It is necessary to underscore this because it is imperative that Negroes do not permit themselves to be misled into the belief that the gains which they have made are anything more than modest, or that it is not necessary to carry on the struggle for full and complete equality today with just as much tenacity as it was during the administration of Woodrow Wilson. The very fact that some gains have been made indicates the need for alertness and vigilance. There are those, unfortunately not all of them white, who already are prepared to rest and let things take their course. There are those, again unfortunately not all of them white, who are ready to compromise with the gains already made and to accept some of the newer and subtler forms of Jim Crow in the making, such for instance as the proposed "regional schools" for the South.

With this caution constantly before us and with a full understanding of the ways of capitalism and of a capitalist ruling class when it is engaged in a real struggle for its very life, we can discuss what improvement Negroes may note in their struggle for full social, economic and political equality.

Of great significance after the war was the hold up in Negro employment. Here again we are faced with a phenomenon directly related to the exigencies of capitalism and capitalist production. The post war capitalist boom created the demand for the services of every able bodied man and woman, skilled and unskilled. This and the continued shortage of skilled labor created a situation which made it possible for the Negro to stay in the factory, in industry. He did not have to go back to "Negro jobs," to the kitchen, to the washtub and to taking care of the "white folks' children."

The description of the economic status of the Negro as "the last hired and the first fired" must be viewed today in the light of the improvement which has taken place. Also, it should be borne in mind that this description did not adequately take into account the fact that Negro cotton pickers, hod carriers, stevedores, porters, laundresses, etc. were not the last to be hired and the first to be fired."

The Party was saved from a very serious blunder by a forthright and correct position taken by the Political Committee on the question of modifying the seniority rules in order that Negroes might retain the ratio of employment after the war as during the war. The Party resisted all pressure to advocate any type of super-seniority for Negroes. Aside from the general correctness of the position taken by the Party, it turned out that due to the "boom" such extraordinary provisions were unnecessary.

It is necessary to emphasize again the role played by the

CIO, that is, by the industrial union movement in the integration of the Negro into industry. It is also necessary to mention that Negro organizations such as the Urban League and the NAACP finally arrived at a position of outright and positive support of the labor movement, particularly of the CIO. This was a long stride from the former aloofness of the NAACP and the now open, now hidden opposition of the Urban League in some cities and by some of its functionaries.

Despite the fact of the persistence of the national pattern of Jim Crow, the Negro did improve his position during and following the Second Imperialist World War. As we have already mentioned, this was most outstanding in industry. The great significance of this development lies not only in that it makes for an appreciably higher standard of living for Negroes but also for the reason that the masses of Negroes were drawn into the class struggle in practice on the side of and as a part of the proletariat. Furthermore, the whole range of life for the Negro, in all its varied forms was enriched and improved. This is important in the life of a group like the Negro because the struggle here is not primarily that of the Negro working class as is the case among white people, but primarily the struggle of the Negro as a whole for democratic rights. Therefore, the struggle must take place in every division and field of activity. In commercial and industrial activity, in the academic world, in the professions and in government. That is, the Marxist must be interested in how all Negroes fare: the toiling, the petty bourgeois and the bourgeois Negroes. The Marxist defends the right of the Negro to membership in the American Bankers Association, the Bar Association, the Medical Association, the American Bowling Congress, sports organizations as well as the AFL, the CIO and the railway brotherhoods. We defend his right to run for office, to live in "white neighborhoods" if he chooses or to occupy the most exclusive accommodations in hotels or public carriers.

The Marxist takes this position despite the fact that many of these opportunities and accommodations can only be utilized by the "elite" or the "talented tenth" among the Negroes. The Marxist takes position also in complete recognition of the fact that intra-class distinctions exist among Negroes as among other groups and in society in general. This Marxist attitude is based on the fact that Negroes as a group are subjected to Jim Crow despite the fact that within the Negro population group there are a variety of economic and social levels.

The above considerations in no wise change or alter the fundamental position of the Party as to the primacy of the Negro proletariat, the collaborationist role of the Negro bourgeois and petty bourgeois, or the need for the promotion of a sharp cleavage between the Negro masses and their leadership. All of this is set forth in the resolution of the 1946 convention. What is said here is only an elaboration of that point of view.

The fact of the group-wide operations of Jim-Crow can be understood and appreciated by even a cursory examination of the

- different fields in which Negroes have made progress. We have already discussed industry and government. Negroes have entered the academic field as instructors and professors in "white" colleges and universities, all over the North. Negro medical men have been admitted to the College of Physicians and the College of Surgeons.. Negro engineers have been employed in far larger numbers than ever before. The Negro press has been accorded recognition, both commercially and professionally, which it never received before.

The very listing of these things is at the same time an indictment of bourgeois society. We can emphasize the progress that Negroes have made in the achievement of civil rights not only in the North but in the South also. Emphasis on the progress Negroes have made is at the same time emphasis on how far Negroes still are from full civil rights. The decisions of the Supreme Court in connection with interstate travel and the State of New Jersey banning discrimination in its national guard by constitutional amendment are not only real gains in the struggle for civil rights but also provide Negroes with a firmer platform to stand on to continue their struggle. The employment of a half dozen Negro players by organized baseball is progress that should not be underestimated. But here again it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the Negro in baseball is still an experiment.

Next to the Civil Rights Program that which caused the greatest furor were the various decisions of the Supreme Court dealing with voting, travel and school attendance by Negroes. These decisions applied only to the South for the reason that it is only in this section where the Negro is subjected to Jim Crow by law. These decisions have resulted in the increase in the number of Negro voters in the South. Not only are more Negroes voting but they are beginning here and there to announce as candidates for office. In the matter of travel the courts' decisions have resulted in better accommodations for Negroes and in legal equality in obtaining seats in interstate travel. In the matter of education the South has been forced to change its practices. In Arkansas the result has been the admission of Negroes to the graduate school of the state university. In Oklahoma a Negro was admitted to graduate instruction but was forced to sit in the hall just outside the door of the classroom. The most ambitious scheme of the South was the proposal for "regional schools" for Negroes to be financed by a group of southern states. Under pressure from Negroes and their friends and because there was doubt as to the constitutionality of the plan, this refurbished Jim Crow scheme was abandoned in favor of a plan for using the already existing schools, as a concentration for both white and Negro students, on a segregated basis of course.

We emphasize the tremendous effect of even those limited changes on Negro life and the standard of living of the Negroes as a whole. The results are increased economic sustenance, a lowering of the illiteracy rate, a lower mortality rate and a

general elevation of the cultural level. Along with these developments comes greater independence and militancy. This for the reason that Negroes like any other section of the masses will learn how to demand more and expect more as they become better fed, housed, clothed. One should not expect the same militancy from a Negro toiler in the serpentine swamps of South Carolina as from a Negro automobile worker in Detroit.

The Negroes themselves have continued their decade old attack on Jim Crow, segregation, disfranchisement, discrimination and mob murder. Despite improvements and despite the fact that the actual physical lynching of Negroes has diminished, Negroes were aware that while the country had undergone a face lifting, it was really the same Jim Crow face. The improvement had taken place within a framework of Jim Crow. There has been a tempering of the national policy of Jim Crow but the policy remained. This showed itself particularly in the maintenance of separate Negro units in the army, navy and air corps, in the vicious and venal Jim Crow situation in Washington, the national capital and by the continued efforts of the Southern reactionaries to keep the Negro in a state of semi-slavery.

One feature of the struggle of the Negroes for their democratic rights is the beginning of the elimination of chauvinism and chauvinistic practices from their own ranks. One hears less talk now from Negroes about "race consciousness" and "race pride." More and more Negroes look upon themselves as "Americans" with the duties and responsibilities of American citizens. They also are more insistent on their rights as American citizens. This is unquestionably the result of the improved civil and economic status of Negroes. The biggest contribution to this end has been the activity of the CIO and the opportunities which have come to the Negro masses to become better integrated into the labor movement.

The desire of the Negro to bring his own practice into consonance with the demands which he makes in connection with his own segregation is exemplified in the decision of Alpha Phi Alpha, oldest and largest Negro college fraternity, to admit white college students to membership. Along the same line is the decision of the National Federal of Negro Women's Clubs to admit white women to membership.

The outstanding event in connection with Negro freedom and equality was the report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights headed by Charles Wilson of the General Electric Company. Coupled with this is the inclusion of the recommendations made in that report in the message of the President to the 80th Congress and now reaffirmed in his message to the 81st Congress.

Both the meaning of the Civil Rights Program and why it is being promoted at this time can be learned from a reading of the Report.

1. The embarrassment which the U.S. faces in Europe on account of its democratic proclamations and its Jim Crow practices. This means that the prestige of the U.S. abroad will be placed in jeopardy, particularly with Russia seizing on every Jim Crow incident and the general Jim Crow in the country to discredit the U.S. In this connection, of course, it is necessary to stress that the bourgeoisie and its government at Washington are anxious that there be no appreciable opposition to the war preparations with Russia, or any obstacles in the way of national unity when the Third World Imperialist War begins. It might prove very embarrassing to have the Negroes in the U.S. threatening to march on Washington, while the government is calling the world to the democratic struggle against reactionary and totalitarian Russia.

2. The bourgeoisie in the U.S. wants a larger domestic market. This can only come from capitalist full employment. This means that people must have employment irrespective of race. For this reason the Civil Rights Report was directed mainly at the South. The Northern consumer goods industrialists want to penetrate the Southern market of 21 millions. This market is composed predominantly of "poor whites" and Negroes.

3. There are persons in the U.S., liberals, radicals, old-fashioned economic conservatives, who believe in "the American Dream." These people are influential in the Negro's struggle for civil rights.

The civil rights report and its inclusion in his messages to Congress by President Truman present serious problems of theory and politics to Marxists and to the Workers Party. These problems cannot be solved nor even an approach made to their understanding if the method used is to label the civil rights proposals of Truman as a "fake civil rights program." Such an attitude is completely stultifying and sterile. All speculations connected with the question of Truman's "sincerity" are equally stultifying and sterile. To argue that the civil rights program is a "fake" because "Truman knows that it will not be passed," is not only an irrelevant argument but a very queer one. The Party must begin and end its consideration of this civil rights issue not with psychoanalytic treatment of Truman's mind, his motivations and quirks, but with an analysis of the situation in which capitalist finds itself today and what relation the recommendations in the report have to this situation. It is not without significance that the Committee was presided over by the president of the largest electrical manufacturing corporation in the world.

The Party can and should join with the Negroes in demanding the passage of all the legislation connected with civil rights contained in the Presidential messages. While doing this the Party should explain to Negroes in the press and everywhere the Party appears just what the civil rights program is and why it appears at this time. The Party should explain the relation of the civil rights issue to the imperialist conflict between Russia and the U.S., also the desire of northern capitalism to

open up the Southern market to exploitation as well as the tremendous role played by the labor movement and Negro trade unionists in the whole development of the demand for equality for Negroes.

The Party in its propaganda must explain that whereas the Negro has made real gains, they are real gains to and for Negroes because they had been so grievously and incredibly discriminated against and oppressed. Negroes should not be grateful for the crumbs they have received. At the same time the Party would do irreparable damage to its reputation if we in any way gave the Negroes the impression that the CP did not rejoice with them in the progress they have made or if we should underestimate the real impact of this progress among the Negroes.

The Party need not worry yet that democratic illusions will seriously increase among Negroes through the operations of the new civil rights propaganda. The program so far is only a bunch of recommendations. Not a single new law has been enacted embodying any of the recommendations contained in the report. There is a long struggle ahead for Negroes before they win enough victories to establish "democratic illusions." The illusion which many Negroes have suffered from up to now was the illusion that no improvement could be gained from "the white man." This led them into all sorts of adventurist, nationalistic and "race consciousness" schemes and organizations.

If the Party approaches this question in the wrong way, we will merely succeed in aiding the Negro demagogues tighten their hold on the Negro masses. There is a section of the Negro leadership, notably the Negro Truman supporters who wield great influence with the Negro masses today. Some of these people are only political demagogues but all of them are not. Some of them have the respect of Negroes and have earned that respect despite the fact that their politics and their social views are pro-capitalist and class collaborationist. The Party, however, will never be able to make headway against this type of Negro leader (White, Randolph) or get into position to argue against the Whites and the Randolphs until the CP has gained the respect of the Negroes.

As a beginning the Party can and ought to carry on propaganda and agitation calling for the passage of the Civil Rights recommendations. Practical work along these lines will help recruit Negroes on a sound and solid basis. Every aspect of our Marxian program in relation to Negroes (and white workers) can be elucidated in the course of such activity. It would be a waste of time, however, for the CP to enter such activity without a positive approach to the question. We go in to fight for the passage by Congress of the Truman recommendations; that is, we propagate Marxism among the Negroes today in connection with their struggle for democratic rights as embodied in the Civil Rights Program.

Aside from the special issue of the Civil Rights Program, the Party reaffirms its former decisions and resolutions relating to political activity among Negroes.

February 1, 1949

Political Committee

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