

The Party and the Negro Struggle

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(Continued)

In the last article the background and reasons for the Negro's racialism and anti-white psychology were outlined. The problem before us now is how to meet the negro's present frame of mind and gradually bring him into our camp.

When we speak to trade unionists we speak to them in trades-union ways and trades-union language. We take into special consideration the trades-union point of view. We cannot condemn the trades unionist for his lack of vision towards the class struggle or for his narrow, craft struggles and point of view. Neither should we condemn the Negro for his present frame of mind. We must speak to him in the language and ways he understands. We must take special consideration for his point of view.

The World War and the Negro

The struggle of the Negro in this country, especially in the last two decades, has been for racial equality. Latterly, as we have indicated in the previous article, a Pan-African movement has been making headway among the Negroes. This movement is considerably stimulated by the struggle for independence of other oppressed races and nations. The Egyptian and Indian struggles especially have had a stirring effect. The Irish struggle has shown what even a small determined people could do against the world's mightiest capitalist-imperialist combination. The hypocrisies of the World War, too, have had a tremendous effect on the Negro's mind. The Negro took at face value all the mouthings about democracy and refused to relinquish the hopes raised during the conflict. They have all come out of the conflict with the spirit that "if it was worth while dying for democracy 'over there' it is more worth while dying for it over here." Out of this experience there has arisen an ever-growing sentiment for independence for the Negro countries, Negro government for Africa, "Africa for the Africans," and a desire to push everything that is Negro.

The new ideas bolstered up the Negro's self-confidence and pride, but distracted, to a great extent, his attention from the struggle as it affects him in this country. This caused him to neglect concrete demands at home for distant objectives far-removed from the actual issue of the struggle.

Thus the two main objectives preoccupying the Negro's mind at the present time are Negro independence, expressing itself in the cry for a free Africa, etc., and race equality, including social equality. There is also, however, a growing feeling of the necessity for improving the Negro's material condition in this country. The idea of organizing for better wages is making headway. Various attempts have been made by the Negroes to organize themselves

into labor unions. Those Negroes who have taken the initial step along this line have faced many difficulties because of the impression abroad among Negroes that organized labor is opposed to the Negro—an impression largely created, as indicated in our last article, by the official attitude of organized labor toward the Negro.

A word or two about some characteristics of the Negro to-day will not be out of place. The Negro has a great love of display, show, pomp, ostentation, brass bands, mysticism, decorations, buttons, social frivolities and military display. (In this regard it is only fair to say that he is not alone.) These contraptions catch his imagination and act as an inducement for organization as nothing else can at the present time.

At Work

The Negro is revolutionary in sentiment because of the wrongs perpetrated against his race. This sentiment may be latent but it is there.

Our main objective in working among the Negroes must be to attract their attention to the class struggle and to draw them into it. Steer him into class organizations. If through skilful agitation and organization we should succeed in winning the Negro to our camp he will be the most embittered, consistent and tireless opponent of capitalism; having suffered the severest exploitation and oppression he will face his oppressors with a fierce hatred.

Our task is not to oppose such aspirations as a free Africa, race equality, social equality, and better conditions, but rather to intensify those aspirations and help to direct them into effective channels. The most important point in our agitation must be to *fix responsibility for the Negro's sufferings where it rightly belongs: on the bourgeoisie and their Capitalist-Imperialist System!* We must make him understand that in order to achieve his objective he must actively enter the struggle against the common enemy of oppressed. We must direct his struggle into a struggle against Capitalism and capitalist governments; and we must see to it that our enemies should not be able to distract his attention from the concrete immediate fighting objectives to the mirage of false hopes. Our tactics must be such that they will draw the masses into the struggle, gradually drawing them into the maelstrom of revolution towards the final objective.

The aspirations of the Negro are the aspirations of an oppressed race. As usual such aspirations develop because of the sufferings and the natural desires for liberation consequently arising. It behooves us to examine into every one of such cases, to see whether the struggle for such objectives would weaken our enemies and pit the masses of the oppressed race against the common enemy and thus lead these

masses nearer to us. This brings us to an examination of the aspirations of the Negro.

A Free Africa

Africa is a vast undeveloped continent parcelled out among the big imperialist plunderers. The exploitation of the natives is diabolical in its crudeness and intensity. Barbarism intermixed with slavery and peonage is the system under which Africa is exploited by the Capitalist governments. Africa has been subjugated by the missionary, whiskey, deceit, fire and sword. The struggle of the natives against their alien exploiters is age-long, and the bones of many of the soldiers of the imperial powers have been bleached by the tropical climate of Africa. Enormous wealth is being derived from Africa for the support of the capitalist regime in Europe and America. Cutting off this wealth would mean economic ruin to many a capitalist state at this critical period! Thus the freeing of Africa would not only deliver a large section of the human race from degradation and slavery but would at the same time undermine one of the pillars of Capitalist Imperialism. Our enemies' strength would be sapped in the struggle, thus weakening him more and more. We should then welcome and encourage and earnestly help in any effort of the Negroes and other oppressed peoples on the African continent to drive out the imperialists and take possession of the land themselves.

Social Equality

Full racial equality implies the desire of the Negro to be considered as a human being. This is an old demand which received impetus after the World War. It is a far more fundamental demand than all the others. It will not be solved until the Negro, through self-assertion and organization, acquires sufficient power and influence to demand respect.

The demand for a free Africa is an outgrowth of the Negro's attempt to obtain full racial equality. For equality the Negro will fight most stubbornly, since its denial affects not only his moral and social conditions but also his material well-being.

To achieve equality he must organize his power everywhere, in the Negro states to drive out the imperialists, in the South to gain political freedom and recognition, in general, but especially in the North, to get better material conditions, better wages, shorter hours and more regular employment. By winning the average political liberties he will be more in a position to protect his interests, and by organizing himself economically everywhere, but especially in the North, he will become equal with all the rest of the organized working-class.

Thus we see that the Negro struggle takes on the aspect of a racial as well as a class struggle. Fundamentally it is, of course, a struggle against Capitalism and Imperialism.

It is especially timely and important to encourage the organization of the Negroes economically. Economic organization is bound to bring them into close contact with the white workers. They will be forced to act concertedly with the rest of labor and thus will learn by experience of their

common interests and be drawn more and more into the class struggle. Besides the economic appeal is the strongest in any case, and while the Negroes may use their economic strength for the achievement and support of their other aspirations the foundation of strength and well-being is economic security.

The Struggle Involved

The accomplishment of this program means a severe struggle against the Capitalist and Imperialist oppressors in the colonies. It can hardly be accomplished without an uprising in the colonies or the destruction of some of the capitalist empires through a Proletarian revolution at home. The conquest of political equality in the South and colonies will bring the right to organize, right to vote, and freedom of speech which will not be conceded by the planter-barons, accustomed to holding the Negroes in peonage, without the bitterest struggle—a struggle which will rock to the very foundation that hideous regime. The white capitalist planters not only would lose billions of dollars, being unable to continue their present intense exploitation of the Negro, but they would then be prevented from interfering with his acquiring more and more power in every direction. The granting of the franchise would mean a democratization of political rule in favor of the Negro, and would force the white planter-barons to support the petty Negro bourgeoisie in order to save themselves. This they will not do until they are forced to it.

Economic organization will strengthen not only the Negro but the working class in general. It will line up with labor an element which heretofore has been used to the detriment of the working class. Besides, if ever the Negro is going to achieve his liberation it will not be by his efforts alone but by the pressure of all the organized workers who themselves will not tolerate the suppression of their brethren, whether they be black, yellow or white.

Our plan should aim to unite the oppressed, strengthen and cement their power. Some of our "leftists" may say, "But that's all reforms and immediate demands. It does not do away with capitalism?" To them we say that the fulfillment of these demands means intense struggles on the part of the masses themselves and our opportunity to win the masses over to us during these struggles and lead them on to the greater and final struggle. Besides, it is foolish to think that the proletarian masses will ever enter into the struggle against Capitalism consciously fighting for Communism. The case will rather be that they will be goaded through the resistance of the bourgeoisie to their needs and demands, into an open assault upon, and destruction of, the bourgeoisie. Especially will this be so in the United States. The American worker will not fight for theories but he will fight like hell for his dinner pail, and the capitalists will less and less be able to give it to him. As far as the masses are concerned our task is to develop the struggle and lead it. It is up to us to learn how, and know where we are leading and whether we are leading well.

Organization Paramount..

In order to accomplish the above program it is not sufficient to merely propagate the ideas. It is necessary to organize the sentiment at the same time. This cannot be done very well except by uniting all the radical Negro organizations, and using this organization to attract all the Negro militants. We will then be able to develop a center capable of influencing the Negro masses and organizing the struggle. It is all very well for our comrades to join any organization where the Negro masses are, but to unite the struggle and organize its leadership they must belong to a center which will, on a large scale, conduct the fight.

In our work among the Negroes, we must not overlook a very simple, but important factor. This is the question of satisfying as much as possible the purely human factor in our work. The desire for enjoyment, dances, exercises, song, music, games, displays, parades, etc., must be met. Through these gatherings there is

not only the possibility of raising funds but also of cementing the working class spirit, and many times to reach the most backward elements which otherwise could never be touched. There, in personal company and good spirit, is the opportunity for intensive individual propaganda, getting of new members, and sale of literature. These are important factors in our work. If we do not provide for relaxation, the capitalists and their henchmen will, thus strengthen their influence. Experience shows, in innumerable instances, that those organizations grow strong politically and in membership which have recognized these purely human factors. For doing such work we will need meeting halls and rooms, owning such places outright wherever necessary. Meeting halls are centers of organizations. They furnish the connection, they act as tools for the work. The more the better.

We must be realists if we are going to meet the real problems confronting the American workers. And the Negro problem is a most vital one. Our task is clear. We must not falter.