

# God or Mammon?

## THE CHOICE BEFORE NATIVE LEADERS.

The "Workers' Herald," organ of the native Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa, publishes a message to the Conference of that Union from Mr. H. Selby Msimang, now or formerly a prominent official of the S.A. Native Congress and latterly also a frequent writer for the Chamber of Mines native paper "Umteteli Wa Bantu." In this message he warns his fellow-workers against a "mysterious rumour" that European workers are showing a tendency towards admitting non-Europeans into their unions. On the contrary, he says, "white Labour has declared an industrial war against black labour and has called to its assistance a new body known as 'the White South Africa League,' a peculiar Ku-Klux-Klan of South Africa. . . . The position between white and black workers is most precarious. . . . And even if there were signs of goodwill towards us I am afraid it would be only to use the power of a non-European organisation in the direction of establishing and cementing the dividing line between white and black."

### MAKING MATTERS WORSE.

Mr. Msimang is no doubt serving the purposes of the "Joint Council of Europeans and natives," of which he is a member, to quite good effect when he helps, as he does by such remarks, to maintain a "precarious position" or "industrial war" between white and black labour. We do not minimise in the least the grave difficulties of inducing white labour recognition of and co-operation with black labour, but these difficulties are only increased by such distorted "warnings" as Mr. Msimang. Most rapprochements between sections of the subject masses are difficult enough of themselves—for instance, look at the complete absence of native support for the Indian Class Areas campaign, and of Indian support for any of the native crusades—without artificial difficulties being raised, or real ones exaggerated, besides. Even without such difficulties rapprochement is seldom spontaneous, things cannot just be "left to develop," great unifications need infinite pains to build them up.

### WHOSE JOB, WHITES' OR BLACKS'?

But more than this. Mr. Msimang knows better than he writes. He himself, a member of the capitalist "Joint Council," has also been a party to such pioneer feelers as have so far been put forth in the direction of a Labour Joint Council, which have shown him that there is considerably more than just "mischievous rumour" in the desire on the part of a number of enlightened white as well as black workers for co-operation, and moreover, that the successful fulfilment of this desire depends partly on greater support from the native side. Indeed the whole initiative in this matter has come from the side of the white workers, and in the case of certain native leaders, too, attempts to lash them into some interest in the subject have been vain, there is more money on the Chamber's side!

### NATIVE MOVE AWAITED.

Agreed, the white unions are backward, but are not the native unions equally so? Which of them has ever attempted an approach to the white unions (choosing not just the most reactionary but the most advanced of them) with a view to a conference on matters of mutual concern,

common interest or reciprocal need for an exchange of fundamental points of view? It was easy enough to have a Dutch Reformed Church black and white conference, but the same natives who took part in that jib at a black and white labour conference. If native workers do not want the help of white workers, let us have no whining about it; but if they do, let them in their turn approach the whites instead of lying on their backs until whites come and rouse them, while some of their leaders make themselves at least as busy as white reactionaries in deprecating anything effective being done.

### COME TOGETHER!

Mr. Msimang says "to organise non-European workers in this country is not an easy or pleasant task." Yes, there is no money in it. But it has got to be done, and if it could be assisted by white trade unionism it would prove an easier and pleasanter task. Again, the very evil he complains of on behalf of the native workers, viz., "the introduction of foreign labour into our market at a wage far below our standard" with a consequent "influx of redundant labour in the industrial centres which tends to reduce the standard of pay to a level bordering upon starvation,"—this is just what white workers too complain of. There is thus every reason for the two forces to come together, and we look to native leaders too to show some initiative in this direction instead of preaching the Chamber of Mines foul-thrust gospel of "never the twain shall meet," just as we look to white workers to recognise that their future, dark if they continue isolated, becomes brilliant as soon as they will accept their mission to lead the entire African Labour movement, white and black, to victory.

### "JUDAS JOURNALISM."

In a leading article on "The Future of Black Trade Unionism," the "Workers' Herald" says: "The enemy has hired a good few of our kith and kin who are in despair, whom he has supplied with modern Press ammunition for the purpose of fighting their own, while he enjoys the spoils of our cheap and abundant labour." "The usual notorious 'good boys' are in evidence everywhere with their servile contributions," says another article in the same paper. . . . "The leading spirit among these is a weekly journal called 'Umteteli Wa Bantu,' controlled by white plutocrats, capitalist bourgeoisie of Johannesburg. Shady articles, unpardonably devoid of any clarity of thought, are sent to it by Judases of our race, which after you have read you come to the conclusion that they are nothing but hypocritical incantations to the fetish of white supremacy."

"And the game is up," continues the leading article, "these disgruntled men are now being discredited by their own, and behold, we may soon witness the day when they shall repent and declare 'I have betrayed an innocent man'."

Mr. Msimang says in his message, "I am ready to offer you my co-operation, or if need be, to stand aside and open a wider field for those of you who may be entrusted with the noble task of bringing about the coming together of all classes of labour into one great homogeneous whole."

Well, the test for this task is that those entrusted with it cannot serve two masters, the Chamber of Mines and the workers.

S.P.B.