

An Open Letter to "Negro World"

August 1, 1931.

Editor, Negro World,
335 Lenox Avenue,
New York City.

Sir: Your program being definitely one of misleading the Negro masses and giving objective support, under cover of fake struggle phrases, to their imperialist oppressors, it is not surprising to find you in your issue of August 1 attempting to distort into kinship with Garvey national reformism the revolutionary demand and struggle of the world Communist movement for the right of self-determination of Negro majorities throughout the world.

Claiming that "Brother Briggs unconsciously preaches GARVEYISM under another name, namely, 'struggle for Negro rights,'" you quote a paragraph from an article of mine sent out by Inprecorr (International Press Correspondence), and 'discovered' by you in one of the organs of the South African Communist Party. For the purpose of your dishonest attempt to befuddle the masses, you could not have selected a more unfortunate quotation, since the paragraph quoted clearly raises two demands quite foreign to the Garvey philosophy. These two demands are (1) unconditional equality of the Negro People, and (2) the right of the Negro majorities in the "Black Belt" of the Southern States... and in the West Indies to determine and control their form of government.

In view of the persistent attacks of your top leadership on the revolutionary demand for social equality the ridiculousness of your pretense that the Communist program outlined in my article is "unadulterated Garveyism" is at once exposed, since there can be no unconditional equality without social equality. And the paragraph quoted from my article plainly raises the demand for unconditional equality.

Garvey Program Silent on Demand of U. S. Negro Masses

And, where in your Garvey program or in any utterance of any of your leaders is there any demand for the right of self-determination for the Negro People in those sections of the South where they constitute a majority of the population? Or for the overwhelming Negro majorities in most of the West Indian islands? Where in your program is there a word of protest or objection, or the slightest call for struggle against the impudent imperialist policy of white supremacy under which these masses are robbed and held in virtual slavery? Is it not a fact that Garveyism shamelessly shares the reactionary philosophy of the fascist Ku Klux Klan that the United States is a white man's country? Has not Garveyism consistently surrendered the struggle for Negro rights within the United States and the West Indies? Has not Garveyism turned into a reactionary slogan the essentially progressive demand for a free Africa by preaching the surrender of Negro rights in the United States and the West Indies and a peaceful return to an Africa still enslaved by the imperialists? A demand further negated by Garvey's infamous statement that "the Negro must be loyal to all flags under which he lives." Has not Garveyism betrayed even the struggle for a free Africa by peddling illusions of imperialist charity and cooperation in the establishment of a Negro homeland (appeals to the robber League of Nations), of liberation through prayer and divine intervention, of liberation through the creation of a Negro capitalism of rent-gouging landlords, exploiting employers, stock-sellers, etc., of libera-

tion, in short, without struggle against the imperialist oppressors and by actual support and strengthening of the very capitalist system responsible for the murderous oppression and frightful exploitation of the Negro People.

Garvey Reformists and Kluxers See Eye to Eye

Your position that a Negro State in the "Black Belt" would be jim-crow nationalism clearly reveals that, like the white ku kluxers, the Garvey reformists are unable to conceive of the right of a black majority in the territory under question to rule where there is a white minority. Like all apologists for, and defenders of imperialism, you see nothing wrong in a handful of white landowners maintaining a murderous policy of white supremacy and suppression over a Negro majority, but majority rule by this Negro majority is quite beyond your servile conceptions. You immediately shout "jim crow nationalism!" On this question, the position of the world Communist movement (which, for your information, is composed of revolutionary workers and peasants of all countries and races acting together in complete equality) is crystal clear, and is as follows:

C. I. Program Clear Cut and Correct

"It would not be right of self-determination in our sense of the word if the Negroes in the Black Belt had the right of determination only in cases which concerned exclusively the Negroes and did not affect the whites, because the most important cases arising here are bound to affect the Negroes as well as the whites. First of all, true right of self-determination means that the Negro majority and not the white minority in the entire territory of the administratively united Black Belt exercises the right of administering governmental, legislative and judicial authority. At the present time all this power here is concentrated in the hands of the white bourgeoisie and landlords. It is they who appoint all officials, it is they who dispose of public property, it is they who determine the taxes, it is they who govern and make the laws. Therefore, the overthrow of this class rule in the Black Belt is unconditionally necessary in the struggle for the Negroes' right of self-determination. This, however, means at the same time the overthrow of the yoke of American imperialism in the Black Belt on which the forces of the local white bourgeoisie depend. Only in this way, only if the Negro population of the Black Belt wins its freedom from American imperialism even to the point of deciding itself the relations between its country and other governments, especially the United States, will it win real and complete self-determination."

Correctness Affirmed by Scottsboro, Camp Hill

The correctness of the Communist demand for the right of State unity of the Negro majorities in the Black Belt is amply demonstrated by the existence of an outrageous system of robbery of the Negro croppers and poor farmers in that section, by the vicious lynching terror (legal and extra-legal) with which the bosses meet the efforts of the Negro masses to organize against robbery and starvation, of which Scottsboro and Camp Hill are cases in point. And to make this demand for State unity a reality and not a paper demand we also raise the demand for the confiscation of the land of the monopolists for the Negro and white workers who till the land.

To win the white masses to support of these demands and of the struggles of the Negro masses is one of the major tasks of the Communist Party of the U.S.A.—a task which it is vigorously and with increasing success carrying out.

(Signed) Cyril Briggs.