

ETHIOPIA ISSUE STIRS THE NEGRO POPULATION OF CHICAGO'S SOUTH SIDE

Creates Wide Basis for Huge August First Anti-War Demonstration, Says Heywood—Cites Success of Angelo Herndon Campaign

By Harry Heywood

(Extracts from Report on Negro Work at District 8 Conference)

The Negroes feel sharpest the blows of the employers' attacks. This attack has resulted in the rapid worsening of the living conditions of the Negro people and also a sharp encroachment upon their rights. We can see on the South Side growing discontent and willingness on the part of the Negro masses to struggle. But we found that in spite of this objectively favorable situation for the development of mass struggles among the Negro masses, no struggles had been developing for a considerable period of time, and that the Party was isolated, with weak connections with the Negro masses and their organizations.

In analyzing this question and the reasons for this, we found that this was due, first, to a lack of clearly defined political outlook on the part of the Party for the development of a fight for the rights of the Negroes around their burning demands; secondly, a lack of understanding of the correct application of the united front tactics, failure to understand the necessity of penetrating the mass organizations, the churches, the fraternal organizations and so forth, where the masses of Negroes are, and the establishment of factions, rank and file movements in these organizations as the only guarantee for successful united front efforts.

In connection with all of this we found sectarian moods and sentiments among large sections of the Party membership, expressed in a complete lack of faith in the masses and their willingness to struggle. At the same time we noted a lack of collective leadership, recruitment at a standstill, no functioning fraction in mass organizations and trade unions, which should have mobilized the Party to carry through a program of action for the rights of the Negro people and the toilers there. Consequently, very loose organization from top to bottom, lack of functioning unit buros, the poor attendance of meetings, poor dues payments, lack of Party education, and so forth.

Start Made in Relief Crisis

In order to overcome this situation the resolution on the South Side first of all established a clear perspective for our work there; for turning the Party into the work of building up a mass united front struggle around the immediate issues confronting the toilers in the sections and breaking through the isolation. We started at first during the relief crisis. In connection with this we carried out a series of struggles and a number of demonstrations, and the activities of the Party were increased in this period. Then we started on the question of the high cost of living.

On the question of Ethiopia, Comrade Childs spoke about the political significance of this question, so I don't have to go into that here. Around this issue, suffice it to say that the masses on the South Side are aroused as never before. Section 7, in cooperation with the comrades of the League Against War and Fascism and the Italian Buro, initiated and is carrying through a united front around this question. First of all, we started a series of demonstrative actions in the district here, the picketing of the consulate, the chaining of two girls to the post with slogans "Down with Mussolini Fascism," "Hands off Ethiopia," etc.

On the next Saturday we carried through flying demonstrations through the Loop of 20 Negro and white comrades, with a parade, and we had an effigy of Mussolini. We distributed 10,000 leaflets during the demonstration, shouting slogans, etc.

We attempted to set up a united front, first, with the Negro World Alliance. We approached this organization, which is a split-off of the old Garvey movement, and the

most influential of the Negro Garveyist organizations, on the question of united action on the question of Ethiopia. They had already announced a parade on this issue for the following Sunday. We proposed that we be allowed to participate in that parade.

Organize Sponsoring Committee

The Party, the American League Against War and Fascism, and the Italian Buro organized a sponsoring committee on the South Side and called a mass emergency conference, which was held last Friday night at the Pilgrim Baptist Church. The conference was very successful.

I want to again emphasize that we have tremendous possibilities in this Ethiopian situation. No issue has stirred the Negro as this one. We have the possibilities for building up the broadest united front ever witnessed on the South Side. The campaign in defense of Ethiopia must now be considered as part of the preparations for August 1st. Our intention is through building up the campaign for the defense of Ethiopia, to lay the basis for bringing masses of Negroes into the August 1st demonstration.

I want to speak on another united front on the South Side, and that is the fight against Jim-crowism, centered around a restaurant on 51st and Cottage Grove. This fight was initiated by the Y.C.L., supported by the Party. A series of actions have been carried through. Twenty-four comrades were arrested in the course of the these actions. We are building up a united front around this issue and last Thursday we set up a Joint Committee Against Racial Discrimination of ten organizations.

Herndon Campaign

In regard to the united front on the Herndon campaign we have great possibilities for building up this campaign. The N.A.A.C.P. has been forced into the united front. A delegation of the I.L.D. went to the chairman of the N.A.A.C.P. with proposals that they join with the I.L.D. and jointly initiate a committee for the defense of Angelo Herndon. Mr. O'Neal, chairman of the local N.A.A.C.P., spoke at the big Herndon mass meeting on the South Side, extended greetings and pledged his support in the name of N.A.A.C.P.

There is very great sentiment among the Negroes for the united front at the present time. The reformists are being driven into this united front movement as a result of the pressure of the masses, and there are possibilities for coordinating these various united front movements in the direction of a Labor Party movement among the masses on the South Side and at the same time lay a basis for the National Negro Congress, to be held sometime next year in Washington.

A couple of words on the shortcomings. At the present time the main shortcoming is that we have not sufficiently involved the membership of the Party from below in these movements. These united front movements that we set up now are due to the efforts of a few leading comrades. The units were not sufficiently involved. Very little independent actions are being carried out by the units themselves.

And also while we can register this progress, it is quite clear that the situation is not definitely changed below. We still have not managed to set up well functioning unit buros; we still have poor attendance; dues payments are still low; recruitment is low; the Daily Worker and literature sales are very low. On the question of classes, we have not developed these sufficiently as yet. However, we realize that the building up of these united fronts on the South Side make it all the more essential for us to overcome this situation and strengthen our units. Because without involving the Party there can be no successful united front built up. Without changing this situation, the Party will not be able to develop and lead these struggles on the South Side.