

THE STRIKE OF NEGRO WORKERS IN GAMBIA

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A very serious movement sprang up among the workers in Gambia, a small British Colony on the West African Coast. As a matter of fact, Gambia, with its population of 200,000 natives and 200 whites is the domain of the PERMAIN CO., a branch of the International Lever Margarine Trust. Last summer the workers in Bathurst, the chief town of the colony, decided to organize a union to struggle for decent living and working conditions. Of course, the fact that a union should have been organized, and mind you, by former Negro slaves, could not be tolerated for one moment by the representatives of "democratic" Britain, who even at home, in "free" England, are not slow to put through anti-trade union laws. Last October the manager of the Company in Bathurst demanded that all the workers leave the union within 72 hours. The workers decided to strike for the recognition of their right to organize.

The local authorities immediately proclaimed martial law in the town. Troops patrolled the streets and made no bones about using their bayonets whenever they saw a few people collect together. Despite the general reign of terror the workers continued the strike for more than one month, while more troops had to be called in to suppress the "disturbance" in the town.

Very instructive was the conduct of the so-called Labor Government, and especially Sidney Webb, the historian of British Trade Unionism, now the noble Lord PASSFIELD, His Majesty's Secretary for Colonies. Despite the fact that information had arrived in London at the end of October that the manager had presented an ultimatum to the workers and that a telegram arrived on November 15 that the troops and the police had run amuck in Bathurst, were attacking the local population, the Government paid no attention at all to these events. Indeed, answering a question in the House of Commons, the Colonial Minister said that he knew nothing at all about the

events referred to and that in general the whole affair was so trifling that he had no intention of making any inquiries at all.

There is no doubt that this first collision with organized capital will end in defeat for the workers of Bathurst, but their movement will not only prove a big factor in raising their own class-consciousness, but will expose to the working class throughout the world the true character of the present Labor Government and the leaders of the Labor Party of Great Britain.

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