Unions Back Negro Congress Despite Opposing Groups

By JAMES W. FORD

The National Negro Congress which convenes in Chicago on Feb. 14, has placed as one of its foremost tasks the unification of Negro labor. A Philip Randolph, the outstanding Negro labor leader in the country, has rendered great service to the Negro people by sponsoring this Congress.

With clear foresight Randolph sees, as expressed in a recent statement, the need of bringing together the wretched bodies of forces to meet growing reaction and violence and to fight for the rights of both the Negro people and organized labor as a whole. One has only to remember the murder of the white Socialist leader Shoe-maker in Florida, the attempted murder of Ossie Powell, one of the Scottsboro boys, the accidental murder of Negro prisoners near Scottsboro, Ala., and the growing reaction represented in the American Liberty League to be alarmed at budding fascism in the country. The Negro people stand at the present time and organized labor needs to make bold its rank to fight its right to live.

By his brilliant fight at the 54th Convention of the American Federation of Labor to get action on a resolution before that body for the organization of Negro workers, Randolph has shown his great need for the movement of Negro workers as a whole.

In an excellent beginning that the National Negro Congress places the following points as first and most important in the organization of Negroes into trade unions, which will lay a firm labor base for the movement of the Negro people as a whole.

The right of Negroes to join at decent living wages and for the right to join all trade unions. For the right to equal wages and equal labor conditions with other workers. For the organization of Negro workers with their fellow white workers into democratically controlled trade unions.

Crosswhite’s Position

In the light of these facts and in view of certain developments that are now taking place in connection with the final drive for the National Negro Congress, it is necessary to raise a few questions for the consideration of those who are interested in the organization of Negro workers and those labor leaders that call themselves friends of Negro labor.

“Crosswhite’s position is that one may legally advise a number of trade unions not to participate in the Negro Congress movement, not that he is against the Congress in principle.”

The speaker was Frank R. Crosswhite, chairman of the Labor Congress, a leading Negro Socialist and recently elected chairman of the Greater New York Socialist Federation. The National Negro Congress, Crosswhite, however, failed to accept the chairmanship of the Committee, on the plea that he would be too much occupied with the impending strike of the Garment workers.

The occasion of the above statement was a Conference of Commissions for the purpose of developing a general strategy for the organization of Negroes into trade unions, which will lay a firm labor base for the movement of the Negro people as a whole.

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Despite this, the Teachers Union, the Musicians Union, Local 802, and other unions have elected delegates to go to the Congress. In Chicago, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters, the Butcher, two of the most important unions in the Middle West, have elected delegates.

Among the outstanding trade unionists who will participate in the Congress are: A. Phillip Randolph, who from his sick bed has pledged his unwavering support of the Congress; and advises not only labor organizations, but all organizations of Negro people to actively participate in the Congress; John L. Lewis, and John Phipps, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, who has agreed to be one of the speakers at the opening session of the Congress in Chicago.

We have enough faith in the Negro masses and the most advanced and best leaders of labor in the country, to foresee and to defeat any attempt on the part of the Congress to have its members present at the Congress, all Congressmen are asked to cut off all relations with the Congress and do not support it.

There is a menace though. The Negro Congress movement which has grown to be a real menace for fence-sitters and radical waverers. The masses are demanding that the whole question of the Congress be handled.

We therefore place before the Socialist comrades and trade union friends of Negro labor the question: Are you for unity of action? Are you for the unification of Negroes into trade unions? Are you for doing everything within your power to bring about this broad movement against reaction in this country? Are you for the unprecedented broad movement of the Negro masses to destroy the Congress and for the struggle against oppression?