

Only C.P. Leads Fight to Smash Racial Barriers

Communists at Same Time Organize Fight for Negroes' Needs

By Cyril Briggs

In his slanders against the Communist Party, Herman Mackawain makes among other ridiculous charges, the farcical claim that the Communist Party has abandoned the fight for jobs for Negroes "for fear of antagonizing the white workers."

But Mr. Mackawain, every step taken by the Communist Party in mobilizing the toilers, black and white, for the revolutionary overthrow of the oppressive capitalist system, is taken in the full knowledge that we thereby antagonize certain backward sections of the working class that are still under the influence of the ideology of the ruling class. Do we therefore abandon the struggle for Soviet Power—Soviet Power which includes not only the proletariat but its allies, among whom are the Negro people? Certainly not, Mr. Mackawain! On the contrary, the Communist Party boldly brings forward its program and strives to liberate the masses from the deep-rooted bourgeois prejudices, by means of which the ruling class seek to prevent united struggle on the part of their victims.

Nothing would please the capitalists better than to see Negro and white workers at each others' throats in a fight for diminishing jobs in a society gripped by crisis. The capitalists and their agents have been known to instigate such clashes (Chicago race riot, 1919, etc.). Against this sinister policy of the exploiters, the Communist Party strives to forge the iron unity of black and white workers and to win white workers in the enterprises to support the fight for employment of Negroes. For us Communists, the fight for jobs for Negroes is not confined to the Harlem ghetto. Our fight is to smash all jim-crow barriers against Negro people. At the same time, the Communists organize and lead the struggle for adequate relief and social insurance for the unemployed Negro and white workers, without discrimination.

Communists Do Not Evade Issues

The Scottsboro campaign and hundreds of other actions, initiated and led by Communists, for the rights of the Negro people are proof that Communists do not evade the difficult struggle against chauvinist ideology. In this report at the 13th Plenum of the Communist International (Dec. 1933) Comrade O. W. Kuusinen pointed out the difficult nature, and at the same time the imperative necessity of this struggle:

"We must fully realize that in the struggle against chauvinism it is necessary to swim against the stream with particular persistence and courage. Evasion of this difficult task, or even mere passivity and silence on this question, indicates in the present conditions, the most dangerous opportunism in the struggle against Fascism and war, the rejection of one of the most important and urgent tasks of the revolutionary education of the toilers."

For those who are sincere, evidence is available on every hand of the energy and effectiveness with which the Communist Party of the U.S.A. is waging this up-stream fight. It is to be seen in the rallying of millions of white American workers to the defense of the Scottsboro Boys and Angelo Herndon, to the fight against jim-crow oppression of the Negro people in this country, to the defense of Ethiopia against Italian Fascism.

That there are still shortcomings in this work, we Communists frankly admit. Not with tongue in cheek, but in a serious effort to overcome these shortcomings; in a serious effort to burn out white chauvinism in the Party and in the working class. This is the sign of a serious party, as Comrade Lenin taught us:

"The attitude of a political party towards its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest criteria of the seriousness of the party and of how it fulfills IN PRACTICE its obligations towards its CLASS and towards the toiling MASSES. To admit a mistake openly, to disclose its reasons, to analyze the conditions which gave rise to it, to study attentively the means of correcting it—these are the signs of a serious party; this means the performance of its duties, this means educating and training the CLASS, and subsequently, the MASSES." ("Left Wing Communism," by Lenin.)

The Nature of the Tasks

It is in the light of Lenin's teachings that we ferret out and openly discuss our shortcomings and mistakes. One of our major shortcomings on the Negro field is the continued lag in carrying out the task of further building and widening our leading Negro cadres, and in the failure to draw more Negroes into the staffs of the leading organs of the Party and of the mass organizations under our influence.

This shortcoming must be frankly faced and overcome. While Mackawain's desertion of the revolutionary movement emphasizes the necessity of our waging a sharp struggle against the influences in our ranks of petty bourgeois Negro nationalism, we must ever bear in mind that the main danger in our Negro work is not petty bourgeois nationalism but white chauvinism, which although no longer daring to raise its head openly in the Party still crops up occasionally in a concealed form. In our Negro work, it is necessary to conduct the sharpest fight in two fronts: against white chauvinism and petty bourgeois nationalism, with the main emphasis on the former.