

Organize the Negro Workers!

The last of a series of four articles on the Cleveland T. U. E. L. Convention to be held June 1 and 2.

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ARTICLE IV.

One of the most important features of the Trade Union Educational League convention to be held in Cleveland on June 1st and 2nd will be the large delegation of Negro workers present. To organize the Negro proletarians, to draw them into the main stream of new revolutionary industrial union movement will be a major objective of the T. U. E. L. convention.

Of all the shameful treason to the working class committed by the misleaders who stand at the old trade unions, none has been more disastrous than their systematic betrayal of the Negro workers. It has long been the policy of the employers to draw a line between white and black workers, to set one group against the other in order to better exploit them, to cultivate the worst forms of race prejudice among the whites. They have deliberately and systematically discriminated against the Negroes, giving them the worst work, the lowest wages, and subjecting them to the most brutal repression.

A. F. L. Won't Organize.

Were the A. F. of L. leaders imbued with even a semblance of real working class spirit they would take it upon themselves as a first and basic task to defeat the plans of the employers by organizing the Negroes and by mobilizing the whole labor movement behind their elementary demands. But they refuse utterly to do this. On the contrary, true to their role as agents of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the workers, they fall in line with the program of the employers and join

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hands with them to oppress the Negroes. They cultivate race chauvinism among the whites, they prohibit Negroes from joining the unions, they cooperate with the employers to keep the Negroes at the poorest paid jobs. All this constitutes one of the most shameful pages in American labor history.

Class Brothers.

But the T. U. E. L. convention represents the revolutionary forces that will stop this historic treachery. The convention will be made up of a body of workers of both sexes and all nationalities, of Negroes who understand and dare to strike a blow in behalf of themselves and their class, and of whites eliminating all white chauvinism from their ranks, recognize the Negro workers as class brothers and who will fight with and for them all the way to the end for complete social emancipation. The T. U. E. L. convention will have more significance to Negro workers than any other trade union gathering ever held in this country.

Negroes constantly take on more importance as a force in industry and as a potential factor in the trade union movement. During the past dozen years hundreds of thousands of them have poured into the mills and factories. For the most part they are going into the key and basic industries, coal, railroads, steel, meat packing, etc., exactly those industries that play the most decisive role in the class struggle. In a recent number of the R. I. L. U. bulletin occurs the following statement quoting Carroll Binder regarding Negroes in the industries of Chicago in 1929:

"Thirty per cent of the labor force

in the Chicago packing industry is colored; the Corn Products Company, which employed only one Negro eight years ago, today employs 350, or twenty per cent of its working force. Beavers Products—65 per cent. The American Hide and Leather Co. was the first tannery to use Negro workers; now all the tanneries use large numbers of them. The foundries and laundries are heavy employers of Negroes. Eleven per cent of the employes of the Pullman Car shops are Negroes. Negro women compose forty per cent of the workers in the lamp shade industry. About twenty per cent of the 14,000 postal workers of Chicago are Negroes," etc., etc.

The great importance to industry and the class struggle of this constantly increasing body of Negro workers cannot be too much stressed. It is the special task of the T. U. E. L. to organize them as part of its general work of organizing the unorganized. This can only be done in the face of studied opposition of the A. F. of L. leaders working hand in glove with the employers.

Special Committees.

But in order that the necessary progress shall be registered by the T. U. E. L. convention in the organization of the Negro workers real work must be done by the left forces between now and the convention. Special committees must be established in the various important industrial centers to prosecute this particular task. These committees, together with the general organizing forces of the T. U. E. L. must establish contacts with the Negroes in all the important industrial plants

and draw them into all the shop committees, T. U. E. L. groups, and other organizations formed as a basis for the convention. In every delegation from every industry where Negroes are employed, there must be a heavy percentage of these workers included. There especially must be a large delegation of Negro workers from the coal and iron mines, the steel mills, fertilizer works, railroads, the cotton and tobacco plantations, and other industries of the South. The real mass character of the T. U. E. L. convention will be measured pretty much by the number of representative Negro workers present.

Good Fighters.

The Negro workers are good fighters. This they have proved in innumerable strikes in the coal, steel, packing, building and other industries, despite systematic betrayal by white trade union leaders and the presence of an all too prevalent race chauvinism among the masses of white workers. They are a tremendous source of potential revolutionary strength and vigor. They have a double oppression as workers and as Negroes, to fill them with fighting spirit and resentment against capitalism. It has been one of the most serious errors of the left wing to underestimate and to neglect the development of this great proletarian fighting force.

Let the T. U. E. L. convention therefore be a great mobilization center for the Negro workers. There must be present Negroes from all the important plants and localities. Such a delegation, upon which the success of the convention depends, can and will be assembled. The T. U. E. L. convention will be a revolutionary signal and inspiration to the masses of Negro workers, exploited and oppressed in the mills, mines and factories of American imperialism.