

Harry Haywood Discusses Problems of Building Labor Party Among the Negro Masses of Chicago

By Harry Haywood

(From the report of Harry Haywood, Organizer of the Chicago South Side Section of the Communist Party, to the November plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, U.S.A. The report by James W. Ford referred to here will be published in a later Plenum supplement of the Daily Worker.)

Comrade Ford in his excellent speech outlined the basis for building a Farmer-Labor party among the Negroes in the United States, for involving masses of Negroes into a movement for independent political action. There is certainly a broad base for such a movement on the South Side of Chicago, with the conditions prevailing there and our recent united front activities among the Negroes. As correctly emphasized by both Comrades Ford and Browder, the movement for a Farmer-Labor Party will not develop spontaneously and can only be built providing we are there to give organization and definite leadership to the formation of such a movement.

In Chicago there is mass dissatisfaction among the Negro population, with the Democratic

Party. Congressman Mitchell, a Negro Congressman, is thoroughly discredited. But there is a serious danger that the masses of Negroes will be swept into the Republican Party. Oscar DePriest is cleverly using this dissatisfaction among the Negro people through disillusion with Mitchell, organizing mass meetings throughout the South Side. He is undoubtedly gaining popularity. Therefore it is necessary to begin an energetic campaign along the lines outlined by Comrade Ford in his report. And therefore, the District Bureau will give serious attention and consideration to the work of setting up a committee to promote the Farmer Labor Party upon the South Side and to link up this work with the general movement for a Labor Party in the city of Chicago.

Harlem-Chicago Cooperation

I want to stress at this point the necessity for closer cooperation between the Harlem Section and the South Side. In general we can say that there is a need for popularization of the experiences, particularly the united front experiences, in Harlem throughout the country. It certainly will be useful for our work among the Negroes in other parts of the country. Also, in Harlem leaders of national organizations have been involved in the united front, whereas in many places local leaders of these same or-

ganizations are holding aloof from the local united fronts and are even sabotaging them. I think the comrades here in Harlem can give us considerable help in this. For example, you have the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Garveyites). Although the movement is not as strong in Chicago as it is in New York, however, it influences an important section of the masses. We have not yet been able to involve the Garveyites in our united front activities, whereas in Harlem we have involved these people, with some of their leaders working in the provisional committee for the Defense of Ethiopia.

Chicago Decisive Area

Comrades, we must not forget the importance of the South Side of Chicago from the standpoint of the Negro movement in the United States. It is a fact that we have in Chicago the largest concentration of Negro industrial working class in this country in the basic industries, stockyards, steel, etc. The Negro masses in Chicago have very militant traditions; tremendous mass struggles on the unemployed field in 1931-32. It is no accident that the first real movement among the Negro masses in this country began in Chicago in the historic struggle of the workers around the issue of unemployment and evictions.

It is quite clear therefore that a broad liberation movement in Chicago can assert a decisive influence upon the Negro liberation movement nationally. Therefore we must give greater attention to the South Side, more cooperation.

Scottsboro

A few words about Scottsboro: We are approaching at the present time the most crucial moment in the liberation struggles of the Negro masses, in fact, the most momentous situation since the Dred Scott decision. This is in connection with the Scottsboro case. The lynchers of Alabama having complied with the legal technicalities set by the Supreme Court are now preparing to rush through a lynch verdict of the boys.

We must not forget that Scottsboro has become a real symbol of the struggle of the Negroes for liberation in this country. There is a likelihood that the lynch court will hand down a verdict against these boys, and in that event the whole country will be shaken by tremendous mass movements among the Negroes. We must already be prepared for that occasion, and give serious attention to building up a movement for the Scottsboro boys in all of the districts, utilizing the united fronts which we have already established there.