

## Comrade ROUX (South Africa):

Comrades, I wish to draw the attention of the Congress to the question of the relation between the workers in the imperialist countries and the workers in the colonial countries. Mention was made here of the aristocracy of labour. An aristocracy of labour is a section of the working class, which, by virtue of its advantageous position, shares to a certain extent in the profits of the bourgeoisie. This economic condition is reflected in the reformist outlook of these workers. Thus the extreme reformism of J. H. Thomas, the British railwaymen's leader, is in part an indication that the British railwaymen in the past, and still to a certain extent at the present time, constitute an aristocracy of labour. Simultaneously it can be said that the British working class as a whole stands in the relation of an aristocracy of labour to the oppressed colonial workers and peasants in the colonies and in the countries dominated by British capital.

Are we however to say that the Welsh miner is an aristocrat of labour and a parasite? Of course this is ridiculous. And yet, the unemployed Welsh miner who gets unemployment benefit has a higher income than the employed Indian miner. It is also true that if the British bourgeoisie had no colonial empire to exploit, they would be unable to pay unemployment benefit to the miners. Now we can regard South Africa from this point of view, as a miniature edition of the British Empire. Here we have a white bourgeoisie and a white aristocracy of labour living in the same country together with an exploited colonial working class and also an exploited colonial peasantry. Here the participation of the workers of the ruling race in the

exploitation of the colonial workers is very apparent. Must the Communist Party stress in its propaganda the parasitical nature of the white workers, even the poor and unemployed whites? Must it stress the parasitical nature of the British workers as sharers in the exploitation of the Indians? No. Rather you would say, we should stress the unity of the workers irrespective of colour, in an attack upon capitalism.

The South African Government, in order to solve the poor white problem, has adopted the policy of sacking natives on the railways and putting the poor whites in their places. These workers get only about 5/— a day, a wage on which they say it is impossible to maintain a European standard of living, and yet this wage is twice that of the natives who do the same work. These are some of the problems with which the South African Communist Party is faced.

The organisation of the native workers into trade unions is the chief task of the Communist Party in the present period. At present the main masses of native workers are unorganised. The new native unions growing up on the Witwatersrand contain mostly representatives of the semi-skilled and de-tribalised natives.

The native organisation, the I. C. U., is a loose political party of natives rather than a trade union. It has put forward general wage demands for all natives, but has not organised particular categories of workers, and has conducted scarcely any strikes in its whole existence. In fact its leaders have on more than one occasion acted or functioned as strikebreakers. This function on the part of the leaders of the I. C. U. is due, in part, to its corrupt leadership and its organisational structure. The growing corruption of the I. C. U. leadership has resulted in a split in the union over the question of control of funds by rival leaders. Today the I. C. U. is heavily in debt and has practically ceased to conduct any political or economic struggle. Its membership has fallen by about 75% in the last nine months. On the other hand, since the beginning of 1928, there has been a steady growth of native trade unions on the Witwatersrand, the gold mining area, though not among the gold miners themselves. These unions are under the leadership of the Communist Party and have conducted a number of struggles, most of which have been successful. In the case of the largest of these unions, the native Laundry Workers' Union, an affiliation has been brought about with the white union in the same industry. The latter is affiliated to the white Trade Union Congress and thus the attitude of the white unions in general on the question of native trade unionism has once more been raised.

The expulsion of Communists from the I. C. U. by Kadalie the native leader who "sold out" to the bourgeoisie in 1926, was facilitated by the fact that the Party failed to foresee the expulsion and to make the necessary preparations. The expulsion was facilitated by the character of the native movement, its dependence upon a few big leaders with no lower functionaries among the rank and file, and a complete absence of democracy in the organisation. The officials were all appointed by Kadalie, and the Communist Party failed to play a sufficiently independent role in the I. C. U.

We had very few Negro members at this time, only about 100 in the whole Party. We were afraid of offending the I. C. U. For example, we delayed for months to set up our own Party school while we tried to persuade the I. C. U. to start a school of their own. The same mistake occurred with regard to industrial unions. We merely tried to persuade the I. C. U. to do this work: of course it was not done. We also tried to persuade Kadalie to be more democratic. Even after we were expelled we hesitated about starting new unions, and therefore lost valuable time.

The Communist Party, however, has, during the last year, pursued a much more vigorous policy. By building up native unions and conducting strikes, we spread our influence among the native masses. The number of native Communists is growing rapidly today. This is an indication that if these tactics had been carried through at an earlier stage, the struggle against Kadalie might have been conducted inside the I. C. U., and we should have been in a position to resist our expulsion. The joint strike of white and native workers in Germiston, and

the amalgamation of the native Laundry Workers' Union with the white Laundry Workers' Union which took place last month, constitute important victories on the field of the inter-racial trade union struggle against the employers. These victories must be consolidated and extended on an ever-increasing scale. First, by continuing the work of building up native unions. Secondly, by extending and strengthening our influence in the white unions. In this respect the Communists must take the lead, as they have already done to a certain extent, in the campaign of organising the unorganised white workers, and for the affiliation of the existing white unions to the Trade Union Congress, which at present only contains a quarter of the organised white workers. Thirdly, by continuing the fight for the affiliation of the new native unions to the Trade Union Congress.

Owing to the decline in the I. C. U.'s membership and its split into two sections, the growth of the Communist Party, the growth of native trade unions and the formation of a native Trade Union Federation, the I. C. U. has declined as a factor in the political situation. Nevertheless it still contains large numbers of native workers, especially in the towns, and plays a more or less revolutionary role in certain country districts.

Therefore the Communist Party should adopt towards the I. C. U. the tactics of the united front, and should try to win the I. C. U. rank and file away from the "good-boy" leadership of the I. C. U. and into the Communist Party. In view of the social democratic structure of the I. C. U., an attempt to capture this organisation by permeation is not practicable.