

Youth for Victory

By Claudia Jones

Without a doubt, the coming National Convention of the Young Communist League poses for discussion one of the most vital aspects of its work and new perspectives—namely that of the fight for full integration of Negro youth in the war effort and in our national life.

Merely to place the question in this way reveals a truism stated by Mac Weiss in *The Communist*:

"... among the Negro youth, the very name of our organization today—Young Communist League—has been accepted by them as an iron clad guarantee that it can be counted upon to fight relentlessly and uncompromisingly against Jim-Crowism, discrimination and segregation, for unity of Negro and white, for full social, economic and political equality for Negro youth. The Negro youth identify the Young Communist League with the struggle for Negro rights. The Young Communist League prides itself on this fact...."

From such a premise, it is not accidental that one of the most insistent questions raised in a pre-convention discussion in one of our Harlem YCL clubs was: "Will the proposed changes in name and program mean a lessening of the struggle for Negro rights, for Negro-white unity?"

I believe this question can only be answered in the negative. But it is further necessary to examine the source of the question. Undoubtedly, this question flows from deep concern on the part of Negro youth who are disturbed by the rise of Fifth Column activities directed against the Negro people and the war effort; they are concerned with such blatant proposals as those advanced by Attorney General Biddle to restrict Negro migration as a "cure" for "race riots"; they are deeply concerned with the shameful atrocities and indignities which Negro soldiers suffer as a result of the Jim Crow system.

Are there guarantees to justify that just an organization as is proposed will conduct such a fight?

I believe that there are. This is so because the very distinction attained by the Young Communist League in its fight for full economic, social and political equality of the Negro has become an imperative necessity for our own nation—a test and yardstick for victory as well as for the future.

NEW TRENDS

Throughout the century, there is a growing insistence on the part of the Negro people for full and complete citizenship. This sentiment has been gaining momentum because of the democratic currents created by the people's war against the fascist Axis. These demands of the Negro people and youth are demands which coincide with the objectives of this war. They are demands which must be met as part of the struggle to mobilize the full strength of our nation for the final blow against the Axis. They are demands which must be met in order to eliminate the reservation and doubts held by wide masses of Negro youth about the war. They need to be met because they are just demands, demands which can serve to strengthen confidence in our common cause on the part of the colored peoples in the Pacific, in Africa, in India, in the Caribbean.

Side by side with this has been the growing recognition on the part of increasing sections of the American people, and foremost, the labor movement, that to rest complacently on the present status of the Negro people is to court disaster.

But the job is far from done. We have only to remember the widespread activity of the defeatists and fifth columnists like Gerald K. Smith, the Hearsts, McCormicks and Co., who daily spread their anti-Negro, anti-Semitic poison, to glean this point.

In my opinion, in its very program the organization planned must declare its unswerving condemnation of all forms of discrimination, segregation and Jim Crowism. It must condemn all ideas of racial superiority; it must have emblazoned on its standard the fight for full economic, political, and social equality of Negro youth, for Negro and white unity. The acceptance of such a program by the convention will be a mandate that it must be carried out.

It will even do more. It will distinguish itself by its actions on this question. For example, it will in practice declare its membership open to all youth, regardless of race, color and creed. It will educate its white members to become champions of Negro youth in their own community, through taking an uncompromising stand on issues concerning Negro youth, through active work for abolition of Jim Crow in the armed forces, job training and upgrading, abolition of the poll tax, lynching, inequalities and discrimination in civilian life, on the basis of the fact that it is in the joint interest of Negro and white youth to do so.