

Scottsboro Issue Creates Rank and File Opposition at N.A.A.C.P. Convention

Harry Haywood, Negro Communist Leader, Tells of Meet

By SENDER GARLIN

HOW rank-and-file pressure at the annual Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People forced officials of the organization to give the floor to Haywood Patterson's mother, Lester Carter, chief Scottsboro defense witness, and James W. Ford, was described by Harry Haywood, Negro Communist leader, who has just returned from Chicago, where the N. A. A. C. P. convention was held.

The fact that the I. L. D. had so completely exposed the position of the N. A. A. C. P. officialdom on the Scottsboro case, Haywood said, forced the latter to conceal their bitter hostility to the mass fight on behalf of the innocent Negro boys. It was this which prompted them to permit Mother Patterson and Lester Carter to speak, he said.

Describes Scene

"It was at the last session of the conference, at the Savoy," Haywood reported. "About 1,000 people were present, a large number of them visitors. It was just after Charles Houston, dean of the Howard University Law School, had ended a speech. Richard B. Moore, who accompanied Mrs. Patterson, came right in after the applause for Houston had subsided. He and Mrs. Patterson and Lester Carter walked right up on the platform. Daisy Lampkin, who was chairman, got terribly flustered and Walter White was on his feet at once.

"Come right up on the platform, Mrs. Patterson," White said in his most ingratiating way."

Mrs. Patterson, who told about the fight which the International Labor Defense was making for her son and the other Scottsboro boys, "got a very good hand when she finished," Haywood reported.

At a previous conference of the N. A. A. C. P. in Pittsburgh, incidentally, Mrs. Patterson was not only barred from addressing the delegates, but several workers who came with her were arrested at the instigation of the N. A. A. C. P. officials.

Ford Speaks.

Ford, Communist candidate for vice-president, spoke at a different session, Haywood said.

"It was during a session of the conference when the subject under discussion was 'The Struggle for Jobs,' he declared.

"Ford and I were there the night before, and you could see that they were very sensitive. They thought that we would demand the floor, and they knew we would get support from the rank and file of the delegates. So Roy Wilkins, field investigator of the N. A. A. C. P., got up on the platform and said:

"I see we are honored by a distinguished visitor, Mr. James W.



HARRY HAYWOOD.

latter was 'doing some very valuable work among the Negroes,' and citing the achievements of the I. L. D. in the Scottsboro case."

United front actions on the part of local N. A. A. C. P. branches with the I. L. D. in various cities were reported by several of the delegates, according to Haywood. One white delegate from Cleveland told how the N. A. A. C. P. in that city had cooperated with the I. L. D. in a joint fight on the Scottsboro issue. Other speeches told of united front actions in St. Louis, Waukegan, Ill., and Los Angeles. In Waukegan, Pickens, a leading official of the N. A. A. C. P., refused to speak at a Scottsboro meeting called jointly by the I.L.D. and the N. A. A. C. P.

SELDOM has he witnessed such "absolutely undemocratic procedure" as at the N. A. A. C. P. convention, Haywood said. "I didn't see a single resolution brought to the floor for adoption. I did miss one session, but I don't think any resolution was brought directly to the delegates at any time during the convention. Everything was figured out nice and neat in a committee, and then a final report was given. Yet, in spite of the efforts of the conven-

tion machine to keep the genuine opposition from expressing itself on the floor, there was very sharp criticism . . . particularly in connection with the Scottsboro case, and the rôle of the N. A. A. C. P. in that case."

Typical Demagogy

Characteristic of the demagogy of the top leadership of the organization was a speech by Roy Wilkins, field secretary of the N. A. A. C. P. Squirming under the lash of the criticism by rank-and-file delegates, Wilkins rose on one occasion to speak. He took for his topic, "Mass Action."

"This question of mass action," he said, "I think I know as much about this as anybody. And let me tell you one thing: there is no mass action without leadership. I have studied this question closely. I have watched Communist demonstrations. I have been at meetings. There is no such thing as mass action without some sort of leadership."

"Wilkins, of course, conveniently failed to touch on the nature of the leadership, hoping to befog the delegates with verbiage which would free the N. A. A. C. P. chiefs of the charge of betrayal of the rights of the Negro masses."

Pressed by one of the delegates,

'Come Right Up,' Said Mr. Walter White to 'Mother' Patterson

Roy Wilkins admitted blandly that when the convenors of the conference placed on the agenda the topic, "Are the Tactics of the N.A.A.C.P. Suitable for Present-Day Needs?" the leaders of the organization had no intention of changing the tactics. Expectation of "considerable discussion" was the only motive which prompted this topic, the N. A. A. C. P. chief declared.

Haywood reported that it was highly significant that the name of Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, ideological leader of the N. A. A. C. P. for years and the editor of its official organ, "The Crisis," was hardly mentioned at the convention. The fact that he was not present and that a message of greeting was not even sent him is an indication of the fact that the Negro masses are gradually getting away from the fettering idea of the "traditional leader of the race."

HAYWOOD said that Charles Houston, dean of the Howard University Law School, was selected by the ruling clique of the N.A.A.C.P. to make the keynote speech summing up the conference.

There were three distinct groups at the conference, according to Houston, "the ultra-conservative, the ultra-radical and the middle groups." After stating that he was in the "middle group," Houston launched into an attack on what he called the "ultra-radical group," calling upon them to "be more modest in their criticism of the national office."

"Speaking about revolutionary policy and mass action, Houston hit on the viciously deceitful formula that 'there is nothing in the program of the N.A.A.C.P. that prevents the local branches from being as radical as they please.' Houston thus sought to hold the rank-and-file of the organization responsible for the treacherous policy of the leadership."

Walter White, declared Haywood, said he supported Houston completely.

Must Build I.L.D.

The N.A.A.C.P. conference, Haywood concluded, proved that the class struggle policies of the I.L.D. had won favor among the masses of Negroes, and this was strongly reflected in the maneuvers which the N.A.A.C.P. leaders resorted to.

"The I.L.D.," he said, "must consolidate organizationally this great prestige by building up hundreds of new branches thruout the U. S.—an achievement which will be a potent force in opening the gates of the Jefferson county jail in Birmingham where the nine Scottsboro boys are now imprisoned."