

# FIRST OF MAY

## May First in South Africa

By Douglas (Johannesburg).

May First 1931 marks a historic turning point in the working class movement in South Africa.

Falling in a period of unparalleled crisis and depression, tremendous burdens are being thrown on the backs of all sections of the working class black, white, coloured and Indian.

**Unemployment** reaches unprecedented figures amongst all sections of workers and it is clearly realised that the **wage cuts** already carried through against railwaymen to the extent of £10. a month in some cases, is but the prelude to an all-round reduction which is already being carried through in other industries.

Consequently the fighting mood of the masses is reflected in a wave of revolutionary activity, drawing wider masses of workers into action.

May Day demonstrations in **Johannesburg** in previous years have been celebrated separately; by white workers in the centre of the town, and by black workers in the backstreets of the city; with unity of black and white workers as an abstract slogan, not directly connected with the immediate demands of the workers.

The severe attacks on the standards of life of the workers, however, has now brought forward the slogan of black and white workers unity as a practical reality.

Preparatory campaigning amongst the factories and amongst the unemployed of all races secured mass support for the revolutionary demands which were being put forward.

May First called for three separate demonstrations, one at the recognised black workers meeting place — Newtown Market, the second at the Town Hall, the meeting place of white unemployed, and the third at the Trades Hall, the Headquarters of the Social Fascist Trade Union Leaders.

**Strike action** was secured in a large number of factories — e. furniture, leather, clothing, building, etc., but the basic industries of mining, agriculture, transport were not successfully approached.

A meeting of 1000 workers marched from the Town Hall to the Trades Hall where the White Chauvinist Social Fascist, United May Day Committee was exposed; and an appeal to the rank and file of the workers assembled there swelled the demonstration to 2000. The procession then marched to Newtown market, where 4000 black coloured and Indian workers were assembled, and to the accompaniment of tumultuous cheering for black and white unity, **the joint procession of 6000 workers assembled for a demonstration through the city.**

To the Native Affairs Dept., Pass Office (where the native workers are retained in semi-feudal relationship with the employer) for a hostile demonstration; black and white alike booing and hissing at this institution of slavery. On to the City Hall, where the feet of black workers had never before trodden in demonstration. The United May Day Committee was assembled at the City Hall with an audience of about 150 persons when the mass demonstration surged forward with banners flying and shouting revolutionary slogans.

For a few moments the Social Fascists attempted to continue amidst the thunderous derision and hostility of the masses. Finally the meeting collapsed, and the wagon of the United May Day Committee dismally made its way from the scene followed by a handful of dejected trade union officials.

The revolutionary speeches of black and white leaders called for black and white workers unity to establish the hegemony of the proletariat in the national revolution, amidst thunderous applause. The slogans of fight against the Native Bills, against Unemployment for the Defence of the Soviet Union were clearly brought forward amid scenes of tremendous enthusiasm.

Finally black and white workers assembled in procession, and marched to the Carlton Hotel demanding Bread. A police cordon prevented entry and the demonstratous continued to the Rand Club, the home of the Mining Bourgeoisie, where entrance was secured. Fighting began in the entrance when a police charge took place and brutally attempted to break up the demonstration.

Black and white workers fought back against the police thugs of Pirow and several policemen were injured.

A black worker carrying a banner fought valiantly in protection of the red flag and only when beaten into insensibility did he relinquish his hold. White workers rescued several prisoners from the police and a hand to hand battle ensued for fifteen minutes when police reinforcements broke the formation. Two black workers and eight white workers were arrested under the Riotous Assemblies Act.

Ikaka La Basebengi (African Section I.R.A.) immediately took charge of the defence and organised mass support for the prisoners and their dependents.

Large mass meetings of workers were held on May First at **Capetown, Durban, Potchefstroom, Pretoria** (where nine black workers were arrested for defying a ban on a procession).

May First opens a new period in the working class movement in South Africa and is the writing on the wall for the bourgeoisie.

Already the mining press demands that the Government takes immediate action against the Communist Party.

The revolutionary movement must reply by "digging in" into the factories, mines and farms, by the organisational consolidation of May First gains, by the intensification of "the offensive against Imperialism".

## May First in the Philippines.

### Three Important Congresses.

By S. Carpio (Manila).

While the reformist Confederation of Labour and C.O.F. (Congresso Obrero Filipinas) were granted permits and given monopoly rights for demonstrating on May First under protection of the imperialist-capitalist military and constabulary, the Proletarian Labour Congress was not only refused permission to demonstrate in Manila, (where the huge demonstration of over 30,000 workers and peasants recently, on the occasion of Comrade Ora's death, and the use of the Red Flag and revolutionary slogans calling for the confiscation of the land and for the establishment of Workers' and Peasants' Soviets — has scared the imperialists and their native capitalist-landlord allies and agents out of their wits), but they cancelled at the last minute any and all permits which the local authorities in the provinces were compelled to grant because of the great popularity of K.A.P. and of the C.P. Thus the authorities banned the mass demonstration at Calocan (4—5 miles from Manila) — despite the local permit, and they despatched troops and constabulary with special orders and ammunition.

Nevertheless at Calocan over ten thousand workers and peasants came together from all the outlying districts and provinces to demonstrate with Red Flags and with slogans and banners calling for "Support the Soviets of China", "Defence of the U.S.S.R. — the only Fatherland of the Toilers", "Drive Out the Imperialists", "Down with the Capitalists and Landlords", etc. A mass demonstration attempted in Manila proper — after the one in Calocan had been dispersed, was forcefully broken up and 64 workers arrested, among them many Chinese workers (Comrade Evangelista was arrested earlier in Calocan).

On that day there also took place in Manila, two "labour" congresses: — that of Balmori's Confederacion del Trabajo, and that of Tejada's and Cristobal's C.O.F. These two congresses coupled with the joint picnic-parade staged by these two reactionary trade union organisations, with the blessings and protection of the police, the capitalist and imperialist press, and the content of the speeches and of the resolutions and decisions of these two conventions, — reveal most glaringly the unbridgeable gulf between the class-collaborationist policies of these agents of the bourgeoisie on the one hand, and the revolutionary policy of uncompromising class-struggle of Class Against Class as pursued by the Proletarian Labour Congress on the other.

The utter degradation of an organised section of the Philippine working class to a mere appendage of the bourgeoisie is clearly seen in the 21 resolutions adopted by Mr. Balmori's own Convention on May First. The most urgent and most important tasks Balmori's clique of bureaucrats set before the working class are: — "**Prohibition of cock-fighting on working days**" ... and ... "**Fixing the relations between Capital and Labour**" ... and ... "**Protective legislation for native industries and business**", and "**Petitioning American Congress for the restoration of the Philippine Republic**"!!!

And, were the contents of the resolutions adopted by the C.O.F. Convention on May First any different?