

# Attitude of ILGW Leadership Towards Negro Workers in Words and Deeds

By ROSE WORTIS

Prior to the elections a few months ago the left wing exposed by innumerable facts in a leaflet the wholesale discrimination by the I.L.G.W.U. against Negro workers in the shops and in the union. It exposed the fact that the Negro workers were receiving lower wages than the white workers, that the complaints of the Negro workers are not even given the same attention as those of the white workers, that in a union with a larger number of Negro members there was not a single Negro worker on any leading body. This forced the Lovestonites to include some Negro workers on their new executive board.

The Lovestonites, the lickspittles of the reactionary machine, came out with the most vicious attack on the left wing for bringing these problems of the Negroes in the industry to the attention of the workers. In leaflets full of the most vicious slander, they accused the left wing of encouraging Hitlerite race prejudice among the workers, and other similar accusations.

The recent convention of the I.L.G.W.U. held in Chicago exposed even more glaringly the attitude of these reformist leaders including the Lovestonites toward the Negro workers. The dressmakers' Joint Board was entitled to a representation of 60 delegates to the conven-

tion, but in none of the locals did the leadership put forth a single Negro worker. Realizing that the left wing would bring up this issue in the union, these fake progressives or second thought decided to take along some Negro workers as fraternal delegates. The Negroes who are paying dues and initiation fees, the Negro workers who are fighting on the picketline were not entitled to the same privileges as the white workers. They were placed in a special category of fraternal delegates for which there are not even provisions in the constitution. This

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# The Attitude of ILGWU Leaders Towards Negroes

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was just to save the faces of the Lovestonites.

## **Jim Crowed in Chicago**

The convention of the International was held in Chicago in the aristocratic Jim Crow Medina Club. During the first week of the convention all the Negro delegates were not permitted to go up in the same elevator with the other delegates.

They were sent to the service elevator, where very often they had to wait for hours before they would be taken up to the hall.

## **Forced to Move.**

On Friday, the fifth day of the convention, the Negro delegates were forced to move from the hotel. Esther Schweitzer and a number of other delegates moved together with them in protest. The convention continued in the same hall, from which the Negro delegates have been ejected. Again on the following morning Esther Schweitzer rose to demand the moving of the convention. Dubinsky forced her to sit down. The Lovestonites again did not come to her support.

The situation became so scandalous, the few rank and file delegates in the balcony were burning with indignation. On the following Monday the machine was finally forced to move the convention.

The Lovestonites who so bitterly resented the leaflet of the Industrial Union about their failure to fight for the rights of the Negro workers, did not utter a word of protest against this condescending superior attitude toward the Negro workers. Throughout all the discussion and all the bouquets that were supposedly thrown at the Negro workers there was no attempt to understand the problems of the Negro workers in the industry or to solve them. Despite the discrimination that was going on under the very nose of the convention by Jim Crowing the Negro delegates, not a single word gave recognition to the fact that there is such a thing as a Negro problem that is different from the problem of the white workers.

If there is any proof needed to substantiate the charge of the Left Wing with regard to the attitude of the I.L.G.W.U. officialdom, including the Lovestonites, toward the Negro workers, their so-called jubilee convention was the best proof.

## **Must Fight Vigorously**

However, the left wing and militant workers cannot merely content themselves by exposing the right wing and the Lovestonites with regard to the problem of the Negro workers. The left wing until now, though raising the problem of Negro workers, has not fought with sufficient vigor against the discriminatory practices in the shops, has not done sufficient work to explain the Negro question as a national question to the mass of workers, and has not carried on a persistent enough struggle against white chauvinism that still exists and is encouraged not only by the bosses but by the reformist bureaucracy.

This convention has brought more sharply to the left wing and militant elements of the union the importance of taking up a real struggle in defense of the day to day interests of the Negro workers in the shops and for the right of the Negro workers to participate in the leadership and in all the affairs of the union on an equal footing with the white workers. In fact, the left wing must exert special efforts to draw the Negro workers into the left wing, into the shop committees and other leading bodies. In developing this struggle the left wing will line up the thousands of Negro workers, still the most exploited section of the workers in the trade, in support of the left wing program so that the Negro workers will join hands with the white workers in fighting against the misleadership of the reformists of the I.L.G.W.U. and for a policy of struggle for better conditions and against all reformist ideas inculcated in the minds of the workers by the reformist leaders and the bosses.

The left wing must show in deeds, not in words alone, that it is not only able to fight the wrong policies of the officialdom, but that it is doing everything in its power to correct and eradicate these evils.