

# The National Revolutionary Struggle Of The Negroes

By TOM JOHNSON

(This is the first of a series of three articles. The other two will appear in successive issues of the SOUTHERN WORKER.)

It is only within the past year that our Communist Party has succeeded, with the help of the Communist International, in developing a truly Bolshevik program of action for our work among the 13 million American Negroes. Moreover it is doubtful if there is another portion of our program so little understood not only by the masses of workers but by our own party members as well. Yet the winning of the millions of Negro workers and poor farmers for Communism is a task of the greatest importance. To talk of a workers' revolution in this country without the active support of the Negro toilers is to give up all thought of a successful revolution. Particularly here in the South this task is of decisive importance to the development of the revolutionary movement. It will be, therefore, the purpose of this article to set forth the program of the Communist Party on the so-called Negro question, as clearly and simply as may be possible.

## Most Oppressed Group

In the first place it is clear to every worker in the South that the Negroes form a group which is **especially oppressed**, oppressed even more than the white workers and farmers. Every worker knows that in the shops and mines the Negroes can get only the hardest and heaviest work; that the Negro workers are forbidden in many cases from following skilled trades; that as a rule on the same job Negroes are paid less than white workers. It is common knowledge that on the farms in the Black Belt the Negro croppers are little if any better than slaves. They have no voice whatever in determining what crops they shall plant, how the crop shall be cultivated and for what price it shall be sold. All this is taken care of by the white landlord, who, at the end of a season takes over the whole of the crop and then gives to the Negro cropper whatever he chooses. In many sections it is not uncommon for Negro croppers to be sold and traded with the land by the white landlords.

Secondly, every worker knows that the oppression of the Negro is not confined to the job. The Negro in the Black Belt has no political rights whatsoever. He cannot vote or run for office. He is forbidden to serve on juries. No pretense is made of giving the Negroes any voice at all in the state, county, or city governments. Farther, in his daily life out-

side the shop the Negro worker and Negro farmer, no less than the worker, is Jim-Crowed and segregated, forbidden to associate on terms of equality with the whites.

## Its Basis—Profit

What is the basis for this oppression? Why do the white boss men and big farmers oppress the Negro more than the white worker? Why does the white ruling class carry on a constant campaign in the schools, the press on every side, to keep the white worker convinced that he is "superior" to the Negro, that the Negro "must be kept in his place"? Is it because the Negro happens to belong to another race? Is it because the Negro's skin is black and the white bosses' skin is white?? Not at all! The Negro is **oppressed more than the white for one reason and for one reason only—because it means more profits for the white bosses and landlords.** This works out in two ways.

First, by means of this extraordinary oppression the white ruling class is able to beat down wages to even below the minimum needed for existence. This is true of both the Negro farm workers and croppers. It must be clear to everyone that if the Negro had even the few rights of the white workers it would be much more difficult for the bosses and the landlords to keep wages so low and to cheat the cropper out of most of his crop. Thus, we can see that by this whole system of oppression of the Negroes, the white ruling class is able to force wages and conditions on the Negro workers and farmers than would otherwise be possible, and this means extra profits for the white bosses and landlords, of course.

## Keep Wages Low

Second, by keeping the wages and conditions of the Negro workers down below that of the working class as a whole the ruling class is able to use this as a club to beat down the wages of the white workers as well. Every worker knows that the standard excuse in cutting wages of white workers is that "Negroes will do the work cheaper." Every worker knows that in any strike in the South, the bosses always try (and often succeed) in breaking the strike by deliberately playing up the racial hatred they have created. When Negro workers strike it is white workers who are brought in to scab on them, and when white workers strike it is Negro workers who are used to break the strike. Thus we see that thru the special oppression of the Negroes the bosses are able to keep down wages of all workers, and of course make more profits for themselves.

(Second Article Next Week)