

Call to African Workers

Since the inception of the All-African Trade Union Federation (AATUF) several, sinister forces have been at work to break up that solid foundation towards the establishment of African working class unity.

The encouragement which the ICFTU is shamelessly giving to the Dakar group of recalcitrant trade union leaders, to form a splinter group is a classic example of the working of such forces.

We publish below an article by Jack Woddis, the journalist of world repute. It was first published in June, 1954 but it is still useful to the cause of African working class unity.

United Action—the way Forward

THE only way in which African workers can secure independence and social justice is through unity: unity in their own ranks; unity between African workers and other exploited sections of their people; unity between African people and workers in the metropolitan countries; unity of African workers with workers throughout the world.

All colonial peoples suffer exploitation. The imperialists have seized their territories by fire and sword—and are trying to maintain their hold by these same violent methods: They plunder the colonial territories of their minerals and agricultural products; prevent the creation of local heavy industry; flood the colonies with expensive goods; invest huge sums in order to exploit cheap labour and draw off super-profits.

Blood and Tears

The African people pay a heavy price for this policy—and they pay in blood and tears. They live in conditions of dire poverty. They suffer labour, racial discrimination, violation of Trade Union rights and democratic liberties. Their national culture is stifled. And their dignity, as human beings, is daily assailed by their oppressors.

The imperialist preparation for a third world war have led to further ruthless attacks on African peoples, whose strategic ores, communica-

tions, and youth are destined, in the plans of the imperialists, to serve the purpose of war. In their attempts to carry out these plans, the imperialists are trying to stifle every expression of the people's will. African workers know only too well that the only way to bring about a lasting improvement in their conditions is to end the colonial system that exploits them.

It is colonial oppression which is the basic cause of the poverty and repression of African people. As long as this system continues there can be no future for African workers. African workers must therefore fight against every manifestation and aspect of colonial rule. The demands and rights of every section of the people oppressed by imperialism must be taken up and defended. In the course of these daily struggles the whole system of colonial exploitation must be constantly exposed. Every success in these struggles, even of a limited character, is an important step forward for the African people, because it makes it possible to help the people learn from their experience of struggle, and build their unity against the whole colonial system.

Patriotic Forces

Colonial exploitation is so widespread and deeply rooted that it affects every important section of the population—workers, peasants,

artisans, professional people; students shopkeepers, and even local manufacturers whose efforts to develop native industry are thwarted by the heavy hand of the big foreign monopolies. Thus the workers are not isolated in their struggles, but can gather around them, and under their leadership, a vast army of all the democratic and patriotic forces in the country. These forces constitute the overwhelming majority of the nation.

The workers in Africa must never allow themselves to be divided from the other democratic forces of the nation. *The national front of the people against colonial oppression must be led by the working class, but it must embrace all those who are oppressed by imperialism and who are anxious to support the struggle for national independence.*

But the working class can never cement all these sections in unity, and give them leadership, if it has disunity in its own ranks. Therefore the primary task of the workers and their Trade Union Organisations must be to strengthen the unity of the working-class. Only a united working class can win the support of the rest of the people and lead them in their struggle for freedom.

To achieve this working class unity, the Trade Unions must maintain close daily contact with the

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workers. They must know what their grievances are, and be prepared to take them up. They must defend the interests and react to the demands of all workers. In carrying out their work to secure justice for the workers they must at all times choose forms of struggles which the majority of the workers are prepared to support, and not advocate actions to which only the most advanced and most militant will respond.

Union Policy

A united working class is only possible where the workers have full democratic control over their organi-

sation and its leaders. Weaknesses in colonial Trade Unions must be eradicated where they exist, as for example, the tendency to have matters in the hands of one or two individual leaders instead of insisting on democratic discussion of union policy, and on the democratic control of union finances and union leaders. Trade Unions are not to be regarded as occasional, temporary organisations, or glorified strike committees, which do nothing for their members between strikes, but must maintain constant activity in defence of the daily and long-term interests of the workers.