

# NEGROES HERE OPPOSE CONSCRIPTION BILL AS THREAT TO ENTIRE RACE; THEY REMEMBER THE 1918 JIM CROW

By Angelo Herndon

A cross-section of Negro opinion in Harlem on the Burke-Wadsworth military conscription bill reveals the strong opposition of the Negro people to the proposed war-mongering measure.

Practically every Negro interviewed by the Daily Worker who would be forced to undergo compulsory military training as provided in the bill, expressed the unanimous belief that the bill, if passed, would be a direct blow to the interests of the entire Negro people.

Negro mothers who remember well the terrible Jim-Crow conditions imposed upon their brothers and relatives who served in the last imperialist World War to "save the world for democracy," also voiced the hope that their sons would not be called upon to give their blood in another war which is being waged to further enrich those who profit from war.

Mrs. Louise Brown, 527 Manhattan Ave., has three sons, two of whom fall into the age limit of the Burke-Wadsworth bill. She has lived in New York with her family for more than three years. She left North Carolina because "the white people down there treat the Colored people just like they were dogs."

"I remember when the last war started the recruiting agent would come around and tell the men that Uncle Sam needed them to fight, and that the Colored people would be treated just like everybody else when the war was over. They said we would all be just like one. But we are not treated as one today and we won't be treated as one tomorrow."

## LIKE SLAVERY

Mrs. Brown said the whole world seems to be in a "mix-up," and "I don't know what's going to happen, but I don't want to see my boys killed off for nothing. What would they gain from it? We had to leave North Carolina because we worked all the time just like slaves on a big plantation. When we got tired of working for nothing the landlord wanted to have us put in jail because he said we owed him. We came here looking for a better chance—but it's all the same everywhere for Colored people. I

hope my boys won't have to die in this war like my brother who was killed in the last war."

Fred Wilson, 34 Mt. Morris Park, is now living on relief after being seriously injured on a WPA job in Long Island. He would much prefer to push a cart for a living than to be subjected to the rigorous and constant pressure of bureaucratic relief officials.

"I am 27 years old," he said, "and always did like my individual right of self-expression, but now I'm in the lion's mouth. If I said what I thought, they might call me a 'Fifth Columnist' or a 'Communist,' though I'm neither one, and cut me off relief."

"Negroes should refuse to enlist even if this conscription bill is passed. The world is large enough for everybody to live in, but we have always been robbed of our right to live in it. Any Negro who wants to get himself killed in this war is a fool. I don't care what they call me, I'm not going to sacrifice my life for any government that discriminates against me because my skin is black and lynches me when I try to exercise my right as a citizen.

"The capitalists who are in power are going to put this bill over if Negroes and everybody else don't unite to fight it. Roosevelt and all the others are just as bad as Hitler, only they are trying to get us in the war in a different way."

**"Congress should be conscripted by the nation and made to pass the anti-lynching bill, the Geyer anti-poll tax bill and the enforcement of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution."**

This was the way 30-year old Thomas Wingford, unemployed Negro worker of 2148 Eighth Ave., summed up the Burke-Wadsworth bill and its relation to the Negro people.

"It is a travesty on democracy when Congress can pass all sorts of bills forcibly conscripting the nation, appropriating billions of dollars for war, when it does nothing to enact legislation for the benefit of the people."

Scores of other persons interviewed readily referred to the Jim-Crow treatment accorded Negroes who fought in the last war. They still remember the grim aftermath of World War No. 1. Fake promises of "freedom" and

"equality" will not suffice to ensnare the Negro people in the present imperialist war.

When the lynchers of the South and the big bankers of Wall Street shout these phrases, they sound like so much rubbish. Lynchings of Negro soldiers in uniform, the race riots organized against them upon their return from "saving democracy" in Europe—are crimes still uppermost in the minds of all Negroes.

It is just like adding insult to injury when the warmakers think they can hood-wink the Negro people again with their hypocritical talk about democracy when Negroes have always been and still are largely excluded from it.

## MENIAL JOBS

Even in the armed forces of the nation, they are segregated, Jim Crowed and given the most menial jobs as a reward for their loyalty, patriotism and willingness to die for something which they do share in.

If a Negro wants to enlist in the Navy, he is told without hesitation that "we don't accept Colored." The same policy prevails in the nation's air force. To win the democratic right of dying for Wall Street, they must join the segregated units of the National Guard, the army, and prove themselves worthy of the cherished right to clean stables and take care of the horses of aristocratic white officers.

It is a crime against the Negro people to see many Negro leaders becoming evermore busy in forming "Negro Committees to Aid National Defense," when Negroes are being told every day by prejudiced white army officers that they will be called in sufficient time before all the dying is over.

It would be well if some of these Negro leaders were equally busy forming committees and waging battle for the anti-lynching bill and the enforcement of other democratic rights denied the Negro people. This is a real people's defense program.

Conscription of the American people can only have the result of a terrific and deadly assault by the warmongers and reactionaries upon the civil and democratic rights of the Negro people.