

Allen:

Comrades: Comrade Johnson has already done away with quite a number of misconceptions that have arisen with regard to the Camp Hill case. But I think the whole set of misconceptions with regard to those events must be definitely cleared up. There were references in this Plenum to the Camp Hill uprising, giving the inference that it was a spontaneous affair. There was an article in the Daily Worker in answer to the attacks of the black Judases that the Communists were responsible for uprisings and bloodshed in the South; there was the attitude taken in the Daily Worker that no Communists were present, that we had nothing to do with the events.

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Camp Hill was our first organised attempt to do agrarian work in the Black Belt of the South. And as such it is the first effort to grapple with the whole National liberation question at its base, the agrarian base, and as such it is of extreme importance to the entire Party.

I want to deal mainly with the Scottsboro case, and certain apparent weaknesses in the way we carried on our campaign. In the first place I do not agree with a number of comrades that the Party picked up the case fast enough. By that I mean to say that once the campaign was started from the centre, the Party did pick it up fast, but where we lagged behind in this campaign was precisely in this point, that at the centre the campaign was not picked up fast enough. It was only two weeks, or maybe three weeks after the first hearing at Scottsboro that the Party and the centre fully realised the importance and significance of this case.

MINOR: Were we notified of it?

Yes. The Southern Worker and the Party sent a reporter into Scottsboro at the first arraignment and sent a telegram from Scottsboro to the Daily Worker on the whole affair - the arraignment and the events that were taking place, and as an indication that the Party was not yet ready to appreciate the significance of that case, that telegram and the whole affair was very very much underplayed in the Daily Worker. It did not receive the importance that its significance demanded. The Daily even lagged further behind in that case, because it took quite a number of more weeks after the campaign was started in the Party itself, for the Daily to see and to treat the case properly. Then at the very beginning of the case, I think there was a great deal of confusion, especially in regard to the tactics we were to employ with the black Judases. In Chattanooga we were faced with the problem of initiating the campaign, of laying the basis for it right on the field. The Ministers Alliance was already there. We began manoeuvring with them. We manoeuvred with them and had quite a number of debates on precisely this subject; then there appeared in the Daily Worker a very long editorial which in my opinion confused the line entirely.

I think that editorial had a great deal to do with causing the comrades to make this mistake not only in Chattanooga, but in other parts of the country, and in that way delayed the momentum of the campaign. That editorial very definitely, in my opinion, presented the problem precisely of manoeuvring with the black Judases, of trying to form a united front with the black Judases, and that did a great deal in swaying the mind of the entire Party on this precise point, and the harm it caused is still apparent today.

I think the biggest weakness in the whole Scottsboro campaign today are, firstly that we have not obtained the necessary organisational results we might have obtained out of it secondly we did not lead it into the direction of a struggle for national liberation, and if there ever was a case where we could do this it is the Scottsboro case, and I think that arises out of the same sort of confusion as was in that Daily Worker editorial, and which, from the discussion in this Plenum, appears to me to still exist in the minds of many comrades.

I think that although the manner in which the criticism was carried on was not the way to present the issue, I think the criticism of Com. Heyward was to the point. I think that when we speak of formalism it means more than merely the relations of comrades personally, relations in Party units or in our work; it also applies very seriously to the way lines are presented and worked out, the political

line, and I think Com. Minor does present precisely an example of that kind of formalism and I think Com. Haywood was decisive in his criticism, not of Comrade Minor personally, whom we all respect as an experienced revolutionary, but of certain deviations, should I call them, from the Party line on the Negro question. I also think that in replying to the criticism of Com. Haywood, Com. Browder was also guilty of a certain formalism. On the one hand Com. Haywood did not only pick out certain statements in the article of Com. Minor in the July Communist, but developed these various points to show where the thing was, more than merely one or two or three errors, but really represented the misconception on this subject.

I think Com. Browder in his reply limited it almost entirely to choosing two or three sentences in the article. I think this is also formalism. When you have an article before you you can always find there certain lines supporting your point of view. It is not a question of just that but a question of a complete misconception of the matter.

In Com. Minor's speech to the Plenum on the first day in his distinction between the petty-bourgeoisie and Negro masses and petty-bourgeois Negro leaders - that was a formal distinction. I do not think it was a significant distinction, I think we cannot refer to petty-bourgeois masses when speaking of the American bourgeoisie or even of the Latin American countries or colonial countries, but I think this is one of the specific features in the Negro question in this country - that we have no petty-bourgeois masses, or we may have it to a very small degree but not to a significant degree. Yes, perhaps 160,000 small landowners or may be today 100,000. This is, comparatively speaking, insignificant quantity. But in speaking of the role of the black Judases. Browder: Do you think Comrade Minor's line is entirely incorrect?

I do not think Com. Minor's line is entirely incorrect, but it is incorrect to the extent where it needs criticism and I think that in carrying on the work in Chattanooga, for instance, we need a sharp and clear policy on this problem.